The effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons

L Groenewald

orcid.org/0000-0001-7931-6195

Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Commerce in Marketing Management at the North-West University

Supervisor: Dr RH Goldberg

Co-Supervisor: Prof LR Jansen van Rensburg

Graduation: October 2019

Student number: 25032194

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Louw and Mari Groenewald, who provided me with the opportunity, love and support to complete this degree. Thank you for always believing in me, encouraging me and inspiring me to do the best and be the best that I can be.

I would like to acknowledge a few people who have supported me throughout my journey to completing my dissertation.

- Firstly, I would like to thank my two outstanding promoters Dr Roland Goldberg and Prof Renier Jansen van Rensburg. Thank you for guiding me, motivating me and providing me with the opportunity to further my studies and realise my potential. I greatly appreciate your knowledge, time and effort throughout my studies. Thank you for your continuous feedback and willingness to help at any time. I would not have been able to complete this journey without your input.

- Secondly, I would like to thank my family – my father, mother, brother and Lemon. Your endless love, advice, assistance, understanding and comfort food motivated me on the days I needed it most.

- Thirdly, I would like to thank my boyfriend Gerhard de Kock. Thank you for having the world's patience with me during this process. Thank you for encouraging me, listening to my complaints, advising me and believing in me when I did not believe in myself. You inspire me every day.

- Fourthly, I would like to thank Prof Nedia Mackay for believing in me and encouraging me to complete my Master's degree. I have learned more than I could have hoped for and would not have taken on this journey if it were not for you. Thank you for helping me to believe in myself.

- Fifthly, special thanks to my best friend Leje Fritz for your uplifting spirit, care, love and support.

- Finally, I would like to thank all my family and friends for the words of encouragement, for motivating me not to give up and offering to help. I am truly blessed.

ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have been conducted on consumers' buying behaviour, socio-demographics as well as the psychographic dimensions of married people and traditional familial set-ups. Marketers and organisations have, however, overlooked the increasing and profitable Singletons consumer segment. Based on the literature review, it was found that Singletons have financial freedom and greater spending power because as they do not have family constraints and responsibilities. It is of great importance for marketers to identify Singleton consumers and to gain greater insight into this segment. Such knowledge will enable marketers to provide products and services that address the specific needs, wants and preferences of Singletons.

This study investigated various concepts including buying behaviour, reference groups, segmentation and lifestyle segmentation in order to identify and describe Singletons. Studying the buying behaviour of Singletons, asking questions such as how, what, where, when and why consumers purchase and consume various products or services, will help marketers to develop appropriate marketing strategies. Effectively segmenting a market will also enable marketers to position their products so that they appeal to the targeted consumer segment. This study hopes to assist marketers and organisations in their efforts to devise marketing strategies that target the Singleton segment more effectively.

In order to determine the influence of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons as the primary objective of this study, 12 secondary research objectives were formulated. Various statements pertaining to reference groups were provided by the SUSCEP scale, which were used to determine their effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons, the AIO-approach was used by measuring six lifestyle dimensions in terms of fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreations, E-shopping and career orientation. The study used a descriptive research design. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling and the data was collected using a self-administrated questionnaire. A sample size of 207 was realised from respondents in the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas of Gauteng province.

The results of the study indicate that Singletons' experience moderately low reference groups effect as well as having a moderately low level of fashion consciousness. Moderately high levels of cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation were found among the respondents. The study also determined the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions, as well as the relationships between reference groups and the six lifestyle dimensions. The significant differences in terms of the

perceptions of Singletons towards reference groups and the lifestyle dimensions with regard to their demographic differences in terms of age, monthly income, highest level of education and gender were determined.

It is recommended that marketers and organisations should focus their efforts and resources on adjusting their marketing strategies so that these are in line with the preferences of Singletons with regard to the lifestyle dimensions of cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation. Marketers can consider the effect of reference groups and lifestyle, along with the difference in perceptions based on the demographic differences to develop effective and efficient marketing strategies and product offerings for Singletons.

Recommendations for future research include considering a larger sample size, examining the effect of reference groups and lifestyle of Singletons in a wider geographic area, conducting a comparative study of Singletons in different geographical areas. In order to gain greater knowledge of the lifestyle of Singletons, a wider variety of AIO-statements can be measured. Furthermore, external influences such as culture, family and social class can be used to determine the buying behaviour of Singletons. To improve external validity, a longitudinal research design can be incorporated. Finally, research can be conducted by focusing on one lifestyle dimension and gaining a more profound understanding of a specific dimension (e.g. cost consciousness), and how Singletons perceive these dimensions.

KEY TERMINOLOGIES USED IN THE STUDY

Reference groups

Cant and Van Heerden (2013:69) explain that reference groups are individuals or groups of individuals that a person uses as a standard when making decisions. Consumers value the opinions of these referents that could include, inter alia, a family member, a friend or a celebrity. These referents influence the consumer's behaviour, values, conduct and decisions (Joubert, 2013:26).

Lifestyle

Lifestyle can be defined as the way in which consumers conduct their daily lives (Ratanasawadwat & Jiamthapthaksin, 2017:972). Levy *et al.* (2014:111) propound that lifestyle refers to how consumers spend their time and money; the various activities they partake in; and the perceptions and opinions they form about the world around them. Krishnan (2011:284) describes lifestyle as a patterned way of life in which consumers engage in on a daily basis.

Buying behaviour

Buying behaviour refers to the decisions consumers make when deciding on the amount of money that they want to spend on certain products as well as the effort they make to gather information on the type of products they would like to purchase (Cunningham, 2018:67). Prakash (2012:64) states that buying behaviour is most typically affected by an array of cultural, psychological, social and personal factors.

Singleton

A person, above the age of 18, who is not married or in a long-term relationship and who lives alone (Bouhlel *et al.*, 2011:23; Macmillan Dictionary, 2018; Schlacter *et al.*, 1979:39-40).

Key terms: Reference groups, buying behaviour, segmentation, lifestyle, Singletons.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **I**

ABSTRACT ..... **II**

KEY TERMINOLOGIES USED IN THE STUDY ..... **IV**

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY **1**

1.1 INTRODUCTION **1**

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY **1**

1.2.1 Singletons 1

1.2.2 Consumer buying behaviour 2

1.2.3 Reference group 3

1.2.4 Market Segmentation 4

1.2.5 Lifestyle 5

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT **6**

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY **8**

1.4.1 Primary objective 8

1.4.2 Secondary objectives 8

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **9**

1.5.1 Literature study 9

1.5.2 Empirical investigation 10

1.5.2.1 Research design 10

1.5.2.2 Data collection method 11

1.5.2.3 Developing the sample plan 12

1.5.2.4 Measurement instrument 14

1.5.2.5 Pilot study 17

1.5.2.6 Data analysis 17

1.6 PRELIMINARY CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION 17

1.7 CONCLUSION 18

CHAPTER 2: CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR 19

2.1 INTRODUCTION 19

2.2 MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR 19

2.3 DEFINING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR 20

2.4 CONSUMER DECISIONS 22

2.4.1 Consumer decision-making styles 23

2.4.2 The consumer decision-making process 24

2.4.2.1 Step 1: Need recognition 25

2.4.2.2 Step 2: Search for information 26

2.4.2.3 Step 3: Pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives 27

2.4.2.4 Step 4: Purchase 27

2.4.2.5 Step 5: Consumption 28

2.4.2.6 Step 6: Post-consumption evaluation 28

2.4.2.7 Step 7: Divestment 29

2.4.3 Types of consumer purchasing decisions 30

2.5 INFLUENCES ON THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS 31

2.5.1 Psychological influences 32

2.5.1.1 Motivation 32

2.5.1.2 Perception 33

2.5.1.3 Learning 33

2.5.1.4 Attitude 34

2.5.1.5 Personality 35

2.5.2 External influences 35

2.5.2.1 Family 36

2.5.2.2 Social class 37

2.5.2.3 Culture 38

2.5.2.4 Reference groups 38

2.6 REFERENCE GROUPS AS AN INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIUR 38

2.6.1 Defining reference groups 39

2.6.2 Types of reference groups 41

2.6.2.1 Formality of the reference group 42

2.6.2.2 Importance of the reference group 42

2.6.2.3 Aspiration to the reference group 43

2.6.2.4 Affiliation to the reference group 43

2.6.3 Marketing implications of reference groups 44

2.6.3.1 Understanding information transmission 45

2.6.3.2 Formal reference groups as potential targets 45

2.6.3.3 Homophily consumers as targets 45

2.6.3.4 Targeting the reference group 46

2.6.3.5 Understanding the strength of weak ties 46

2.6.4 The strength of reference group influence on consumer buying behaviour 46

2.7 REFERENCE GROUPS AS BASIS FOR MARKET SEGMENTATION..... 47

2.8 CONCLUSION 48

CHAPTER 3: MARKET SEGMENTATION..... 49

3.1 INTRODUCTION 49

3.2 MARKET SEGMENTATION..... 49

3.3 IMPORTANCE AND CRITERIA FOR SEGMENTING A MARKET 51

3.3.1 Selection of a target market 52

3.3.2 Designing appropriate marketing mix strategies 53

3.3.3 Differentiation 53

3.3.4 Identification of opportunities and threats in a market 54

3.3.5 Effective allocation of resources 54

3.4 CHARACTARISTICS OF PROSPEROUS MARKET SEGMENTS..... 54

3.5 MARKET SEGMENTATION STRATEGIES 56

3.5.1 Undifferentiated mass market segmentation: 57

3.5.2 Differentiated segmentation: 57

3.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MARKET SEGMENTATION PROCESS 58

3.6.1 Market aggregation..... 58

3.6.2 Consumer preference heterogeneity..... 58

3.6.3 Majority fallacy..... 59

3.6.4 Sales-cost trade-off 59

3.6.5 Cannibalisation 59

3.7 BASES FOR MARKET SEGMENTATION 59

3.7.1 Demographic segmentation 61

3.7.1.1 Age 62
3.7.1.2 Gender 62
3.7.1.3 Income, education and occupation 63
3.7.1.4 Life stages 64
3.7.2 Behaviouristic segmentation 64
3.7.2.1 Purchase occasion 65
3.7.2.2 Benefits sought 65
3.7.2.3 User status 65
3.7.2.4 Loyalty status 65
3.7.2.5 Buyer readiness stage 66
3.7.2.6 Attitude towards the product 66
3.7.3 Geographic segmentation 66
3.7.4 Psychographic segmentation 67
3.7.4.1 Social class 67
3.7.4.2 Personality 67
3.7.4.3 Lifestyle 68
3.8 CONSUMER LIFESTYLE 68
3.8.1 Towards a definition of lifestyle 69
3.8.2 Characteristics of lifestyle 71
3.8.3 Emerging lifestyle groups 71
3.8.4 The AIO-approach 73
3.9 SINGLETONS 77
3.9.1 The significance of the Singleton segment 77

3.9.2 Towards a definition of Singletons 79
3.9.3 Sub-segments of Singletons 80
3.9.3.1 Suddenly Singletons 81
3.9.3.2 Solus Singletons 81
3.9.3.3 Struggling Singletons 82
3.9.3.4 Starting out Singletons 82
3.9.3.5 Freemales 82
3.9.3.6 Male Singletons 82
3.9.3.7 Regretful loners 82
3.9.4 Consumption orientation of Singletons 83
3.9.4.1 Variety-seeking propensity 84
3.9.4.2 Risk aversion 84
3.9.4.3 Brand consciousness 84
3.9.4.4 Price consciousness 84
3.9.4.5 Impulsivity 85
3.9.4.6 Convenience seeking 85
3.9.5 Singletons in the South African market 85
3.10 CONCLUSION 86
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 87
4.1 INTRODUCTION. 87
4.2 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS 87
4.2.1 Step 1: Identify the research problem and objectives 88
4.2.1.1 Primary objective 88

4.2.1.2 Secondary objectives 88
4.2.2 Step 2: Determine the research design 89
4.2.2.1 Causal research 90
4.2.2.2 Exploratory research 90
4.2.2.3 Descriptive research 91
4.2.3 Step 3: Design the data collection method 94
4.2.3.1 Secondary data sources 94
4.2.3.2 Primary data sources 95
4.2.3.3 Data collection method used in this study 98
4.2.3.4 Research instrument 98
4.2.3.5 Types of response formats 100
4.2.3.6 Measurement scales used in questionnaire 101
4.2.3.7 Linking the objectives with the questionnaire 108
4.2.3.8 Pilot study of the questionnaire used for this study 109
4.2.4 Step 4: Design the sample and collect data 109
4.2.4.1 Sample design 109
4.2.4.2 Phase 1: Define the target population 110
4.2.4.3 Phase 2: Identify the sample frame 111
4.2.4.4 Phase 3: Select a sampling procedure 111
4.2.4.5 Phase 4: Determine the sample size 115
4.2.4.6 Phase 5: Select the sample elements 116
4.2.4.7 Collection of data 117
4.2.5 Step 5: Analyse and interpret the data 118

4.2.5.1 Reliability 119

4.2.5.2 Validity 121

4.2.5.3 Methods and statistical techniques 122

4.2.5.4 Statistical analysis applied in this study 123

4.2.6 Step 6: Prepare the research report 126

4.3 CONCLUSION 126

CHAPTER 5: REPORTING OF RESULTS 127

5.1 INTRODUCTION 127

5.2 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION A OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: SCREENING QUESTIONS 127

5.3 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION B OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: REFERENCE GROUPS 127

5.3.1 Reliability of section B 127

5.3.2 Validity of section B 128

5.3.3 The effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of respondents 129

5.4 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION C OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: LIFESTYLE 130

5.4.1 Reliability of section C 131

5.4.2 Validity of section C 131

5.4.2.1 Fashion consciousness 132

5.4.2.2 Cost consciousness 132

5.4.2.3 Health consciousness 132

5.4.2.4 Recreation 132

5.4.2.5 E-shopping 133

5.4.2.6 Career orientation 133

5.4.3 Lifestyle dimensions 133

5.5 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION D OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION 135

5.5.1 Demographic profiles of respondents 135

5.6 THE UNDERLINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VARIOUS LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS 137

5.7 THE UNDERLINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF REFERENCE GROUPS INFLUENCE AND THE LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS OF SINGLETONS 139

5.8 THE DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION OF REFERENCE GROUP INFLUENCE AND THE LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS OF SINGLETONS WITH REGARDS TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES 141

5.8.1 Demographic differences: Age 141

5.8.2 Demographic differences: Monthly income 145

5.8.3 Demographic differences: Highest level of education 149

5.8.4 Demographic differences: Gender 154

5.9 CONCLUSION 155

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS 156

6.1 INTRODUCTION 156

6.2 OVERVIEW 156

6.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES 157

6.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION 159

6.4.1 Secondary research objective 1 159

6.4.2 Secondary research objective 2 159

6.4.3 Secondary research objective 3 160

6.4.4 Secondary research objective 4 161

6.4.5 Secondary research objective 5 162

6.4.6 Secondary research objective 6 162

6.4.7 Secondary research objective 7 163

6.4.8 Secondary research objective 8 164

6.4.9 Secondary research objective 9 165

6.4.10 Secondary research objective 10 166

6.4.11 Secondary research objective 11 167

6.4.12 Secondary research objective 12 167

6.5 LINKING ALL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES. QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE, MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 171

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 174

6.6.1 Limitations of the literature review 174

6.6.2 Limitations of the empirical study 174

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 175

6.8 CONCLUSION 176

BIBLIOGRAPHY 177

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE 190

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INVITATION 196

APPENDIX C: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS 198

APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR 199

APPENDIX E: LETTER FROM TECHNICAL EDITOR 200

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1: Sample sizes for marketing research studies 13

Table 1-2: Sampling plan for the study 14

Table 2-1: Towards a definition of consumer behaviour 20

Table 2-2: Towards a definition of reference groups 40

Table 3-1: Towards a definition of market segmentation 50

Table 3-2: Marketing mix components 53

Table 3-3: Towards a definition of lifestyle 70

Table 3-4: Lifestyle dimensions 74

Table 3-5: Appellations of the term Singleton as used in the literature 79

Table 3-6: Towards a definition of Singleton 79

Table 4-1: Uses and methods of the research designs 93

Table 4-2: Comparing qualitative and quantitative research 96

Table 4-3: The advantages and disadvantages of secondary and primary data sources 97

Table 4-4: Measurement of reference group influence (SUSCEP-scale) 105

Table 4-5: Measuring of lifestyle 106

Table 4-6: Measuring demographics 108

Table 4-7: Relationship between objectives and questionnaire 108

Table 4-8: Summary of the target population 111

Table 4-9: Summary of the sample plan for this study 117

Table 5-1: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for section B of the questionnaire 128

Table 5-2: KMO measure value indicator 129

Table 5-3: Mean and standard deviation of reference groups 130

Table 5-4: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for section C of the questionnaire 131

Table 5-5: Mean and standard deviation of the lifestyle dimensions..... 134

Table 5-6: Demographic profile of respondents..... 136

Table 5-7: Pearson correlation coefficients between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons 137

Table 5-8: Pearson correlation coefficients between reference groups and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons..... 140

Table 5-9: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference groups influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to the different age cohorts 142

Table 5-10: Cohen's effect sizes of difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their monthly income..... 146

Table 5-11: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their level of education 150

Table 5-12: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their gender..... 154

Table 6-1: Summary of the links between the research objectives, literature review and empirical study 158

Table 6-2: Conclusions to secondary objective 1 159

Table 6-3: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 2 159

Table 6-4: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 3 160

Table 6-5: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 4 161

Table 6-6: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 5 162

Table 6-7: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 6 163

Table 6-8: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 7 164

Table 6-9: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 8 164

Table 6-10: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 9 165

Table 6-11: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 10 166

Table 6-12: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 11 167

Table 6-13: Conclusions for secondary objective 12 168

Table 6-14: Links between research objectives, questions, main findings, conclusions and recommendations 172

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: The model of consumer behaviour 22

Figure 2-2: The consumer decision-making process model 25

Figure 2-3: Factors influencing the consumer decision-making process 31

Figure 2-4: The perceptual process 33

Figure 2-5: Types of reference group 42

Figure 2-6: Factors used to describe a reference group 44

Figure 3-1: The three-level market model 49

Figure 3-2: The importance of market segmentation 52

Figure 3-3: Characteristics of an ideal market segment 55

Figure 3-4: Market segmentation strategies 57

Figure 3-5: Bases for market segmentation 60

Figure 3-6: Observable and unobservable variables of segmentation bases 61

Figure 3-7: Understanding the influence of consumer lifestyle on marketing efforts 69

Figure 3-8: Global Households by family type: 2016-2030 77

Figure 3-9: The goals and aspirations of Singletons 78

Figure 3-10: The identified sub-segments of Singletons 81

Figure 3-11: Factors to consider when studying consumption orientation of consumers 83

Figure 4-1: The marketing research process 88

Figure 4-2: The relationship between a marketing research problem and research design 92

Figure 4-3: Different types of secondary data sources 95

Figure 4-4: Primary data collection techniques 97

Figure 4-5: Steps in designing an effective questionnaire 99

Figure 4-6: Sample design framework 110

Figure 4-7: Sampling procedure 112

Figure 4-8: The relationship between reliability and validity 119

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the study by discussing the newly identified Singletons consumer segment and related salient factors, namely consumer buying behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation. The chapter continues by presenting the problem statement of the study, after which the primary and secondary objectives of the study are stated. Following these, the research methodology selected to reach these objectives is presented. The chapter concludes with a brief description of each chapter of the study and explains how the chapters fit together as a coherent whole.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

An overview of the study is provided below in order to highlight the importance of the key terms and concepts used in the study.

1.2.1 Singletons

The number of single-person households is increasing all over the world (Quintos, 2019). For example, a 2011 census found that there were over seven million single-person households in England and Wales, with a projected growth of 70% by the year 2026 (Cardona, 2013; Euromonitor International, 2008). According to Flynn (2017), the 2014 census conducted in the United States of America (USA) showed that single people who are eighteen years of age and older represent 50% of the country's adult population. South Africa has been identified as one of nine countries that experienced a 20% growth in single-person households over a six-year period (Euromonitor International, 2008). Higher divorce rates, the increase of work opportunities for women in the workplace and the breakdown of traditional households lead to an increased number of people choosing to live a single life (Flynn, 2017). With the ever-increasing number of single-person households around the world, businesses should conduct further research into this market segment in order to ensure that they understand and effectively cater to the needs of this growing segment.

The growing number of single-person households around the world has, therefore, led to the identification of a new segment of consumers (Quintos, 2019). Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:23) describe this newly identified segment by using different appellations, including *singletons*, *singles*, *bachelors*, *bachelorettes*, or s*olos*. For the purpose of this study, all the above terminologies will be referred to collectively as *Singletons*. Singletons can be defined as those

consumers who are solitary with constraint because of divorce or bereavement, or those who choose *singlism* - they do not find the coupled life appealing and have no desire to be coupled up and hence choose to live alone (Bouhlel *et al.,* 2011:26). Sweeney (2015) is of the opinion that people are exchanging relationships for education and for the furthering of their careers; to work on their self-development; and to become more financially flexible.

Singletons are perceived as having greater purchasing power and a high disposable income due to their lack of dependents (Mascolo, 2017). The absence of such restraints allows them to spend more money on non-essential items and luxury products. Research indicates that Singletons spend a greater share of their disposable income on clothing, shoes, alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, which is in stark contrast with family households that tend to spend more of their disposable income on essential housekeeping items and services such as insurance and medical aid (Schultz, 2010).

Singletons have a unique lifestyle and the reason for choosing a particular lifestyle differs from person to person. Due to their lack of family constraints and their limited responsibilities, Singletons are able to participate in a large variety of activities. Flynn (2017) and Mascolo (2017) assert that 51% of Singletons are more willing and able to try new things and are less price-sensitive. Cheap travel, technological advancements and the availability of an assortment of entertainment options offer Singletons more carefree fun, resulting in a lower incentive for them to settle down and take on familial responsibilities (Hundal, 2005).

According to Cardona (2013), single consumers are present in different age groups, each with different needs and preferences, in different stages of their respective lifestyles, income levels and consumer profiles. Thus, it is important for marketers to bear in mind that Singletons are not demographically identical, but constitute a market segment comprised of single consumers with varying traits and buying behaviours. Manickam and Sriram (2013:3) and Quintos (2019) explain that a more profound understanding of Singletons' buying behaviour will enable marketers to satisfy the needs and wants of this particular market segment more effectively and efficiently.

1.2.2 Consumer buying behaviour

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:4) define consumer buying behaviour as the study of individual consumers, groups or businesses whilst searching, purchasing, using and disposing of products to satisfy their various needs. The study of consumer behaviour enables marketers to gain greater insight into the preferences of different consumers. Furthermore, it provides answers to questions like who, what, when, why and how (Lake, 2009:10). It is important for

a business to understand the various needs and wants of their consumers and identified market segments as this will enable them to cater to the needs of their consumers efficiently, and will allow them to meet consumer expectations effectively (Cant, 2010:38; Manickam & Sriram, 2013:3). Lamb *et al.* (2010:75) add that investigating consumer behaviour will assist marketers to predict the behaviour of their respective consumers in various circumstances and enable them to influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

The behaviour of consumers affect their decision when purchasing a product or a service (Lake, 2009:11). The purchasing decisions of consumers are, furthermore, influenced by internal and external factors. Lamb *et al.* (2010:86) explain that internal factors include motivation, perception, learning ability, attitude, personality and lifestyle. Family, culture, social class, opinion leaders and reference groups are viewed as the external factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Reference groups as an external factor that affects consumer behaviour was investigated in this study and, as such, are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent section.

1.2.3 Reference group

In 1902, Cooley (cited in Dawson *et al.,* 2001:4) conducted a study on the standards formed by significant others and how people use these standards as a basis to form their comparisons and self-appraisals. The author concluded that the appearance of individuals is influenced based on the thought of how others perceive them. The following year, DuBois (cited in Dawson *et al.*, 2001:2) found that the behaviours, attitudes and norms of other individuals or groups have a bearing on how one defines or feel about oneself. These findings contributed towards coining a new concept in consumer behaviour, namely the influence of *reference groups*. Lessig and Park (1978) describe a reference group as "an actual or imaginary institution, individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations or behaviour". More recently, a reference group has been defined as any person or group that serves as a point of comparison for an individual in forming either general or specific values, attitudes or acting as a specific guide for behaviour (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:105; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:16).

Reference groups, from a marketing perspective, are those frames of references that consumers use when making their purchasing decisions (Lin *et al*., 2009:31). According to Joubert (2013:26), the degree to which a consumer is involved with a reference group influences the extent to which the reference group affects the consumer's buying behaviour. Furthermore, Joubert (2013:27) states that when a consumer considers buying a non-essential item or a luxury product, the influence of the reference group is much higher

compared to the influence needed when making the purchasing decisions of essential products. The buying behaviour of a consumer is measured in comparison with other members who belong to the same reference group. The consumer, therefore, draws on the value system of the reference group and uses it as a guide when making their purchasing decisions (Parumasur & Lombard, 2014:106-107).

Hyman (cited by Schulz, 2015:212) claims that reference groups can be classified as either normative or comparative reference groups. Normative reference groups are groups with whom consumers feel they have a strong connection and are the result of direct and constant interaction between the consumer and the normative referent (Lei *et al.,* 2017:1915). Lake (2009:168) concurs that normative referents comprises mainly the individual's family, co-workers, friends and peers. Consumers perceive these referents to be more reliable and influential because of the significant role they play in the consumer's life (Lin & Chen, 2009:29). Comparative reference groups, in turn, are considered more impersonal as an individual's physical interaction with comparative referents are restrained (Lake, 2009:169). Schulz (2015:214) states that celebrities and sport stars are examples of comparative referents. Consumers sometimes refer to comparative referents as *role models* as the lives they lead create the ideal to which the aspiring consumer strives (Lin & Chen, 2009:29).

Apart from Hyman's normative and comparative classifications of reference groups, Joubert (2013:26) distinguishes four types of reference groups: membership reference groups, formal and informal reference groups, primary and secondary reference groups as well as aspirational reference groups.

Lake (2009:169) explains that once a clear understanding of the different types of reference groups and the influences they exert has been gained, marketers will have a clearer understanding of how to appeal to different consumer segments. Marketers who acknowledge the significant influence inflicted by reference groups on consumer buying behaviour can utilise this information to successfully segment the market. Market segmentation can, therefore, enable marketers to fulfil consumers' specific wants and needs by effectively providing differentiated products or services for each group (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:50).

1.2.4 Market Segmentation

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2013:200), market segmentation refers to the process by which consumers are divided into groups that have similar characteristics and needs. Segmentation allows marketers to develop a customised marketing strategy. Furthermore, it provides marketers with an indication as to what products and goods should be made available

in order to meet the specific needs and wants of their identified consumers (Ratanasawadwat & Jiamthapthaksin, 2017:972).

Cunningham (2018:145) differentiates between four segmentation variables that can be used for segmenting consumer markets, namely geographic, demographic, behavioural and psychographic segmentation variables. Psychographics, in particular, provides marketers with valuable insights into the consumer (Krishan, 2011:285). Sociologist Max Weber and psychoanalyst Alfred Adler originally referred to the concept *lifestyle* to describe psychographics. Lazer (1963) introduced this concept in the marketing field, which became one of the key variables used to segment a market.

Kurtz and Boone (2012:290) assert that psychographic segmentation entails dividing consumers into groups based on similar values and lifestyles. Using psychographic segmentation variables such as lifestyle, social class and personality allows marketers to "get into the mind of the consumer". These variables can enhance the understanding of the consumer's motives when making purchasing decisions. Businesses that understand the lifestyles of their consumers will be more successful in providing consumer-specific products and services (Ratanasawadwat & Jiamthapthaksin, 2017:973).

1.2.5 Lifestyle

Lifestyle, as a key psychographic segmentation variable, is one of the widely used variables to segment a consumer market. Lifestyle is commonly defined as the way consumers live their daily lives and how they spend their time and money (Hur *et al.,* 2010:297; Ratanasawadwat & Jiamthapthaksin, 2017:972). According to Bruwer and Li (2017:1557), lifestyle provides marketers with an overall view of consumers, by investigating their motivations and personal values. Cant (2010:49) states that lifestyle enables marketers to gain a better understanding of how consumers see themselves and how they experience the world.

According to Parumasur and Lombard (2014:66), the lifestyle of an individual has a significant bearing on the products or services they buy and consume. Hoyer *et al.* (2018:391) explain that lifestyle refers to the manifestations or patterns of behaviour that an individual follows to acquire a chosen lifestyle. Furthermore, the authors note that the activities, interests and opinions (AIO's) of the consumer represent these patterns of behaviour most effectively. The values, interests, opinions and activities in which an individual participates provide an indication of the type of lifestyle they aspire to attain (Cant, 2010:49). Joubert (2013:75) propounds that lifestyle influences the buying behaviour of consumers as certain products or services must be purchased in order for the consumer to procure a desired lifestyle.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, it is clear that these aspects are of great significance in the lives of Singletons. These constructs can help to understand the lifestyle of the Singleton segment and what marketers should do to cater to their specific wants and needs. The following section provides the problem statement that addresses the influence of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

An extensive review of the literature revealed that at the time of this study, no previous research could be found that has been conducted on the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons in South Africa.

Singletons represent a newly identified segment of consumers who choose singlism – to live a single lifestyle (Moscolo, 2017). Living in an ever-changing world, it is important for marketers to adjust to a 21st century reality (Ren *et al*., 2016:2). The traditional household of three or more consumers is drastically decreasing as compared to the growth rate of the single-person household (Cardona, 2013). Singletons are therefore an ever-increasing market segment, with the growth of single-households predicted to increase worldwide by 48 million by 2020 (Envision, 2016) therefore making it the fastest growing household group around most parts of the world.

Economic freedom is an expression that best describes the financial situations of Singletons (Mascolo, 2017). Singletons have flexible spending power, as they have more time and money to invest in products and services that facilitate their lifestyle (Henricks, 2014). Singletons have great willingness to spend, if the right product or service is provided. Marketing products and services to Singletons should be focused as Singletons differ in age, gender, nationality, preferences, dislikes and interests (Henricks, 2014). Cunningham, (2018:143) propounds that marketers who use a “one size fits all” approach will be unsuccessful when trying to sell their products. Customised marketing strategies should be devised in order to appeal to the different types of Singletons (Ren *et al.,* 2016:5). Understanding the different products and qualities Singletons need and value will enable marketers to provide more specific and need-fulfilling products to the single consumer (Cunningham, 2018:144). These consumers tend to be quite meticulous and demanding. As with other segments, Singleton’s buying behaviour is influenced by the consumers’ preferences, product requirements, beliefs and lifestyle. According to Armstrong *et al.* (2013:185) marketers use these factors to determine similarities among consumers and their buying behaviour.

According to Solomon (2010:49), consumer buying behaviour is an observational activity conducted to determine how consumers, individuals or groups acquire, consume and dispose of products and services. Through studying consumers, organisations can improve their marketing strategies by obtaining a better understanding of how consumers think, feel, reason and choose when presented with different alternatives (Mykhailyk, 2014:350). Family, friends, celebrities and co-workers influence consumers when proceeding through the decision-making and purchasing processes. Studying the consumer behaviour of Singletons is potentially of great interest to marketers as it influences how a product should be positioned in order to optimise customer consumption (Mykhailyk, 2014:351). There are several factors that influence the decision-making process of a consumer. Psychological (motivation, perception, learning, attitude and personality) and external factors (family, social class, culture and reference groups) help to determine the way in which consumers think and feel about different products and services (Hoyer *et al*., 2018:389).

Reference groups are people who have their own perspectives regarding products and services. Research indicates that consumers frequently base their consumption choices on the influences and perspectives of various reference groups (Schulz, 2015:212). It is important for marketers and organisations to gain insight into the different referents in the consumers' lives and the level of impact that these referents have on Singletons' buying behaviour (Cant, 2010:69). Marketers will benefit from studying the effects of these referents on Singletons, as it provides them with an indication of what products and services the single consumer needs and desires (Sankar, 2016:50).

Lodha and Vyas (2012:147) state that consumer buying behaviour is affected by the lifestyle of consumers. The activities, interests and opinions of a consumer have a significant influence on their various lifestyles and the way in which they interact with the world (Lodha & Vyas, 2012:148). According to Husain and Akhtar (2015:30), conducting a lifestyle analysis is one of the most effective approaches that marketers can use to gain a more profound understanding of the specific requirements that Singletons may have. The desired lifestyle that the consumer would like to live by will become clear once marketers formulate positioning strategies to provide these consumers with the desired products and services in order to complement their desired lifestyles (Husnain & Akhtar, 2015:32). With the number of Singletons rapidly increasing, marketers should invest in greater efforts to address the diverse needs and desires of this segment more effectively (Henricks, 2014). According to Envision (2016), although there is a rise in the number of Singletons, they still feel as if there is a stigma to being alone. Therefore, it is critical for marketers to understand the buying behaviour of Singletons (Quintos, 2019). This, in turn, will enable marketers to provide effective

communication and strategies that will contribute towards delivering appropriate products and services.

This study aims to address a prevalent gap in the current marketing literature by conducting an investigation into how lifestyle and reference groups affect the buying behaviour of Singletons. An analysis of the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons will enable marketers to more cater to the needs and wants of Singletons effectively and efficiently. Identifying and understanding the reference groups to whom Singletons refer when making purchasing decisions will allow marketers to position their products and services aptly. Thus, by identifying the referents and lifestyle choices Singletons consider when making their buying decisions, marketers have the opportunity to reach this segment more effectively by developing fitting marketing strategies and policies. **The reason for undertaking this study was to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.**

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of the study is to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

To attain the primary objective, the following secondary objectives have been formulated:

1. To provide an overview of the literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.
2. To develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singleton market segment and who participated in this study.
3. To determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.
4. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion-consciousness.
5. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of cost-consciousness.
6. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health orientation.
7. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation.

8. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping.

9. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career-orientation.

10. To determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

11. To determine the underlying relationships between the effect that the reference groups have and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

12. To determine the difference in perception of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regard to their demographic differences.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the research methodology that was used to collect and evaluate the data needed for this study. The research design, population and sampling, measurement instrument, data collection, and data analysis are discussed below, demonstrating the procedures that were followed in order to achieve the research objectives.

1.5.1 Literature study

Hair *et al*. (2010:51) define a literature study as a thorough examination of information that is relevant to the research topic. Articles, books, theses and scholarly journals were consulted during this study to structure the literature review. Different electronic databases (mentioned below), were used to acquire existing literature needed for this study.

- EbscoHost: International journals on Academic Search Premier, Business Source, Communication and Mass Media Complete and EconLit.
- Emerald: International journals.
- Internet: Google Scholar.
- ProQuest: International dissertations in full text.
- SACat: National catalogue of books and journals in South Africa.
- ScienceDirect: International journals.

- NEXUS: Databases compiled by the NRF of current and completed research in South Africa

1.5.2 Empirical investigation

The empirical investigation provides insight into how primary data was obtained for this study. The research design, data collection method, sample plan, measurement instrument, pilot study and data analysis are discussed below.

1.5.2.1 Research design

The research design is a master plan or outline that provides guidance when collecting and analysing data (Burns & Bush, 2014:98). Conducting a successful study will be more feasible as the research design helps to detail all the necessities for the study. Zikmund and Babin (2012:50) identify three general types of research designs, namely exploratory, causal and descriptive research.

Exploratory research, as explained by Zikmund *et al*. (2012:55), is used when a basis for further research is needed when novel marketing concepts are being tested. Burns and Bush (2014:101) state that the primary goals of exploratory research are to gain background information, clarify problems and establish research priorities. With exploratory research, the research is highly adjustable and un-structured, and is typically conducted in areas of research that have not yet been studied (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:24).

Causal research aims to determine those aspects that give rise to some event or another (Burns & Bush, 2014:74). According to McDaniel and Gates (2010:77), causal research determines whether the value of one variable will influence the value of another variable. Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:123) state that experiments provide the most convincing indications of causal relations in causal research. Causal research is expensive, complex and time-consuming, thus making it more difficult to conduct (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:108).

Descriptive research has a primary objective to describe a marketing phenomenon (Burns & Bush, 2014:74). Answers to questions such as who, what, where and how are provided when conducting descriptive research (McDaniel & Gates, 2010:49). Hair *et al*. (2010:36) propose that descriptive research attempts to provide a comprehensive and accurate description of characteristics such as attitudes, intentions, preferences, beliefs or opinions.

Businesses can describe a consumer segment by conducting a lifestyle analysis and by determining the extent of influence exerted upon consumers by various reference groups. **The**

empirical research for this study was therefore based on a descriptive research design because the purpose of this study is:

- To describe the demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singleton market segment and who participated in this study.
- To describe the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of various lifestyle dimensions that have an effect on the buying behaviour of these consumers.
- To describe the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.
- To describe the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.
- To describe the underlying relationships between the level of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.
- To describe the differences in perception regarding reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regard to their demographic differences.

1.5.2.2 Data collection method

Cant (2010:48) describes two types of data collection methods, namely primary and secondary data collection. Primary data refers to data that has not yet been collected. A formal marketing investigation must be conducted to collect this type of data (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:71). Qualitative or quantitative research can be used to collect information for a specific purpose (Bradley, 2010:518). Secondary data has been previously collected and pertains to a problem or issue (Hair *et al*., 2010:26). The relevance, timeliness, accuracy and reliability are factors that should be kept in consideration when using secondary data (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:58). Furthermore, Burns and Bush (2014:146) classify data collection into two categories, namely qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative research, as explained by Berndt and Petzer (2011:45), is used to obtain insight into a person's perspective and allows the researcher to gain background information and a clear understanding of a research problem. Wiid and Diggines (2009:89) identify focus groups, observation and interviews as the primary data collection methods most commonly used.

Quantitative research is research that aims to measure and quantify data by generalising the results from the acquired sample to the broader targeted population during data collection (Malhotra, 2010:171). Burns and Bush (2014:146) and Burns *et al*. (2017:143) state that quantitative research is a form of conclusive research, as it usually involves the administration of a structured questionnaire, with predetermined response options.

For the present study, primary data was collected by means of self–administrative questionnaires. Statistical data analysis was used to quantify the data in order to address the study's primary and secondary objectives. Therefore, **quantitative research was conducted in this study**.

1.5.2.3 Developing the sample plan

A population refers to a set of respondents who have the same characteristics, contributing to all the elements that belong to the target group of the study (De Vos *et al*., 2009:202; Henn *et al*., 2009:153). The population used for this study included consumers who form part of the Singleton segment, and who are residing in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The sample was drawn from this population by using an appropriate method of sampling.

Burns *et al*. (2017:241) distinguishes between two types of sampling, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

With probability sampling, each individual of the population has an equal chance of being included into the sample (Steven *et al*., 2012:185). Berndt and Petzer (2011:173) state that probability sampling is based on the notion of random selection and the use of an available sample frame (McDaniels & Gates, 2010:423). Probability sampling techniques include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling (Hair *et al*., 2010:133).

Simple random sampling refers to when the researcher uses random numbers from a table or a random selection procedure to select specific respondents for inclusion in the sample (Burns & Bush, 2014:243; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:429). Systematic sampling entails that researchers use a sample frame and randomly choose the starting point of the first sample member. The subsequent members are chosen according to a pre-selected interval (Malhotra, 2010:377). With stratified sampling, the researcher identifies subpopulations in the sample frame known as "strata" (Burns & Bush, 2014:243). The researcher randomly selects sub-samples from each stratum to participate in the study (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:205). Cluster sampling, in turn, divides the sample frame into smaller clusters that are similar to one another.

After selecting a few clusters, researchers can conduct a census on each cluster (Burns & Bush, 2014:243).

According to Wiid and Diggines (2009:199), non-probability sampling refers to the probability of the element in the population, being selected to participate in the study, as unknown. Non-probability sampling is arbitrary and subjective, as researchers depend on their own judgement (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:175). According to Zikmund and Babin (2012:312) purposive sampling, referral sampling, quota sampling and convenience sampling are all sampling techniques that form part of non-probability sampling.

Purposive sampling allows researchers to identify a respondent for the sample by using their own knowledge or knowledge obtained from others (McDaniel & Gates, 2013:293). With referral sampling, respondents are gathered by referrals from initial respondents. These referrals tend to have the same characteristics, interests and dislikes as the individual who referred them (Struwig & Stead, 2013:121). Quota sampling allows the researcher to identify quota characteristics, and it enables the researcher to categorise the population by relevant properties (Burns & Bush, 2014:255). Convenience sampling takes place when potential respondents are conveniently intercepted whilst visiting high–traffic locations such as shopping malls (Aaker *et al*., 2011:351).

For this study, non–probability, convenience sampling was used.

According to Malhotra (2010:374), sample size is generally described as the number of sample elements included in a study. Burns and Bush (2014:267) add that the accuracy of the sample is determined by the size of the sample. A larger sample will provide the researcher with more accurate information (Burns & Bush, 2017:264).

Malhotra (2010:374) furthermore explains that the nature of a study, as well as previous studies, influence the selected sample size of the study. Table 1-1 provides insight into different sample sizes that can be used for conducting different research studies.

Table 1-1: Sample sizes for marketing research studies

Type of study	Minimum size	Typical range
Problem-identification research	**500**	**1 000 – 2 500**
Problem-solving research	200	300 – 500
Product tests	200	300 – 500
Test-marketing studies	200	300 – 500
TV/radio/print advertising	150	200 – 300

Source: Adapted from Malhotra (2010:375).

For this study, problem-solving research was conducted by using 207 respondents, which ensured the accumulation of accurate data.

Table 1-2 provides a summary of the sample plan implemented in the study.

Table 1-2: Sampling plan for the study

Design elements	Application to empirical study
Population	
Sampling element	Consumers who form part of the singleton segment, residing in Gauteng province, South Africa, in 2018.
Extent	Gauteng province
Time	2018
Sampling method	Non-probability convenience sampling.
Sample size	Researcher interviewed 207 sampling elements.

1.5.2.4 Measurement instrument

Wiid and Diggines (2009:171) define a questionnaire as a list of questions that is designed primarily to obtain data. This data will, in turn, contribute towards accomplishing the primary and secondary objectives of a study. Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:328) define data collection as an act where the information needed for the completion of the study is gathered. Data for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire.

According to Burns and Bush (2014:172), there are four basic types of questionnaires that researchers can use for obtaining data, namely a person-administrated questionnaire, computer-assisted questionnaires, computer-administrated questionnaires, and self–administrated questionnaires. Person–administrated questionnaires are questionnaires where

the questions are read and explained (if necessary) to the respondents by the interviewer. The interviewer is responsible for recording the answers provided by the respondents. When using computer-assisted questionnaires, the questions are presented to the respondents verbally. The interviewer depends on the computer to present him or her with the questions being asked, while providing spaces where the interviewer can fill in the answers provided. A computer–administrated questionnaire enables respondents to complete the questionnaire on the computer itself. The computer is responsible for providing the respondents with the questions and then recording the answers that they indicate. Burns and Bush (2014:178) define self–administrative questionnaires as questionnaires that are completed by the respondents on their own. The respondents do not receive any assistance from agents, humans or computers administrating the interviews. For the purpose of this study, a self–administrated questionnaire was used as the research instrument. This ensured that the respondents did not feel rushed, anxious or pressured when answering questions, which in turn, resulted in more truthful and insightful information being obtained (Burns & Bush, 2014:178). Screening questions were used by trained fieldworkers, which helped to identify respondents who qualified to participate in the study.

The layout of the questionnaire included the purpose of the study, instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, as well as the rights of the respondents concerning the completion of the questionnaire. The four sections (A, B, C and D) containing the various questions and scales followed. These sections comprised of the following:

- **Section A:** This section comprised screening questions that determined whether the respondent qualified to participate in this study. This study is very specific, since it considered only single respondents. Screening questions for this study include:

    1) Are you older than 18?
    2) Are you single?
    3) Do you live alone?

- **Section B**: This section aimed to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons. The Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence (SUSCEP) scale, based on the measures used by Bearden *et al.* (1989), was used to measure the effect that reference groups have on Singletons. The normative influences constitute statements B1 to B8, whereas statements B9 to B12 constitute informational influences. De Marais (2015:10) confirmed the reliability of the SUSCEP scale by determining its Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The normative scale presented a coefficient of 0.09 with the informational scale

coefficient being 0.72. A Likert–type scale was used to measure the responses to the statements where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

- **Section C:** A lifestyle analysis of respondents was conducted through the use of 37 AIO (activities, interests and opinions) statements, as proposed by Plummer (1974). According to Hur *et al.* (2010:296), when conducting a lifestyle analysis, the AIO statements are the most typically used approach. Investigating how consumers conduct their daily lives through work and play can allow researchers to divide consumers with different tendencies and feelings into compatible segments, to ensure that more efficient marketing strategies are developed and implemented (Kucukemiroglu *et al.*, 2006:60). Anantachart (2013:87) states that when using the AIO lifestyle framework developed by Plummer, the reliability of each lifestyle dimension in terms of activities, interests and opinions was 0.85, 0.86 and 0.88 respectively. A seven–point Likert–type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) was used to measure the 37 AIO statements. The following lifestyle dimensions were defined by placing the 37 AIO statements in sub–categories:
    - Fashion-consciousness
    - Cost-consciousness
    - Health orientation
    - Recreation
    - E-shopping
    - Career orientation.
- **Section D**: This section comprised information on the respondents' demographic background. Questions based on the respondents' age, income, marital status, gender, occupation and education were asked. According to Burns and Bush (2014:176), in order to accumulate accurate data from respondents, challenging or delicate questions should be asked towards the end of the questionnaire. This helps to alleviate potential stress and provides respondents with a sense of safety when answering the questions. Closed–ended questions with predetermined answers were used as the format of these demographic questions.

1.5.2.5 Pilot study

In order to complete a pilot study of the questionnaire, the formulated questions should be presented to a small sample size of respondents who are of relevance to the study (Burns & Bush, 2014:229). Upon completion of the questionnaire, any problems concerning the wording, phrases, question flow, directions, length or items identified by respondents should be changed and corrected in order to improve the quality of the questionnaire.

The North-West University's Statistical Consultation services analysed the questionnaire for this study in order to determine whether the questions asked were applicable in terms of achieving the objectives of the study.

A sample of twenty respondents was asked to complete the questionnaire in Gauteng. The test sample consisted of Singletons and enabled the researcher to determine their understanding of and responses to the questions asked.

In order to achieve the primary objective of this study, which is to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons, the data gathered through the completion of the self-administrative questionnaires was analysed.

1.5.2.6 Data analysis

Zikmund *et al*. (2010:462) state that once the data has been collected, it should be captured, analysed and interpreted for the researcher to obtain information applicable to the study. Editing, capturing, coding and the cleaning of the data are of great importance as the study is quantitative of nature. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to calculate the frequencies in sections B and D respectively. Cronbach-Alpha values were calculated to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) determined the validity of the questionnaire as a measuring instrument. The practical significance by means of effected size was determined through the use of d-values of Cohen. The means and standard deviations were calculated. Linear relationships were determined through the use of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients.

1.6 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION FOR THIS STUDY

Chapter 1: Contextualisation of the study

This chapter commences with an introduction to the study. Background to the study, the research problem, primary and secondary objectives and an overview of the research

methodology are presented. The significance and relevance of the study are also noted here. Chapter 1 concludes with a proposed outline of the study.

Chapter 2: Analysing consumer buying behaviour

A theoretical overview of consumer buying behaviour is provided in this chapter. A discussion of the decision-making process and the various influences on the decision-making process is presented. Reference groups, as one of the predominant external influencing factors on the consumer decision-making process, are discussed and analysed.

Chapter 3: Market segmentation

This chapter focuses on a theoretical and contextual discussion of the market segmentation concept with emphasis on the psychographic (lifestyle) segmentation variable. Singletons, as a consumer segment, and their relevance for marketers in South Africa conclude this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

Insight into the research methodology used in this study is provided. The research methodology was based on the marketing research principles. Aspects such as the literature study, empirical investigation, research design, data collection methods, the sample plan, the measurement instrument, and the data analysis methods are addressed.

Chapter 5: Reporting of results

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The main findings are drawn and described in agreement with the objectives of the study.

An overview of the study is provided, along with the conclusions obtained by analysing the results obtained, recommendations for future research, and limitations of the study.

1.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 provides the motivation reasoning for undertaking the present study by considering the research problem, along with the primary objective of the study and secondary objectives set in order to achieve the primary objective. The methodology implemented in this study is referred to.

Chapter 2 will focus on discussing consumer behaviour as a framework for determining the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

CHAPTER 2: CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide theoretical insights into the nature of consumer behaviour. The chapter commences by defining the concept of consumer behaviour and elaborating on what it entails and how it relates to the marketing concept. Consumer decisions along with the consumer decision-making process are explained, followed by a discussion on the influences of the decision-making process. Thereafter, reference groups, as one of the primary influencers of the study, are discussed by elaborating on the different types of reference groups, their marketing implications and the strength of their influence on consumer buying behaviour. The chapter concludes with a description of how reference groups can be used as a basis for market segmentation.

2.2 MARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Kurtz and Boone (2012:7) propound that marketing encompasses a considerable number of activities and ideas which makes the formulation of a single definition for marketing quite challenging. Kotler and Keller (2016:26) offer a concise definition stating that marketing concerns the practice of meeting consumer needs most profitably. Kotler and Keller (2016:26) add that marketing is “the art and science of choosing target markets and recruiting, keeping and growing customers through creating, delivering and communicating superior customer value”. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of marketing, the American Marketing Association (AMA) provides the following definition of marketing: “The activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large” (AMA, 2017).

Marketing from a consumers’ perspective comprises of activities such as advertising and personal selling, but in reality, the process of marketing begins long before products are produced and made available for consumers to purchase and consume (Kurtz & Boone, 2012:7). Furthermore, Kurtz and Boone (2012:7) propound that marketing involves identifying and analysing the needs of consumers to gather information needed in order to design and produce products and services, which will meet consumers’ expectations and satisfy their needs and wants and to create and build relationships with consumers and suppliers.

Kotler and Keller (2016:27) stress that the aim of marketing is to identify and understand consumers by studying their behaviours and getting to know them so well that marketers will be able to develop products and services which will align with their specific needs and desires.

Marketers who understand consumers, the way in which they behave and their wants and needs, will be able to create customised marketing strategies that will effectively appeal to the consumers in their selected target market(s). The study of consumer behaviour is thus regarded as a core component of marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016:27).

2.3 DEFINING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:4) explain that consumers demonstrate certain types of behaviour whilst selecting, securing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services, which they feel, will facilitate their lifestyle. Babin and Harris (2018:4) define consumer behaviour as to how consumers acquire, use and dispose of the offerings presented by organisations. Furthermore, it is stated that consumers cannot only acquire these offerings through direct purchase, but by means of barter, leasing or borrowing as well. Whilst studying consumer behaviour, marketers strive to firstly understand consumer buying behaviour, predict consumer patterns and lastly attempt to influence the purchase decisions made by consumers (Lamb *et al*., 2010:75). Over the years, several authors have provided various definitions for the concept of consumer behaviour. Table 2-1 presents some of the more popular definitions used in marketing literature today.

Table 2-1: Towards a definition of consumer behaviour

Author	Definition
Joubert (2013:2)	"An investigation done into the methods used by individuals, groups and organisations to identify, purchase, asses and discard goods and services in order to satisfy their particular needs and wants."
Hoyer *et al.* (2018:5)	"The totality of consumers' decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, time and ideas by human decision-making units."
Parumasur *et al*. (2014:2)	"A combination of activities and influences that occur before, during and after the purchase itself."

Table 2-1: Towards a definition of consumer behaviour (continued)

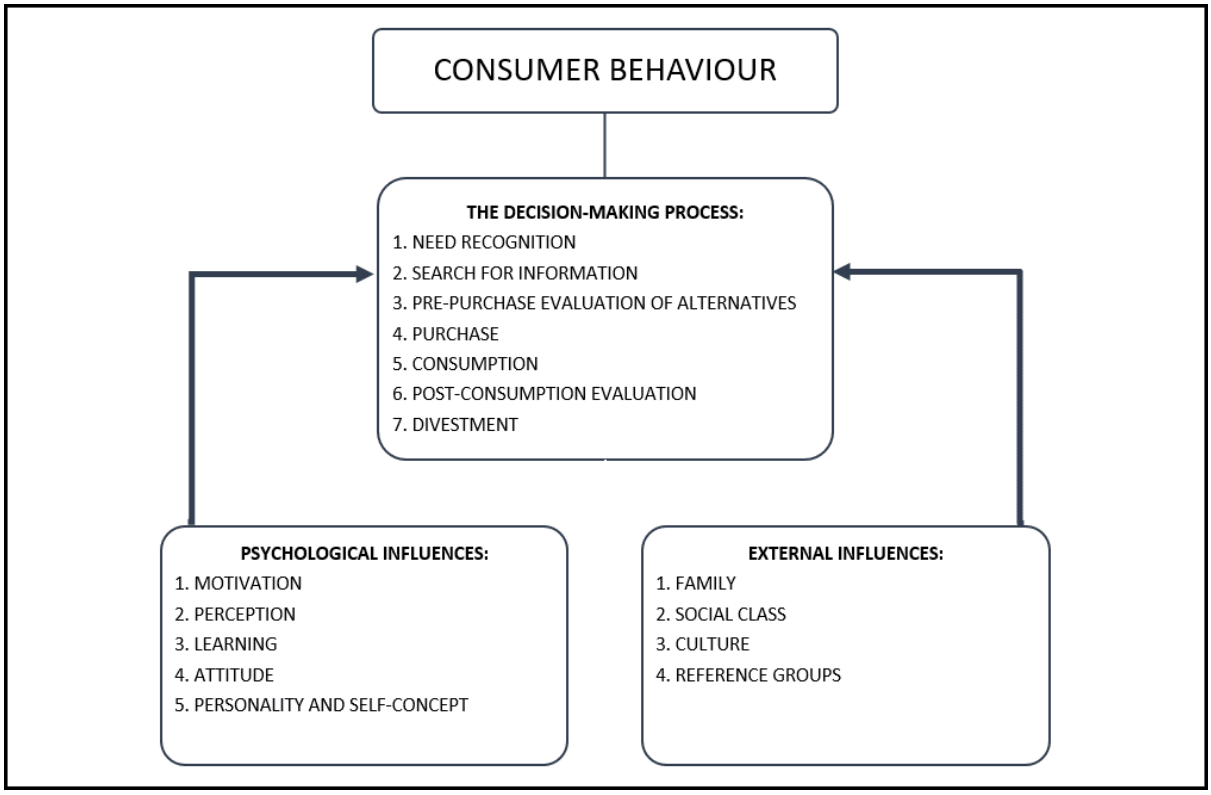
Author	Definition
Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:4)	"The behaviour that consumers display in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. "
Kardes *et al.* (2015:7)	"Consumer activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses that precede, determine or follow these activities."
Babin and Harris (2018:4)	"The set of value-seeking activities that take place as people go about addressing and attempting to address real needs."

By taking into consideration the various definitions of consumer behaviour mentioned in Table 2-1, for the purpose of this study, consumer behaviour is defined as *the activities of searching for, purchasing, consuming and disposing of goods and services that consumers believe will satisfy their unmet needs and desires.*

Noel (2009:12) highlights the fact that organisations should bear in mind that the consumption of goods and services is undertaken by consumers from various age categories, including adults, senior citizens and/or teenagers. It is therefore important that marketers should conduct research on the behaviour of consumers in various different age groups. Once marketers gain a better understanding of the behaviour patterns of consumers in different age categories, they will be able to adjust their marketing strategies to best provide consumers with products and services they want and need (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016:14). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:5) concur, stating that the study of consumer behaviour focuses on providing effective and efficient marketing strategies to assist consumers whilst proceeding through the decision-making process (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016:14; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:5).

According to Al Zoubi and Bataineh (2011:61), the decision-making process concerns the various stages through which consumers proceed when deciding on how to spend their effort, time and money on the products and services they wish to purchase. Marketers should not only understand the different decisions made by consumers, but also the factors that influence these purchasing decisions (Parkash, 2017:64). Figure 2-1 depicts a model of consumer behaviour explaining how different factors (both psychological and external in nature) affect the consumer decision-making process.

Figure 2-1: The model of consumer behaviour



Source: Adapted from Kardes *et al*. (2015:234) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:16).

The decisions that consumers make, as well as the psychological and external influences exerted on these decisions, are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent section.

2.4 CONSUMER DECISIONS

In 2016, Joel Hoomans published an article concerning choices made by strategic leaders, stating that on average a person makes 35 000 decisions a day (Hoomans, 2016). It is important for marketers to know how and why consumers choose to make their purchasing decisions whilst considering all the available alternatives. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:406), a decision is made when a consumer selects an option where there are two or more alternatives available. The authors add that a decision can only be made if there are available options to choose from. Cant *et al.* (2010:193) propounds that consumers engage in making decisions, as these decisions will satisfy their perceived needs. According to Lombard *et al.* (2016:262), consumers make decisions in order to alleviate tension that occurs as a result of their unmet needs.

A no-choice situation, also commonly referred to as a *Hobson's choice* (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:406), is defined as a situation in which the consumer does not have alternatives to choose from and thus the situation does not constitute a decision. Furthermore, Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:406) state that a Hobson's choice rarely occurs, and that consumers are more likely to be faced with a decision as they usually have a variety of products and services from which they can choose. Baoku *et al.* (2010:629) add that consumers have different styles of making decisions between available alternatives.

2.4.1 Consumer decision-making styles

According to Parkash (2017:63), decision-making styles entail the approaches, orientation and influences that consumers experience when making their purchase decisions. Zhou *et al.* (2010:46) identify eight decision-making styles used by consumers:

- *Price or value consciousness*: These consumers are more apprehensive about the price paid for a product or a service than they are concerned about the perceived value.
- *Perfectionism or quality consciousness*: Consumers wish to acquire available products or services that are of the highest quality.
- *Impulsiveness and carelessness*: Consumers purchase products or services without considering the price.
- *Confusion due to over-choice*: Consumers struggle to make purchase decisions due to too many alternatives to select from.
- *Brand consciousness*: Consumers choose to purchase products that are prestigious in nature as they believe that a higher price represents a higher quality product.
- *Recreational and hedonistic shopping consciousness:* Consumers use shopping as a form of recreation and considers it to be a fun activity.
- *Novelty and fashion consciousness*: Consumers are focused on purchasing the latest and most distinctive products.
- *Habitual, brand loyal orientation*: Consumers are loyal towards a certain brand or store and choose to re-purchase products from their preferred brand category or store without considering other alternatives.

Understanding the diverse consumer decision-making styles will provide marketers with a more profound understanding of consumer behaviour. Marketers can use this insight to effectively identify segments of consumers who share in the same decision-making styles. Upon identifying the consumer segments, marketers will be able to devise effective marketing campaigns and strategies (Shin, 2010:36). In addition to understanding the diverse range of consumer decision-making styles, it is beneficial for marketers to gain a holistic understanding of the consumer decision-making process, as this will enable them to realise at what point in the process certain decisions are made, and by so doing, place them in a better position to alter or affect these decisions.

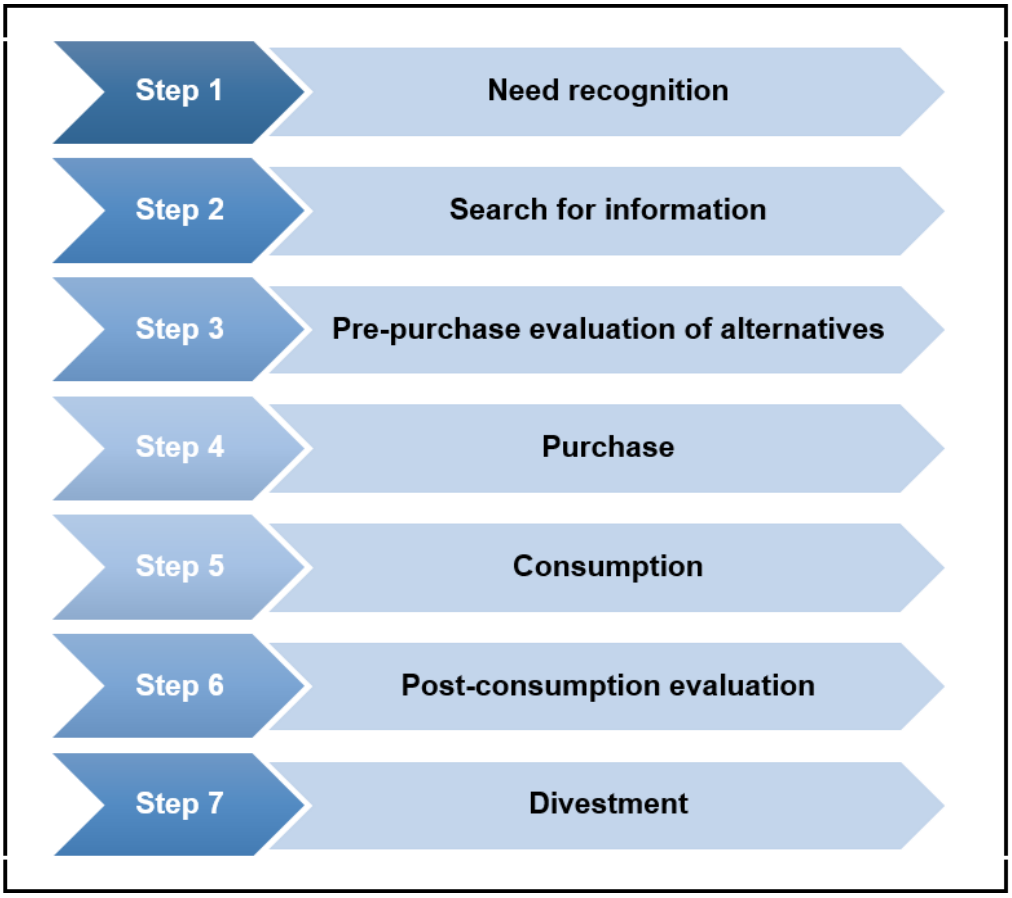
2.4.2 The consumer decision-making process

According to Noel (2009:133), the foremost essential assumption of decision-making is the availability of two or more alternatives. Consumers constantly strive toward satisfying their desires and needs. Consumer decision-making is considered to be a cognitive process, during which consumers identify their specific wants and needs and then implement actions to fulfil these needs (Joubert, 2013:124).

The process of consumer decision-making comprises seven steps including need recognition, search for information, pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives, purchase, consumption, post-consumption evaluation and divestment (Lombard *et al.,* 2014:261). Marketers who study the various steps in the consumer decision-making process are better equipped to understand how consumers make decisions and what their specific preferences are. This will enable marketers to be more persuasive in their marketing strategies, campaigns and product offerings (Noel, 2009:135). Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:325) add that once marketers gain an in-depth understanding of the different steps in the consumer decision-making process, this will provide them with more profound consumer insight enabling them to effectively comprehend the complexity of the different decisions made by consumers; understand why some consumer decisions are more time-consuming and demand more attention than others; and have a clearer view of the risks that some decisions may impose on consumers.

Joubert (2013:126) states that upon understanding these steps, marketers can tailor their marketing strategies, product offerings and communication to best appeal to the consumers and provide them with products and services they most likely seek. The consumer decision-making process model is illustrated in Figure 2-2.

Figure 2-2: The consumer decision-making process model



Source: Adapted from Joubert (2013:126) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:16).

The various steps in the consumer decision-making model are discussed subsequently.

2.4.2.1 Step 1: Need recognition

The decision-making process of a consumer begins with the recognition of unsatisfied needs and desires. A need can be fulfilled by acquiring products or services (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018:84) According to Noel (2009:136), need recognition occurs once the consumer's actual state of affairs does not measure up to their desired state. Consumers who are not satisfied with their desired state will present motivational behaviour in which they will engage in relevant activities to ensure that they reach their desired state.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:414) identified two different styles of need recognition by which consumers can be classified. Consumers who find that their products or services no longer satisfy them recognise that their present state constitutes a problem. This can also be caused by a decrease in the actual state of the current product or service, for example when a

consumer has run out of milk, they recognise their need and replace it with a new full bottle. The desired state represents the second need recognition style identified by Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:414). The desired state occurs when consumers yearn for something new; for example, if a consumer does not own a motor vehicle, but all of his friends do. The consumer's desired state is thus to have a vehicle of his own.

According to Joubert (2013:126), whilst consumers are going through the process of need recognition, they are influenced by several factors such as environmental influences, memory, individual differences and social influences. These factors affect the complexity of the decisions made by consumers.

2.4.2.2 Step 2: Search for information

Upon recognising their needs, consumers will start searching for information on various products and/or services that could possibly satisfy their unmet needs and desires. Lombard *et al.* (2013:270) explain that the process that consumers go through whilst searching for information comprise physical and mental activities. Consumers will collect information about the brands and product alternatives, as well as the nature of the product's price, terms of sales, product availability and quality. Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:342) add that consumers go through this information search process in order to find products or services with specific attributes which they believe will fulfil their unmet needs.

Pride and Ferrell (2010:196) propound that the information-seeking process of consumers can be internal or external. The internal search for information ensues when consumers recollect their past experiences within their memory or draw on genetic tendencies. Consumers who reflect on their memories will shorten the lengthy process of searching for alternatives, as experience and knowledge enable them to recall whether they were satisfied with a certain product or not (Joubert, 2013:128). An external search comprises information collected by means of consulting family, friends or peers – collectively referred to as reference groups (see section 2.5.2.4) (Pride & Ferrell, 2010:196).

According to Joubert (2013:128), there are individual differences and environmental influences that affect the information search process of a consumer including attitudes, personality, consumer resources (time and money), lifestyle, motivation, involvement, knowledge and demographics. External influences include factors such as marketing campaigns, advertising, social and cultural influences, selling strategies and promotions. After collecting sufficient information, consumers will process the information and arrive at a conclusion based on what they have learned (Peter & Donnelley, 2011:50).

2.4.2.3 Step 3: Pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives

Having identified promising solutions to their recognised needs, consumers engage in the third step of the decision-making process during which they will evaluate their alternative solutions. According to Lombard *et al*. (2013:273), consumer evaluation is part of this step and it entails that the consumer measures each alternative's advantages and disadvantages whilst using pre-established evaluation criteria.

Joubert (2013:131) explains that the evaluation criteria of each consumer varies. Consumers all have unique and different needs, which means they have different limits they deem as adequate when searching and selecting the best alternative to fulfil their unmet needs. Furthermore, Joubert (2013:131) states that the particular situation or environment in which these alternatives are evaluated depends on the type of product under consideration. Less time will be spent on evaluating the everyday products (such as bread and milk), whereas more time is devoted to high-value, once-off purchases where product characteristics, specifications and special features will be assessed to determine which alternative is of best fit to the consumer (Lantos, 2011:69).

2.4.2.4 Step 4: Purchase

The fourth step in the decision-making process as proposed by Peter and Donnelly (2011:51) is the actual purchase of the product which has been evaluated by the consumer through means of their pre-determined set of criteria. Consumers purchase these products based on their belief that they will satisfy their unmet needs and desires.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:49) identify trial purchases, repeat purchases and long-term commitment purchases as the three types of purchases that consumers make. Trial purchases are known as the exploratory purchase phase of a consumer. Consumers explore the product or service by purchasing and using it for the first time. The quantity of products or services bought will be trivial at first, since consumers are unsure about the manner in which they will experience the product or service. Promotions are a strategy that can be implemented and are regarded as an encouraging and influencing factor for consumers to try new products on a trial basis. Coupons, free samples and price discounts are a few possibilities that form part of the promotional strategy.

Repeat purchases take place when a new brand is introduced to an established product category. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:429), consumers who experience the new brand as more satisfying than older brands will engage in repeat purchasing behaviour of the

new brands once they have concluded the trial purchase. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:429), a consumer may also make repeat purchases of an existing brand or product category once it has satisfied and met the needs of the consumer. A stable marketplace will be met through repeat purchases as consumers become loyal towards the brand and this ultimately leads to the purchase of products in larger quantities (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:429).

Long-term commitment purchases constitute the last consumer purchase type identified by Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:429). This concept refers to consumers buying larger, more expensive products which are meant to last longer than a year. Trial purchases are not practical in terms of long-term purchases, as these products cannot be obtained in small quantities and are usually purchased after the evaluation process has been completed

2.4.2.5 Step 5: Consumption

Upon purchasing the products or services, consumers now possess these products and decide on when and how they prefer to consume it (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:345). According to Goodwin *et al.* (2008:3), consumption represents the end of all the economic activities and is the step during which the product or service is put to final use by consumers.

2.4.2.6 Step 6: Post-consumption evaluation

Noel (2009:150) states that it is imperative for marketers to remain in touch and involved with consumers even after they have purchased and consumed the products or services. This will enable marketers to receive feedback based on the satisfaction levels that consumers experienced whilst consuming the product or service.

In this step of the consumer decision-making process, consumers evaluate the products or services that they have consumed and determine whether these met their expectations or not. Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:429) propound that the post-consumption evaluations conducted by the consumer could result in one of the following three outcomes: (1) the actual performance of the product or service matches the consumer's expectations; (2) the performance of the product or service exceeds the consumer's expectations; or (3) the performance of the product or service is below the expectations of the consumer. When making purchase decisions in the future, consumers make use of their memory and how they perceived the product or service, making the decision process easier (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:429). Thus, the outcomes compared to the consumer's expectations are of great significance.

Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:345) refer to the terms positive disconfirmation and negative disconfirmation to denote the outcome of post-consumption evaluation. Positive disconfirmation occurs when consumers are pleasantly surprised by the outcome that they have received whilst consuming the product or service. Exceeding the expectations set by the consumer results in the consumer being satisfied with the product. Satisfied consumers return to re-purchase the products that they know will satisfy their needs, which increases the likelihood of spreading positive word-of-mouth. Furthermore, Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:345) explain that negative disconfirmation occurs once consumers have consumed the product or service but their expectations and unmet needs have not been satisfied. Dissatisfaction is directly related to negative disconfirmation. Consumers feel let down by the product or service, making their decision to discard the product and searching for alternatives more likely. Consumers who are dissatisfied may also be proactive in spreading negative word-of-mouth and discourage other consumers to purchase and use the product or service.

According to Peter and Donnelly (2011:10), organisational success is defined by the ability of an organisation to satisfy the needs and desires of consumers most effectively and efficiently, thus implying that the main focus of an organisation should be to satisfy the diverse wants and needs of consumers and thus to gain a competitive advantage

2.4.2.7 Step 7: Divestment

Divestment represents the final step in the consumer decision-making process. Consumers have to decide whether they are going to recycle, reuse (i.e. product packaging) or dispose of the consumed product and how they will go about doing so.

Szimigin and Piacentini (2018:108) explain that consumers seldom think about the ways in which they are going to dispose of a product or service whilst purchasing or consuming it and do not always choose the same method of doing so. Disposing products or services to friends and family or giving it away freely are some of the initial methods opted by consumers (Szimigin & Piacentini, 2018:108). Other methods include donating it to charity, direct disposal, whether it is in general rubbish or by means of recycling, represents yet another method. The last method comprises the consumer exchanging it for another product or service (Szimigin & Piacentini, 2018:109).

2.4.3 Types of consumer purchasing decisions

Prakash (2017:67) affirms that consumers are forced to make various purchasing decisions on a daily basis. The complexity of a consumer's decision varies according to the type of decision being made (Lei *et al*., 2017:193). Prakash (2017:68) identifies four general consumer purchasing decisions:

- *Minor new purchase*: These represent the new purchases a consumer makes; however, the value they represent are insignificant to the consumer.

- *Minor re-purchase*: These purchases represent routine purchases of a product which previously satisfied the needs of the consumer. Thus, the consumer has no desire to look at alternative options, but would rather opt to buy the same product or brand again.

- *Major new purchase*: These purchase decisions are regarded as the most difficult decisions of all, as the product category from which these decisions are made usually comprise more expensive products and require the consumer to spend more time and effort when deciding whether to purchase the product or not. New purchases complicate the decision-making process and lengthens the amount of time spent on it, as consumers may have very little experience with the product or brand when making these decisions, and as such engage in a lengthy search for information (see section 2.4.2.2)

- *Major re-purchase*: Consumers have more confidence when making major re-purchase decisions as they have gained experience and knowledge of the product or brand category due to previous consumption of products or brands of the same or similar nature.

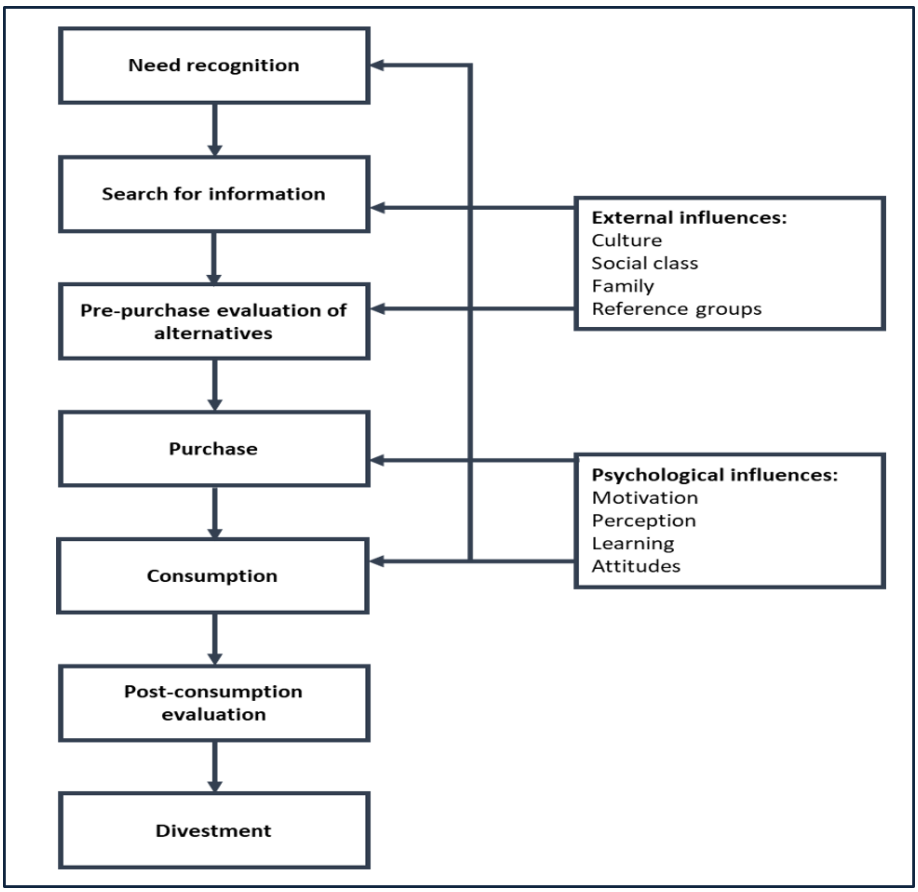
Marketers should understand the types of purchasing decisions that consumers make so that they can develop effective marketing strategies for specific products. The marketing efforts and strategies used for minor new purchases differ from those used for major new purchases. Marketers should identify the influences that a consumer encounters when making their purchasing decisions and develop strategies that will enable them to cater to the diverse needs of their consumers (Prakash, 2017:69).

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Rani (2014:52) confirms that consumer decisions are influenced by numerous factors, specifications and characteristics. Organisations and brands will be able to cater more meritoriously to their consumers and provide them with more effective marketing campaigns, strategies and marketing messages once they have identified the different factors influencing their consumers' decisions. According to Prakash (2017:65), marketers who understand the influences affecting their consumers' decisions will be able to tailor their marketing efforts in order to satisfy the needs of their consumers.

According to Huang and Kieng (2011:535) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:37), the factors influencing the consumer decision-making process can be psychological or external in nature. Psychological influences include motivation, perception, learning, attitude and personality. External influences comprise family, social class, culture and reference groups. Elaboration on these influences will be provided below.

Figure 2-3: Factors influencing the consumer decision-making process



Source: Adapted from Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:16) and Sethna and Blythe (2016:70).

2.5.1 Psychological influences on consumer decision making

Psychological influences are those internal factors that determine a consumer's preferences and which, in turn, affect their purchasing decisions (Parkash, 2017:66). Ramya (2016:77) states that the five most important psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, attitude and personality.

2.5.1.1 Motivation

Joubert (2013:66) defines motivation as a force that determines the behaviour of humans. Stanton (cited in Ramya, 2016:77) concurs that a motive can be defined as "a drive or an urge for which an individual seeks satisfaction". Consumers have a motive to purchase products in order to satisfy their unmet needs. Motivation is the driving force that encourages consumers to purchase specific products and services in order for them to satisfy their needs and desires (Ramya, 2016:78). According to Rani (2014:58), consumers recognise a need, which becomes pressing to the point where it motivates them to take the necessary purchasing actions to satisfy their needs. The buying behaviour of consumers are directly affected by the level of motivation to satisfy their needs (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018:271). Ramya (2016:78) differentiates between two types of needs, namely psychological needs and biogenic needs. Psychological needs comprise esteem, affection, prestige and learning. Biogenic needs are needs that arise from a physiological state of tension including food, water and shelter.

In order to satisfy the various needs of consumers, appropriate goals should be set (Joubert, 2013:67). Goals are the result of motivated consumer behaviour (Lombard *et al*., 2014:183). According to Noel (2009:92), goals can be divided into generic goals, which represent a general product or service category that will fulfil a consumers' need, whereas product-specific goals refer to the goals consumers set in order to acquire a specific product or brand.

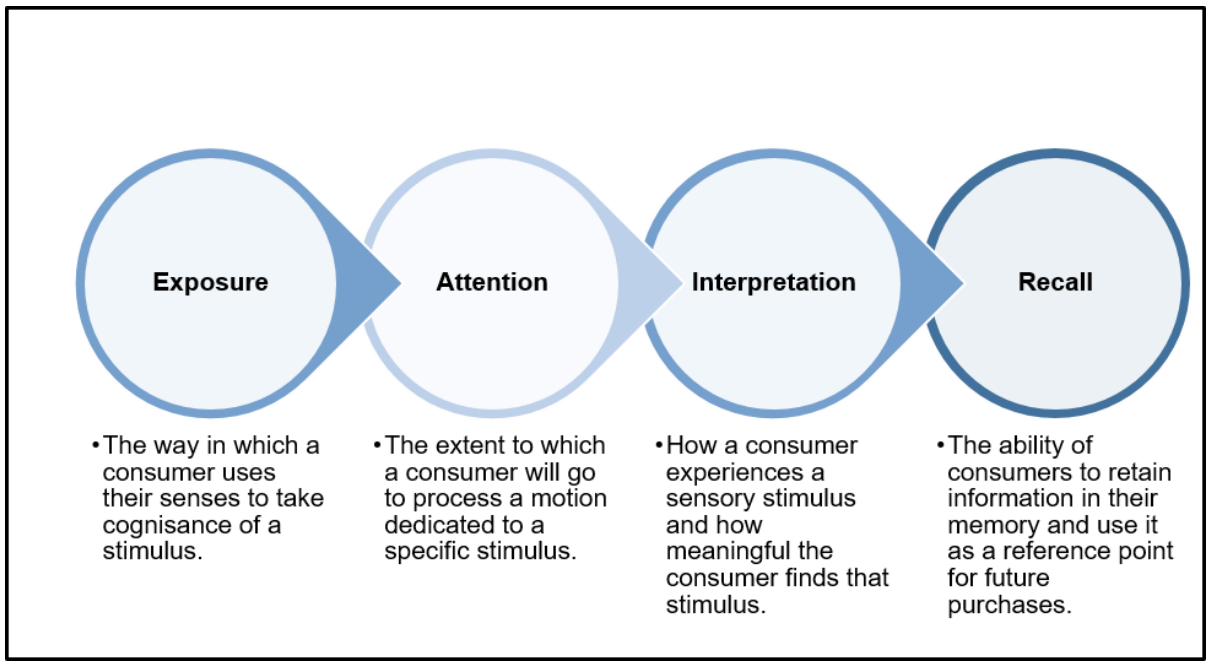
Consumers who present goal-related behaviour, and who are highly motivated to satisfy their needs, will enter a physical state known as involvement (Noel, 2009:93). According to Babin and Harris (2018:96), involvement is synonymous to motivation. Consumers who are more motivated have greater involvement and personal relevance, devoting more time and attention in finding value from a product or service. Noel (2009:93) explains that higher levels of motivation and involvement will lead to consumers being more attentive to advertisements pertaining to their specific needs or desires. Furthermore, he states that the way in which a consumer perceives a product or services will increase the level of motivation and involvement when wanting to fulfil their needs.

2.5.1.2 Perception

According to Babin and Harris (2018:53), perception is the interpretation and awareness regarding reality from a consumer's point of view. Lombard *et al.* (2014:160) define perception as a process during which a consumer is first exposed to a stimulus, after which the consumer's attention is drawn to the stimulus, being interrupted by the consumer using a set criteria eventually resulting in the consumer reacting to the stimulus in a particular manner.

Perception is selective, as it refers to the way in which a consumer filters stimuli (Prakash, 2017:65). Lombard *et al*. (2014:162) add that consumers only take notice of a trivial number of stimuli in their environment, attending to and processing an even smaller number thereof. Consumers tend to see, hear and notice things that are of interest to them, as these represent what they value, who they are and their beliefs (Ramya, 2016:77). Lombard *et al*. (2014:163) identify four stages of the perceptual process, which signifies the process consumers go through when being exposed to a stimulus. Figure 2-4 presents the perceptual process:

Figure 2-4: The perceptual process



Source: Adapted from Lombard *et al*. (2014:163).

2.5.1.3 Learning

Learning is defined by Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:162) as a process during which consumers continually acquire new knowledge by means of different activities and experiences.

Consumers use this knowledge as a source for feedback and a basis for similar behaviour in the future. Rani (2014:59) states that the acquisition of information and experience could lead to consumer changing and/or adapting their behaviour in accordance with what they have learnt. Unsatisfied consumers who have a negative experience with a brand or product will *learn* not to buy that specific product or service again, as it failed to satisfy their specific needs and desires. Satisfied consumers who have a positive experience with a brand or product will *learn* that their needs and desires are met by consuming the specific brand or product, and will, therefore, most likely engage in re-purchase behaviour.

Learning may be *intentional*, in which case consumers will actively search for information about a specific product or brand, or it may be *incidental,* in which case it was not the intention of the consumer to acquire more information concerning a product or brand (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2014:162). Information concerning new products and services is provided to consumers through advertisements, allowing them to learn more about the marketers' offerings.

Consumers develop attitudes towards products or services as they acquire more knowledge by learning about them through means of advertisements, direct interaction with the product and information provided by peers, family and other reference groups (Rani, 2014:59).

2.5.1.4 Attitude

Prakash (2017:66) propounds that a consumers' attitude affects the way an individual acts or judges objects, people and events. Marketers should, therefore, conduct attitude research, as this will enable them to identify how consumers will react to product changes and whether they will accept a product or not. Lombard *et al*. (2014:203) define attitudes as an individual's persistent favourable or unfavourable evaluations, emotions and action tendencies towards some object or idea. According to Joubert (2013:81), consumer attitudes are learned and tend to be consistent.

Consumers form attitudes towards products or services as they acquire more knowledge by learning about them through means of advertisements, direct interaction with the product and information provided by peers, family and others. Attitudes are moderately consistent with the behaviour they reflect, making it a challenge to persuade consumer attitudes as they economise on energy and thought.

According to Lombard *et al.* (2014:204), a consumers' attitude comprises three components known as affect (emotions and feelings) which refers to when consumers deal with certain

emotions and feelings experienced towards a product or service and is measured by the satisfaction of a consumer. Behaviour is the second component, which includes the actions and respect of consumers and how they engage with different products. The cognitive component refers to the beliefs or judgements of the consumers about the apparent benefits of the product. The authors add state that one of these three components will be the dominating influence while consumers are developing an attitude towards a product or service. Joubert (2013:84) explain that once a component changes, this will affect the other components too, as the three components (affect, behaviour and cognitive) are interrelated.

2.5.1.5 Personality

Babin and Harris (2018:112) define personality as the propensities, intentions, thoughts and behaviour exercised by individuals as they adapt to different environments. Personality, as described by Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:100), is the internal psychological characteristics an individual possesses that determine how they respond to their environment. Prakash (2017:66) explains that an individual's personality is a social identity that they create for themselves and it represents the sum of sensory experiences that other people encounter whilst interacting with them. Babin and Harris (2018:112) further propound that individuals have their own unique personalities; personality traits are combined in order to form the personality of an individual; and behaviour is influenced by relatively stable personality traits. However, personality traits cannot predict the behaviour of individuals with precision.

According to Lantos (2011:316), a consumer's personality is comprised of various traits, and every individual's traits are different. A trait refers to any distinctive, relatively permanent way in which individuals vary from each other (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:105). According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:105), personality is related to the consumer's decision-making process, as it indicates how and why consumers choose to purchase or consume a broad category of products, rather than focusing on one brand only. Pride and Ferrell (2010:205) add that marketers aim to design various marketing strategies and advertisements aimed at certain personality types. Marketers should incorporate positive traits such as amiability, individuality or competitiveness in their marketing efforts, as consumers do not react well to advertisements they feel may have a negative impact on their moods.

2.5.2 External influences

According to Peter and Donnely, the consumer decision-making process is directly or indirectly affected by external influences. Marketers have no control over external influences; however, it is important for them to gain a better understanding of the effects thereof on consumers and

their decisions. This will assist marketers to target their selected audiences more effectively and efficiently by devising bespoke marketing strategies (Rani, 2014:54). Rani (2014:53) continues by stating that some of the more profound external influences on the consumer decision-making process include family, social class, culture and reference groups.

2.5.2.1 Family

Family is defined as two or more individuals who are related to each other through blood, matrimony or adoption, and who live together in a single housing unit (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:262). Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:324) define family as two adults who form a unit and take on the responsibility of portraying certain roles. Furthermore, they explain that family can be considered as one of the most important reference groups, as it acts as a source of information, portray the value expressed towards preferred products and brands and acts as a utilitarian influence that in turn shapes consumer buying behaviour.

According to Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:219), one can distinguish between two types of families, namely *nuclear* families and *extended* families. A nuclear family is comprised of a married couple and their children. An extended family is defined as a nuclear family to which additional relatives are added, for example, brothers, sisters, cousins, nieces, aunts, uncles and grandparents. Extended families usually comprise at least two generations of family members. According to Sankar (2016:104), family can be considered as the primary mechanism by which cultural values and behaviour patterns are passed on to the following generation.

According to Ramya (2016:78), a consumer's buying behaviour and the decisions they make are influenced by different members of the family. Each member of the family has different preferences, dislikes, tastes and lifestyle, which are rooted in the family buying behaviour (Mpinganjira, 2013:218; Ramya, 2016:79). Pride and Ferrell (2010:208) explain that family decision-making influences what products will be consumed in order to cater to the needs of all the family members. Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010:208) identify various different roles that family members assume when making purchasing decisions:

- *Initiator*: The member of the family who identifies the need and starts the purchasing process.
- *Information gatherer*: The member of the family who shows interest in the purchase and seeks out more information regarding the purchase.

- *Influencer*: The member of the family who influences the alternatives under consideration, product criteria and the final choice.
- *Decision-maker*: The member of the family who is responsible for making the final decision.
- *Purchaser*: The member of the family who is responsible for the actual purchase of the product.
- *User*: The member of the family who consumes the purchased product.

2.5.2.2 Social class

Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:162) state that social class can be described as a class stratification system in which members of a society who share similar class values, power, interest, behaviour and status are grouped together. Consumers are aware of their society, social class system and their position within this class stratification system (Mpinganjira *& Dos Santos*, 2013:162). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:282) define a social class as a continuum or a range of special positions in which each individual member within a society can be placed.

According to Ramya (2016:79), the social class to which a consumer belongs determines their buying behaviour. Rani (2014:54) identifies three social class tiers that differ in terms of consumer buying behaviour, namely the upper-class tier, middle-class tier and the lower-class tier. The upper-class tier represents consumers who strive to acquire high-class, high-quality brands and products in order to maintain their high status in society. Consumers who form part of the middle-class tier are more careful when purchasing products, as they seek out information about brands prior to purchasing them in order to obtain the best value for their money. Consumers who belong to the lower-class tier purchase products on impulse without focusing on brands, often purchasing “no-name” brands.

It is important for marketers to identify and conduct research on the different social classes as a consumer’s buying behaviour is influenced by their social class (Ramya, 2016:79). By studying the influence of social class on the buying behaviour of consumers, marketers will be able to classify the value and purchasing patterns of consumers who belong to a specific social class (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:166). Upon identifying their targeted consumers and the social class to which they belong, marketers can formulate effective marketing and product strategies, brand images and product mixes that will facilitate and complement the desired lifestyle of their targeted consumers (Lantos, 2011:215).

2.5.2.3 Culture

A consumer's family and the environment in which they find themselves largely determine their culture (Lawan & Zana, 2013:521). Culture can be defined as the set of values and beliefs consumers within a specific social system share (Ramya, 2016:79). According to Babin and Harris (2018:181), culture provides consumers with guidelines on how to act appropriately in everyday situations. Thus, culture can be regarded as one of the main determinants of consumer behaviour (Peter & Donnelly, 2011:43).

Ramya (2016:80) affirms that the consumer decision-making process is considerably influenced by culture. Rani (2014:54) stresses the importance of marketers considering different cultures amongst their targeted audience when devising marketing strategies, brands and marketing campaigns, as it will influence the perceptions, behaviours and expectations of those targeted consumers. Certain cultures experience certain actions offensive, thus marketers should collect sufficient information about cultural factors, which are inherent to the market, so as to provide a suitable product, advertising and marketing offerings (Ramya, 2016:81).

2.5.2.4 Reference groups

Some of the most prominent human needs include a sense of belonging; the desire to feel important to others; and to be accepted by others in society (Lombard *et al*., 2014:106). Consumers base their actions, activities, opinions and decision-making on the influence exerted on them by other individuals, organisations or groups (Lawan & Zana, 2013:158). According to Babin and Harris (2018:158), a reference group can be considered as a group of individuals that a consumer admires and who have a prominent impact on their purchase decisions.

2.6 REFERENCE GROUPS AS AN INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:298) state that consumption does not take place in isolation. This is because consumer buying behaviour is affected by the people he or she knows, whom they surround themselves with and the groups with whom they associate.

Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:298) propound that reference groups enable marketers to understand the various patterns of consumer buying behaviour. The values and beliefs exerted by an individual belonging to a certain reference group provide marketers with insights on how to position their marketing activities in order to appeal to the values and beliefs of in a

specific target market or who form part of a particular reference group (Lombard *et al.,* 2014:110). According to Joubert (2013:27), the values and beliefs associated with a certain reference group determine the behaviour of its members. Sankar (2016:102) state that the effect of reference groups on individuals can be normative or informational in nature. Individuals who purchase or consume certain products or services in order to comply with someone else's expectations are being influenced normatively, whereas the influence of individuals who obtain information from other individuals and then base their purchasing decisions on the information gathered is informational in nature.

Joubert (2013:27) further propounds that reference groups affect consumer behaviour through value-expressiveness. The term *value-expressiveness* refers to the behaviour exerted by a specific reference group that determine the value portrayed by its members, for example, individuals belonging to a health-conscious reference group will only purchase organic vegetables and fruits. Information and experience provided by a reference group influence the buying behaviour of its members by providing information on products and services through first-hand experiences (Lombard *et al*., 2014:110). An individual is more likely to consult a member of a reference group to whom they both belong when seeking purchasing advice (Joubert, 2013:28). Furthermore, Joubert (2013:28) explains that an individual will be more receptive to receiving advice on his or her purchasing decision when it comes from a member of the same reference group, as individuals perceive fellow members as more credible.

Reference groups aid marketers' abilities to develop products, brands and effective communication strategies for consumers by using the information and knowledge gained when studying the particular reference group to whom the consumer belongs (Lombard *et al.,* 2014:106). This section focuses on the importance of reference groups and how marketers can improve their offerings by having a more profound understanding thereof.

2.6.1 Defining reference groups

Consumer behaviour is influenced by various factors on a daily basis both consciously and/or subconsciously (Lombard *et al*., 2014:206). One such factor is that of reference groups. Reference groups infiltrate the social lives of its members, altering their perceived needs and values of products and services, which greatly affect their buying behaviour (Babin & Harris, 2018:158-159).

Over the years, various authors articulated different definitions of the term *reference groups*. Table 2-2 presents some of the more commonly used definitions of reference groups as found in the literature.

Table 2-2: Towards a definition of reference groups

Author	Definition
Lessig and Park (1978)	"An actual or imaginary institution, individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations or behaviour."
Schiffman and Kanuk (2004)	"A reference group is any person or group that serves as a point of comparison for an individual in forming either general or specific values, attitude or a specific guide for behaviour."
Cant (2010)	"Reference groups are one or more people that a consumer uses as a basis for comparison or point of reference in forming responses and performing behaviours."
Joubert (2013)	"People or institutions whose opinions are valued and to whom a person looks for guidance in his or her own behaviour, values and conduct, such as family, friends or celebrities."
Lei et al. (2017)	"Reference groups consist of group members, who share interests and mutual objectives, communicate with each other, share expectations and influence the behaviours, estimations and attitudes of other members and aspiring members of a group."
Babin and Harris (2018)	"Reference groups represent an actual or imaginary institution consisting of an individual or groups, whose presumed values and perspectives exert significant relevance on the behaviour of consumers."
Szmigin and Piacentini (2018)	"Reference groups are those groups that are used by a person as a basis for comparison and guidance when forming their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours."

By taking into consideration all of the definitions of reference groups mentioned in Table 2-2, for the purpose of this study, reference groups are defined as *the individuals or groups with whom the consumer would like to identify with, by using them as a point of comparison when forming their beliefs, attitude and behaviours*.

Reference groups may vary in size, tangibility or intangibility, and individuals may belong to various reference groups simultaneously, but they tend to refer back to one primary reference group in any given situation (Sankar, 2016:101). Consumers could form part of a physical group, or of a virtual group on the Internet on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Spotify and Pinterest. These physical and interpersonal groups are commonly known as reference groups and all have different influences, standards, beliefs and norms that they exert on individuals belonging to them. The following section provides a brief explanation of the different types of reference groups that have an effect on a consumer's buying behaviour.

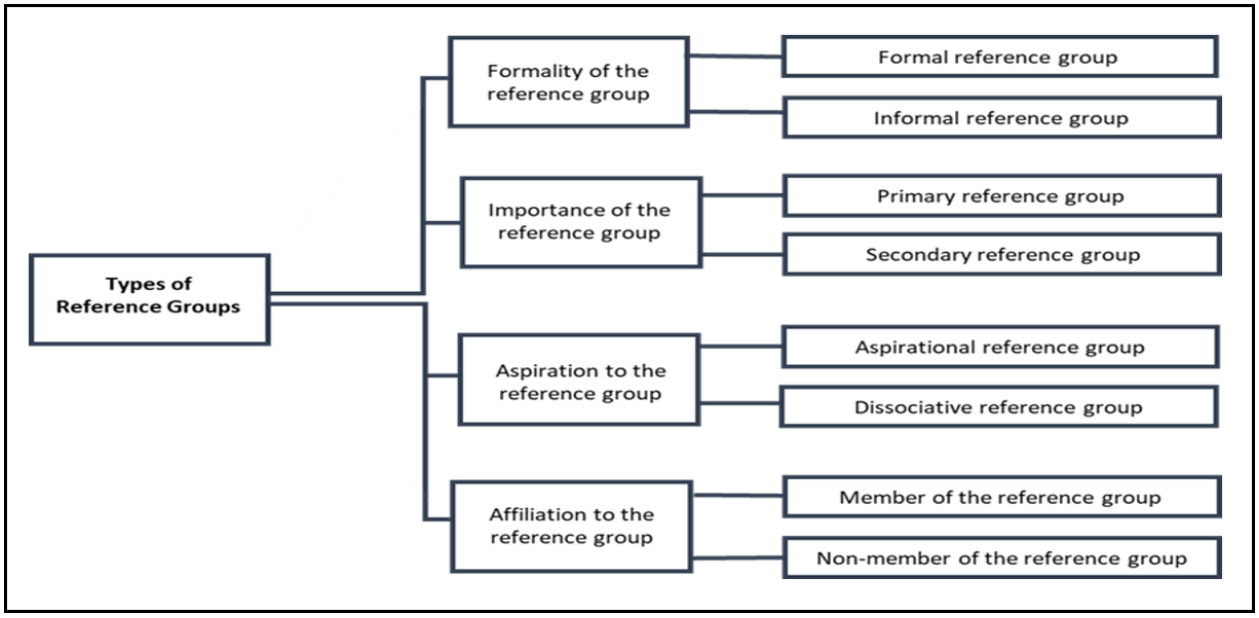
2.6.2 Types of reference groups

Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:298) note that the associations' consumers make or avoid, with various types of reference groups are fundamental to marketing. Reference groups provide consumers with a framework for comparison and guidance when forming their respective buying behaviours (Babin & Harris, 2018:158). A consumer's social identity is formed based on the type of reference group(s) to which he/she belongs (Lei *et al*., 2017:1915).

Peter and Donnelly (2011:45) classify reference groups into primary and secondary reference groups. Family, close friends, peers and co-workers comprise primary reference groups. Individuals have social ties with these referents through frequent and direct interaction (Babin & Harris, 2018:160). Secondary reference groups consist of religious groups, professional associations, sport stars and celebrities (Peter & Donnelly, 2011:45).

Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:298) use membership and the attractiveness of a particular reference group to describe the different dimensions of a reference group. The attractiveness of a reference group is determined by deciding whether a group has a positive or a negative influence on a consumer. Membership refers to the reference groups to whom consumers belong such as contractual or associative and disclaimant groups. Contractual or associative groups refer to groups where there is a degree of proximity through mutual interests or family and friendship ties. Disclaimant groups are the groups to whom a consumer belongs or used to belong but do not wish to be associated with (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018:299). Non-member groups consist of aspirational and avoidance groups. According to Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:300-301) aspirational groups are groups that a consumer admires and aspires to be like, whereas avoidance groups are those groups that a consumer tends to avoid and demonstrate negative feelings toward. Lombard *et al*. (2014:107) use basic descriptors such as formality, importance, aspiration and affiliation to accurately describe different reference groups. Figure 2-5 provides an illustration of the different types of reference groups, after which each is elaborated on in the sections that follow.

Figure 2-5: Types of reference groups



Source: Adapted from Lombard *et al*. (2014:108).

2.6.2.1 Formality of the reference group

Differentiating between formal and informal reference groups determines the level of formality thereof. Formal reference groups represent a group to which an individual becomes a member of (Babin & Harris, 2018:160). Structure, rules and membership affiliations represent the key concepts of a formal reference group (Lombard *et al*., 2014:108). According to Babin and Harris (2018:160), members belonging to a formal reference group are expected to adhere to set rules, values and codes of conduct. Formal reference groups comprise of people whom a consumer works with as well as the clubs and organisations to which they belong (Lombard *et al.*, 2014:108). Informal reference groups, consisting of a consumer's family, friends and peers, have no formal values, rules and code of conduct requirements, whilst still maintaining their own distinctive interactions. Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:303) assert that a group of individuals who interact due to some commonality in a mutual interest or through friendship effectively form an informal reference group.

2.6.2.2 Importance of the reference group

Lombard *et al*. (2014:109) explain that the buying behaviour of a consumer is influenced based on how important the consumer perceives the reference group to be. Primary and secondary reference groups can be distinguished in this regard. Primary reference groups are defined by

Babin and Harris (2018:160) as reference groups in which members frequently interact with one another, communicating and interacting face-to-face. Joubert (2013:27) affirms that primary reference groups comprise of a consumer's family, neighbours, friends and colleagues. Strong social ties are formed amongst members of a primary reference group, making it the most influential group that have a bearing on certain behaviours with respect to different brands, products and services (Lombard *et al*., 2014:109). Secondary reference groups include religious and professional groups with whom consumers interact less frequently. The social ties and influence of secondary reference groups concerning products and services are valued less than those of primary reference groups (Babin & Harris, 2018:160).

2.6.2.3 Aspiration to the reference group

Aspirational reference groups are those groups to which consumers do not currently, but would like to belong (Joubert, 2013:26). Babin and Harris (2018:160) state that consumers aspire to belong to aspirational groups as they often appeal to the consumers' ideal self. Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:300) add that consumers aspire to become like someone in the group, as this individual could represent a position, skills or lifestyle that the aspiring consumer wishes to acquire, i.e. that of sport stars and celebrities. Consumers will emulate these individuals by purchasing products and services that they use or promote so as to be more like them (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2018:300).

According to Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:301), dissociative reference groups are groups to which consumers have no desire to belong to and tend to demonstrate negative feelings towards such groups. Consumers do not want to emulate these groups at all and thus have no desire to behave or consume products or services that are consumed by the members in a dissociative reference group. Babin and Harris (2018:161) state that consumers classify dissociative reference groups as an "out-group" as a consumer does not identify with the particular group.

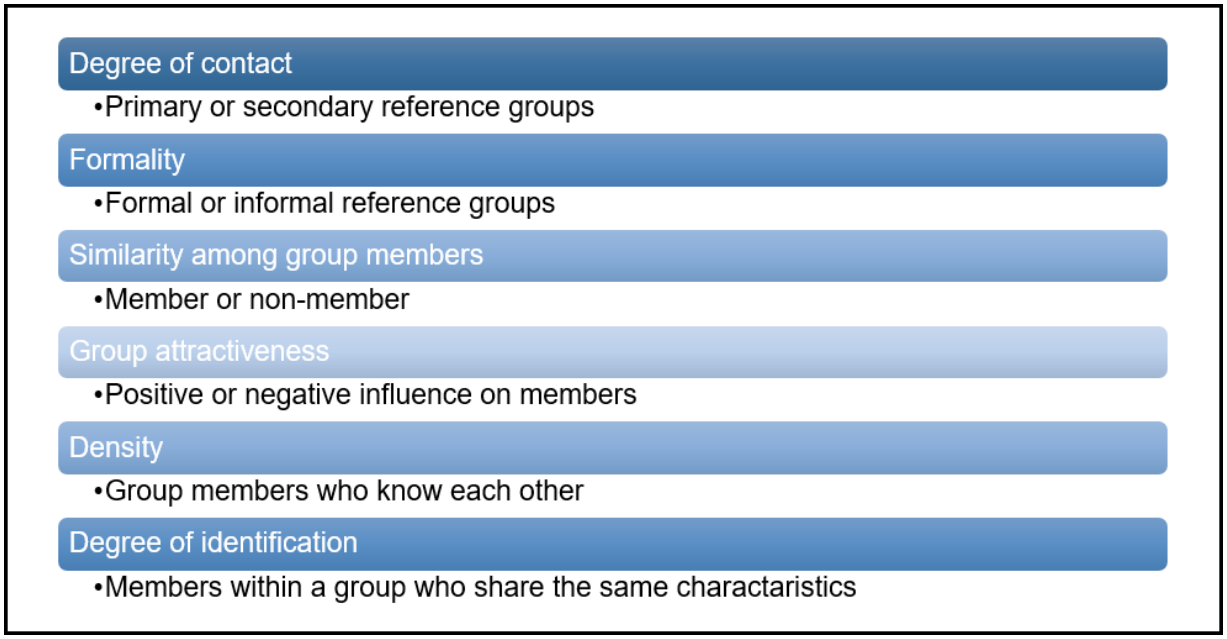
2.6.2.4 Affiliation to the reference group

Lombard *et al*. (2014:109) propound that affiliation or membership has an effect on the buying behaviour of consumers. Membership to a reference group suggests that an individual has qualified to become part of that particular group. Members of certain reference groups have certain behaviours and new members will model their behaviours based on those of the existing members (Lombard *et al*., 2014:109). Non-members, according to Joubert (2013:28),

are consumers who do not belong to a certain group. They do not have membership to a reference group, but yet model their behaviours based on someone belonging to the group.

Schulz (2015:213) explains that whilst consumers interact in social environments they portray certain behaviours in order to attach themselves to specific reference groups and the members within those groups. Consumer buying behaviour is directly affected by reference groups, as they determine what products or brands the consumer purchases (Lei *et al*., 2017:1915). Babin and Harris (2018:306) highlight the importance of marketers understanding the core characteristics and importance of reference groups. Hoyer *et al.* (2018:300) state that reference groups can be described according to the degree of contact, formality, similarity among group members, group attractiveness, density, degree of identification and the strength of the ties connecting members within a reference group. Figure 2-6 portrays the factors used to describe a reference group.

Figure 2-6: Factors used to describe a reference group



Source: Adapted from Hoyer *et al*. (2018:300).

2.6.3 Marketing implications of reference groups

Gaining a more profound understanding of reference groups in the market, and the role they play on affecting consumer behaviour is of great importance to marketers, as it has a direct influence on their segmentation, targeting and positioning efforts and even on the design and

production of their respective products and services. The significance and implication of reference groups and their prominent role in marketing are discussed below.

2.6.3.1 Understanding information transmission

The transmission of information within a reference group is affected by the degree of contact, network density and tie-strength. Quick transmission of information can be accomplished when there is constant interaction between members, who have strong social ties, who share information about obtaining, consuming and disposing of product offerings. Marketers should focus on identifying reference groups with strong social ties and dense networks in order to achieve the optimal spreading of information concerning their products, brands or service offerings.

2.6.3.2 Formal reference groups as potential targets

Hoyer *et al.* (2018:308) propound that formal reference groups (i.e. work colleagues, clubs and organisations) provide marketers with clarity when deciding on their target market(s), marketing campaigns and the products or services being provided to targeted consumers. Marketers focus on certain aspects when providing products, brands or services with the assurance that their marketing efforts will be successful. The characteristics exhibited by members of a formal reference group provides marketers with greater insight required to target a segment effectively and efficiently. Marketers could thus provide custom products and services to the specific segment comprised of formal reference group members, and promote these products to the group using bespoke marketing messages devised according to the segment's unique reference group traits.

2.6.3.3 Homophily consumers as targets

Homophily is defined by Centola (2010:905) as a situation in which people have similar characteristics and are more likely to interact with each other than with people whose characteristics are different from theirs. Homophily is a term not commonly used by many authors and thus only a few reliable sources that accurately describe this term is available. McPherson (2004:270-271) describes this concept as a case in which consumers share similar backgrounds, experiences, social entities and friends. These consumers are more likely to communicate amongst one another, with their viewpoints, assumptions, needs and desires tending to be the same. Considering homophily from a marketing perspective, marketers promote their products, brands or services and sell them to consumers based on previous purchases from members in the same reference group. Homophily helps marketers

to identify common characteristics amongst a specific reference group in a segment, and thus marketers are able to provide unique products and marketing messages that appeal to all the members of such a reference group, due to them having a set of shared characteristics.

2.6.3.4 Targeting the reference group

Marketers make use of various networks (i.e. social media platforms) in order to increase product or brand awareness amongst potential consumers. Hoyer *et al.* (2018:309) state that social networks have a tendency to have a profound influence on members of the same reference group. It is common for reference groups to devise their own social media webpages and/or groups to which members of the reference groups belong, subscribe and interact on a regular basis. By identifying reference groups, marketers would be able to identify their unique use of social media platforms, and could thus promote their products and services on these specific social media pages and groups, and by so doing, effectively targeting members of the same reference group.

2.6.3.5 Understanding the strength of weak ties

Weak ties are not necessarily unworkable, as they provide a platform to spread information across networks and connect members and/or non-members (Hoyer *et al.*, 2018:308). Consumers within one group may not have strong ties with another group, but are still able to spread information across to each other, albeit not forming part of the same reference group. For example, Hoyer *et al.* (2018:308) state that a reference group member may share information that he/she has obtained about products or brands with his/her family or friends with whom he/she shares strong ties, albeit not belonging to the same reference group.

Therefore, if a product or service is marketed to a specific reference group using customised marketing strategies, then the members of the reference group could spread positive word-of-mouth to non-members. Marketers should, therefore, grab every opportunity to ensure the optimal spread of product or brand information and to gather critical information regarding potential consumers and the reference groups to which they belong. This will ensure they provide appropriate and bespoke product and brand offerings to fulfil the pressing needs and desires of the consumers and members within a reference group (Schulz, 2015:213).

2.6.4 The strength of reference group influence on consumer buying behaviour

Considering the influence that reference groups exert on consumers, marketers should take note that reference groups may influence consumers based on the product category, type of product consumed or the preferred brand used. However, it is also possible for a reference

group to have no influence on the consumers whilst purchasing certain products or brands (Sankar, 2016:127). Schulz (2015:212) explains that consumers base their purchasing and consumption decisions on the interests, preferences and values of the certain group to ensure it corresponds with the beliefs and values of the particular reference group. Kotler and Keller (2009:194) note that reference groups influence the buying behaviour of individuals as they create pressure to conform. Marketers who identify and study the different reference groups, as well as the influence they exert on individuals will be able to provide consumers with fitting product and service offerings (Cant, 2010:69; Lake, 2009:169).

Lombard *et al*. (2014:111) identify the following determinates of reference group influence:

- The influence that reference groups have on consumers is the strongest when the product or brand is noticeable to the members belonging to the groups. For example, consumers who form part of a group supporting the Forever New brand, will be more likely to only purchase from their store and make the clothing visible by wearing it around the other group members.

- Reference groups are more influential when consumers are considering buying a luxury product such as designer clothing. Consumers who want to purchase non-essential products find that the influence exerted from reference groups is considerably low.

- Consumers are more likely to conform to the requirements and norms of a reference group when they are completely devoted to the reference group and its members.

- The importance of certain activities within a group, which accounts for the functioning of a reference group, will determine the pressure experienced by a consumer in order to conform to the norms of the group.

Marketers should identify the strength of the ties consumers form with their reference groups, as this will provide them with the knowledge and ability to communicate their product offering effectively to consumers in order to increase product sales.

2.7 REFERENCE GROUPS AS BASIS FOR MARKET SEGMENTATION

The primary objective of an organisation from a marketing perspective is to identify the specific needs and desires of their consumers (Kardes *et al.,* 2015:39). Segmentation enables marketers to divide a large and diverse mass market into smaller segments of consumers who have the same traits, wants, needs, characteristics and behaviours. Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:52) state that sociological (group) variables can be used as a consumer rooted

segmentation base. Reference groups represent a group whose beliefs, attitudes and behaviours align, which in turn contribute towards aligning their consumer purchasing behaviour (Thanyamon, 2012:15). Considering the above, marketers can use reference groups as a base for segmentation as they represent a group (segments) of consumers who all have a need or desire to consume the same type of product or service.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasised the importance of consumer behaviour to marketers by providing insight into how consumers make decisions while encountering various psychological and external influences. The reference groups construct have also been discussed, which provides a clear indication of the importance of identifying the reference groups that influence Singletons, while considering the implications and strengths the offer. The chapter concludes by stating the importance of reference groups and how they can be used as a basis for segmentation. Chapter 3 provides a perusal of the practice of segmentation in marketing and considers various methods of effectively segmenting a market.

CHAPTER 3: MARKET SEGMENTATION

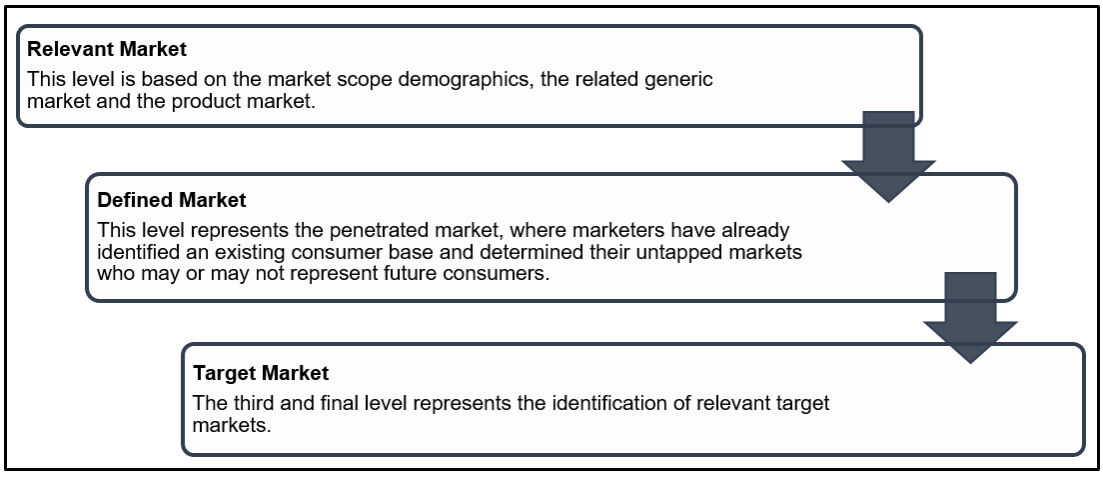
3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide theoretical insights into the concept of market segmentation by providing a comprehensive discussion of market segmentation and by elaborating on the importance and criteria used for successful market segmentation. Furthermore, the various factors that influence market segmentation, as well as the specific bases used for segmenting a market are discussed. The chapter continues by discussing the psychographic variable of market segmentation, with specific reference to the use of consumer lifestyle as basis for segmentation. The Singletons segment, a newly identified global consumer segment, is then introduced after which the significance of the Singletons segment and its various sub-segments are emphasised. The chapter concludes by substantiating why it is important for marketers to conduct further research into this market segment.

3.2 MARKET SEGMENTATION

Jadczakova (2010:16) defines a market as "the aggregation of all products that appear to satisfy the same need". Building on this definition, Kotler and Keller (2016:28) propound that a market represents an assortment of consumers and sellers who transact a certain product or service. Marketers can describe consumer groups by analysing the different markets such as product, geographic, needs, demographics and labour markets (Kotler & Keller, 2016:28). Jadczakova (2010:16) developed a three-level market model as presented in Figure 3-1, that consists of the relevant market, the defined market and the target market.

Figure 3-1: The three-level market model



Source: Jadczakova (2010:16).

Jadczakova (2010:16) states that upon reaching level three of the three-level market model, marketers consider and implement different segmentation bases (see section 3.7) to define the segments that form part of the identified target market.

Bug *et al*. (2015:9) explain that consumers are not homogenous. The diverse behaviours, needs, preferences, dislikes, attitudes and values of consumers should be identified, after which consumers who have similar traits should be grouped accordingly. These groups are more commonly known as *segments* (Bug *et al.,* 2015:9). According to Jadczakova (2010:6), *segmentation* is the process during which consumers are divided into segments in which their shared needs and characteristics are believed to influence their behaviour when introduced to a particular marketing mix. Marketers consider the process of market segmentation as highly significant when identifying their target consumers and devising their marketing mix. Table 3-1 presents a number of definitions that have been devised for the process of market segmentation.

Table 3-1: Towards a definition of market segmentation

Author	Definition
Joubert (2013:97)	"Market segmentation divides the heterogeneous market into fairly homogeneous subsets of customers".
Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:275)	"Market segmentation refers to the process of dividing a market into smaller and distinct groups of customers with similar needs or other characteristics that make them respond in a similar way to marketing efforts".
Lombard *et al*. (2014:54)	"Market segmentation is a process of dividing a market into sub-sets or segments of customers so that the members of each segment share characteristics and are distinct from members of other segments".
Kardes *et al*. (2015:42)	"The process of dividing the large and diverse mass market into subsets of consumers who share common needs, characteristics or behaviours and then targeting one or more of those segments with a marketing mix".
Babin and Harris (2018:36)	"Market segmentation is the separation of a market into groups based on the different demand curves associated with each group".

By considering the key elements of the definitions presented in Table 3-1, the following definition of market segmentation will be used in this study: *Market segmentation is the process in which marketers divide the heterogeneous market into sub-sets of consumers, who share common needs and characteristics and who will respond in a similar way to marketing efforts*.

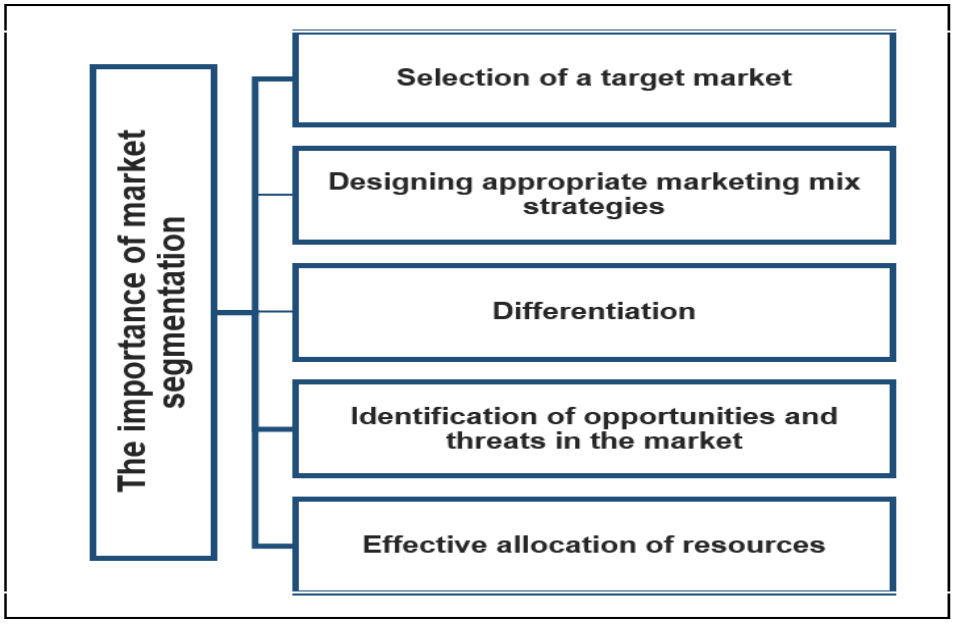
Kardes *et al*. (2015:39) note that an organisation has the potential to effectively match their capabilities and maximise their success and revenue by providing products and services that are tailored for a specific target segment. Organisations are able to profit through the implementation of effective market segmentation practices by focusing their capital, marketing efforts and resources on suitable consumer segments, whilst avoiding unyielding competition and consumers who do not form part of the identified target segments (Kardes *et al.,* 2015:41).

Lombard *et al*. (2014:242) propound that a variety of bases can be used to segment a market, namely usage or behavioural segmentation, demographic segmentation, geographic segmentation, needs/benefits segmentation, market-value-based segmentation, psychological segmentation and/or decision-makers segmentation. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss all the market segmentation bases, and therefore only the four widely-used segmentation bases will be explored, namely behavioural, geographical, demographical and psychological segmentation, the latter which is one of the core constructs of this study (see section 3.7.4).

3.3 IMPORTANCE AND CRITERIA FOR SEGMENTING A MARKET

Bruwer *et al*. (2017:4) assert that market segmentation is considered to be a key aspect of the marketing strategy of an organisation. It provides an organisation with a competitive advantage in the marketplace, because targeting specific segments can lead to superior financial performance (Bruwer *et al.,* 2017:4). An organisation considers the homogenous consumer segments when creating product offerings to specifically cater and satisfy these consumers' needs, desires, preferences and tastes (Bug *et al.,* 2015:10). According to Bug *et al.* (2015:10), consumers and organisations can only survive in a globalised community in which increasing cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of providing consumers with products that align with their unique needs and desires can be achieved by means of market segmentation. Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:276) provide a variety of reasons as to why segmentation is crucial for the survival and success of an organisation. The importance of market segmentation is presented in Figure 3-2 and is discussed subsequently.

Figure 3-2: The importance of market segmentation



Source: Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:276).

3.3.1 Selection of a target market

Market segmentation enables organisations to identify and understand the different traits and behaviours of consumers within a specific market segment. Gaining a more profound understanding of the differences and similarities within each group will aid the organisation to decide which market segments would be most profitable to target – considering the organisation's product and/or service offering – and also allows the organisation to determine which market segments should be avoided (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:276). Jadczakova (2010:24) states that the marketing strategy that an organisation wishes to pursue will determine the type and number of market segments to be selected. Furthermore, Jadczakova (2010:24) explains that organisations may choose to target multiple segments simultaneously, each with its unique marketing strategy, to serve the consumers in that specific segment most effectively and efficiently. Organisations that target multiple market segments must devise tailored marketing mix strategies for each market segment selected, and in so doing, improve their market performance and limit the waste of resources (Jadczakova, 2010:24).

3.3.2 Designing appropriate marketing mix strategies

Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:276) explain that once consumers are grouped into segments according to their similarities, suitable and alluring marketing mixes can be created that satisfy the needs and desires of the targeted consumers. According to Jadczakova (2010:24), various marketing mix components should be considered by marketers, after which the optimal combination should be selected and reflected in the marketing mix strategy in order to maximise the profitability of each identified market segment. Table 3-2 presents the various marketing mix components that should be taken into account when devising each segment's marketing mix strategy.

Table 3-2: Marketing mix components

Product	**Place**
• **New product development** • **Product/service quality, features and use** • **Product lines, packaging and branding** • **Installations, instructions, warranty**	• Channel decision • Shelf policy • Inventory policy • Transportation
Promotion	Price
• **Advertising** • **Sales promotion** • **Publicity** • **Brand names** • **Package design** • **Point of purchase, salespeople** • **Media selection:** – **What media?** – **Reach, frequency and cost**	• Price levels: – Penetration pricing – Skim pricing • Price changes: – Size – Timing – Duration – What products? – Against which competitors?

Source: Adapted from Jadczakova (2010:24).

By considering the array of various marketing mix components listed in Table 3-2, marketers will be able to devise a marketing mix strategy that can satisfy the specific needs and desires of consumers in each identified market segment that will ultimately lead to repeat purchases (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:276).

3.3.3 Differentiation

Kardes *et al*. (2015:42) note that organisations tend to cater for larger consumer segments, and as such, larger markets experience a stronger competitive edge and thus require

improved differentiation of their brands, products, services and marketing strategies. The Business Dictionary (2018) defines differentiation as “the result of efforts to make a product or brand stand out as a provider of unique value to customers in comparison with its competitors.” According to Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:276), in the present increasingly competitive global community, it is important for an organisation to differentiate its product offerings from those of its competitors. Market segmentation provides organisations with the opportunity to offer their consumers' more attractive and unique marketing mixes by making informed choices as to which specific segments to target.

3.3.4 Identification of opportunities and threats in a market

Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:276) propound that whilst implementing the market segmentation process, organisations analyse the wants and needs of consumers, which simultaneously enables organisations to identify untapped gaps in the market. Organisations can thus use the opportunity to develop new product offerings that will meet the wants and needs of consumers. Similarly, threats presented in the market can also be identified.

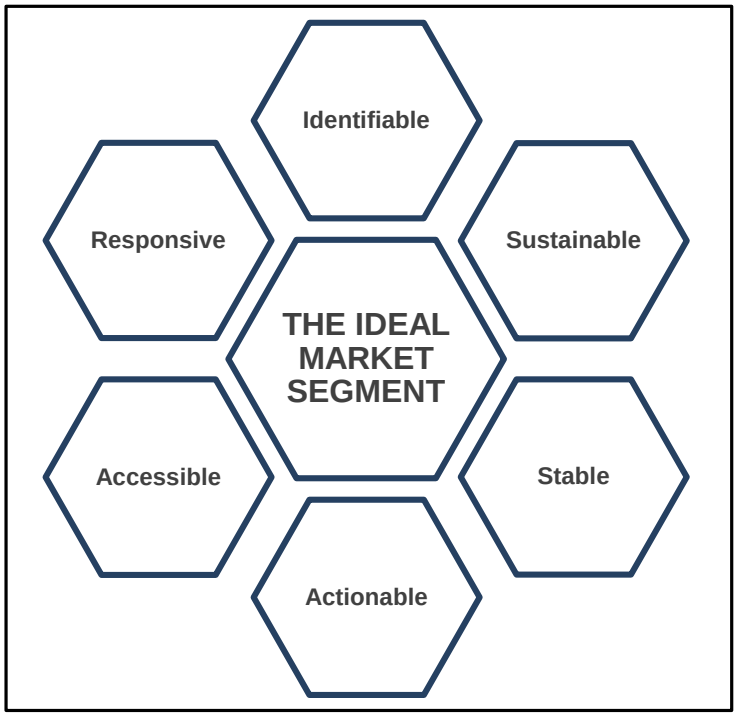
3.3.5 Effective allocation of resources

The market segmentation process helps organisations to identify market segments with optimal profit potential (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:276). The more attractive a segment is perceived to be, the more likely an organisation is to target that segment and focus all their efforts and available resources on providing products or services that will satisfy the needs and desires of consumers in those segments most effectively. The allocation of available resources to prosperous market segments will enable marketers to utilise them meritoriously.

3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF PROSPEROUS MARKET SEGMENTS

Considering the importance of market segmentation, marketers should strive to implement the market segmentation process successfully (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:51). According to Jadczakova (2010:16) as well as Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:51), marketers can provide targeted consumers with an appropriate marketing mix by ensuring that the selected market segment is identifiable, sustainable, stable, actionable, accessible and responsive. The characteristics of an ideal market segment in presented in figure 3-3 and discussed subsequently.

Figure 3-3: Characteristics of an ideal market segment



Source: Adapted from Jadczakova (2010:16) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:51).

- *Identifiable:* Marketers should ensure that their selected market segments are easily identifiable by grouping consumers with similar characteristics, needs and wants together. Jadczakova (2010:16) states that grouping consumers of a segment will be easier if they can be recognised without difficulty. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:51), some characteristics and variables used to define a segment can be identified easily, whilst others may be more challenging to recognise.

- *Sustainable:* Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:51) propound that a segment may be established, but may not be sufficiently large to be deemed profitable. A segment should comprise a substantial number of consumers in order for marketers to be able to estimate the size, buying propensity and spending power of the selected consumers. In addition, the segment size should be large enough for the organisation to earn sufficient profits from serving the segment.

- *Stable:* Jadczakova (2010:16) states that marketers prefer to target consumer segments that are relatively stable over time and present the most potential for growth. The stability of a market segment refers to the preferences of the consumers within a segment that remain the same for a considerable period of time before changing. Schiffman and Kanuk

(2014:51) note that marketers should avoid unpredictable and fickle segments that suggest minimal growth opportunities.

- *Actionable:* In order to present the consumer segment with a distinctive marketing mix strategy effectively, marketers should be able to communicate easily and effectively with the consumer segment with a view to ensure that the strategy is heard and understood without having to face communication barriers (Jadczakova, 2010:16).

- *Accessible:* Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:51) explain that in order for marketers to reach a consumer segment in an economical manner, it should be accessible and easy to reach. Various forms of media such as magazines, journals, the Internet and cellular phone advertisements can be incorporated and used to communicate with a particular consumer segment (Jadczakova, 2010:16). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:52) add that the use of various forms of media allows marketers to customise their promotional messages and product and/or service offering to the preferences of the targeted market segment.

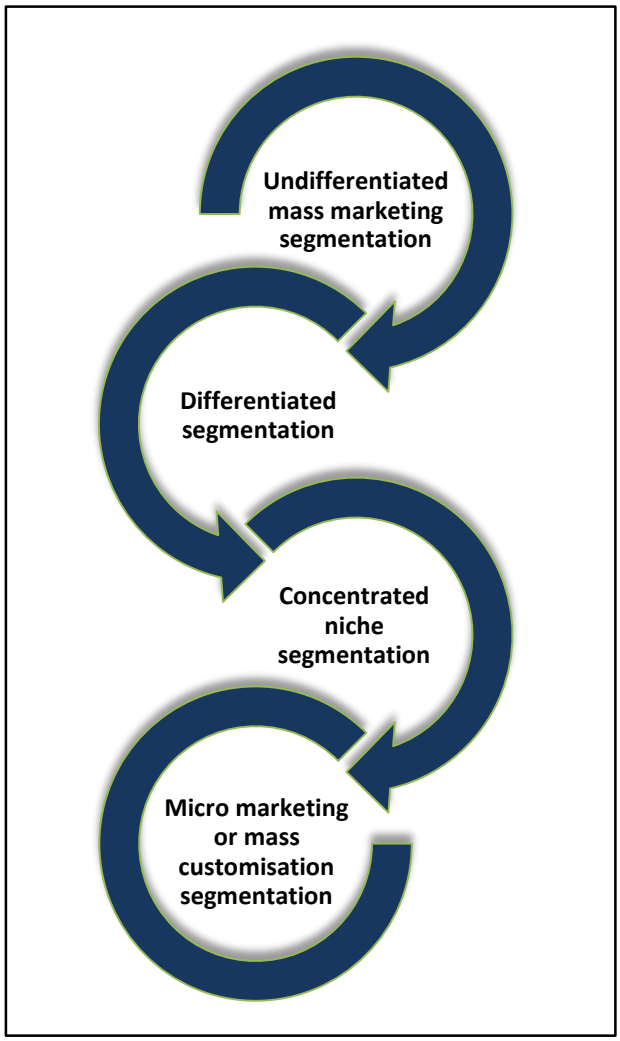
- *Responsive:* Jadczakova (2010:16) explains that the promotional messages and product and/or service offering presented to consumers by the marketing mix should be devised in such a way that the targeted consumer segment directly responds to it. The marketing mix elements should, therefore, be congruent with the specific characteristics, needs and wants of the consumers in the identified market segment.

Marketers should, therefore, ensure that their identified market segments adhere to the proposed criteria listed above so that they select and target segments that will be most prosperous and to which the proposed marketing mix will fit appropriately. A consumer segment that conforms to the proposed criteria will be deemed as a successful segment to target (Joubert, 2013:100). Marketers should also consider the fact that not all market segmentation strategies will be successful, and should thus bear in mind the different factors that could influence the market segmentation process (Kardes *et al*., 2015:44).

3.5 MARKET SEGMENTATION STRATEGIES

According to Kardes *et al*. (2015:44), there are four different market segmentation strategies that an organisation can implement. Figure 3-4 illustrates and elaborates on the various market segmentation strategies that an organisation could implement.

Figure 3-4: Market segmentation strategies



Source: Adapted from Kardes *et al*. (2015:42).

3.5.1 Undifferentiated mass market segmentation:

This type of market segmentation strategy entails that an organisation devises a single marketing mix strategy to serve all the consumers within a given market segment. No customisation of products, services or promotional branding occurs (Kardes *et al.,* 2015:42).

3.5.2 Differentiated segmentation:

Kardes et al. (2015:43) assert that this type of market segmentation strategy entails that an organisation targets several segments and devises a customised marketing mix strategy that appeals to the needs, wants and characteristics of each market segment.

3.5.3 Concentrated niche segmentation:

This type of market segmentation strategy constitutes a unique segment of consumers who wants to acquire specific products or services within a small, specialised market (The Economic Times, 2018). Kardes *et al*. (2015:43) consider this to be a special type of differentiated segmentation strategy. Here, marketers aim to obtain and serve a large section of consumers belonging to a small niche market.

3.5.4 Micromarketing or mass customisation segmentation:

This type of segmentation strategy entails the implementation of marketing mix strategies by organisations on a one-to-one basis with their consumers. Mass customisation represents a specialised form of micromarketing, where consumers from large segments or mass markets can customise the products or services offered by the organisation (Kardes *et al.,* 2015:43).

3.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MARKET SEGMENTATION PROCESS

Kardes *et al*. (2015:42) state that market segmentation is synonymous with a multi-product strategy where products are developed for specific sub-segments identified within a larger market segment. According to Kardes *et al.* (2015:42), various factors influence the market segmentation process, including market aggregation, consumer preference heterogeneity, majority fallacy, sales-cost trade-off and cannibalisation. These factors are discussed in greater detail below.

3.6.1 Market aggregation

The Dictionary of Marketing (2018) defines market aggregation as a form of undifferentiated marketing where marketers implement a one-size-fits-all approach. All consumers are served in the same manner, without taking their differences into account. Market aggregation and market segmentation can be considered as complete opposites.

3.6.2 Consumer preference heterogeneity

Szmigin and Piacentini (2018:324) explain that consumer preference refers to the brands, products or services that a consumer prefers and chooses to consume. Consumers have varying preferences. Kardes *et al*. (2015:44) affirm that the importance and implementation of the market segmentation process will increase as consumer preference heterogeneity increases. Organisations will then focus on the larger, more profitable consumer segments

that have a more prominent preference heterogeneity of a specific product or service, whilst neglecting the smaller, less typical segments.

3.6.3 Majority fallacy

Marketers tend to cater to larger market segments, as they believe that it will be more profitable. Kardes *et al*. (2015:44) refer to this as the "majority fallacy", explaining that although larger market segments may include more potential consumers, smaller market segments could be more profitable. A larger market segment typically experiences more intense competition. Smaller market segments have less competition, and therefore could lead to increased profitability and sales (Kardes *et al*., 2015:44).

3.6.4 Sales-cost trade-off

Kardes *et al*. (2015:44) are of the opinion that an increase in sales is directly related to the ability of organisations to align their product offerings with the specific preferences of consumers within their identified market segments.

3.6.5 Cannibalisation

Cannibalisation occurs when an organisation has too many product offerings that are too similar to each other. The similarities of the products result in them competing against each other and not with other organisations' products in the market (Kardes *et al*., 2015:44). Cannibalisation is the outcome of *over-segmentation*, according to Walters *et al*. (2018:21). Over-segmenting a segment will result in having a segment that is too small to be considered as a separate segment.

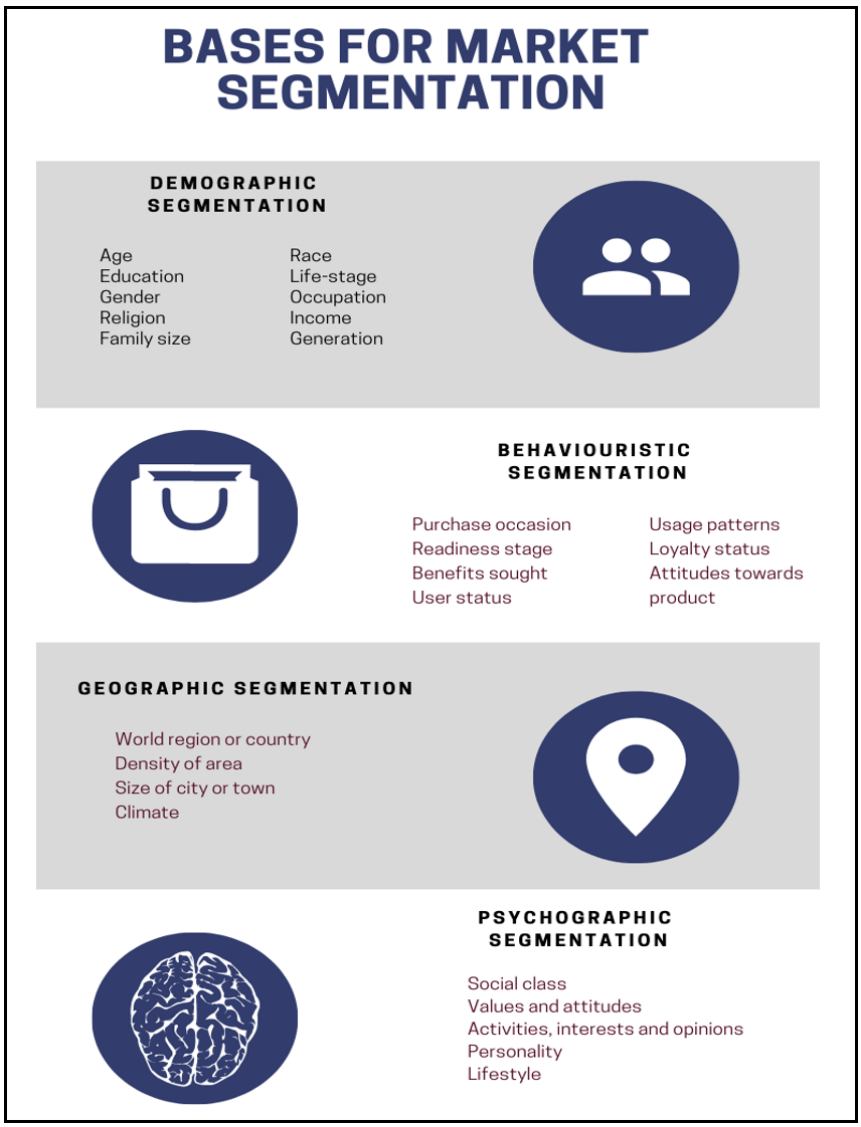
By gaining a holistic understanding of the various factors that influence the market segmentation process, marketers can decide on and select a suitable market segmentation base.

3.7 BASES FOR MARKET SEGMENTATION

Jeong (2018:2) asserts that market segmentation represents a process whereby marketers extract homogenous markets that have parallel characteristics and develop tailored products and services that appeal to the chosen market. Segmentation considers the different traits and characteristics of the consumer and not those of the product or service that is provided. By knowing and understanding the characteristics of a consumer, marketers can select a segmentation base for implementation that is most congruent with consumers' needs, wants

and characteristics (Lombard *et al*., 2014:242). Jadczakova (2010:16) defines a segmentation base as “a set of variables or characteristics used to assign potential customers to homogenous groups”. Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:52) propound that a form of hybrid segmentation can be implemented when segmenting a market. Hybrid segmentation refers to the use of two or more segmentation bases simultaneously. Jeong (2018:2) states that the bases most often used for segmenting a market include, *inter alia*, demographic, behaviouristic, geographic and psychographic segmentation bases. Figure 3-5 outlines the segmentation bases and the specific variables associated with each base.

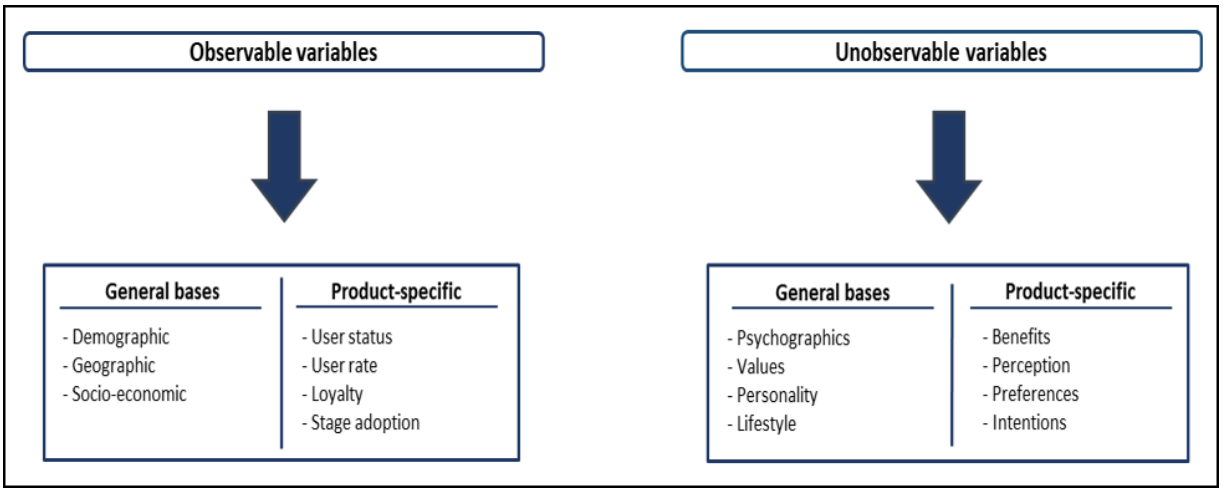
Figure 3-5: Bases for market segmentation



Source: Adapted from Armstrong and Kotler (2011:204); Joubert (2013:100) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:52).

Asiedu (2016:3) asserts that segmentation bases can further be classified into observable bases and unobservable bases, where observable bases refer to those bases that marketers are able to measure directly and unobservable bases to those bases where the results are inferred. Asiedu (2016:3) and Jadczakova (2010:16) divide the different segmentation bases into general bases and product-specific bases. General bases are those bases that are autonomous of products, services or circumstances, whereas product-specific bases relate to the consumer and the product, service or circumstance (Jandczakova, 2010:16). Figure 3-6 portrays the observable and unobservable variables of segmentation bases.

Figure 3-6: Observable and unobservable variables of segmentation bases



Source: Adapted from Asiedu (2016:3).

The following section provides a brief description of the more popular segmentation bases used in both academia and practice today, and those that are specifically relevant to this study.

3.7.1 Demographic segmentation

Asiedu (2016:3), Nasiopoulos (2015:2) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:53) all support the notion that demographics is the main, most dominant and most common form of market segmentation. Nasiopoulos (2015:2) states that it is the foremost used approach as it is easy to comprehend the scales of measurement used in demographic segmentation and the collection and interpretation of demographic information is an uncomplicated process. Asiedu (2016:3) supports this notion by adding that it is easy for marketers to conjunct other variables with those of the demographic base. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:53), marketers tend to favour the use of demographics as a base when segmenting a market, because it:

- Represents the easiest and most logical manner in which marketers should classify consumers, and they are measured more precisely as compared to other segmentation bases.

- It enables marketers to locate and reach specific segments in a cost-effective manner.

- It helps marketers to identify opportunities in the market by indicating changes in consumers' age, income, distribution and population of numerous regions.

- It identifies variables such as attitudes, consumer behaviour and media exposure patterns that directly relate to the demographics of a consumer segment.

Madeira *et al*. (2015:5) propound that the variables most commonly used for demographic segmentation are age, gender, income, education and occupation, and life stages.

3.7.1.1 Age

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:53), marketers should consider the age of consumers when segmenting a market because the needs, wants and product preferences of consumers vary according to their age categories. Cleveland *et al*. (2011:248) concur that the buying behaviour of consumers in the younger age groups are ever-changing with the constant evolvement of technology, making them more willing to try new products. Consumers in the older age groups have more time and money to spend on physical, luxury and leisure activities (Barry, 2009:316). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:53) illustrate the influence of age on consumer buying behaviour by comparing the buying behaviours of students to those of adults. Students perceive certain products or services to be more expensive and luxurious, whereas adults perceive the same products as reasonably priced. Therefore, age is an important demographic element to consider when segmenting a market.

3.7.1.2 Gender

According to Lombard *et al*. (2014:245), to segment, a market according to gender requires marketers to distinguish between male and female consumers. Gender is a factual segmentation variable considered to be the demographic variable most used by marketers to segment a household market (Lombard *et al.*, 2014:245; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:53). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:53) assert that gender roles have changed slightly over the past few years as men are increasingly purchasing more grooming products whilst women are buying household tools. Although some roles have changed slightly with regard to gender-specific buying behaviour, Lombard *et al*. (2014:245) note that marketing products such as

clothing, hair-care products, toiletries and cosmetics are is different for male and female market segments.

3.7.1.3 Income, education and occupation

Lombard *et al*. (2014:245) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:54) propound that using income as a variable to distinguish between different consumer segments is of great importance as it has a significant effect on the products and services that consumers choose to purchase and consume. An increase in a consumer's income will increase their purchasing power, and as such their expenditure on various product categories (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:53). According to Palmer (2009:195), the income of consumers can be measured using the following approaches: (1) total income before taxation, which represents the gross income of a consumer; (2) disposable income, which represents the income available to consumers after taxation; and (3) discretionary income, which is the disposable income of consumers less the expenditure on the necessities of life (i.e. mortgage payments). According to Cleveland *et al*. (2011:240), marketers strive to target consumers with higher income due to their larger purchasing power. However, marketers should consider that not all consumers feel comfortable sharing information concerning their income, which presents a limitation when using income as a segmentation variable (Palmer, 2009:195).

Well-educated individuals tend to form new perspectives and norms rather than following local behavioural norms (Cleveland *et al*., 2011:248). Higher education provides an individual with skills and reasoning abilities not possessed by everyone else. Having various skills, ways of reasoning and their own perspectives and norms, the needs and preferences of consumers with higher education levels differ from consumers with lower levels of education (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:54). According to Cleveland *et al*. (2011:248), marketers who want to segment a market using the education variable must consider the perceptions of consumers and their levels of education, and adjust their marketing strategies accordingly.

Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:152) concur that the occupation of consumers determine the lifestyle they lead, the social circles in which they move, their behaviour as well as the products or services that they prefer to consume. Considering the occupation variable to segment a market adds significantly towards understanding a typical description of the consumer and demographic aspects. Wei (2015:266) considers the following categories of occupation: workers, professionals, government employees, service workers, joint-venture employees, teachers, researchers, self-employed, unemployed and students. Marketers can consider these categories when developing marketing strategies based on occupation. Ray and Choudhury (2015:8) propose that occupation is a prominent factor determining the purchase

decisions of a consumer. The “bandwagon effect” is used to describe the above statement by asserting that the colleagues of consumers influence them to make certain purchase decisions (Wei, 2015:266).

Income, education and occupation correlate with each other as consumers with higher levels of education qualify for higher-level jobs, and they earn noticeably more compared to consumers who have had little education and work in the lower-level jobs (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:54). Income, education and occupation are also variables that relate closely to the various life stages through which consumers proceed.

3.7.1.4 Life stages

The life stages of a consumer (i.e. bachelorhood, honeymooners, parenthood, post-parenthood and dissolution) can be used by marketers as a demographic variable to segment a market (Lombard *et al.*, 2014:245). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:54) assert that consumers have different requirements during each stage of the lifecycle. For example, young singles are looking for furniture to fill their apartments, whilst new parents are searching for housing that is child-friendly. Marketers can identify the specific life stages and select a segment to serve which they feel will be most profitable based on a specific stage of the consumer lifecycle (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:54).

Marketers can use the various demographic variables to describe *who* the consumers are that are purchasing specific products and services effectively (Solomon, 2011:263). Combining these demographic segmentation variables with one or more of the other segmentation bases will allow marketers to understand the needs, wants and buying behaviour of their consumers better, and will ensure that they deliver appropriate products and services to their targeted segments (Joubert, 2013:105).

3.7.2 Behaviouristic segmentation

Another method used by marketers to segment a consumer market effectively is to apply consumer behaviour as a basis for segmentation. Based on the knowledge, responses, usage and attitudes that a consumer has towards a product, marketers can divide consumers into segments using behaviouristic elements (Kotler & Keller, 2016:207). Nasiopoulos (2015:4) propound that segmenting consumers based on their buying behaviour will allow marketers to categorise consumers into segments according to the purchase occasion; the benefits sought; user status; loyalty status; buyer readiness stage; and attitude towards the product. These behaviouristic variables are briefly discussed below.

3.7.2.1 Purchase occasion

The purchase occasion refers to how many times consumers purchase a product or service (Nasiopoulos, 2015:4). According to Joubert (2013:107), marketers distinguish between regular occasion users and special occasion users, where regular occasion users are those consumers who purchase products and services on a consistent basis, and special occasion users are those consumers who purchase products and services on special occasions only, such as graduations, engagements, birthdays and weddings.

3.7.2.2 Benefits sought

Consumers seek different benefits from products and services (Lombard *et al*., 2014:243). Some consumers, for instance, seek the benefits of a car to get them from point A to point B, whereas other consumers seek the benefit of a car as a status symbol or perhaps for the benefit of speed (Joubert, 2013:107). Marketers can satisfy the needs of consumers in a specific segment successfully if they take note of the particular benefits sought and offer products or services that are most likely to provide for these (Joubert, 2013:107).

3.7.2.3 User status

Consumers can be segmented based in terms of how often they purchase and use products (Nasiopoulos, 2015:3). Keegan and Green (2011:247) assert that consumers can be segmented into groups consisting of heavy users, medium users, potential users, ex-users and non-users. Heavy users refer to those consumers who purchase many of an organisation's products, representing the bulk of sales revenue (Joubert, 2013:107). Medium users refer to those consumers that purchase and use an organisation's products less frequently than the heavy users, yet more often as compared to light users. Marketers are more likely to focus on heavy users, as they are the consumers from whom they generate the most profit (Lombard *et al*., 2014:243). Joubert (2013:107) proposes that marketers should focus their efforts on potential users as well, as these may represent the growth of the organisation and its products moving forward.

3.7.2.4 Loyalty status

Bothma (2013:35) states that consumers can be segmented into four categories based on their loyalty towards a product, service or organisation. These categories are: (1) *Hard-core loyalists,* referring to those consumers who insist on using the same products, services or brands every time; (2) *Soft-core loyalists,* referring to consumers who are willing to choose from a limited set of products and brands; (3) *Shifting loyalists,* referring to consumers who

shift their loyalty from one product, brand or organisation to another; and (4) *Switchers*, referring to consumers who show no loyalty towards any product, brand or organisation whatsoever.

3.7.2.5 Buyer readiness stage

Consumers can be segmented by determining whether they are unaware, aware, informed, interested, desirous or intending to purchase an organisation's product, service or brand (Nasiopoulos, 2015:4). Marketers can design and incorporate various strategies to specifically fit the consumers' readiness stage – whether it is to inform, persuade or sell the products or services of the organisation. Doing so will increase the sales and profits of the organisation (Joubert, 2013:106).

3.7.2.6 Attitude towards the product

Joubert (2013:107) is of the opinion that organisations can increase the effectiveness of their marketing efforts when their targeted consumers are segmented based on their attitudes displayed towards the product. Marketers can avoid allocating resources towards marketing efforts targeted at consumers who are negative or hostile towards the product or brand, thus focusing all their resources and efforts on consumers who are enthusiastic and positive towards the product or brand offering (Joubert, 2013:107).

Armstrong and Kotler (2011:207) state that understanding the behaviour of various consumers will help marketers to position their product offerings in accordance with their targeted consumers' requests, requirements, behaviour and attitudes – making the behaviouristic segmentation base more effective than those of demographics.

3.7.3 Geographic segmentation

By using a geographic basis of segmentation, marketers divide a market according to the cities, town, regions and countries in which their consumers reside. A market segment can then be divided even further by grouping consumers into various geographical units based on climate, area, size of the city and population density (Lombard *et al*., 2014:249; Nasiopoulos, 2015:3). Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:54) propound that the geographical location in which a consumer resides influences their buying behaviour. For example, the climate of an area determines the type of clothes, food and beverages consumers purchase. Consumers residing in rural areas have different wants, needs and buying behaviours compared to those who live in urban and suburban areas (Joubert, 2013:101). Lombard *et al*. (2014:249) note that marketers can localise their advertising and marketing efforts by basing them on a specific

area. Then, marketers can position their marketing mix, plan their marketing strategy, as well as their distribution function accordingly.

3.7.4 Psychographic segmentation

Psychographic segmentation considers the psychological factors that affect a consumer's behaviour when purchasing products or services (Nasiopoulos, 2015:3). Lantos (2011:37) notes that the thoughts of consumers, their beliefs, and the way in which they choose to live and spend their money can be used to determine their behaviour, and as such, to segment them into groups of consumers with the same or similar psychographic traits. Baharun *et al*. (2011:5041) state that the use of psychographic segmentation provides organisations with a competitive advantage as it identifies the interests of consumers, the activities in which they participate as well as their opinions on various subject matters. When segmenting a consumer market based on psychographic traits, marketers consider the social class, personality and lifestyle of a consumer (Lombard *et al*., 2014:246).

3.7.4.1 Social class

Social class is defined by Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013:162) as a class stratification system in which members of a society who share similar class values, power, interests, behaviour and status are grouped together. To determine the social class of a consumer, Nasiopoulos (2015:3) propound that marketers should identify and understand their background, income, spending patterns and purchase frequency, as these determine purchasing power. Furthermore, Nasiopoulos (2015:3) argues that consumers will keep purchasing certain products or services to remain in the social class to which they belong.

There are various social class tiers to which consumers can belong, namely the upper-class tier; the lower-uppers; the upper-middles; the middle-class tier; the working class; the upper-lowers; and the lower-class tier (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011:204; Rani, 2014:54). Consumers belonging to the same class tier are more likely to have the same needs, desires and buying behaviours (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:55).

3.7.4.2 Personality

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:105) define personality as the distinctive and permanent way in which individuals differ from each other. Babin and Harris (2018:112) further describe personality as internal psychological characteristics such as propensities, intentions, thoughts and behaviours that a consumer has and that determine their buying behaviour in various situations.

Consumers have unique personalities and will thus react differently to marketing efforts, products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2016:197). According to Nasiopoulos (2015:3), the social class tier to which a consumer belongs and the type of lifestyle they lead have a bearing on their personalities. Nasiopoulos (2015:3) explains that consumers who lead a luxurious lifestyle have a higher disposable income and will have a more luxuriant personality. Consumers who live off necessities and who can be classified in the lower-class tier will tend to have a down-to-earth, basic personality.

Pride and Ferrell (2010:205) assert that once marketers have identified a dominating personality type within a segment, it is important for them to provide a marketing mix and advertising campaigns that are congruent with the personalities of consumers within that specific segment, as this will influence the consumer decision-making process and ultimately increase sales figures.

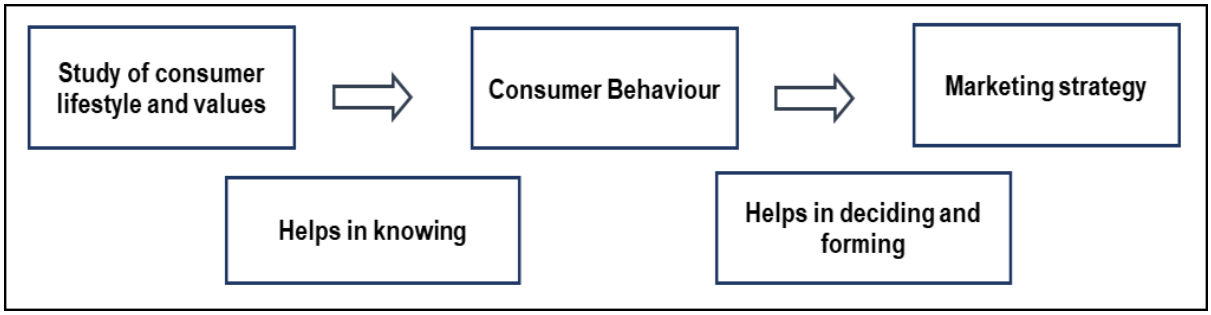
3.7.4.3 Lifestyle

Lifestyle can be considered as the most popular psychographic variable used by marketers to segment a market (Nasiopoulos, 2015:4). Lombard *et al*. (2014:247) affirm that a consumer's lifestyle can be defined by studying their activities, interests and opinions (AIO). According to Marketers should thus develop marketing mixes and strategies according to the AIO's of consumers that will, in turn, provide them with the products or services to achieve their desired lifestyle. Lifestyle is one of the core concepts of this study and is therefore discussed in the section that follows.

3.8 CONSUMER LIFESTYLE

The lifestyle of a consumer is considered to be of great importance in the modern marketing era because as it has a profound effect on the consumer's decision-making process and determines their buying behaviour (Husnain & Akhtar, 2015:30). A large number of consumer research companies, marketing firms and academic institutions study lifestyle variables as these provide valuable information regarding consumers (Babin & Harris, 2018:123; Bruwer & Li, 2017:1557). Narang (2010:537) agrees that the study of consumer lifestyle helps marketers to devise effective marketing and communication strategies. According to Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:154), different aspects of consumer behaviour such as products and services consumed; activities, interests and opinions; personality traits and self-concept; value systems; and attitudes towards various product classes are used to create psychographic profiles of consumers within a specific segment. Figure 3-7 presents a graphical illustration of how the study of consumer lifestyle helps marketers to devise effective marketing strategies.

Figure 3-7: Understanding the influence of consumer lifestyle on marketing efforts



Source: Adapted from Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:154).

3.8.1 Towards a definition of lifestyle

Babin and Harris (2018:123) note that consumers use the term *lifestyle* to describe their everyday life, whether they live healthy, unhealthy, dangerous, alternative or adventurous lifestyles. Hoyer *et al*. (2018:391) affirm that marketers can determine the lifestyles of consumers by identifying what they choose to do in their spare time. Lifestyle can be used to reflect on consumers' various modes of living and provide insight into the patterns of consumption associated with them (Vaidya, 2015:33). Bruwer and Li (2017:1557) assert that the use of lifestyle variables to identify and comprehend consumers has become the principle of psychographic segmentation, with marketers and academia realising its significance in the field of marketing. Table 3-3 offers a range of definitions that have been formulated by authors over the years in order to describe the psychographic dimension of lifestyle.

Table 3-3: Towards a definition of lifestyle

Author	Definition
Narang (2010:539)	"Lifestyle refers to an individual's activities, interests and opinions and the way they spend their time and money."
Solomon (2011:54)	"Lifestyle is a pattern of consumption that reflects a consumer's choice of how they live and how they spend their time and money."
Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:152)	"Lifestyle refers to a distinctive mode of behaviour centred around activities, interests, opinions, attitudes and demographic characteristics, distinguishing one segment of a population from another."
Bug et al. (2015:13)	"Lifestyle focuses on what people like to do, what their areas of interests are and what opinion they hold on various matters."
Ratanasawadwat and Jiamthapthansin (2017:972)	"Lifestyle provides marketers with a deeper understanding of their consumers' buying behaviour, by looking at the way people live their daily lives and how they spend their time and money."
Babin and Harris (2018:122)	"Lifestyle represents distinctive modes of living, including how people spend their time and money."
Hoyer et al. (2018:391)	"Lifestyle refers to manifestations or actual patterns of consumers, which are represented by a consumer's activities, interests and opinions."

By considering the key elements in the definitions provided in Table 3-3, for the purpose of this study, lifestyle is defined as *manifestations or actual patterns exerted by consumers, focusing on the activities, interests and opinions they choose to spend their time and money on*.

Husnain and Akhtar (2015:25) assert that lifestyle is valuable because it provides marketers with the ability to predict the wants and needs of consumers within a specific segment. Products can be considered to be the building blocks of lifestyle, as certain products may represent a particular lifestyle of a set of consumers whilst other consumers may use products that are more unique or exclusive. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2011:175), lifestyle allows marketers to develop a consumer profile based on how a consumer interacts with the world. Baharun *et al*. (2011:5041) propound that segmenting a market using lifestyle variables measures consumer activities based on what their interests are and the level of importance attached to their surroundings; how they spend their time and money; basic demographic characteristics; and how they view themselves and the world around them.

Babin and Harris (2018:123) reiterate that marketers can devise effective and efficient marketing strategies by studying the lifestyles of consumers within a specific segment as this relates directly to their product purchase and consumption behaviours. Babin and Harris (2018:124) advise that marketers should focus on devising marketing strategies that appeal

to the lifestyle of their targeted consumers rather than implementing marketing efforts that are solely based on the definite product itself.

3.8.2 Characteristics of lifestyle

Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:153) highlight the following characteristics of lifestyle:

- *Lifestyle implies a central life interest*: Religion, family, friends, work, leisure, politics and hobbies represent a few of the central life interests of consumers, and determine how they interact with the environment around them.

- *Lifestyle suffuses various aspects of life:* The behaviour of a consumer can be considered to be relatively consistent, due to the nature of his or her lifestyle. Marketers can predict the behaviour of consumers in different stages of their lives by observing how they conduct themselves in specific situations.

- *Lifestyle varies according to sociologically relevant variables:* Variations in the lifestyle of consumers are rapidly changing due to the rate of social change within society. These variations are represented by the change in consumer age, sex, ethnicity, social class and religion. The lifestyles of consumers all over the world have changed over the past few decades; for example, as women have been promoted to higher positions within the working class and the number of double-income families have increased considerably.

- *Lifestyle is a group occurrence*: The relationships of, and the reference groups to whom a consumer belongs influence his/her lifestyle.

By understanding and analysing the characteristics of lifestyle from a marketing perspective, marketers can gain a more profound understanding of their consumers and will thus be more focused when positioning and marketing their products and services (Sathish & Rajamohan, 2012:154). Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:154) add that various reference groups and individuals influence a consumer's lifestyle, and therefore marketers have identified various emerging consumer lifestyle groups. These emerging lifestyle groups are discussed subsequently.

3.8.3 Emerging lifestyle groups

Baharun *et al*. (2011:5041) suggest that there are various lifestyle groups to which consumers belong and that the behaviour demonstrated by consumers in the various groups are not necessarily similar. Hur *et al*. (2010:269) concur that consumers in different lifestyle groups

have diverse interests, preferences and requirements. Identifying and understanding what a specific lifestyle group needs, wants and prefers to enable marketers to devise marketing strategies and product offerings that will appeal to those consumers' specific requirements (Sathish & Rajamohan, 2012:163). Lantos (2011:347) differentiates between the following lifestyle groups:

- *Alpha women:* This lifestyle group comprises women who strive to "have it all"; who do not believe in the old "stay-at-home-mom" or "women do not work" traditions. They work hard and are career-orientated whilst still maintaining a healthy balance between work and family relations.

- *Metro-men:* This lifestyle group comprises men in their twenties who have a keen sense of fashion, who are in touch with their feminine side, and who take the time to groom themselves. They tend to have the style and taste of those associated with gay men, but are heterosexual.

- *Scuppies:* This lifestyle group comprises consumers who are environmentally and health conscious. They strive to live a "clean" life by purchasing products from organisations with a green footprint and consume organic products.

- *Ubersexuals:* This lifestyle group comprises male consumers who embrace masculinity. They enjoy the finer things in life and consider themselves to be gentlemen. They acknowledge that they have a feminine side, but do not fear, nor flaunt it.

- *Retrosexuals:* These male consumers deny their feminine side and would rather be perceived as being a "macho-man" – participating in traditional male behaviour, and tend not to concern themselves with grooming rituals.

Marketers who segment a market based on consumer lifestyle can divide consumers into different groups based on the lifestyle they lead and the buying behaviour they display. By conducting research on the lifestyle of consumers within a targeted segment, marketers can, therefore, devise customised marketing and promotional messages in order to ensure that they inform consumers of their product and/or service offerings effectively and efficiently (Baharun *et al*., 2011:5042).

There are various methods available to marketers to conduct consumer lifestyle research studies. The AIO-approach is the most used approach and entails analysing the activities, interests and opinions of consumers (Hur *et al.*, 2010:296). For the purpose of this study, the

AIO-approach will be used to determine the lifestyle and the influence thereof on the buying behaviour of Singletons in South Africa.

3.8.4 The AIO-approach

Lifestyle represents a psychographic approach where marketers focus on identifying trends and factors that have an influence on a consumer's life, work and leisure (Anantachart, 2013:86; Bug *et al*., 2015:16). The AIO-approach used to analyse consumer lifestyle was first introduced in the 1970s by Wells and Tigert, and has since been used by various well-known researchers such as Plummer (1974), Bowls (1988), Swingyard and Smith (2003), Bergman *et al*. (2005), Kumar and Sarkar (2008) and Hur *et al*. (2010). These studies explored the segmentation of markets based on lifestyle variables, making effective use of the AIO-approach to analysing consumer lifestyle.

The AIO-approach is a measurement instrument that is used to measure the activities, interests and opinions of consumers (Suresh *et al*., 2011:22). This approach entails providing consumers with a battery of three hundred statements that focus on their activities, interests and opinions, usually in a survey format in which they indicate on a 10-point Likert-scale whether they agree or disagree with the provided statements (Narang, 2010:538). According to Sathish and Rajamohan (2012:155), analysing the activities referred to in the AIO-approach provide a clear indication of how consumers spend their money and include activities such as work, hobbies, vacations, social events and entertainment. Anantachart (2013:86) propose that analysing the interests referred to in the AIO-approach indicates a consumer's preference in terms of family life, career, community, recreation, food and home. The opinions analysed by using the AIO-approach highlight how consumers feel about various matters and include items such as themselves, social issues, economics, products and business (Bug *et al*., 2015:18). Table 3-4 provides a list of some of the various lifestyle dimensions used in an AIO analysis.

Table 3-4: Lifestyle dimensions

Activities	Interests	Opinions	Demographics
Work	Family	Themselves	Dwelling
Hobbies	Homemaking	Social issues	Education
Social events	Career	Politics	Income
Vacation	Community	Business	Occupation
Entertainment	Recreation	Economics	Family size
Club-membership	Fashion	Education	Dwelling
Community	Health	Products	Geography
Shopping	Media	Future	City size
Sports	Achievements	Culture	Stage in life-cycle

Source: Adapted from Bug *et al.* (2015:17) and Solomon (2011:264).

For the purpose of this study, the following lifestyle dimensions will be analysed by using the AIO approach:

- **Fashion consciousness:**

Consumers who consider themselves to be fashion-conscious perceive themselves as having style, being inventive and finding pleasure in seeking out new things that are not associated with the norm (Zhou *et al*., 2010:47).

- **Cost consciousness:**

According to Zhou *et al*. (2010:46), consumers who are cost-conscious are more hesitant about the price they have to pay for a product or a service than they are concerned about its perceived value.

- **Health orientation:**

Hong (2009:3) states that health-orientated consumers consider themselves as being sensitive to health hazards, and as such, they tend to avoid health issues by engaging in frequent exercise, managing stress levels to the best of their abilities and take great care in what they eat. Health conscious consumers have various nutritional and health needs that result in them seeking out organic, natural and unmodified products to maintain their healthy lifestyles (Bemporad & Baranowksi, 2011:83).

- **Recreation:**

According to Hall (2017:5), recreation can be considered as a period of time, a specific activity or state of mind that an individual engages in, in order to meet a personal requirement or desire primarily for his or her own satisfaction. Hurd and Anderson (2017:17) propound that recreation is the period an individual enters after heavy work in order to regain energy and to rest. Recreational activities can take place outside, such as exercising or exploring mountains, deserts, forests, the ocean and wildlife. Reading, meditation, photography, painting, dancing, singing and yoga are other forms of recreation.

- **E-shopping:**

Jusoh and Ling (2012:223) define e-shopping as a process during which consumers embrace the viable alternative of electronic commerce and purchase products from the comfort of their own homes on the Internet by visiting online stores and completing the transaction online. Considering the rapid rise in consumers choosing to shop online, marketers can make an effort to invest more of their resources in online retail formats in order to increase their sales and profits (Ha & Stoel, 2010:568).

- **Career orientation:**

The Business Dictionary (2018) defines career orientation as "the pattern of job-related preferences that remain fairly stable over a person's work life." By analysing consumers' career orientation, marketers can deduce the extent to which consumers invest in their careers, how hard they work, and how important they consider their careers to be.

The lifestyle dimensions discussed above will be analysed by using the AIO-approach in order to compile an accurate profile of the lifestyle and its influence on the behaviour of Singletons (see section 3.8) in South Africa. Schariff *et al.* (2014:11) propound that the AIO statements enable marketers to distinguish between two polar approaches, which are: (1) the *situation-specific approach*, where marketers aim to determine whether a specific product offering will be accepted or rejected based on the lifestyle of the consumer; and (2) *the general approach* which is concerned with obtaining a more profound understanding of the lifestyle and buying behaviours of consumers. The viability of a specific product is not applicable to this approach (He *et al.*, 2010:617). For the purpose of this study, the AIO statements will be general in nature, as the primary objective is to determine the lifestyle of consumers within a specific segment. Implementing a general approach to analysing the AIO statements enable marketers to gain a more holistic understanding of the lifestyle and behaviour of consumers within the

segment under study and this will help to create consumer profiles that are in accordance with their lifestyles (Schariff *et al*., 2014:12).

Solomon (2011:264) asserts that besides creating consumer lifestyle profiles and determining the influence that lifestyle has on consumer behaviour, the information obtained by conducting lifestyle studies can be used in the following ways:

- *Create a new view of the market:* Marketers may have developed and based their marketing strategies on the lifestyle of the consumers within the target market. Their views of this consumer market can change as they realise that the consumers do not match their assumptions.

- *Defining a target market:* The information provided by conducting a lifestyle study can be used to surpass simple product consumption or demographic clarifications.

- *Better communication of product attributes:* Marketers can incorporate the information obtained from lifestyle studies to devise advertising campaigns that will communicate the product's attributes to the consumers in the target market in such a way that it appeals to their specific lifestyles.

- *Positioning of the product:* Marketers can use consumer lifestyle information as a guideline when positioning their products in order to appeal to the specific requirements of the consumers in the target market.

- *Development of a product strategy:* Marketers can identify new product opportunities, marketing strategies and promotions based on their understanding of how a product forms part of the consumer's specific lifestyle.

Schariff (2014:13) adds that lifestyle studies can also be used to provide a better understanding of consumer behaviour; introduce new and innovative products; minimise risk for a new product or business ventures; and to improve an organisation's overall marketing strategy.

One of the consumer segments in South Africa that has not as yet been researched sufficiently with regards to their lifestyle and the influence of reference groups (see Chapter 2) on their behaviour is the Singletons segment. By conducting a lifestyle analysis, consumer profiles can be developed for the Singletons segment in South Africa. Moreover, by using the information obtained from the lifestyle study, marketers can deduce how lifestyle, and specifically those lifestyle dimensions analysed within this study, have an impact on the behaviour and decision-

making process of consumers within the Singletons segment. By obtaining this information, marketers will gain a more profound understanding of the consumers within the South African Singleton segment, and can, therefore, serve this segment more effectively and efficiently by devising marketing strategies that are congruent with their specific lifestyle and needs.

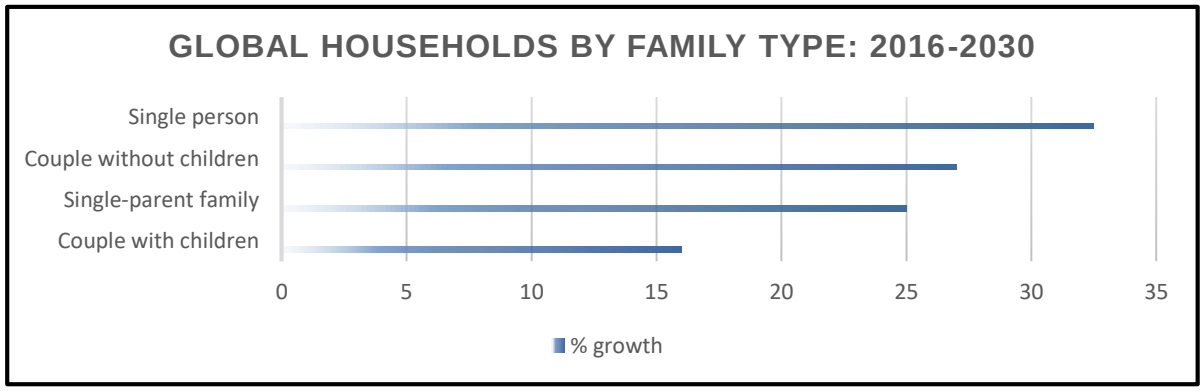
3.9 SINGLETONS

This section concerns the Singletons segment in South Africa. A discussion on the segment will commence by firstly emphasising the significance of the Singletons segment to marketers by formulating an appropriate description of the Singleton consumer. Upon defining what it entails to be qualified as a Singleton, the various sub-segments are discussed, followed by the consumption orientations of Singletons. This section introduces the Singletons segment and provides the knowledge that marketers need in order to target this growing consumer segment in South Africa effectively.

3.9.1 The significance of the Singleton segment

Bouhlel (2011:22) states that the concept of being "single" has been a topic of great interest for research fields like social psychology, sociology and marketing on a global scale (Quintos, 2019). *One* is no longer the loneliest number as single consumers currently represent the largest, rapidly growing and untapped consumer segment globally (Mascolo, 2017). The Euromonitor International research group states that by the year 2030, the single household is predicted to increase by 15.7%, resulting in 331-million single households globally (Jacobs, 2013). Figure 3-8 presents the growth projections of global households based on the family type from 2016 to 2030.

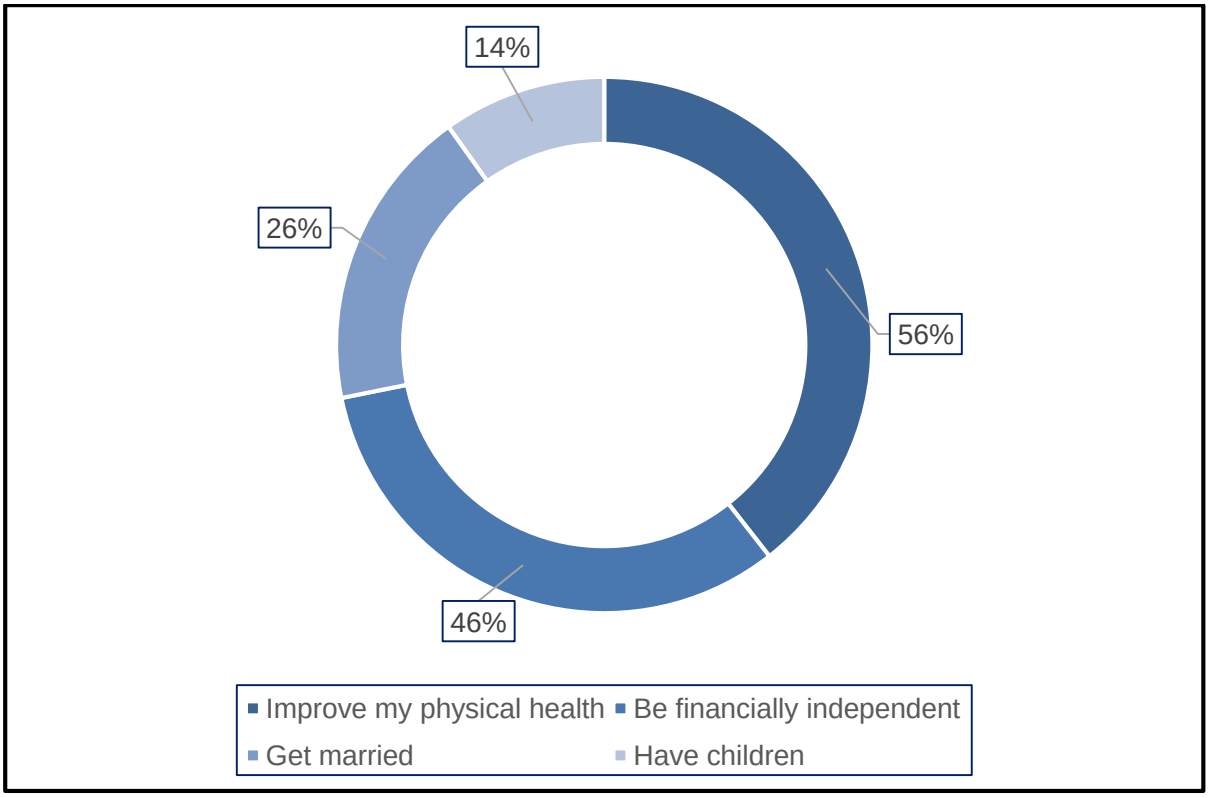
Figure 3-8: Global Households by family type: 2016-2030



Source: Euromonitor International (2015).

The information provided in Figure 3-8 indicates that the single person household is projected to show the greatest growth over the next few years. Bouhlel (2011:24) and Jacobs (2013) explain that this growth phenomenon is driven by factors such as the desire for individual accomplishment, mass urbanisation, longevity, increase in the divorce rate and increased female employment. According to Wortzel (2014:324) the "single" stage of the traditional family lifecycle is changing from searching for a mate and marriage preparations to one where singles would rather focus on personal growth and enriching their personal experiences. In terms of their individual goals and aspirations, Flynn (2017 asserts that most of the Singletons would like to improve and maintain their physical health and wellbeing. A great majority would like to be financially independent, and thus tend to focus on their wealth-building activities. Only some of the Singletons aspire to get married, with an even smaller number wanting to have children. These statistics are presented in Figure 3-9.

Figure 3-9: The goals and aspirations of Singletons



Source: Adapted from Flynn (2017).

In order to gain a better understanding of the Singletons segment, it is firstly necessary to identify and define the various appellations used for the term *Singletons*.

3.9.2 Towards a definition of Singletons

In order to construct a more precise definition of the term *Singletons*, various synonyms of the terms used in literature have been identified. A preliminary review of the literature on Singletons has indicated that various appellations are used interchangeably with the term *Singleton*. Table 3-5 presents the appellations that have been identified by authors in the field as well as their accompanying definitions.

Table 3-5: Appellations of the term Singleton as used in the literature

Author	Appellation / Synonym
Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:22); Euromonitor (2017); Macmillan Dictionary (2018)	Singles
Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:22)	Solos
Macmillan Dictionary (2018)	Bachelor
Euromonitor (2017)	Single-person Households

Given the identified synonyms of *Singleton* listed in Table 3-5, Table 3-6 provides a list of definitions that can be identified in the literature to denote these appellations respectively.

Table 3-6: Towards a definition of Singleton

Author	Definition
Singles	
Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:22)	"A person who has never been married".
Solos	
Stern *et al.* (1987) quoted by Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:23)	"Those consumers who choose to live alone and follow a specific lifestyle; who seek pleasure, have sufficient time on their hands and who have above average buying power".
Musset (2003) quoted by Bouhlel *et al.* (2011:23)	"Consumers who are solitary with constraint and who spend less due to economic reasons".
Bachelor	
Schlacter *et al.* (1979:39-40)	"A young, single person who lives in an apartment or small house".
Cambridge Dictionary (2018)	"A man who is not married".
Singleton	
Oxford Dictionary (2018)	"A person who is not married or in a long-term relationship".
Macmillan Dictionary (2018)	"A person who is not married or is not in a romantic relationship".

By considering the above definitions, the term *Singleton* is defined as follows for the purpose of this study:

A person who is not married or in a long-term relationship and who lives alone and follows a specific lifestyle.

Bouhlel *et al*. (2011:23) propose that Singletons can be divided into two main categories, namely those consumers who have voluntarily decided to live alone – and thereby fully embracing their Singleton lifestyle; and those consumers who live alone due to bereavement or divorce. Those consumers who have decided to live alone have more time and money to spend on activities and products to fulfil their needs and wants. They live a specific lifestyle as they take advantage of their freedom in the absence of personal engagements (Sweeny, 2015). Those consumers who form part of the second category of Singletons, those who are solitary with constraint due to bereavement or divorce, do not always have the financial capacity of the first group, and they tend to spend less due to economic reasons (Bouhlel *et al*., 2011:23).

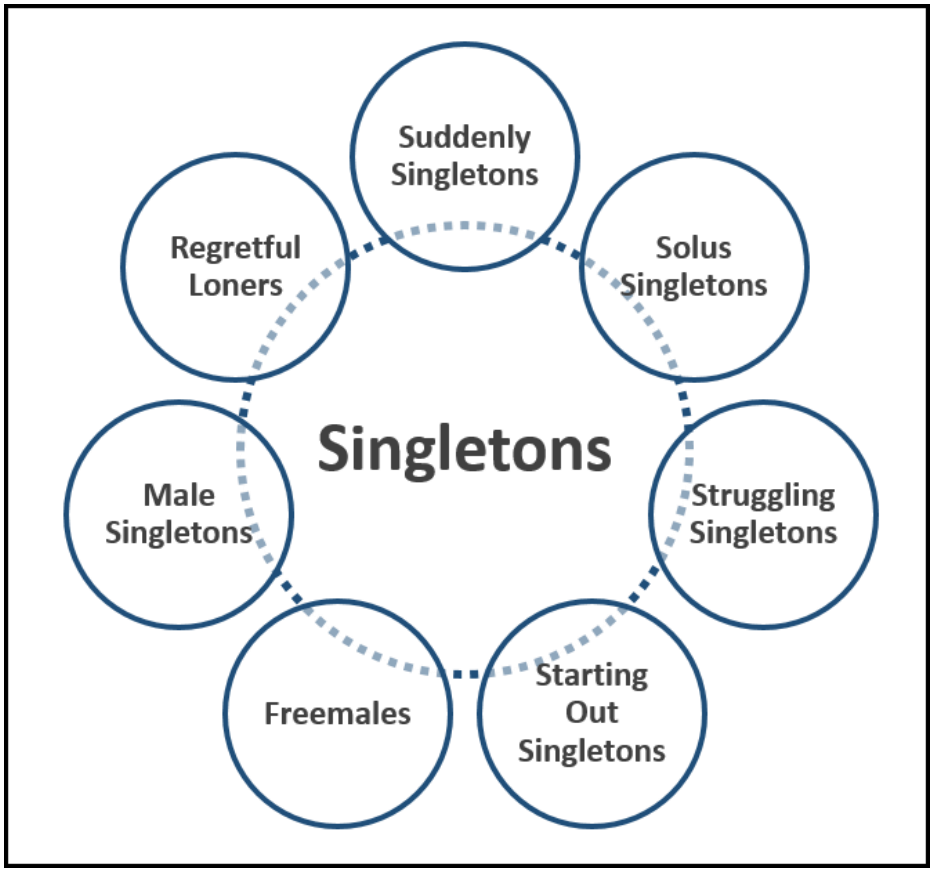
Mascolo (2017) propounds that marketers cannot create valuable product or service offerings without knowing and understanding the consumers to whom they are catering. Singletons have unique wants and needs. Segmenting the Singletons segment by analysing their lifestyle dimensions will enable marketers to satisfy their needs appropriately.

The following section provides a brief description of the sub-segments of Singletons that have been identified to date by authors in the field.

3.9.3 Sub-segments of Singletons

Jacobs (2013) states that it is a dangerous notion for marketers to define Singletons as a homogenous group. In reality, Singletons have different lifestyle profiles, income levels, interests and preferences (Cardona, 2013). Schultz (2010) propounds that the Singletons segment is an emerging and expanding segment that will enjoy rapid growth compared to any other household segment globally by the year 2030. According to Euromonitor International (2017) and Thompson (2013), Singletons can be divided into various sub-segments, each demonstrating different behaviours. These sub-segments are depicted in Figure 3-10 and are described subsequently.

Figure 3-10: The identified sub-segments of Singletons



Source: Euromonitor International (2017) and Thompson (2013).

3.9.3.1 Suddenly Singletons

The *Suddenly Singletons* sub-segment represents Singletons who are in their early 40s and who are well-paid executives. They are career-orientated and are often employed in IT, pharmaceuticals, finance and publishing, to name a few. These Singletons are regular users of the Internet and use it to stay abreast of news headlines and networking.

3.9.3.2 Solus Singletons

The *Solus Singletons* sub-segment mainly comprises the elderly. They have downsized to modern small flats and receive the majority of their income from their private pensions. They can further be categorised as frequent shoppers who regularly visit their nearest supermarket to purchase groceries.

3.9.3.3 Struggling Singletons

The *Struggling Singletons* sub-segment comprises the least affluent of the Singletons market segment. They are aged between 18 and 25 years, unskilled, and have no tertiary education. These Singletons have a 60% likelihood of being unemployed.

3.9.3.4 Starting out Singletons

The younger Singletons between the ages of 26 and 30 comprise the *Starting Out Singletons* sub-segment. They have skills and tend to have well-paid jobs in advertising, telecoms, media, IT and pharmaceuticals. These Singletons have the financial capability to rent or buy a small house or an apartment.

3.9.3.5 Freemales

The *Freemales* sub-segment of Singletons consists of independent women who are between the ages of 23 and 44 and who are career-driven and confident. These women have been dubbed “freemales” as they embrace single life. Freemales tend to be complacent about their finances and would much rather shop for new shoes than save money for the future. Statistics provided by Euromonitor International (2008) show that 25% of Freemales own at least 30 pairs of shoes.

3.9.3.6 Male Singletons

The *Male* Singletons sub-segment comprises successful and intelligent men. These Singletons opt to remain single, not because they fear commitment or marriage, but usually because of an unsuccessful marriage. These Singletons found contentment in living a single life by focusing on their careers, spending time with friends and following their ambitions.

3.9.3.7 Regretful loners

There was a brief moment when Singletons were out and proud, embracing the single life. However, that time has ended. Male Singletons aged between 25 and 44 have been dubbed “Regretful Loners”. This sub-segment has been named as such due to the belief that these Singletons are living lonely, miserable and unfulfilled lives (Euromonitor International, 2008).

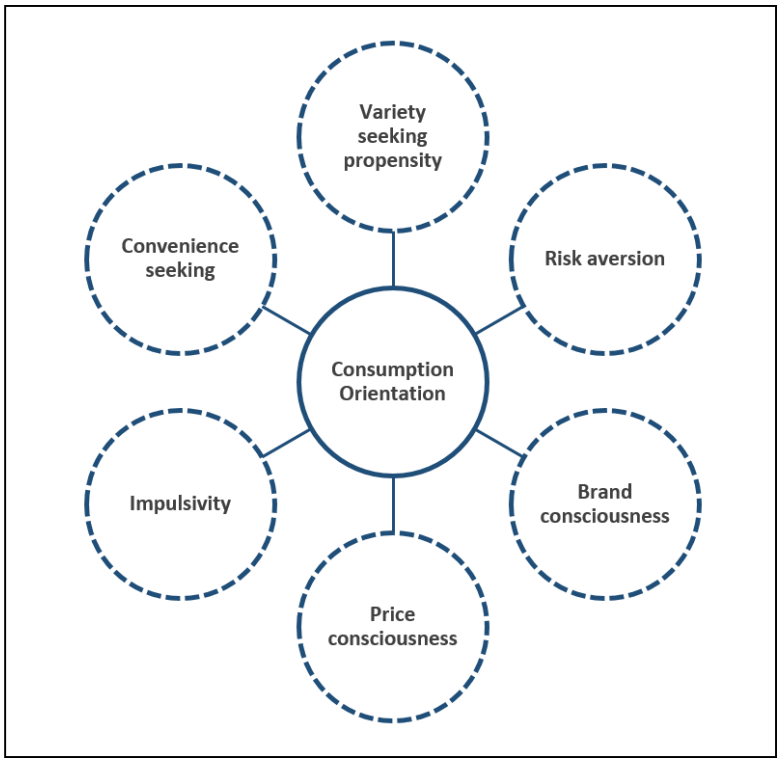
The Singletons sub-segments were segmented by means of demographic segmentation by considering variables such as gender, age, income and education (Parumasur & Lombard, 2013:244). Schultz (2010) emphasises the importance of demographics when segmenting

Singletons into sub-segments as the consumption orientation between male and female Singletons differ significantly.

3.9.4 Consumption orientation of Singletons

According to Schultz (2010), the consumption orientation of Singletons differs considerably from those of married consumers. It is, therefore, necessary for marketers to gain a better understanding of the buying behaviour of Singletons in order to improve the effectiveness of marketing to this segment of consumers. Singletons tend to spend more money and time on leisure activities such as vacation trips, dining out, cinema and outings. Singletons consume products, brands and services that they feel will valorise their image. The product categories they deem most important include beauty, fashion and hygiene (Bouhlel *et al.*, 2011:23; Schultz, 2010). Singletons embrace their single lifestyles by consuming products and services that they find most appealing and that they feel will complement their single way of life. To gain a better understanding of the consumption orientation of Singletons, it is important for marketers to consider the following aspects: (1) variety-seeking propensity; (2) risk aversion; (3) brand consciousness; (4) price consciousness; (5) impulsivity; and (6) convenience seeking. These factors are presented in figure 3-11 and discussed subsequently.

Figure 3-11: Factors to consider when studying consumption orientation of consumers



Source: Adapted from Bouhlel et al. 2011:23 and Schultz, 2010.

3.9.4.1 Variety-seeking propensity

Variety-seeking propensity can be defined as “the tendency of a consumer to purchase an item that is different from their last purchase” (Binge *et al*., 2009:104). Kim *et al*. (2018:101) state that consumers are sometimes likely to choose the lesser known items, as these provide some variety. Bouhlel *et al*. (2011:23) assert that Singletons seek out variety more than the married consumer segment. Singletons live a busy lifestyle, form part of various reference groups and are more willing to try new products and services. Since they belong to various reference groups, these Singletons show a willingness to try and experience new things. This is evidence that they do have a high level of variety-seeking propensity and are able to alter their buying behaviour more easily than married consumers.

3.9.4.2 Risk aversion

According to Chiu *et al.* (2014:94), perceived risk is a multidimensional construct, mainly consisting of financial loss, product performance, privacy and product delivery. Furthermore, Chiu *et al*. (2014:94) define perceived risk as the consequences of buying certain products or services faced by the consumer that cannot be anticipated with certitude and can prove to be unpleasant. Singletons are characterised as being free from family life constraints and commitment responsibilities (Schultz, 2010), providing them with independence and low-risk aversion (Bouhlel, 2011:23). Singletons have also gained a reputation for splurging, as they are not restricted with their spending and tend to be financially well off. Bouhlel (2011:23) propounds that Singletons are less risk averse that married consumers.

3.9.4.3 Brand consciousness

Brand conscious consumers tend to purchase products or services that well-known, more expensive brands (Ismail, 2017:131). According to Phau and Teah (2009:59) consumers purchase certain products or service brands in order to express their personal characteristics and to use the brands as symbols of status and prestige. Singletons consider brands a sign of social affiliation and a representation of the certain lifestyle they wish to portray to the world (Bouhlel *et al*., 2012:24). Thus, Bouhlel *et al*. (2011:24) conclude that Singletons are more brand conscious than married consumers.

3.9.4.4 Price consciousness

Price consciousness reflects a consumers’ preference for inexpensive products and services. These consumers want to pay the lowest price for all products and services and do not

consider the quality or brand of the product to be of great importance (Bindroo *et al*., 2016:118). According to Bouhlel *et al*., (2011:24) and Schultz (2010), Singletons are not considered to be price conscious. They have financial freedom and spend more time and money on themselves. Their buying power is considerably higher than those of married consumers and they do not shop for special or search for promotions (Bouhlel *et al*., 2011:24).

3.9.4.5 Impulsivity

Zhang *et al.* (2015:1282) consider impulsivity as a psychological feature exemplifying the impulse buying tendency of consumers. Bouhlel (2011:24) defines impulsive purchases as purchases that are made by an individual who accedes to a sudden and intense desire to purchase a product or service for which they have not planned. Singletons are considered impulsive buyers, as they have more spending power and the willingness to try new, unfamiliar things. They are motivated by instantaneous gratifications (Phau & Teah, 2009:64).

3.9.4.6 Convenience seeking

Convenience seeking can be defined as the degree to which consumers look for savings in both time and money (Hou & Elliot, 2016:127). Consumers want the purchasing process to be simple, understandable, without constraints and no unpardonable restrictions (Bindroo *et al*., 2016:118.) Singletons are perceived as being convenience seeking, as they want a shopping experience to be fast and convenient. Considering that Singletons are willing to try new things, they will utilise e-shopping as it is a faster, more convenient method of acquiring the products they need (Bouhlel, 2011:24).

Marketers who realise the importance of the above-mentioned variables and who incorporate these variables in their marketing strategies would be able to provide accurate products and services to the Singletons segment. However, in some markets, like the South African market, organisations and academia alike have yet to define the Singletons market more appropriately, and are thus likely not serving this segment optimally.

3.9.5 Singletons in the South African market

At the time of this study, very little or no research has been conducted on the Singletons market segment in South Africa. This is despite the fact that the Singletons segment has been receiving increased attention from organisations and marketers internationally due to their high spending power and growth in segment size. Due to the lack of conclusive research conducted on the Singletons in South Africa, this study aims to contribute to the literature on the Singletons segment, and to provide a more comprehensive definition of the segment by

means of describing their specific lifestyle preferences and the effect that reference groups have on their buying behaviour. This would, in turn, aid marketers to target the Singletons segment more effectively and efficiently by devising marketing strategies aimed at their specific preferences.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter emphasised the importance of market segmentation by discussing the various segmentation bases that marketers can choose to use. This study focusses on using lifestyle as a basis to effectively segment the Singleton consumer market. The Singleton segment is introduced and more insight into the growing consumer segment has been provided by distinguishing between the various sub-segments of Singletons and their consumption orientation. Chapter 4 will elaborate on the research methodology implemented in this study, in order to fill the identified gap within the marketing literature

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter focuses on the research methodology implemented to address the research problem of this study. The various stages of the marketing research process serve as the structuring principle of this chapter. Identifying the research problem along with the various objectives is the first step in the process. The second step is to determine the research design to use - here causal, exploratory and descriptive research designs are discussed. Designing the data collection method is the third step, where secondary and primary data sources are perused. The fourth step in the marketing research process elaborates on designing the sample and data collection method. Step five entails analysing and interpreting the data, with the research report being step six of the process. The chapter concludes by providing an explanation of the forms of data analysis used in the study.

4.2 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS

In order for marketers to make effective decisions concerning their brand, products or services, marketing research should be conducted by studying opportunities and specific problems through market surveys or product-preference tests (Kotler & Keller, 2016:60). According to Kardes *et al*. (2015:18), market research that is conducted effectively will improve the organisation's profits, reduce uncertainty among marketers and provide them with consumer insights. Marketing research is a systematic process that plans, collects, analyses and interprets data, which is used to define marketing problems and opportunities (AMA, 2018; Kardes *et al*., 2015:15; Kotler & Keller, 2016:61; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:7).

Kotler and Keller (2016:62) assert that marketers who adopt a good marketing research process make the most effective and efficient use of the practices and resources available. The marketing research process has six consecutive steps that are portrayed in Figure 4-1. As noted, the marketing research process serves as the chapter outline and acts as a roadmap to structure this chapter.

Figure 4-1: The marketing research process



Source: Adapted from Babin and Zikmund (2016:62); Bradley (2013:36) and Iacobucci and Churchill (2015:37).

4.2.1 Step 1: Identify the research problem and objectives

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:24) propound that the first step of the marketing research process, which entails the identification of research problem and the defining of the research objectives, can be considered the most difficult step. Kotler and Keller (2016:62) add that when defining the research problem, marketing managers should avoid making it too broad or too narrow. This step also comprises the formulation of specific research objectives that are based on the research problem and that can be used as a guide as to what information should be collected in order to solve the research problem (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:62; Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:29). The research problem for this study was presented and demarcated in section 1.4 and the objectives of this study emanate from this.

4.2.1.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

4.2.1.2 Secondary objectives

The following secondary objectives have been formulated in order to achieve the primary objective of this study:

1. To provide an overview of the research literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.

2. To develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singletons market segment and who participated in this study.

3. To determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

4. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion consciousness.

5. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of cost consciousness.

6. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health orientation.

7. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation.

8. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping.

9. To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career orientation.

10. To determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

11. To determine the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

12. To determine the difference in perceptions of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their demographic differences.

4.2.2 Step 2: Determine the research design

Determining the research design for the study is the second step in the marketing research process. Sontakki (2009:65) defines the research design as a framework that the researcher uses to ensure that that the right data is collected and that it is analysed correctly. The research design provides the researcher with specific methods and procedures to allocate resources in order to obtain the information needed to answer the research question. According to Kotler and Keller (2016:63), the market researcher has to consider the sources of data, the research approaches, the research instrument, sampling plan and the available methods of contact to develop the research design effectively. A research design requires

detailing all the necessities for the study, which help the market researcher to conduct a successful study (Burns & Bush, 2014:98). Clow and James (2014:27) classify the various research design frameworks into three basic categories: causal, exploratory and descriptive.

4.2.2.1 Causal research

Rahman (2017:17) asserts that a causal research design is suitable for understanding a phenomenon in the attempt to explain the cause and effect relationship between the dependent and independent variables. McDaniel and Gates (2010:77) concur that a causal research design is implemented in order to determine the impact of specific changes on existing norms, assumptions and different processes. Causal research aims to clarify the relationship patterns between the variables by focusing, analysing and interpreting a specific situation or problem (Dawar, 2016:135). Therefore, the causality can be determined by considering the variable that is assumed to have a bearing on another variable and in order to measure the changes on the other variable.

Causal research, therefore, involves conducting experiments in order to determine whether a variable has an effect on another variable (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2015:51). According to Sontakki (2009:72), an experiment refers to a research process where the independent variable is manipulated in order to determine the effect on the dependent variable. Furthermore, Sontakki (2009:73) notes that there are three basic components involved when conducting an experiment, namely the variable being manipulated (independent variable); the actual alteration (treatment); and the dependent variable (the actual variables chosen to measure the subject response). When conducting causal research, laboratory experiments or field experiments can be selected (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:56). Laboratory experiments occur in an artificial setting in which the variables can be controlled or manipulated and where the subjects are aware of their participation in the experiment (Sontakki, 2009:74). Field experiments are conducted in the real world, where the natural setting serves as the base of the field experiment and the subjects are unaware of their participation. When conducting field experiments, the variables cannot be controlled (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:56). Feinberg *et al*. (2013:108) note that causal research may be difficult to conduct as it is expensive, time-consuming and fairly complex to implement.

4.2.2.2 Exploratory research

Exploratory research is research conducted in order to investigate a problem or situation (Mooi *et al*., 2018:14). Kardes *et al*. (2015:22) suggest that exploratory research is a broad research design that is implemented in order to generate ideas or help formulate problems to be used

for further research. According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2015:59), exploratory research enables a researcher to understand a research problem when there is little information available on the identified problem area.

When conducting exploratory research, the researcher can gain a clear understanding of the problem, as well as obtain guidance, ideas and insights on how to conduct future research that can eventually lead to the provision of a definite solution to the problem (Kardes *et al*., 2015:22). Sontakki (2009:68) considers exploratory research essential for the researcher to properly define the problem at hand. According to Sontakki (2009:68) exploratory research can be pinpointed and used to:

- Formulate a problem for more precise investigation
- Establish priorities for further research
- Gather information about the practical problems for conducting research on particular academic statements.
- Improve the researcher's familiarity with the research problem
- Clarify the research concepts.

Exploratory research is flexible and various methods can be used to gather information about a problem or a situation. Literature searches consider both secondary and primary data sources to provide information on the problem. Primary data collection methods of an exploratory research approach include focus groups, in-depth interviews, projective techniques, observational studies and ethnographies (Mooi *et al*., 2018:15).

4.2.2.3 Descriptive research

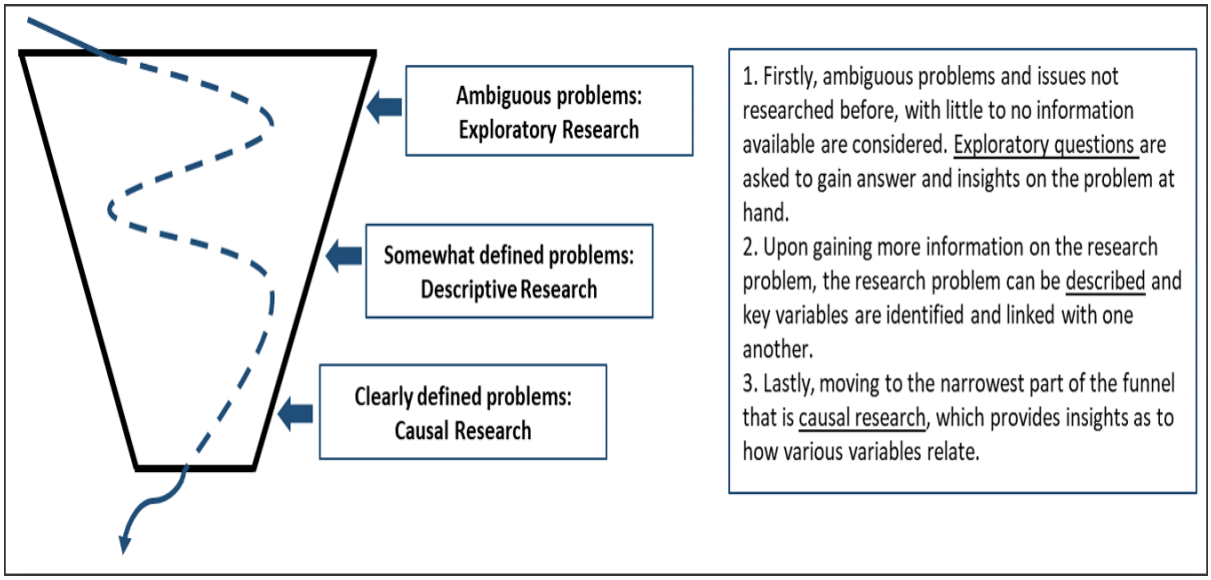
Descriptive research is conducted in order to describe certain phenomena, characteristics, behaviours, functions or to formulate predictions about trends or variables. Descriptive research also helps to describe market segments, consumers, competitors and performance measurement accurately (Kardes *et al*., 2015:25; Mooi *et al*., 2018:17). Conducting descriptive research provides answers to the who, what, when, where and why of the research as well as determining the frequency when something occurs or how variables vary from each other (Brown & Suter, 2014:34; Feinberg *et al*., 2013:57). According to Mooi *et al*. (2018:17), descriptive research can focus on one or more variables simultaneously.

Sontakki (2009:70) notes that the data obtained by means of descriptive research can be used as a basis for making marketing decisions. According to Sontakki (2009:70), a descriptive research design can be used to:

- Describe characteristics of certain groups by gathering demographic information such as consumer's age, gender, income, education level and marital status
- Estimate the proportion of consumers in a specific population who behave in a certain manner;
- Make specific predictions
- Determine whether certain variables are associated with one another.

Mooi *et al*. (2018:13) are of the opinion that the various research designs (causal, exploratory and descriptive) are interrelated. Figure 4-2 presents a funnel which is used as a metaphor to explain the relationship between the marketing research problem and the various research designs.

Figure 4-2: The relationship between a marketing research problem and research design



Source: Adapted from Mooi *et al*. (2018:13).

Furthermore, Mooi *et al*. (2018:14) identify the various uses of the research designs. Researchers should understand and consider the various uses and methods of each research design in order to be able to select and apply an appropriate research design to the marketing

research problem. Table 4-2 compares the three research designs in terms of use and methods.

Table 4-1: Uses and methods of the research designs

	Exploratory research	**Descriptive research**	**Causal research**
Uses	Understand structure Formulate problem precisely Generate hypotheses Develop measurement scales	Describe consumers and competitors Understand market size Segment markets Measure performance	Uncover causality Understand the performance effects of marketing mix elements.
Methods	Literature search Case analyses Focus groups In-depth interviews	Literature search Panels Observations Surveys	Laboratory experiments Field experiments

Source: Adapted from Brown and Suter (2014:29) and Mooi *et al.* (2018:14).

In this study, a review of the literature provided evidence that minimal knowledge of the Singletons consumer segment and their buying behaviour exists, and in effect formed the basis from which the research problem was formulated (see section 1.4). The research problem accentuates that little or no research is available on the Singletons segment in South Africa. This study adopted a descriptive research design to obtain adequate information pertaining to the research problem in order to describe the Singletons segment, draw conclusions and make specific predictions. Following a descriptive research design allows the researcher to:

- Provide a description of the research literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.
- Describe the demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singletons market segment and who participated in this study.
- Describe the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.
- Describe the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health orientation, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation.

- Describe the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

- Describe the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.

- Describe the different perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their demographic differences.

Considering the purpose of the study, a descriptive research design was used in order to draw conclusions and to describe a situation.

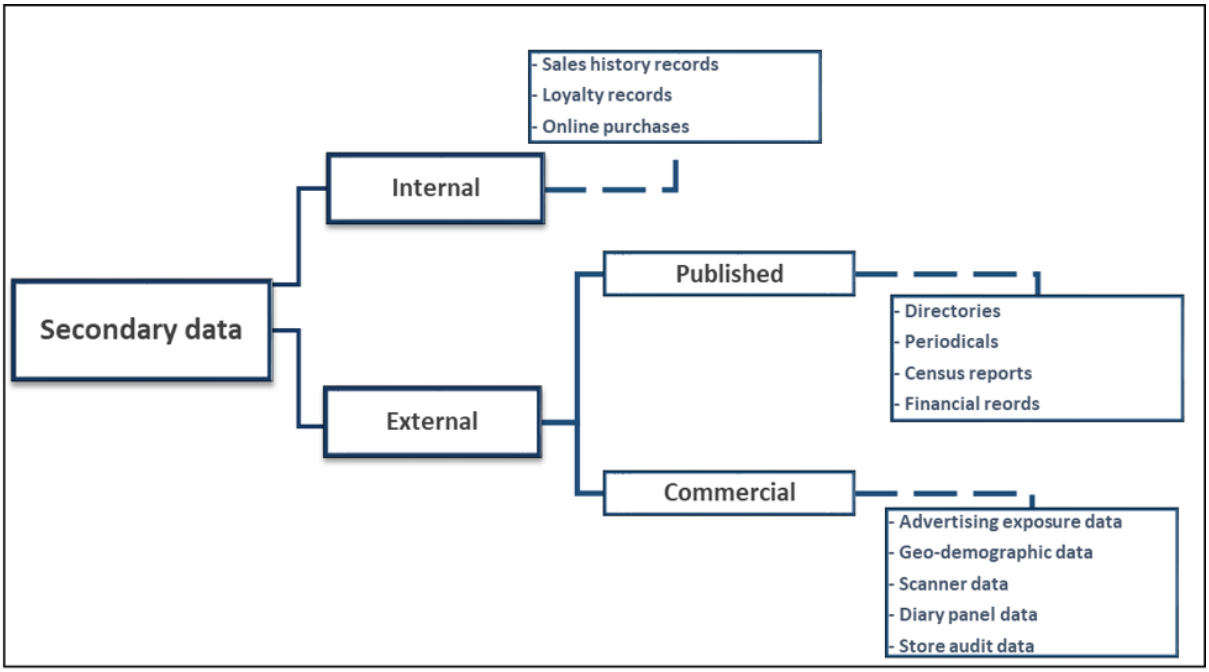
4.2.3 Step 3: Design the data collection method

The third step in the marketing research design process is to design a data collection method based on the research problem and objectives defined in step 1 and the research design selected in step 2. Bradley (2013:139) defines data collection as an assortment of facts obtained to be used by a researcher as a basis for analysis, reasoning or discussion. Mooi *et al*. (2018:28) describe data as the heart of marketing research. Kotler and Keller (2016:63) warn that data collection can be quite expensive and error-prone, and therefore great care should be taken when designing and implementing the data collection method. Kardes *et al*. (2015:30) and Kotler and Keller (2016:63) distinguish between two types of data that can be collected, namely secondary data and primary data. These are discussed subsequently.

4.2.3.1 Secondary data sources

Secondary data is described by Kotler and Keller (2016:63) as data that was previously collected for another purpose by individuals or organisations. Secondary data is readily available to researchers in various forms (Sontakki, 2009:138). According to Brown *et al*. (2018:60), the information provided by secondary data sources have been collected and considered prior to and based on a preceding research problem and not on the problem at hand. Various types of secondary data sources, whether they are internal or external secondary data sources, are available to researchers. The various sources of secondary data are presented in Figure 4-3.

Figure 4-3: Different types of secondary data sources



Source: Adapted from Iacabucci and Churchill (2015:143) and Kardes *et al*. (2015:30).

4.2.3.2 Primary data sources

Primary data, also referred to as "new-to-the-world" data, is the data that is specifically gathered to address a specific research problem under consideration (Brown *et al*., 2018:60; Kotler & Keller, 2016:63). Kardes *et al*. (2015:30) propound that lifestyle information, attitudes, preferences, motivations, behaviours and demographics are the type of information that can be gathered using the primary data collection method. Primary data can be collected by means of qualitative and quantitative research.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain more background information on the research problem, without using numbers as a form of measurement (Zikmund *et al*., 2017:63). According to Wiid and Diggines (2009:89), observations, words, pictures, audio and stories are some of the forms in which qualitative research can be conducted. Qualitative research adopts an interpretive approach to data that allows the researcher to obtain an idea of a persons' perspective and how they experience various situations (Harreveld *et al*., 2016:18). Zikmund *et al*. (2017:63) assert that compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is less structured and mostly makes use of open-ended formats, thus enabling the research participants to answer questions at length.

Quantitative research is considered to be a form of conclusive research presented in values, where data is collected by means of a structured questionnaire with predetermined response options (Burns & Bush, 2017:143). Quantitative data allows for a larger sample to be considered when collecting data (Feinberg *et al*. 2013:219). Mooi *et al*. (2018:32) argue that quantitative data is based on qualitative judgements. Elsbach and Kramer (2016:43) support this notion by affirming that the hypotheses formulated using qualitative research is tested whilst conducting quantitative research. Table 4-3 provides a comparison of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

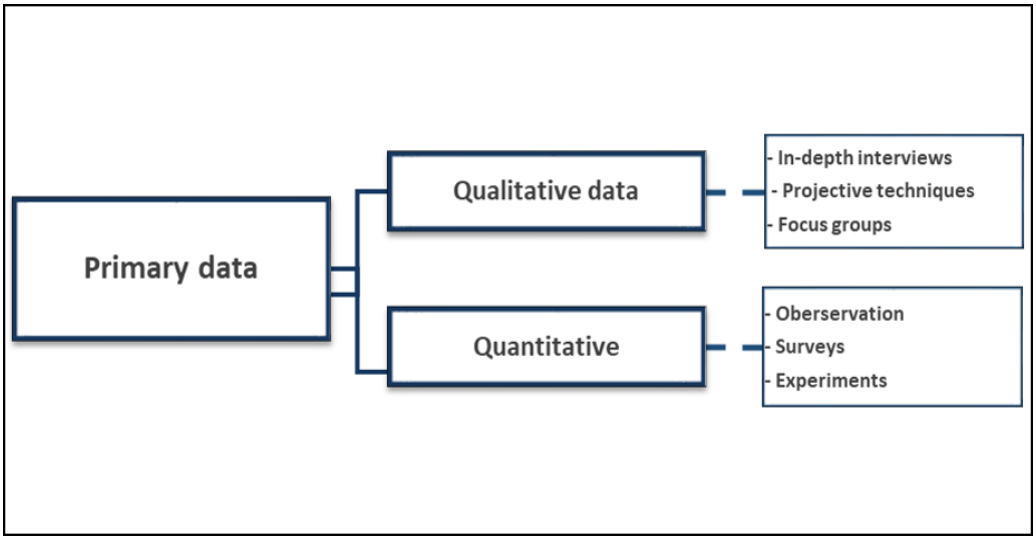
Table 4-2: Comparing qualitative and quantitative research

Research aspect	Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Common purpose	Test hypotheses or specific research questions	Discover new ideas, thoughts and feelings used in exploratory research with general research objectives
Type of research design	Descriptive or causal design	Exploratory design
Approach	Measure and test	Observe and interpretive
Type of questions	Limited probing, structured response categories	Probing, unstructured, free form
Research independence	Results are subjective, the researcher is intimately involved	Results are objective, a researcher is an uninvolved observer
Sample size	Large sample with a good representation of the population	Small samples
Type of analysis	Statistical and mathematical procedures	Interpretive, subjective, semiotic analysis
Outcome	Recommend a final course of action	Develop an initial understanding

Sources: Adapted from McDaniel and Gates (2010:92); Shiu *et al*. (2009:171) and Zikmund *et al*. (2017:66).

Malhotra and Dash (2016:175) suggest that qualitative and quantitative research each have various data collection techniques. Figure 4-4 illustrates the qualitative and quantitative research techniques that can be implemented to collect primary data.

Figure 4-4: Primary data collection techniques



Source: Adapted from Cant (2010:48) and Malhotra and Dash (2016:175).

When considering the primary and secondary sources of data, it is important that the advantages and disadvantages of each data source are considered. Obtaining this knowledge will assist researchers to understand and collect the correct data that is most applicable to the research problem (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:69). The advantages and disadvantages of each data source are presented in Table 4-4.

Table 4-3: The advantages and disadvantages of secondary and primary data sources

	Secondary data	*Primary data*
Advantages	Cost-effective Greater sample sizes Greater level of authority Quick to access Easy to compare research More accurate	Recent data Conducted specific for the purpose/research study Proprietary
Disadvantages	Data may be outdated May not fully fit the research problem Hidden errors in data can occur Difficult to assess data quality No control over data	Tendency to be expensive Larger time period is `required to obtain data

Source: Adapted from Mooi *et al*. (2018:31).

4.2.3.3 Data collection method used in this study

For the purpose of this study, secondary data was collected by means of an extensive literature review (Chapters 2 to 3). The literature review provided the researcher with knowledge of the theoretical constructs investigated in this study, which included consumer buying behaviour and reference groups (Chapter 2), as well as market segmentation with a specific focus on lifestyle segmentation of the Singletons consumer segment (Chapter 3).

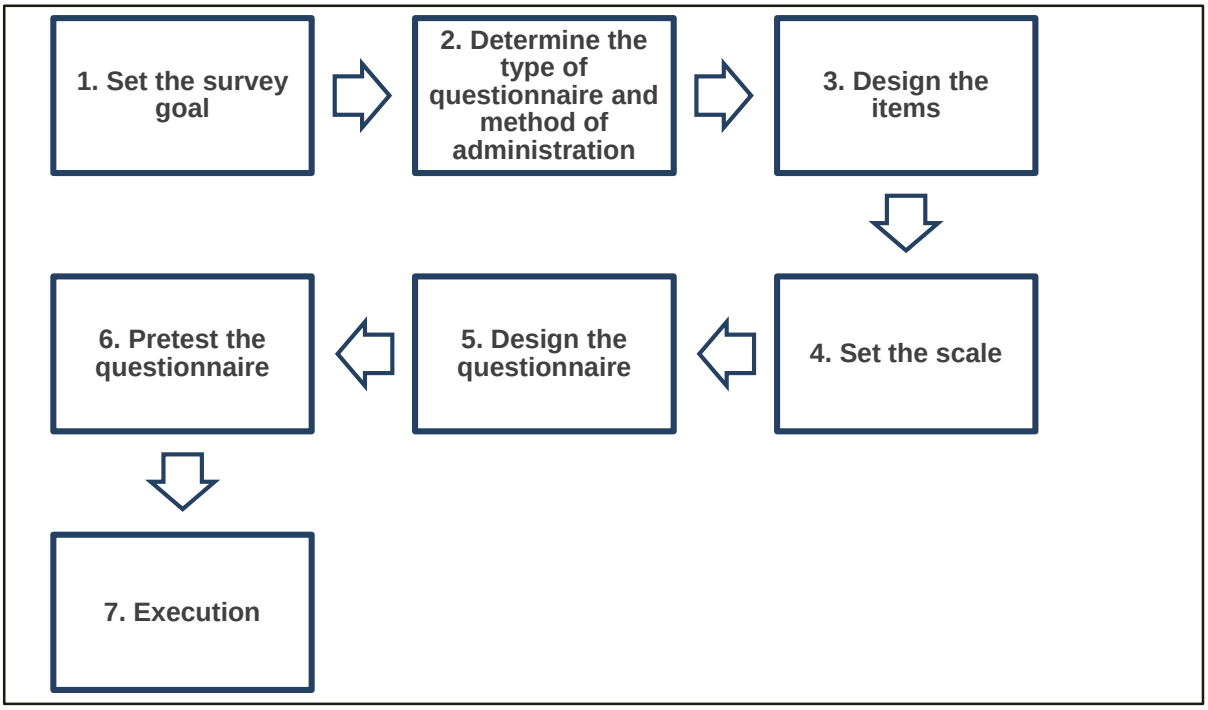
This study followed a **quantitative** research approach to collect primary data. Babin and Zikmund (2016:13) assert that following a quantitative research approach enables researchers to use scales to measure concepts. Likert, ordinal and nominal scales were used in this study to measure the responses of respondents. Quantitative research is used to determine the behaviour of the respondents as well as the relationship between variables (Struwig & Stead, 2013:177). For these reasons, a quantitative research approach was used in order to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

A self-administrative semi-structured questionnaire was used, where fieldworkers intercepted potential respondents at high traffic areas in order to gather the data for the study. According to Burns and Bush (2014:172), questionnaires are the descriptive method mostly used for collecting data and conducting market research. This is due to the fact that questionnaires are an inexpensive, accurate and efficient way for researchers to obtain information about the target population (Burns & Bush, 2014:172). The questionnaire in this study was used to determine and describe the characteristics of Singletons in terms of demographics, reference groups and lifestyle.

4.2.3.4 Research instrument

Primary data was collected for this study by using a standardised questionnaire. Kardes *et al*. (2015:26) explain that a questionnaire is a set of structured questions with response options for the participants. The primary goal of questionnaires is to obtain data through a list of questions that will generate the data needed to solve the research problem (Wiid & Diggines, 2009:171). Mooi *et al*. (2018:171) note that there are seven steps to follow that will ensure that an effective questionnaire is designed. Figure 4-5 provides a schematic representation of these steps.

Figure 4-5: Steps in designing an effective questionnaire



Source: Adapted from Mooi *et al*. (2018:64)

Kotler and Keller (2016:63) assert that researchers use questionnaires in order to assess the knowledge, satisfaction, beliefs and preferences of individuals as well as to measure these magnitudes in the general population. According to Kardes *et al*. (2015:26), questionnaires can be structured in a variety of forms including oral or written formats, which can be administrated by means of telephone, the Internet, mail, face-to-face or e-mail.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2014:37) identify four basic types of questionnaires, namely person-administrated questionnaires; computer-assisted questionnaires; computer-administrated questionnaires; and self-administrative questionnaires. This study made use of a self-administrative questionnaire. According to Burns and Bush (2014:142), self-administrative questionnaires are presented to the respondents where they have the opportunity to complete them without interference by the interviewer or fieldworkers. Mooi *et al*. (2018:68) propound that no interviewer bias occurs, as the trained fieldworkers are responsible for distributing and collecting the completed questionnaires. The researcher is not present to influence the answers provided by the respondents in any way.

4.2.3.5 Types of response formats

Rao (2011:140) affirms that developing and deciding on a response format is a crucial stage when designing a questionnaire. Struwig and Stead (2013:115) propound that attitude scales and projective techniques influence the type of measurement techniques that will be used when developing the response format. According to Wiid and Diggines (2009:117), the researcher must consider the probable reaction or answer of the respondents on the question. Rao (2011:140) distinguishes between five forms of questions that can be used in a questionnaire: open-ended, close-ended, multiple choice, dichotomous and scaled-response questions.

A. Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are unstructured and offer the respondents the freedom of answering the questions in their own words, based on how they think and feel (Rao, 2011:140). Mooi *et al*. (2018:402) assert that these questions can also be referred to as verbatim items, where respondents write their answers in the response box provided. According to Hyman and Sierra (2010:154), open-ended questions are most effective when used in face-to-face interviews, as some answers provided by the respondents are unpredicted and follow-up questions need to be asked in order for the interviewer to gain a better perspective. Articulation of respondent bias, interviewer bias, hard-to-record answers, coding inconsistency and difficulty, reduced cross-study comparability and complexity and costliness are some of the disadvantages associated with open-ended questions (Hyman & Sierra, 2010:155).

B. Close-ended questions

Close-ended questions are more structured as compared to open-ended questions, and here respondents select an answer from a fixed set of alternative answers (Rao, 2011:141). Hyman and Sierra (2010:156) propose the following advantages when using close-ended questions:

- The communication skills required by respondents are less critical.
- Close-ended questions enable speedy responses from the respondents.
- The questions are easy to answer.
- Coding, entering and analysing the data can be done quickly compared to open-ended questions.
- The skills needed for interviewing respondents are less important.

Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:215) confirm that multiple-choice questions, dichotomous questions and scaled-response questions are all forms of close-ended questions.

- **Multiple-choice questions**

Clow and James (2014:332) note that multiple-choice questions provide the respondents with multiple answers, usually more than three from which they can choose. According to Rao (2011:141), the response options provided can be considered as alternative options so that they can be closest to the view or opinion of the respondent completing the questionnaire. Multiple-choice questions ideally require the respondent to choose only one answer from the total number of options available (Smith & Albaum, 2010:228).

- **Dichotomous questions**

Babin and Zikmund (2016:309) define dichotomous questions as the questions where the respondents have to select only one of the two alternative options available. “Yes or No” and “Agree or Disagree” are examples of dichotomous questions’ response options. Neutral answer options can be used as supplements to the Yes/No option, where respondents have response options such as “Neither”, “Can’t say” or “Don’t know” (Smith & Albaum, 2010:227). According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:215), respondents prefer dichotomous questions as they are easy to answer, whereas researchers share this preference due to the ease of coding and tabulation of the answers provided by using this format.

- **Scaled-response options**

Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:233) consider scaled-response questions parallel to multiple-choice questions, as both forms offer various alternative response options. However, scaled-response options differ from multiple-choice questions in the sense that they use various forms of measurement scales. The Semantic differential scale, Likert scale, Rating scale and the Importance scale are the different measuring scales that can be used when considering scaled-response options as a form of response.

4.2.3.6 Measurement scales used in the questionnaire

According to Arora and Mahankale (2013:94), the level of measurement helps the researcher to decide how the data obtained from the variable will be interpreted. Researchers who know the level of measurement can decide which statistical analysis should be used for the assigned values. Mooi *et al*. (2018:35) assert that the four basic levels of measurement include nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales.

- **Nominal scale**

Malhotra (2010:253) consider nominal scales to be the most basic and least precise level that a researcher uses to measure something where a numerical value is used to substitute a word. The characteristics of a specific outcome when using a nominal scale only fits into one class or category (Salkind, 2017:32). Babin and Zikmund (2016:272) assert that the numerical value assigned to an object should only to be used for identification purposes. Nominal scaling does not require any spacing or ordering (Arora & Mahankale, 2013:96). Arora and Mahankale (2013:96) consider pin codes, gender, marital status and geographic locations as nominal scale variables.

- **Ordinal scale**

As indicated in the first three letters, the *ord* in ordinal level scales stands for *order,* where the items are ranked or graded and sequenced with regards to a common variable (Salkind, 2017:32). According to Benzo *et al*. (2016:145), ordinal scales provide richer data and information than nominal scales. Mooi *et al*. (2018:37) assert that ordinal scales provide the researcher with information comprising of the order of the respondent's observations. Ordinal scales can position items based on the comparative magnitude of a concept and allow items to be arranged based on how much of a certain concept they represent (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:275).

- **Interval scale**

Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:235) explain that the numerical value assigned to the responses are meaningful when they allow equal increments of the attribute being measured. The interval scale enables the researcher to achieve a higher level of measurement in comparison with those of the nominal and ordinal scales (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:275). According to Arora and Mahankale (2013:97) there is no fixed zero-point location, since zero does not signify the absence of the attribute. Clow and James (2014:262) note that using interval scales allow researchers to calculate a mean and conduct tests like t-tests and ANOVAs. Considering the above, interval scales have desirable properties, allowing researchers to analyse the resulting number using the entire range of statistical operations (Arora & Mahankale, 2013:97).

- **Ratio scale**

Ratio scales have a meaningful zero point as well as all the characteristics of the nominal, ordinal and interval scales (Mooi *et al*., 2018:38). Salkind (2017:33) notes that the zero-point

means that although certain traits are not present, they are still being measured. According to Arora and Mahankale (2013:97), the ratio scale is the only type of scale that permits researchers to make comparisons of absolute magnitude. Cant *et al*. (2010:135) consider the ratio scale to be the highest scale level from which the most information can be collected.

The questionnaire used **for this study** consists of the four sections (refer to Appendix A) that are described below.

Section A – Screening questions: Screening questions were asked in order to ensure that the respondents who completed the questionnaire qualified to participate in the study.

Section B – Reference groups: The purpose of section B of the questionnaire was to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons by using the 12-item SUSCEP (the Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence) scale introduced by Bearden *et al*. (1989). The SUSCEP-scale is used by marketers in order to measure consumer behaviour of individuals (DeMarais, 2015:8), as well as the tendency of an individual to change due to social pressure (Huang *et al*., 2012:140). Bearden *et al*. (1989) define susceptibility to interpersonal influences as the extent to which an individual is sensitive to the opinions of others. The SUSCEP-scale measures how the choices of individuals are influenced by significant others. Such individuals try to enhance their image by consuming products and brands approved of by others (Paulose & Ramanathan, 2016:10). The SUSCEP-scale measures the normative dimensions (conformity and enhancing one's image) by using eight items and uses four items to measure the informative dimensions (utility information) (Paulose & Varghese, 2016:38). The reliability and validity were established regarding the effect of the SUSCEP-scale's ability to effectively measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons. DeMarais (2015:11) determined the reliability of the SUSCEP-scale by calculating the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the normative dimension (0.09) and the informative dimension (0.72). Studies that used the SUSCEP-scale have also been conducted by Ebren (2009), Huang *et al*. (2012), Paulose and Varghese (2016) and Paulose and Ramanathan (2016).

Section B of the questionnaire incorporated 12 items of the SUSCEP-scale on a Likert type scale in order to measure the responses. A seven-point Likert type scale was used to rate the response to each statement of the SUSCEP-scale in ascending degree of agreement, where 1 – strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Section C - Lifestyle: The purpose of this section was to conduct a lifestyle analysis of Singletons, using 37 AIO statements as proposed by Plummer (1974). The statements used

in this study were obtained and adapted from previous lifestyle studies conducted by Anantachart (2013), Kucukemiroglu *et al*. (2006), Lee *et al*. (2009) and Narang (2010). According to Hur *et al*. (2010:296), conducting an analysis based on the activities, interests and opinions (AIO) is the foremost used approach to determine the lifestyle of consumers, as well as how they spend their time and money. AIO-lifestyle studies conform to using a psychographic inventory, where the battery of statements are used to determine the activities, interests and opinions in which the respondents participate (Hur *et al*., 2010:296).

Section C of the questionnaire set out to determine the lifestyle of Singletons by using 37 AIO-statements. Sub-categories of the 37 AIO-statements were created in order to determine the following lifestyle dimensions: fashion consciousness, cost-consciousness, health orientation, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation respectively.

The AIO measurement scale implements a seven-point Likert scale to rate the response to each AIO statement in ascending degree of agreement, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

Section D – Demographic information: The aim of this section was to obtain information regarding the respondents' demographics such as age, gender, income, marital status, level of education and current occupation. The information obtained from this section helps the researcher to create a sample profile of the respondents.

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire comprised of close-ended questions that included dichotomous, multiple-choice and scaled questions. Tables 4-5 to 4-7 provide a summary of the response format and level of measurement used in each question of the questionnaire.

Table 4-4: Measurement of reference group influence (SUSCEP-scale)

Question	Statement	Response format	Level of measurement
B1	I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends will approve of them.	Scaled	Likert
B2	It is important that others like the products and brands I use.	Scaled	Likert
B3	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	Scaled	Likert
B4	If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	Scaled	Likert
B5	I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	Scaled	Likert
B6	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	Scaled	Likert
B7	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	Scaled	Likert
B8	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	Scaled	Likert
B9	To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	Scaled	Likert
B10	If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.	Scaled	Likert
B11	I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative from a product class.	Scaled	Likert
B12	I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.	Scaled	Likert

Table 4-5: Measuring of lifestyle

Question	Statements	Response format	Level of measurement
C1.1- C1.10	Fashion consciousness I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style. When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for fashion, not for comfort. An important part of my life and activities is dressing smartly. I often try the latest hairstyles when they change. I dress more fashionably than most people do. People can realise your social status by looking at the brand of clothes you wear. I read fashion-related magazines. I consult the internet for the latest fashion and styles. I spend a lot of time talking with my friends about the latest fashion trends. I like to watch fashion-related programmes on television.	Scaled	Likert
C2.1 – C2.5	Cost consciousness I shop for specials. I find myself checking the prices in the grocery store even for small items. I usually watch the advertisements for announcements of sales. A person can save a lot of money by shopping around for bargains. I like to pay cash for everything I buy.	Scaled	Likert
C4.1 – C4.4	Recreation I thoroughly enjoy my leisure time. Leisure is worth the extra money spent for it. I would rather enjoy leisure time than work hard. I prefer to do nothing but watch TV or movies during the holidays.	Scaled	Likert

Table 4-5: ***Measuring of lifestyle (continued)***

Question	Statements	Response format	Level of measurement
C5.1 – C5.7	E-shopping I think online buying is a novel, fun way to shop. E-shopping is easier than local shopping. I like browsing on the internet. I think e-shopping offers lower prices than local stores. I enjoy buying things on the internet. Buying things on the internet scares me. I think e-shopping offers a better selection than local stores.	Scaled	Likert
C6.1 – C6.5	Career orientation My work is stressful. My work is of primary importance to me in life. My work is my true identity. I lack perseverance and focus to achieve goals. My work gives me satisfaction.	Scaled	Likert

Table 4-6: Measuring demographics

Question	Statements	Response format	Level of measurement
D1	How old are you?	Multiple-choice	Ordinal
D2	What is your monthly disposable income?	Multiple-choice	Ordinal
D3	What is your gender?	Dichotomous	Nominal
D4	Please indicate your highest level of education.	Multiple-choice	Nominal
D5	Please specify your current occupation.	Open-ended	-

4.2.3.7 Linking the objectives with the questionnaire

Table 4-8 links the objectives of the study with the questions used in the questionnaire.

	Secondary objectives	Questions
1.	To provide an overview of the research literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.	Chapters 2 & 3
2.	To develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the singletons market segment and who participated in this study.	D1 – D5
3.	To determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.	B1 – B12
4.	To determine the lifestyle of singletons in terms of fashion consciousness.	C1.1 – C1.10
5.	To determine the lifestyle of singletons in terms of cost consciousness.	C2.1 – C2.5
6.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health orientation.	C3.1 – C3.4
7.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation	C4.1 – C4.4
8.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping.	C5.1 – C5.7
9.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career orientation.	C6.1 – C6.5
10.	To determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.	C1.1 – C6.5
11.	To determine the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.	B1 – B12; C1.1 – C6.5
12.	To determine the difference in perception of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of singletons with regards to their demographic differences.	B1 – B12; C1.1 – C6.5; D1 – D5

Table 4-7: Relationship between objectives and questionnaire

4.2.3.8 Pilot study of the questionnaire used for this study

A pilot study is conducted once a draft questionnaire has been completed. A small sample of respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire before it is launched in order to identify any reading difficulties or errors (Struwig & Stead, 2013:97). According to Flynn and Foster (2009:157), pretesting the questionnaire allows the researcher to make the necessary improvements in order to collect correct and efficient data. Several steps need to be followed before the pilot study can commence.

The first step was to submit the questionnaire to the Ethical Committee of the North-West University. The questionnaire was examined and a few changes regarding the demographic section required adjustment. Upon receiving clearance from the Ethical Committee, the questionnaire was submitted to the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University. The questionnaire was analysed to ensure that the data obtained is relevant and will achieve the objectives of the study.

Upon receiving approval from the Statistical Consultation Services, a sample of twenty respondents who formed part of the target population, namely Singletons who reside in the Gauteng, were asked to complete the questionnaire. An analysis of the completed questionnaires derived from the pilot study indicated that it was easy for the respondents to understand and complete the questionnaire and that no further amendments were necessary.

4.2.4 Step 4: Design the sample and collect data

The fourth step of the marketing research process comprises the implementation and management of the data collection method, where the researcher designs the sample and obtains the data required for the research study.

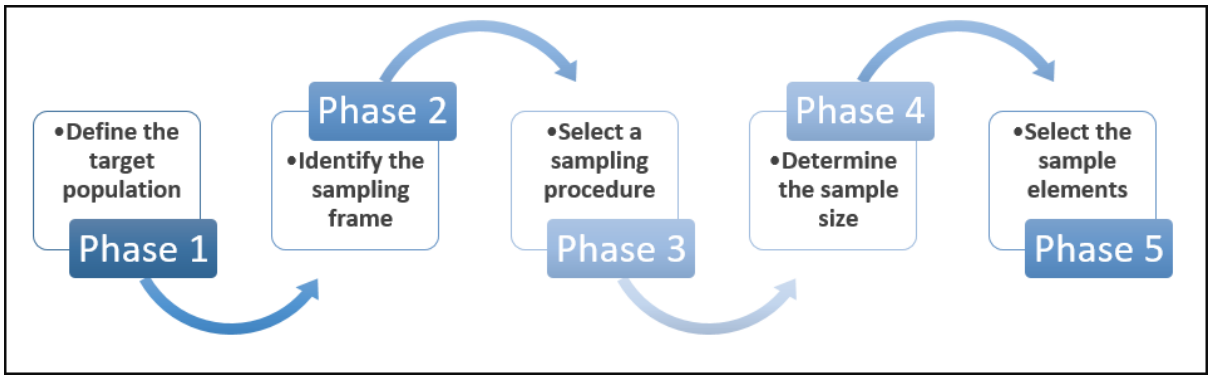
4.2.4.1 Sample design

A sample represents a limited number of respondents who form part of the total population used by researchers in order to make assumptions or conclusions of the entire population (Sontakki, 2009:106). According to Feinberg *et al*. (2013:58), participants are selected from a target population to participate in a study. Malhotra (2010:335) asserts that the sample serves as a representation of the total population who shares characteristics similar to those of the population at large. The selected sample have the characteristics and information pursued by the researcher (Malhotra, 2010:372). McDaniel and Gates (2010:326) argue that selecting a

sample allows researchers to form various inferences of the characteristics of the target population accurately.

Babin and Zikmund (2016:340) propound that when researchers select a sample as a representation of the population, several phases should be considered during the sampling process. Figure 4-6 illustrates these phases.

Figure 4-6: Sample design framework



Source: Adapted from Babin and Zikmund (2016:340) and Malhotra (2010:372).

4.2.4.2 Phase 1: Define the target population

Sontakki (2009:110) describes sampling as a process of making decisions, where determining the target population is an important decision to be made. According to Neelankavil (2015:240), sampling concerns the identification of a sub-group of a larger population used as a basis for representing and arriving at conclusions about the entire population. Population characteristics are used to form sub-groups in the population (Zikmund & Babin, 2010:310). Benzo *et al*. (2016:129) describe a target population as the individuals under examination with relation to the research objectives of the study. According to Mooi *et al*. (2018:42), a target population consists of the group of units that a researcher considers when forming judgements. The research problem will determine whether the units from the population consist of groups of individuals, consumers, products or organisations. Defining the target population is of great importance, as a clearly defined target population will ensure that the selected sample is representative of the characteristics of the total population (Shiu *et al*., 2009:485).

Feinberg *et al*. (2013:303) and Malhotra (2010:336) define a target population by considering the elements, sampling units, extent, geographical areas and the time period in which the data will be collected. Babin and Zikmund (2016:343) assert that population elements refer to an

individual or object that belongs to the target. Table 4-5 provides a summary of the target population considered for this study.

Table 4-8: Summary of the target population

Dimension	Application to the study
Sampling elements	Consumers who form part of the Singletons segment, residing in Gauteng, South Africa in 2018/2019.
Sampling unit	Singletons segment in Gauteng, South Africa in 2018/2019.
Extent	The Gauteng province of the Republic of South Africa.
Time period	October 2018 to January 2019.

The target population for this study comprised of consumers in the Singletons segment who reside in Gauteng province in the Republic of South Africa. The sampling elements comprise of consumers who form part of the Singletons consumer segment and who reside in Gauteng during 2018 and 2019. The sampling unit for this study can be defined as the Singletons consumer segment. The extent of this study comprises the Gauteng province. Data was obtained from the sampling elements from November 2018 to February 2019.

4.2.4.3 Phase 2: Identify the sample frame

Phase two in the sampling process is to identify the sampling frame from which samples can be drawn. Dawar (2016:141) describes a sampling frame as a list or set of directories such as telephone directories, mailing lists and internal databases that comprise of the sampling elements from which the researcher can draw actual samples.

Considering this study, no sampling frame was available from which to draw a sample. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to obtain an appropriate sample that comprised of consumers within the Singletons segment in Gauteng province during October 2018 and January 2019.

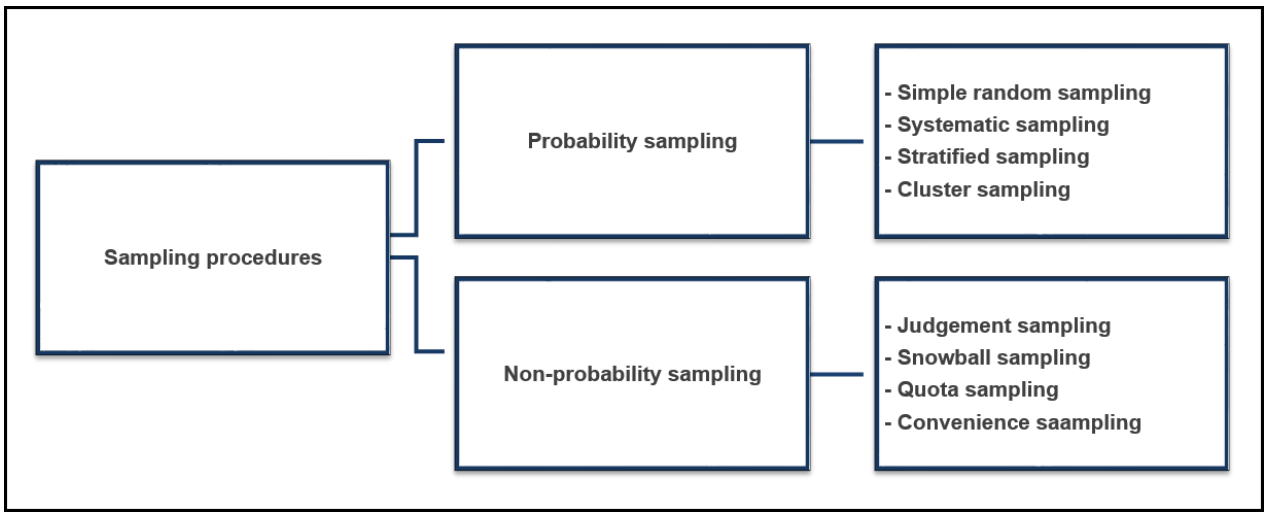
4.2.4.4 Phase 3: Select a sampling procedure

The third phase in selecting a sample for the study is to select a suitable sampling procedure. Gbadamosi (2013:122) asserts that researchers rely on drawing samples from the target population due to the exorbitant costs involved when including an entire population in a study. In addition, it could prove to be unrealistic to study the entire population of interest. By implementing an effective sampling procedure, the researcher can save time when conducting

the study and collecting the relevant information. Similarities in the characteristics of members of the same population enable marketers to use a sample to gauge the entire population of interest.

Sampling is considered important because it identifies respondents who actively embody the target population. If the wrong target population and respondents are identified, there is a strong likelihood that misleading conclusions will be made (Boone & Kurtz, 2014:320). Brown *et al*. (2014:306) identify probability sampling and non-probability sampling as methods that can be used to draw a representative sample. Figure 4-6 provides a schematic representation of the sampling procedure and its various methods of implementation.

Figure 4-7: Sampling procedure



Source: Adapted from Mooi *et al*. (2018:44)

A. Probability sampling

Probability sampling entails a systematic selection of sampling units so that each member of the target population has a known, non-zero probability of being selected for the sample (Brown *et al*., 2014:307). Babin and Zikmund (2016:351) assert that probability sampling consists of random sampling components that ensure that the elements selected are objective and not based on the researcher's bias and judgement. Boone and Kurtz (2014:320) identify simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling as techniques for conducting probability sampling.

- **Simple random sampling**

Babin and Zikmund (2016:351) consider simple random sampling a one-stage sample selection, where each element belonging to the population has an equal probability of being chosen for the sample. Researchers select elements by allocating a specific identification number to an element on the sampling frame, and specialised software or strata is used to randomly select numbers and compile the sample (Mooi *et al*., 2018:44). According to Gbadamosi (2013:123), the advantages of simple random sampling include that it is simple to conduct and justifies the criteria of probability sampling. However, this sampling technique has the disadvantages of being expensive and time-consuming.

- **Systematic sampling**

A systematic sampling technique requires the researcher to devise a list of the research elements alphabetically, numerically, geographically or in the way the researcher wishes (Sontakki, 2009:119). The researcher randomly selects the starting point of the first element, where a fixed skip interval is implemented to select the subsequent elements (Gbadamosi, 2013:123). McDaniel and Gates (2010:429) propound that systematic sampling is more time, cost and economically effective. Brown *et al*. (2014:307) and Zikmund *et al*. (2017:353) explain that in order to determine the value of the skip interval, the researcher divides the total target population size with the determined sample size.

- **Stratified sampling**

Stratified sampling entails grouping the population into various identifiable and homogenous groups, where samples are then chosen from each of the sub-groups (Mooi *et al*., 2018:45). Zikmund *et al*. (2017:354) assert that the homogenous groups can also be referred to as *strata*. According to Brown *et al*. (2014:309), a sample from each identified sub-group will be taken in order to gain an accurate representation of the final sample. Stratified sampling is most effective in research studies where various groups of individuals have several divergent viewpoints (Boone & Kurtz, 2014:320).

- **Cluster sampling**

Gbadamosi (2013:124) asserts that the goal of cluster sampling is to obtain the characteristics of a probability sample as economically possible. Cluster sampling, as defined by Boone and Kurtz (2014:320), is similar to stratified sampling in that the researcher selects a population from which samples are drawn. Zikmund *et al*. (2017:355) considers the *area sample* to be

the most prevalent type of cluster sample. Area samples represent a large cluster with various areas that are located close to one another. Researchers consider cluster sampling most effective when the population consists of geographic areas and not of individual elements such as people (Wiid & Diggnes, 2009:207). Babin and Zikmund (2016:355) warn that when the attitudes and characteristics of the cluster are too similar, these may prove to be problematic.

B. Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is distinguished from probability sampling by the fact that it is not known whether any element of the target population will be selected (Zikmund *et al*., 2017:357). According to Brown *et al*. (2014:305), the researcher's personal judgement is at play when selecting a sample. The probability of an element being included in the sample cannot be estimated due to the fact that not all elements have the opportunity to be included. Gbadamosi (2013:124) asserts that non-probability sampling does not incorporate any statistical methods like those of probability sampling when selecting a sample and can thus be considered to be arbitrary in nature. Researchers use non-probability sampling techniques since they are less costly and can be executed more easily as compared to probability sampling techniques (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:387). Techniques used for non-probability sampling include judgement sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and convenience sampling.

- **Judgement sampling**

Judgement sampling, also known as purposive sampling, refers to a technique of sampling in which an experienced researcher trusts his or her own judgement when selecting the research elements to be included in the sample (McDaniel & Gates, 2013:293). According to Zikmund *et al*. (2017:357), researchers may select samples that do not necessarily represent the entire population, but have specific aspects and characteristics that the researcher finds compelling. Malhotra (2010:379) asserts that judgement sampling is inexpensive and easy to administer. Researchers should pay attention to the judgements they make, because an error in judgement can lead to identifying the wrong sample (Shiu *et al*., 2009:481).

- **Snowball sampling**

Snowball sampling entails obtaining information from the initial respondents about additional respondents who qualify to participate in the study (Zikmund *et al*., 2017:358). The additional respondents are likely to display the same activities, interests and opinions as the initial respondents (Struwig & Stead, 2013:121). According to Burns *et al*. (2017:242), researchers may use probability sampling in order to recruit the initial respondents. Babin and Zikmund (2016:350) concur that snowball sampling is most effective when the population is small or

difficult to reach. The sample will continue to grow when the additional respondents are asked to refer even more potential respondents. The initial, additional and potential respondents need to have the characteristics and qualities that the researcher requires. These qualities include, *inter alia,* gender, age, education and income (Gbadamosi, 2013:126).

- **Quota sampling**

Iacobucci and Churchill (2015:271) propound that quota sampling occurs when a sample is selected based on pre-specified characteristics that are in accordance with the proportion of the population. These characteristics include demographics, attitudes and consumer behaviour that are based on the researcher's judgements and desires (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:305; Gbadamosi, 2013:126). Babin and Zikmund (2016:350) emphasise that some of the advantages associated with quota sampling include the speed at which data can be collected; the convenience of collecting the data; and the relatively low costs involved when collecting the data.

- **Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling entails the collection of data from respondents who are readily and conveniently available (Mooi *et al*., 2018:63). Boone and Kurtz (2014:320) assert that convenience sampling mostly occurs at the place and time where the research is being conducted, due to the availability of suitable respondents. A sample collected by means of convenience sampling can be referred to as the "accidental sample", with mall interception surveys and TV call-in opinion polls being appropriate examples of data collection techniques. Although the place and selection of respondents are subjective, Gbadamosi (2013:125) assert that convenience sampling saves time and money and is easy to implement. Mooi *et al*. (2018:63) state that the researcher's decision as to who can form a part of the sample is limited as it is largely influenced by situational factors.

For the purpose of this study, **non-probability convenience sampling** was used since no sampling frame was available, and not all Singleton consumers could effectively be identified. Singleton consumers were intercepted by fieldworkers at high-traffic locations in Gauteng. These areas were deemed to be convenient since the researcher and the fieldworkers of this study reside in Gauteng.

4.2.4.5 Phase 4: Determine the sample size

The fourth phase in establishing a sample design is to determine the sample size. Cant *et al*. (2009:139) propound that the sample size includes the total number of elements that are

selected to be included in the study. Dawar (2016:142) proclaims that the size of the sample is affected by the nature of the research. Numerous qualitative and quantitative considerations have to be thoroughly examined when determining the sample size, which can prove to be a complex process (Dawar, 2016:142). According to Mooi *et al*. (2018:64), when samples are selected accurately, they have a stronger representation of the population, rather than selecting the sample according to size. Mooi *et al*. (2018:64) consider a smaller sample to be sufficiently precise and argue that the larger the sample size is, the less precise the gains become. Over time, various misconceptions and generalisations have been formed regarding an adequate sample size. Wiid and Diggnes (2009:208) state that some of the general misconceptions regarding sample size is that a sample size is fixed and proportionate to the size of the population; and that the accuracy of the study's results increase with a larger sample size. Malhotra (2010:374-375) mentions the following factors that influence the size of a sample:

- The number of variables needed for data collection.
- The type of data that has to be collected.
- The nature of the research.
- The complexity of the data analysis.
- The availability of resources such as time, finances and skilled fieldworkers

This study followed a **quantitative research approach** by implementing a descriptive research design. The influence of the various constructs on consumer buying behaviour were analysed by collecting data by means of semi-structured questionnaires. With regards to quantitative research, Struwig and Stead (2013:125) assert that an acceptable reflection of the population can be obtained with a sample size consisting of 150 to 200 respondents. According to Kent (2007:145) (as cited by Dawar, 2016:163), to conduct any kind of quantitative analysis, a minimum sample size of 100 respondents are needed. In this study, the sample size consisted of 251 responses, and 208 responses were considered due to response errors in the remaining responses.

4.2.4.6 Phase 5: Select the sample elements

The fifth and final phase in establishing a sample design is to select the sample elements. The sample elements of the study refer to the respondents from whom the researcher would like

to collect information, based on their activities, interests and opinions (Wiid and Diggnes, 2009:214).

In this study, **non-probability convenience sampling** was used to select the sampling elements. The sampling elements for this study can be defined as consumers in the Singletons segment who reside in the Gauteng province of the Republic of South Africa during 2018 and 2019. Table 4-6 provides a summary of the sample plan implemented in this study.

Table 4-9: Summary of the sample plan for this study

Design elements	Application to empirical study
Population	
Sampling element	Consumers who form part of the Singleton segment, residing in Gauteng province, South Africa in 2018.
Sampling unit	Singletons consumer segment
Extent	Gauteng province
Time	2018
Sample frame	No sampling frame.
Sampling method	Non-probability convenience sampling.
Sample size	200 sampling elements.

4.2.4.7 Collection of data

With the sample designed, the next step is to implement the sample plan and collect the required data. In order to collect the required data, the researcher and the fieldworkers need to be trained in order to assure that the data is collected effective and usable (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:31).

For this study, the researcher consulted with students who are in their final year of studies in order to fill the fieldworker's positions. It was imperative that the fieldworkers comprised of a broad understanding of academia and the research process. Background information on the study and its objectives were provided to the candidates, along with practicalities on how the data collection process will work. The roles, responsibilities and expectations of the fieldworkers were explained. The explanation was followed by a Q&A session where all uncertainties and questions were addressed.

In order to assure that no bias occurred during the data collection process the questionnaires incorporated neutrally worded questions, with non-leading answers. Fieldworkers collected

the data, which ensured that the researcher could not influence the responses provided by the respondents.

The trained fieldworkers started distributing self-administrative semi-structured questionnaires to Singletons in and around the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas of Gauteng province as from October 2018 to January 2019. The fieldworkers were responsible for identifying Singletons by conveniently intercepting them at high-traffic locations which was identified as Menlyn Park Mall, Menlyn Maine, Eastgate, Nelson Mandela Square, Bedfordview Mall, The Grove, Mall of the South, Greenstone Shopping Centre and Mall of Africa.

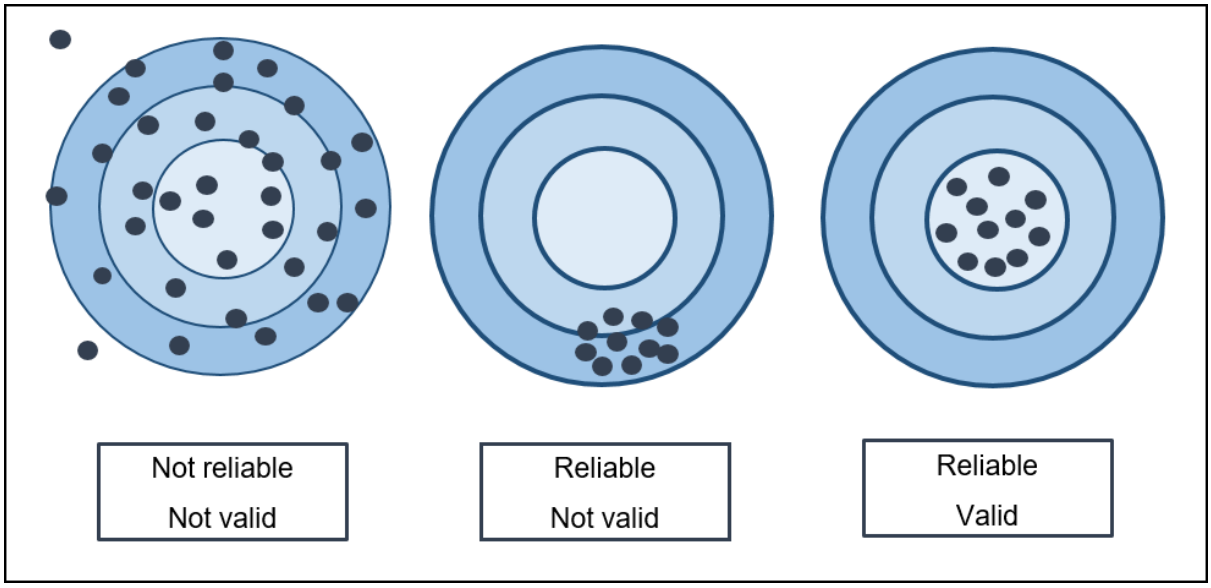
4.2.5 Step 5: Analyse and interpret the data

The fifth step in the marketing research process is to analyse the primary data collected for the study. Arora and Mahankale (2013:107) state that the data collected for the study contains facts and answers with regards to the research problem and that a meaningful interpretation thereof can only be made once it has been processed accordingly. Rao (2011:145) is of the opinion that the process of analysing raw data and interpreting it into useable information is a lengthy and complicated process – one in which various techniques are used to obtain the required information. Whilst analysing the data, researchers have to apply appropriate statistical techniques in order to make useful inferences (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:352; Hyman & Sierra, 2010:314).

The questionnaires collected for this study were checked manually in order to ensure that only those questionnaires that have been completed properly, accurately and that are numbered correctly are analysed. The questionnaires were submitted to the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University to be analysed.

Reliability and validity are important concepts in quantitative research as these indicate whether the data collected for a study is truthful and representative of the reality thereof (Baines & Page, 2013:113). A brief discussion of the analysis and interpretation of the data is provided below. Clow and James (2014:272) suggest the following figure to illustrate the relationship between reliability and validity.

Figure 4-8: The relationship between reliability and validity



Source: Adapted from Clow and James (2014:272).

4.2.5.1 Reliability

Babin and Zikmund (2016:280) assert that reliability indicates the internal consistency of a measuring instrument. Clow and James (2014:267) consider a measuring instrument as reliable when consistent results are provided as a criterion for evaluating measurement scales that reflects on the consistency of the measuring instrument (Baines & Page, 2013:113). According to Clow and James (2014:267), reliability can be evaluated by using three different approaches: test-retest, equivalent forms and internal consistency.

- **Test-retest reliability**

With test-retest reliability, the researcher repeats the measurement process by using the same instrument at two different time periods on the same respondents (Clow and James, 2014:267). According to Hyman and Sierra (2010:125), test-retest reliability represent the degree to which the answers provided by the respondents are similar on both the occasions of measurement. Clow and James (2014:268) and Malhotra (2010:319) identify the following potential problems that can occur whilst using test-retest reliability:

- Testing effects: Having been previously exposed to the measurement instrument may have an impact on the responses provided the second time around.

- Researchers gave a limited time interval and budget when retesting the measurement instrument.

- Environmental factors such as personal factors, the respondent's health or mood can alter the responses provided whilst retesting.

- Locating the same respondents may prove to be difficult as the respondents may not be available or willing to cooperate.

- **Equivalent forms reliability**

Equivalent forms reliability involves the completion of two measurement instruments at different time periods by the same respondent. This form illustrates the internal reliability that provides correlated results of the two instruments and that determines the reliability of the test (Baines & Page, 2013:113). McDaniel and Gates (2010:315) assert that the problems associated with test-retesting can be prevented when creating equivalent forms to be used for measurement. However, this method also has its own disadvantages, such the time, cost and effort needed to assemble two equivalent forms (Brown *et al*., 2014:256).

- **Internal consistency**

The internal-consistency method measures reliability with only one exposure and represents a measure's homogeneity (Hyman & Sierra, 2010:126). According to Babin and Zikmund (2016:280), internal consistency considers different items in the measuring instrument and the consistency of the results produced by the items. The internal-consistency reliability method does not present the problem areas identified when using the methods mentioned above tTest-retest and equivalent-form), as it is only administered once (Hyman & Sierra, 2010:126). Clow and James (2014:268) assert that Cronbach's alpha coefficient can be used in order to determine the internal-consistency reliability and the scales used to measure the same construct. The higher the score of the Cronbach alpha, the more reliable the measurement is. Scales that have a Cronbach alpha coefficient score of 1 indicate perfect reliability, and 0 indicates no reliability. Poor reliability is achieved when the scales have a Cronbach alpha score of 0.06 or lower. Scales that have a low correlation can be discarded by the researcher and the construct reliability can be retested (Clow & James, 2014:269; Shiu *et al*., 2009:403).

For the purpose of this study, the **reliability** of the data was measured by using the interval-consistency reliability method, determining the Cronbach alpha coefficient by using confirmatory factor analysis.

4.2.5.2 Validity

Mooi *et al*. (2018:408) define validity as the degree to which the researcher measures the research components in order for it to be meaningful. Using a valid measuring instrument means that the measure is free from systematic errors. The measuring instrument, the respondents and the environment are all aspects from which a systematic error may arise (Smith & Albaum, 2010:253). According to Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:319), the true characteristics of the respondents, businesses or situations can be measured by using a valid measuring instrument. In testing the validity of a scale, Smith and Albaum (2010:253) consider the following different types of validity: content validity, criterion validity and construct validity.

- **Content validity**

Content validity represents the extent to which a measurement represents all aspects of a given construct. In other words, content validity assesses whether the objectives of the study are sufficiently addressed by the specific measuring instrument (Mooi *et al*., 2018:394). Hyman and Sierra (2010:126) affirm that content validity can be assessed by ensuring that the items seem sensible by consulting various experts on the subject matter (Smith & Albaum, 2010:253). According to Fwhen the target population of the study has an appropriate representative sample, the content validity can be considered to be sufficient.

- **Criterion validity**

Criterion validity, also referred to as pragmatic validity, considers two types of measures that are measured at the same time in order to conclude how one measure predicts the outcome of the other measure (Mooi *et al*., 2018:394). Smith and Albaum (2010:253) identify the two measures as concurrent and predictive validity. According to Clow and James (2014:271), predictive validity considers how the measurement instrument can predict future behaviour and actions.

- **Construct validity**

Construct validity, as described by Clow and James (2014:271), assesses the measuring instrument with regards to capturing the constructs and items being considered in the study and how these relate to the theoretical information of the study. Smith and Albaum (2010:253) propound that construct validation considers the questions of “does it work?” and “why does it work?” when answering theoretical questions. Babin and Zikmund (2016:283) assert that construct validity is a concept represented by a reliable and truthful measure. Two types of construct validity have been identified by Babin and Zikmund (2016:283) and Hyman and

Sierra (2010:126), namely convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity refers to a clear understanding of the research questions and problem by the researcher as well as the knowledge to measure it appropriately. Discriminant validity, in turn, represents the phenomena of interest in a model, not captured by other measures, by using a measure that is empirically unique (Hyman & Sierra, 2010:126; Mooi *et al*., 2018:395).

In this study, the **construct validity** of the questionnaire was confirmed by using confirmatory factor analysis.

4.2.5.3 Methods and statistical techniques

According to Struwig and Stead (2013:164), the properties, purpose and underlying assumptions should be considered when selecting the techniques to analyse data since a rationale should be provided in order to gather applicable information. The methods and statistical techniques used in this study are discussed below.

- **Descriptive statistics**

Salkind (2017:8) states that descriptive statistics is used when the researcher wants to organise and describe the characteristics of a large data set. By using descriptive statistics, the researcher can actively understand and interpret raw data about the patterns in the population and sample (Dawar, 2016:145). Struwig and Stead (2013:165) assert that the purpose of using descriptive statistics is to analyse a large amount of data, and in turn, gain an inclusive, articulate and forthright depiction thereof. According to Babin and Zikmund (2016:387) and Dawar (2016:145), calculating the mode, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages by using descriptive statistics enables researchers to describe the sample of the study and to identify the pattern of responses. Babin and Zikmund (2016:382) identify the following techniques that can be used when analysing variables:

  - Univariate analysis – researchers only analyse one variable in order to obtain frequency counts.

  - Bivariate analysis – researchers consider two variables at a time in order to draw conclusions of the pattern between them.

  - Multivariate analysis – two or more variables are analysed in order to determine properties and trends within the data.

- **Inferential statistics**

Inferential statistics is used by considering the score of a measure to make generalisations, assumptions or inferences about a sample that represents the whole population (Struwig & Stead, 2013:167). Inferential statistics allows the researcher to test hypotheses and conceptual models based on the samples that were measured (Dawar, 2016:145). According to Salkind (2017:8), inferential statistics is used to make inferences on smaller data sets that represent the entire population compared to descriptive statistics. Struwig and Stead (2013:165) assert that inferential statistics can be divided into four groups that:

- Measure the relationships between variables
- Provide comparisons between dependant groups
- Predict group membership ensure the differences between groups that have been randomly assigned.

4.2.5.4 Statistical analysis applied in this study

The descriptive statistical analysis used in this study is briefly discussed, with Chapter 5 presenting the results obtained from the data analysis.

- **Frequency and Percentage distribution:**

Babin and Zikmund (2016:373) assert that frequencies can be considered as the most rudimentary of statistical descriptions that indicate how often each response occurs. The *f* symbol is used when indicating frequency. According to Salkind (2017:63) the frequency can be determined by considering the raw data and counting how many times a score occurs, and then enter that number in each of the class intervals as presented by the count.

The percentage is articulated by using the % symbol and is used to describe the respondents who have answered a question in a specific way (Aaker *et al*., 2011:438). Using percentages in data analysis allows researchers to simplify the data and to make comparisons between portions of data (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:506).

- **Means**

The mean is the most commonly used measure of central tendency and reduces the amount of analysed data (Busany & Maoz, 2016:886). Mooi *et al*. (2018:400) define a mean as a method used to describe a typical value of a list of numbers by dividing the number of observations with the sum of a variable's value. According to Hyman and Sierra (2010:321),

means can also be referred to as arithmetic mean or just average. Salkind (2017:22) provides the following formula for calculating the mean:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

Where:
$\bar{x}$ = value of the scores/mean
$\sum$ = indicates that all the individual values are summed
X = individual scores in the group of scores
n = size of sample

- **Standard deviation for individual items of the questionnaire**

Dawar (2016:146) defines a standard deviation as a measure that is widely used to describe the sample distribution values' variability from the mean. According to Malhotra (2010:487), determining the standard deviation enables researchers to examine the differences between the respondents in the sample. Standard deviation averages the deviations by considering the mean and then measuring the deviation of each score (Struwing & Stead, 2013:165). Babin and Zikmund (2016:382) propose a rule of thumb when determining the standard deviation, stating that the value of the standard deviation should be expected to be one-sixth of the range.

- **Factor analysis**

Benzo *et al*. (2016:135) affirm that factor analysis can be regarded as complex statistics that is used to categorise data into simpler dimensions. Factor analysis considers a large number of items, which are then reduced into a smaller subset of factors, in order to determine underlying construct dimensions by analysing a set of items (Clow & James, 2014:311). Furthermore, Clow and James (2014:311) assert that factor analysis allows researchers to examine the questions that measure facets of the same components. According to Dawar (2016:36), the significance of the factor analysis value can be indicated as follows:

- A factor value of >0.6 indicates that the variable describes the factor very well.
- A factor value of >0.3 indicates that the variable describes the factor moderately well.
- A factor value of <0.3 should be ignored, as the variable fails to describe the factor properly.

For this study, **factor analysis** was used in order to determine the factor value, which was then used to attain the Cronbach alpha to test the reliability of the study. Chapter 5 presents the results obtained from conducting a factor analysis for this study.

- **Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient**

In order to determine whether linear relationships exist between reference groups, fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health orientation, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated. Brown *et al.* (2014:397) assert that the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient evaluates the consistent change of two continuous variables across cases that in turn indicates the degree of linear associations. A small letter *r* is used to represent the Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (Salkind, 2017:84). According to Babin and Zikmund (2016:469) researchers use the correlations to form conclusions as to how the different characteristics relate to one another. Struwig and Stead (2013:168) propound that the Pearson product-moment correlation indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables, determining whether they are positive, zero or negative. A perfect negative relationship has a correlation coefficient from -1.00, a perfect positive relationship has a correlation coefficient of +1.00, whereas a correlation coefficient of 0.00 represents no relationship at all (Arora & Mahankale, 2013:110). Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:452) affirm that perfect relationships are rare and that coefficients have a tendency of being preceded by decimals. Cooper and Schnindler (2011:513) and Brown *et al*. (2014:396) provide the following formula for calculating Pearson's *r*:

$$\mathbf{r} = \frac{\sum \mathbf{xy}}{(\mathbf{N}-\mathbf{1})\mathbf{s_x s_y}}$$

Where:
$\boldsymbol{r}$ = Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient
$\sum$ = indicates that all the individual values are summed
$\mathbf{N}$ = the number of pairs of cases
Sx,Sy = the standard deviation for x and y

- **Cohen's effective size conventions**

Cohen's effective size provides researchers with the opportunity to interpret and form comparisons between group means (Kreamer & Blasey, 2016:312). Salkind (2017:207) assert that Cohen's effective size can range from small, medium and large. A small effect size is when Cohen's d is 0.2. A Cohen's d of 0.3 represents a medium effect size, whereas a large effect size is represented by a Cohen's d of ≥ 0.8. Kraemer and Blasey (2016:312) affirm that it is crucial that the correct size is selected with context to the research.

4.2.6 Step 6: Prepare the research report

To conclude the marketing research process, the sixth and final step (see Figure 4-1) comprises the preparation of the research report in which the results of the study are presented and in which the implications and limitations of the study are discussed. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 5, and the conclusions, implications and limitations of the study are discussed in Chapter 6.

4.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the methodology followed in the study by discussing the marketing research process. The research problem and objectives of the study have been identified and the research design was developed and discussed. Furthermore, this chapter elaborated on the process of selecting a research method and identifying a fitting sample used in the study.

CHAPTER 5: REPORTING OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results obtained from the empirical part of the study after implementing the research methodology as set out in Chapter 4. The chapter commences by providing the results of the influence of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons, followed by the results obtained from conducting a lifestyle analysis on Singletons. The chapter concludes by reporting on the relationships identified between the core constructs of this study.

5.2 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION A OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: SCREENING QUESTIONS

The respondents who provided the data for this study by means of completing a questionnaire, successfully qualified to participate in this study by answering the screening questions in section A of the questionnaire. Initially, 251 questionnaires were collected, but only 207 could be used as the questionnaires of the respondents who did not qualify to participate were discarded. Therefore, all respondents who participated in this study were over the age of 18, single and lived by themselves at the time that this study was conducted.

5.3 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION B OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: REFERENCE GROUPS

Section B of the questionnaire set out to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons. The SUSCEP scale (see section 4.2.3.6) was used to obtain the necessary data for this section of the study.

5.3.1 Reliability of section B

The reliability of this section of the questionnaire was determined by deriving the Cronbach alpha value, and as such, determining the homogeneity or correlation between the 12 items of the SUSCEP scale. In order to derive the overall Cronbach alpha value of the SUSCEP scale, confirmatory factor analysis was used. The effect of reference groups among the respondents was measured. The internal reliability of the 12 items of the SUSCEP-scale was confirmed by dividing the items into two sub-scales, namely the normative scale and the informational scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficient values were determined for the normative scale, which comprised of items B1-B9 and the informational scale which consisted of items

B10-B12. An overall Cronbach alpha value was determined by considering items of both the normative and informational scale, and this is the value that was considered for this study. Table 5.1 presents the Cronbach alpha values of both the normative and informational scales, along with the overall Cronbach alpha value for the SUSCEP scale used to determine the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

Table 5-1: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for section B of the questionnaire

Construct	Cronbach alpha value
Normative items (B1 – B9)	0.95
Informational items (B10 – B12)	0.89
Reference groups (Overall Cronbach alpha)	0.95

Table 5-1 indicates that a Cronbach alpha value of 0.95 was derived by considering the 12 items of the SUSCEP scale, thus indicating a high level of reliability. An overall Cronbach alpha value of >0.8 was found, which serves as an indication that the 12 items of the SUSCEP scale used to measure the effect of reference groups on the respondents has a high-level of reliability.

Main Finding B1: The 12 items of the SUSCEP scale are reliable to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of respondents.

5.3.2 Validity of section B

The validity of the items used in the SUSCEP scale was determined by applying confirmatory factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to determine the appropriateness of the factor analysis. The amount of variance that a variable share with all other variables was also derived. Field (2009:677) asserts that the following values of the KMO measure can be regarded as follow:

Table 5-2: KMO measure value indicator

<0.5 = not good sampling adequacy
0.5 – 0.7 = mediocre sampling adequacy
0.7 – 0.8 = good sampling adequacy
0.8 – 0.9 = great sampling adequacy
>0.9 = superb sampling adequacy

Source: Field (2009:677)

A p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated in order to determine whether there is sufficient correlation between the items of the SUSCEP scale. The amount of variance an item shares with all the other items is considered by deriving the commonalities. The values of the commonalities should be >0.3 in order to be deemed acceptable.

The SUSCEP scale used in section B of the questionnaire comprised of items B1-B12. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on the SUSCEP-scale's items, a variance of 75.91% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.93, which represents superb sampling adequacy. The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making them suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The commonalities varied between 0.44 and 0.86. Considering the above-mentioned findings, the construct validity of the SUSCEP scale was therefore confirmed.

Main finding B2: The confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the SUSCEP scale is a valid instrument to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of respondents.

5.3.3 The effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of respondents

The SUSCEP scale made use of a 7-point Likert scale to rate the response to each of the scale's 12 items, where 1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree a little, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = agree a little, 6 = agree moderately and 7 = agree strongly. Considering the response options, the following four independent groups were identified:

- Respondents who responded between 1 and 3 were placed in a group representing low levels of reference group influence.
- Respondents who responded between 3 and 4 were placed in a group representing moderately low levels of reference group influence.
- Respondents who responded between 4 and 5 were placed in a group representing moderately high levels of reference group influence.
- Respondents who responded between 5 and 7 were placed in a group representing high levels of reference group influence.

The mean and standard deviation (SD) derived from the respondents' responses with regards to this section of the questionnaire are listed in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3: Mean and standard deviation of reference groups

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Reference groups	3.62	1.48

From Table 5-3 it can be deduced that a moderately low level (mean=3.62) of reference group influence is exerted upon the buying behaviour of respondents. The standard deviation (SD=1.48) is relatively low, indicating that the responses provided by respondents did not differ much.

Main finding B3: A moderately low level of reference group influence is exerted on the buying behaviour of respondents.

5.4 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION C OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: LIFESTYLE

The aim of section C of the questionnaire was to determine the lifestyle of respondents in terms of six specific lifestyle dimensions, namely fashion consciousness; cost consciousness; health consciousness; recreation; E-shopping; and career orientation. The AIO-approach (see section 3.8.4) was used to obtain the necessary data in order to determine the lifestyle of respondents. A battery of 37 AIO-statements was used to determine the lifestyle of respondents in terms of the six lifestyle dimensions identified. The results of this section of the questionnaire are discussed subsequently.

5.4.1 Reliability of section C

The reliability of this section of the questionnaire was determined by deriving the Cronbach alpha value for each of the lifestyle dimensions in this section of the questionnaire. In order to derive the overall Cronbach alpha values, confirmatory factor analysis was used. Table 5.4 presents the overall Cronbach alpha value for the statements of each lifestyle dimension.

Table 5-4: Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for section C of the questionnaire

Lifestyle dimension	Cronbach alpha
C1: Fashion consciousness	0.93
C2: Cost consciousness	0.79
C3: Health consciousness	0.88
C4: Recreation	0.62
C5: E-shopping	0.84
C6: Career orientation	0.74

From Table 5-4 it can be deduced that the Cronbach alpha value for five groups of lifestyle dimension statements is ≥ 0.7. One of the lifestyle dimensions has a Cronbach alpha value that is <0.7, and therefore making it an unreliable form of measure for the construct (recreation).

Main finding C1: From the six lifestyle dimensions in section C of the questionnaire, only five dimensions and their statements are considered reliable.

Main finding C2: The statements used to determine the lifestyle dimension of recreation are considered unreliable.

5.4.2 Validity of section C

The validity of the items used to measure each of the lifestyle dimensions was determined by applying confirmatory factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to determine the appropriateness of the factor analysis. The amount of variance that a variable share with all other variables was also derived. A p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated in order to determine whether there is sufficient correlation between the items of the SUSCEP scale. The results pertaining to the validity of the items used to measure each of the lifestyle dimensions are discussed subsequently.

5.4.2.1 Fashion consciousness

The statements used to measure the level of respondents' fashion consciousness comprised of items C1.1 - C1.10. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 74.02% was obtained. The KMO indicated a superb sampling adequacy with it being 0.92. The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.42 and 0.81. The construct validity of the statements used to measure fashion consciousness was thus confirmed.

5.4.2.2 Cost consciousness

The statements used to measure the level of respondents' cost consciousness comprised of items C2.1-C2.5. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 59.71% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.81, which represents great sampling adequacy. The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.55 and 0.76. The construct validity of the statements used to measure cost consciousness was thus confirmed.

5.4.2.3 Health consciousness

The statements used to measure the level of respondents' health consciousness comprised of items C3.1-C3.4. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 73.64% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.77, representing good sampling adequacy The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.51 and 0.78. The construct validity of the statements used to measure cost consciousness was thus confirmed.

5.4.2.4 Recreation

The statements used to measure the level of respondents' health consciousness comprised of items C4.1-C4.4. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 79.42% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.56, indicating mediocre sampling adequacy The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it

suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.39 and 0.75. The construct validity of the statements used to measure cost consciousness was thus confirmed.

5.4.2.5 E-shopping

The statements used to measure the level of E-shopping comprised of items C5.1-C5.7. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 76.19% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.87, representing a great sampling adequacy The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.27 and 0.80. The construct validity of the statements used to measure E-shopping was thus confirmed.

5.4.2.6 Career orientation

The statements used to measure the level of respondents' career orientation comprised of items C6.1-C6.5. By conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on these items, a variance of 50.57% was obtained. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.74, indicating good sampling adequacy The p-value of Bartlett's test of sphericity was calculated as <0.001, which is an indication of a sufficiently large correlation between the items, making it suitable to perform an exploratory factor analysis. The communalities varied between 0.09 and 0.65. The construct validity of the statements used to measure career orientation was thus confirmed.

Main finding C3: The confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the statements in section C of the questionnaire are valid for measuring the lifestyle dimensions of respondents.

5.4.3 Lifestyle dimensions

The scales used to determine the lifestyle dimensions of respondents' made use of a 7-point Likert scale to rate the response to each of the scale's 12 items, where 1 = disagree strongly, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree a little, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = agree a little, 6 = agree moderately and 7 = agree strongly. Considering the response options, the following four independent groups were identified:

- Respondents who responded between 1 and 3 were placed in a group representing low levels of agreement.

- Respondents who responded between 3 and 4 were placed in a group representing moderately low levels of agreement.
- Respondents who responded between 4 and 5 were placed in a group representing moderately high levels of agreement.
- Respondents who responded between 5 and 7 were placed in a group representing high levels of agreement.

The mean and standard deviation (SD) derived from the respondents' responses with regards to this section of the questionnaire are listed in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5: Mean and standard deviation of the lifestyle dimensions

Lifestyle dimension	Mean	Standard deviation
C1: Fashion consciousness	3.64	1.52
C2: Cost consciousness	4.80	1.40
C3: Health consciousness	4.89	1.52
C4: Recreation	4.68	1.18
C5: E-shopping	4.03	1.34
C6: Career orientation	4.32	1.27

According to Table 5-5, five out of six lifestyle dimensions present moderately high levels of agreement. Fashion consciousness presented a moderately low level of agreement (mean=3.64). A moderately high level of agreement (mean=4.80) exists among respondents in terms of cost consciousness. Health consciousness (mean=4.89), recreation (mean=4.68), E-shopping (mean=4.03) and career orientation (mean=4.32) represent moderately high levels of agreement among respondents. The standard deviation of all the lifestyle dimensions was relatively low, ranging between 1.27 and 1.52, indicating that there was little difference in the responses provided by the respondents.

Main finding C4: A moderately low level of fashion consciousness was found among respondents.

Main finding C5: A moderately high level of cost consciousness was found among respondents.

Main finding C6: A moderately high level of health consciousness was found among respondents.

Main finding C7: A moderately high level of recreation was found among respondents.

Main finding C8: A moderately high level of E-shopping was found among respondents.

Main finding C9: A moderately high level of career orientation was found among respondents.

5.5 RESULTS OBTAINED FROM SECTION D OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic profiles of respondents were compiled by considering the information obtained from section D of the questionnaire.

5.5.1 Demographic profiles of respondents

In order to determine the demographic profiles of respondents effectively, their age, monthly income, gender and level of education were considered. In this section, the symbol “F” is the abbreviation for frequency and the symbol “%” is used to refer to percentage.

A sample of 207 was realised. Questions that were not answered by respondents have been indicated at the frequency count of each question in section D. Table 5-6 presents the demographic information used to construct the sample profile.

Table 5-6: Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18 to 29 years	122	59.2%
30 to 39 years	49	23.8%
40 to 49 years	21	10.2%
50 to 59 years	7	3.4%
60 years or older	7	3.4%
Total	206	
Frequency missing	1	
Monthly disposable income		
Less than R10 000 pm	70	34.1%
R11 000 to R20 000 pm	59	28.8%
R21 000 to R30 000 pm	30	14.6%
R31 000 to R 40 000 pm	20	9.8%
More than R40 000 pm	8	3.9%
Prefer not to say	18	8.8%
Total	205	
Frequency missing	2	
Gender		
Male	75	36.4%
Female	123	59.7%
Prefer not to say	8	3.9%
Total	206	
Frequency missing	1	
Level of education		
Primary school	2	1.0%
Matric/Grade 12 completed	57	27.5%
Technical college diploma	29	14.0%
University or technology diploma	28	13.5%
University degree (B-degree or Honours)	74	35.7%
Postgraduate degree (Masters or Doctorate)	12	5.8%
Total	202	
Frequency missing	5	

With regards to demographic variables, the sample primarily consisted of respondents who are between the ages of 18 and 29 years of age (59.2%). Thirty-four percent of respondents are aged between the ages of 30 and 49 (23.8% + 10.2%). Respondents who are 50 years of age and older represent only 6.8% (3.4% + 3.4%) of the sample.

The monthly disposable income of the majority of the respondents ranged between R10 000 pm to R30 000 pm (34.1% + 28.8% + 14.6% = 77.5%). Twenty respondents account for the 9.8% who earn between R31 000 and R40 000 pm, with only 8.8% of the respondents preferring not to indicate their monthly disposable income.

More female (59.7%) than male respondents (36.4%) participated in the study, with 3.9% of the respondents who have chosen not to indicate their gender.

Regarding the level of education among respondents, 35.7% had a university or postgraduate degree, 13.5% had a university or technology diploma, 14.0% had a technical college diploma and 27.5% only had a matric certificate.

5.6 THE UNDERLINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VARIOUS LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS

In order to identify the underlining relationship between the various lifestyle dimensions of respondents in terms of fashion consciousness (FC), cost consciousness (CC), health consciousness (HC), recreation (R), E-shopping (E-s) and career orientation (CO), Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were determined. Table 5-6 illustrates the correlations that emerged between the various lifestyle dimensions.

Table 5-7: Pearson correlation coefficients between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons

		FC	CC	HC	R	E-s	CO
FC (C1.1 - C1.10)	Pearson correlation	1	-0,005	0.321**	0.413**	0.433**	0.191**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,948	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,006
CC (C2.1 - C2.5)	Pearson correlation	-0,005	1	0.152*	0,023	-0,070	0.147*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,948		0,029	0,745	0,314	0,036

Table 5-8: Pearson correlation coefficients between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons (continued)

		FC	CC	HC	R	E-s	CO
HC (C3.1 - C3.4)	Pearson correlation	.321**	.152*	1	0.234**	0.252**	0.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,029		0,001	0,000	0,001
R (C4.1 - C4.4)	Pearson correlation	.413**	0,023	.234**	1	0.416**	-0,016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,745	0,001		0,000	0,819
E-s (C5.1 - C5.7)	Pearson correlation	.433**	-0,070	.252**	.416**	1	-0,016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,314	0,000	0,000		0,824
CO (C6.1 - C6.5)	Pearson correlation	.191**	.147*	.224**	-0,016	-0,016	1

Considering Table 5-7 it can be deduced that there is a medium statistically significant effect between the following dimensions:

- Fashion consciousness & Health consciousness – 0.32
- Fashion consciousness & Recreation – 0.41
- Health consciousness & E-shopping – 0.31
- Fashion consciousness & E-shopping – 0.43
- Recreation & E-shopping – 0.42

A small statistically significant effect was found between the following dimensions:

- Fashion consciousness & Cost consciousness – 0.19
- Career orientation & Health consciousness – 0.15
- Cost consciousness & Career orientation – 0.14
- Health consciousness & Recreation – 0.23
- Health consciousness & Career orientation – 0.22

No statistically significant effect was found between the following dimensions:

- Fashion consciousness & Cost consciousness
- Cost consciousness & Recreation
- Cost consciousness & E-shopping
- Recreation & Career orientation

- E-shopping & Career orientation

Main finding D1: A practically significant relationship was found between fashion consciousness & health consciousness.

Main finding D2: A practically significant relationship was found between fashion consciousness & recreation.

Main finding D3: A practically significant relationship was found between fashion consciousness & E-shopping.

Main finding D4: A practically significant relationship was found between recreation & E-shopping.

Main finding D5: A practically significant relationship was found between health consciousness & E-shopping.

5.7 THE UNDERLINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF REFERENCE GROUPS INFLUENCE AND THE LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS OF SINGLETONS

The underlining relationship between the reference group (RG) construct and the six dimensions of lifestyle – fashion consciousness (FC), cost consciousness (CC), health consciousness (HC), recreation (R), E-shopping (E-s) and career orientation (CO), were determined by calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Table 5-7 presents the results.

Table 5-9: Pearson correlation coefficients between reference groups and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons

		RG	FC	CC	HC	R	E-s	CO
RG (B1.1 - B1.12)	Pearson correlation	1	.645**	-0,096	.213**	.383**	.518**	0,078
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,170	0,002	0,000	0,000	0,270
FC (C1.1 - C1.10)	Pearson correlation	.645**	1	-0,005	.321**	.413**	.433**	.191**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,948	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,006
CC (C2.1 - C2.5)	Pearson correlation	-0,096	-0,005	1	.152*	0,023	-0,070	.147*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,170	0,948		0,029	0,745	0,314	0,036
HC (C3.1 - C3.4)	Pearson correlation	.213**	.321**	.152*	1	.234**	.252**	.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,002	0,000	0,029		0,001	0,000	0,001
R (C4.1 - C4.4)	Pearson correlation	.383**	.413**	0,023	.234**	1	.416**	-0,016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,745	0,001		0,000	0,819
E-s (C5.1 - C5.7)	Pearson correlation	.518**	.433**	-0,070	.252**	.416**	1	-0,016
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,314	0,000	0,000		0,824
CO (C6.1 - C6.5)	Pearson correlation	0,078	.191**	.147*	.224**	-0,016	-0,016	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,270	0,006	0,036	0,001	0,819	0,824	

From Table 5-8 it can be deduced that there is a statistically significant effect between reference groups and fashion consciousness (0.64) as well as reference groups and E-shopping (0.52). Reference groups and recreation presented a medium statistically significant effect of 0.38, whilst no statistically significant effect was found between reference groups and cost consciousness; reference groups and health consciousness; and reference groups and career orientation.

Main finding D6: A statistically significant relationship was found between reference groups and fashion consciousness.

Main finding D7: A statistically significant relationship was found between reference groups and E-shopping.

Main finding D8: A practically significant relationship was found between reference groups and recreation.

5.8 THE DIFFERENCE IN PERCEPTION OF REFERENCE GROUP INFLUENCE AND THE LIFESTYLE DIMENSIONS OF SINGLETONS WITH REGARDS TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Cohen's effect sizes were determined in order to establish whether statistically significant differences exist between respondents in terms of their demographic differences, with reference to their perceptions of reference group influence and the various lifestyle dimensions. The practically significant differences of the demographical categories such as age, income gender and level of education are discussed below.

5.8.1 Demographic differences: Age

In order to ensure that the age categories used to determine practical significance are sufficient in size, only the following age categories were considered: (1) 18 to 29 years; (2) 30 to 39 years; (3) 30 to 39 years; and 40 to 49 years. The last two categories of 50 to 59 years and 60 to 69 years were discarded. Table 5-8 indicates the means, standard deviation and effect sizes when comparing the perceptions of respondents by examining the demographic variables in terms of the respondents' age categories to determine their practical significance when compared to reference groups (RG) and the six lifestyle dimensions.

Table 5-10: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference groups influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to the different age cohorts

Age								
	Age category	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Sig.	Effect size - Age categories		
						1 vs 2	1 vs 3	2 vs 3
RG (B1.1 - B1.12)	1	122	3,79	1,51	0,21	0,05	0,42	0,37
	2	49	3,72	1,40				
	3	21	3,17	1,33				
	Total	**192**	**3,70**	**1,47**				
FC (C1.1 - C1.10)	1	122	3,64	1,53	0,35	0,21	0,14	0,34
	2	49	3,94	1,53				
	3	21	3,42	1,47				
	Total	**192**	**3,69**	**1,53**				
CC (C2.1 - C2.5)	1	122	4,58	1,33	0,08	0,27	0,42	0,13
	2	49	4,97	1,31				
	3	21	5,15	1,62				
	Total	**192**	**4,74**	**1,37**				
HC (C3.1 - C3.4)	1	122	4,86	1,48	0,51	0,08	0,23	0,30
	2	49	4,74	1,53				
	3	21	5,20	1,69				
	Total	**192**	**4,87**	**1,52**				
R (C4.1 - C4.4)	1	122	4,66	1,22	0,99	1,01	0,02	1,01
	2	49	4,68	1,15				
	3	21	4,69	1,30				
	Total	**192**	**4,67**	**1,20**				
E-s (C5.1 - C5.7)	1	122	4,30	1,23	0,02	0,27	0,60	0,30
	2	49	3,90	1,34				
	3	21	3,52	1,47				
	Total	**192**	**4,11**	**1,30**				
CO (C6.1 - C6.5)	1	121	4,11	1,29	0,03	0,31	0,49	0,12
	2	49	4,56	1,17				
	3	20	4,71	1,05				
	Total	**190**	**4,29**	**1,25**				

Considering Table 5-9, it can be observed that medium significant effect sizes were found between the three age categories in terms of reference group influence and the various lifestyle dimensions.

- **Reference groups**

Age category one (mean= 3,79) and age category two (mean=3.72) had a small effect size, indicating that respondents in these two categories experienced the same level of reference group effect. A difference of medium effect was found between age categories one and three (mean=3.17) as well as age categories two and three. It can be deduced that the respondents from age category one and age category two experienced a greater level of influence of reference groups compared to respondents in age category three.

- **Fashion consciousness**

There was a practically significant difference between age category one (mean=3.64) and age category two (mean=3.94) as well as age category one (mean=3.64) and age category three (mean=3.42) in terms of fashion consciousness. A difference of medium effect between age category two (mean=3.94) and age category three (mean=3.42) respondents was found. Therefore, the respondents in age category two are more fashion conscious than the respondents in age category one and three.

- **Cost consciousness**

Age category one (mean=4.58) and age category three (mean=5.15) exerted a difference of medium effect concerning the level of cost consciousness. Practically significant differences were found between age category one (mean=4.58) and age category two (mean=4.97) as well as between age category two (mean=4.97) and age category three (mean=5.15) respectively. Respondents in age category two and three are less cost-conscious than the respondents in age category one.

- **Health consciousness**

Respondents in age category one (mean=4.86) and age category two (mean=4.74) had an effect size of 0.08, indicating that respondents in these two categories experience health consciousness similarly. Respondents in age category three (mean=5.20) are more health conscious than respondents in age categories one and two.

- **Recreation**

Respondents in age category one (mean=4.66) and age category two (mean=4.68) both exerted great effect sizes of 1.01, while a small to no effect was found between age category one (mean=4.66) and age category three (mean=4.69) respondents with an effect size of 0.02.

- **E-shopping**

A medium, leaning towards a great effect of 0.60 was found between respondents in age category one (mean=4.30) and age category three (mean=3.52) respectively. Respondents from age category two (mean=3.90) are more willing to shop online than respondents in age category one and three.

- **Career orientation**

In terms of career orientation, respondents in age categories two (mean=4.56) and three (mean=4.71) were found to be more career orientated than respondents in age category one (mean=4.11). A small effect size of 0.12 was identified between age categories two and three, whilst medium effect sizes were found between age categories one and two (0.31) and age categories one and three (0.49).

Main finding E1: Respondents who are between the ages of 18 and 29 and respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 are significantly more influenced by reference groups than the respondents between the ages of 40 and 49.

Main finding E2: Respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 were found to be more fashion conscious than those between the ages of 18 and 29 and 40 to 49 respectively.

Main finding E3: Respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 and 40 and 49 are more cost conscious than the respondents between the ages of 18 and 29.

Main finding E4: Respondents between 30 and 39 years of age are the least health conscious, with respondents between the ages of 40 and 49 being the most health conscious.

Main finding E5: The respondents of all three age categories thoroughly enjoy and participate in recreational activities. Respondents between 40 to 49 of age enjoy these the most.

Main finding E6: Respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 found the concept of E-shopping more appealing than respondents aged between 30 and 49 of age.

Main finding E7: Respondents between the ages of 30 and 39 and 40 and 49 are more career orientated than respondents between the ages of 18 and 29.

5.8.2 Demographic differences: Monthly income

To determine the practical significance with regards to the monthly income of respondents, only the following categories were considered to ensure that the number of responses are sufficiently large: (1) Less than R10 000 pm;(2) R11 000 – R20 000 pm;(3) R21 000 – R30 000 pm; and (4) R31 000 – R40 000 pm or more. Table 5-10 indicates the means, standard deviation and effect sizes when comparing the perceptions of respondents, by examining the demographic variables in terms of respondents' monthly income, in order to determine the practical significance between reference groups and the six lifestyle dimensions.

Table 5-11: Cohen's effect sizes of difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their monthly income

Monthly income											
				Std.		Effect size - Income categories					
	Category	N	Mean	Deviation	Sig.	1 vs 2	1 vs 3	1 vs 4	2 vs 3	2 vs 4	3 vs 4
Reference groups (B1.1 - B1.12)	1	70	3,63	1,39	0,93	0,07	0,06	0,04	0,13	0,11	0,02
	2	59	3,53	1,41							
	3	30	3,72	1,55							
	4	28	3,69	1,68							
	Total	**187**	**3,62**	**1,46**							
Fashion consciousness (C1.1 - C1.10)	1	70	3,45	1,46	0,57	0,11	0,14	0,31	0,04	0,21	0,17
	2	59	3,61	1,50							
	3	30	3,67	1,30							
	4	28	3,92	1,79							
	Total	**187**	**3,61**	**1,50**							
Cost Consciousness (C2.1 - C2.5)	1	70	4,85	1,39	0,73	0,07	0,18	0,01	0,24	0,06	0,20
	2	59	4,94	1,32							
	3	30	4,59	1,33							
	4	28	4,86	1,72							
	Total	**187**	**4,84**	**1,41**							
Health consciousness (C3.1 - C3.4)	1	70	4,84	1,59	0,27	0,07	0,04	0,37	0,03	0,44	0,41
	2	59	4,73	1,42							
	3	30	4,78	1,30							
	4	28	5,40	1,77							
	Total	**187**	**4,88**	**1,53**							

Table 5-10: Cohen's effect sizes of difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their monthly income (continued)

Monthly income											
				Std.		Effect size - Income categories					
	Category	N	Mean	Deviation	Sig.	1 vs 2	1 vs 3	1 vs 4	2 vs 3	2 vs 4	3 vs 4
Recreation (C4.1 - C4.4)	1	70	4,50	1,23	0,52	0,18	0,10	0,31	0,08	0,13	0,21
	2	59	4,71	1,12							
	3	30	4,62	0,81							
	4	28	4,86	1,28							
	Total	**187**	**4,64**	**1,15**							
E-shopping (C5.1 - C5.7)	1	70	4,18	1,19	0,47	0,26	0,14	0,25	0,12	0,01	0,11
	2	59	3,83	1,29							
	3	30	3,99	1,38							
	4	28	3,85	1,63							
	Total	**187**	**3,99**	**1,32**							
Career Orientation (C6.1 - C6.5)	1	69	3,79	1,40	0,01	0,60	0,59	1,13	0,01	0,53	0,54
	2	59	4,51	1,03							
	3	30	4,51	0,95							
	4	27	5,16	1,27							
	Total	**185**	**4,34**	**1,29**							

From Table 5-10 it is clear that medium and sufficient effect sizes were obtained between the monthly income categories of respondents and the health consciousness and career orientation lifestyle dimensions. Insignificant effect sizes were identified in reference groups, fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, recreation and E-shopping and these will thus not be discussed.

- **Health consciousness**

Respondents in category one (mean=4.84) and category four (mean=5.40) had a difference of medium effect of 0.37. A difference of medium effect was found between monthly income category two (mean=4.73) and monthly income category four (mean=5.40) of 0.44 as well as between monthly income category three and four with a medium effect six of 0.41. Respondents in monthly income category three and four have more disposable income to spend on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

- **Career orientation**

Considering the monthly income categories and career orientation dimension, the following can be deduced: a difference of medium effect leaning towards a great effect was found between monthly income category 1 (mean=3.79) and monthly income category 2 (mean=4.51), having an effect size of 0.60. Monthly income categories 1 and 3 (mean=4.51) had a medium difference in effect of 0.59. Income categories 2 (mean=4.51) and 4 (mean=5.16) had a medium effect of 0.53, where a difference of medium effect was also found between income categories 3 and 4. A difference of great effect - 1.13, was found between income categories 1 and 4.

Main finding E8: Respondents with a monthly income of less than R10 000 pm and those earning R31 000 and more per month were more health conscious than the respondents in the other income categories.

Main finding E9: Respondents with a monthly income of R31 000 and more are the most career orientated.

5.8.3 Demographic differences: Highest level of education

For the purpose of this section of the questionnaire, only five out of the six educational levels were considered. The question pertaining to the primary schooling among respondent was discarded as only two respondents were placed in this category. The following categories were considered in determining the effect sizes of the respondents with regards to their highest level of education:

1. Level of education category one: Primary school completed
2. Level of education category two: Matric/ Grade 12 completed
3. Level of education category three: Technical College diploma
4. Level of education category four: University or Technology diploma
5. Level of education category five: University degree (B-degree or Honours)
6. Level of education category six: Post Graduate degree (Masters or Doctors)

As previously mentioned, no effects and small effects (0.2) are to be observed in table 5-11, as only medium (0.35) and great effects (0.8) will be discussed. Table 5-11 presents the means, standard deviations and effect size when comparing the perceptions of the respondents by examining the demographic variable in terms of the level of education of the respondents, to determine the practical significance between reference groups and the six lifestyle dimensions.

Table 5-12: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their level of education

Education						Effect size - Level of education									
	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.	2 vs 3	2 vs 4	2 vs 5	2 vs 6	3 vs 4	3 vs 5	3 vs 6	4 vs 5	4 vs 6	5 vs 6
Reference groups (B1.1 - B1.12)	2	57	3,70	1,60	0,33	0,02	0,35	0,12	0,34	0,32	0,09	0,36	0,23	0,69	0,46
	3	29	3,66	1,62											
	4	28	3,19	1,44											
	5	74	3,53	1,33											
	6	12	4,20	1,31											
	Total	**200**	**3,59**	**1,47**											
Fashion consciousness (C1.1 - C1.10)	2	57	3,65	1,69	0,26	0,19	0,12	0,16	0,42	0,31	0,35	0,23	0,04	0,54	0,58
	3	29	3,94	1,24											
	4	28	3,48	1,55											
	5	74	3,41	1,39											
	6	12	4,29	1,96											
	Total	**200**	**3,62**	**1,53**											
Cost consciousness (C2.1 - C2.5)	2	57	4,83	1,33	0,19	0,36	0,11	0,16	0,07	0,25	0,53	0,29	0,27	0,03	0,24
	3	29	5,33	1,32											
	4	28	4,98	1,27											
	5	74	4,61	1,46											
	6	12	4,93	1,34											
	Total	**200**	**4,85**	**1,38**											

Table 5-11: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their level of education (continued)

Health consciousness (C3.1 - C3.4)	2	57	4,80	1,70	0,70	0,26	0,06	0,02	0,25	0,19	0,27	0,01	0,08	0,19	0,27
	3	29	5,20	1,35											
	4	28	4,90	1,72											
	5	74	4,78	1,38											
	6	12	5,19	1,55											
	Total	**200**	**4,89**	**1,53**											
Recreation (C4.1 - C4.4)	2	57	4,77	1,44	0,50	0,02	0,16	0,15	0,37	0,14	0,13	0,39	0,01	0,53	0,52
	3	29	4,74	1,12											
	4	28	4,58	1,27											
	5	74	4,59	0,97											
	6	12	5,21	1,06											
	Total	**200**	**4,70**	**1,19**											
E-shopping (C5.1 - C5.7)	2	57	4,14	1,39	0,07	0,18	0,51	0,02	0,40	0,33	0,16	0,57	0,49	0,90	0,41
	3	29	3,90	1,45											
	4	28	3,46	1,84											
	5	74	4,12	1,05											
	6	12	4,67	0,99											
	Total	**200**	**4,03**	**1,36**											
Career orientation (C6.1 - C6.5)	2	56	3,85	1,45	0,00	0,82	0,43	0,44	0,83	0,39	0,38	0,01	0,01	0,40	0,39
	3	29	4,86	1,11											
	4	28	4,38	1,12											
	5	73	4,39	1,17											
	6	12	4,87	0,73											
	Total	**198**	**4,33**	**1,26**											

- **Reference groups:**

Table 5-11 indicated that the following education categories had a medium effect size:

  - Education category 2 (mean=3.66) and 4 (mean=3.53) – 0.35
  - Education category 3 (mean=3.19) and 6 (mean=4.20) – 0.36
  - Education category 5 (mean=3.53) and 6 (mean=4.20) – 0.46

A medium, leaning towards a great effect size of 0.69 was found between education category 4 (mean=3.53) and education category 6 (mean=4.20).

- **Fashion consciousness:**

A medium effect of difference in practical significance was found between the following education categories in terms of fashion consciousness:

  - Education category 2 (mean=3.94) and 6 (mean=4.29) – 0.42
  - Education category 3 (mean=3.48) and 5 (mean=3.41) – 0.35
  - Education category 4 (mean=3.48) and 6 (mean=4.29) – 0.54
  - Education category 5 (mean=3.41) and 6 (mean=4.29) – 0.58

- **Cost consciousness:**

Education category 2 (mean=5.33) and 3 (mean=4.980 had a medium statistical significant difference of 0.36, where the education categories 3 (mean=4.98) and 5 (mean=4.61) also had a medium effect size of 0.53.

- **Recreation:**

Respondents in education category 2 (mean=4.74) and 6 (mean=5.21) had a difference of medium effect of 0.37. A similar effect size of 0.39 was found between education categories 3 (mean=4.58) and 6 (mean=5.21). Similar differences in effect size was also found between education categories 4 and 6 – 0.53 and education categories 5 and 6 – 0.52.

- **E-shopping:**

A difference of great effect of 0.90 was found between education categories 4 (mean=4.12) and 6 (mean=4.67). Difference of medium effect was found between the following education categories in terms of E-shopping:

- Education category 2 (mean=4.14) and 4 (mean=3.46) – 0.51
- Education category 2 (mean=4.14) and 6 (mean=4.67) – 0.40
- Education category 3 (mean=3.90) and 6 (mean=4.67) – 0.57
- Education category 4 (mean=3.46) and 5 (mean=4.12) – 0.49
- Education category 5 (mean=4.12) and 6 (mean=4.67) – 0.41

- **Career orientation:**

There was a practically significant difference with medium effect between the following education categories in terms of the level of education among the respondents and the lifestyle dimensions:

- Education category 2 (mean=3.85) and 4 (mean=4.38) – 0.43
- Education category 2 (mean=3.82) and 5 (mean=4.39) – 0.44
- Education category 3 (mean=4.86) and 4 (mean=4.38) – 0.39
- Education category 3 (mean=4.86) and 5 (mean=4.39) – 0.38
- Education category 5 (mean=4.39) and 6 (mean=4.87) – 0.39

A great effect of 0.82 was found between education category 2 and 3, with a similar effect size of 0.83 between education categories 2 and 6.

Main finding E10: Respondents who were influenced by reference groups the most had completed matric and have obtained Postgraduate degrees.

Main finding E11: Respondents with a Technical college diploma and respondents who obtained Postgraduate degrees are more fashion conscious.

Main finding E12: Respondents with a Technical college diploma are found to be the most cost-conscious of all the respondents.

Main finding E13: Respondents who have obtained a master or doctors degree partakes and enjoys more recreational activities than the other respondents.

Main finding E14: Respondents who have university degrees and postgraduate degrees are more willing to shop online.

Main finding E15: Respondents with Technical college diplomas and postgraduate degrees are more career orientated compared to the other respondents.

5.8.4 Demographic differences: Gender

Table 5-12 indicated only one gender category to have a medium effect size of 0.45 in terms of health consciousness. It can be deduced that female respondents are more health conscious than male respondents.

Table 5-13: Cohen's effect sizes of the difference in perceptions of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their gender.

Gender						
	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig	Effect size
Reference groups (B1.1 - B1.12)	1	75	3,67	1,45	0,83	0,03
	2	123	3,63	1,50		
Fashion consciousness (C1.1 - C1.10)	1	75	3,31	1,47	0,02	0,33
	2	123	3,81	1,52		
Cost consciousness (C2.1 - C2.5)	1	75	4,58	1,32	0,06	0,25
	2	123	4,92	1,40		
Health consciousness (C3.1 - C3.4)	1	75	4,45	1,52	0,00	0,45
	2	123	5,13	1,46		
Recreation (C4.1 - C4.4)	1	75	4,55	1,28	0,43	0,13
	2	123	4,72	1,11		
E-shopping (C5.1 - C5.7)	1	75	4,07	1,32	0,85	0,03
	2	123	4,04	1,31		
Career orientation (C6.1 - C6.5)	1	75	4,18	1,45	0,19	0,19
	2	122	4,43	1,16		

Main finding E16: Female respondents are more health conscious than male respondents.

Main finding E17: Male respondents experience a greater influence from reference groups than female respondents.

Main finding E18: Female respondents are more fashion conscious than male respondents.

Main finding E19: Female respondents enjoy and partake in recreational activities more than male respondents.

Main finding E20: Female respondents are more cost-conscious than male respondents.

Main finding E21: Male respondents enjoy E-shopping more than female respondents.

Main finding E22: Female respondents are more career orientated than male respondents.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results obtained from the questionnaire, with regard to determining the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons. The results of each section was presented along with the main findings thereof. The secondary research objectives were linked to the main findings of the study. Chapter 6 provides conclusions based on the results in this chapter, along with recommendations, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 provides a brief overview of the research study, after which the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to the objectives of the study are presented. Marketers and organisations can utilise the recommendations, as they are based on the main findings of the study and will, therefore, help marketers to target the Singletons consumer segment in South Africa. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of the study, along with suggestions for future research in the field.

6.2 OVERVIEW

The effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons was the primary objective of this study. The primary constructs of the study, namely consumer behaviour (chapter 2), reference groups (chapter 2), segmentation (chapter 3) and lifestyle (chapter 3) were discussed and analysed in the literature review in order to gain a more profound understanding of the theoretical bases of this study.

Chapter 2 focused on consumer behaviour and how, what, when, where and why consumers purchase, use, evaluate and dispose of the products and services that they consume in order to satisfy their wants and needs (cf. Sankar & Zakkariya, 2016:20). An elaboration on consumer behaviour was provided by discussing consumer decisions; the decision-making process; and the various influences on the decision-making process. Reference groups are considered to be one of the primary external influences on the buying behaviour and decision-making process of Singletons. Reference groups, as defined by Irelan and Considine (2015:3), refer to the groups or individuals that a person uses as a basis for comparison and guidance when deciding on the product or service that they wish to purchase. Reference groups, as one of the main constructs of this study, were discussed by examining the different types of reference groups, their marketing implications and the strength of their influence exerted on the buying behaviour of consumers. This study made use of the SUSCEP scale to measure the effect of reference groups on Singletons. The SUSCEP scale was developed by Bearden *et al*. (1989), after which its validity and reliability were confirmed.

Chapter 3 focused on the market segmentation process by elaborating on the criteria used to successfully segment a market. Joubert (2013:97) asserts that segmenting a market is a process

whereby heterogeneous markets are divided into homogeneous subsets, where the consumers all have similar wants and needs. Market segmentation is thus an important concept for marketers, as it allows them to focus all their efforts and resources on developing and selling products and services to a well-defined group of consumers. The literature overview in this chapter of the study focused on elaborating on the various factors that influence market segmentation, along with the bases used when segmenting a market. This study incorporated psychographic segmentation as a base for market segmentation. Psychographic segmentation comprises numerous variables such as social class, values and attitudes, personality and lifestyle (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011:204; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014:52). Lifestyle segmentation is regarded as one of the main constructs of the study, as this entails the manner in which consumers are segmented based on the way they spend their time and money. According to Nasiopoulos (2015:4), the lifestyle psychographic variable is the most popular variable that marketers use to segment markets. A consumer's mode of living is represented by his or her lifestyle and entails the activities, interests and opinions (AIO's) in which they participate. This study aimed at identifying and describing the lifestyle of Singletons in order to establish the effect thereof on the consumer segment's buying behaviour. The AIO (activities, interests and opinions) approach is based on various statements that measure different lifestyle dimensions of respondents. Six lifestyle dimensions of Singletons were analysed in this study, including fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation.

6.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In this section, answers are provided to the research objectives that were formulated for the present study. In order to address the primary objective of this study, which is to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons, 12 secondary objectives were formulated. Table 6-1 provides an indication as to how the study's research objectives are linked to the literature review and the empirical study.

Table 6-1: Summary of the links between the research objectives, literature review and empirical study

	Research objectives	Literature review	Empirical study
Primary objective			
	To determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.	Chapters 2 and 3.	Questions: B1-12, C1.1-C6.5, D1-D5.
Secondary objectives			
1.	To provide an overview of the research literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.	Chapters 2 and 3.	-
2.	To develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singletons market segment and who participated in this study.	Chapter 3.	Questions: D1-D5.
3.	To determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.	Chapter 2.	Questions: B1-B12.
4.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion-consciousness.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C1.1-C1.10.
5.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of cost-consciousness.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C2.1-C2.5.
6.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health orientation.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C3.1-C3.4.
7.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C4.1-C4.4.
8.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C5.1-C5.7.
9.	To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career orientation.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C6.1-C6.5.
10.	To determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.	Chapter 3.	Questions: C1.1-C6.5.
11.	To determine the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.	Chapters 2 and 3.	Questions: B1-B12, C1.1-C6.5.
12.	To determine the difference in perceptions of reference groups' influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their demographic differences.	Chapters 2 and 3.	Questions: B1-B12, C1.1-C6.5, D1-D5.

The following section provides the conclusions and recommendations for each research objective. The conclusions and recommendations were drawn on the empirical results presented in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as the literature review presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

This section indicates the secondary objectives that were set out to achieve the primary objective, by discussing the conclusions and recommendations.

6.4.1 Secondary research objective 1

The aim of secondary research objective 1 was to *provide an overview of the research literature related to the main constructs of the study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation*. Table 6.2 presents the conclusions pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-2: Conclusions to secondary objective 1

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 1
Conclusion 1.1: From secondary objective 1, no recommendations can be made, but it can be concluded that the literature needed for this study was perused and discussed. The following chapters provided the required literary overview: Chapter 2: Consumer behaviour and reference groups Chapter 3: Market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation

6.4.2 Secondary research objective 2

The aim of secondary research objective 2 was *to develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singletons consumer segment who participated in this study.* Table 6-3 presents the main findings and conclusions pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-3: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 2

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 2
The results of the study pertaining to various demographic elements of respondents allowed the researcher to develop a demographic profile of Singletons who participated in this study. The following conclusions relate to these demographic variables: **Conclusion 2.1:** Singletons who participated in this study were primarily aged between 18 and 29 years of age. **Conclusion 2.2:** Singletons who participated in this study primarily receive a monthly disposable income of R20 000 pm and less. **Conclusion 2.3:** Singletons who participated in this study are mainly female. **Conclusion 2.4:** Singletons who participated in this study mostly have a university degree (B-degree or Honours).

Table 6-3: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 2 (continued)

Recommendations: Secondary research objective 2
In order to devise effective and efficient marketing strategies, and for marketers to develop and promote products and services that are aligned with the specific needs of Singletons, it is important for marketers and organisations to identify and understand the demographics of this unique segment. It is for this reason that the following recommendations are provided: **Recommendation 2.1:** Marketers who are actively targeting Singletons will need to conduct further research on female consumers aged between 18 and 29 years of age with university degrees earning a disposable income of R20 000 pm and less with the aim of identifying the unique needs, wants and other characteristics of this specific consumer group. **Recommendation 2.2:** Marketers and organisations should develop and promote products and services that are aligned to the dominant demographic elements identified in this study in order to improve communication with this consumer group. **Recommendation 2.3:** Marketers should make use of celebrities and other spokespersons and/or actors that are female, aged 18 to 29 and who portray a sense of intelligence in order to improve the effectiveness of communication with Singletons, in light of the fact that the majority of consumers in this group fall within this demographic profile. These dominant demographic elements should be considered when devising marketing campaigns directed towards Singletons.

6.4.3 Secondary research objective 3

The aim of secondary research objective 3 was *to determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.* Table 6-4 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-4: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 3

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 3
In order to determine the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons, the SUSCEP scale was incorporated in the questionnaire. The SUSCEP scale consists of 12 items. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 3 was addressed in main findings B1, B2 and B3. Conclusions pertaining to the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 3.1:** It can be concluded that the 12 items of the SUSCEP scale were reliable for measuring the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons. **Conclusion 3.2:** It can be concluded that the SUSCEP scale is a valid instrument to measure the effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of respondents. **Conclusion 3.3:** It can be concluded that a moderately low level of reference group influence is exerted on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

Table 6-4: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 3 (continued)

Recommendations: Secondary research objective 3
Recommendation 3.1: Since reference groups have a moderately low effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons, it is recommended that marketers and organisations should understand the concept of reference groups and the effect these may have on consumers in general. However, marketers and organisations should not spend a significant amount of resources on trying to identify and understand the various reference group influences of Singletons, as these do not affect their buying behaviour significantly. **Recommendation 3.2:** The moderately low effect of reference groups on the buying behaviour of Singletons signals the ability of consumers in this segment to make purchase decisions by themselves without much consultation with others. Marketers should capitalise on this aspect by exposing Singletons to impulse purchase products or providing them with an immediate payment option or platform for goods and services, as not much time is required to lapse between the exposure to the product or service and the decision to purchase.

6.4.4 Secondary research objective 4

The aim of secondary research objective 4 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion-consciousness*. Table 6-5 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-5: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 4

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 4
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of fashion consciousness among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of fashion consciousness among Singletons comprised of items C1.1 - C1.10. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 4 was addressed in main findings C1, C3 and C4. Conclusions pertaining to the level of fashion-consciousness of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 4.1:** It can be concluded that the ten items used to measure the level of fashion consciousness of Singletons were reliable. **Conclusion 4.2:** It can be concluded that the ten items used to measure the level of fashion consciousness of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 4.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a relatively low level of fashion consciousness.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 4
Recommendation 4.1: By considering the relatively low levels of fashion consciousness among Singletons, it is recommended that fashion marketers and retailers should adopt a pull marketing strategy as opposed to pushing their brands out to consumers. This entails creating unique and bespoke customer experiences and to place the consumer at the centre of all marketing campaigns and strategies. The lifestyles, needs and wants of Singletons should guide marketers of fashion brands and retail outlets towards devising the ultimate pull marketing strategies in order to lure consumers to their brands. **Recommendation 4.2:** Fashion marketers and retailers should provide sufficient reason for Singletons to visit their stores, seeing that Singletons will not purposefully frequent these shops to shop for fashion items. Loyalty cards and other incentives could be a viable option to lure Singletons to repeat visits to retail outlets.

6.4.5 Secondary research objective 5

The aim of secondary research objective 5 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of cost consciousness*. Table 6-6 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-6: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 5

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 5
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of cost-consciousness among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of cost consciousness among Singletons comprised of items C2.1 – C2.5. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 5 was addressed in main findings C1, C3 and C5. Conclusions pertaining to the level of cost consciousness of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 5.1:** It can be concluded that the five items used to measure the level of cost consciousness of Singletons were reliable. **Conclusion 5.2:** It can be concluded that the five items used to measure the level of cost consciousness of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 5.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a moderately high level of cost consciousness.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 5
Recommendation 5.1: Due to the moderately high level of cost consciousness among Singletons, marketers should focus on the value of their products and downplay the price of the product if, indeed, the product is expensive. Marketers should strive to convince Singletons that their products are worthy of the price, even during recessions or economically challenging times. **Recommendation 5.2:** Marketers could appeal to the frugality of Singletons' cost consciousness by offering discounts on their products and by handing out coupons and other such incentives to convince Singletons that they are buying at a discounted or bargain price. **Recommendation 5.3:** Marketers could promote their products on a monthly sale as opposed to traditional seasonal sales. Singletons will be more willing to spend their hard-earned money on sale items than paying the full price. Marketers could implement clever pricing strategies to ensure that they still earn a suitable profit on products placed on sale.

6.4.6 Secondary research objective 6

The aim of secondary research objective 6 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health-consciousness*. Table 6-7 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-7: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 6

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 6
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of health consciousness among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of health consciousness among Singletons comprised of items C3.1 – C3.4. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 6 was addressed in main findings C1, C3 and C6. Conclusions pertaining to the level of health consciousness of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 6.1:** It can be concluded that the four items used to measure the level of health consciousness of Singletons were reliable. **Conclusion 6.2:** It can be concluded that the four items used to measure the level of health consciousness of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 6.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a moderately high level of health consciousness.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 6
Recommendation 6.1: Due to the moderately high level of health consciousness among Singletons, marketers should emphasise the health benefits of their products and services and downplay potential health hazards that could be brought about through the use of said products and services. **Recommendation 6.2:** It could be beneficial, in some instances, to add healthier alternatives to existing product lines in order to cater to health-conscious Singletons. This could be especially beneficial for marketers and organisations that produce products or provide services that could be perceived as harmful to consumers' health, i.e. candy or chocolate producers. **Recommendation 6.3:** It could be advantageous for brands that are actively targeting Singleton consumers to partner or collaborate with well-known health brands, such as Virgin Active or Discovery. This would lure Singletons towards the brand as they might perceive the brand as a healthy alternative to competitors in the same industry due to its collaboration with a health partner. **Recommendation 6.4:** Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons should opt to advertise and promote their brands at areas where health-conscious consumers can be found (such as gymnasiums) or within targeted media platforms like health magazines and newsletters. This will ensure that health-conscious Singletons are reached more effectively and efficiently. **Recommendation 6.5:** Marketers should place extensive information pertaining to the health benefits and/or hazards on their digital platforms as health-conscious Singletons are prone to conduct additional research on the health benefits of certain product categories.

6.4.7 Secondary research objective 7

The aim of secondary research objective 7 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation*. Table 6-8 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-8: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 7

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 7
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of recreation among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of recreation among Singletons comprised of items C4.1 – C4.4. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 7 was addressed in main findings C2, C3 and C7. Conclusions pertaining to the level of recreation of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 7.1:** It can be concluded that the four items used to measure the level of recreation of Singletons were unreliable. **Conclusion 7.2:** It can be concluded that the four items used to measure the level of recreation of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 7.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a moderately high level of recreation.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 7
Recommendation 7.1: Due to the moderately high level of recreation among Singletons, marketers should conduct further research in order to deduce the exact recreational activities Singletons participate in, and by so doing, allowing marketers a more holistic picture to focus on when devising marketing strategies for this specific segment. **Recommendation 7.2:** Seeing that Singletons enjoy recreational activities, marketers could create or promote recreational activities that are devised specifically for Singleton consumers, i.e. travel packages for solo travellers or gym membership packages for single consumers at discounted rates (taking into consideration their moderately high levels of cost consciousness). **Recommendation 7.3:** Due to the ever-changing recreational activities on the market today, marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons should keep abreast of the latest recreational trends and activities available to their consumers.

6.4.8 Secondary research objective 8

The aim of secondary research objective 8 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping*. Table 6-9 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-9: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 8

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 8
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of E-shopping among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of E-shopping among Singletons comprised of items C5.1 – C5.7. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 8 was addressed in main findings C1, C3 and C8. Conclusions pertaining to the level of E-shopping of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 8.1:** It can be concluded that the seven items used to measure the level of E-shopping of Singletons were reliable. **Conclusion 8.2:** It can be concluded that the seven items used to measure the level of E-shopping of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 8.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a moderately high level of E-shopping.

Table 6-9: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 8 (continued)

Recommendations: Secondary research objective 8
Recommendation 8.1: Due to their moderately high level of preference for E-shopping, marketers and organisations should ensure that their products and services targeted at Singletons' are made available for purchase online. **Recommendation 8.2:** Marketers should ensure that they communicate the option to purchase their products and services online to their Singleton consumers. **Recommendation 8.3:** Due to the amount of time spent online browsing and shopping for products and services, marketers and organisations should make use of online advertising space to promote their products and services, or to advertise any promotions to Singletons. This would improve the reach of their marketing messages to the Singletons segment.

6.4.9 Secondary research objective 9

The aim of secondary research objective 9 was *to determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career-orientation*. Table 6-10 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-10: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 9

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 9
The AIO-approach, developed by Plummer (1974), was used to measure the level of career orientation among Singletons. The statements used to measure the level of career orientation among Singletons comprised of items C6.1 – C6.5. Responses were rated using a 7-point Likert scale. Secondary objective 9 was addressed in main findings C1, C3 and C9. Conclusions pertaining to the level of career orientation of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 9.1:** It can be concluded that the seven items used to measure the level of career orientation of Singletons were reliable. **Conclusion 9.2:** It can be concluded that the seven items used to measure the level of career - orientation of Singletons were valid. **Conclusion 9.3:** It can be concluded that Singletons have a moderately high level of career orientation.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 9
Recommendation 9.1: Due to their moderately high levels of career orientation, marketers and organisations should pitch career-oriented events and functions to Singleton consumers, i.e. hosting a networking event or seminar. By luring career oriented Singletons to such events, marketers can advertise and promote their specific brands, products and services at such events in order to improve their reach to consumers in the Singletons segment. **Recommendation 9.2:** Marketers and organisations promoting and selling products and services that could possibly assist consumers in honing their skills or progress in their careers should emphasise the ability of their products and/or services in assisting Singletons in improving their efficiency and/or effectiveness at their place of work.

6.4.10 Secondary research objective 10

The aim of secondary research objective 10 was *to determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons*. Table 6-11 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-11: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 10

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 10
This section of the study set out to determine whether linear relationships exist between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons including fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation. Secondary objective 10 was addressed in main findings D1, D2, D3, D4 and D5. Conclusions pertaining to the underlying relationships between the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons are as follows: **Conclusion 10.1:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the lifestyle dimensions of fashion consciousness and health consciousness. **Conclusion 10.2**: It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the lifestyle dimensions of fashion consciousness and recreation. **Conclusion 10.3**: It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the lifestyle dimensions of fashion consciousness and E-shopping. **Conclusion 10.4:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the lifestyle dimensions of recreation and E-shopping. **Conclusion 10.5:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the lifestyle dimensions of health consciousness and E-shopping. **Conclusion 10.6:** Singletons who are fashion conscious tend to be more health-conscious, enjoy partaking in recreational activities and have a preference for E-shopping. **Conclusion 10.7:** Singletons who enjoy a preference for E-shopping also enjoy partaking in recreational activities and also tend to be more health conscious.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 10
By considering the conclusions pertaining to the underlying relationships of the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons, the following recommendations are provided: **Recommendation 10.1:** It is important for marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons to take heed of these results and conclusions when devising their marketing strategies for this segment of consumers. This information should be used as guidelines when devising marketing strategies, implementing promotions and/or when communicating information to Singletons. **Recommendation 10.2:** Given the interrelationships between fashion consciousness, recreation, health consciousness and E-shopping, marketers could advertise and sell trendy and fashionable active wear or recreational outfits (i.e. hiking gear) online. **Recommendation 10.3:** Given the interrelationships between recreation, health consciousness and E-shopping, marketers and organisations could advertise and sell recreational activities or travel packages for single consumers online that are geared towards improving the consumers' levels of health, i.e. mountain climbing or European skiing excursions.

6.4.11 Secondary research objective 11

The aim of secondary research objective 11 was *to determine the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.* Table 6-12 presents the conclusions and recommendations pertaining to this objective.

Table 6-12: Conclusions and recommendations for secondary objective 11

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 11
This section of the study set out to determine whether linear relationships exist between the level of reference group influence and the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons including fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation. Secondary objective 11 was addressed in main findings D6, D7 and D8. Conclusions pertaining to objective 11 are as follows: **Conclusion 11.1:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exist between the level of reference group influence and fashion consciousness. **Conclusion 11.2:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the level of reference group influence and E-shopping. **Conclusion 11.3:** It can be concluded that a practically significant relationship exists between the level of reference group influence and recreation. **Conclusion 11.4:** It can be concluded that Singletons whose buying behaviour is influenced by reference groups, tend to be more fashion conscious, enjoy a preference for E-shopping and partake in recreational activities.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 11
Recommendation 11.1: It is important for marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons to take heed of these results and conclusions when devising their respective marketing strategies for this segment of consumers. This information should be used as guidelines when devising marketing strategies, implementing promotions and/or when communicating information to Singletons. **Recommendation 11.2:** Given the interrelationships between the level of reference group influence, fashion -consciousness, E-shopping and recreation, marketers should identify the dominant reference groups and ensure that these types of reference groups are satisfied with the particular products or services that are marketed to Singletons so as to ensure positive word of mouth when consulted by Singletons. **Recommendation 11.3:** By identifying the dominant reference groups that have an influence on the buying behaviour of Singletons, members of such reference groups (i.e. sport stars) could be used to advertise or promote, or be assigned as brand ambassadors of fashion items, recreational activities or travel packages or e-commerce platforms.

6.4.12 Secondary research objective 12

The aim of secondary research objective 12 was *to determine the difference in perceptions of reference group effect and the lifestyle of Singletons with regards to their demographic differences.* Table 6-13 presents the conclusions pertaining to secondary research objective 12.

Table 6-13: Conclusions for secondary objective 12

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 12
This section of the study set out to determine whether linear relationships exist between the level of reference group influence and the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons including fashion consciousness, cost consciousness, health consciousness, recreation, E-shopping and career orientation. Secondary objective 12 was addressed in main findings E1 – E22. Conclusions pertaining to objective 12 are as follows:
Demographic element: Age
Conclusion 12.1: Singletons between the ages of 18 and 29 and 30 and 39 are significantly more influenced by reference groups than Singletons between the ages of 40 and 49. **Conclusion 12.2:** Singletons between the ages of 30 and 39 are more fashion conscious than those between the ages of 18 and 29 and 40 to 49 respectively. **Conclusion 12.3**: Singletons between the ages of 30 and 39 and 40 and 49 are more cost-conscious than Singletons between the ages of 18 and 29. **Conclusion 12.4:** Singletons between the ages of 30 and 39 are the least health-conscious whilst Singletons between the ages of 40 and 49 are the most health conscious. **Conclusion 12.5:** Singletons between the ages of 40 and 49 enjoy participating in recreational activities the most. **Conclusion 12.6:** Singletons between the ages of 18 and 29 share a preference for E-shopping more than those aged between 30 and 49 years of age. **Conclusion 12.7:** Singletons between the ages of 30 and 39 and 40 and 49 are more career orientated than Singletons aged 18 to 29. **Conclusion 12.8:** Singletons earning a monthly income of less than R10 000 pm and those earning R31 000 and more per month are more health conscious than those Singletons in other income categories. **Conclusion 12.9:** Singletons earning a monthly income of R31 000 and more are the most career orientated.
Demographic element: Level of education
Conclusion 12.10: Reference groups mostly influence the buying behaviour of Singletons who have completed matric and Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree. **Conclusion 12.11:** Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma and Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree are more fashion conscious. **Conclusion 12.12:** Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma are the most cost-conscious. **Conclusion 12.13:** Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree share a preference for participating in recreational activities. **Conclusion 12.14:** Singletons who have obtained a university degree and Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree share a preference for E-shopping. **Conclusion 12.15:** Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma and Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree are more career oriented.

Table 6-13: Conclusions for secondary objective 12 (continued)

Conclusions: Secondary research objective 12
Demographic element: Gender
Conclusion 12.16: Female Singletons are more health conscious than male Singletons. **Conclusion 12.17:** Male Singletons experience a greater influence from reference groups than female Singletons. **Conclusion 12.18:** Female Singletons are more fashion conscious than male Singletons. **Conclusion 12.19:** Female Singletons participate in recreational activities more than male Singletons. **Conclusion 12.20:** Female Singletons are more cost-conscious than male Singletons. **Conclusion 12.21:** Male Singletons enjoy E-shopping more than female Singletons. **Conclusion 12.22:** Female Singletons are more career orientated than male Singletons.
Recommendations: Secondary research objective 12
Demographic element: Age
Recommendation 12.1: Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons should strive to identify the dominant reference groups of Singletons aged younger than 40 years in order to align their marketing strategies and messages with the unique characteristics and needs of these reference groups. **Recommendation 12.2:** Marketers and organisations should focus on producing and marketing fashion items that are age-appropriate for Singletons between the ages of 30 and 39 years. Marketers could conduct additional research (for example, by means of focus group sessions) on what this age group of Singletons like and what they would prefer to wear. **Recommendation 12.3:** In order to provide Singletons aged between 30 and 39 and 40 and 49 years with products and services at a reasonable price, marketers and organisations should investigate and determine the products and services that Singletons in these age groups these prefer and purchase the most. Upon gaining this information, product promotions, product groupings, sales and discounts can be provided as incentives by the marketers and organisations to ensure that they retain these consumers. **Recommendation 12.4:** Marketers and organisations can target health-conscious Singletons aged between 40 and 49 by providing them with special gym facilities and classes designed specifically for their needs. Organisations in the healthcare industry can award Singletons aged between 40 and 49 with benefits in terms of discount on healthy food and beverages and free yoga classes. **Recommendation 12.5:** Marketers and organisations can identify the recreational activities that are mostly enjoyed by Singletons between the ages of 40 and 49 and develop recreational packages or offers specifically targeted at those recreational activities they prefer. **Recommendation 12.6:** Marketers and organisations should ensure that the product lines and/or services targeted at Singletons aged between 30 are made available for purchase online, across all ecommerce sites i.e. Amazon. **Recommendation 12.7:** Marketers and organisations could arrange for career events and/or functions specifically targeted at Singletons aged between 30 and 49. This could be mid-career change seminars or talks on how to improve performance at work and excel in one's career. At these events, marketers can expose other brand and/or products targeted at Singletons in this specific age group.

Table 6-13: Conclusions for secondary objective 12 (continued)

Recommendations: Secondary research objective 12
Demographic element: Monthly income
Recommendation 12.8: Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with health-related products should take note that Singletons who earn less than R10 000 pm and R31 000 pm or more are more prone to spend their disposable income on health-related products and services. Further research should be conducted on the lifestyle of these age groups, as well as their personal preferences so that marketers can position health-related products accordingly and advertise such products in media platforms that are mostly used by Singletons in these age groups. **Recommendation 12.9:** Marketers should conduct further research on Singletons who earn R31 000 pm or more in order to gauge what their specific career needs and preferences are. Based on these findings, career-related events, functions, seminars and/or products and services could be marketed to Singletons in this specific income category.
Demographic element: Level of education
Recommendation 12.10: Marketers and organisations should make sure that they identify and understand who the reference groups are that Singletons consult when making purchase decisions, specifically those Singletons who have completed matric or who have obtained a postgraduate degree. This will allow them to customise their marketing strategies and messages to conform to the needs and unique characteristics of Singletons with these levels of education. **Recommendation 12.11:** Marketers and organisations who promote fashion brands and items to Singletons should customise their marketing strategies and campaigns according to the needs and unique characteristics of Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma and/or a postgraduate degree, seeing that Singletons who have obtained these levels of education are more fashion-conscious than others. **Recommendation 12.12:** Marketers should pitch promotional products and discounted goods and services specifically to Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma, seeing that they tend to be more cost-conscious. **Recommendation 12.13:** Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with recreational products or packages should conduct further research on Singletons who have obtained a postgraduate degree. By doing so, marketers will gain a more profound understanding of the exact needs and preference pertaining to their recreational activities, and will, therefore, be able to customise products and packages to cater for the exact needs of this group of Singletons. **Recommendation 12.14:** Products that are specifically aimed at Singletons who have obtained a university degree and/or a postgraduate degree should be made available online for purchase, seeing that such consumers share a preference for E-shopping. In addition, further research can be conducted on the personal preferences and needs of Singletons who have obtained a university degree or postgraduate degree in order to ensure that such products are produced or made available to such consumers. **Recommendation 12.15:** Marketers and organisations who market and promote products and services that are aimed at advancing consumers' careers should specifically aim their marketing efforts at Singletons who have obtained a technical college diploma and those who have obtained a postgraduate degree.

Table 6-13: Conclusions for secondary objective 12 (continued)

Demographic element: Gender
Recommendation 12.16: Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with health-related products and services should bear in mind that female Singletons are more inclined to be interested in, and to purchase such products. Thus, marketers could capitalise on this by making use of female spokespersons and brand ambassadors in order to communicate with this group of Singletons more effectively. Packaging and other brand elements should also be aligned with female preference. **Recommendation 12.17:** Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with health-related products and services should keep in mind that female Singletons are more inclined to be interested and to purchase such products. Thus, marketers could capitalise on this by making use of female spokespersons and brand ambassadors in order to communicate with this group of Singletons more effectively. Packaging and other brand elements should also be aligned with females' preferences. **Recommendation 12.18:** Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with fashion brands and items should invest more time and resources on targeting female Singletons than male Singletons, as female Singletons are more fashion conscious than male Singletons. **Recommendation 12.19:** Marketers and organisations that are actively targeting Singletons with recreational activities and excursions should invest more time and resources on targeting female Singletons than male Singletons, since female Singletons are more prone to participate in recreational activities. **Recommendation 12.20**: Marketers and organisations that are targeting Singletons with value-added products, discounted products, vouchers and sales should focus more on targeting male Singletons, as these consumers are more cost-conscious than female Singletons and are more likely to react to such marketing efforts. **Recommendation 12.21:** Products and services targeted at male Singletons should be made available online, as male Singletons have a preference for E-shopping. In addition, marketers can capitalise on this fact by advertising brands and products targeted at male Singletons online, as this will improve the chances of reaching male Singletons more effectively, seeing that they are active online. **Recommendation 12.22:** Career-advancing opportunities, products, service, as well as seminars, events and functions aimed at consumers who wish to progress in their careers or change careers, should be targeted at female Singletons as they are more career-oriented than male Singletons.

6.5 LINKING ALL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES. QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE, MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the links between all aspects of the study in terms of the study's primary and secondary research objectives, the questions posed in the questionnaire, the main findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Table 6-15.

Table 6-14: Links between research objectives, questions, main findings, conclusions and recommendations

Questions	Main finding	Conclusions	Recommendations
Secondary objective 1: To provide an overview of the research literature related to the main constructs of this study, namely consumer behaviour, reference groups, market segmentation and lifestyle segmentation.			
Chapters 2 & 3	-	1.1	-
Secondary objective 2: To develop a demographic profile of consumers who form part of the Singleton market segment and who participated in this study.			
Section D: D1 – D5	5.5	2.1 – 2.4	2.1 – 2.3
Secondary objective 3: To determine the extent to which reference groups have an effect on the buying behaviour of Singletons.			
Section B: B1 – B12	5.3	3.1 – 3.3	3.1 – 3.2
Secondary objective 4: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of fashion consciousness.			
Section C: C1.1 – C1.10	5.4	4.1 – 4.3	4.1 – 4.3
Secondary objective 5: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of cost consciousness.			
Section C: C2.1 – C2.5	5.4	5.1 – 5.3	5.1 – 5.3
Secondary objective 6: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of health consciousness.			
Section C: C3.1 – C3.4	5.4	6.1 – 6.3	6.1 – 6.5

Table 6-14: Links between research objectives, questions, main findings, conclusions and recommendations (continued)

Secondary objective 7: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of recreation.			
Section C: C4.1 – C4.4	5.4	7.1 – 7.3	7.1 – 7.3
Secondary objective 8: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of E-shopping.			
Section C: C5.1 – C5.7	5.4	8.1 – 8.3	8.1 – 8.3
Secondary objective 9: To determine the lifestyle of Singletons in terms of career orientation.			
Section C: C6.1 – C6.5	5.4	9.1 – 9.3	9.1 – 9.2
Secondary objective 10: To determine the underlying relationships between the various lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.			
Section C: C1.1 – C6.5	5.6	10.1 – 10.7	10.1 – 10.3
Secondary objective 11: To determine the underlying relationships between the level of reference group effect and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons.			
Section B & C: B1 – B12 ; C1.1 – C6.5	5.7	11.1 – 11.4	11.1 – 11.3
Secondary objective 12: To determine the difference in perception of reference group influence and the lifestyle dimensions of Singletons with regards to their demographic differences.			
Section B, C & D: B1-B12 ; C1.1 – C6.5 ; D1 – D5	5.8	12.1 – 12.22	12.1 – 12.22

Considering the information presented in Table 6-29, it can be concluded that the secondary objectives set out to achieve the primary objective of this study, which was to *determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons*, have been met.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Upon conducting a research study, it is unavoidable to experience limitations that influence the study. This section presents the limitations pertaining to the literature review and empirical research.

6.6.1 Limitations of the literature review

- Extensive literature is available on consumer behaviour and lifestyle; however, a limited amount of information is available on the Singletons consumer segment.
- Secondary sources concerning Singletons are limited, consisting mostly of Internet sources.
- Minimal, to non-existing resources of Singleton consumers in South Africa are available, thus compelling the researcher to rely on information provided by international studies.
- A large body of literature is available with regard to lifestyle segmentation; however, limited information concerning the AIO-approach and the various statements. The battery of statements is not easily accessible or properly explained.

6.6.2 Limitations of the empirical study

- No sampling frame of Singletons in South Africa was available for this study, resulting in the choice of using a non-probability convenience questionnaire.
- This study only considered Singletons in the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas of Gauteng, thus making it an inaccurate representation of the entire South African population.
- The final sample of this study consisted of 207 respondents. A larger sample is needed in order to obtain more conclusive results.
- The lifestyle of Singletons was only represented by measuring six lifestyle dimensions. More insight should be gathered on the lifestyle of Singletons by considering more lifestyle dimensions.

- The study had more female respondents than male respondents, which also indicated a possible misrepresentation of the larger South African Singleton population.

- Bearing these limitations in mind, recommendations for future research are presented in the following section.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the above mentioned limitations, a number of recommendations can be made for future studies:

- A more accurate representation of the target population can be gained if a larger sample size is considered in future research.

- Future studies should consider a wider geographic are of study, by considering all the densely populated provinces in South Africa.

- A comparative can be conducted to determine how Singletons and their lifestyles differ with regard to the various geographic locations.

- Similar studies can be conducted by determining the lifestyle of Singletons and analysing various dimensions and their statements, from the AIO-approach.

- Future studies can consider determining the effect of other external influences such as culture, family and social class that may affect the buying behaviour of Singletons.

- Probability sampling can be implemented in future studies in order to assure that the results obtained represent the entire population and not only the participating respondents.

- It is recommended that longitudinal research designs should be incorporated, as it will improve the external validity of this study. This study was conducted at one point in time only, and greater and more accurate results could have been obtained by using a longitudinal research design.

- Future studies can consider one of the lifestyle dimensions and gain a more profound understanding of Singletons with regard to that specific dimension, for example considering the cost consciousness dimension of Singletons and then determining their financial aspirations, expenditure and preferred banking schemes.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an overview of the study as well as the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations. The secondary objectives were used to draw conclusions, which are based on the main findings formulated in Chapter 5. Recommendations were formulated to assist marketers and organisations in their efforts to target Singleton consumers effectively based on their preferences as identified in the main findings. A summary is provided of the links between all the aspects of the study. The chapter concluded by discussing the various limitations that the researcher experienced while conducting this study. Finally, a number of suggestions based on the limitations was offered for future studies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V., Day, G.S. & Leone, R.P. 2011. Marketing research. 10th ed. New Jersey: Wiley.

Al Zoubi, M.O. & Bataineh, M.T. 2011. The effects of using celebrities in advertising on the buying decision: empirical study on students in Jarash private university. *American journal of scientific research*, 13(2011):59-70.

American Marketing Association (AMA). 2017. Definition of marketing. http://www.marketing-dictionary.org/Marketing. Date of access: 26 Sept. 2018.

American Marketing Association (AMA). 2018. Definition of marketing research. http://www.marketing-dictionary.org/Marketing+research. Date of access: 2 Jan. 2019.

Anantachart, S. 2013. Discovering Thai senior consumers' patterns of consumption in Bangkok. *Journal of health research*, 27(2):85-91.

Arora, R. & Mahankale, N.R. 2013. Marketing research. New Delhi: PHI learning.

Asiedu, E. 2016. A study of use and impact of market segmentation practices on bank performance: with special reference to commercial banks in Colombia. *Journal of business and financial affairs*, 5(1):3-5.

Babin, B. & Zikmund, W. 2016. Exploring marketing research. 11th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Babin, B.J. & Harris, E. 2018. Consumer behaviour. 8th ed. Boston: Cengage.

Baharun, R., Hamid, A.B.A., Shamsudin, A.S., Salleh, N.Z.M., Zaidin, N. & Sulaiman, Z. 2011. Market segmentation in Malaysia by using psychographic dimensions for unit trust products. *African journal of business management*, 5(13):5040-5047.

Baines, P., Fill, C. & Page, K. 2013. Essentials of marketing. UK: Oxford University Press.

Baoku, L., Cuixia, Z. & Weimn, B. 2010. An empirical study on the decision-making styles of the Chinese peasant consumers. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 27(7):629-637.

Barry, T.E. 2009. Assessing the nomological validity of a cognitive age segmentation of Japanese seniors. *Asia Pacific journal of marketing*, 21(3):315-328.Bemporad, R. &

Baranowski, M. 2011. Conscious consumers are changing the rules of marketing. Are you ready? http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:938rT3oqav4J:www.fmi.org/docs/sustainability/BBMG_Conscious_Consumer Date of access: 12 Oct. 2018.

Benzo, R., Monsen, M.G. & Fourali, C. 2016. Marketing research: planning, process, practice. USA: Sage Publications.

Berndt, A. & Petzer, D. 2011. Marketing research. Cape Town: Pearson.

Bindroo, V. & Echambadi, X.H. 2016. Satisfaction-repurchase intention relationship: exploring the contingent roles of consideration set size in price consciousness. *Journal of marketing and management*, 3(1):15-125.

Binge, J.E., Sanchez, I. & Andreu, L. 2009. The role of variety seeking in short and long run revisit intentions in holiday destinations. *International journal of culture, tourism and hospitality research*, 3(2):103-115.

Boone, L.E. & Kurtz, D.L. 2014. Contemporary marketing. 16th ed. Mason, OH: South-Western.

Bothma, C. 2013. Product management. Cape Town: Juta.

Bouhlel, O., Mzoughi, M.N. & Chaieb, S. 2011. Singles: an expanding market. *Business management dynamics*, 1(3):22-32.

Bradley, N. 2010. Marketing research: tools & techniques. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Oxford.

Bradley, N. 2013. Marketing research: tools and techniques. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, T.J. & Suter, T.A. 2014. Marketing research. 2nd ed. Mason, OH: South-Western.

Brown, T.J., Suter, T.A. & Churchill, G.A. 2018. Basic marketing research: customer insights and managerial action. 9th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Bruwer, J & Li, E. 2017. Domain-specific market segmentation using a latent class mixture modelling approach and wine-related lifestyle (WRL) algorithm. *European journal of marketing*, 51(10):1552-1576.

Bug, P. & Topfer, M. 2015. Classical consumer lifestyle segmentation methods. *International marketing review*, 2(2):10-31.

Burns, A.C. & Bush, R.F. 2014. Marketing research. 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Burns, A.C., Veeck, A. & Bush, R.F. 2017. Marketing research. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Busany, N. & Maoz, S. 2016. Behavioural log analysis with statistical guarantees.

Cambridge Dictionary. 2018. Bachelor. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bachelor Date of access: 31 Aug 2018

Cant, M. 2010. Marketing: an introduction. Lansdowne, Cape Town: Juta.

Cant, M.C. & Van Heerden, C.H. 2010. Marketing management: A South African perspective. Cape Town: Juta.

Cardona, M. 2013. Single-minded marketing: a multitrillion-dollar opportunity. www.cmo.com/features/articles/2013/4/16/single-minded-marketing.html Date of access: 13 Mar. 2018.

Centola, D. 2010. The spread of behavior in an online social network experiment. *Journal of science*, 32(59):1194-1197.

Chiu, C.M., Wang, E.Y., Fang, Y.H. & Huang, H.Y. 2014. Understanding consumers' repeat purchase intentions in b2c e-commerce: the roles of utilitarian value, hedonic value and perceived risk. *Information systems journal*, 24(1):85-114.

Churchill, G.A., Brown, T.J. & Suter, T.A. 2010. Basic marketing research. 7th ed. Southern-Western: Cengage.

Cleveland, M., Papadopoulos, N. & Laroche, M. 2011. Identity, demographics, and consumer behaviors: international market segmentation across product categories. *International marketing review*, 28(3):244-266.

Clow, K.E. & James, K.E. 2014. Essentials of marketing research: putting research into practice. London: Sage.

Cooper, D.R. & Schindler, P.S. 2011. Business research methods. 11th ed. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.

Cunningham, N. 2018. Introduction to marketing: a Southern African perspective. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Dawar, S. 2016. Impact of technological innovation on marketing mix of mobile phone industry in Rajasthan.

Dawson, E. & Chatman, E. 2001. Reference group theory with implications for information studies: a theoretical essay. *Information research*, 6(3):1-5.

De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B. & Delport, C.S.L. 2009. Research at grass roots: for the social sciences and human service professions. 3rd ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

DeMarais, D. 2015. Validation of the SUSCEP scale: an independent second look. *In proceedings of the 1990 academy of marketing science (AMS) annual conference*. Cham: Springer.

DMA. 2013. Meet the 4 new singleton consumer types you need to get to know. www.dma.org.uk/article/meet-the-new-singletons-you-need-to-get-to-know/1474 Date of access: 12 Mar. 2018.

Dos Santos, M. 2013. Consumer behaviour: South African psychology and marketing applications. Cape Town: Oxford.

Ebren, F. 2009. Susceptibility to interpersonal influence: a study in Turkey. *Social behaviour and personality, an international journal*, 37(8):1051-1063.

Elsbach, K.D. & Kramer, R.M. 2016. Handbook of qualitative business research: innovative pathways and methods. New York, NY: Routledge.

Envision. 2016. The single shopper – an overlooked consumer ready to connect. http://www.dialogue-international.com/the-single-shopper-an-overlooked-consumer-ready-to-connect/ Date of access: 11 Jun. 2018.

Euromonitor. 2017. https://www.stylus.com/solo-living-independent-singletons Date of access: 15 Aug. 2018.

Euromonitor International. 2008. Singletons: a consumer group you can't afford to ignore. www.marketresearchworld.net/content/view/2064/78/ Date of access: 17 Jan. 2018.

Euromonitor International. 2017. Households in 2030: rise of the singletons. www.blog.euromonitor.com/2017/03/households-2030-singletons.html Date of access: 12 Mar. 2018.

Feinberg, F.M., Kinnear, T.C. & Taylor, J.R. 2013. Modern marketing research: concepts, methods and cases. 2nd ed. South-Western: Cengage.

Field, A. 2009. Discovering statistics using SPSS. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Flynn, J.Z. & Foster, I.M. 2009. Research methods for the fashion industry. New York: Fairchild.

Flynn, M. 2017. Infographic: marketing to singles. www.martinoflynn.com/blog/2017/04/12/infographic-marketing-singles/ Date of access: 17 Jan. 2018.

Gbadamosi, A. 2013. Principles of marketing: a value-based approach. NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ha, S. & Stoel, L. 2010. Consumer E-shopping acceptance: antecedents in a technology acceptance model. *Journal of business research*, 62(5):565-571.

Hair, J.F., Wolfinbarger, M.F., Ortinau, D.J. & Bush, R.P. 2010. Essentials of marketing research. 2nd ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Harreveld, B., Danaher, M., Lawson, C., Knight, B.A. & Busch, G. 2016. Constructing methodology for qualitative research. London: Macmillan Publishers.

Hawkins, D.I. & Mothersbaugh, D.L. 2010. Consumer behavior: building marketing strategy. 11th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

He, Y., Zou, D. & Jin, L. 2010. Exploiting the goldmine: a lifestyle analysis of affluent Chinese consumers. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 27(7):615-628.

Henn, M., Weinstein, M. & Foard, N. 2009. A critical introduction to social research. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications.

Henricks, M. 2014. Marketing to singles: why one isn't the loneliest number. https://www.americanexpress.com/us/small-business/openforum/articles/marketing-to-singles-why-one-isnt-the-loneliest-number/ Date of access: 11 Jun. 2014.

Hong, H. 2009. Scale development for measuring health consciousness: re-conceptualization. *Social and behavioural sciences*, 1(1):3-24.

Hoomans, J. 2016. 35 000 decisions: the great choices of strategic leaders. https://www.go.roberts.edu. Date of access: 30 Aug. 2018.

Horner, S. & Swarbrooke, J. 2016. Consumer behaviour in tourism. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

Hou, J. & Elliot, K. 2016. Gender differences in online auctions. *Electronic commerce research and applications*, 17(1):123-133.

Hoyer, W., McInnis, D. & Pieters, R. 2018. Consumer behaviour. 7th ed. Boston: Cengage.

Huang, Y., Shi, J. & Wang, L. 2012. Consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence in mainland China. *Asian journal of social psychology*, 15(2):140-144.

Hundal, A. 2005. Psychographics of singletons: implications for marketers. *Management and labour studies*, 1(1):26-28.

Hur, W., Kim, H. & Park, J. 2010. Food and situation – specific lifestyle segmentation of kitchen appliance market. *British food journal*, 112(3):294-305.

Hur, W., Kim, H.K. & Park, J. 2010. Food and situation-specific lifestyle segmentation of kitchen appliance market. *British food journal*, 112(3):294-305.

Hurd, A. & Anderson, D.M. 2017. Kraus' recreation and leisure in modern society. Burlington: Jones and Bartlett Learning.

Husnain, M. & Akhtar, M. 2015. Impact of lifestyle on brand preferences. *Journal of business administration research*, 4(2):30-38.

Hyman, M.R. & Sierra, J.J. 2010. Marketing research kit for dummies. Indiana: Wiley Publishing.

Iacobucci, D. & Churchill, G.A. 2010. Marketing research: methodological foundations. 10th ed. Mason: Cengage.

Iacobucci, D. & Churchill, G.A. 2015. Marketing research: methodological foundations. 11th ed. Nashville, TN: Earlie Lite Books.

Jacobs, E. 2013. Singular behaviour. https://www.ft.com/content/94417e42-fab2-11e2-a7aa-00144feabdc0 Date of access: 19 Mar 2018.

Jadczakova, V. 2010. Evaluation and analysis of questionnaire lifestyle segmentation. *Journal of economics and management*, 1(1):3-26.

Jeong, Y., Zielinski, S., Chang, J. & Kim, S. 2018. Comparing motivation-based and motivation-attitude-based segmentation of tourists visiting sensitive destinations. *Journal of sustainability*, 10(2):1-16.

Joubert, P. 2013. Introduction to consumer behaviour. 2nd ed. Lansdowne, Cape Town: Juta.

Jusoh, Z.M. & Ling, G.H. 2012. Factors influencing consumer attitudes towards e-commerce purchases through online shopping. *International journal of humanities and social science*, 2(4):223.

Kardes, F.R., Cronley, M.L. & Cline, T.W. 2011. Consumer behaviour. 2nd ed. South–Western: Cengage.

Kardes, F.R., Cronley, M.L. & Thomas, W.C. 2015. Consumer behaviour. 2nd ed. Stamford: Cengage.

Keegan, W.J. & Green, M.C. 2011. Global marketing. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.

Kim, J., Kim, P. & Kim, J.E. 2018. Different or similar choices: the effect of decisions framing on variety seeking n travel bundle packages. *Journal of travel research*, 57(1):99-115.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2009. Marketing management. 13th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2016. A framework for marketing management. 6th ed. Essex, England: Pearson.

Kotler, P., Armstrong G. & Tait M. 2013. Principles of marketing: global and Southern African perspectives. Cape Town: Pearson.

Kreamer, H.C. & Blasey, C. 2016. How many subjects? Statistical power analysis in research. USA: Sage publications.

Krishnan, C.V. 2011. Determinants of consumer buying behaviour: an empirical study of private label brands in apparel retail. *Journal of economics and management*, 2(3):24-27.

Krishnan, J. 2011. Lifestyle – a tool for understanding buyer behaviour. *Journal of economics and management*, 5(1):283 – 298.

Lake, L.A. 2009. Consumer behaviour for dummies. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lamb, C.W., Hair, J.F. & McDaniel, C. 2010. MKTG2. Mason, Oh.: Cengage Learning.

Lantos, G.P. 2011. Consumer behaviour in action: real-life applications for marketing managers. New York, NY: Sharpe.

Lawan, L. & Zanna, R. 2013. Evaluation of socio-cultural factors influencing consumer buying behaviour of clothes in Borno State, Nigeria. *International journal of basic and applied sciences*, 1(3):519-529.

Lei, Y., Yayla, A. & Kahai, S. 2017. Guiding the Herd: the effect of reference groups in crowdfunding decision making. *Journal of business and economics*, 1(1):50-62.

Lessig, V.P. & Park, C.W. 1978. Promotional perspectives of reference group influence: advertising implications. *Journal of advertising*, 7(2):41-47.

Levy, M., Weitz, B.A. & Grewal, D. 2014. Retail management. 9th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Lin, L. & Chen, Y. 2009. A study on the influence of purchase intentions on repurchase decisions: the moderating effects of reference groups and perceived risks. *Tourism review*, 64(3):28-48.

Lin, Z., Heng, C. & Goh, K. 2013. Social media brand community and consumer behaviour: quantifying the relative impact of users and marketer generated content. *Information system research*, 24(1):88-107.

Lodha, G. & Vyas, A. 2012. Sales promotion approaches & marketing strategies followed in domestic LPG sector of India. *International journal of marketing and technology*, 2(10):137-151.

Macmillan Dictionary. 2018. Singletons. https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/singleton Date of access: 31 Aug 2018

Madeira, A.B., da Silveira, J.A.G. & Toledo, L.A. 2015. Marketing segmentation: your role for diversity in dynamical systems. *Journal of marketing*, 13(1):71-78.

Malhotra, N.K. 2010. Marketing research: an applied orientation. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Malhotra, N.K. & Dash, S. 2016. Marketing research: an applied orientation. 7th ed. India: Pearson.

Manickam, S. & Sriram, B. 2013. Modelling the impact of marketing information on consumer buying behaviour in a matured marketing environment: an exploratory study of the Middle East consumers. *Journal of promotion management*, 19(1):1-16.

Mascolo, K. 2017. How marketing to singles may be good for small businesses. www.voices.Whitman.syr.edu/programs/marketing Date of access: 17 Jan. 2018.

McDaniel, C.J & Gates, R. 2013. Marketing research essentials. 8th ed. New Jersey: Wiley.

McDaniel, C.J. & Gates, R. 2010. Marketing research essentials. 7th ed. Danvers: Wiley.

McPherson, M. 2004. A Blau space primer: prolegomenon to an ecology of affiliation. *Industrial and corporate change*, 13(1):263-280.

Mooi, E., Sarsteat, M. & Reci, I. 2018. Market research: the process, data and methods using strata. Singapore: Springer.

Mpinganjira, M. & Dos Santos, M.A.O. 2013. Consumer behaviour: South African psychology and marketing applications. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Mykhailyk, N. 2014. Consumer behaviour: the psychology of marketing. *Journal of marketing*, 1(1):350-353.

Narang, R. 2010. Psychographic segmentation of youth in the evolving Indian retail market. *The international review of retail, distribution and consumer research*, 20(5):535-557.

Nasiopoulos, D.K. 2015. Modelling of market segmentation for new IT product development. *International journal of marketing and technology*, 12(1): 1-16.

Neelankavil, J.P. 2015. International business research. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Noel, H. 2009. Basics marketing 01: Consumer behaviour. 1st ed. Switzerland: AVA Publishing.

Oxford Dictionary. 2018. Singletons. https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/singleton Date of access: 31 Aug 2018

Palmer, A. 2009. Introduction to marketing. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Parumasur, S.B. & Lombard, M.R. 2014. Consumer behaviour. 3rd ed. Cape Town: Juta.

Paulose, D. & Varghese, R. 2016. A study on the role of materialism and interpersonal influence in triggering conspicuous consumption among emigrants from Kerala. *Rajagiri management journal*, 10(1):38-62.

Paulose, M.D. & Ramanathan, H.N. 2016. A study on social antecedents of conspicuous consumption among emigrants from Kerala. *Journal of research in business and management*, 4(2):8-19.

Peter, J.P. & Donnelly, J.H. 2011. Marketing management: knowledge and skills. 10th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Phau, I. & Teah, M. 2009. Devil wears (counterfeit) Prada: a study of antecedents and outcomes of attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands. *Journal of consumer marketing* 26(1):15-27.

Prakash, S. 2017. Consumer buying behaviour: the 21st century consumers. *Journal of marketing*, 1(1):63-68.

Pride, W.M. & Ferrell, O.C. 2010. Marketing. 15th ed. Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.

Quintosn C. 2019. Loner living – solitude is bliss. https://blog.euromonitor.com/;oner-living-solitude-is-bliss/ Date of access: 26 Jul. 2019.

Rahman, T. 2017. Analysis on consumer recall, recognition and brand association pf the Savlon social media campaign. *Journal of business management*, 1(1):17.

Ramya, N. 2016. Factors affecting consumer buying behaviour. *International journal of applied research*, 2(10):76-80.

Rani, P. 2014. Factors influencing consumer behaviour. *Journal of customer behaviour*, 2(9):52-61.

Rao, K.R.M. 2011. Services marketing. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley.

Ratanasawadwat, N. & Jiamthapthaksin, R. 2017. Incorporating social network Thai text mining with lifestyle segmentation analysis. *International congress on advanced applied informatics*, 1(1):971-975.

Ray, D. & Choudhury, S.R. 2015. Factors affecting consumer decision making for purchasing selected home appliance products based on market segmentation: a feedback study of people associated with management education. *Journal of research in business and management*, 3(2):6-11.

Ren, H., Liu, L., Wang, D., Liu, J. & Luo, X. 2016. The battle for singles day: how social media marketing campaigns boost sales. *Pacific Asia conference of information systems*, 1(1):2-5.

Salkind, N.J. 2017. Statistics for people who (think they) hate statistics. 6th ed. London: Sage publications.

Sankar, D. 2016. Pre-owned car market in Kerala: a model linking attitudes, product and dealer related factors to post purchase behaviour. *Journal of academy of business and economics*, 1(1):50-62.

Sathish, S.SA. & Rajamohan, A. 2012. Consumer behaviour and lifestyle marketing. *International journal of marketing, financial serviced and management research*, 1(10):150-172.

Schariff, R.T.S., Shafi, A.R.M. & Hasim, N.H.H. 2014. Application of consumer lifestyle research in marketing perspective. *Global engineers and technologists review*, 4(1):11-15.

Schiffman, L.G. & Kanuk, L.L. 2014. Consumer behaviour. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Schlacter, J., Razzauk, N. & Mills, M. 1979. The family lifecycle revisited. (In Gitlow, H.S. & Wheatley, E.W., eds. Developments in marketing science: proceedings of the academy of marketing science, Miami, FL. New York, NY: Springer. p. 38-43).

Schultz, E.J. 2010. As single becomes new norm, how to market without stigma. www.adage.com/artical/news/advertising-market-singles-stigma/146376/ Date of access: 17 Jan. 2018.

Sethna, Z. & Blythe, J. 2016. Consumer behaviour. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Shin, H.K. 2010. The relationship between consumer decision-making styles and acculturation: a study of Korean American golfers in Southern California. Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico. (Dissertation – D.Phil.).

Smith, S.M. & Albaum, D.S. 2010. An introduction to marketing research.

Solomon, M.R. 2011. Consumer behaviour: buying, having, and being. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Sontakki, C.N. 2010. Marketing research. Himalaya Publishing House.

Stevens, R.E., Loudon, D.L., Ruddick, E.M., Wrenn, B., & Sherwood, P.K. 2012. The marketing research guide. 2nd ed. Binghamton, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Struwig, F.W. & Stead, G.B. 2013. Planning, designing and reporting research. Cape Town: Pearson.

Suresh, S., Rarichandran, S. & Ganesan, P. 2011. Understanding wellness cener loyalty through lifestyle analysis. *Health marketing quarterly*, 28(1):16-37.

Sweeney, B. 2015. Singles have money, so why is business ignoring them? http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20150214/ISSUE01/302149982/singles-have-money-so-why-is-business-ignoring-them Date of access: 17 Jan. 2018.

Szmigin, I. & Piacentini, M. 2018. Consumer behaviour. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thanyamon, S. 2012. Consumer behaviour in purchasing home furnishing products in Thailand. *Journal of marketing*, 1(1):4-12.

The Business dictionary. 2018. Defining differentiation. http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/differentiation.html Date of access: 29 Nov 2018

The Dictionary of Marketing. 2018. Defining market aggregation. https://trackmaven.com/?post_type=dictionary_term&s=market+aggregation Date of access: 29 Nov 2018

The Economic Times. 2018. Definition of niche marketing. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/niche-marketing Date of access: 4 Nov 2018

Thompson, D. 2013. Meet the 4 new Singleton consumer types that you need to get to know. https://dma.org.uk/article/meet-the-4-new-singleton-consumer-types-you-need-to-get-tp-know/1441274 Date of access: 12 Mar 2018.

Vaidya, I.N. 2015. Lifestyle based segmentation of rural consumers of central Gujarat: an empirical study with special reference to gender and age. *Journal of business and management*, 17(7):33-41.

Wiid, J. & Diggines, C. 2009. Marketing research. Lansdowne, Cape Town: Juta.

Wortzel, L.H. 2014. Young adults: single people and single person households. *Advances in consumer research*, 4(1):324-329.

Zhou, J.X., Arnold, M.J., Pereira, A. & Yu, J. 2010. Chinese consumer decision-making styles: a comparison between inland and coastal regions. *Journal of business research*, 63(1):45-51.

Zikmund, W.G. & Babin, B.J. 2010. Exploring marketing research. 10th ed. Melbourne: South-Western.

Zikmund, W.G., Babin, B.J., Carr, J.C. & Griffin, M. 2012. Business research methods. 8th ed. Mason, OH: South-Western.

Zikmund, W.G., D'Alessandi, S., Winzar, H., Lowe, B. & Babin, B. 2017. Marketing research: Asia-Pacific edition. 4th ed. Cengage.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Fieldworker initials and surname: **Questionnaire number:**

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOMKAMPUS

This survey forms part of a Master's study in Marketing Management at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), with a specific focus on ***the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons***.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to determine the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

Participating in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the process at any time. All information that you provide will be treated with the highest standard of privacy and will remain entirely anonymous. No data will be disclosed to any other parties and no data will be reported on an individual basis.

Results:

The research results will only be used empirically for the written dissertation of the study. All participants are welcome to request results upon completion of the study.

Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. When evaluating a question, please answer from your own perspective, by marking or completing where required. Please accept my gratitude in anticipation of your willingness to participate in this research. Should you have any questions, please contact Dr R.H. Goldberg at 018 285 2207 or Roland.Goldberg@nwu.ac.za.

Yours faithfully

Liani Groenewald

Supervisors: Dr R.H. Goldberg

Prof. L.R. Jansen van Rensburg

SECTION A – SCREENING QUESTIONS

Are you older than 18?	Yes	No
Are you single?	Yes	No
Do you live alone?	Yes	No

If your answer is 'Yes' to all the above questions, please complete the questionnaire.

If your answer is 'No' to all the above questions, you do not have to complete the questionnaire.

SECTION B – REFERENCE GROUPS

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 = '*Strongly disagree*' and 7 = '*Strongly agree*'.

	Statement	**Strongly disagr**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Strongly agree**
B1	I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends will approve of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B2	It is important that others like the products and brands I use.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B3	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B4	If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B5	I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B6	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B7	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B8	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B9	To make sure I buy the right product or brand, I often observe what others are buying and using.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B10	If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B11	I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative from a product class.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B12	I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION C – LIFESTYLE

Please indicate how you feel about the following statements on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 = '*strongly disagree'* and 7 = '*strongly agree'*.

C1 – Fashion Consciousness

	Statement	**Strongly disagree**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Strongly agree**
C1.1	I usually have one or more outfits that are of the very latest style.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.2	When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for fashion, not for comfort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.3	An important part of my life and activities is dressing smartly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.4	I often try the latest hairstyles when they change.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.5	I dress more fashionably than most people do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.6	People can realise your social status by looking at the brand of clothes you wear.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.7	I read fashion-related magazines.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.8	I consult the internet for the latest fashion and styles.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.9	I spend a lot of time talking with my friends about the latest fashion trends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1.10	I like to watch fashion-related programs on television.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C2 – Cost-Consciousness

	Statement	**Strongly disagree**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**Strongly agree**
C2.1	I shop for specials.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C2.2	I find myself checking the prices in the grocery store even for small items.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C2.3	I usually watch the advertisements for announcements of sales.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C2.4	A person can save a lot of money by shopping around for bargains.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C2.5	I like to pay cash for everything I buy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C3 – Health-Consciousness

	Statement	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree
C3.1	I drink a lot of water or low-calorie drinks.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C3.2	I prefer to buy low-calorie, healthy foods.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C3.3	I do physical exercises regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C3.4	I would say that I lead a healthy lifestyle.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C4 – Recreation

	Statement	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree
C4.1	I thoroughly enjoy my leisure time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C4.2	Leisure is worth the extra money spent for it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C4.3	I would rather enjoy leisure time than work hard.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C4.4	I prefer to do nothing but watch TV or movies during the holidays.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C5 – E-shopping

	Statement	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree
C5.1	I think online buying is a novel, fun way to shop.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.2	E-shopping is easier than local shopping.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.3	I like browsing on the internet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.4	I think e-shopping offers lower prices than local stores.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.5	I enjoy buying things on the internet.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.6	Buying things on the internet scares me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C5.7	I think e-shopping offers a better selection than local stores.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C6 – Career orientation

	Statement	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	Strongly agree
C6.1	My work is stressful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C6.2	My work is of primary importance to me in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C6.3	My work is my true identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C6.4	I lack perseverance and focus to achieve goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C6.5	My work gives me satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SECTION D – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

D1. How old are you?

18 to 29 years	1
30 to 39 years	2
40 to 49 years	3
50 to 59 years	4
60 to 69 years	5
70 or older	6

D2. What is your monthly disposable income?

Less than R10 000 p.m.	1
R11 000 to R20 000 p.m.	2
R21 000 to R30 000 p.m.	3
R31 000 to R40 000 p.m.	4
More than R40 000 p.m.	5
Prefer not to say	6

D3. What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2
Prefer not to say	3

D4. Please indicate your highest level of education:

Primary school completed	1
Matric / Grade 12 completed	2
Technical College diploma	3
University or Technology diploma	4
University degree (B-degree or Honours)	5
Postgraduate degree (Masters or Doctorate)	6

D5. Please specify your current occupation:

Thank you for taking the time to partake in this study!

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INVITATION

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Dear XYZ

15 October 2018

This is an invitation to participate in a research study focusing on the newly identified Singleton consumer segment in South Africa. I am currently conducting research towards a Master's degree in Marketing Management at the North-West University, with specific focus on *the effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behaviour of Singletons.*

Objective:

The purpose of this study is to gain a profound understanding of what it entails to be s Singleton. The information accumulated will enable marketers to identify and apprehend this new consumer segment, aiding them in their task of creating appropriate products, services and marketing campaigns.

Sample and methodology:

The researchers aims to use self-administrated questionnaire, where the respondents will be able to complete the questionnaire by themselves. Trained fieldworkers will be responsible for identifying respondents who qualify to partake in the study by asking them screening questions. Upon completing the questionnaire the trained fieldworkers will be present should the respondents have any questions. It will take the respondent approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

All results will be used as empirical research for the written Master's Dissertation on the topic under study. All research participants are welcome to request results upon completion of this study.

Participation:

If you are willing to complete the self-administrated questionnaire, the fieldworkers will provide a questionnaire for you to fill in. Upon completion of answering the questionnaire, the trained fieldworkers will collect it from you.

Please accept my thanks in anticipation of your willingness to participate in this research study. Feel free to contact me directly with any queries.

Yours sincerely,

…….

Liani Groenewald

Master Student

Mobile: 082 826 1870

Email: lianigroenewald21@gmail.com

Student number: 25032194

Promoters: Dr R Goldberg (NWU) and Prof. L.R.J van Rensburg (NWU)

APPENDIX C: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Hoffman Street, Potchefstroom, 2520

School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences
Tel: +27 (0)18 299 2552
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

20 May 2019

Re: Mrs L Groenewald (25032194)

We hereby confirm that the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University analysed the data of the above-mentioned student and assisted with the interpretation of the results. However, any opinion, findings or recommendations contained in this document are those of the author, and the Statistical Consultation Services of the NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) do not accept responsibility for the statistical correctness of the data reported.

Regards

Marike Cockeran

Statistical Consultant
School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
North-West University
Potchefstroom Campus
+27 (0)18 299 2552
Marike.Cockeran@nwu.ac.za
www.nwu.ac.za

APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Declaration

This is to declare that I, Dr. L Combrink

Language editor and translator

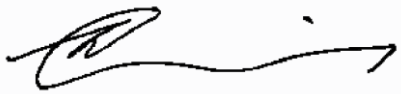
have language edited the study

with the title

THE EFFECT OF REFERENCE GROUPS AND LIFESTYLE ON THE BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF SINGLETONS

by

LIANI GROENEWALD



Date: 17 May 2019

APPENDIX E: LETTER FROM TECHNICAL EDITOR

BJB

Tegniese Versorging / Technical Editing

PO Box 2272
Potchefstroom
2520

Ms Liani Groenewald

Dear Ms Groenewald

TECHNICAL EDITING OF DISSERTATION

This letter serves to confirm that we edited your dissertation for the Master of Commerce in Marketing Management at the North-West University

"The effect of reference groups and lifestyle on the buying behavior of Singletons"

This editing included the following:

- figures,
- tables,
- the layout of the text, and
- the aspects of the contents.

Sincerely yours

EP Beukes
E Oosthuizen

May 2019