

The effect of employee attitude on brand value in a selected agricultural business

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ABSTRACT

Substantial research had already been undertaken in terms of the effect of employee attitude or behaviour on things like brand identity, customer satisfaction, customer perceptions et cetera. Past research on the effect of employee attitude on brand perception and customer spending has concentrated on the principles in general. Although very much related, no specific research could be found on the exact topic concerning the effect of employee attitude on brand value, especially not amongst South African agricultural companies.

All organisations are under continuous pressure to do more with less as shareholders want more and better financial performance. In order to achieve the latter, income needs to be increased while expenses must be pushed down. One of the most important answers to this dilemma lies in the effective management of human capital. It is of cardinal importance for an employee to disclose an appropriate attitude towards the customer as this might determine the customer's overall impression of his / her buying experience and eventually the level of recurring business.

This research aims to focus on the effect of employee attitude on the perception of brand value in a particular South African agricultural business in order for management to gain insight and to develop strategies in order to leverage brand perceptions of customers through the effective management of employee attitude and behaviour.

Quantitative empirical research was performed by using a set of self-completion questionnaires. The unit of analysis (or study population) for this study was the customers and employees (as external and internal customers) of a selected South African agricultural business (Senwes Ltd).

The questionnaire was divided into three categories, namely demographic (personal factual) questions, questions about the respondent's perceptions of the company's brand and lastly questions about the respondent's experience of attitudes of the employees of the company. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample of respondents by e-mail. The data gathered through the survey was processed and analysed by the Statistical Consultation Services Department of the North-West University.

The results of the empirical study indicated that firstly the respondents currently have a very high brand perception of Senwes and secondly it was found that the respondents also agreed that the employees of Senwes have a very positive attitude towards customers. There was statistically also no significant evidence that any of the different respondent groups (based on customer types, gender, age and geographic location) felt differently about the two research constructs, namely brand value and employee attitude.

A correlation analysis further revealed that firstly there is a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and brand value and, secondly, it was argued that employee attitude causes the change in brand value. This is found to be in line with previous research confirming this relationship in other sectors of the market.

The recommendations include that employee branding should be made a key priority. A second recommendation was to focus on the needs of employees. When employees feel looked after, they tend to much easier go the extra mile in return. Thirdly it was recommended to build employee loyalty and commitment through care, concern, fairness, honest communication and trust. In the fourth place the recommendation is made to incorporate measurement and reward criteria into the existing performance management system in order to motivate employees to live the brand measures. Finally a positive company culture needs to be created or maintained and lived by.

Key words: Employee attitude, employee commitment, employee behaviour, brand value, brand equity, brand perception, agricultural business.

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CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

A company's brand plays an extremely important role in attracting customers. According to Yazdanifard *et al.* (2011:391) customers will prefer a brand name of good quality rather than a quality product of an infamous brand.

Companies have been faced with challenging times during especially the last century or two. On the one hand, companies continually need to find ways in which they can improve their brand value and customer experience, while on the other hand they are under continuous pressure to cut back on operating costs (Garlick, 2003:1). In short it means that companies need to do more with less. This is especially problematic according to Garlick (2003:1), because service delivery has never been more important to customers. One of the most important answers to this dilemma, according to Garlick (2003:1), lies in the effective management of human capital. Garlick (2003:1) emphasises the fact that the most powerful differentiator between products is not related to the features and benefits of the products as such, but rather the emotional and experiential benefits of the products or services. He holds the opinion that customer loyalty is established because customers like doing business with a particular brand and a brand develops its personality based on the people who represent it.

Employees often forget how much they represent the organisation they are working for when dealing with customers of this organisation. They often incorrectly experience the interaction with a customer as a personal interaction / relationship, while losing focus of the bigger picture. It is so easy to lose sight of the fact that they are at that point in time holding the entire relationship between the organisation and the customer in their hands. What the customer sees in the eyes and face of the employee is his / her perception of the entire organisation and its brand (Garlick, 2003:3). Therefore it is of cardinal importance for an employee to disclose an appropriate attitude towards the customer as this might determine the customer's overall impression of his / her buying experience and eventually the level of recurring business.

1.2 Problem statement

Substantial research had already been undertaken in terms of the effect of employee attitude or behaviour on things like brand identity, customer satisfaction, customer perceptions et cetera. Anon (2012:1) is of the opinion that employees are the face of a brand. When these employees deliver a company's brand value to customers, their efforts translate directly into increased customer spending.

A few other researches also confirm the important effect of employee attitude on customers' perceived brand value and, eventually, customer spending (Garlick, 2003:1; Schlager *et al.*, 2011:2; Yazdanifard *et al.*, 2011:391).

Past research on the effect of employee attitude on brand perception and customer spending has concentrated on the principles in general. This research aims to focus on the effect of employee attitude on the perception of brand value in a particular South African agricultural business. Although research had been done in August 2015 by an external company on request of the particular agricultural company, it only focussed on the perceived brand value of the company compared to other similar companies in the industry. The research was not aimed at employee attitude and the possible effect thereof on the perceived brand value.

The findings of this research are expected to assist management of the agricultural company to gain insight into the effect of employee attitude on perceived brand value, specifically in their own environment. The aim is also to assist management of the company to develop strategies in order to create bigger collaboration between the marketing department and human resource management. When employees could be mobilised to, on the one hand, develop a better understanding of the brand value of the company and, on the other hand, realise what the effect is of their attitudes during interaction with customers, it might add value towards a more positive customer perception of the brand value, resulting in higher customer spending. This might in turn drive up sales and profits and eventually increases the company's market share and contribute towards sustainability in the long term.

1.3 Research question

The research question for this study is: *What is the effect of employee attitude on the perceived brand value of a South African agricultural business?*

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives are divided into a primary objective and secondary objectives.

1.4.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this research is to determine the effect of employee attitude on the perceived brand value of a South African agricultural business and to present suggestions and recommendations on a proposed relevant future strategy for the involved company.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of this research are:

- To define and explain the concepts of employee attitude and brand value;
- To review previous research in terms of the effect of employee attitude on brand value; internally in the involved company and externally in the broad market;
- To determine what the brand perception of external customers currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd, as a South African agricultural business;
- To determine what the brand perception of employees (internal customers) currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd;
- To determine how external customers experience the attitudes of employees when buying from Senwes;
- To determine how employees (internal customers) of Senwes experience the attitudes of other employees when buying from Senwes;
- To assess and interpret the results of this study;
- To determine if there is a relation between employee attitude and customers' perceived brand value of the business and
- To propose suggestions and recommendations in terms of the desired employee attitude management strategy for the involved company.

1.5 Research hypothesis

A hypothesis according to Welman *et al.* (2005:26) is a statement that can be tested by an empirical study. Welman *et al.* (2005:26) also distinguish between non-directional and directional hypotheses. Non-directional hypotheses do not predict the direction of

the relationship, while a directional hypothesis predicts the direction of the relationship. A non-directional hypothesis is, for example *There is a relationship between work satisfaction and burnout*, while the same hypothesis would be as follows when being directional: *There is a negative relationship between work satisfaction and burnout* (Welman *et al.*, 2005:26).

Directional hypotheses are used when the researcher is confident about the direction of the relationship or when previous research had already made findings on the relationship direction. In the case of this research, previous research had already found that there is a positive relationship between employee attitude and perceived brand value.

The following hypothesis can be formulated for this research:

H₀: There is a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and the perceived brand value of Senwes Ltd, as a South African agricultural business.

1.6 Research design

1.6.1 Research approach

Bryman *et al.* (2014:31) distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research in the sense that quantitative research focuses on the testing of theories, while qualitative research refers to research concerning generating theories. Quantitative research concerns the collection and analysis of numerical data while qualitative research concerns the collection and analysis of primarily non-numerical data (words, pictures and actions) according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:41).

This study is of a quantitative research nature, because the data that has been collected, aims to measure opinions of customers and employees in a numerical format. The specific scale used in this research for the constructs to be measured is a four-point likert scale, consisting of the values strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

The second reason for choosing a quantitative approach is because of the aim of the research to basically test a hypothesis, namely whether there is a relation between employee attitude and the perceived brand value of an organisation.

1.6.2 Research methodology

1.6.2.1 Literature review

A literature review was conducted to understand the terms of employee attitude, brand perceptions, brand value / equity and the importance thereof in running a business. The literature review also aimed to evaluate available previous research done in the same field as this study. A brief overview is also given of Senwes Ltd as a South African agricultural business. The sources that were consulted include:

- Scientific journals;
- Text books;
- Internet articles and
- Company-related (Senwes Ltd) literature.

1.6.2.2 Research participants

Long (2004:1157) describes a unit of analysis as “the most basic element of a scientific research project.” It refers to the subject of study or the study population which an analyst may generalise. Examples of such units of analysis according to Long (2004:1157) are countries, schools, communities or interest groups to name only a few.

The unit of analysis (or study population) for this study will be the customers and employees (as external and internal customers) of a selected South African agricultural business, namely Senwes Ltd. These customers and employees are situated between Ventersdorp in the north and Bloemfontein in the south and between Heilbron in the east and Hartswater in the western parts of South Africa.

Why these participants were included in the study and how it would help to answer the research question is as follows: Lamb *et al.* (2015:281) define a “brand” as a name, term, symbol, design or combination thereof that identifies a seller’s products and differentiates them from competitors’ products. A brand therefore refers to a perception of a product, service or company name in the mind of a person.

The research question to be answered refers to the effect that employee attitude has on brand value. What needed to be investigated was the level of brand value perception in the minds of existing customers, who are experiencing the attitudes of employees of the agricultural business on a day-to-day basis. The customers needed to rate the

employee attitudes and also indicate how positive or negative their perception towards the particular brand is.

Therefore it is believed that the chosen unit of analysis was most appropriate to answer the primary research question.

1.6.2.3 Measuring instrument and data collection technique

The data that was collected was in the form of self-completion questionnaires, while the nature of the data was as follows: Questions were divided into three categories, namely demographical (personal factual) questions, questions about the respondent's perception of the company's brand and lastly questions about the respondent's experience of the employees' attitudes of the company. External as well as internal customers (employees) of the company were included in the research.

The process in order to collect the data for this research entailed the following: The questionnaire was compiled by using Google Forms. It was distributed to the selected sample of respondents by e-mail. The data gathered through the survey was processed and analysed by the Statistical Consultation Services Department of the North-West University.

Completing the survey was absolutely voluntary while anonymity as well as confidentiality was ensured to respondents.

1.6.2.4 Sample size and sampling technique

The size of the sample chosen was 644 (10.5 %) out of the population of 6,157 customers. A combination of sampling techniques based on the guidelines of Welman *et al.* (2005:69) was used to draw the sample. More details about how the sample size and sampling techniques were applied during the empirical study are provided in Chapter 3.

1.6.2.5 Statistical analysis

Researchers, according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:312), often make the mistake not to thoroughly plan the data analysis techniques before collecting it. This often results in problems at the time of analysis. One cannot use any statistical analysis technique on any variable and the nature of the data may put some limitations on the kind of

techniques that can be used to analyse the data. Therefore it is important to spend time on planning in terms of the specific statistical analyses techniques to be used before finalising the questionnaire and collecting the data. The following data analysis techniques and methods were planned and followed through:

Frequency tables (also called distribution tables) were the first data analysis technique conducted for all data collected. In some cases, where applicable, measures of central tendency were calculated in order to analyse the data.

A further statistical analysis technique that was used where applicable is measures of dispersion. The range, variance and standard deviation are measures that indicate the amount of variation in the data and can be just as interesting to observe as central tendencies (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:319). The mentioned techniques of data analysis are referred to as “univariate” analysis according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:318).

The reliability of the results was analysed by means of calculating the Cronbach’s Alpha variable. The constructs included in the research were analysed through ANOVA (analysis of variance) and T-tests to determine the possible match between opinions of different respondent types.

Another data analysis technique, known as “bivariate” analysis, is concerned with analysing two variables at a time in order to uncover whether or not they are related. In this particular study it is one of the main aims to discover what the relation is between employee attitude (as the possible independent variable) and brand perception / value (possible dependent variable), especially by the company’s customers.

Planning and consulting with Statistical Consultation Services of the NWU were done to finalise the questionnaire (see Annexure A) and to identify the most appropriate statistical analysis techniques to be employed.

1.6.2.6 Ethical considerations

To touch on some ethical aspects; no incentives were offered in exchange for the completion of the questionnaires (not even the sharing of results) to avoid unrealistic expectations to be created. The fact that this was not a research in the public domain but in the space of a particular company, will cause some practical and confidentiality issues around making the research results publicly available.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study was limited to a large extent by another formal research project launched by Senwes itself. Management of Senwes limited the number of external customers to be selected and targeted for this study in an attempt to prevent the possibility of customers refusing participation in a second survey (the formal survey conducted by the company itself). Especially the farmer community gets frustrated very easily when being targeted with too many surveys too often.

Due to previous internal research projects, it is a known fact that farmers, which form the majority of external customers of Senwes, for some reason react very poorly to electronic communications.

1.8 Layout of the study

The layout of this dissertation is as follows:

- Chapter 1 (this chapter) outlines the nature and scope of the study, the problem statement, objectives, research methodology and mentions the limitations of the study.
- Chapter 2 contains an overview of the two main concepts of employee attitude and brand value as well as previous research available in the same field of study.
- Chapter 3 covers the empirical research conducted, which includes a brief overview of the company in which the empirical research was conducted as well as the analysis of gathered data and a discussion of the results.
- Chapter 4, the final chapter, presents certain conclusions drawn from the research results and presents recommendations to be considered as possible solutions to the research problem. This chapter also aims to evaluate whether the research objectives were achieved.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is firstly to provide some clarity on the main constructs of this research, namely employee attitude and perceived brand value, and secondly, to provide an overview of previous research in the same field of study.

2.2 Employee attitude

In the broader sense of the word, employees have attitudes towards various things at work, like the company they work for, their managers, the company's brand, their own development or training and much more. In the context of this research, the focus will be placed on the attitudes of employees towards customers.

2.2.1 Definition of employee attitude towards customers

Employee attitude towards customers has been described by Turkay and Sengul (2014:26) as the behaviours displayed by employees towards customers in the process of service production. Dibb *et al.* (2016:381) describe employee attitude towards customers as client-based relationships and interactions with customers that result in satisfied customers who repeatedly use a product / service over time.

Kattara *et al.* (2015:2) view employee attitude as very similar to employee behaviour, which they define as various sequences of actions performed by employees within an organisation. Some of these actions are positive and seen as constructive actions which positively build relationships, while others are seen as negative and may destroy a productive work environment (Kattara *et al.*, 2015:2).

2.2.2 The importance of employee attitude towards customers

Vachon (2013:1) explains the importance of a positive employee attitude towards customers. The front-line employees have the power to make a difference to their customers every day. Front-line or customer-facing employees are in the true sense of the word ambassadors for the company they work for and they are in a make-or-break position. Of concern is the fact that these employees seldom realise how much power they have in their hands in terms of the future of the company they work for. A negative

customer experience due to bad employee attitude can have a colossal impact on the employee as well as the entire company.

Every employee in the customer services industry has the responsibility to serve every customer in an exceptional way, every time. Whether they are the first or the last customer of the day, they must all feel equally important to the company and to you as ambassador of the company. They must all be served with a smile and a positive attitude. This is what will make them come back for more, according to Vachon (2013:1).

Vachon (2013:2) explains that 95 % of both positive and negative letters that companies receive from customers talk about people with whom they interacted before even talking about any product. This emphasises just how important employee attitude towards customers is.

Because employee attitude is so critically important in determining customers' perceptions, Turkey and Sengul (2014:25) went further and determined which employee attitudes specifically had the biggest influence on customers' perceptions. In terms of positive behaviours, they found that the three most significant employee behaviours were being polite and cheerful, making the customer feel special and being knowledgeable enough to respond to questions. In terms of negative behaviours, giving negative answers and strong reactions to questions and being sulky were the two most significant behaviours (Turkey & Sengul, 2014:25).

In conclusion, you won't get your customers to love your brand unless your employees love it first (Ogilvy *et al.*, 2015:41). Furthermore, you never get a second chance to make a good first impression (Miller, 2012:2).

2.3 Brand equity

2.3.1 Defining branding and brand equity

A brand is described by Dibb *et al.* (2016:318) and Pride and Ferrell (2017:255) as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's product or service uniquely from those of other sellers. MacRobert (2011:34) explains that a company's brand is not its name, logo or website, but rather the perception that clients, investors, employees and members of the general public have of the company. In other

words, it is the reputation of the company which makes up the company's brand and which, therefore, denotes the value of its brand equity. Keller, as cited by Tanveer and Lodhi (2016:43), also holds the opinion that the power of brand is vested in what customers perceive about the brand through what they have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand over time.

Aaker, as cited by Tanveer and Lodhi (2016:44), describes brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service. Keller (1993:1) defines brand equity as the varying effect that brand knowledge has on a consumer's decision to respond to the marketing of a particular brand. Although Keller's opinions also date back quite a while, his research is still being cited by many modern-day researchers and therefore still being respected and regarded as timeless. Kotler, as cited by Srivastava (2015:2), defines brand equity as the added value endowed on products and services. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability the brand commands for the firm (Srivastava, 2015:1). Dibb *et al.* (2016:322) agree that brand equity is a function of the brand goodwill built up over time, which underpins sales volumes and financial returns. Brand value and brand equity can be regarded as similar terms according to MacRobert (2011:34) and (Anon, 2017:1).

In conclusion, all these researchers agreed that consumer association and perception of a particular brand play an important role in determining the brand value or brand equity. Tanveer and Lodhi (2016:45) indicated that, if the perceived brand value amongst customers increases, purchase intention will also increase.

2.3.2 Dimensions of brand equity

Aaker (1992:27) initially developed a brand equity model, according to which brand equity has four dimensions as indicated in Figure 2-1. These dimensions are brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand attributes and association, as well as perceived quality (Tanveer & Lodhi, 2016:43). The principles and viewpoints of this model are still widely used and respected by more recent researches like Keller (1993:2), Atilgan *et al.* (2005:7), Golkar *et al.* (2014:2), Tanveer and Lodhi (2016:43) and many more. Brand equity or brand value is mainly determined by these four key elements or dimensions (Anon, 2017:1).

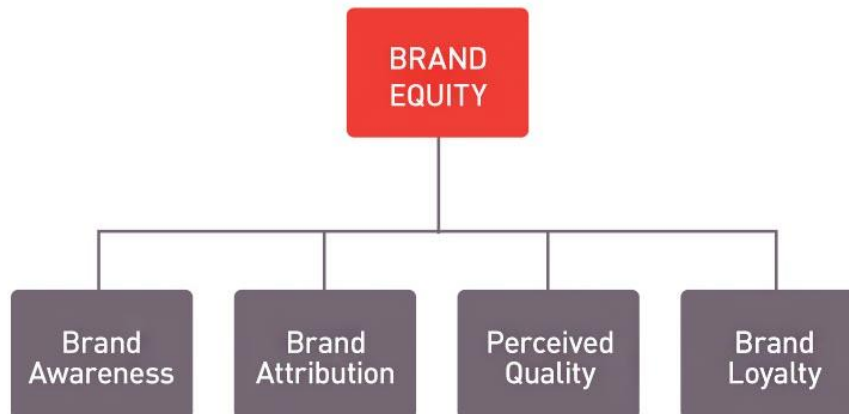


Figure 2-1: Aaker brand equity model.

Source: Aaker (1992:27)

2.3.2.1 Brand loyalty

Aaker (1991:35) is of the opinion that brand loyalty by customers mostly forms the core of a brand's equity. When customers pay little attention to a specific brand and buys mainly according to price, convenience and features, brand value or brand equity will be fairly low. If customers, on the other hand, continue to buy a particular product, in the presence of competitors having products with superior price, convenience and features, substantial brand value exists.

Brand loyalty, according to Aaker (1991:35), is an indication of the attachment that a consumer or customer has to a particular brand. It is an indication of how easily a customer will switch to a different brand. As the level of customer brand loyalty increases, the barriers for market entry by new competitors get stronger and the vulnerability of the customer base to competition is reduced. Brand loyalty directly translates into future sales (Aaker, 1991:35).

Golkar *et al.* (2014:2) agree that brand loyalty is the amount of positive attitude by a customer towards a brand, the amount of his commitment to the declared brand and the

intention of continuing to buy in the future. Pride and Ferrell (2017:257) confirm the same viewpoint.

2.3.2.2 Brand awareness

Another dimension determining brand equity is brand awareness. According to Golkar *et al.* (2014:2), people are more willing and comfortable to buy products with familiar names. The visibility of a brand's name and symbol creates awareness. There seems to be an assumption amongst consumers that a famous brand is probably trustable and of good quality (Golkar *et al.*, 2014:2). Brand awareness according to Aaker (1991:61) refers to the ability of the potential buyer to recognise and recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category.

An unknown product has a far less chance of being bought than a known product which consumers are aware of. Therefore, brand awareness is also an important dimension determining brand value. A customer would be very likely to buy a product with a brand name he is aware of and of which he has a favourable memory in terms of features, quality and price (Aaker, 1991:61). Dibb *et al.* (2016:322) confirm the viewpoint that a familiar brand is more likely to be selected than an unfamiliar brand.

2.3.2.3 Brand association

Golkar *et al.* (2014:2) mean that brand awareness is not enough to create brand value. There has to be some positive association with the particular brand in order to move a consumer to buy the product, whether it is an attractive price, good features or quality. Aaker (1991:109) describes brand association as anything that is linked in memory to a specific brand. Atilgan *et al.* (2005:7) confirm that high brand equity indicates that customers have strong positive associations towards the specific brand.

2.3.2.4 Perceived quality

Perceived quality is described as a consumer's idea or perception of the overall quality of a particular product or service in terms of its intended purpose, relatively to available alternatives in the market (Atilgan *et al.*, 2005:6). Golkar *et al.* (2014:2) refer to perceived quality very similarly and elaborate further by saying that the brand is linked to the quality perceived by the consumer which contributes towards determining the value that the consumer assigns to the brand in his mind.

2.3.3 Importance of brand equity

Brand equity, both internally and externally, is what creates sales, profits and sustainability. According to Motsamai (2015:v) internal brand perceptions by the employees of any company, especially those in contact positions of service organisations, play a direct role in the reputation of the particular organisation amongst its stakeholders. From an external point of view, Tanveer and Lodhi (2016:48) found that brand equity amongst customers, including perceived quality, brand awareness and brand association have a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

2.4 Previous research

Various research has already been undertaken in terms of the effect of employee attitude on things like brand identity, customer satisfaction, customer perceptions et cetera. Although very much related, no specific research could be found on the exact topic of the effect of employee attitude on brand value, especially not amongst South African agricultural companies. What follows is an overview of previous research in this field of study, both internally in the particular company as well as externally in the broad market across all industries.

2.4.1 Previous internal research

The company on which this research was focussed, namely Senwes, appointed a consultancy firm, Lida Groenewald Research Consultants, who conducted a longitudinal research comparing measurements of the same construct at two different points in time (Groenewald, 2015). The first study was conducted in 2008, while it was repeated in 2015.

The primary research objective was to determine the brand strength or brand equity of Senwes in the market. The aim was to understand how Senwes performs relatively to its competitors in the market. The previous study slightly differs from this research. Where the previous research focussed on determining only the brand strength or brand equity of the company as a single construct, this research includes a second construct into the study, namely the perceived employee attitude towards the customer. The current study does not aim to measure perceived brand value to the same depth and extent as the previous study. The objective is rather to measure perceived brand value

on a high level and to determine the possible relation with the second construct, as mentioned. This research is also cross sectional and not longitudinal in nature.

The results of these two studies (2008 and 2015) boiled down to the following: In 2008 80 % of clients purchased most of their goods at Senwes. This figure declined to 68 % in 2015. Even though the majority of clients would recommend Senwes, most customers shopped around for better prices and opportunities.

Another thing that came to the fore was that Senwes lacked a consistent brand image across stakeholder groups. In 2015 the brand's positioning was not that favourable, which could directly be linked to Senwes' heritage as "Sentraal Wes Koöperasie" versus Senwes as a company. It was evident that most clients and some suppliers still viewed Senwes as a co-operative, whereas employees and most suppliers or other stakeholders viewed Senwes as a modern, progressing company. Several clients were angry that Senwes did not meet their expectations, still based on the previous co-operative model.

Clients' overall satisfaction with Senwes slightly increased since 2008. The overall satisfaction level of clients and shareholders can be described as moderate (generally satisfied), with shareholders slightly more satisfied than clients. However, less than one fifth of clients and shareholders were delighted by Senwes' services.

2.4.2 Previous external research

During a study by Kattara *et al.* (2015:1) to investigate the impact of employee behaviour on the perception of customers about service quality as well as their overall satisfaction, it was found that employee behaviour, both negative and positive, is highly correlated to the overall satisfaction of customers.

Also a very similar previous research is that of Conradie *et al.* (2014:100), who studied the influence of the eleven P's (internal marketing mix elements), namely product, price, place, promotion, physical evidence, processes, people, personal relationships, packaging, positioning and performance on the perception of brand awareness. The research found some positive contributions that positive employee attitudes make towards increased brand perceptions by customers. It was found that satisfied employees, motivated to perform well, lead to satisfied and loyal customers, trusting the organisation (Conradie *et al.*, 2014:118). Conradie *et al.* (2014:118) concluded that

internal marketing in the organisation influences the excellence and consistency of service delivery provided by employees and experienced by customers. Successfully implemented marketing programmes empowering employees, further encourage positive relationships being built between employees and customers. A positive relationship with customers creates trust and loyalty towards a company, leading to a positive brand perception (Conradie *et al.*, 2014:118).

Davies and Chun (2007:1) found in a study that the positive attitudes of employees towards a firm's corporate character will rub off and boost the opinions of customers towards the company. Investing money in improving the views of employees of the corporate character of a firm will drive growth. They found that too many companies neglect what employees think and only focus on what customers think about their brand image. In a study amongst 4,700 customers and employees of 63 businesses, they discovered that service companies are more likely to be growing when opinions of employees about the company are better than that of customers (Davies & Chun, 2007:1). It was found that sales dropped when customers thought more of the company than its employees did. The contrary is also true. Sales grew with the same proportion as the size of the gap by which employee opinions of the company exceeded those of customers. Davies and Chun (2007:1) referred to the process where the views of employees rubbed off onto customers, as "emotional contagion".

In a different research, great brands like Virgin, Apple, Starbucks and Chanel all have one consistent characteristic in common, namely how they make customers feel because of the experience they have when interacting with their products, services and / or people (Minchington & Morris, 2011:16). The only real source of a competitive advantage of any organisation is its people and the value they are creating for their customers. Minchington and Morris (2011:16) were of the opinion that employees having positive experiences with employers are more engaged to create positive experiences for customers, resulting in increased sales.

Wentzel (2009:359) examined how the brand attitudes of consumers were influenced after interacting with one of the brand's employees. Although the focus was placed on employee behaviour that was either consistent or inconsistent with existing consumer impressions, it was found that employee behaviour does indeed influence the brand perception of consumers.

Research that also came very close to touching on the focus of this study, namely determining the effect of employee attitude on brand value, was the research done by Golkar *et al.* (2014:1) with respect to determining the factors influencing the brand equity. Golkar *et al.* (2014:1) focussed on the influence that each of the dimensions of brand equity, based on the model of brand equity according to Aaker (1992:27), respectively have on brand equity. The four dimensions of brand equity, namely brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty were investigated in terms of each dimension's effect on brand equity. The study revealed that there is a significant direct relationship between all four dimensions and brand equity (Golkar *et al.*, 2014:1). Although one could probably reason that employee attitude can also implicitly influence the two dimensions of brand associations and brand loyalty, employee attitude was not investigated explicitly.

Yaniv and Farkas (2005:447) confirmed that the brand perception level of employees positively affects the perception level of customers. It means that what an employee thinks about the brand of his employer, whether positive or negative, rubs off onto the consumer and plays an important role in the perception that the consumer forms about the brand.

Mostert *et al.* (2016:25) found a positive and significant interrelationship between customer satisfaction, brand loyalty and relationship intention during his research. Kumar *et al.* as cited by Mostert *et al.* (2016:26) defined relationship intention as a customer's intention to build a relationship with a brand, a product or a service associated with an organisation. If an organisation follows a relationship marketing approach, the focus is on building a long-term relationship by understanding the needs of the customer in order to offer products and / or services which will meet those needs (Mostert *et al.*, 2016:26). These long-term relationships are found to result in customer retention and repeated sales. It is more profitable for an organisation to retain existing customers than to find or attract new ones.

Research undertaken by Motsamai (2015:v) investigated the effect of internal brand perceptions on employee engagement. It was found that the attitude or disposition of staff, especially in contact positions of service organisations, directly affects the reputation of the company amongst all stakeholders. Mosley (2007:126) confirmed that engaged and satisfied employees tend to be more likely to deliver a more positive service experience to customers. According to Fletcher, as cited by Motsamai

(2015:119), engaged employees generated 17 % more revenue growth during a particular study and 38 % better earnings than less engaged employees. Employees have been found to be very important role players when it comes to building a sustainable service brand, firstly through a positive service attitude and secondly through the emotional values being evoked by a distinctive style of service (Motsamai, 2015:120).

Sirin (2017:28) acknowledged that brand perceptions are built and measured through the interaction of people with a particular organisation, be it a customer, employee, service provider or any other stakeholder. Employees, especially, act as brand ambassadors and have a direct effect on a company or employer brand. The time and effort spent to equip your forefront or customer-facing employees is as important as the time and effort being spent at training back-end staff dealing with business processes behind the scenes (Sirin, 2017:28).

In conclusion, Tripathi (2014:123) distinguished between customer engagement and customer satisfaction and held the opinion that there are definite benefits and payoffs when customers can be more engaged leading to a higher level of customer satisfaction than merely satisfaction without engagement. This may result in an increased brand perception resulting in more regular purchases, profits, customer retention and increased market share. The challenge for the employee as marketer of products and services is to persuade a consumer that the particular brand is worth spending his time, effort and money. Customer engagement entails a process of building, nurturing and preserving relationships (Tripathi, 2014:125).

2.5 Summary

This chapter began by defining employee attitude and explaining why it is important in any organisation.

The focus was shifted to brand value or brand equity with a few definitions to explain the concept. The four dimensions of brand equity, according to the David Aaker model, namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand association and perceived quality were discussed. The topic was concluded with a discussion on the importance of brand equity.

Finally, previous research was reviewed. The previous research conducted internally by Senwes, both in 2008 and 2015, was briefly mentioned and explained. Thereafter external previous research done in all industries on the topic of this research was reviewed. Previous research found that there is a significant direct relationship between employee behaviour and customer satisfaction eventually resulting in an influence on brand equity. Employees play a vital role in generating a sustainable bottom line in any organisation. They act as brand ambassadors and have a direct effect on a company or employer brand.

Despite substantial research in the field of general employee behaviour and the effect thereof on customer satisfaction, no specific research could be found on the exact topic of the effect of employee attitude on brand value, especially not amongst South African agricultural companies. The aim of this research is to partially fill this gap and determine if trends in a selected South African agricultural company (Senwes) are in line with previous research in the broader market space.

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter has reviewed the literature regarding employee attitude, brand value and the importance thereof in the business world, as well as previous research already done in this field of study.

This chapter starts with a brief background of the industry and specific company in which the research was performed. It explains the research design by elaborating on the research approach followed as well as the research methodology. The latter includes a reference to the participants involved in the study, the measuring instrument and data collection technique used. The sampling size and sampling technique are discussed and the statistical analyses performed in this study are elaborated on.

It explains the response rate achieved and provides a breakdown of the statistical results obtained based on the data gathered. It is important to note that the statistical results are only provided in this chapter without being discussed. An interpretation of the results is provided in Chapter 4.

3.2 The environment of the empirical study

3.2.1 The South African agricultural industry

Farming in South Africa dates back as far as 1952 when Jan van Riebeeck set foot in the Cape (Meintjes, 2012:47). Production activities in the agriculture industry consist mainly of three categories, namely field crops and horticulture (with an approximate agriculture sub-sector share of 25 % each), as well as animal production, owning the remaining approximately 50 % of share.

Commercial farming started in the late 1800's / early 1900's, which led to the forming of various co-operatives (Meintjes, 2012:48). Through relevant legislation co-operatives secured the supply of input products (grain seed and fertiliser) as well as certain marketing services for farmers.

The early 1940's saw the institution of Control Boards through further legislation. This entailed / brought forward certain advantages and protection to farmers due to the fact that farming produce could only be marketed through relevant Control Boards and the

co-operatives, as their agents. Certain fixed-price agreements were put in place to compensate farmers for their produce delivered to co-operatives (Meintjes, 2012:49).

As time passed by, a general move developed towards more market-related pricing systems, and the middle 1990's saw the dissolution of Grain Control Boards (Louw, 2017:2). The dissolution of Control Boards reduced certain distortions by price control mechanisms, a more commercial and competitive climate was established for imports and exports, easier entry into the agriculture industry with healthier competition became possible and improved efficiency and performance of the industry also resulted from this (Meintjes, 2012:50).

Agriculture is a risky and demanding industry to be involved in due to certain parts of South Africa having a propensity towards droughts. Despite this fact, agriculture is an important industry in the economy and makes an essential contribution towards economic growth (Meintjes, 2012:52). This sector utilises more than 80 % of available land and approximately 60 % of available water. The agriculture sector represented just less than 10 % of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 1960. Since the early 2000's this figure has been confirmed to have stabilised at just below 2.5 %. Despite the decline, this is still a very prominent contribution to GDP, since the US agricultural industry, for example, only represents 1 % of their GDP (Greyling, 2015:1).

The most recent situation is that agriculture, finance and mining strongly contributed to the growth of the South African GDP by 2.5 % in the second quarter of 2017 (StatsSA, 2017:2). Agriculture showed a strong recovery from South Africa's recent drought through increased production of 33.6 % during Q2 of 2017.

In terms of the total labour market in South Africa, agriculture also plays a major role as it employed almost 900,000 workers in 2016, which represented a very prominent 5.6 % of total employment in South Africa (Anon, 2017:3). The primary sector, of which agriculture is part, represented 8.3 % of the total labour force in 2016 (Anon, 2017:8).

3.2.2 Senwes – a major role player in agriculture

Senwes is one of the leading agricultural companies in South Africa. The company has a rich and proud history of over 108 years. Over the last few years Senwes evolved into a group of companies with subsidiaries like Hinterland, Grainovation, Tradevantage, JDI, Prodist, Grasland and Certisure (Senwes, 2017b).

The Senwes Group of companies is built on three pillars, namely Input Supply, Financial and Technical Services and Market Access throughout the majority of South African provinces. The total number of employees currently employed in the Senwes Group amounts to just over 3,000. Senwes is a major role player in food security in South Africa with an average turnover of R8.5 billion over the past five years (Senwes, 2017a:44).

The core business of Senwes, in a nutshell, entails that producers are offered a range of financial products such as production loans, monthly accounts, credit arrangements, insurance and certain long-term hire purchase facilities. These enable them to obtain all the necessary input products for all their farming needs. Finally, the producer is offered access to handling and storage facilities for his produced grain and serves as a link between the producer and the buyer (Senwes, 2017b).

Senwes is capable of handling approximately 20 % of all grain and oil seeds produced nationally per year and has a total storage capacity of 4.8 million tonnes, representing just over 25 % of the total South African commercial grain storage capacity (Senwes, 2017b).

This prominent picture of Senwes, as part of the agriculture industry, concludes the overview of the environment in which the research was conducted.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Research approach

As mentioned earlier, the approach for this study was of a quantitative research nature, because the data that has been collected aim to measure opinions of customers and employees in a numerical format.

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2007:6) time is a very important element of any research design. They distinguish between cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs in terms of time. Trochim and Donnelly (2007:6) define a cross-sectional study as a study that takes place at a single point in time, while a longitudinal study do at least two (and often more) measurements over time.

This study was cross-sectional in nature, because it took a slice or cross-section of what was intended to be measured from the customer and employee base of the involved

organisation. It measured the opinions of the customers and employees in terms of brand value and employee attitude at a particular point in time.

3.3.2 Research methodology

3.3.2.1 Research participants

The unit of analysis (or study population) for this study will be the customers and employees (as external and internal customers) of Senwes.

When it comes to external customers, it includes the following two different categories:

- key-account customers and
- non-key-account customers.

The criteria to be regarded as a key-account customer are twofold, namely if a customer makes use of a production loan at Senwes and secondly if the customer has a net asset value above a certain threshold.

The agricultural business, Senwes, on which the study was based, currently has 410 key-account customers, which consist of large and prominent farmers. The second category of customers consists of 2,716 non-key-account customers.

The external customer base is very homogeneous. It mainly consists of white South African grain farmers who are distributed throughout the central part of South Africa.

The employee base, as internal customers, is slightly less homogeneous. In terms of race and language, it already consists of some representation of South Africa's population. Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Blacks were included in the study.

The goal of a research survey, according to Maree (2007:180), is to use the sample to learn from the population. Therefore it is important to choose the sample size appropriately in order to be able to make inferences from the sample to the population.

According to Bryman *et al.* (2014:176), there is no cast-in-concrete answer in terms of sample size. It is more of a trade-off between a number of considerations like time, cost and the need for precision. The absolute size of a sample is more important than relative size according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:176).

According to Bryman *et al.* (2014:171) it is incredibly difficult to select a truly representative sample, but the aim in this study was to include a probability sample as far as possible and to follow a stratified random sampling technique in order to include a proportional representation of both categories of customers, namely external customers (key-account holders and non-key-account holders), as well as internal customers (employees).

The reason for choosing the latter sampling strategy is because of the importance to obtain the responses of both categories of external customers as well as the employees, for purposes of this research. The stratified random sampling technique allowed the representative inclusion of all three respondent categories.

The information of the involved unit of analysis is sitting in a private domain. It belongs to the particular agricultural business.

Customers and employees are dispersed over an area of 160,000 square kilometres, but through the help of the key-account relationship managers and the human resources department the hurdle of gaining access to the unit of analysis was overcome.

A standardised means of communication to both categories of customers as well as employees took place via e-mail.

3.3.2.2 Measuring instrument and data collection technique

The data that was collected was in the form of self-completion questionnaires, while the nature of the data was as follows: Questions were divided into three categories, namely demographic (personal factual) questions, questions about the respondent's perceptions of the company's brand and lastly questions about the respondent's experience of attitudes of the employees of the company. External as well as internal customers (employees) of the company were included in the research.

The aim of the demographic section was to collect information on the gender, age and race of the respondent. The province in which the respondent is situated was also collected as well as the average number of hectares planted and grain delivered to Senwes in the past three years, if and where applicable.

Section 2 focussed on the brand value of the company. The intention was to obtain the respondent's opinion on how he / she rates the brand value of the company. It is important to determine how high or low his / her brand perception of the company is.

Lastly, section 3 focussed on the experience the respondent has of the attitudes of employees of the particular agricultural company. It was the intention to determine how the respondent perceives the employee's level of commitment, ownership and general attitude.

The questionnaire contained self-developed questions which were closed questions in nature.

The nature of the data collected was mostly ordinal in the sense that it represented customer opinions, ranging from strongly disagreeing or low on the one hand to strongly agreeing or high on the other.

The questions included in the questionnaire are attached per Annexure A.

The process in order to collect the data for this research entailed the following: The questionnaire was compiled by using Google Forms. It was distributed to the selected sample of respondents by e-mail. On electronic receipt of the completed surveys the data was inspected and checked for completeness after which it was ready to be processed and analysed by the Statistical Consultation Services Department of the North-West University.

The research was explained to all respondents in a cover e-mail, stating that completing the survey was absolutely voluntary. Anonymity as well as confidentiality was also ensured to respondents.

3.3.2.3 Sampling size and sampling technique

The size of the sample chosen was 644 (10.5 %) out of the population of 6,157 customers. Table 3-1 shows how the sample was compiled from the different customer types.

Table 3-1: Customer sample compilation

Customer type	Population	Sampling frame (with e-mails)	Sample	Sample %
Employees (Internal customers)	3031	1242	414	13.7%
Customers (External customers)	3126	2042	230	7.4%
- Key-account customers	410	410	26	6.3%
- Non-key-account customers	2716	1632	204	7.5%
Total	6157	3284	644	10.5%

A combination of sampling techniques based on the guidelines of Welman *et al.* (2005:69) were used to draw the sample. Firstly, a sampling frame, as described by Welman *et al.* (2005:57) was compiled consisting of all customers with e-mail addresses due to practical accessibility reasons. Next, a probability stratified sampling technique was used to divide the compilation of customers into strata to make sure that employees, as internal customers, as well as both types of external customers were included in the selection.

Next, for employees, a probability systematic sampling technique was followed to select approximately 400 employees from the sampling frame to be included in the survey.

In selecting key-account customers, a non-probability convenience sampling method was used. Each one of nine key-account managers, each managing about 45 key accounts, was asked to identify three of his customers who were willing to take part in this research in addition to another formal research project currently undertaken by Senwes parallel to this one. Only customers who indicated their willingness to take part were included in the survey. (Also see limitations of this study discussed later in this chapter.) A sample of 26 key-account customers was included in this research.

From the sampling frame of 1,632 so-called “other” customers (in other words non-key-account customers) a probability stratified technique was used to include customers with firstly their number of production hectares on record, secondly those with total deliveries to Senwes on record and lastly those with no hectares or deliveries on record. A systematic sampling method was then employed to select more or less 200 respondents, based on the limitations of the study as referred to.

It was believed that a total sample of 644 out of a population of 6,157 (10.5 %) would be an adequate sample size according to available guidelines.

3.3.2.4 Statistical analysis

The following data analysis techniques and methods were used for this study:

Of the five main types of variables found in any research according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:313), namely dichotomous, nominal (or categorical), ordinal, interval and ratio variables, this research consists of mostly ordinal variables, but also includes nominal (or categorical) variables to a lesser extent. The only statistical analysis that can be conducted for nominal and ratio variables is frequency tables (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:313). Frequency tables are also of great value to interpret the ordinal variables. So, frequency tables (also called distribution tables) were the first data analysis technique conducted for all data collected.

In some cases where applicable, measures of central tendency were calculated in order to analyse the data. The three different forms of averages according to Bryman *et al.* (2014:319), namely arithmetic mean, median and mode were calculated where appropriate.

The reliability of the results was analysed by means of calculating the Cronbach's Alpha variable. The constructs included in the research were analysed through ANOVA (analysis of variance) and T-tests to determine the possible match between opinions of different respondent types.

Another data analysis technique, known as "bivariate" analysis, is concerned with analysing two variables at a time in order to uncover whether or not they are related. In this particular study, it is one of the main aims to discover what the relation between employee attitude (as the possible independent variable) and brand perception / value (possible dependent variable) is, especially by the company's customers. A correlation analysis using Spearman's rho was used in order to determine the relation between these two variables.

3.4 Response rate

The sample for the purpose of this study consisted of 414 employees and 230 customers of Senwes, of which 26 were key-account customers and 204 were non-key-account customers (refer to Table 3-2 below). The sample included a total of 644 customers, representing 10.5 % of the customer population (see also Table 3-1 above).

Table 3-2: Sample and response composition of the study

Customer type	Sample	Responses	Response %
Employees (Internal customers)	414	116	28.0%
Customers (External customers)	230	38	16.5%
- Key-account customers	26	27	103.8%
- Non-key-account customers	204	11	5.4%
Total	644	154	23.9%

After 14 days of continuous monitoring and follow-up, a total of 154 responses were received, representing a total response rate of 23.9 %. Of these responses, 116 originated from employees (a response rate of 28 %) while 38 came from customers (a response rate of 16.5 %). Of the customers, 27 responses were indicated to have been received from key-account customers (a response rate of 103.8 %) while 11 responses were received from non-key-account customers (a response rate of 5.4 %). (See the conclusion of results in Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.2.1.1) for an explanation of the outlying response rate of key-account customers.)

3.5 Research results

The results of this research will be elaborated on from the different angles, based upon the statistical tools employed, as discussed in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter. Firstly, a frequency analysis was done to understand how respondents felt in terms of each question in the questionnaire. Secondly, the reliability of the results was analysed by means of calculating the Cronbach's Alpha variable. The constructs included in the research were analysed next through ANOVA (analysis of variance) and T-tests to determine the possible match between opinions of different respondent types. Finally, the correlation coefficient was calculated to determine whether there is a linear relationship between the two constructs of the study, namely employee attitude and perceived brand value.

3.5.1 Frequency analysis

The first part of the results analysis focuses on the reflection of how the responses are distributed across possible options and these are presented by means of frequency / distribution tables.

3.5.1.1 Section 1: Demographic and personal information

The first section of the questionnaire focussed on demographic and personal information. The first eight questions covered this section.

(a) Question 1: Customer type

Are you a key-account customer, a non-key-account customer or an employee of Senwes?

Customers were divided into employees as internal customers as well as external customers, who were divided into key-account and non-key-account customers. The qualifying criteria to be a key-account customer are firstly to make use of a production loan from Senwes and secondly to have a net asset value above a certain threshold. Table 3-3 shows the distribution of respondents amongst the three different customer types. Out of the 154 respondents, 116 (75.3 %) are employees, while 38 (24.7 %) are customers, of which all are farmers.

Table 3-3: Customer types of participants

Customer type	Frequency	Percentage
Employee	116	75.3%
Key-account customer	27	17.5%
Non-key-account customer	11	7.2%
Total	154	100.0%

(b) Question 2: Gender

Are you male or female?

A pure coincidence is that male and female respondents were distributed evenly as shown in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4: Participant gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	77	50.0%
Male	77	50.0%
Total	154	100.0%

(c) Question 3: Age

What is your age?

As indicated in Table 3-5, the majority of respondents (31.2 %) are in the age group 40 to 49 years.

Table 3-5: Age of participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Under 20 Years	1	0.7%
20 - 29 Years	23	14.9%
30 - 39 Years	31	20.1%
40 - 49 Years	48	31.2%
50 - 59 Years	31	20.1%
60 Years or above	20	13.0%
Total	24	100.0%

(d) Question 4: Ethnic group

What is your ethnic group?

The majority of respondents (92.3 %) are white while only 7.7 % of responses came from other ethnic groups (Table 3-6).

Table 3-6: Ethnic group of participants

Ethnic group	Frequency	Percentage
African	1	0.6%
Black	6	3.9%
Coloured	4	2.6%
Indian	1	0.6%
White	142	92.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(e) Question 5: Location

In which province are you located?

A total of 85.2 % of all participants are located in only two provinces, namely the North-West Province (53.3 %) and the Free State (31.9 %) as indicated in Table 3-7. With 85.2 % of respondents distributed between only two provinces, the remaining 14.8 % of respondents are relatively scattered between five other provinces and therefore they are only referred to as being in “other” provinces.

Table 3-7: Geographic location of participants

Province	Frequency	Percentage
Free State	49	31.9%
Gauteng	8	5.2%
KwaZulu-Natal	1	0.6%
Mpumalanga	3	1.9%
North-West	82	53.3%
Northern Cape	7	4.5%
Northern Province	4	2.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(f) Question 6: Usage of products / services of Senwes

Which of the following products / services of Senwes do you make use of?

Table 3-8 shows an exposition of the products and services of Senwes being utilised by respondents.

Table 3-8: Usage of products / services by participants

Using products/services	Frequency	Percentage
Production input products/services	84	54.5%
Financial products/services	42	27.3%
Grainlink services	36	23.4%
None	36	23.4%
Mechanisation products/services	35	22.7%
Agricultural services	28	18.2%
Total	261	169.5%

(g) Question 7: Crop production hectares (average hectares planted per year)

On how many average hectares per year (for the past 3 years) have you produced crops, if any?

The average hectares being used for crop production for the past three years are listed in Table 3-9.

Table 3-9: Crop production hectares by participants

Average hectares per year	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 249	15	9.7%
250 - 499	5	3.2%
500 - 999	6	3.9%
1000 - 2499	6	3.9%
2500 - 4999	4	2.6%
None	118	76.7%
Total	154	100.0%

(h) Question 8: Grain deliveries to Senwes (average tonnes per year)

How much grain (approximate tonnes) have you delivered into Senwes silos on average per year for the past 3 years, if any?

The average tonnes of grain delivered to Senwes by participants in the past three years are indicated in Table 3-10.

Table 3-10: Grain deliveries by participants

Average deliveries per year (tonnes)	Frequency	Percentage
0 - 249	5	3.2%
250 - 499	2	1.3%
500 - 999	4	2.6%
1 000 - 2 499	4	2.6%
2 500 - 4 999	4	2.6%
5 000 - 9 999	5	3.2%
10 000 - 49 999	1	0.6%
More than 50 000	1	0.6%
None	128	83.3%
Total	154	100.0%

3.5.1.2 Section 2: Perceived brand value of Senwes

Section 2 focussed on how respondents perceive the brand value of Senwes. Questions 9 to 20 are covered by this section.

(a) Question 9: Single agricultural company that comes to mind

Senwes is the single company that comes to mind when I think about agricultural products and / or services.

Of all respondents 70.8 % held the opinion (45.5 % agreed and 25.3 % completely agreed) that Senwes is the single company that comes to mind when they think about agricultural products / services. The remaining 29.2 % didn't agree. See Table 3-11.

Table 3-11: Thoughts of Senwes as a brand

Single agriculture company that comes to mind	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	39	25.3%
Agree	70	45.5%
Disagree	35	22.7%
Completely disagree	10	6.5%
Total	154	100.0%

(b) Question 10: Leader in SA agriculture market

I view Senwes as the leader in the South African agriculture market.

Amongst all respondents, 85.1 % view Senwes as the market leader in agriculture. Responses to this question are listed in Table 3-12.

Table 3-12: Leadership opinion

Leader in the SA agriculture market	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	43	27.9%
Agree	88	57.2%
Disagree	22	14.3%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(c) Question 11: Good value for money

Senwes offers good value for money.

Table 3-13 indicates that 87.7 % of participants mean that Senwes offers good value for money.

Table 3-13: Value for money indication by respondents

Good value for money	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	26	16.9%
Agree	109	70.8%
Disagree	18	11.7%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(d) Question 12: High quality products and services

Senwes offers high quality products and services.

As indicated per Table 3-14, 91.6 % of respondents agree that the products and services offered by Senwes are of a high quality.

Table 3-14: Quality of products & services

High quality products & services	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	31	20.1%
Agree	110	71.5%
Disagree	13	8.4%
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Total	154	100.0%

(e) Question 13: Will recommend to friends / family

I will recommend the products and / or services of Senwes to a friend or colleague.

Of all respondents 96.8 % said that they will recommend Senwes to friends and family – see Table 3-15.

Table 3-15: Willingness to recommend Senwes

Will recommend to friends/family	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	44	28.6%
Agree	105	68.2%
Disagree	5	3.2%
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Total	154	100.0%

(f) Question 14: Services meet my needs

The service of Senwes meets my needs.

Table 3-16 contains the opinions of respondents on whether they think the service of Senwes meets their needs. Of all respondents 90.3 % agreed to this.

Table 3-16: Service satisfaction

Services meet my needs	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	27	17.5%
Agree	112	72.8%
Disagree	13	8.4%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(g) Question 15: Generally satisfied with Senwes

Overall, I am satisfied with the products / services of Senwes.

In terms of overall satisfaction with the products and services offered by Senwes, 90.9 % confirmed positively as indicated in Table 3-17.

Table 3-17: General satisfaction level

Generally satisfied with Senwes	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	27	17.5%
Agree	113	73.4%
Disagree	14	9.1%
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Total	154	100.0%

(h) Question 16: Senwes is more effective than competitors

Compared to competitors, I regard Senwes as more effective.

Of all respondents 83.1 % regard Senwes as more effective than competitors – see Table 3-18.

Table 3-18: Efficiency of Senwes

Senwes more effective than competitors	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	34	22.1%
Agree	94	61.0%
Disagree	24	15.6%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(i) Question 17: Senwes – high brand value

I perceive Senwes to have a high brand value.

Table 3-19 indicates that 92.9 % perceive Senwes to have a high brand value.

Table 3-19: Brand value opinion by participants

Senwes - high brand value	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	45	29.2%
Agree	98	63.7%
Disagree	10	6.5%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(j) Question 18: Continuation of support to Senwes

I will continue to support Senwes.

Of all respondents, 97.4 % undertook to maintain their support to Senwes. See Table 3-20 in this regard.

Table 3-20: Support indication

Continuation of support to Senwes	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	57	37.0%
Agree	93	60.4%
Disagree	4	2.6%
Completely disagree	0	0.0%
Total	154	100.0%

(k) Question 19: Treats customers with respect

Senwes treats customers with respect.

According to Table 3-21, 95.5 % of respondents hold the opinion that Senwes treats its customers with respect.

Table 3-21: Level of respect to customers

Treats customers with respect	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	57	37.0%
Agree	90	58.5%
Disagree	5	3.2%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(l) Question 20: Senwes keeps promises

Senwes delivers on what they promise.

As the opinions of respondents are indicated in Table 3-22, 90.9 % of participants experienced that Senwes delivers on what they promise.

Table 3-22: Promise keeping

Senwes keeps promises	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	40	26.0%
Agree	100	64.9%
Disagree	12	7.8%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

3.5.1.3 Section 3: Employee attitude / commitment towards customers of Senwes

In section 3 the focus shifted to how respondents experience the attitude of employees when they do business with Senwes. Questions 21 to 30 are covered by this section.

(a) Question 21: Quality of service of Senwes

The quality of service of Senwes in general is of a high standard.

As listed per Table 3-23, 92.9 % of respondents hold the opinion that the service quality of Senwes in general is of a high standard.

Table 3-23: Senwes service quality

Service quality of Senwes is high	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	37	24.0%
Agree	106	68.9%
Disagree	9	5.8%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(b) Question 22: Helpfulness of customer service representatives

The Senwes customer service representatives are helpful when rendering a service to me.

Of all respondents, 93.5 % confirmed that the Senwes customer service representatives are helpful when being of service to them. See Table 3-24.

Table 3-24: Helpfulness of customer service (CS) representative

CS Representatives are helpful	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	44	28.6%
Agree	100	64.9%
Disagree	8	5.2%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(c) Question 23: Friendliness of customer service representatives

The Senwes customer service representatives are friendly while rendering a service to me.

Table 3-25 indicates that 94.2 % of respondents experienced friendliness by Senwes customer service representatives.

Table 3-25: Friendliness of customer service (CS) representative

CS Representatives are friendly	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	50	32.5%
Agree	95	61.7%
Disagree	8	5.2%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(d) Question 24: Enthusiasm of customer service representatives

The Senwes customer service representatives are enthusiastic about their products and / or services when rendering a service to me.

According to Table 3-26, 93.6 % of participants confirmed that Senwes customer representatives are enthusiastic about their products and services.

Table 3-26: Enthusiasm of customer service (CS) representative

CS Representatives are enthusiastic	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	40	26.0%
Agree	104	67.6%
Disagree	9	5.8%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(e) Question 25: Answering questions / resolving problems

The Senwes customer service representatives answer my questions or resolve my problems to my satisfaction.

A total of 92.2 % of respondents experienced that Senwes customer representatives answer their questions and resolve their problems to their satisfaction. See Table 3-27.

Table 3-27: Dealing with questions and problems

Questions answered / problems resolved	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	43	27.9%
Agree	99	64.3%
Disagree	11	7.2%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(f) Question 26: Satisfaction with attitudes

While rendering a service to me, the attitudes of Senwes employees are to my satisfaction.

Of all participants in this study, 94.8 % are satisfied with the attitudes of Senwes employees, as indicated in Table 3-28.

Table 3-28: Level of satisfaction with employee attitudes

Satisfied with employee attitudes	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	38	24.7%
Agree	108	70.1%
Disagree	7	4.6%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(g) Question 27: Professional standard of service

The service I receive from Senwes employees is of a professional standard.

According to frequency Table 3-29, 92.2 % of respondents confirmed that the service they receive from Senwes employees is of a professional standard.

Table 3-29: Professional standard of service

Standard of service is professional	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	39	25.3%
Agree	103	66.9%
Disagree	11	7.2%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(h) Question 28: Knowledge about products / services

While rendering a service to me, Senwes employees appear to be knowledgeable about their products / services.

Table 3-30 indicates that a total of 92.2 % of participants hold the opinion that Senwes employees appear to be knowledgeable about their products and services.

Table 3-30: Knowledge about products / services

Good knowledge of products/services	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	40	26.0%
Agree	102	66.2%
Disagree	11	7.2%
Completely disagree	1	0.6%
Total	154	100.0%

(i) Question 29: Commitment of employees

While rendering a service to me, I experience Senwes employees as having a high level of commitment.

Out of all respondents, 90.3 % experience Senwes employees to have a high level of commitment while being of service to them. See Table 3-31.

Table 3-31: Employee commitment

Employees have commitment	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	43	27.9%
Agree	96	62.4%
Disagree	13	8.4%
Completely disagree	2	1.3%
Total	154	100.0%

(j) Question 30: General attitude of employees

I experience the attitude of Senwes employees positively while being of service to me.

Finally, 92.9 % of all participants in this study experience the attitude of Senwes employees positively while receiving a service from them, as indicated in Table 3-32.

Table 3-32: General employee attitude

General employee attitude is good	Frequency	Percentage
Completely agree	43	27.9%
Agree	100	65.0%
Disagree	8	5.2%
Completely disagree	3	1.9%
Total	154	100.0%

3.5.2 Reliability analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability index for the research results of sub-construct 1 (brand value) and sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) was calculated as 0.932 and 0.960 respectively, as indicated in Table 3-33. The Cronbach's Alpha for both sub-constructs combined is 0.962. The mean per sub-construct is also indicated.

Table 3-33: Cronbach's Alpha index and mean

Research constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean
Sub-construct 1: Brand value	0.932	3.137
Sub-construct 2: Employee attitude	0.960	3.190
Sub-constructs 1 & 2 combined	0.962	3.161

3.5.3 Construct analysis

ANOVA and T-tests were performed on the two constructs, namely brand value and employee attitude separately, as well as on the combined construct. These analyses were done for the following survey questions:

- Question 1 (Customer type)
- Question 2 (Gender)
- Question 3 (Age)
- Question 5 (Geographical location)

3.5.3.1 Customer type (Survey Question 1)

An ANOVA was done to evaluate the answers between the different customer types, namely employees, key-account customers and non-key-account customers. Results are displayed in Table 3-34.

Table 3-34: ANOVA with regards to customer type

	P-value	Options	Effect size	
			1	2
Construct (Combined)	0.673	1: Employees		
		2: Key-acc cust	0.16	
		3: Non-key-acc cust	0.35	0.22
Sub-Construct 2 (Employee attitude)	0.685	1: Employees		
		2: Key-acc cust	0.26	
		3: Non-key-acc cust	0.01	0.27
Sub-Construct 1 (Brand value)	0.186	1: Employees		
		2: Key-acc cust	0.52	
		3: Non-key-acc cust	0.63	0.12

3.5.3.2 Gender (Survey Question 2)

A T-test was done to evaluate the answers between males and females. Results are displayed in Table 3-35.

Table 3-35: T-test with regards to gender

	P-value	Options	Effect size
			1
Construct (Combined)	0.535	1: Female	
		2: Male	0.09
Sub-Construct 2 (Employee attitude)	0.628	1: Female	
		2: Male	0.07
Sub-Construct 1 (Brand value)	0.080	1: Female	
		2: Male	0.27

3.5.3.3 Age (Survey Question 3)

An ANOVA was done to evaluate the answers between the different age groups. Results are displayed in Table 3-36.

Table 3-36: ANOVA with regards to age

	P-value	Options	Effect size			
			2	3	4	5
Construct (Combined)	0.569	2: 20 - 29 Years				
		3: 30 - 39 Years	0.24			
		4: 40 - 49 Years	0.19	0.51		
		5: 50 - 59 Years	0.09	0.39	0.11	
		6: 60 Years or above	0.07	0.18	0.26	0.16
Sub-Construct 2 (Employee attitude)	0.645	2: 20 - 29 Years				
		3: 30 - 39 Years	0.16			
		4: 40 - 49 Years	0.26	0.41		
		5: 50 - 59 Years	0.13	0.29	0.13	
		6: 60 Years or above	0.04	0.12	0.30	0.17
Sub-Construct 1 (Brand value)	0.314	2: 20 - 29 Years				
		3: 30 - 39 Years	0.29			
		4: 40 - 49 Years	0.12	0.49		
		5: 50 - 59 Years	0.06	0.39	0.06	
		6: 60 Years or above	0.08	0.20	0.20	0.14

3.5.3.4 Geographical location (Survey Question 5)

An ANOVA was done to evaluate the answers between the different geographical locations, namely Free State, North-West and other provinces. Results are displayed in Table 3-37.

Table 3-37: ANOVA with regards to geographical location

	P-value	Options	Effect size	
			1	5
Construct (Combined)	0.674	1: Free State		
		5: North-West	0.05	
		8: Other	0.05	0.01
Sub-Construct 2 (Employee attitude)	0.514	1: Free State		
		5: North-West	0.38	
		8: Other	0.26	0.13
Sub-Construct 1 (Brand value)	0.271	1: Free State		
		5: North-West	0.24	
		8: Other	0.16	0.11

3.5.4 Correlation coefficient

Two values are worth noting in terms of the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient as indicated in Table 3-38. The first important value to consider is the correlation coefficient "r", which was calculated as 0.746. The second value to take into consideration is the immensely small "p"-value of 1.11×10^{-28} , indicated as "Sig. (2-tailed)". The purpose of the correlation analysis is to determine any possible linear relationship between two variants.

Table 3-38: Spearman’s rho – Correlation coefficient

			sub-construct1	sub-construct2
Spearman's rho	sub-construct1	Correlation Coefficient (r)	1.000	.746**
		Sig. (2-tailed) (p)		0.000
		N	154	154
	sub-construct2	Correlation Coefficient (r)	.746**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed) (p)	0.000	
		N	154	154

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.6 Summary

The research results, based on the set research objectives as well as the methodology followed to obtain the data, were presented in this chapter. The chapter started with a brief background of the agricultural industry and specific company (Senwes) in which the research was performed.

It explained the research design by elaborating on the research approach followed as well as the research methodology. The approach for this study was of a quantitative cross-sectional nature. The research methodology included a reference to the participants involved in the study, the measuring instrument and data collection technique used. The participants for this study were customers and employees (as external and internal customers) of Senwes. The data was collected through self-completion questionnaires. Questions were divided into three categories, namely demographic (personal factual) questions, questions about the respondent’s perceptions of the company’s brand and lastly questions about the respondent’s experience of attitudes of the employees of the company. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected sample of respondents by e-mail. The data was processed and analysed by the Statistical Consultation Services Department of the North-West University.

The size of the sample chosen was 644 (10.5 %) out of the population of 6,157 customers while a combination of sampling techniques based on available guidelines were used to draw the sample. A total of 154 responses were received representing a total response rate of 23.9 %.

The first part of the results analysis (demographic and personal information) focussed on the reflection of how the responses were distributed across possible options and these were presented by means of frequency / distribution tables. The Cronbach's Alpha, based on the overall research results, measuring internal reliability, was 0.962 – indicating that it was indeed reliable according to the Cronbach's Alpha. ANOVA and T-tests were performed in order to test whether there were a significant difference between the answers of certain respondent groups, like customer type, gender, age groups and geographic location. The results of these tests showed that there were no significant differences between the opinions of the different respondent groups. Finally, the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was calculated at 0.746 – indicating a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and perceived brand value.

The next and final chapter contains the conclusions on the research results, recommendations based on the study and certain suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the analysis and a high level interpretation of the results obtained from the empirical research. In this chapter conclusions are drawn from the empirical study and certain recommendations are made based thereon. Furthermore, a critical evaluation was done to determine whether the study objectives were achieved, after which suggestions follow to consider for future research. Finally the chapter will be concluded with a closing summary.

4.2 Conclusions from the empirical research

The conclusions are based on the empirical research presented in Chapter 3. The conclusions will be structured as follows: Firstly, conclusions will be made on the frequency analysis. This will be addressed in the same sequence of the three sections contained in the research instrument, namely demographic and personal information, perceived brand value (research construct 1) and employee attitude (research construct 2). Next, conclusions will be drawn from the reliability analysis, the construct analysis and finally, the correlation coefficient.

4.2.1 Conclusions on the frequency analysis

The following three sub-sections will focus on how the respondents reacted to the different questions of the research instrument.

4.2.1.1 Conclusions on demographic information

The demographic variables analysed in the study included the following eight factors:

- Customer type;
- Gender;
- Age group;
- Ethnic group;
- Geographic location;
- Products / services utilisation;
- Average hectares of crop production in the past three years and

- Average tonnes of grain delivered to Senwes in the past three years.

Customers were divided into employees as internal customers as well as external customers, who were divided into key-account and non-key-account customers. The qualifying criteria to be a key-account customer is, firstly to make use of a production loan from Senwes and secondly to have a net asset value above a certain threshold. Out of the 154 respondents, 116 (75.3 %) are employees, while 38 (24.7 %) are customers, of which all are farmers (refer to Table 3-3 in Chapter 3). Of the customers, 27 responses were indicated to have been received from key-account customers (a response rate of 103.8 % - see Table 3-2) while 11 responses were received from non-key-account customers (a response rate of 5.4 %). If one keeps in mind that the sample size of key-account customers was only 26 against the 27 responses received (refer to paragraph 3.3.2.3 of Chapter 3) – one more than the sample size – a conclusion can be drawn that customers are not certain of their classification. With an overall response rate of 23.9 %, it is highly unlikely for any sub-division to realise a response rate of 103.8 %. The conclusion can be made that a few of the bigger customers included in the sample regard the extent of their business with Senwes big enough to view themselves as key-account customers, without really knowing the criteria to be classified as such. Customers that are actually key-account customers would, on the contrary, have known that they were actually classified as such due to the fact that they would have been told that at some point during their relationship with Senwes. Further, they also receive personalised visits and attention by specifically assigned key-account managers – so they would know their classification without doubt. (See recommendations later in this chapter for specific suggestions in order to turn this observation into something positive for the company.)

Although the number of customer responses could be viewed as significantly less than that of employees (25 % to 75 %), Statistical Consultation Services of the NWU confirmed that the responses were still sufficient to work with.

Quite coincidentally, the gender distribution is exactly 50/50. Of the 154 respondents, 77 are respectively male and female (refer to Table 3-4).

The majority of respondents (31.2 %) are in the age group 40 to 49 years (refer to Table 3-5). The ages of the remaining respondents follow a curve very much like a normal distribution, symmetrically distributed on both sides of the 40 to 49 age group.

Respondents in both age groups, 30 to 39 as well as 50 to 59 are 20.1 % respectively, while the next age groups of 20 to 29 and above 60 years show 14.9 % and 13.0 % respectively. An outlier of 0.7 % (one respondent) is under the age of 20 years.

In terms of ethnicity (refer to Table 3-6), the majority of respondents (92.2 %) are white while only 7.8 % of responses came from other ethnic groups. It is a known fact that the majority of farmers in South Africa are white and although the diversity amongst employees of Senwes are more representative than farmers, the sample was not drawn specifically with the objective to include certain numbers of all ethnic groups (a stratified sampling technique). Approximately one third of all employees with e-mail addresses were included in the sample of which a response rate of 28 % materialised. This phenomenon should be seen as a coincidence without any specific meaning.

A total of 85 % of all participants are located in only two provinces, namely the North-West Province (53.2 %) and the Free State (31.8 %) - refer to Table 3-7. The remaining 15 % of respondents are distributed between the other five involved provinces, namely Gauteng, Northern Cape, Northern Province, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.

Regarding products / services utilised, the total percentage of 169.5 % shows an overlap of around 70 % of respondents that indicated more than one product / service that they utilise (refer to Table 3-8). The question made provision for selecting more than one option. Almost 55 % of respondents are making use of production input products / services, while 27 % of respondents make use of financial products / services. A total of 23 % of participants make use of Grainlink services and mechanisation products / services respectively and 23 % also indicated that they do not use any of Senwes' products or services. Finally 18 % of respondents indicated that they are making use of agricultural services. The respondents were very representative of the products and services Senwes offers.

The 77 % of all respondents who indicated no hectares being planted are mainly the employees of Senwes (refer to Table 3-9). Most of the farmers (9.7 % of respondents but 42 % of farming respondents) indicated that they have produced crops in the past three years on less than 250 hectares per year. Around 3 % to 4 % of total respondents (between 11 % and 17 % of farming respondents) have respectively planted (in each bracket) between 250–499, 500–999, 1,000–2,499 and 2,500–4,999 hectares. The opinions of external (farming) customers are represented by an estimated average of

close to 34,000 crop production hectares per year for the past three years – sufficient to represent a significant opinion.

A total of 83.1 % of respondents indicated that they did not deliver any grain to Senwes in the last three years (refer to Table 3-10). While employees consisted of 75 % of respondents, it means that around 8 % of customers also form part of this grouping of respondents. The almost 17 % of respondents who did deliver grain to Senwes are more or less evenly spread between the brackets below 10,000 tonnes per year. One respondent delivered between 10,000 and 50,000 tonnes per year while another participant delivered more than 50,000 tonnes per year for the past three years. The opinions of external (farming) customers are represented by an estimated average of close to 144,000 tonnes of grain being delivered to Senwes per year for the past three years – sufficient to represent a significant opinion.

4.2.1.2 Conclusions on perceived brand value (research construct 1)

Research construct 1, namely the perceived brand value of Senwes, was covered by Questions 9 to 20 of the research instrument. The overall average (mean) of all responses in terms of the perceived brand value of Senwes (construct 1) is 3.137. To put the mean into perspective, the scale values were assigned as follows:

- Completely disagree - Value = 1
- Disagree - Value = 2
- Agree - Value = 3
- Completely agree - Value = 4

The overall response therefore of all customers who participated in the study was a very positive one - somewhere between “agree” and “completely agree”. In other words, the respondents currently have a very high brand perception of Senwes – 3.137 on a scale of 1 to 4.

4.2.1.3 Conclusions on employee attitude (research construct 2)

Research construct 2, namely the employee attitude towards customers, was covered by Questions 21 to 30 of the research instrument. The overall average (mean) of all responses in terms of this construct is also calculated at a very positive value of 3.190 out of 4. The scale values were the same as in the case of construct 1, as discussed

above. The respondents therefore also agreed that the employees of Senwes have a very positive attitude towards customers – 3.190 on a scale of 1 to 4.

4.2.2 Conclusions on the reliability analysis

Of the more advanced statistical calculations included in this research, reliability analysis is the most important starting point. If measures are not reliable it cannot be valid in which case none of the further calculations would be meaningful (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:39). Reliability is concerned with the issue of consistency of measures. Most researchers test internal reliability by means of a test referred to as **Cronbach's Alpha**. This index shows the degree to which all items in a research instrument measure the same attribute (Welman *et al.*, 2005:147). The calculation of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient varies between 0 (indicating no correlation and therefore no internal consistency) and 1 (perfect correlation and complete internal consistency). A result greater or equal to 0.8 usually indicates an acceptable level of internal reliability (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:38).

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability index for the research results of sub-construct 1 (brand value) and sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) was calculated as 0.932 and 0.960 respectively (refer to Table 3-33). The Cronbach's Alpha for both sub-constructs combined is 0.962. This indicates that the results of the research instrument used for this study have a very high level of internal consistency or internal reliability. Based on this reliability level, further statistical calculations could be proceeded with.

4.2.3 Conclusions on the construct analysis (T-tests and analysis of variance)

In order to determine if two or more different groups in the study have equivalent or different mean scores, T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests can be used (Welman *et al.*, 2005:237). Descriptive research involves comparing the mean value of one group with that of another. During such research, T-tests (when there are only two groups like male and female to compare) and analysis of variance (when more than two groups are involved) are the most appropriate statistics to use (Welman *et al.*, 2005:237). These two statistical significance tests are used to show whether the results (in other words the difference between the means) are significant or not.

The T-test and ANOVA-test result in a p-value that is being evaluated. A small p-value (eg. smaller than 0.05) is seen as sufficient evidence that there is a statistically

significant difference between the means of the groups being compared. A p-value of greater than 0.05 is considered sufficient evidence that there is statistically no significant difference between such means (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:51).

An important aspect to keep in mind is that statistical significance does not necessarily indicate that the difference in means is big enough to have an effect in practice. Practical significance refers to a large enough difference in means to have an effect in practice. To evaluate practical significance, the “effect size” (d) is calculated (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:52). Many different effect sizes exist, but for the purpose of this study the focus will only be placed on the one used for the difference between means. This measure, called the effect size, does not only make the difference in the means independent of units and sample size, but also brings the spread of the data into consideration (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:52). An effect size of smaller than 0.8 is considered as practically insignificant, while an effect size of greater or equal to 0.8 is regarded as practically significant (Ellis & Steyn, 2003:54).

ANOVA and T-tests were performed on the two constructs, namely brand value and employee attitude; separately as well as on the combined construct. These analyses were done for the following survey questions to determine whether there were differences in the means of the different groups:

- Question 1 (Customer type)
- Question 2 (Gender)
- Question 3 (Age)
- Question 5 (Geographical location)

4.2.3.1 Question 1 - Customer type (ANOVA-test)

In terms of sub-construct 1 (brand value), sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) and the combined overall construct, p-values of 0.186, 0.685 and 0.673 were calculated respectively (refer to Table 3-34). Because the three p-values are all greater than 0.05 it indicates that there are no significant statistical differences between the means of how the three different customer types, namely employees, key-account and non-key-account customers responded in terms of brand value, employee attitude as well as the overall construct of brand value and employee attitude together.

In terms of practical significance, the effect sizes were as follows:

- a. Sub-construct 1 (brand value):
 - Between employees and key-account customers: effect size (d) = 0.52
 - Between employees and non-key-account customers: d = 0.63
 - Between key- and non-key-account customers: d = 0.12
- b. Sub-construct 2 (employee attitude):
 - Between employees and key-account customers: effect size (d) = 0.26
 - Between employees and non-key-account customers: d = 0.01
 - Between key- and non-key-account customers: d = 0.27
- c. Combined-construct (brand value and employee attitude together):
 - Between employees and key-account customers: effect size (d) = 0.16
 - Between employees and non-key-account customers: d = 0.35
 - Between key- and non-key-account customers: d = 0.22

Because all these effect sizes are smaller than 0.8, it can be concluded that the differences in means were so small that it will not be of any significance in practice and can therefore be ignored.

It can therefore be concluded that all three different customer types agree that Senwes has a very positive brand value (with an average of 3.137 on a scale of 1 to 4) as well as a very positive employee attitude in general (with an average of 3.190 on a scale of 1 to 4).

4.2.3.2 Question 2 - Gender (T-test)

A T-test was done to evaluate the answers between males and females. T-tests are used when there are only two groups to compare values of, as in this case where respondents could only be either male or female. Results are displayed in Table 3-35.

The p-value for sub-construct 1 (brand value) is calculated as 0.080 while the p-value for sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) is 0.628 (refer to Table 3-35). Both of these values are greater than 0.05, meaning that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean values of the two sub-constructs. With the p-value of sub-construct 1 (brand value) being very close to 0.05, it makes sense to consult the effect sizes as well to determine whether the slight differences were of practical significance.

The effect size between females and males for sub-construct 1 (brand value) is calculated as 0.27 while the corresponding effect size for sub-construct 2 (employee

attitude) is 0.07. Because both of these effect sizes are smaller than 0.8, it indicates that there is no practical significance in the difference between the means.

It can therefore also be concluded that for both male and female respondents, the opinions about brand value and employee attitude very closely correspond.

4.2.3.3 Question 3 - Age (ANOVA-test)

An ANOVA-test was done to evaluate the answers between the different age groups. Results are displayed in Table 3-36. Because there was only one respondent in the age group below 20 years, it was not brought into account.

Both of the p-values for sub-construct 1 (brand value) and sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) being 0.314 and 0.645 respectively, are greater than 0.05. This once again indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean values of the different age groups. According to the value of 0.314 for sub-construct 1, as opposed to 0.645 for sub-construct 2, it appears that respondents might differ very slightly in terms of their opinions regarding brand value, while they tend to agree slightly more on employee attitude. With none of the effect sizes exceeding the value of 0.8 (see Table 3-36) though; there is not any practically significant difference between the mean values of the different age groups.

The conclusion can be made that all age groups very much agree in terms of their opinions on brand value as well as employee attitude.

4.2.3.4 Question 5 - Geographical location (ANOVA-test)

An ANOVA-test was also done to evaluate the answers between the different geographical locations, namely Free State, North-West and other provinces. Results are displayed in Table 3-37. With the majority of 85 % of respondents distributed between only two provinces and the remaining 15 % of respondents relatively scattered between five other provinces, the latter 15 % of respondents are only referred to as being in "other" provinces, as indicated.

Both the p-values for sub-construct 1 (brand value) and sub-construct 2 (employee attitude) being 0.271 and 0.514 respectively, are greater than 0.05. This also indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean values of the different geographical locations. With none of the effect sizes exceeding the value of 0.8 (see

Table 3-37), there is not any practically significant difference between the mean values of the different provinces.

The conclusion can finally also be made that respondents from all provinces very much agree in terms of their opinions on brand value as well as employee attitude.

4.2.4 Conclusions on the correlation coefficient

The correlation coefficient can be referred to as a statistic which is used to measure the degree of association between two variables. If both variables are ordinal in nature, as in the case of this study, the ***Spearman rank-order correlation*** (also referred to as Spearman's rho) should be used (Welman *et al.*, 2005:229).

Correlations are measured to estimate the degree to which the changes in one variable are associated with changes in another variable. A positive correlation between two variables reflects a direct relationship, which implies that an increase in one variable corresponds with an increase in the other variable. A negative correlation, on the other hand, refers to two variables which are indirectly or inversely related. In this case an increase in one variable would be associated with a decrease in the other (Welman *et al.*, 2005:234).

A coefficient r with a value of -1.00 represents a perfect indirect or negative linear relationship, while a coefficient of $+1.00$ indicates a perfect direct or positive linear relationship. A coefficient with a value of zero indicates no linear relationship at all (Welman *et al.*, 2005:234).

As indicated in Table 3-38, the correlation coefficient (r) was calculated as 0.746 , indicating a direct or positive linear relationship between brand value (sub-construct 1) and employee attitude (sub-construct 2) as constructs of this research. So it can be concluded that a change in one of these variables will have a direct positive effect on the other. The reverse situation will also be true: A decrease in one variable will also result in a corresponding decrease in the other.

Relationships based on correlations can usually not be considered as causal. This means that it is usually not possible to infer that one event is caused by another (Welman *et al.*, 2005:235).

In terms of the principle of causality, an attempt is made to determine the direction of causal influence. In case of an experimental research design, the researcher manipulates the independent variable in which case there is little doubt about the direction of causal influence. With cross-sectional research designs however, as in the case of this study, the data is being collected simultaneously and it is not possible to determine the direction of causal influence. In such cases, one must rely on common sense or theoretical ideas to accept or conclude that a particular variable causes a change in another variable (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:40).

As it is common understanding that a positive brand perception amongst customers will not necessarily have any effect on the attitudes disclosed by employees when rendering a service to such customers, but rather the other way around, one could without reasonable doubt argue that employee attitude will be the variable that will cause change in customer brand perception. In terms of the logical sequence of events, it makes more sense for the employee to influence the way a customer thinks about a product / service, the associations with the product / service, the quality perceptions / impressions he / she develops in his / her mind and the eventual level of satisfaction experienced by the customer. All of these aspects determine a customer's perceived brand value of the involved company.

Based on the latter reasoning, one can conclude that firstly this study determined that there is a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and brand value (a strong correlation coefficient of +0.746) and secondly, above all probability it is the former variable (employee attitude) that causes the change in the latter variable (brand value).

4.2.5 Acceptance of the formulated hypothesis

Hypothesis H₀, as formulated for this research in paragraph 1.5 of Chapter 1, can be accepted based on the above research results. The hypothesis was formulated as: *there is a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and the perceived brand value of Senwes Ltd, as a South African agricultural business.*

4.3 Managerial implications of the research

CEO's will agree that one of the biggest challenges they are facing is to continuously grow an organisation's profitable revenue (Anon, 2012:1). According to Anon (2012:1)

previous research had already shown that there is a direct link between employee and customer satisfaction and profit. When one looks at what causes a customer to be satisfied with his / her purchasing of a product or service, one finds that his / her perception of the product's / service's brand value plays a very important role. It doesn't stop at the customer. Garlick (2003:1) indicated that perceived brand value also played a very prominent role in an employee's choice to apply for a job at a particular company. Brand value therefore influences an employee's choice to associate with an organisation or not. Therefore one must realise that brand value plays a very important role in the level of satisfaction for both employees and customers.

In a study from the Forum for People Performance Management and Measurement, as cited by Anon (2012:1), it was shown that there is a direct relationship between employee and customer perceptions of a particular hotel brand and increased or recurring customer spending. This is not only valid for the hotel industry, but can be generalised to all industries (Anon, 2012:1).

What is important further, is the fact that employees influence the perceived brand value of customers more than they realise. What the customer sees in the eyes and face of the employee forms / influences his / her perception of the entire organisation and its brand (Garlick, 2003:3). Therefore it is of cardinal importance for an employee to disclose an appropriate attitude towards the customer as this might determine the customer's overall impression of his / her buying experience and eventually the level of recurring business.

This is why it is so important for management to realise what the effect is of employee attitude on the perceived brand value amongst its customers. This psychological aspect of the product / service is what will drive customers back to spend more of their hard earned money at the company – assisting to bring the CEO closer to reaching his objective of continuously growing the organisation's profitable revenue.

4.4 Recommendations

The brand of a company is no longer only visible symbols. It is rather something that is defined by the relationships with all stakeholders of a company, including employees (Boyd & Sutherland, 2006:9). Employee attitude and behaviour have an impact on the

perceived brand value of a company, as shown again by this research, and ultimately affects the bottom line.

Recommendations are made based on a combination of the literature study, the empirical research as well as the author's personal opinion. The following five key practices were regarded most important by employees during a particular study to motivate them to live the brand (often referred to as employee branding or human capital branding) and to disclose a positive attitude towards both internal and external customers (Boyd & Sutherland, 2006:9). Some of these factors have already been addressed to some extent by Senwes in the recent past, while there are still gaps to be closed in all of these areas:

4.4.1 Make employee branding a key business priority

In order for employee branding to be successful, it needs to be made a key business objective and consistently applied by management. When management "walks the talk", employees take things seriously.

For employees to become passionate about the brand, it was found that the brand needs to be perceived as valuable by the employees (Boyd & Sutherland, 2006:15). Employees also want to understand where their efforts fit into the big picture of business operations. They want to understand how their efforts aid in reaching the company's objectives. Once they understand this, it tends to boost their level of commitment to live the brand of the organisation.

4.4.2 Focus on the needs of employees

It is very important to have a culture where employees are viewed as the organisation's biggest asset. When employees experience that the company values their personal needs and that their development is important to the organisation, they tend to go the extra mile in return. A sense of belonging needs to be created through pride, commitment and loyalty, while personal responsibility and accountability are encouraged. It should be considered to add employees, as the company's biggest asset, into the mission statement as one of the means through which the vision is intended to be accomplished. The company should also consider implementing a formal employee wellness program of which the periodic reporting of the progress and status

should be a standing agenda-point on certain meetings of the Executive Committee and the Boards of Directors.

4.4.3 Build employee loyalty and commitment

Loyalty plays a key role in obtaining employee commitment. It was very interestingly found in a study that satisfaction is unrelated to both loyalty and commitment in the short term. Employees may be unsatisfied in their work but may still stay loyal to the organisation. Loyalty and commitment without the underlying satisfaction, is a time bomb though and will not last. The inputs in order to achieve loyalty are things like care, concern, fairness, honest communication and trust.

It should be considered to establish a form of collaboration between the marketing and human resources departments in order to better equip employees with appropriate brand knowledge and marketing skills through informing, motivating, energising and engaging employees. It is believed that an internal marketing strategy will contribute towards employees becoming better equipped in order to become true brand ambassadors.

4.4.4 Integrate measurement and reward criteria into their overall performance management system

It is very important for employees to be evaluated, rated and to give employees feedback in terms of how they performed against their own set goals and those of the organisation. Without measuring performance and giving feedback to employees, no objectives will be taken seriously by employees. In order to motivate employees to live the brand measures, some reward criteria need to be incorporated into the overall performance management system.

What is also extremely important is the principle of the expectancy theory of Victor Vroom (Redmond, 2016:2). According to this theory (see schematic representation of the Victor Vroom Expectancy Theory in Figure 4-1), the employee must be able to believe that his / her efforts will lead to high performance. Objectives must be realistic and achievable, otherwise motivation levels go for a knock. Secondly, once the employee believes that the objectives are achievable, the next thing he / she must be able to believe is that his / her performance will lead to reward. Although he / she might believe in the achievement of the objective (in other words performance), motivation will

diminish or even vanish when it is not believed that his / her performance will lead to rewards. Only when both conditions are met, motivation levels are boosted.

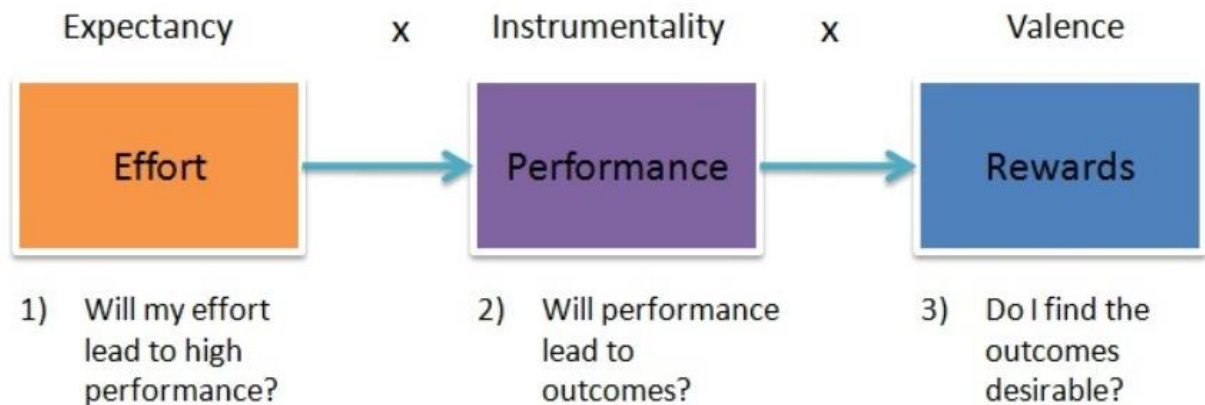


Figure 4-1: Schematic representation of the Expectancy Theory of Victor Vroom

Source: Redmond (2016:2)

4.4.5 Creating company culture (beliefs and values) and live by it

For organisations trying to promote employee commitment, organisation culture is a key factor to be created and kept relevant. Organisations need to create a culture and value set according to which employees are viewed as the most valuable asset in the company.

A critical aspect to obtain employee commitment to live the organisation's brand is that employees need to be repeatedly made aware of the vision, mission and values of the organisation. It is also important that they must believe in those values, because when this is the case, chances are higher that they would live them. It is also important for management to constantly live by those values to improve credibility.

A very important thing to keep in mind is that obtaining employee commitment to live the brand of the company, it must be a top-down approach driven by senior management. Without management setting and maintaining the example and "walking the talk", employees will not be convinced and motivated to live the brand passionately.

4.5 Critical evaluation of the study

A critical evaluation is performed to determine whether the primary and secondary objectives of this study, as referred to in section 1.4 of Chapter 1, have been sufficiently achieved.

4.5.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this research is to determine the effect of employee attitude on the perceived brand value of a South African agricultural business and to present suggestions and recommendations on a proposed relevant future strategy for the involved company.

4.5.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives included the following:

- To define and explain the concepts of employee attitude and brand value;
- To review previous research in terms of the effect of employee attitude on brand value; internally in the involved company and externally in the broad market;
- To determine what the brand perception of external customers currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd, as a South African agricultural business;
- To determine what the brand perception of employees (internal customers) currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd;
- To determine how external customers experience the attitudes of employees when buying from Senwes;
- To determine how employees (internal customers) of Senwes experience the attitudes of other employees when buying from Senwes;
- To assess and interpret the results of this study;
- To determine if there is a relation between employee attitude and customers' perceived brand value of the business and
- To propose suggestions and recommendations in terms of the desired employee attitude management strategy for the involved company.

The first secondary objective, ***to define and explain the concepts of employee attitude and brand value***, was achieved in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of the literature study (Chapter 2).

The second secondary objective, ***to review previous research in terms of the effect of employee attitude on brand value internally in the involved company and externally in the broad market***, was realised in section 2.4 of the literature study (Chapter 2) where both previous internal and external research were reviewed.

The third secondary objective, ***to determine what the brand perception of external customers currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd, a South African agricultural business***, was attained in sections 3.5.1.2 (Chapter 3) and 4.2.1.2 (Chapter 4) where the research results as well as conclusions were explained in terms of brand perceptions of external as well as internal customers.

The fourth secondary objective, ***to determine what the brand perception of employees (internal customers) currently is about the products and services of Senwes Ltd***, was also explained in sections 3.5.1.2 (Chapter 3) and 4.2.1.2 (Chapter 4) where the research results as well as conclusions were explained in terms of brand perceptions of both external and internal customers.

The fifth secondary objective, ***to determine how external customers experience the attitudes of employees when buying from Senwes***, was attained in sections 3.5.1.3 (Chapter 3) and 4.2.1.3 (Chapter 4) where the research results as well as conclusions were explained in terms of employee attitude experienced by external as well as internal customers.

The sixth secondary objective, ***to determine how employees (internal customers) of Senwes experience the attitudes of other employees when buying from Senwes***, was explained in sections 3.5.1.3 (Chapter 3) and 4.2.1.3 (Chapter 4) where the research results as well as conclusions were explained in terms of employee attitude experienced by both external and internal customers of Senwes.

The seventh secondary objective, ***to assess and interpret the results of this study***, was achieved by presenting and discussing the results of the empirical study in Chapter 3. Each of the demographical variables as well as the variables of both research

constructs, namely perceived brand value and employee attitude, were presented separately and in detail.

The eighth secondary objective, ***to determine if there is a relation between employee attitude and customers' perceived brand value of the business***, was attained through the conclusions reached from the results of the empirical study in this chapter (see section 4.2).

The final secondary objective, ***to propose suggestions and recommendations in terms of the desired employee attitude management strategy for the involved company***, was achieved through the recommendations made in section 4.4 of this chapter.

Through the achievement of all the secondary objectives the conclusion is made that the primary objective, as stated in paragraph 1.4.1 of Chapter 1 and repeated in paragraph 4.5.1 of this chapter, was successfully achieved.

4.6 Suggestions for further research

Further research that would be suggested is as follows:

Closer collaboration between the human resources and marketing departments is a fairly new idea – a field without much previous research. It would be of great value not only to the agriculture industry, but also to the broad market if more light can be shed on how to approach such collaboration.

Internal marketing to employees is also an aspect that can benefit through further research. How to get employees to live the brand (employee / human capital branding) is a question that needs more answers. Although there is information about previous studies on employee branding, very little empirical research is available on the successful implementation of an employee brand management programme in South Africa (Boyd & Sutherland, 2006:11). This is something that should be further researched as the brand ambassadorship of employees directly contributes to the bottom line of any organisation.

4.7 Summary

This study revealed that firstly the overall response of all customers who participated in the study was a very positive one - somewhere between “agree” and “completely agree”. The respondents currently have a very high brand perception of Senwes – with a mean of 3.137 on a scale of 1 to 4. It was also found that the respondents also agreed that the employees of Senwes have a very positive attitude towards customers – with a mean of 3.190 on the same scale.

Based on the statistical analysis, it was shown that all three different customer types agreed that Senwes has a very positive brand value as well as a very positive employee attitude in general. Both male and female respondents also agreed on these opinions. This was also valid for the different age groups and various geographical locations. There was statistically no significant evidence that any of these different respondent groups felt differently about the two research constructs, namely brand value and employee attitude.

A correlation analysis further revealed that firstly there is a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and brand value and secondly, above all probability and based on the reasoning in this chapter, it can be argued that employee attitude causes the change in brand value. The research therefore confirmed that there is indeed also a positive linear relationship between employee attitude and the perceived brand value of Senwes Ltd, as a South African agricultural business. This is found to be in line with previous research confirming this relationship in other sectors of the market.

As employee attitude and behaviour impact on the perceived brand value of a company, as shown again by this research, it ultimately affects the bottom line. Certain recommendations were formulated and included, firstly to make employee branding a key priority. In order for employee branding to be successful, it needs to be made a key business objective and consistently applied by management. When management “walks the talk”, employees take things seriously.

A second recommendation was to focus on the needs of employees. When employees experience that the company values their personal needs and that their development is important to the organisation, they tend to go the extra mile in return.

Thirdly it was recommended to build employee loyalty and commitment through care, concern, fairness, honest communication and trust.

In the fourth place, the recommendation was made to incorporate measurement and reward criteria into the existing performance management system in order to motivate employees to live the brand measures.

Finally a positive company culture needs to be created or maintained and very importantly be lived by. Organisations need to create a culture and value set according to which employees are viewed as the most valuable asset in the company. Without management setting and maintaining the example and “walking the talk” though, employees will not be convinced and motivated to passionately live the brand.

The study was also critically evaluated to assess whether or not the research objectives were achieved. It was concluded that it indeed achieved the primary and secondary objectives of this study. Although the objectives of the study were met, some suggestions for future research were made.

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ANNEXURE A – RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

MBA Research Questionnaire

This research investigates "The effect of employee attitude on brand value of a selected South African agriculture company".

(NWU School of Business & Governance - September 2017)

This survey contains only 30 questions and will take less than 10 minutes of your time, although it will contribute enormously to this research.

Information provided through this survey will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore you are kindly requested to answer the questions as honestly as possible in order to make this research as meaningful as possible.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the survey.

Section 1 of 3: Demographic & Personal Information

Please provide the following demographic & personal information about yourself:

1. **Question 1: Are you a key-account customer, a non key-account customer or an employee of Senwes? ***

Mark only one oval.

- Key-account customer
 Non key-account customer
 Employee

2. **Question 2: Are you male or female? ***

Mark only one oval.

- Male
 Female

3. **Question 3: What is your age? ***

Mark only one oval.

- Under 20 Years
 20 - 29 Years
 30 - 39 Years
 40 - 49 Years
 50 - 59 Years
 60 Years or above

4. **Question 4: What is your ethnic group? ***

Mark only one oval.

- White
- Black
- Indian
- Coloured
- Other: _____

5. **Question 5: In which Province are you located? ***

Mark only one oval.

- Free State
- Gauteng
- KwaZulu Natal
- Limpopo
- Mpumalanga
- Northern Cape
- Northern Province
- North West
- Western Cape

6. **Question 6: Which of the following products/services of Senwes do you make use of? ***

Check all that apply.

- Grainlink services
- Retail / Production input products/services
- Financial products/services
- Agricultural services
- Mechanization products/services
- None
- Other: _____

7. **Question 7: On how many average hectares per year (for the past 3 years) have you produced crops, if any? ***

Mark only one oval.

- None
- 0 - 249
- 250 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1000 - 2499
- 2500 - 4999
- More than 5000

8. **Question 8: How much grain (approximate tons) have you delivered into Senwes Silo's on average per year for the past 3 years, if any? ***

Mark only one oval.

- None
- 0 - 249
- 250 - 499
- 500 - 999
- 1 000 - 2 499
- 2 500 - 4 999
- 5 000 - 9 999
- 10 000 - 49 999
- More than 50 000

Section 2 of 3: Perceived brand value of Senwes

"Perceived brand value" refers to what a person thinks of the products/services of a particular vendor. A perception or idea in someone's head of how good or bad the products/services of the involved vendor is.

Please answer the following questions about how you perceive the brand value of Senwes from a customer perspective:

9. **Question 9: Senwes is the single company that comes to mind when I think about agricultural products and/or services. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

10. **Question 10: I view Senwes as the leader in the South African agriculture market. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

11. **Question 11: Senwes offers good value for money. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

12. **Question 12: Senwes offers high quality products and services. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

13. **Question 13: I will recommend the products and/or services of Senwes to a friend or colleague. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

14. **Question 14: The service of Senwes meets my needs. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

15. **Question 15: Overall, I am satisfied with the products/services of Senwes. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

16. **Question 16: Compared to competitors, I regard Senwes as more effective. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

17. **Question 17: I perceive Senwes to have a high brand value. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

18. **Question 18: I will continue to support Senwes. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

19. **Question 19: Senwes treats customers with respect. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

20. **Question 20: Senwes delivers on what they promise. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

Section 3 of 3: Employee attitude / commitment towards customers at Senwes

Employee attitude / commitment towards customers refers to the degree of friendliness, helpfulness and enthusiasm with which an employee renders a service to you as a customer.

Please answer the following questions with regards to the employee attitude or level of commitment you experience at Senwes towards you as a customer:

21. **Question 21: The quality of service of Senwes in general is of a high standard. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

22. **Question 22: The Senwes customer service representatives are helpful when rendering a service to me. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

23. **Question 23: The Senwes customer service representatives are friendly while rendering a service to me. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

24. **Question 24: The Senwes customer service representatives are enthusiastic about their products and/or services when rendering a service to me. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Completely disagree

25. **Question 25: The Senwes customer service representatives answer my questions or resolve my problems to my satisfaction. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Completely disagree

26. **Question 26: While rendering a service to me, the attitudes of Senwes employees are to my satisfaction. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Completely disagree

27. **Question 27: The service I receive from Senwes employees is of a professional standard. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Completely disagree

28. **Question 28: While rendering a service to me, Senwes employees appear to be knowledgeable about their products/services. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Completely disagree

29. **Question 29: While rendering a service to me, I experience Senwes employees as having a high level of commitment. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

30. **Question 30: I experience the attitude of Senwes employees positively while being of service to me. ***

Mark only one oval.

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

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ANNEXURE B – LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION LETTER

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Date: 2017/11/02

To whom it may concern,

LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves as proof that the following document was submitted for language editing in November 2017:

Author: Tiaan van Jaarsveld
Document type: Mini-Dissertation: MBA (NWU)
Title: *THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE ATTITUDE ON BRAND VALUE IN A SELECTED AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS*

I applied all reasonable effort to identify errors and made recommendations about spelling, grammar, style and punctuation.

I attempted to be consistent regarding language usage and presentation.

The bibliography was also checked and corrections were made where necessary.

I confirmed the content as far as possible, but cannot be held responsible for this as all facts could not be confirmed. This remains the responsibility of the author.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards.

Rentia Mynhardt