

Investigating consumers' brand loyalty in small family-owned businesses in the Stilfontein area, North West Province

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree [Master of Business
Administration](#) at the North-West University

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ABSTRACT

The significance of family-owned businesses extends across various domains, encompassing employment, economic contribution, and scholarly interest. Family-owned businesses constitute a substantial portion of the workforce and GDP in the United States. Similarly, family enterprises significantly influence South Africa's economic growth. Extensive research has explored different aspects of family businesses, such as financial performance, governance, and succession planning. However, a gap exists in understanding consumer loyalty towards family-owned brands. This study addresses this gap by investigating the factors driving consumer loyalty to family-owned businesses, particularly in the town of Stilfontein in the North West Province, South Africa.

This study is guided by an interpretivist paradigm, employing an inductive approach to qualitative research. Data collection involves semi-structured interviews with participants sampled through a non-probability method. Interviews with customers of family businesses are conducted to gather insights into brand loyalty. The subsequent data analysis reveals several themes and sub-themes that explain the factors contributing to consumer loyalty toward small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein. The emergent themes highlight the importance of community bonds, personalised services, product quality, and symbiotic relationships in driving consumer loyalty. Participants emphasise their preference for supporting local family-owned businesses, citing a deep connection to the community and a commitment to local economic growth. Managerial visibility, employee alignment with values, and quality interactions are vital in fostering customer loyalty.

The findings underscore the intricate interplay of factors contributing to consumer brand loyalty in family-owned businesses. While the study enriches the understanding of consumer behaviour and loyalty, it also identifies limitations such as geographical constraints and sampling scope. This research opens avenues for future exploration in diverse regions and a broader range of family-owned businesses.

Keywords: Brand loyalty, Family-owned business, Consumer, Brand Trust, Consumer Satisfaction, Repeat Purchases, Brand Performance, Organisation Culture and Brand Commitment

DECLARATION

I, **Marco Johan van Schoor**, declare that the work in this dissertation is original and my work and that I have not previously submitted it to any other university in its entirety or in part.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Lord Jesus, thank You for this privilege and thank You for making this possible for me.
- I want to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my mother, Annemarie van Schoor, for her invaluable contributions and support throughout this endeavour.
- Further, I would like to thank Prof Christo Bisschoff, thank you prof for the guidance and feedback during this study.
- I want to thank the four selected small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein for allowing me to conduct research within their businesses. Thank you to the participants who participated in this study, who gave time to answer my questions and contributed to this knowledge body.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the significance of family-owned businesses, particularly in South Africa, as well as the background of the research study. The study's primary research gap was understanding the characteristics influencing consumer loyalty to family-owned business brands. The main goals and purpose of the study were mentioned in this chapter, focusing on the primary research question.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The 2023 EY and University of St. Gallen Family Business Index showed considerable growth among the top 500 family-owned businesses, with sales exceeding \$8.02 trillion, a 10% increase over 2021 (Robertsson, 2023). These businesses surpass global economic development, playing an important role in the global economy. According to Robertsson (2023) Key results include Europe's supremacy, with Germany accounting for 31% of big family firms, and Asia-Pacific's ascent, with 79 enterprises and more than \$1 trillion in revenue. The Index's composition remains constant, with 47% of new entries from Europe, the Middle East, India, and Africa (EMEIA).

The research on family business has examined a broad range of issues, according to Lude and Prögl (2018:121), such as the financial performance of the family business, the governance of the family business, and the succession of the family business. The research gap identified, which birthed this study, was to determine why customers are loyal to the family-owned business brand. A framework was developed after identifying the critical factors why customers choose to do business with dedicated family-owned businesses. Through the construction of the framework, the management of family-owned businesses can enhance their marketing, customer service, and other aspects, according to the information gathered in this study. Management must know the reason behind consumer loyalty as this information might enable the company's growth.

The family-owned business environment is a holistic concept of grave importance to the country's economy. Scholars have argued about family-owned business succession plans and African family-owned businesses. What makes the family-owned business so significant? Why do customers choose a family-owned business instead of a major retailer? All questions need to be answered. This research study aimed to clarify the state of brand loyalty of customers towards family-owned businesses in the small town Stilfontein in the North West Province.

The following chapters will provide background to the study, indicating why the researcher chose the study to be investigated. Further, discussing terms and definitions follows and clarifies the research questions and topic. Furthermore, the problem statement identifying the research problem will shed light on the value of the study from a managerial perspective. The ' 'study's objectives further enlighten the overall purpose of the research and provide clarity.

The study scope enabled the reader to understand the geographical area where the study occurred and provided a more profound understanding. The research method and design elaborated on how the research was conducted. This research was conducted from the interpretivism paradigm with an inductive approach. The primary data were collected through a qualitative interview schedule with semi-structured questions. The participants participating in the study used a non-probability sample.

Additionally, the researcher approached the selected owners of the family-owned business to obtain permission to conduct research within their business. After obtaining permission to access the client's database to consult their contact details in the family-owned business, interviews were scheduled with the willing participants to collect data regarding the research objectives.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Branding is also essential for small to medium-family businesses to acquire a competitive advantage in saturated markets (Jandaghi *et al.*, 2011:153). Valuable managerial information could be generated through the collection of consumer brand loyalty data, which in turn provides marketing strategies for the business (Kyriakidis &

Rach, 2010:7). Creating brand-loyal customers has various advantages for small to medium-family businesses and customers tend to be less sensitive to changes in price once they are loyal, and attached to the brand (Holland & Baker, 2001:42). Branding is used as a primary tool to distinguish a product or a service from that of the competition (Moolla, 2010:20). The purpose of branding is to link product identification, loyalty, and enhancing new products, to a specific brand or brand name (Lamb, as cited by Moolla, 2010:20). However, what are the reasons causing customers to be loyal towards a specific small family-owned business? This is even more intriguing when loyalty is examined in a small town like Stilfontein.

The most significant result of brand loyalty is that brand loyalty increases the attraction of new clients through brand awareness and reduces marketing costs (Moolla, 2010:20). Competitiveness has a huge influence on the business environment (Richardson, 2018:1). Businesses are affected by six uncontrollable environmental influences, namely 1) socio-culture activities, 2) the competitive environment, 3) politics, 4) geographical influences, 5) technology, and 6) economic stance (Richardson, 2018:1). Business experts have warned South African businesses to prepare for a total electrical blackout (Staff Writer, 2023). This is a clear example of a business environment that an individual or company cannot control. The ongoing power crisis exemplifies a political and socio-economic environment out of the business' control.

The force behind markets is driven by competition (Godfrey, 2008:3). The South African family-owned business industry is affected by socio-economic problems such as load-shedding, high-interest rates, and recovery of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kaftan *et al.*, 2023:2). Hence, family-owned businesses need to improve their approach toward their market and brand loyalty strategy to maintain their market share, keep current customers and attract new customers.

This study intends to assist family businesses in identifying the areas in their business that generate brand loyalty. The research gap is why customers purchase products and services from small to medium-sized family-owned businesses instead of major retail stores. In the competitive economic environment, businesses depend on loyal customers to survive. However, determining 'customers' loyalty is challenging.

Managers are tasked to determine the company's risks. One of the significant company risks is the continuous entry of new products into the market which could cause business vulnerability and customer attrition if consumer loyalty is lacking (Obeng *et al.*, 2016:383). Thus, every business management, mainly family-owned businesses, must know the drivers behind brand loyalty. This study will contribute to the family-owned business sector with a specific aim toward small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein to address the issue of why customers choose to conduct business in this sector.

1.3. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The definition of key terms is included to elaborate on recurring terminology used in this study. The definitions of these terms aim to enlighten the reader and create context through which the study must be interpreted.

1.3.1. Brand loyalty

Historically, brand loyalty was considered biased toward specific branded products (Usman *et al.*, 2016:154). Bandyopadhyay *et al.* (2005:415) argue that brand loyalty is based on an interpersonal occurrence where individuals are loyal to a trusted brand, institution, or individual. Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007:223) describe brand loyalty as preferential behaviour towards a brand consisting of a broader spectrum of competitive alternatives. Brand loyalty is an act that consists of a choice that is supported by the behaviour of customers towards a preferred product or service Usman *et al.* (2016:154). The information above clearly indicates that brand loyalty is a choice that resides around the consumer. Brand loyalty emerges through how customers perceive a brand (Sindhu *et al.*, 2021:6). The family-owned 'business's brand is communicated through brand personalities, which determines the 'consumer's loyalty. This study defines brand loyalty as a consumer's preference towards a specific business's product or service.

1.3.2. Family-owned business

The family business environment is a topic of increasing interest among academics, philosophers, stakeholders, policymakers, and businesspeople. The research on family business has examined a broad range of issues, according to Lude and Prügl (2018:121), such as the financial performance of the family business, the governance of the family business, and the succession of the family business. The family business consists of various levels and dimensions. It is, therefore, not easily defined as a sole concept. However, the indication is clear that most definitions are focused on either the ownership or management aspect (Van Breda, 2014:19). Thus, a family-owned business is a business owned by a family (or families) and managed by the family or combined families (Van Breda, 2014:19). A family-owned business was thus referring to a business owned and managed by a family rendering services or products to customers.

1.3.3. Customer

Customers can purchase a product or service (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2023). This study describes a customer as willing and able to buy a product or service.

1.3.4. Brand Trust

There are numerous definitions of trust. However, the emphasis is on the situational risk taken by individuals and the level of vulnerability experienced by the individual due to the risk taken (Burke *et al.*, 2007:606). Trust is the foundation of loyalty since trust directly influences an 'individual's commitment (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999:70). Brand trust originates from an individual's perception that the brand is responsible and reliable (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012:80). Brand trust is the assurance a consumer has in the brand of the business.

1.3.5. Consumer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is the satisfaction level a consumer receives through a previous experience with the brand (Vera & Trujillo, 2017:603). Scholtz (2014:20) emphasises that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are linked directly to customer expectations of a

product or service. Consumer satisfaction refers to the value the consumer gains by using the business, product or service.

1.3.6. Repeat Purchases

A sequence of recurrent repeat purchases of the same brand shows a habit in a consumer's buying pattern, which is unlikely to change (Punniyamoorthy & Raj, 2007:226). This study defines repeat purchases as using the business's product or service.

1.3.7. Brand Performance

After using the product or service, a customer can evaluate the brand's performance (Moolla, 2010:134). Brand performance describes how the brand adheres to all the consumer's expectations (Hill, 2017:16). Brand performance is the overall need satisfaction that the brand provides the consumer.

1.3.8. Organisation Culture

An individual's purchasing behaviour is influenced socially by organisational culture, and the organisation's culture forms part of the client base (Lamb *et al.*, 2015:107). This study defines organisational culture as how the business manages daily customer interactions.

1.3.9. Brand Commitment

Brand commitment is a cognitive motive with behavioural intention (Kim *et al.*, 2008:99). An individual's commitment to a brand is usually an emotional connection linked with the product or service (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012:78). In this study, brand commitment is the assurance of customers repeating their purchases since they have trust in the brand.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1. Research Question

What drives customers' loyalty towards the small family-owned businesses brand in the town of Stilfontein?

1.4.2. Research Objectives

1.4.2.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study was to investigate 'customers' brand loyalty towards small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein.

1.4.2.2 Secondary objectives

As a means of addressing the primary objective of this study, the following secondary objectives were developed:

- To obtain insight into the defining characteristics and unique dynamics of customers' brand loyalty towards family-owned businesses through a literature study.
- To empirically explore the reasons for 'customers' loyalty towards small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations on brand loyalty towards family-owned businesses.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The assumptions and philosophies of individuals concerning the world around them are defined as a paradigm that influences the method employed when research is conducted (Collis & Hussy, 2014:43). Given the study's objectives, the interpretivism paradigm were used. The research paradigm employed in this study is the interpretivism paradigm, which follows an inductive approach and supports qualitative

research methods. In an interpretivist paradigm, qualitative data is usually collected for the researcher to interpret (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:136).

1.6. IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the enhancement of family-owned businesses by enabling the management to determine what births the loyalty of clients towards the brand and what the management should do to increase customer loyalty. If brand loyalty is managed correctly, it can add remarkable value to the company; hence, this study will clarify the status of brand loyalty in the family-owned business.

This study contributes to several family-owned businesses' brand loyalty body of knowledge. These businesses operate in the building, butchery, motor vehicle spares, and hardware sectors.

This study also examines 'customers' relationships and commitment to family-owned business brands. As a result, family-owned businesses can use this study's developed brand loyalty framework to evaluate consumer loyalty towards their businesses and brands to improve their competitiveness or even start a new marketing venture. This study also focuses on improving consumer loyalty towards family-owned businesses.

The study disciplines are in entrepreneurship and marketing. This study investigates four distinctive family-owned businesses from different business sectors in Stilfontein (building material, butchery, motor vehicle spares, and hardware suppliers).

1.7. DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

1.7.1. Delimitations

The geographical demarcation of this study is in Stilfontein. Stilfontein was originally a prosperous mining town between Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom on the N12. Although Stilfontein might seem insignificant compared to cities such as Klerksdorp, Potchefstroom, and Rustenburg, the former mining town is a hidden gem. Several individuals live in the town and work in neighbouring towns. Stilfontein became a

destination of choice because of low house prices, located within ten kilometres from Klerksdorp, and easy access via the N12 national road. As a result, the town experienced significant growth and an expansion of family businesses.

This study's scope is limited to certain factors contributing to customers' brand loyalty in family-owned businesses. Additionally, the study participants originate from a limited section of the family-owned businesses sectors, and participants were selected from four family-owned businesses in Stilfontein. Customers of other family-owned businesses in Stilfontein and the rest of the country are excluded from this study.

1.7.2. Assumptions

The researcher used an inductive procedure to condense raw data into a summative format for interpretation. The researcher assumed that a clear link can be established between the research question and the data obtained from the interviews.

1.8. OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

In chapter one, the context of the study and background were set. The topic, research problem, and research question are introduced. The problem statement, objectives, research method, and limitations were formulated.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In chapter two, a theoretical framework and context of brand loyalty of customers in small family-owned businesses are given.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter three describes the research design, methods, and selected data collection methods used in this qualitative study. A clear depiction was given of how the research question was addressed through the selected methodology.

Chapter 4: Findings

The data collected through the interviews were analysed through inductive analysis, whereafter the findings were shared to answer the research question.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter makes conclusions and suggestions based on the study's findings.

1.9. SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to establish the study's foundations by introducing brand loyalty and small family-owned business brands and the systematic approach. Chapter two contains the literature based on brand loyalty and its application in small family-owned businesses.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter thoroughly examines the literature on brand loyalty and its implications for consumer choices and the performance of family-owned businesses. The study defines brand loyalty as a conscious preference for one brand over another. It delves into numerous viewpoints on brand loyalty from scholars such as Bandyopadhyay, Punniyamoorthy, Raj, and Usman, focusing on the consumer-centric character of brand loyalty.

2.2. INTRODUCTION

This literature review examined what brand loyalty is, how brand loyalty affects customers' choices, and how these choices determine the success of the family businesses. Furthermore, the family business concept was elaborated on to contextualise this study. Brand loyalty is a biased action toward a specific brand of preference (Usman *et al.*, 2016:154). Bandyopadhyay *et al.* (2005:415) argue that brand loyalty is based on an interpersonal occurrence where individuals are loyal to a trusted brand, institution, or individual. Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007:223) describe brand loyalty as preferential behaviour towards a brand consisting of a broader spectrum of competitive alternatives. Brand loyalty is an act that consists of a choice that is supported by the behaviour of customers towards a preferred product or service Usman *et al.* (2016:154). The information above clearly indicates that brand loyalty is a choice around the 'consumer'.

2.3. A GLOBAL VIEW OF BRAND LOYALTY

This section broadens the discussion to examine the complex interplay between brand loyalty, culture, economics, and technological advantages. Cultural distinctions influence loyalty patterns, while economic conditions shape consumer behaviour and

preferences. Social media and digital marketing, for example, have revolutionised the dynamics of brand loyalty worldwide. The section demonstrates the intricate interplay of these factors and their impact on brand loyalty across various areas and cultures. Brand loyalty has taken on a global dimension in an increasingly interconnected world, impacted by cultural, economic, and technical considerations.

Firstly, cultural differences influence brand loyalty by altering customer preferences, behaviours, and emotional connections (Seock & Lin, 2011:94). Societies emphasise communal values, individualism, and community relationships, all contributing to different loyalty patterns. According to Seock and Lin (2011:94), the analysis of these cultural impacts reveals how brands connect with varied communities, promoting loyalty through cultural empathy. Economic variables play a critical influence in shaping brand loyalty worldwide, for instance, the effect of COVID-19 on various shopping trends and brand loyalty. Customer loyalty is influenced by socio-economic differences, purchasing power, and economic stability (Awad *et al.*, 2023:386). While some regions place a premium on cost and value, others place a premium on quality experiences. Hence, understanding the relationship between economic settings and brand loyalty explains why customers support specific brands despite changing financial environments. Awad *et al.* (2023:386) expand on the change in consumer loyalty due to the restrictions experienced in the lockdown phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, where customers chose brands that could provide a service without placing the consumer in danger.

The Internet of Things has also transformed brand loyalty by allowing brands and customers to connect globally (Arulkumar *et al.*, 2022:111). Technological advancements make real-time engagement, personalised experiences, and cross-border connections possible. Social media, e-commerce platforms, and digital marketing have transformed how firms generate and sustain loyalty on a global scale, crossing physical boundaries to construct virtual communities of loyal customers. The difficulty for international businesses is to balance a standardised worldwide image with local modifications that resonate with varied cultures. Tailoring company messages, products, and experiences to regional preferences is important to promote community loyalty. Exploring cross-cultural loyalty trends exposes consumer behaviour, similarities, and differences across locations.

2.4. BENEFITS OF BRAND LOYALTY

This section discusses the numerous benefits that brand loyalty provides to family businesses, such as maintaining a consistent customer base, encouraging community engagement, enabling word-of-mouth marketing, providing a competitive edge, enhancing resilience during economic downturns, nurturing intergenerational success, providing personalised customer experiences, and boosting flexibility and adaptability.

2.4.1. Sustained Customer Base

Brand loyalty is essential for cultivating a continuous and recurrent client base. Customers who form emotional bonds with family-owned businesses tend to become loyal customers who regularly return (Cardoso *et al.*, 2022:109). This devotion assures a consistent stream of income, which is critical to the business's financial stability and growth. Hence, brand loyalty provides a beneficial advantage for businesses, enabling them to secure future transactions and sustain their customer base.

2.4.2. Community Engagement

Family-owned businesses frequently play important roles in their communities. Brand loyalty enhances this community integration, resulting in a mutually advantageous relationship in which the businesses develop alongside the community's success. Community engagement is done mainly through an online presence of businesses on social media as a marketing platform (Park & Namkung, 2022). Customers who support local businesses feel a feeling of belonging, building strong relationships between the business and its community with a sense of loyalty in the community.

2.4.3. Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Because of pleasant experiences and emotional ties, loyal customers mature into brand supporters (Karim & Rabiul, 2022:12). This phenomenon leads to natural word-of-mouth marketing, tremendously increasing brand visibility, legitimacy, and reputation. According to Karim and Rabiul (2022:12), family-owned businesses have a wider consumer base because of the loyalty gained and the customers' zealous recommendations.

2.4.4. Competitive Edge

Brand loyalty is a significant distinguishing feature for family-owned businesses in competitive industries. While larger organisations may have more resources, family-owned businesses thrive on their personalised services, unique stories, and community participation (Temprano-Garcia *et al.*, 2023:163). Brand loyalty emphasises this originality by establishing obstacles that make it difficult for competitors to reproduce the same consumer devotion.

2.4.5. Resilience During Economic Challenges

During economic downturns or crises, brand loyalty's durability becomes especially important. According to Cardoso *et al.* (2022:109), loyal customers, motivated by emotional ties, are likelier to continue purchasing even when faced with difficult economic conditions. Natural resilience acts as a buffer, protecting family-owned businesses from income erosions that would otherwise bankrupt less established entities.

2.4.6. Nurturing Generational Success

Family-owned enterprises have a long-term view, generally with the goal of intergenerational succession. Brand loyalty is critical in building this legacy and maintaining a strong consumer base for subsequent family members who take over the firm (Arambhan & Seetharaman, 2022:337). The goodwill and relationships built with loyal clients provide a solid basis for sustained success.

2.4.7. Personalised Customer Experiences

A preference for personalised interactions is inherent in family-owned enterprises. Loyal customers are known by name, and their preferences are preserved thoroughly (Van Breda, 2014:19). This personalised approach strengthens the link between clients and the business, instilling in patrons a sense of respect and understanding and strengthening loyalty even more.

2.4.8. Flexibility and Adaptability

Family-owned firms are well-suited to capitalise on brand loyalty due to their agility and adaptability. According to Van Breda (2014:33), the agility of family-owned businesses enables them to respond quickly to client input, preferences, and changing market circumstances. This increased response boosts consumer pleasure and loyalty, confirming the relationship between flexibility and long-term brand loyalty.

In conclusion, this literature study section emphasises the numerous advantages of brand loyalty to family-owned firms. Brand loyalty promotes community cohesion, improves reputation, provides a competitive advantage, and cultivates long-term sustainability. Family-owned businesses rooted in personalised encounters, community participation, and legacy-building are positioned specifically to reap the benefits of brand loyalty, fostering ties that span generations and justify their ongoing success.

2.5. BRAND LOYALTY IN SOUTH AFRICAN FAMILY BUSINESSES

Brand loyalty emerges through how customers perceive a brand (Sindhu *et al.*, 2021:6). The family-owned business' brand is communicated through brand personalities, which determines the consumer's loyalty. The measurement of brand loyalty is a complex unit to be depicted by competitors, according to Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007:224). Brand loyalty is a market-based resource and provides a sustainable competitive advantage to the company, which holds 'customers' loyalty (Usman *et al.*, 2016:155). Brand loyalty consists of a bi-dimensional concept, firstly the measurement of behaviour and, secondly, the consumer's attitude towards a selected range of brands in the same category (Moolla, 2010:20).

The family business consists of various levels and dimensions. It is, therefore, not easily defined as a sole concept. The indication is clear that most definitions are focused on either the ownership or management aspect (Van Breda, 2014:19). Thus, a family-owned business can be defined as a business owned by a family or families and which is, in return, managed by the family or combined families (Van Breda, 2014:19). Family business ranges from the Italian family pizza house to the public traded family-owned business Walmart, in essence, the economy of each country was founded and built by family businesses (Lude & Prögl, 2018:121).

The family business is dependent on the loyalty of its customers. Without the loyalty of the customer, the family business could be depleted. Therefore, the family business is viewed as unique. Van Breda (2014:33) emphasises the uniqueness of family businesses since family businesses can access resources that are seldom available for non-family-owned enterprises. Family business management faces challenges such as the economic environment, policy uncertainty, competition, and external factors, but one of the biggest challenges is acquiring a loyal client base (Lude & Prögl, 2018:121). In addition, the family-owned business seeks economic growth in emerging markets and rarely considers brand loyalty's potential to facilitate economic growth (Sindhu *et al.*, 2021:6). Loyal customers are the core asset of any business; this asset can only be utilised and maintained by a strong relationship with the customer (Usman *et al.*, 2016:153). Furthermore, the accumulation of loyal customers is linked directly to trust, defined as the confidence that a customer will acquire what is desired and be satisfied with the product or service (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2005:188). Furthermore, brand loyalty is built over time through positive experiences with the business from a cliental view; these positive experiences require consistent attention and managerial effort (Moolla, 2010:21). The genesis of loyal customers is generated through solid relationships with the customer; this relationship includes being genuine and honest, and this aspect of brand loyalty is the core of the existence thereof.

In South Africa, family businesses play an increasingly important role in creating jobs and distributing wealth; the family business is, however, not exempt from challenges (Hnatek, 2012:1). Thus, the family-owned business should be aware of the level of loyalty associated with their brand, to secure future growth and sustainability. Establishing brand loyalty in a company generates essential benefits since brand loyalty creates entry barriers that prevent the entrance of competitors and provides the opportunity to increase sales and revenue (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2005:187). In addition, brand loyalty guarantees that loyal customers will resist competitive efforts and increases the company's ability to respond to market changes (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman, 2005:187).

2.5.1. Measuring brand loyalty

Using proper metrics and efficient measures is required for effective brand loyalty management. According to Hohenberg and Taylor (2020:1), measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty is a significant difficulty for businesses. As a result, scholars and practitioners have created a variety of methods for assessing the phenomena related to brand loyalty. Measuring brand loyalty may be challenging since no one indicator can quantify brand loyalty. Assessing brand loyalty involves several indicators. According to Grant (2021), among the most popular indicators used in marketing research to evaluate a company's brand loyalty are customer satisfaction, brand value, brand awareness, and brand trust. Jadhav *et al.* (2021) set out to create a framework that integrates the conventional antecedents of brand loyalty, namely perceived value, satisfaction, and trust, with Keller's (1993) consumer-based brand equity model (CBBE) dimensions, to assess their impact on brand loyalty.

According to Hohenberg and Taylor (2020:5), to "achieve sustainably high sales success with their existing customer base, firms must systematically assess and manage customers' loyalty as well as their level of satisfaction." They recommend assessing client loyalty using objective data, such as a company's customer relationship management system, subjective data from customer surveys, and loyalty schemes, among other things. Samudro and Susanti (2021) established a model for measuring industrial branding that integrates logical, emotional, and value aspects, revealing a clear link between the model's constructions and brand loyalty. Their model identified how industrial customers perceive branding and the importance of practical and emotional aspects for marketers to send the proper message. Finally, rational brand quality and emotional brand connections have a role in purchasing decisions. However, logical qualities significantly impact brand loyalty more than emotional aspects (Samudro & Susanti, 2021:14).

Customer sensory experience models assess brand loyalty (Ong et al., 2018). Triangle sensory marketing is a concept created by Riza and Wijayanti (2018) that describes how sensory stimulation promotes brand loyalty through customer brand experience. Sensory marketing can potentially influence customer perception, judgement, and conduct. Customers' purchase decisions, degree of happiness, and brand loyalty may

all be influenced by positive brand experiences. Sensory qualities were discovered to have a considerable influence on customer evaluations, emotional commitment, choices, and purchase intentions, and hence have the potential to affect consumer attitudes drastically (Riza & Wijayanti, 2018:60). This is because brand-related stimuli evoke cognitive and behavioural responses linked with the brand and brand identity. Customers' positive perceptions of the brand image foster brand loyalty and long-term consumer connections. Watson et al. (2015) discovered that when the dimensions of behavioural and attitudinal loyalty are separated, the antecedents have distinct impacts on each component. Brand loyalty efficacy can be determined differently depending on which loyalty construct is assessed. They caution that separating attitudinal and behavioural allegiance produces non-generalisable outcomes. As a result, because managers do not grasp what actual customer brand loyalty is, they may overestimate or underestimate loyalty based on consumer attitudes or actions (Watson et al., 2015:804). There should be a mix of behavioural and attitudinal antecedents when evaluating brand loyalty.

2.5.2. Bisschoff and Moolla's model and its antecedents of brand loyalty

Over the years, researchers have found excess brand loyalty antecedents (Dandis & Eid, 2022; Dandis & Wright, 2020; Dick & Basu, 1994; Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978; Ong et al., 2018). However, regardless of the number of antecedents used to measure brand loyalty, these researchers discovered that the seminal multi-dimensional model of Jacoby and Chestnut (1978) remains important and that both attitudinal and behavioural antecedents are required to measure brand loyalty. As a result, this viewpoint advises that brand loyalty assessment incorporates attitudinal and behavioural components. Dandis and Eid (2022) conclude from their study that the strongest conceptualisation of brand loyalty is adopting a multi-dimensional approach encompassing both attitudinal and behavioural components, based on Dick and Basu's (1994:108) multi-dimensional model of brand loyalty.

After an exhaustive examination of historical and existing brand loyalty models, Moolla (2010:150) found more than 100 probable antecedents to measure and manage brand loyalty from diverse applications and sectors. Moolla discovered 96 confirmed brand loyalty antecedents from his theoretical research of the brand loyalty models after

scrutinising the popularity of the antecedents. Later, Moolla and Bisschoff (2013) lowered the number of antecedents of brand loyalty to 26 and later to 12 (Bisschoff & Moolla, 2015). The final selection of 12 antecedents was kept after the literature study validated their applicability in current measuring applications. Since then, these 12 antecedents and their corresponding measurement criteria have been attempted, evaluated, and statistically verified in over 15 different businesses (Bisschoff, 2021:40). Banking (Bisschoff & Salim, 2014; Taoana et al., 2022), hospitality (Scholtz, 2014), pet food (Basson, 2015), fresh chicken (Schmulian, 2019), generic and branded medication (Du Plooy, 2012), membership services (Muller, 2012), cosmetics (Mashava, 2016), and even the children's soft drink market (Bisschoff & Bester, 2018) are examples of these industries. The approach was also utilised in the agriculture industry, where Wiese (2014) and Hill (2017) validated it to quantify farmer brand loyalty to their agribusinesses.



Figure 1 Moolla's Brand Loyalty Model

The initial model included 50 questions to assess the 12 brand loyalty factors. Examples are customer happiness, switching costs, brand trust, relationship proneness, participation, perceived value, commitment, repeat purchase, brand affect, brand relevance, brand performance, and culture.

2.5.3. Moola's Brand Loyalty Antecedents

Table 1 details the twelve brand loyalty antecedents depicted in Figure 1.

Table 1 Moola's Brand Loyalty Antecedents

Antecedent	Description	Researcher
1. Culture	Culture refers to the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another. It encompasses values, norms, and attitudes shaping human behaviour. Understanding cultural influences is crucial for corporations to sell products or services to diverse cultural groups effectively. Even minor shifts in cultural attitudes can impact brand loyalty formation.	Hofstede (2001:9), Lamb <i>et al.</i> (2015:107)
2. Brand Performance	Brand performance refers to how well a product's primary characteristics function. It is tied to metrics like sales, market share, and profitability. Companies must understand consumer and competitor behaviours and align their marketing strategies to succeed in competitive markets. Integrated marketing campaigns have been shown to enhance brand effectiveness.	Lamb <i>et al.</i> (2015:240), O'Cass & Weerawardena (2010:575)
3. Brand Relevance	Brand relevance is the ability of a brand to provide a purpose to all stakeholders interested in it. A brand becomes relevant to consumers during their decision-making process when they recognise a product or service they want to purchase and choose a brand that is relevant to that product or service. To establish brand relevance, visibility, and credibility within a specific product or service category are essential. A firm must continuously assess and improve its brand relevance for long-term survival.	Aaker (2012:44) Overton-De Klerk & Sienaert (2016:50)

4. Relationship Proneness	Relationship proneness is a consumer's personality trait reflecting their inclination to engage in relationships with sellers within a specific product category. Cultural factors significantly influence relationship expectations. Therefore, understanding both customer relationship proneness and culture is essential when designing effective relationship marketing strategies.	Bloemer et al. (2003:4), Wei et al. (2015:452)
5. Brand Affect	Brand affect represents a brand's capacity to evoke a positive emotional response from consumers spontaneously. Firms must comprehend how their brands emotionally impact customers, as studies indicate a strong association between brand affect and brand loyalty. Building brand trust has a significant influence on brand affect.	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:82), Geçti and Zengin (2013:117)
6. Repeat Purchases	Repeat purchases refer to buying products from the same supplier for convenience, typically for frequent, low-cost purchases. Several factors influence repeat purchases, including perceived value, customer satisfaction, confidence in the brand, and conversion barriers. High repeat purchase behaviour can significantly benefit a company, as repeat customers are often more lucrative than first-time purchasers.	Oxford (2016) Chen and Fang (2016:903), Hsu et al. (2015:1)
7. Perceived Value	Perceived value is a consumer's overall assessment of a product's utility based on their perceptions of what they receive versus what they give. It is closely related to customer satisfaction, which, in turn, impacts brand loyalty. A customer's value perception may encompass cost, quality, benefits, and social psychology.	Zeithaml (1988:14); Igaua et al. (2013:9) Nikhashemi et al. (2016:437)
8. Commitment	Commitment involves emotional attachment, involvement, or a sense of obligation to an organisation or brand. Favourable interactions or experiences lead to emotional commitment, while continuation commitment arises when the costs of switching to another brand are high. Normative commitment is based on a sense of societal obligation. Customer commitment typically translates into brand loyalty, manifested through recurrent purchases.	Allen and Meyer (1996:253) Shukla et al. (2016:324), Bansal et al. (2004:239)

9. Involvement	Involvement represents the quantity and type of information consumers process when deciding which brand to purchase. Higher involvement leads to more favourable opinions about a brand or business. Brands should aim to foster greater consumer involvement to mitigate the impact of failures and reduce consumer dissatisfaction and exit intentions.	Vera and Trujillo (2017:602) Shiue and Li (2013:643) Cruz et al. (2017:105)
10. Switching cost	Switching costs are expenses incurred when changing service providers, which consumers would not face if they stayed with their current provider. Higher switching costs, coupled with customer satisfaction, can increase loyalty to a brand. These costs include increased price sensitivity and moderating the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Businesses can benefit from customers who are less price-sensitive and more brand loyal by increasing switching costs.	Lee <i>et al.</i> (2001:36) Ningsih and Segoro (2014:1016) Stan <i>et al.</i> (2013:1549-1550)
11. Brand Trust	Brand trust is a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand's ability to fulfil its stated function. It is often built on perceptions of a brand's attributes, such as reliability, safety, and honesty. Effective marketing strategies should foster emotional connections between customers and brands, as these connections contribute directly to trust and loyalty.	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001:82), Bidmon (2017:180), Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (1999:1254)
12. Customer	Customer trust directly impacts brand loyalty. Trust-building strategies include honesty, shared values, a strong brand reputation, and avoiding actions detrimental to consumers. Rather than simply being visible, a responsible brand is preferred to establish trust and enhance brand loyalty. Companies should engage appropriately with all stakeholders to actively enhance brand trust.	Geçti & Zengin (2013:12), Molinillo <i>et al.</i> 2017:173)

In conclusion, the discussed brand loyalty antecedents in Table 1 encompass critical factors such as culture, brand performance, brand relevance, relationship proneness, brand affect, repeat purchases, perceived value, commitment, involvement, switching costs, brand trust, and customer trust. These factors collectively play a vital role in

shaping consumer behaviour and influencing brand loyalty. Understanding and effectively leveraging these antecedents are essential for businesses seeking to foster strong brand loyalty among their customers.

2.6. BISSCHOFF AND MOOLLA'S REFINED MODEL

Bisschoff and Moolla (2014) improved and verified their model to provide a functional model for measuring brand loyalty. The initial twelve brand loyalty precursors were reduced to nine. Further refining means that the initial 50 measurement criteria were reduced to 39 in the new empirical model, considerably simplifying the model and making it more practicable in the corporate sector. Bisschoff (2021) has proposed that the nine brand loyalty antecedents may be used to quantify loyalty based on the effective implementation in the various sectors (as indicated above). Bisschoff's research on the refined Moolla model identified nine brand loyalty influences: (1) Culture-orientated Brand performance; (2) Repeat purchase; (3) Relationship proneness; (4) Customer satisfaction; (5) Brand relevance; (6) Perceived value; (7) Brand benefits; (8) Switching costs; and (9) Involvement. Figure 2 depicts the refined model.



Figure 2 Bisschoff and Moolla's Refined Model

The nine brand loyalty antecedents in Bisschoff and Moolla (2014) and Bisschoff's (2021) model are utilised to quantify brand loyalty in this study. These nine antecedents have been defined following the multi-dimensional brand loyalty model principles derived from the theory of planned behaviour (which employs both attitudinal and behavioural antecedents). However, two of the nine antecedents do not fall into either group and are classified as "other" antecedents. Perceived value and Client Satisfaction are two of these antecedents. The categorisation of the nine brand loyalty antecedents is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2 Description and supporting sources of Bisschoff and Moolla's nine brand loyalty antecedents

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Culture-orientated brand performance	Companies must engage with their customers through their culture. Culture is the prism through which people see, comprehend, and evaluate the brand's products, services, and market events. Culture can impact consumer preferences. A brand that appeals to a consumer's culture is more likely to be recognised. It is easier for them to interact with these businesses. Culture influences consumers' attitudes and actions, which affects their decision-making processes and buying behaviour. The brand is a culture in and of itself. Iconic brands are philosophies that go beyond the advantages and features of the product. Brand culture is the process of connecting culture and brand in terms of personality, mode of operation, customer experience, and values. Organisations with a strong, inventive culture may establish successful brands by discovering new techniques to give customers increased perceived value, which adds to brand performance.	Baghi & Gabrielli, 2019; Bisschoff, 2020a, 2020b; Carter, 2017; Kapferer, 2013; Kotler & Armstrong, 2019; Moolla & Bisschoff, 2013; O'Cass & Ngo, 2007; Ong <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Pratap, 2017; Thompson <i>et al.</i> , 2010; Unurlu & Uca, 2017.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Repeat purchase	Individual customer decisions to buy a certain product or service from the same firm are repurchase intents. When consumers are more likely to buy a product again, suggest it to others, and are less likely to buy competitor brands, this is referred to as repeat purchase. Repeat purchases are made by loyal customers, and previous purchasing conduct typically predicts future behaviour. Repeat customer behaviour is heavily influenced by availability, service or product, service environment, service delivery, knowledge, and reliability. Additional external characteristics such as accessibility, ease, or the unavailability of adequate alternatives impact decisions to repeat consumption patterns.	Arslan, 2020; Dlamini & Chinje, 2019; Huang <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Kopp, 2021; Riza & Wijayanti, 2018; Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2017.
Relationship proneness	The willingness of a consumer to build and sustain a relationship with a brand is referred to as relationship proneness. Consumer and brand connections can be strong if the consumer feels that the brand performs effectively and can match the consumer's expectations. Customers stay in relationships for a reason; thus, it is critical to investigate the cause of loyalty. This might be due to seller-imposed lock-in limits or valued qualities such as rational quality, emotional brand connotations, or cost.	Fetscherin <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Bahia, 2020; Samudro & Susanti, 2021; Soedarto <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Taoana <i>et al.</i> , 2022; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Yao, 2019.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Customer satisfaction	Customer satisfaction refers to a consumer's perception of how well a product or service performed compared to their expectations or whether it exceeded consumer expectations. It is not just the brand's capacity to satisfy customers but also the reason for their satisfaction. Customer happiness is influenced by product quality. Offering customers more prompt and customised services may increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Customer satisfaction is a leading indication of consumer loyalty and repurchase intentions. Customer satisfaction results in repeat purchases, brand loyalty, referrals, and recommendations to other customers.	Basson, 2015; Farris <i>et al.</i>, 2015; Grant, 2021; Mudanganyi <i>et al.</i>, 2019; Otto <i>et al.</i>, 2020; Samudro & Susanti, 2021; Shirazi <i>et al.</i>, 2013; Singh <i>et al.</i>, 2017; Yao, 2019; Zouari & Abdelhedi, 2021.
Brand relevance	Brand relevance assesses how customers see a brand in connection to the marketing mix (pricing, product, distribution, and promotion). It refers to the brand's visibility and positioning concerning its competitors within its industry. It is the capacity to connect with customers and ensure that they share this with their circle of influence. What makes a brand relevant is its ability to have personal relevance. Consumers will not be attracted or retained if a brand is not personally acceptable or relevant to them. Brand relevance is the extent to which a brand influences customer decision-making and the weight it places on brand criteria.	Beyene, 2021; Johnen & Schnittka, 2020; Leischnig & Geigenmüller, 2020; Nel <i>et al.</i>, 2009; Zorraquino, 2022.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Perceived value	Customers assess the usefulness, functionality, or other important metrics when purchasing products, services, or items. Perceived value is how the consumer perceives the brand's quality and worth. It is a consumer's view that a brand is better in terms of value or quality than other brands. Perceived value may be defined as the additional value proposition that drives purchasing behaviour and increases brand equity. It also improves a brand's marketability. The brand offering and price are considered to establish perceived value; this is a trade-off between total advantages acquired and total sacrifice made by customers.	Grant, 2021; Mudanganyi <i>et al.</i>, 2019; Samudro <i>et al.</i>, 2020; Samudro & Susanti, 2021; Soedarto <i>et al.</i>, 2019; Thompson <i>et al.</i>, 2010.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Brand benefits	Brand benefits indicate the increased value of a brand. Brand benefits are customers' benefits from using a product or service. There are three types of benefits: functional (logical), emotional (experiential), and symbolic. The product traits and features related to its outcomes and performance are referred to as functional benefits. Customers' emotional or experiential advantages are what they experience when they use a product or service. It is the sensory and cognitive reactions of the customer to the brand. Symbolic benefits are the inherent advantages of a brand when eaten and relate to customers' desires for emotional satisfaction, self-expression, and social approbation. The successful use of practical and symbolic advantages improves overall business performance by enhancing client trust, loyalty, and commitment.	Ghantous & Christodoulides, 2020; Huang <i>et al.</i>, 2016; Keller, 1993; Stokburger-Sauer <i>et al.</i>, 2012; Sullivan, 2019; Zorraquino, 2022.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Switching costs	Switching costs or barriers are the costs associated with changing service providers. This fee can be avoided if a client remains loyal to their present service provider. Switching costs are not just monetary but also psychological in nature, such as the time and effort required to transfer brands. Other examples include the expense of looking for a new brand, changing customer behaviours, and the emotional cost. The expense of switching brands discourages consumers from doing so. As a result, the intensity of switching costs mediates the link between customer happiness and loyalty. Whether direct or indirect, switching costs always positively impact consumer loyalty.	Demir <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Ganaie & Bhat, 2021; Gao <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Samudro <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2017.

Antecedent	Description	Researchers
Involvement	The contact and engagement of a consumer with a brand is referred to as involvement. Brand participation influences consumers' impressions of items or brands. It refers to a customer's level of interest in a certain brand or product. Involvement assesses the level of brand interest and the brand's value to the client. The level of participation reveals how personally meaningful or appealing the product is and how much information the buyer requires to decide. When customers are involved with a brand, they are more inclined to devote time and cognitive effort to learning more about it. Customers who are very involved are also interested in the brand and perceive personal value in it. This excites consumers about the brand and encourages them to actively participate in their brand experience.	Barreto & Ramalho, 2019; Bian & Haque, 2020; Cho, 2021; Dahlgren, 2011; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; France <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Gligor & Bozkurt, 2021; Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2022.

2.6.1. A model to measure brand loyalty in Stilfontein

This study selected the refined Moola model (Bisschoff, 2021) as a theoretical basis to analyse small businesses' brand loyalty in Stilfontein. Although these models discussed above are validated quantitative models, the drivers of brand loyalty remain relevant for a qualitative study. The selected model is reliable and valid; hence, the drivers serve as sound guidelines to measure brand loyalty. As such, the nine drivers served as guidelines in the interviews to measure brand loyalty.

2.7. SUMMARY

This chapter extensively explored brand loyalty's complex dynamics, its impact on customer decisions, and its role in the success of family-owned firms. Investigating brand loyalty's significance in the context of family businesses sets the stage for understanding its effects on consumer behaviour and business outcomes. The literature study revealed that brand loyalty is a conscious preference for specific brands or items. This literature review lays the groundwork for upcoming empirical exploration by explaining the theoretical framework. The succeeding chapters will apply these findings within the context of family-owned firms, yielding insights into brand loyalty's impact on consumer behaviour and business outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter aimed to clarify the methodological approach of this study to investigate brand loyalty among customers in small family-owned businesses in the Stilfontein area. The research was guided by the interpretivism paradigm and an inductive technique, emphasising understanding participants' perceptions and experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data to reveal the overall driving forces of participants' loyalty. Ethical issues were considered, and data analysis used thematic analysis to uncover primary themes and sub-themes. The study aimed to achieve reliably valid and significant insights into the dynamics of brand loyalty in the small family-owned business environment.

3.2. INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted through qualitative methods to obtain insight into customers' brand loyalty in small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein. The interpretivism paradigm was utilised in this study to generate knowledge rather than testing existing theories at the onset. An inductive approach was employed since the 'study's approach is from the interpretivism paradigm. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data to reach data saturation. A cross-sectional study was conducted at a single point in time. The cross-sectional design involves gathering data to identify patterns and associations between variables (Brynman *et al.*, 2018:107). This study collected data from a specific population of customers in four selected small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein.

3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1. Research paradigm

The assumptions and philosophies of individuals concerning the world around them are defined as a paradigm that influences the method employed when research is conducted (Collis & Hussy, 2014:43). Given the study's objectives, the interpretivism paradigm was used in this study. The research paradigm employed in this study is the interpretivism paradigm, which follows an inductive approach and supports qualitative research methods. In interpretivism, data is collected through qualitative methods, and the opportunity is given to the researcher to interpret (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:136).

3.3.2. Research approach

This study employed an inductive approach to research since it is conducted through the interpretivism paradigm. Therefore, the methodological option selected to accommodate the nature of the study was mono-method, qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on the views of a small sample from a subjective point of view (Wiid & Diggins, 2013:87).

3.3.3. Research design

This study collected secondary data comprehensively to answer the primary and secondary research objectives. The purpose of employing secondary data was to investigate why customers are loyal to the family-owned business brand. Secondary data entails the critical analysis of previous research consisting of conclusions and validated theories concerning the significant themes of the current study's primary and secondary research objectives. The secondary data were obtained through various academic sources and citations applicable to answering the primary and secondary research objectives. While searching for relevant literature, several academic databases, such as Google Scholar, North-West University Library, and EBSCOhost, were employed.

The primary data collection in this study was conducted from an interpretive paradigm through qualitative research conducted through an interview schedule with semi-structured questions. The responses were transcribed, and themes and sub-themes were identified to draw conclusions and answer the research question.

3.3.4. Sampling method

A sample is a sub-group selected from the study population, representing the whole population target of the study (Salkind, 2010:1109). When selecting a sample, probability or non-probability sampling techniques can be utilised (Salkind, 2010:1109). The suitable sampling technique used in this study was non-probability sampling since the sampling relied on chance, and not all population members received equal opportunities to contribute to the study (Collis & Hussey, 2014:132). This study further employed the non-probability sampling techniques of purposive sampling to recruit the population participants, obtain data, and answer the research questions. Purposive or judgmental sampling uses a conscious selection process of participants to participate in the study; these selected participants must be accessible to the researcher to be included in the study sample (Maree, 2016:197).

The population of Stilfontein was too large to be included as a whole sample since the study was conducted in a short cross-sectional time horizon; sampling consisted of 8 individuals depending on the level of saturation reached (Malterud *et al.*, 2015:2). Saunders *et al.* (2016:194) state when non-probability samplings employed. The purposive sampling technique is used. The data gathered will provide themes and sub-themes in which the data are clustered. At some point, these data will reach theoretical saturation, indicating all significant themes from the data for this research.

The inclusion criteria consisted of customers in the time horizon in which the study was conducted shopping at a family-owned business in the four family-owned businesses on which the study was based. These four businesses included a business in the building industry, a motor vehicle spares supplier, a hardware supplier, and a butchery. Therefore, the inclusion criteria for a participant to participate in this study was that they had to be an active client in this family-owned business participating in the study.

Customers of large retail stores formed part of the exclusion criteria since the study focused on why customers choose family-owned businesses instead of major retailers in the building, butcher, motor vehicle spare, and hardware sectors. The owners or managers of the four businesses acted as gatekeepers and brought the researcher in contact with their client base. Through this method, the researcher conducted interviews with the eight willing participants.

The management approved the permission required to interact with customers in the business, and the participants gave consent to participate in the study. Since the study wanted to determine why customers support family-owned businesses in the building, butchery, motor vehicle spares, and hardware sector, the study's outcome enables the business to exploit these characteristics attached to why customers support them and gain a market advantage.

3.3.5. Data collection

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews collected the data on why customers are loyal to the family-owned business brand in Stilfontein. The family-owned businesses' clientele was interviewed. All interviews were recorded. The clients were asked to explain why they support the family-owned business brand.

Through an interview schedule, prominent data can be managed, and the semi-structured questions are flexible and attractive (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:215). The semi-structured questions consisted of a list of questions that pertained to specific topics and themes; these questions were used as a guide for the researcher (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:225). The utilisation of an interview schedule with semi-structured questions is viewed as pragmatic since questions can be asked that are not included in the original question as the response of the participant grows. The primary raw data required in this study were gathered directly from the participants and depended on their willingness to share their experiences. This approach allowed the researcher to retrieve valuable data through interaction with the participant, and elaboration on the 'participant's view will enrich the study (Rabonda, 2022).

Steps taken in this study to collect data:

Step 1: Obtained authorisation from North-West University's Ethics Committee to conduct research.

Step 2: Informed the owners/managers of the family business of the study in detail and obtained written permission from the selected family businesses to participate in the study and use their data for research purposes.

Step 3: The gatekeepers notified their loyal customers about the research project and requested them to participate in the family business research. The message was an open invitation letter to welcome participants to the study.

Step 4: The letter contained a live link that the customer clicked and accepted or declined the invitation. When they accepted the invitation, the business owner provided the customer's contact details to the researcher, who then contacted the customer and made an interview appointment. Those who clicked on the "Not agree" tick box was thanked for their time, and their details were not provided to the researcher by the gatekeeper.

Step 4: All the interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate data capturing. The recordings are protected by storing the original recording in a safe, while the data is password-protected on the computer.

Step 5: Code the 'participants' data and store it securely on a password-protected computer. The data are anonymously coded and stored. The data remains anonymous – and there will be no reference to a specific interviewee. Instead, interviewees were coded and referred to as Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and so forth.

3.3.6. Data analysis

This study consisted of mono-method, qualitative research where data gathering and analysis were interrelated and conducted collaboratively (Saunders et al., 2019:640). The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to gather primary data; these interviews were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants.

A thematic analysis approach to analyse the data was employed when the primary data were collected. Saunders *et al.* (2019:651) describe the thematic analysis process as a theme-giving process. The researcher coded the data into major themes and sub-themes that directly corresponded with the research question. The thematic analysis approach provided a systematic yet flexible data analysis process since it included four primary elements. These elements included becoming familiar with the data collected, coding the data, identifying themes, and linking the themes to the research question (Saunders et al., 2019:652).

3.3.7. Assessing and demonstrating quality and reliability

Reliability determines the quality of the study. Reliability and validity enrich the interpretation and meaning of the research findings if qualitative research is conducted. In turn, it increases the confidence of others in the study's quality. Bryman *et al.* (2015:44-45) argue that trustworthiness has four specific criteria, namely 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. The study determines how others accept the outcome of the investigation (Bryman *et al.*, 2015:44). The researcher can ensure credibility by using a well-designed research method.

Further, the researcher ensured reliability and validity by asking for permission to conduct the interviews in various family-owned businesses. Firstly, the researcher ensured that each participant understood what was expected during the interview. Secondly, the researcher confirmed that all interviews were recorded with permission to back up the evidential data provided by the respondents. Dependability was of grave concern to the researcher. The research design was implemented precisely as stated, and all changes were documented to ease the traceability process. In ensuring trustworthiness, the researcher presented the findings to the participants to authenticate whether the researcher understood the elaboration of the respondent correctly. Any additional information was added.

3.3.8. Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to specific ethical considerations. The researcher first obtained ethical clearance from the NWU's Business School's ethical committee. Obtained goodwill permission from the family-owned business and informed consent from all participants preceded the interviews.

Through the aid of this research proposal, the researcher justified the importance of the research. Research regarding 'customers' brand loyalty towards family-owned businesses is essential to the family-owned businesses in the study. The research outcome strengthens their knowledge of why customers shop at family-owned businesses instead of major retailers. As a result, support may be given to family-owned companies with a preliminary framework to enhance the pulling factors.

Furthermore, this study was feasible since data collection was done according to the scheduled timeframe. No impractical financial expenses were required.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted the literature review and interviews with supervision and support from an experienced study leader. The researcher aimed to protect the identity of individuals participating in the research by not providing any personal information that could lead to the identification of the participants. Codes replaced the ' 'participant's personal information; no results can be traced back to the participants. The researcher was the only link between the participants and the research results; hence, the results were sorted digitally on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. The utmost respect for the participants was shown, allowing 24 hours before an interview to give them time to decide whether they wanted to participate. Interviews were scheduled to suit the 'participants' programs and conducted in an environment where the participants felt secure. This ensured that participants were in their comfort zone. Interviews were done privately, and participants were free to share their experiences.

The researcher confirmed their right to end their participation at any time. Participation in this study was voluntary and did not hold any direct benefits for any participants. The mediator and gatekeeper were informed that this study has no direct benefit for any participant. The indirect benefit of the study was that the family-owned businesses in use during the research could access the mini-dissertation after its completion and utilise the information to identify why customers choose to shop at a family-owned business.

The research results were distributed via the mini-dissertation available on the NWU's online thesis repository and dissertations through the ' 'university's library. Should this study lead to an additional conference or research publications, it will be considered an additional research output. The researcher declares that his role throughout this study was conducting the literature review and completing the research proposal. The researcher further formulated the interview questions from the literature as a point of departure. The researcher completed the research proposal to obtain ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study.

Furthermore, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants in the study. The research conducted individual interviews and analysed the data received. After the discussions, the researcher constructed a framework consisting of the themes and sub-themes identified in the responses, which applied to the family-owned business environment that can be utilised to grow the family business brand.

The researcher utilised the support of gatekeepers to access the participants and make appointments. Hence, the POPAI Act was not in breach, and personal information regarding the participants was only shared with the researcher once the participant agreed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The study results are presented in Chapter 4. This chapter expands the qualitative research methodology (as discussed in Chapter 3) by providing the empirical results emanating from an in-depth data analysis. The results are categorised into themes and sub-themes from interviews with customers of the selected family-owned businesses.

The findings are made after interviewing eight individuals actively participating as customers in the selected four small family-owned businesses. Each theme was expanded by matching sub-themes that emphasise different facets of customer-business interaction, emphasising the drivers of loyalty. These findings provide insight into the complex dynamics between community participation, personalised service, and the mutual loyalty that sustains customers' steadfast support for these family-owned businesses.

4.2. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 highlighted the qualitative research methodology applied while this chapter shares the findings. The themes were identified through inductive reasoning to answer the main research question: What drives customers' loyalty *towards the small family-owned businesses brand in Stilfontein*? This chapter, therefore, presents the themes and sub-themes from the qualitative data and provides insights into the various determinants of consumer loyalty.

4.3. OVERVIEW OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

In this study, a total of 16 distinct codes were employed to analyse participant responses and generate themes. These codes, ranging from community connection to personalised service, facilitated a detailed exploration of factors influencing consumer loyalty towards small family-owned businesses in the Stilfontein area. The coding process ensured a comprehensive analysis, capturing the various perspectives expressed by participants and contributing to a rich understanding of the study's key themes.

4.4. THEME 1: SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES

During the interviews, it became evident that people prefer to do business with people they know. The participants from each family-owned business clearly stated they chose to do business locally. They also choose to promote community connection and create an environment where small family-owned businesses support one another and, by doing so, invest in the local Stilfontein economy. Most of the interviewees expressed their preference towards quality and personal service above price and accessibility.

4.4.1. Sub-Theme 1.1: The local community as a loyalty driver

Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 strongly emphasised their preference to conduct business at local family-owned businesses, citing a deep-seated belief in the interchange relationship between supporting local businesses and receiving support from the community. Interviewees 1 and 5, being small business entrepreneurs, emphasized that they stay local and *buy local*" and that this mindset must form part of small communities to ensure sustainability. The interconnectedness between the community and small family-owned businesses showcased that people choose to do business with others they know. This connection is perceived as a foundational aspect of community strength and sustainability, where loyalty becomes a way to invest in the shared prosperity of their town. Community connection and interchange are the first drivers of consumer loyalty toward small family-owned businesses.

4.4.2. Sub-Theme 1.2: Local investment and loyalty to community brands

Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 expressed a symbiotic mindset in their support for local businesses. They view their loyalty as a direct investment in the local economy, foreseeing their support returning to them through an increased community economy. This economic engagement aligns with a larger goal of fostering a thriving local business ecosystem, promoting the shop local idea. This sub-theme demonstrated that the customers in the economy of Stilfontein know which businesses are family-owned and tend to direct their loyalty toward these businesses. The loyalty directed toward these businesses gives the customers the security of knowing that the town's economy is sustained through their loyalty. Managing small family-owned businesses can increase the customers' loyalty by promoting the local shop idea. The interviewees' responses indicated that customers are aware of the economic stance of the community. This awareness, in turn, creates a moral obligation to support locals. As a result, family-owned businesses can capitalise on this loyalty driver and make local business's support more visible. They are promoting the businesses that the family business supports, for instance, on social media, could draw attention to the business. This can, in turn, foster the "shop local" and "stay local" drive.

In conclusion, the interviews indicated a multi-faceted and interconnected narrative of consumer behaviour. This narrative revolved around the preference for local family-owned businesses, driven by trust, community connection, and a commitment to local economic growth. Interviewees actively sought out businesses with whom they share personal connections, emphasising the concept of reciprocity between the businesses and their community. Moreover, they considered their loyalty not merely as transactions but as investments in the shared prosperity of their town, aligning with a larger goal of fostering a robust local business ecosystem.

4.5. THEME 2: IDENTIFYING AND VALUING FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES

Interviewees knew that they were conducting business at a family-owned business. Customers in the small Stilfontein community are acutely aware of which businesses are managed and owned by families. Most customers have a personal connection with the family and/or the management.

4.5.1. Sub-Theme 2.1: Managerial visibility and contribution

Participants consistently recognised family-owned businesses through their distinct management styles. The hands-on and personalised approach of managers and owners in family-owned businesses leaves a permanent mark on business operations. This goes beyond mere professionalism, extending into a realm of relational engagement where managers become acquainted with customers on a personal level. An interviewee doing business with the building material business remarked that, for example, the management knows how they want their products delivered. This interviewee (Interviewee 1) stated *They know I 'don't like sand or bricks delivered on my grass* (Interviewee 1). This statement exemplifies the personal connection between management and clients, creating a recurring purchase effect and assuring future sales. Building relationships between management and customers sustains managerial attendance, care, and personal connection. As such, relationship building is identified as a consumer loyalty driver.

Managerial attendance as a loyalty driver links clearly with the literature reviewed in chapter two, where a sustained customer base is built on management's attendance. Hence, managing small family-owned businesses can increase the loyalty of consumers by actively engaging with clientele. This active engagement provides managerial visibility in the business and drives consumer loyalty as derived from the responses.

4.5.2. Sub-Theme 2.2: Employee alignment with values

The influence of family ownership and management transcends organisational boundaries, as participants noted that employees also reflect the business' family-oriented approach. This alignment stems from shared values and a consistent attitude that resonates through all levels of the business, ensuring that customers encounter a cohesive and genuinely caring team. Interviewees stated that employees' level of expertise and knowledge is evident in a family-owned business. Interviewee 3.1 stated, "the staff are well informed about the products and knows exactly what you are referring to; they even advise you on a better product or alternatives for your choice" (Interviewee 3). This sub-theme identifies a critical driver of consumer loyalty, namely employee alignment. The employee's knowledge about products and services and their service approach toward consumers strongly influences customer loyalty (and future sales).

The interviews revealed that participants were well-attuned to family-owned businesses in their local community. The participants recognised these businesses through their unique management styles and observed how management visibility and employee alignment with values were pivotal in cultivating consumer loyalty. This understanding underlines the interplay between personal connections, managerial engagement, employee expertise, and shared values driving loyalty within small family-owned businesses.

4.6. THEME 3: LOCAL BUSINESS ADVOCACY AND LOYALTY

The importance of local business support among the interviewees was profound. All the interviewees stated that they 'do not only support one or two local family-owned businesses but also tend to support as many family-owned businesses as possible. Additionally, support for the local family-owned businesses was evident, and the advocacy for local businesses was prominent during discussions with the participants as a driver of loyalty.

4.6.1. Sub-Theme 3.1: Holistic community support as a loyalty driver

Interviewees demonstrated a broader commitment to supporting multiple family-owned businesses within the community of Stilfontein beyond merely prioritising one or two businesses. This dedication stems from an understanding that a network of thriving local businesses enhances the collective economic foundation of the area. Interviewees were aware of the financial situation in Stilfontein and stated that they support and advocate for local businesses because family-owned businesses keep the money circulating in Stilfontein. This advocacy resonates around loyalty not just to a specific brand but also to community loyalty. Interviewee 7 stated that "the struggle of one family business is the struggle of all businesses" (Interviewee 7). This statement signified the interrelatedness between businesses in small communities such as Stilfontein and showcased the effect of loyalty. Small-town loyalty is not restricted to a brand but extends towards a specific business. The loyalty driver in this sub-theme is labelled as holistic support in the community to support family-owned businesses in Stilfontein and resonates around a moral obligation seated in relationships built in the community.

4.6.2. Sub-Theme 3.2: Proactive community engagement as a loyalty driver

Participants prioritise local family-owned businesses as their choice of businesses to support actively in the Stilfontein community. By supporting these businesses, they uphold the shared identity of their community, promoting the growth of local businesses and, in return, the welfare of their town and its people. Interviewee 2 stated that “Stilfontein is not a rich town, we know one another, and we feel for one another, we carry our own” (Interviewee 2). This statement signifies that family-owned businesses gain loyalty not just because of products or quality but also because of community engagement. The consumer loyalty driver identified in this sub-theme is the engagement of family-owned businesses in the community, which builds brand visibility among consumers.

4.7. THEME 4: QUALITY AND PERSONALISED SERVICE

Quality and personalised services as a theme refer to a business's reputation in the community, hence creating trustworthiness and reliability. Emphasis was especially placed on the personalised notion of doing business within family-owned businesses.

4.7.1. Sub-Theme 4.1: Quality as a loyalty driver

Participants perceive their loyalty as a two-way street, asserting that family-owned businesses gain customer support through deep-seated loyalty toward their community. This sense of community enrichment arises from a cohesive cycle where both business and customer contribute to the overall vibrancy of the local community. Interviewees repeatedly stated that the community of Stilfontein is a tight-knit community where people know one another. This was mentioned as a sub-theme, indicating that the loyalty of consumers is driven by their obligation toward the town's economy. The willingness to do business in town, even though the small family-owned business might not have all products readily available, is driven by the quality of products and services provided (Interviewee 2).

4.7.2. Sub-Theme 4.2: Personalised services and interaction as loyalty drivers

The attraction of family-owned businesses lies in the personalised nature of the interaction customers experience. Interviewees value the extra effort invested in understanding individual preferences and needs. This leads to heightened customer satisfaction and a strengthened sense of belonging. Interviewees stated they feel like part of the family (Interviewee 7). This feeling of belonging and personal connection drives the loyalty of consumers toward small family-owned businesses. The participants stated that family-owned businesses cannot compete with large retail stores in terms of price (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 6 further elaborated and said that the family-owned business's ability to provide a personalised service outweighs the inability to compete with large retail stores.

4.8. SUMMARY OF THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

In Stilfontein, customers' loyalty towards small family-owned businesses is derived from a complex interplay of factors. These factors resonate around the profound sense of community connection and shared prosperity among consumers. The participants in the study expressed their loyalty through a belief system that the support of local family-owned businesses exceeds the act of only a transaction. Consumers recognise that their loyalty directly contributes to the sustainability of the town. Another driver of loyalty is the personalised experience offered by family-owned businesses. The hands-on and personable approach of these businesses' management creates a sense of customer familiarity and belonging. This individual attention exceeds routine transactions, creating lasting impressions and fostering an emotional tie that drives consumer loyalty.

Furthermore, the economic engagement and community welfare associated with supporting family-owned businesses contribute significantly to consumer loyalty. Participants view their loyalty as an investment in their local economy. In this context, a distinctive aspect of consumer loyalty is the advocacy for local businesses. While individual brands matter, participants demonstrate a broader commitment to the community's well-being by actively supporting a range of family-owned businesses. This collective orientation emphasises loyalty's integral role in the community's overall

economic climate. The embeddedness of family-owned businesses within the community also drives loyalty. Their longstanding presence fosters trust and reliability, shaping their reputation in the community. This trust, in turn, generates customer loyalty.

Lastly, the holistic engagement of family-owned businesses with the community emphasises the loyalty equation. Participants value the products, services, or quality these businesses offer and their active participation in the community. This engagement embodies a commitment to the community's identity and welfare, strengthening the connection between businesses and consumers. In conclusion, the loyalty that drives consumers towards small family-owned businesses in the Stilfontein area is the product of a multifaceted relationship characterised by community connection, personalisation, economic engagement, collective advocacy, quality, and holistic engagement. These elements combine to create a loyalty that transcends transactional boundaries, embodying a shared commitment to the prosperity and identity of the family-owned businesses and the community they serve.

Figure 3 shows the themes and sub-themes generated in this study.

Theme 1: Support for local family-owned businesses	Theme 2: Identifying and valuing family-owned businesses	Theme 3: Local business advocacy and loyalty	Theme 4: Quality and personalised service
• Sub-theme 1.1: The local community as a loyalty driver. • Sub-theme 1.2: Local investment and loyalty to community brand as a loyalty driver.	• Sub-theme 2.1: Managerial visibility and contributions as loyalty driver. • Sub-theme 2.2: Employee alignment with values as loyalty driver.	• Sub-theme 3.1: Holistic community support as a loyalty driver. • Sub-theme 3.2: Proactive community engagement as a loyalty driver.	• Sub-theme 4.1: Quality as a loyalty driver. • Sub-theme 4.2: Personalised services and interaction as loyalty driver.

Figure 3 Themes and sub-themes

4.9. SUMMARY

Chapter 4 deals with the empirical analysis of the data. The chapter identified the following themes: Support for local family-owned businesses, Identifying and valuing family-owned businesses, Local business advocacy and loyalty, and Quality and

personalised service. Various sub-themes were identified as drivers of customer loyalty in Stilfontein, which include the local community, local investment and loyalty to the community brand, managerial visibility and contributions, employee alignment with values, holistic community support, proactive community engagement, quality, and personalised services and interaction as loyalty drivers.

The next chapter is the final chapter of the study. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the empirical study. Furthermore, the chapter also highlights the limitations and identifies areas for future research on customer loyalty in Stilfontein (or any other small rural town).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the themes and sub-themes identified in Chapter 4. The chapter addresses the research questions while posing the limitations and areas of future research.

5.2. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question is, *What drives customers' loyalty towards the small family-owned business brand in the town Stilfontein in the North West Province?*

The empirical results show that the support for local family-owned businesses with the key drivers of the local community and investment in local community brands drives customers' brand loyalty. They are, furthermore, identifying, and valuing family-owned businesses as a loyalty driver with key elements such as managerial visibility and employee alignment as drivers. Additionally, local business advocacy is considered a driver of loyalty, with key elements such as holistic community support and proactive community engagement as drivers. Lastly, quality and personalised services are loyalty drivers, with the key elements of quality products and personalised services as the drivers. The abovementioned identifies the main drivers of the loyalty of customers and brand loyalty toward small family-owned businesses.

Furthermore, the study strongly validates Moolla's model by confirming key drivers influencing customer loyalty to local family-owned businesses. It emphasizes the critical role of local community support, investment in local brands, and the identification of family-owned businesses as crucial factors. The research aligns with Moolla's model, highlighting the impact of managerial visibility, employee alignment, and local business advocacy, with elements like proactive community engagement and holistic support. Additionally, the study affirms the model's relevance by identifying

quality products and personalized services as essential elements driving customer loyalty to small family-owned businesses. In essence, the empirical results robustly support Moolla's model, emphasizing the significance of these key drivers in fostering brand loyalty in this context.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion 1: Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that the research on customer brand loyalty to family-owned businesses offers valuable insights. However, certain limitations within the study suggest avenues for future research. The study's geographical constraints and reliance on non-probability sampling methods indicate opportunities for further exploration.

Building upon Conclusion 1, it is recommended that future research endeavours consider employing a combination of non-probability and probability sampling methods. This approach can address the geographical limitations and enhance the study's representativeness.

Conclusion 2: In light of the study's specific focus on family-owned businesses in Stilfontein, South Africa's North West Province, it is essential to acknowledge that the findings may not fully represent all family-owned firms across the country. Consequently, future studies should broaden their scope to encompass a more diverse range of brand loyalty patterns.

Expanding on Conclusion 2, future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach and undertake longitudinal studies to gain deeper insights into consumer behaviour and brand loyalty dynamics over time. Additionally, conducting cross-cultural analyses and involving various stakeholders, including employees within family-owned firms, can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding.

Further building upon these conclusions, it is recommended that future studies explore opportunities for validation and generalisability by replicating the research methodology in different contexts, including urban and rural populations. This approach can enhance the findings' robustness and applicability across diverse settings.

5.4. LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Despite contributing to the literature on 'consumers' brand loyalty toward family-owned businesses, this study has limitations. Future research will be able to take advantage of these limitations. More data can be collected from other provinces and African countries as a future contribution. In this study, the significant limitations are the geographical demarcation and the non-probability sampling. This study's simplicity, convenience, and low cost of this type of sampling makes it ideal. While the study's conclusions cannot be generalised to the entire population, the insights gained are useful in comprehending the specific problem scenario. Future research should investigate different geographical areas and include a broader range of small family-owned firms to widen the scope of the study. This broadening would allow findings to be extrapolated to a broader context and allow for cross-regional comparisons.

Furthermore, the study focused exclusively on family-owned businesses in Stilfontein, in the North West Province of South Africa. The study did not adequately represent the whole of South 'Africa's family-owned businesses. The study's findings were unintended to be generalised to the population. Instead, they provided insights into the nature of the problem.

5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study holds the potential for extension to different geographical regions, encompassing a broader spectrum of small family-owned businesses. This expansion would facilitate the extrapolation of certain findings and provide a deeper understanding of the drivers of brand loyalty in small family-owned businesses in South Africa.

5.6. CONCLUSION

In summary, Chapter 3 explained the application of qualitative research methodologies used in this study, while the subsequent chapter elaborated upon the findings from

consumer interviews. Employing inductive reasoning, this chapter orchestrated the emergence of themes and sub-themes, all directed toward the central inquiry:

"What drives the loyalty of consumers towards the small family-owned businesses brand in Stilfontein?"

Investigating consumer loyalty toward small family-owned businesses in the Stilfontein area has identified several themes and their corresponding sub-themes. Intricately woven, these insights cast light upon the underlying mechanisms that cause and uphold this loyalty and match the overarching research question. The investigation, encapsulated within the themes and sub-themes outlined in chapter four, establishes a coherent narrative emphasising consumer loyalty dynamics in the context of family-owned businesses. The themes collectively signify a convergence of factors that interplay to create an ecosystem of loyalty rooted in community bonds, personalised services, quality, and symbiotic relationships between consumers and family-owned businesses. Through the interpretation of themes, Chapter 5 discussed and gave recommendations, linking the established themes with insights from the literature review. Moreover, the study's conclusion leads to a reasoned answer to the primary research question. As evidenced by the data analysed in Chapter 4, consumer brand loyalty towards small family-owned businesses in Stilfontein predominantly arises from the convergence of superior product quality and personalised service.

While the study has contributed to understanding consumer brand loyalty in family-owned businesses, certain limitations underscore the need for future research. These limitations, encompassing geographical constraints and the nature of sampling, offer avenues for further exploration. Notably, the study's geographical focus on Stilfontein prompts the prospect of expansion to encompass diverse regions and a more extensive range of small family-owned businesses. This study encapsulates the complex connection between consumer loyalty, community engagement, and personalised services within family-owned businesses. Its findings enrich the current body of knowledge and indicate a future rich with opportunities for expansion, exploration, and refinement.

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ANNEXURE 1: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE



Dynamic Language &
Translation Specialists

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Monday, 09 October 2023

To whom it may concern

Re: Confirmation of language edit, typography and technical precision

The MBA mini-dissertation "Investigating consumers' brand loyalty in small family-owned businesses within the Stilfontein area" by M van Schoor (27288749) was edited for language and technical precision. Referencing and sources were checked to comply with the Harvard guidelines specified by the 2020 NWU Reference Guide.

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

Antoinette Bisschoff

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

Officially approved language editor of the NWU since 1998
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Precision ... to the last letter

ANNEXURE 2: ETHICS APPROVAL



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31 March 2023

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on 31/03/2023, the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Investigating consumers' brand loyalty in small family-owned businesses within the Stilfontein area

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof Bisschoff- MBA

Student: Van Schoor MJ(27288749)

N	W	U	-	0	0	6	3	2	-	2	3	-	A	4
Institution			Study Number						Year		Status			

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 1/4/2023

Expiry date: 1/5/2024

Risk: Low

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

ANNEXURE 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS)

Participant number:	Digital recording no:
CLIENT OF WHICH BUSINESS:	Date:
QUESTION 1	
1.1. Family-owned businesses are unique and native to the economy of every town or business district. Please select and explain why you would prefer to do business with a family-owned or large retail business.	
RESPONSE:	
☐ Family-owned business:	
☐ Large retail store:	
1.2. How do you identify this business as a family-owned business?	
RESPONSE:	
1.3. How many other small businesses besides this one do you support that you know are family-owned?	
RESPONSE:	
Question 2:	
2.1. How long have you been supporting this specific family-owned business?	
- How long have you been supporting the building supply business? - How long have you been supporting this butchery? - How long have you been supporting this motor vehicle spare shop? - How long have you been supporting this hardware shop?	
Response:	
2.2. Why do you prefer business at this small family-owned business?	
Response:	
2.3. Please provide 5 main motivations why you remain loyal to this family-owned business.	
Response:	

Question 3:
3.1. In the previous answer, you indicated the approximate years you have supported this family-owned business (Building supplier/Butchery/Motor vehicle spare shop/ hardware shop). Please select and motivate some characteristics of this business (<i>Building supplier/Butchery/Motor vehicle spare shop/hardware store</i>) that contribute to your willingness to return and do business here.
RESPONSE:
Characteristic 1:
Characteristic 2:
Characteristic 3:
Characteristic 4:
3.2. As a consumer actively participating in the local economy of Stilfontein, what requirements must new competitors in the family-owned business environment meet to gain your support?
RESPONSE:
3.3. What enhancements would you like to see in this family-owned business? Please provide recommendations to better your experience of the businesses.
RESPONSE:
3.4. What do you expect from a family-owned business that you would not find at large retail stores?
RESPONSE:
3.5. How can this family-owned business secure your continuous loyalty?
RESPONSE: