

# Investigating the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour

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## **ABSTRACT**

The South African automotive industry is faced with the challenge of consumers losing confidence in their vehicle brands and becoming detached from the industry. The present tumultuous economic climate in South Africa, the growing number of light passenger vehicles available to consumers, recent malfunctioning scandals, and the introduction of various alternative modes of transport, all contributes towards to consumers feeling detached from the industry. Since the South African automotive industry is characterised as a competitive industry, it is increasingly important for vehicle brands to pursue the development and maintaining of consumers' brand attachment, in order to help them to differentiate themselves from competitors by the strength of their consumers' attachment towards their brands.

The literature investigation uncovered that vehicle brands need to cultivate their consumers' brand attachment to ensure that their brand will be sustainable. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence buyers' attachment to vehicle brands, and whether buyers' brand attachment has a significant influence on their purchase intention and willingness to also pursue extensions of the vehicle brand.

The study implemented a descriptive quantitative research design, and used non-probability convenience sampling to collect data from consumers who reside in Gauteng, who own a vehicle, and who plan to remain with their current vehicle brand when purchasing a new vehicle. A computer-administered questionnaire was distributed to public and closed community groups on Facebook (within Gauteng), resulting in a total of 322 usable questionnaires. The data analysis included assessing the validity and reliability of the scales, the calculation of descriptive statistics, and the calculation of inferential statistics in the form of a standard multiple regression and structural equation modelling.

The results of the empirical investigation were reported in the form of two articles. The measurement scales used to measure the constructs of the study were found to be valid and reliable. In addition, brand image, brand trust and brand personality were found to have an influence on the level of brand attachment vehicle buyers experience, with brand personality having the greatest influence. Therefore, it is recommended that vehicle brands ought to focus their efforts on enhancing their brand personalities, as vehicle buyers' attachment towards a brand is facilitated by their ability to identify their individualistic selves with the personality of the brand.

The results also indicated that brand attachment has an influence on vehicle buyers' purchase intentions, and an even stronger influence on vehicle buyers' brand extension attitude. For this

## **Abstract**

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reason, vehicle brands should ensure that their individualistic brand personality is portrayed throughout the various product ranges they have on offer, in order to increase consumers' willingness to purchase extended product offerings.

Future research should address the methodological and other limitations of this study by collecting data from respondents of all nine of South Africa's provinces, and by considering the use of probability sampling. Collecting longitudinal data should also be considered, because brand attachment is developed over time. Lastly, future research can focus on measuring consumers' brand attachment towards a specific vehicle brand and/or model, which will help to develop a broader perspective of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour.

## LIST OF KEYWORDS

This section provides a list of keywords used in the study. To ensure consistency and clarity of these terms, the following definitions are provided.

- Automotive industry

The automotive industry comprises of various facets, which include both the manufacturing of vehicles and parts for the purpose of transporting passengers and freight, as well as the selling of new and pre-owned vehicles made by manufacturers (Stats SA, 2017:2).

- Consumer behaviour

This entails the behaviour that consumers exhibit in their search for a specific product on which they seek to spend their available resources. This concept also includes consumers' behaviour when using, evaluating and disposing of said product that ought to satisfy their needs (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:23).

- Branding

Branding entails a combination of names, terms, signs, symbols or designs intended to create awareness and prominence of a product in the marketplace, ultimately differentiating a product from its competitors (AMA, 2017; Keller, 2013:30).

- Brand attachment

As a descendent from the attachment theory – described as a developmental relationship – brand attachment is seen as a multi-faceted concept where an emotion-laden bond is formed between the consumer and a brand (Bowlby, 1974:350; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89; Ghose & Lowengart, 2013:14-15).

- Brand image

As defined by Aaker (1996:68), brand image is the representation of what a brand advocates and the promises it makes to consumers through the implementation of a brand strategy, and comprises a unique set of brand associations.

- Brand trust

Brand trust is defined as the willingness of the consumer to rely on the ability of a brand to perform a certain function (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82).

### List of keywords

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- Brand personality

Brand personality refers to assigning various human characteristics, which are both relevant and applicable, to a brand (Aaker, 1997:347; Kardes *et al.*, 2011:243).

- Brand extension

A brand extension is realised when the parent brand furthers and adapts its existing brand offerings to create a new product or service area (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:26).

- Purchase intention

Purchase intention is defined by Semenik *et al.* (2012:295) as “consumers’ willingness and intent to purchase or repurchase a product in the near future”.

## PREFACE

The reader's attention is drawn to the following:

- The dissertation is submitted in the format of two research articles.
- Please note that the specifications of the target journals with regard to page margins, font and font size were omitted to ensure technical consistency throughout the dissertation. For this reason, each chapter of this dissertation is concluded with a reference list. The referencing for the complete dissertation was done according to the Harvard style guidelines of the North-West University (NWU, 2012).
- The first article (presented in Chapter 4) will be submitted to the accredited *Journal of Contemporary Management*.
- The second article (presented in Chapter 5) will be submitted to the accredited journal *Acta Commercii*.
- The dissertation was language edited by Dr Louisemarie Rathbone. The letter of confirmation of language editing is available in Appendix B.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The main purpose of this study is to determine those factors that influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to pursue other extensions of the vehicle brand. This chapter, therefore, sets out to provide the study's contextual background.

The chapter commences with a discussion of the background as well as the research problem of the study, which is followed by an overview of the South African automotive industry and the current challenges and changes the industry faces. Thereafter, a discussion on the disciplines, theoretical constructs and relationship between relevant constructs used in the study follow, from which the research objectives, hypotheses and conceptual framework of the study are formulated. To conclude with, a brief description of the research methodology followed in this study is provided, and an outline of the chapters in the study is given.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The South African automotive industry, which includes both the manufacturing of vehicles and car parts, as well as the sales of new and pre-owned vehicles is among the most diverse and competitive in comparison with the global market (Stats SA, 2012:126; Stats SA, 2016:3). Vehicle buyers have 55 vehicle brands and 3 458 passenger vehicle models available to choose from (AIEC, 2017:16). Even though the automotive industry is one of the largest contributors to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the South African economy (7.4%), the recent economic downturn has seen sales of new and pre-owned vehicles declining by 11.4% in 2016. Moreover, the overall economic climate and rising inflation, which places increased pressure on South-African household budgets, gave rise to more than a third (35%) of current vehicle owners proclaiming that they are considering purchasing another vehicle brand than the one they own in the future (Ipsos, 2014). Additional scandals within the industry – such as the recent Ford Kuga engines that malfunctioned – resulted in consumers becoming detached from, and losing confidence in malfunctioning vehicle brands (AIEC, 2017:16; Bubear, 2017a; Wheels24, 2017).

With a decline in new vehicle sales, as well as consumers becoming detached from brands and generally losing confidence in the South African automotive industry, it has become paramount

for vehicle manufacturers and franchises to concentrate their marketing efforts on branding, since branding attaches a personality to the brand with which the consumer can associate (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136). An 11.4% increase in pre-owned vehicles sales were noted in the fourth financial quarter (October, November and December) of 2016, and the decline (-7.3%) in new vehicle sales in the same time period made it clear that vehicle dealerships must establish a degree of attachment with vehicle buyers (Stats SA, 2017:4). Branding also promotes the development of a greater level of trust, which generally has a positive effect on the consumer's identification with and perception of the brand, and may lead to a more urgent purchase intent (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Tsai *et al.*, 2015:371).

As noted, since more than a third of South African vehicle owners are considering to purchase a different vehicle brand when purchasing a new or pre-owned vehicle in the future, marketers need to focus their attention on creating consumer brand attachment (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Ipsos, 2014; Loureiro *et al.*, 2017:10; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). The creation of consumer brand attachment is extremely important, because an attached consumer tends to be more inclined to purchase a selected brand or an extension of that brand (Chiu *et al.*, 2017:169; Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). According to Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) and Malär *et al.* (2011:46), consumers tend to attach themselves to a brand with which they are able to relate to on a personal level, resulting in an emotional level of trust.

From the discussion above, the following research problem is formulated for this study:

Ownership of a vehicle (either new or pre-owned) is not regarded as a symbol of status anymore, but rather as a purchase emerging from a utilitarian need. Vehicle buyers are also offered other means of public transportation, which allows them to elude the process of purchasing a vehicle from an industry from which they feel detached. For this reason, it is pivotal for vehicle brands to offer consumers more than just new or pre-owned vehicles that can be differentiated by certain attributes (including a comprehensive service-warranty, engine power, driving comfort, fuel consumption and the safety of the vehicle). Vehicle brands should rather aim to build their consumers' brand attachment in order to differentiate themselves through the strength of consumers' brand attachment. Extant literature suggests that consumers' attachment towards a brand is positively influenced by their trust in the brand, their perceptions of the brand's image, and their associations with the personality of the brand. It has also been established that consumers' brand attachment positively influences their purchase intention as well as their willingness to purchase extensions of the brand.

However, it seems as if no investigation has been undertaken that explores vehicle buyer's brand attachment, as well as said brand attachment's antecedents and consequences, within the South African automotive industry. Knowledge of the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyer's brand attachment could assist vehicle brands to identify the positive influence that brand trust, brand image and brand personality may have on consumers' brand attachment. Vehicle brands could also gain a better understanding of the positive influence that strong brand attachment might have on consumers' purchase intention and their willingness to purchase extensions of the brand. Subsequently, this study aims to assist vehicle brands in developing a trustworthy brand that is compatible with, and appealing to individual personalities of the brand's consumers and to offer a brand image that consumers perceive as an extension of themselves, which may lead to a favourable intention to purchase as well as a willingness to purchase extensions of the brand.

### **1.3 INDUSTRY OVERVIEW**

This section provides a discussion on the South African automotive industry. The automotive industry is defined, followed by a brief industry analysis, and an indication of the major challenges this industry faces.

#### **1.3.1 Defining the automotive industry**

The most significant contributor to the globally integrated and market-orientated South African economy, which consists out of a GDP of R4 337 billion, is the manufacturing industry (AIEC, 2017:7). In terms of contribution to the manufacturing industry, the automotive industry is the largest contributor, and also one of the most dynamic parts of the segment (AIEC, 2017:6). The South African automotive industry, in its entirety, forms part of various sectors within the country's economy, and contributed 7.4% to the country's GDP in 2016 (AIEC, 2017:6). The Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (SIC) categorises the manufacturing segment of the automotive industry into division 29 (Stats SA, 2012:31). Division 29 comprises of the manufacturing of motor vehicles for the sole purpose of transporting passengers or freight, as well as the manufacturing of various parts and accessories. Also included in this division is the manufacturing of trailers and semi-trailers (Stats SA, 2012:126). The SIC classifies economic activities relevant to South African conditions through the implementation of a set of agreed upon concepts, definitions, principles and classification rules (Stats SA, 2012:11).

The automotive industry in South Africa does not singularly comprise out of the manufacturing of motor vehicle and parts for passenger or freight transportation, but includes the sales of both new and pre-owned vehicles (Stats SA, 2017:2). Therefore, the automotive industry also forms part of division 45 within the SIC classifications, since this division entails both the wholesale and retail

sale of new and pre-owned vehicles, as well as the repair and maintenance of these new and pre-owned vehicles, and also the wholesale and retail sale of parts and accessories for new and pre-owned vehicles (Stats SA, 2012:155-156).

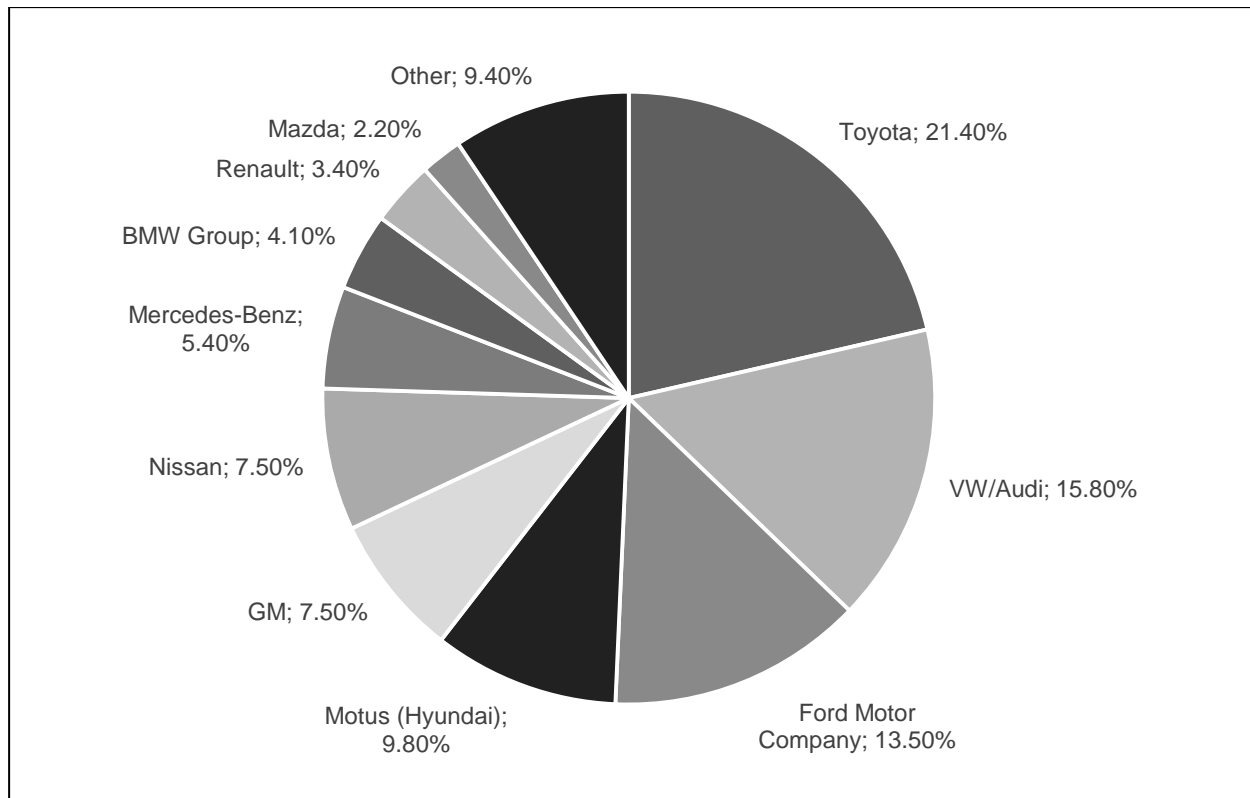
According to Stats SA (2016:4), a total decline in motor vehicle sales of 11.4% was reported in 2016, and that decline was spurred by a slowdown in the domestic economy, above average inflationary pressures on new vehicle sales, frequent interest rate increases, pressure on both consumers and households' disposable income, as well as lower levels of consumer confidence within South Africa (Bubear, 2017a). With regard to the motor trade sales in the South African automotive industry, a decline of 7.3% in new vehicle sales was found during the third financial quarter in 2016 in comparison with 2015, whereas pre-owned vehicle sales increased by 11.4% during the third financial quarter in 2016 in comparison with 2015 (Stats SA, 2017:3).

### **1.3.2 Major role players in the South African passenger vehicle industry**

The South African passenger vehicle industry consists of franchise dealerships that have a contract with a vehicle manufacturer, which means that they sell specifically branded motor vehicles, as well as independent dealerships that have no obligation towards a specific brand (Rawes, 2014). All vehicle dealerships within South Africa, whether solely new vehicle dealerships or used-vehicle dealerships, form part of the National Automobile Dealer Association (NADA), which is the professional body that represents these dealerships (NADA, 2017). The South African Department of Trade and Industries (2015:2) identified the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in South Africa as:

- European light vehicle manufacturers – including Mercedes Benz, BMW, and Volkswagen – which are classified as wholly owned subsidiaries.
- Both Japanese and American manufacturers – including Toyota, General Motors, and Ford – which are also classified as 100% controlled subsidiaries.
- Other major brands imported from around the world, such as Peugeot, Citroen, Volvo, Daihatsu, Honda, Subaru, Hyundai, Kia, Tata, and Mahindra, with the demand for Chinese brands also growing in the South African market.

The 55 brands and 3 458 different models available to consumers illustrate that the South African passenger vehicle industry is among the most competitive trading environments within the global automotive industry (AIEC, 2017:16). Figure 1-1 below illustrates the market shares of the major vehicle brands within the South African passenger vehicle industry.

**Figure 1-1: Market shares in the South African passenger vehicle industry, 2016**

Source: Adopted from AIEC (2017:17).

From Figure 1-1 above it is apparent that the South African passenger vehicle industry is competitive in nature, with a variety of brands available to customers to choose from. The three major role-players in the South African automotive industry are Toyota (21.40%), VW/Audi (15.90%) and the Ford Motor Company (13.50%), with Motus (Hyundai) (9.80%), GM (7.50%) and Nissan (7.50%) closely following (AIEC, 2017:17).

Consequently, the South African passenger vehicle industry is under great pressure to increase new vehicle sales. However, that task has become difficult due to, among other factors, the weakened economy (Bubear, 2017b). Despite the weakened economy and overall decline in vehicle sales, the major role-players in the industry were able to maintain their vehicle sales at an acceptable standard. Table 1-1 below depicts the top 10 passenger vehicle sales in South Africa for the last three months of 2016.



**Table 1-1: Top 10 passenger vehicle sales from October 2016 – December 2016**

October 2016			November 2016			December 2016		
Make	Model	Units sold	Make	Model	Units sold	Make	Model	Units sold
VW	Polo Vivo	2 701	VW	Polo	1 762	VW	Polo Vivo	1 835
	Polo	2 458	Toyota	Corolla	1 746	VW	Polo	1 504
Toyota	Corolla	1 968	VW	Polo Vivo	1 649	Toyota	Fortuner	958
	Etios	1 520	Ford	Fiesta	1 130	Ford	EcoSport	896
	Fortuner	1 172	Toyota	Etios	1 106	BMW	3 Series	849
	Avanza	649	Renault	Kwid	519	Ford	Fiesta	627
Ford	Fiesta	1 856	Toyota	Fortuner	1 135	Toyota	Corolla	957
	EcoSport	1 012	Ford	EcoSport	908	Renault	Kwid	752
Renault	Sandero	562	Datsun	GO	484	Toyota	Etios	597
Nissan	X-Trail	541	Toyota	RAV4	462	Ford	Figo	475

Source: Adopted from Bubear (2017b).

From Table 1-1 above, it is evident that the major role-players within the South African passenger vehicle industry (as previously illustrated in Figure 1-1) have the highest sale figures, with Volkswagen (Polo and Polo Vivo models) with the second largest market share (15.90%), frequently showing the highest sale figures (Bubear, 2017b). Toyota (Corolla and Fortuner models) and Ford's (EcoSport and Fiesta models) sales are in close range of Volkswagen's sales (Bubear, 2017b).

### 1.3.3 Trends and challenges in the South African passenger vehicle industry

New vehicle sales have steadily decreased over time, as tight-budgeted consumers tend to rather consider vehicles from the used-vehicle market (Parker *et al.*, 2016). Even though there are an abundance of investment opportunities for new and established organisations in both the global and South African automotive industry as manufacturers, BMW (R6 billion), Toyota (R6.1 billion), Volkswagen (R4.5 billion), Ford (R2.5 billion) and Mercedes-Benz (R3 billion) have opted to increase their investments within South Africa's automotive industry by expanding their operational and manufacturing capacity at their various plants nationwide (Parker *et al.*, 2016).

In addition, the concept of vehicle ownership is changing globally, as car-pooling and ride-sharing have become increasingly popular (Kolver, 2014; Parker *et al.*, 2016). These trends are expanding in South Africa, with Uber (a transportation provider), the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit

System, as well as the Gautrain (located in Gauteng) offering consumers various modes of transport within the greater metropolitan areas (Gautrain, 2016; Rea Vaya, 2016; Uber, 2017).

The automotive industry, both globally and within South Africa, has furthermore been riddled with scandals, including the Volkswagen emissions scandal in September 2015, where Volkswagen diesel models were allowed to pass emission tests without adhering to set standards (Wheels24, 2017). More recently, in January 2017, Ford recalled 4 556 of its Kuga models after more than 45 of these units had engine bay fires (Wheels24, 2017). As a result, ambivalent consumers may perceive some vehicle brands as dangerous and unreliable as these brands do not represent the trustworthy image consumers seek in order to become attached to said brand (Heinrich *et al.*, 2016:546; Miladian, 2009:84; Terblanche, 2008:12; Veasna *et al.*, 2013:523).

Although the automotive industry has been plagued by scandals, it is still on the forefront of innovation through the implementation of technologies such as the Super Cruise used in Cadillac vehicles, where drivers' eye-movements are being tracked to ensure that they keep their eyes on the road (Truett, 2017). Apple and Google also intend to collaborate with vehicle manufacturers to produce cars or supply these manufacturers with self-drive technology (Davis, 2017).

## **1.4 THEORETICAL CONTEXT**

The sections that follow provide an overview of existing research in the related fields of consumer behaviour and branding, with specific emphasis of the constructs under investigation in this study (i.e. brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension, and purchase intention).

### **1.4.1 Consumer behaviour**

Consumer behaviour is understood as the study of consumers' consumption experiences by observing the thoughts and feelings that consumers experience throughout the consumption process as well as their actions, which include the decision to spend available resources on consumption-related items (Babin & Harris, 2016:4; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:23). In mature markets, brands' core product offerings rarely differ from each other, thus creating a scenario where the consumer can hardly distinguish between the quality of the different offerings (Ziniel, 2013:1). As a result, consumers seek to purchase brands that correspond with their values, beliefs and/or personalities (Solomon, 2013:30). Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:24) further explain that consumers spend their available physical and monetary resources on products and services intended for final use. When consumers encounter consumption-related situations, a decision process is initiated where self-concepts (which entail the manner in which consumers view

themselves) and consumers' lifestyles play a role in terms of internal and external influencers that produce needs and desires that need to be satisfied through consumption-related items (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:37). Social and cultural aspects of a consumer's life form the basis of external influences related to their self-concepts and lifestyles, which ultimately lead to their purchasing decision (Babin & Harris, 2016:26-27). Brands need to take these social and cultural factors into consideration, because these factors have the power to sway the perceived perceptions, habits, behaviour and expectations of the consumer (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24; Rani, 2014:53-54). Hammerl *et al.* (2016:37) emphasise that consumers may alter their perceived beliefs about a brand depending on the strength of a reference group's influence, which will subsequently influence their purchase intention.

### **1.4.2 Branding**

Researchers Onkvisit and Shaw (1989:22) are of the opinion that a brand or brand name only serves as a description of the term known as a trademark. The process by means of which manufacturers create a propriety name for a specific product by creating a distinct mark for such a product – which could include a term, sign, symbol, or design – may suffice as a broad description of branding, even though branding is regarded as a more complex phenomenon (AMA, 2017; Armstrong & Kotler 2011:243-244; Maurya & Mishra, 2012:122). A brand allows marketers not only to label products within certain classifications, but also facilitates the segmentation of products with greater ease due to the distinctive markers allocated to the brand (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:278; Kotler *et al.*, 2010:242). These distinctive markers allow consumers to clearly identify a branded item, and this may lead to consumers focusing both their attention and purchasing power on said branded item (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136). Businesses are able to sell their products more distinctively through the implementation of branding, because branding has a bearing on consumers' social life, economic sustainability, culture and religion – all of which affect consumers' perceived perceptions of a brand as well as their purchase intent (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:278; Kotler *et al.*, 2010:242; Maurya & Mishra, 2012:122). Furthermore, scholars David and Bearden (2017:48) and David *et al.* (2017:9) propound that the attachment style of consumers towards a brand impacts on their willingness to make an investment (financial or emotional) with the brand.

### **1.4.3 Brand attachment**

Brand attachment – descending from the attachment theory – is regarded as an emotionally-laden bond a consumer not only forms with a brand, but also with certain places (Feldman, 1996:419; Park *et al.*, 2010:4; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). Consumers who are predisposed to depend on their primary providers are prone to develop an emotional bond with a brand, and this emotional

bond may only be limited to a number of preferred brands (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Bidmon, 2017:180). Cheng *et al.* (2016:11) explain that consumers who are emotionally attached to a brand are more inclined to have a favourable judgement of the overall benefits the brand has to offer, and also a more favourable judgement when assessing the overall utility of the brand. The value that the consumer receives from a product or service is perceived to be higher when the consumer has a higher level of brand attachment. Managers, therefore, have the opportunity to enhance the strength of the emotional attachment that consumers have towards their organisations or product offerings by creating their image in such a way that it is not only more emotionally desirable, but also more socially desirable (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89).

According to Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290), Sarkar and Roy, (2016:475) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:88), an elevated level of brand attachment could (1) positively influence a consumer's willingness to pay a premium price for a product or service, (2) positively influence a consumer's willingness to purchase brand extensions, and (3) influence a consumer to forgive service mishaps more easily. These are construed as economic assets for the organisation. Furthermore, consumers feel more attached to a brand when the brand's reputation and quality are perceived in a positive light (Dennis *et al.*, 2016:3056). Consumers' attachment towards a brand will be optimal when certain aspects of the brand reflect similar aspects of their personal identity that individualise them, and which may also incline consumers to discriminate towards a brand when a brand does not embody those personality traits that consumers perceive as unique to themselves (Belaid & Behi 2011:46; Hwang & Kandampully, 2012:108; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009:996).

#### **1.4.4 Brand image**

Gardner and Levy (1955:38) note that certain feelings, ideas and attitudes, which form the crux of brand image, are important motivators in consumers' purchasing decisions and behaviours. Subsequently, Aaker (1996:71) stated that brand image is the manner in which consumers perceive a brand. In addition, definitions of brand image include the notion that a brand image is formulated in the minds of consumers through cognition, affection and evaluation processes – these cultivate the associations and perceptions that a consumer has about a brand (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Arai *et al.*, 2013:384; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8; Roy & Banerjee, 2014:2). By constructing a well-defined brand image, organisations enable consumers to create a unique self-image, which in return enhances the self-esteem of the consumer, because ownership of a brand that is perceived in a positive light contributes to the unique individual image of the consumer and serves as an extension of themselves (He *et al.*, 2016:17).

Hutter *et al.* (2013:345) and Lee *et al.* (2014:8) propound that consumers identify within themselves certain aspects of the brand's image and cultivate associations that will not be realised if the image of the brand is not present in consumers' minds. The positive association between consumers and the brand image, and the acceptance that the brand image is a representation of consumers' individual self-image, will influence purchasing decisions and consumers' willingness to pay a premium price in a positive way (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Yu *et al.*, 2013:608). Therefore, the absolute fit of a brand's image significantly determines whether consumers would be willing to consider purchasing from the brand's extensions (Riley *et al.*, 2014:918).

#### **1.4.5 Brand trust**

Brand trust can be defined as the consumer's willingness to rely on the brand's ability to perform certain stated functions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82). Trust can be regarded as a multidisciplinary construct – and this adds to the depth of the construct, but the diversity in scholarly views may impede the integration of different perspectives that could allow for a measure of consensus on the nature of trust. Consumer behaviour theory explains that trust in people can evolve when past experiences and prior interactions develop by moving through the stages from predictability, to dependability, to trust that would eventually lead to faith and lower uncertainty experienced by the consumer (Babin & Harris, 2016:149; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98).

In the literature of marketing and branding, trust is viewed as a prerequisite for developing and maintaining a successful long-term relationship, as well as facilitating brand attachment with a consumer, because it is an antecedent of relationship commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:20; Phan & Ghantous, 2013:472; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:30). Morgan and Hunt (1994:24) conceptualise trust as comprising of reliability and integrity, whereas Delgado-Ballester (2004:586) conceptualises trust as embodying reliability and intention. In addition, Erciş *et al.* (2012:1398) are of the opinion that trust is built upon the foundation of the reliability and honesty of a brand.

Therefore, the main purpose of brand trust is to ensure that when a brand extends its product or service offerings, that the consumer is encouraged to purchase the brand extension because a high degree of brand trust may compensate for lack of knowledge about the brand extension and lower perceived risk on the consumer's side (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014:163; Kim & Jones 2009:294). Becerra and Korgaonkar (2011:948) and Tsai *et al.* (2015:362) add that trust will enable the organisation to increase purchases, decrease shopping cart abandonment, and increase the willingness of consumers to rely on a brand.

### **1.4.6 Brand personality**

Brand personality entails a set of human characteristics that are assigned to a brand (Aaker, 1997:347). McCrae and Costa (1986:81; 1997:509) indicated that personality is composed of traits that are systematically described as personal styles of thinking, feeling and acting. A main challenge that organisations have become aware of, is the necessity of creating an organisational personality that is both appealing and compatible with its set target market (Müller, 2014:532). Therefore, organisations can implement the five-factor structure developed by Aaker (1997:352) as a measurement instrument, since brand personality not only offers organisations the opportunity to differentiate their product or service within the market, but also helps to create expectations in consumer about key brand characteristics. It also serves as a base foundation upon which the organisation can develop a long-term relationship with the consumer (Babin & Harris, 2016:119; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:366-367; Rajagopal, 2006:55-57).

### **1.4.7 Brand extension**

Brand extension is defined as an adaptation of an existing brand to a new area of product development or service delivery, which may also be described as a brand variant (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:26; Wood, 2000:668). Broad agreement has been established within the vast literature of brand extension that consumers' evaluation of a specific brand's extension of products or services depends on the parent brand's image, the category in which the extension takes place, the consumer's perceived fit, and the characteristics of the brand extension (Aaker & Keller, 1990:39-40; Boush & Loken, 1991:26-27; Klink & Smith, 2001:333; Riley *et al.*, 2014:918-919; Völckner & Sattler, 2006:29). It is, therefore, important for the brand extension to enhance the appeal of the parent brand, since a negative experience with the parent brand may cause consumers to perceive the brand experience negatively; this would dilute their purchase intention (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014:163). In addition, the perceived fit of the brand personality leads to a level of affect toward a brand extension (Ferguson *et al.*, 2016:350). Confusion may arise when the similarities between the parent brand and brand extension are too great, resulting in consumers taking their purchase power elsewhere (Sood & Keller, 2012:380; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2001:14). However, for the purpose of this study, the focus is on consumers' attitudes towards brand extension and their willingness to purchase such brand extension, which is subsequently discussed.

#### **1.4.7.1 Brand extension attitude**

A brand is perceived as one of the organisation's most fundamental assets, which ultimately entails that an extension of a brand is likely to have a direct benefit to the organisation (Martinez *et al.*, 2009:311). Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) hold that consumers' attitude towards a brand

extension consists of their *favourability* and *perceived quality* of the extension as well as their *likelihood of trying* the extension.

*Favourability* entails that consumers develop a degree of acceptance towards a brand extension by trusting the brand and perceiving the brand image fit as adequate. Dwivedi and Merrilees (2013:458) and Wu and Yen (2007:338) believe that consumers' attitude towards an extension of a brand would be more favourable when the brand trust is stronger, even if the similarity between the brand extension and the parent brand is perceived as quite far. Martinez *et al.* (2009:311) and Muhammed *et al.* (2016:26) add that accepting a brand extension is enhanced by a perceived favourability towards the brand image, and that favourable brand extension attitudes are the result of consumers perceiving the parent brand image as favourable.

The *perceived quality* entails perceptions that consumers have towards the parent brand. These perceptions affect their attitude towards an extension of the brand, and therefore it follows that the similarity between the parent brand and the brand extension plays an integral part in the formation of consumers' attitude (Muhammed *et al.*, 2016:26; Wu & Yen, 2007:338). Consumers perceive high quality brands as credible and trustworthy; therefore, even if the similarity of the brand extension is perceived as far from the parent brand, consumers may have a positive attitude towards the brand extension (Broniarczyk & Gershoff, 2003:172-173).

The dimensions of *favourability* and *perceived quality* form the foundation to the question as to whether consumers will have the *likelihood of trying* a brand extension, since brand extensions develop from high-quality parent brands that the consumer trusts, together with a degree of similarity could lead to the consumer considering to purchase a brand extension (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013:458; Spiggle *et al.*, 2012:979; Wu & Yen, 2007:339).

#### **1.4.8 Purchase intention**

The intention a consumer has to purchase a product or service in the near future determines the purchase intention of said consumer (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). Various studies have focused on purchase intent rather than purchase behaviour, because intentions have greater implications for an individual's actions, and are also more likely to influence their purchasing actions positively (Ajzer & Driver, 1992:207-209; Schossler *et al.*, 2006:139-140).

According to Cronin Jr. and Taylor (1992:65), service quality and consumer satisfaction exert a strong influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Taylor and Baker (1994:172) confirmed this statement by noting that, when a consumer's perception of both service quality and satisfaction are high, increased intention to purchase a product or service is observed. Another influencing

factor of a consumer's purchasing decision, which may ultimately lead to their intent to purchase, is the ethical behaviour of the organisation. Consumers expect ethical corporate behaviour from an organisation and will reward this ethical corporate behaviour by their willingness to pay a higher price (Creyer 1997:428).

The impact of the self on purchase intention has been measured by focussing on the perception that consumers have of the functional, experiential and symbolic values that a brand has to offer, with consumers mostly focused on the functional and experiential value as opposed to the symbolic value of a brand (Hung *et al.*, 2011:463-464). Consumers who perceive themselves as akin to the personality of a brand will ultimately display a higher intention to purchase a product or service (Beck & Dagogo-Jack, 2014:408; Wang & Yang, 2008:469).

The level of credibility that a brand has to offer has an effect on the purchasing decision of the consumer, with a higher perceived levels of credibility leading to a greater intention to purchase (Wang & Yang, 2010:185). If consumers express a purchase intention, this should not be presupposed lightly by the organisation. This is the case because even though purchase intent is associated with a reasonably high degree of reliability, organisations should be aware of the risks of assumption by implementing purchase intent as a marketing objective (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295).

## **1.5 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONSTRUCTS**

The section below provides a discussion on the relationship between the theoretical constructs dealt with above, furnished with evidence obtained from existing studies.

### **1.5.1 Brand image and brand attachment**

Heinrich *et al.* (2016:546) and Veasna *et al.* (2013:523) confirm that brand image influences the emotional attachment of a consumer towards a brand. Also, Dennis *et al.* (2016:3055) found that the identity and meaning of a brand – which are dimensions of a brand's image – influence brand attachment positively. Furthermore, Japtura *et al.* (2016:11) hold that brand image, which caters to consumers' ideal self, influences brand attachment significantly. Following the literature investigation, it is subsequently hypothesised that:

H<sub>1</sub>: Brand image statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.



### **1.5.2 Brand trust and brand attachment**

Research by Louis and Lombart (2010:126) indicates that only the credibility element of trust influences brand attachment positively. In addition, Belaid and Behi (2011:39) state that trust enhances the affectionate bond within brand attachment positively, and that in being attached to a brand, a consumer believes that the brand will not take advantage of his or her vulnerabilities or break promises. Furthermore, Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) propound that the higher the degree of trust a consumer has with a brand, the higher their level of attachment towards the brand will be. Following the literature investigation, it is subsequently hypothesised that:

H<sub>2</sub>: Brand trust statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

### **1.5.3 Brand personality and brand attachment**

Optimal attachment is achieved when consumers' selves are incorporated into the brand's personality (Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). Research by Hwang and Kandampully (2012:108) and Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996) explored the relationship between brand personality and brand attachment. These scholars' findings demonstrate that when the personality of the brand portrays characteristics that consumers deem unique to themselves, they are positively inclined to become attached to the brand. Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) found positive evidence that when a brand reflects the individual personality of the consumer, attachment towards the brand is set to follow. In support, research by Yao *et al.* (2015:1425) found that consumers are emotionally attached towards a brand when the brand is regarded as a reflection of his or her personality. Following the literature investigation, it is subsequently hypothesised that:

H<sub>3</sub>: Brand personality statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

### **1.5.4 Purchase intention and brand attachment**

Cheng *et al.* (2016:11), Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) and Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) hold that consumers who are emotionally attached to a brand will have a more favourable conclusion when assessing the utility of a brand, which in turn will lead to a positive intention to purchase a product or service. Cheng *et al.* (2016:250) further reiterate that emotional brand attachment enhances consumers' purchase intention. Beck and Dagogo-Jack (2014:408) found positive evidence that consumers who are attached to a brand tend to reward this brand with increased purchase intention when the brand they are attached to recognises the consumer's individual self. Furthermore, consumers will be willing to pay a premium price for the brand's products to which they are attached to (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Sarkar & Roy, 2016:475). Following the literature investigation, it is subsequently hypothesised that:

H<sub>4</sub>: Brand attachment statistically significantly influences respondents' purchase intention.

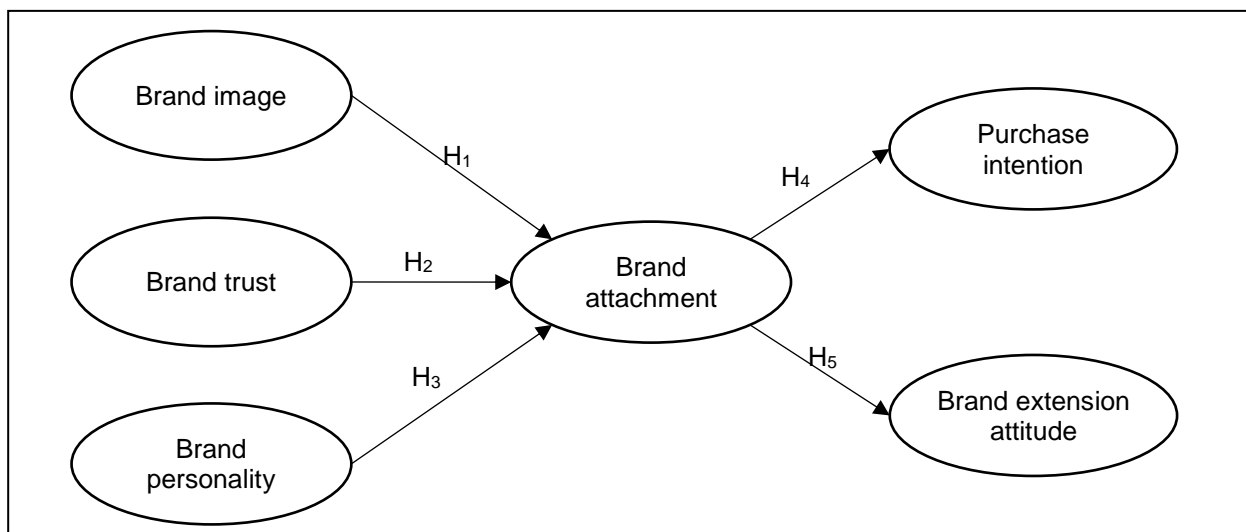
### 1.5.5 Brand extension and brand attachment

Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) found positive evidence that when a consumer perceives higher levels of attachment towards a parent brand, he or she will be more willing to purchase brand extension products or services offered by the brand, and tends to be willing to forgive the brand extension's mishaps. He *et al.* (2016:250) support this notion with evidence that consumers who display emotional attachment towards a brand can show support towards the brand extension. Heinrich *et al.* (2016:545) confirm that emotional brand attachment has an essential influence on the success of a brand extension. Following the literature investigation, it is subsequently hypothesised that:

H<sub>5</sub>: Brand attachment statistically significantly influences respondents' brand extension attitudes.

Figure 1-2 below depicts the conceptual framework for this study.

**Figure 1-2: Conceptual framework**



Source: Researcher's own construct.

## 1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to determine those factors that influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to consider purchasing extensions of the brand.

The following secondary objectives support the primary objective, namely to:

- 1) Describe the sample profile.
- 2) Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.
- 3) Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.
- 4) Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.
- 5) Determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their vehicle brand.
- 6) Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.
- 7) Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their vehicle brand.
- 8) Determine the interrelationships between brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW**

This section provides a brief overview of the research methodology used in this study. The literature study, empirical investigation, research design, sampling, measurement instruments, data analysis, and the fundamental role it has in collecting the data are subsequently discussed. An in-depth discussion on the topic is provided in Chapter 3.

### **1.7.1 Literature study**

For the literature study, secondary data was obtained from a selection of marketing and economic websites, theses, scholarly journals, departmental reports, academic textbooks and company reports. The researcher also used various electronic databases, including Emerald Insight Journals, JSTOR, EbscoHost, Google Scholar and SA Media, to obtain an extensive body of literature that constitutes the theoretical foundation of this study.

### **1.7.2 Empirical investigation**

The main goal of an empirical investigation entails the collection of primary data, which also involves the implementation of qualitative or quantitative research methods. Quantitative research stresses the use of structured questions, predetermined responses within administered questionnaires and is descriptive in nature, which enables a researcher to determine a causal relationship between certain variables (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:348; Hair *et al.*, 2013:77).

A descriptive research design is regarded as conclusive (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57; Malhotra *et al.*, 2012:90). This research design can be applied when research objectives include the representation of consumer characteristics and for determining occurrence frequency, or the degree to which variables are associated, and whether there is a need to make predictions regarding a phenomenon (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57; Hair *et al.*, 2006:63).

**A descriptive research design was used for the purpose of this study**, as it allows for the measurement of those factors that influence vehicle buyers' brand attachment towards a specific brand, and whether vehicle buyers' brand attachment has an influence on their purchase intention and willingness to purchase a brand extension. The use of a descriptive research method allows, by means of answering the "who, what, where and how" questions, the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding of the South African automotive industry's current situation (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57; Hair *et al.*, 2013:36).

**A quantitative research method was also used for the purpose of this study** in the form of a computer-administered questionnaire that was developed on Google Docs. The questionnaire contains structured questions with predetermined responses (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). This allowed the researcher to obtain information that specifically addresses the research problem of this study.

The target population of this study included male and female individuals who reside in the Gauteng metropolitan area, who own a vehicle, and who plan to remain with their current vehicle brand. Selecting the population in this manner enabled the researcher to ensure that most of the respondents were aware of all the brands within the South African passenger vehicle industry – which assisted in the data collection process.

**Non-probability, convenience sampling was used for this study.** The primary reason for the use of non-probability sampling is that there were no databases available from which a sampling framework could be constructed, since detailed records of vehicle ownership are not publicly available. Convenience sampling enabled the researcher to attract a sufficient number of vehicle buyers to measure the formulated hypotheses (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:304). Applying judgement or quota sampling was not deemed appropriate, since a large sample size is vital for the present study. Therefore, selecting respondents subjectively or deliberately through the use of pertinent characteristics that are demographic in nature would not be possible (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:174). Individual internet users in South Africa, who can access the internet at home or by means of any type of device or connection, comprise 52% of the country's population (Internet World Stats, 2016). In addition, 7 097 726 million vehicles are registered in South Africa, of which 2 964 621 million are registered in Gauteng (eNaTIS, 2017). Therefore, snowball sampling, which is suitable

when the target population is relatively small and focussed, was also not regarded an appropriate sampling method for this study (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:350-351).

**For the purpose of the study**, the targeted sample size consisted of at least 300 respondents, because according to Malhotra *et al.* (2013:370), problem-solving studies require a sample size of between 300 and 500 respondents to generate accurate data. Table 1-2 provides a summary of the sampling plan of the study.

**Table 1-2: Sampling plan summary for the study**

<b>Population</b>	Consumers residing in Gauteng who own a vehicle and who plan to remain with their current vehicle brand when purchasing a new vehicle.
<b>Sampling frame</b>	No sampling frame was available.
<b>Sampling element and unit</b>	Consumers who seek to purchase the same vehicle brand as the one they currently own.
<b>Sampling method and technique</b>	Non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling technique.
<b>Sample size</b>	300 respondents.

Source: Researcher's own depiction.

To collect the data from the sample, a structured questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A). As part of the questionnaire, a preamble was included to provide respondents with an explanation regarding the context of the study as well as their rights when completing the questionnaire. The preamble also contained two screening questions to determine whether respondents are currently owners of a vehicle and whether they are planning to remain with their current vehicle brand when purchasing a vehicle in the future, which indicated their eligibility for this study. Furthermore, the questionnaire consisted of the following sections:

- **Section A:** obtained the demographic information of respondents, which included their gender, ethnicity, age, level of education and employment status.
- **Section B:** obtained information regarding respondents' patronage behaviour, such as their current vehicle brand, how long they have been associated with their current vehicle brand, and the aspects that most attract them to purchase a specific brand.
- **Section C:** measured respondents' brand attachment, using empirically validated scales from studies by Malär *et al.* (2011:48) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:87).

- **Section D:** measured respondents' brand trust by means of empirically validated scales from studies by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:87) and Delgado-Ballester (2004:586).
- **Section E:** measured respondents' brand personality, using empirically validated scales from studies by Aaker (1997:351) and Romaniuk (2008:157).
- **Section F:** measured respondents' brand image perceptions, using an empirically validated scale from Salinas and Pérez (2009:55).
- **Section G:** measured respondents' purchase intentions, using an empirically validated scale from a study by Kaufmann *et al.* (2016:5745).
- **Section H:** measured respondents' brand extension attitude, using empirically validated scales from studies by Aaker and Keller (1990:35) and Salinas and Pérez (2009:55).

The questions developed for Sections C to H made use of a five-point Likert scale so that respondents had to rate their attitude towards statements regarding the related constructs. Casler *et al.* (2013:215) note in this regard that internet surveys are economical, not as time-consuming as in-person distribution of questionnaires, and have a high geographical reach without researchers having to travel far.

Initially, a pilot test was conducted with 10 respondents from within the target population, which allowed the researcher the opportunity to identify and correct any misunderstandings that the respondents may have encountered whilst completing the questionnaire (Burns & Bush, 2014:229; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:351). After rectifying a small number of technical and wording issues, the finalised questionnaire was distributed electronically to several Gauteng-based Facebook community groups (both public and closed). The questionnaires were collected daily over a period of two months from 1 July 2017 to 30 August 2017, and generated 322 usable questionnaires.

The data gathered from respondents by means of the computer-administered questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program (version 24). The data analysis of this study included:

- A calculation of descriptive statistics, including the means and standard deviations for each construct, and a calculation of frequencies and percentages for the variables concerned.
- The reliability of the scales measuring the brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension and purchase intention constructs, was assessed by

means of Cronbach's alpha reliability statistic values to ensure the internal reliability of aforementioned scales. These scales are considered reliable when the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.70 or exceeded 0.70 (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257).

- A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure the validity of the constructs (i.e. brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension and purchase intention).
- A standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether respondents' brand trust, brand personality and brand image perception significantly influenced their brand attachment.
- A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was conducted in order to test the proposed conceptual model of the study.

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS**

This study is chronologically distributed into six chapters. A short description of the chapters is as follows:

- **Chapter 1** provides an introduction and contextualisation of the study. This chapter entails a brief literature review highlighting the different concepts and constructs of the study, as well as the background to the industry under investigation. The research problem and objectives are presented, as well as a brief description of the research methodology that used in this study.
- **Chapter 2** focusses on consumer behaviour and branding, as well as in-depth discussions of relevant theoretical constructs, including brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension attitude and purchase intention.
- **Chapter 3** provides a detailed discussion of the research methodology that was implemented for the purposed of this study.
- **Chapter 4 (Article 1)** presents the results of the findings as to whether the antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment, which include brand trust, brand image and brand personality, influenced the brand attachment behaviour of vehicle buyers.

- **Chapter 5 (Article 2)** presents the results of the findings of the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour, which include their purchase intention and willingness to purchase brand extensions.
- **Chapter 6** presents the conclusion of this study, where recommendations are made to the South African passenger vehicle industry as a result of the empirical results and findings. Furthermore, limitations that were encountered during the course of the study are highlighted and future research directions are recommended.



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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study is to examine the factors that influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and to determine whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and their willingness to purchase other extensions of the brand. Therefore, this chapter sets out to provide theoretical insight into consumer behaviour and branding, which form the foundation of the study, after which brand attachment is discussed by emphasising its foundation, dimensions and importance. A detailed theoretical discussion on the antecedents of brand attachment follows. These consist of brand image, brand trust and brand personality. The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion on brand extension and consumers' purchase intention as potential outcomes of brand attachment.

#### **2.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

This section presents a discussion on the concept of consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the importance of consumer behaviour in marketing and within organisations are explored. Additionally, the consumer decision-making process as well as the different influences on the consumer decision-making process are analysed in light of cultural and social influences with specific reference to consumers' buying behaviour relating to brands.

Understanding consumer behaviour is salient, as it involves the behaviour that consumers portray in their pursuit to satisfy their needs by searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of a product (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:23). Consumer behaviour entails the consumption experiences of consumers, and can be studied by witnessing consumers' thoughts and feelings during the course of the consumption process, as well as the actions they take during this process. These entail whether or not consumers are willing to spend their available resources on consumption-related products (Babin & Harris, 2016:4; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:23). According to Babin and Harris (2018:20), consumers' behaviour is ever-changing in nature, therefore, various definitions of consumer behaviour are captured in Table 2-1.

**Table 2-1: Definitions of consumer behaviour**

Definition	Source
Consumer behaviour comprises consumers' decisions as a whole with regard to acquiring, consuming and disposing of goods, services, time and ideas by using decision-making units over a period of time.	Hoyer <i>et al.</i> (2013:3); Jacoby (1976:332)
Consumer behaviour transpires before, during and after purchasing, and entails all activities and influences that form part of the purchasing process.	Cant <i>et al.</i> (2006:2); Hawkins <i>et al.</i> (1998:7); Joubert <i>et al.</i> (2013:2)
Consumer behaviour can be understood as the mental and physical activities that households and organisations implement and which lead to decisions made and actions taken to purchase a product in order to satisfy their need.	Sheth <i>et al.</i> (1999:5)
Consumer behaviour entails the interaction between affective and cognitive behaviour demonstrated by consumers throughout the exchange facets of their lives.	Peter and Olson (2010:523)
Consumer behaviour causes consumers to exhibit certain behavioural patterns in their search for a specific product on which they are willing to spend their available resources.	Schiffman <i>et al.</i> (2010:23)
Consumer behaviour is exhibited when a consumer realises a need and seeks to fulfil that need through a set of value-seeking activities.	Babin and Harris (2016:4)

Based on Table 2-1, consumer behaviour as a field of study can be understood when both the terms of human thought and action, as well as the accumulation of knowledge by consumers are considered as approaches (Babin & Harris, 2011:4). Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:24) and Pride and Ferrell (2010:194) indicate that consumer behaviour refers to the buying behaviour of end consumers who are willing to spend both physical and monetary resources available to them on products and services intended to fulfil their needs.

### 2.2.1 Importance of consumer behaviour

The core brand offerings available to consumers within mature markets rarely differ from each other, and this creates a situation where consumers have difficulty differentiating between the quality of different product offerings (Ziniel, 2013:1). As a result, consumers tend to pursue and purchase brand offerings that resemble their personal beliefs and values as well as their individual personalities (Solomon, 2013:30). Therefore, numerous scholars within the field of marketing believe that understanding consumer behaviour is of vital importance for both organisations and marketers for the following reasons:

- The marketing concept – which includes determining the needs and wants of consumers – is founded upon the understanding of consumers' behaviour (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:26).

- The organisation's success, according to Babin and Harris (2011:10) and Solomon (2011:35), depends on whether or not consumers with diverse preferences respond positively to the marketing strategy of the organisation.
- The marketers within the organisation need to determine the influences of what, where, when and how consumers purchase products in order to fully satisfy consumers' needs (Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:3).
- The organisation needs to satisfy their consumers' needs in order to succeed in an ever-growing and increasingly competitive market. In order to achieve success, long-term consumer value needs to be delivered; therefore, the behaviour of consumers' needs to be understood (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:6).
- The interdisciplinary nature of consumer behaviour not only draws on the business environment, but on various academic fields such as psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology and economics as well (Babin & Harris, 2011:7-8; Martins *et al.*, 2012:15-31; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:36).
- Understanding consumers' behaviour will enable the organisation to educate their consumers, which will empower these consumers to make better decisions when choosing which brand of product to purchase (Kardes *et al.*, 2011:13).

In today's highly competitive business environment, brands are increasingly experiencing that the key to their success to retain consumers by satisfying their needs (Cant *et al.*, 2006:7; Joubert *et al.*, 2013:6). Therefore, realising that consumer satisfaction coincides with the behaviour consumers, as demonstrated by their decision-making processes, will help the brand to offer a product that is of value to the consumer (Babin & Harris, 2011:213; Kardes *et al.*, 2011:13).

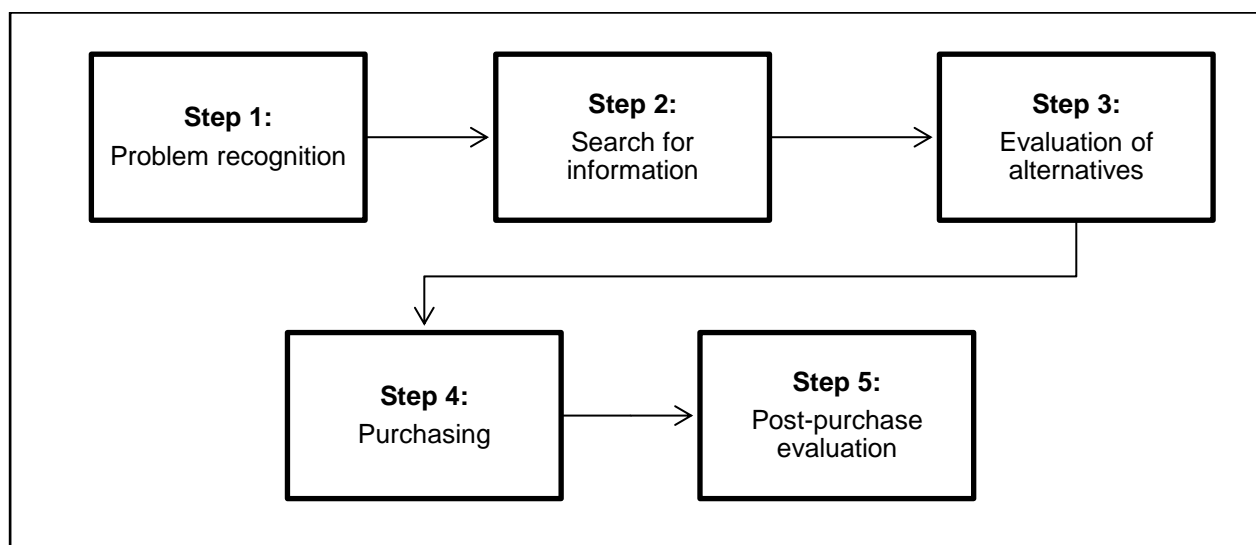
### **2.2.2 The consumer decision-making process**

Consumers have to make various important decisions on a regular basis, with the knowledge that these decisions will not only affect their professional careers or quality of life, but also their families and those who depend on them (Babin & Harris, 2016:15). Cant *et al.* (2006:193) and Solomon (2011:332) believe that consumers can be regarded as problem-solvers who make decisions regarding their consumption needs and desires and also have to decide whether there are alternative brands available to satisfy these needs and desires. Consumers' decisions are based on selecting the best of two or more alternatives available to them and evaluating several

purchasing experiences. This helps them to develop tactics to simplify their choice of product (Du Plessis & Du Rand, 2011:3; Hoyer, 1984:829).

Today's consumers often risk accumulating debt in order to satisfy their needs or desires. Therefore, consumers may use a structured approach known as the decision-making process to find a desirable way to fulfil their needs or desires (Babin & Harris, 2011:213, Babin & Harris, 2016:15-16). Unknowingly, they tend to follow a number of structured steps within the decision-making process, as portrayed in Figure 2-1, in their routine search to satisfy and fulfil their needs.

**Figure 2-1: The consumer decision-making process**



Source: Adopted from Babin and Harris (2016:250) and Solomon (2013:3).

The consumer decision-making process is interpreted by marketers and organisations as a representation of consumers' thought patterns. For this reason, the consumer's decision-making process should be studied, as it helps marketers and organisations to understand consumers' beliefs, how they acquire information, and which benchmarks they use to make a product choice (Gilligan & Wilson, 2003:236; Solomon, 2011:333). The activities that consumers exhibit during the different steps of the decision-making process can be described as:

- **Step 1:** *Problem recognition* is when the consumer becomes aware that change is necessary so that the existing state of affairs can change into the desired state of affairs (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:131). Consumers do not instigate the decision-making process unless a need or desire arises that they want to fulfil (Babin & Harris, 2016:250). Therefore, Kotler and Keller (2009:53) argue that organisations need to educate themselves on the needs and desires of their consumers and should provide consumers with applicable information

that can prompt the decision-making process, thus allowing the organisation to establish a competitive advantage.

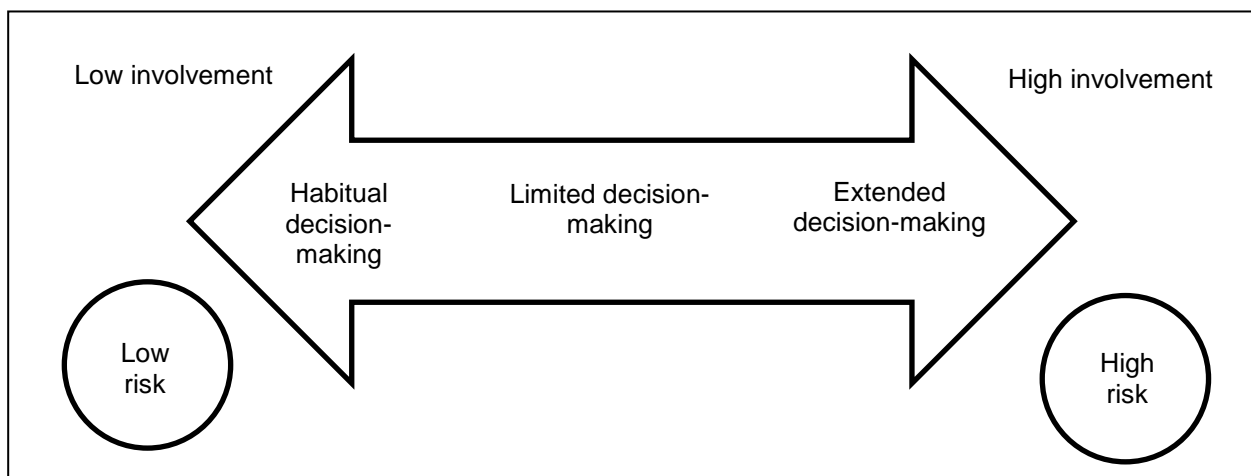
- **Step 2:** *Search for information* can take on both a mental and physical form. During this step the consumer obtains applicable information regarding the identified needs or desires (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:133). Consumers trust their recollection of past experiences (internal sources) as a viable source from which adequate information can be gleaned, whereas brands' marketing efforts and non-commercial information (external sources) are perceived as supplementary information (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:485).
- **Step 3:** *Evaluation of alternatives*, according to Babin and Harris (2016:266) and Schiffman *et al.* (2010:489), is the ultimate choice that consumers make between alternative brands by means of gathering information from an evoked set, entailing the exact brands that consumers bear in mind and the criteria that consumers use to evaluate the evoked set of brands.
- **Step 4:** *Purchasing* commences when consumers have concluded their search for information and their evaluation of alternatives, leading to a decision on what brand to purchase to fulfil their need or desire (Peter & Donnelly, 2011:51). Schiffman *et al.* (2010:497) maintain that consumers have a choice between trial purchases, repeat purchases and long-term commitment purchases. Additionally, trial purchases take place when a new brand is launched and consumers purchase it for the first time, whereas repeat purchases coincide with brand loyalty, since consumers are willing to purchase the brand repeatedly (Lambin, 2007:78). Furthermore, long-term commitment purchases can be characterised by durable goods that consumers purchase immediately after their evaluation of various alternatives (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:497).
- **Step 5:** *Post-purchase evaluation* entails the physical and psychological assessment of the brand's product and whether or not the performance of the product met, exceeded or were below consumers' standards and expectations, which will ultimately determine consumers' satisfaction (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:138; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:498).

Understanding the decision-making process will enable brands to gain a competitive advantage within their selective industries, because they will gain greater insight into the criteria that consumers use when analysing a product and ultimately deciding which product to purchase. This further allows brands to tailor their marketing strategies in such a manner that they achieve consumer satisfaction and repeat purchasing (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:20; Joubert *et al.*, 2013:141).

### 2.2.3 Decision-making approaches

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:490) describe the concept of consumer decision-making as the rational and functional connotations that consumers make during their assessment of the attributes of a brand that can ultimately satisfy their need. Three approaches that consumers can implement during the decision-making process have been identified. These are illustrated in Figure 2-2 and discussed thereafter.

**Figure 2-2: Decision-making approaches**



Source: Adopted from Babin and Harris (2016:254).

From Figure 2-2, it is evident that not all consumer decision-making circumstances require the same volume of information to be available before a purchase is made (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:478). Furthermore, Joubert *et al.* (2013:135) believe that the degree of complexity of the decision influences the level of involvement, as Figure 2-2 illustrates that the higher the involvement, the more difficult consumers may find it to make a decision. As mentioned, three decision-making approaches can be distinguished:

- *Habitual decision-making* (also referred to as routine decision-making or nominal decision-making) entails that consumers' choice of brand is based on habit and low involvement, due to them having experienced the brand's product through a previous purchase, which should ultimately result in consumer satisfaction (Babin & Harris, 2016:254; Joubert *et al.*, 2013:135).
- *Limited decision-making* is quite similar to habitual decision-making, as it refers to consumers deciding between a few alternatives through internal research and limited external research (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:492). Moreover, limited decision-

making is based on the criteria that consumer use to evaluate brands; consumers' only uncertainty here pertains to their specifically preferred brands (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:479).

- *Extended decision-making* entails that consumers diligently search for information, both internally and externally, followed by a complex criteria assessment of the numerous alternatives available to them (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:493; Peter & Donnelly, 2011:48). Therefore, extended decision-making requires high levels of involvement by the consumer, and can be interpreted as a lengthy process, since a thorough assessment is critical before a purchase is made (Babin & Harris, 2016:254).

A number of decisions made by consumers involve little conscious effort as these decisions are a result of a single need or desire that they experience (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:490). Even though consumers implement the decision-making approaches discussed above before purchasing a product, there is no guaranteed that the process will lead to the satisfaction of consumers' needs or desires, since consumers often settle for an alternative product about which they may be unsure (Babin & Harris, 2016:255). Vehicle buyers, for example, often display extended decision-making behaviour such as reading automotive magazines, visiting car shows, as well as collecting and validating information on social media before purchasing their prospective vehicle (Grover & Mandan, 2017:81; Mostert, 2012:10). Extended decision-making further entails a high degree of involvement, since consumers actively acquire detailed information with regard to their high-cost, high-risk vehicle purchase (Julina & Kariyawan, 2012:175).

#### **2.2.4 Influences on the consumer decision-making process**

Consumers' decisions are influenced by the self-concept that they develop, which entails the manner in which said consumers ideally view themselves (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24). Consumers' self-concepts are constructed by *internal influences*, which are predominantly psychological and physical in nature, and which may develop from past experiences, as well as *external influences*, that are primarily sociological and demographic in nature (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:37).

##### **2.2.4.1 Internal influences**

In their pursuit of gaining knowledge about a product, consumers rely on cognition, which refers to the thinking process as well as affect. The latter refers to the emotions experienced for the duration of consumption-related activities (Babin & Harris, 2016:25). Kotler and Keller (2009:200) note that consumers' consciousness are enthused by marketing and environmental stimuli that

entail a set of psychological processes merging with a set of individual consumer characteristics. These affect the decision-making process and ultimately consumer purchases. Numerous scholars (Blythe, 2008:29; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:11; Lantos, 2011:316; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:37) concur that consumers' recognition of a need is based on five key psychological factors:

- *Motivation* can be described as an inner state of consumers driven by their interests, the lifestyle consumers display as a result of their achieved goals, as well as their needs (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:284; Solomon, 2011:154). The foundation of motivation is also made up also entails the level of consumers' involvement, because involvement encapsulates the motivational state of consumers throughout the decision-making process (Clow & Baack, 2010:84; Elliot & Percy, 2007:10; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:47).
- *Perception* can be described as consumers' awareness, through exposure and attention, to marketing stimuli. These culminate in consumers' interpretation of reality (Babin & Harris, 2016:51; Solomon, 2011:83). Consumers' perceptions are extremely selective, and therefore, they demonstrate perceptual defences, which allow them to not passively receive marketing stimuli (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:273; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:179).
- *Learning*, as defined by Babin and Harris (2016:51), is the behavioural change that occurs as an outcome of the interaction between consumers and marketing stimuli. Consumers are exposed to repeated marketing stimuli that results in them passively learning by assessing low-involvement information (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:232).
- Consumers' *personalities* entail the entirety of beliefs, behaviours, intentions and inclinations they demonstrate throughout their exposure to environmental stimuli (Babin & Harris, 2016:111; Kotler & Keller, 2009:197-198). Moreover, the personalities of consumers are unique and have an effect on the decisions they make with regards to which brand to purchase, as consumers tend to seek personality traits that they value in the brand they will ultimately purchase (Lantos, 2011:316; Pride & Ferrell, 2010:205).
- The *attitudes* of consumers entail their learned pre-disposition to respond either in a favourable or unfavourable manner towards objects, products or services (Babin & Harris, 2016:128; Blythe, 2008:138; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:128). Furthermore, attitude plays a critical role in consumers' behaviour, as it influences consumers' decision-making process in their pursuit to satisfy their needs (Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:128).

Vehicle buyers' decision-making process are internally influenced by their need to display their economic and social status as well as their individual personalities by the vehicles they purchase

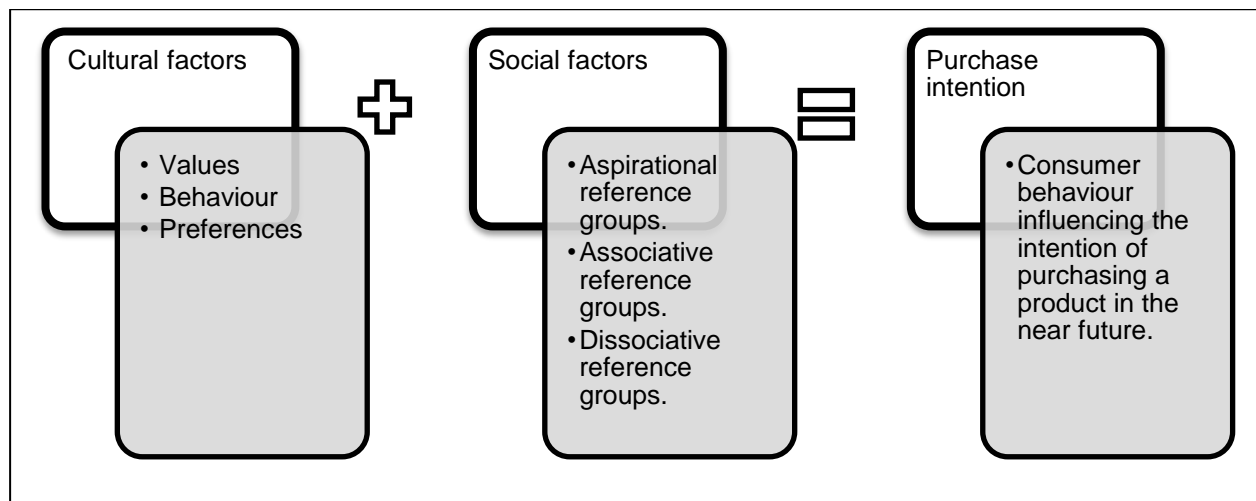


(Kim & Jang, 2014:41; Sundie *et al.*, 2011:675). Also, vehicle brands ought to educate their targeted consumers by means of their various advertisements and marketing strategies in order to influence consumers decision-making in a positive manner, because informed consumers will be positively inclined to purchase the vehicle brand (Nayeem, 2012:86; Sang & Bekhet, 2015:81).

#### 2.2.4.2 External influences

External influences to which consumers are exposed are described by Babin and Harris (2016:26) as those social and cultural aspects of consumers' lives that have a bearing on their self-concepts and lifestyles and which directly influence their decision-making and purchasing behaviour. Figure 2-3 outlines the social and cultural aspects, that are discussed thereafter, that externally influences consumers' purchasing decisions.

**Figure 2-3: External factors influencing consumer behaviour**



Source: Adapted from Babin and Harris (2016:26-27), Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:24), and Hoyer *et al.* (2013:305).

##### 2.2.4.2.1 Cultural factors

Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:24) and Schiffman *et al.* (2010:366) define culture as the totality of values, preferences and collective behaviours orthodox to a specific culture, which serve to navigate the behaviour of consumers belonging to a specific culture. Cultural norms exist within a specific culture, and these norms refer to the implicit rules that stipulate appropriate behaviour within certain situations and prohibits other behaviour (Babin & Harris, 2016:180). Although cultural norms are mostly unwritten and seemingly unconsciously understood by members of a certain culture, they are a result of the values of said culture (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:41). Schiffman *et al.* (2010:366) believe that cultural values encapsulate the following:

- Specific cultures treasure only a certain number of cultural values.
- The cultural values dictate the culturally correct behaviour in certain situations.
- Cultural values are not overturned easily and can withstand change.
- Cultural values can be implemented over a wide spectrum of situations.
- Members of a specific culture widely accept the cultural values.

Cultural values influence consumers' behaviour throughout the decision-making process, and it is crucial for brands to understand variations in cultural behaviour (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:42). In the event of a brand or consumer displaying behaviour that is inconsistent with culturally acceptable behaviour, a cultural sanction may result. This refers to "penalties" that may range from strange looks by members of the culture to banishment from the culture (Babin & Harris, 2016:181). Brands need to take these cultural values, preferences and sanctions into consideration, as they have the power to sway the perceived perceptions, habits, behaviour and expectations of consumers – and this will ultimately influence consumers' purchase behaviour (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:24; Rani, 2014:53-54). Additionally, brands need to attach greater cultural importance by portraying the distinctive characteristic(s) encapsulated within the personality of the brand, which will result in the brand being perceived as a cultural group (Aaker *et al.*, 2001:506; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:368-369). It is essential for vehicle brands to ensure that they understand the individual and collective cultural preferences of their consumers in order to develop their marketing efforts in such a manner that consumers will express a stronger willingness to purchase their vehicle brand (Nayeem, 2012:86).

#### 2.2.4.2.2 Social factors

Social factors can be regarded as an array of non-commercial influences that has an influence on consumers' decision-making processes (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:484). Furthermore, social factors are represented by reference groups, who are individuals that are socially tied to consumers (Babin & Harris, 2018:160). Hoyer *et al.* (2013:305) define reference groups as a source of social influence that can be summarised as a group of individuals that have substantial relevance for consumers and that impacts on the evaluations, aspirations and behaviour of consumers. Numerous scholars (Babin & Harris, 2016:158-159; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:219; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:305-306; Joubert *et al.*, 2013:24; Solomon, 2013:433) divide reference groups into aspirational, associative and dissociative groups to which consumers may relate. The three types of reference groups are:

- *Aspirational reference groups* are often classified as groups that consumers do not form part of, but admire and aspire to be a part of (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:24; Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012:98). Aspirational reference groups appeal to consumers' ideal selves that consumers may perceive in various celebrities and athletes (Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:305).
- *Associative reference groups* are groups that consumers already form part of, and can be divided into a primary group, which includes the friends and family of consumers with whom consumers have regular and direct contact, as well as a secondary group, which includes professional and social relations with whom the consumer has less frequent contact (Babin & Harris, 2016:158; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:218; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:305; Solomon, 2013:433).
- *Dissociative reference groups* are groups whose outlooks, values and actions are discarded by consumers who do not wish to form part of these groups (Joubert *et al.*, 2013:24).

Reference groups are considered to be influential when consumers seek to purchase a public luxury, which is a product of high value where ownership of the product is noted by other consumers and said product's brand is easily identifiable (Peter & Olson, 2010:339). Vehicles are high value products and consumers base their decisions on their trusted reference groups' opinions during the decision-making process of vehicle purchasing (Nayeem, 2012:86). As a result, brands need to be aware that consumers may alter their evaluations and aspirations towards a brand depending on the strength of the reference group's influence, which may lead to a positive or negative influence on purchase intention (Hammerl *et al.*, 2016:37; Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012:98). In addition, it is also essential for brands to implement the social power of reference groups, which is an individual or group's ability to alter the actions of others throughout its marketing activities in order to induce consumers' choice of a specific brand (Parumasur & Roberts-Lombard, 2012:98-99; Solomon, 2013:431).

The individual nature of consumers affects their decision-making, since each consumer values a different set of product appeals (Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010:538-539). Branding, which is discussed in the subsequent section, allows consumers to associate their individual selves with the individual nature of the brand, and may therefore have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention through the differentiated experience that the brand offers (Diallo *et al.*, 2013:435; Keller, 2013:34; Truong *et al.*, 2017:90; Zarantonello & Schmitt, 2010:539).

## 2.3 BRANDING

The word brand originates from the Old Norse word “brandr”, which means to burn down with a hot iron on objects and animals in order to brand them as the owner’s possessions (Leibtag, 2014:9; Maurya & Mishra, 2012:122). The idea of branding started as far back as ancient Babylon, where merchants made use of pictorial illustrations, including symbols and pictures, to promote their offerings and goods to the mostly illiterate consumers (Landa, 2006:xx). The practice of branding cattle and people to symbolise ownership has been abolished, and positive associations of branding were re-established during the course of the Industrial Revolution, branding has come to represent a commercial association, which refers to the brand names of products (Landa, 2006:xx; Maurya & Mishra, 2012:122). The American Marketing Association developed one of the very first definitions of what a brand is, namely that a brand can entail a name, term, design, symbol, or any other quality unique to the products of a retailer, to allow said retailer to sell its distinctive products in the market (AMA, 1960:8). The definition of a brand as developed by the American Marketing Association in 1960 evolved throughout the years, as summarised in Table 2-2.

**Table 2-2: Definitions of a brand**

Definition	Source
A brand or brand name only encapsulates the depiction of the term known as a trademark.	Onkvisit and Shaw (1989:22)
A brand entails the promised bundles of attributes that a consumer purchases, which could be actual or imagined, rational or emotional, and touchable or invisible, in order to satisfy a need.	Ambler (1992:18)
A brand can be in the form of a person, product, service or place, which is portrayed in such a manner that consumers perceive the brand as distinctive and significant.	De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:25)
A brand is the perceived connotations that consumers have with the name, mark or symbol of a specific product and the reputation that precedes the brand.	Calkins (2005:1); Du Toit and Erdis (2013:17)
A brand condenses consumers’ perceptions of a specific product based on their experiences and information regarding an organisation.	Duncan (2005:70)
A brand serves as a guarantee of trust perceived by consumers about the quality of a specific product, which ultimately simplifies consumers’ choices.	Keller and Lehmann (2006:740)
A brand personifies the signs and symbols with which consumers seek to identify in their desire to belong.	Bastos and Levy (2012:349)
A brand can be described as a symbolic concept that consumers perceive as adding meaning and value to a product, suggesting that there is a connotation between objects and cultures.	Eshuis and Edwards (2013:1068)

Through the various definitions depicted in Table 2-2, it is clear that the basis of a brand, in the context of contemporary capitalism, is the marketer's ability to describe the distinctiveness and worth of a specific product through the use of a name, a sign, a term, a symbol or even an individual design (AMA, 2016; Keller, 2013:30; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136).

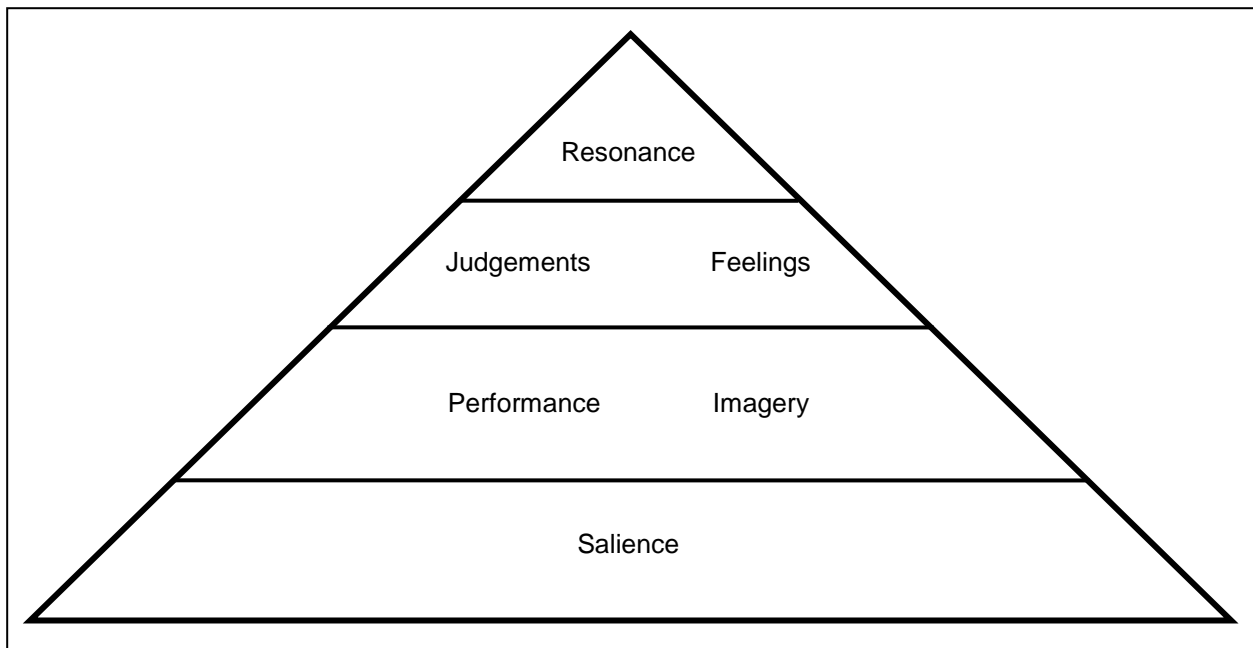
Branding is regarded as a developmental process whereby businesses create a brand name or brand identity that is ultimately lodged in the hearts and minds of consumers. It involves the creation of a distinctive name, logo, term or design that portrays the individual nature of a specific product (Armstrong & Kotler 2011:243-244; Duncan, 2005:71; Landa, 2006:9). Furthermore, Eshuis and Klijn (2012:29) hold that branding focusses on the perceptions of consumers that allows brands to focus on its emotional and psychological aspects, which means that consumers' connection with a brand is established through experiences rather than logical reasoning. This notion concurs Maurya and Mishra's (2012:122) observation that branding is a complex phenomenon.

### **2.3.1 Importance of branding**

Developing a strong, distinctive brand that offers favourable attributes to consumers ought to be the main aim for organisations, as it may result in higher revenues due to repeat purchases as consumers are less inclined to accept substitute brands (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:15; Esch *et al.*, 2006:98; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:253; Kapferer, 2008:24; Keller, 2013:35). Several researchers have conceptualised the effect of brands on consumers' current and future purchase intentions. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on Keller's Brand Resonance Model and a number of its factors that organisations should seek to optimise in order to build stronger brands (Keller, 2009:144; Keller, 2016:6). Figure 2-4 below serves as an illustration of the Brand Resonance Model and is subsequently discussed in greater detail.

Keller (2013:120) describes brand resonance as the nature of the relationship that consumers have with a brand and the extent to which they feel "in-sync" with the brand. It is characterised by the intensity of consumers' psychological bond and their level of activity, shown by their intent to purchase, towards the brand. The Brand Resonance Model was developed with the dimensions of brand knowledge as the main focus, as well as the impact that these dimensions have on the relationship between consumers and brands (Keller, 2016:4). In addition, Keller (2016:4) states that the Brand Resonance Model comprises a series of steps and brand building blocks that organisations can implement to profile the formation of consumers' relationship with a brand.

**Figure 2-4: Brand Resonance Model**



Source: Adopted from Keller (2016:6).

The optimisation of branding is advantageous to an organisation as it strengthens consumers' perceived segmentation of a specific brand due to the characteristics that markers assign to specific brands. This helps to establish a consumer's relationship with a brand (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:278; Kotler *et al.*, 2010:242). Additionally, these characteristic markers may strengthen the purchase intention of consumers due to the effortlessness needed to identify a clearly branded product (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136). By describing several elements of the Brand Resonance Model, Keller (2001:14-19; 2009:144; 2016:4-5) identified the importance of the following factors for organisations seeking to optimise their branding:

- The duality of brands, which entail the tangible and intangible values that consumers perceive to receive from a brand, relates to the performance and image of a brand, and this ultimately contributes to their intention to purchase a brand.
- The judgement that consumers exercise towards a brand is influenced by a brand's ability to reduce their perceived risks when purchasing a relatively unknown product, which in the long-term will lead to a brand gaining consumers' trust.
- The attachment that consumers have towards a brand can be instigated by creating brand engagement, where organisations identify the emotion and affections that consumers have towards a brand and focus on these emotions and affections throughout the process of developing brand attachment.

- The imagery and extension of a brand should be assisted by the creation of a brand's personality, which entails a brand's ability to identify the distinctive personalities of consumers that enable consumers to feel "in-sync" with a brand. It also entails implementing the distinctive personalities by means of the image the brand wants to create.

### **2.3.2 Benefits branding holds for consumers**

Branding allows consumers to identify the source or manufacturer of a product, and this enables them to assign responsibility and to obtain knowledge and information about said source or maker (Keller, 2013:34). Duncan (2005:92), Kapferer (2008:37) and Landa (2006:55-56) add that consumers' ability to assign responsibility decreases their perceived risk when purchasing, and allows for trust to develop toward a range of products produced by the brand. Another added benefit of branding is that consumers' purchasing decisions are made easier when brands are perceived as less of a risk to purchase, which ultimately saves consumers money as searching costs are significantly reduced (Duncan, 2005:92; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:223). Furthermore, brands may embody certain characteristics with which consumers identify or towards which consumers strive in order to obtain their ideal selves. This results in a stronger association with a brand (Duncan, 2005:92; Keller, 2013:34; Landa, 2006:57-58). The final benefit that branding holds for consumers, according to Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013:293) and Keller (2013:34), is the signal of quality, as consumers are able to make assumptions and have reasonable expectations about the quality of a brand's product. This signal of quality is an invaluable benefit, as consumers are rushed and time is of vital importance to them. Therefore, the reduction of perceived risk through evident quality helps them when making their purchasing decisions (Keller, 2013:35).

Branding, furthermore, allows for a profound relationship to develop between brands and consumers, to the extent that this relationship is perceived as a pact or a bond (Keller, 2013:34). In addition, branding facilitates vehicle buyers' need for differentiation by allowing consumers to express their individual selves by means of the vehicles that they purchase, while also helping them to address their need of being part of a collective (Tafesse *et al.*, 2014:31). Therefore, the attachment style that consumers experience towards a brand significantly influences their likelihood of purchasing a brand's products as well as their willingness to pay a customised price for said products. These issues further have a bearing on the investment (emotional or financial) that consumers are willing to make (David & Bearden, 2017:48; David *et al.*, 2017:9). This attachment that consumers experience towards a brand is discussed in the next section.

## **2.4 BRAND ATTACHMENT**

Schmitt (2012:9) mentions that brand attachment can be considered as a salient construct that refers to consumers' approach towards feeling related to a brand. Furthermore, within marketing literature, brand attachment is described as consumers' tendency to become emotionally attached towards a brand over a prolonged period of time (Ghose & Lowengart, 2013:14-15; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88). In addition, researchers Japtura *et al.* (2014:626) and Mikulincer and Shaver (2008:503) suggest that consumers who consider themselves to have an attached relationship with a brand experience a sense of security. Thomson *et al.* (2005:80) were the first to develop measures that enable both researchers and organisations to measure emotional brand attachment, through their conceptualising of emotional bonding and the effect that affection, passion and connection have on emotional brand attachment. Recently, research by Japtura *et al.* (2014:620-621) and Park *et al.* (2010:5-6) found that brand attachment is a reflection of the brand and the self-connection consumers have with the brand as it formed through emotional and cognitive bonding. Brand attachment further entails the similarity that consumers desire in terms of their desired self-concepts and the brands that portray this desirable self-concept through its brand image (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987:51).

### **2.4.1 Foundations of brand attachment**

From a psychological perspective, the attachment theory is regarded as the developmental caregiver-infant relationship formed through the caregiver's interaction with the infant (Bowlby, 1974:350). Attached individuals may experience variations in the strength of attachments experienced, and stronger attachments are linked to individuals who experience stronger feelings of affection, connection, passion and love (Bowlby, 1974:117; 1996:550; Collins & Read, 1990:661; Fehr & Russell, 1990:433). Ainsworth (1989:711) note that individuals form affectionate bonds during the course of different life-cycles – including attachment – and that the formation of attachment allows individuals to gain the unique value of security and comfort from different relationships, further allowing them to participate in other activities due to the secure base created by the attachment bond within a relationship. Furthermore, individuals seek to establish strong emotional attachment. This begins with a child's attachment to its caregiver and continues throughout the adolescent and adult life-stages, also including attachment through romantic relationships as well as kinships and friendships (Allen, 2008:419; Bowlby, 1974:350; Hazan & Shaver, 1994:10; Simpson *et al.*, 2007:355).

It is in children's nature to use their primary caregiver, who is also perceived as an attachment figure, as a secure base when setting out to discover and experience their surroundings (Ainsworth, 1969:334; Weinfield *et al.*, 2008:78). Children who experienced *secure attachment*



relationships are able to rely on their caregivers for comfort and reassurance, and this helped them to master their environment, even though this mastering endeavour may seem daunting. Security within an attachment offers children the necessary protection, if ever the need arises (Weinfield *et al.*, 2008:79; Zeifman & Hazan 2008:437). Children who experienced *attachment anxiety* are continuously concerned about their caregivers' whereabouts, as they fear potential unavailability, and this extends to a fear of abandonment and rejection beyond infancy into fear within relationships where, when needed, their partner may be unavailable (Mende & Bolton, 2011:286; Mende *et al.*, 2013:126; Thomson & Johnson, 2006:712; Weinfield *et al.*, 2008:87). Furthermore, *attachment avoidance* entails that an individual fears dependence within relationships, seeking both emotional and cognitive distance from their partners, and often rely on themselves because they distrust others (Mende & Bolton, 2011:286; Mende *et al.*, 2013:126; Thomson & Johnson, 2006:712).

#### **2.4.1.1 Implications of the attachment theory on brand attachment**

Brand attachment as a concept has been developed from the attachment theory. It is perceived as a multi-faceted concept, encapsulating brand attachment as an emotionally-laden bond that consumers develop with a variety of brands as well as with different places (Feldman, 1996:419; Lin *et al.*, 2011:5918; Park *et al.*, 2010:4; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). Proksch *et al.* (2015:945) suggest that the key to the formation of brand attachment with both anxious and avoidant consumers is to portray a brand personality to consumers deemed relevant in order to maintain relationships. For this reason, consumers who experience attachment anxiety are prone to discriminate between brands based on the brands' individual personality (Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009:996). In addition, Belaid and Behi (2011:46) and Bidmon (2017:180) concur that consumers who experience secure attachment are prone to trust and rely more on brands, resulting in the formation of an emotional bond between consumers and brands. However, this emotional bond may be restricted to a preferred number of brands.

#### **2.4.2 Dimensions of brand attachment**

Thomson *et al.* (2005:88) developed a measure to reflect consumers' strength of emotional attachment towards brands. The dimensions of affection, passion and connection were identified by these authors as a set of emotional items that could possibly point out consumers' attachment, based on the premise that consumers have can express their emotional attachment towards a brand. These three dimensions comprise various items, as depicted in Table 2-3.

**Table 2-3: Dimensions of brand attachment**

Dimension	Items
Affection	Affectionate, loved, peaceful, friendly
Connection	Attached, bonded, connected
Passion	Passionate, delighted, captivated

Source: Adopted from Thomson *et al.* (2005:82).

The formation of consumers' emotional attachment towards a brand is complex and timely in nature, due to the various emotions they may experience (Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88). Malär *et al.* (2011:48) further adapted these dimensions towards evaluating emotional brand attachment. The authors conclude that consumers' self-congruence can help to increase emotional brand attachment. Additionally, Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011:1057) argue that the emotional brand attachment dimensions developed by Thomson *et al.* (2005:82) support truly loyal repurchasing by consumers.

### 2.4.3 Importance of brand attachment

Emotionally attached consumers tend to evaluate brands, the numerous benefits they have on offer, as well as the overall utility they receive from a brand in a favourable manner (Cheng *et al.*, 2016:11). Furthermore, when a consumer experiences a higher level of brand attachment, this consumer perceives the value that associated with a product in higher esteem. Therefore, an opportunity exists, from a managerial point-of-view, for managers to increase the strength of the emotional brand attachment that consumers experience by developing the brand's image in such a manner that it is perceived as more desirable to consumers – both in an emotional and social context (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). In addition, Japtura *et al.* (2014:627) and Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996) concur that brands that develop their image and personality to be congruent with that of the ideal self of consumers increase the emotional brand attachment that consumers experience, which in turn increases the likelihood of repeat purchases.

A higher level of brand attachment, according to numerous researchers (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Sarkar & Roy, 2016:475; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88), could (1) influence consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for a product in a positive manner, (2) influence consumers' willingness to purchase brand extensions in a positive manner, and (3) influence consumers to forgive service failures more easily, which can be interpreted by brands as an economic asset. Therefore, vehicle brands ought to ensure that consumers perceive their brands as genuine and

their marketing efforts as truthful as these dimensions enhance consumers' brand attachment (Loureiro *et al.*, 2017:9). Dennis *et al.* (2016:3056) further mention that the attachment levels that consumers experience intensify when the reputation of the brand and the quality of the brand's products are observed in a positive light by consumers. Furthermore, Belaid and Behi (2011:46), Hwang and Kandampully (2012:108), Kaufmann *et al.* (2016:5477), and Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996) note that optimal attachment levels that consumers experience are the result of the brand's ability to reflect certain aspects of consumers' personal identities which individualises them, and this helps consumers to discriminate against those brands that do not embody certain personality traits that consumers perceive as unique to themselves.

#### **2.4.4 Factors implemented to optimise consumers' attachment towards a brand**

Japtura *et al.* (2014:627) propound that the stronger consumers' attachment towards the brand, the greater likelihood is that consumers will recommend, purchase and revisit the brand. Consumers are then also likely to defend the brand and to ignore negative information they may receive about the brand. Kaufmann *et al.* (2016:5743) and Malär *et al.* (2011:46) suggest that brands need to take the following into account if they want to optimise consumers' attachment to them:

- The creation of the image of the brand should allow for a portrayal of consumers' selves, which comprises the individual personal identity of consumers, as this will allow consumers to experience a greater degree of similarity between themselves and the brand.
- The authentication of the brand should embody the actual self-congruence of consumers rather than embodying the ideal self-congruence that consumers strive towards.
- The brand should practice caution when executing aspirational branding by offering brand promises that are perceived as realistic since aspirational branding has a bearing on brand attachment when product involvement is low.
- The efforts related to branding should be individualised as marketing efforts that are consumer-specific. This will result brand attachment being dependent on the effect of the self-congruence that consumers experience.

### **2.5 BRAND IMAGE**

In their pursuit to reach a better understanding of the stimuli that drive consumers' behaviour and purchase intentions, Gardner and Levy (1955:38) found that consumers apply a set of feelings, ideas and attitudes that form the core of a brand image when making their purchasing decisions.

Subsequently, Keller (1993:3) suggested that the brand image that consumers perceive is a collection of their perceptions and their associations with the brand. In addition, Aaker (1996:71) proposes that the way in which consumers perceive a brand summarises up their image of a brand. To further strengthen the notion that a brand's image is shaped by the perceptions and associations of consumers, Patterson (1999:419) notes that consumers' perceptions of the attributes and associations with the symbolic value they receive form their image of a brand. The author also indicates that the symbolic value that consumers receive may assume various shapes, and that the brands that consumers purchase on a regular basis form part of both their verbal and non-verbal communication over time. More recently, definitions of brand image suggest that consumers formulate an image of a brand by means of various cognitive, affective and evaluative processes that they implement to cultivate their associations and perceptions of a brand (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Arai *et al.*, 2013:384; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:444; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8; Roy & Banerjee, 2014:2; Shimp & Andrews, 2014:35).

### **2.5.1 Dimensions of brand image**

Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) identify three dimensions guide the way in which a brand's image is formulated, namely functional image, affective image and reputation. Table 2-4 presents a brief description of each of the brand image dimensions.

**Table 2-4: Dimensions of brand image**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Functional image	The functional image of a brand is represented by the perceptions that consumers have of both the tangible and product-related attributes of a product, comprising the quality and usage of that product.	Chen and Chen (2014:84); He and Lai (2014:252); Roth (1995:56)
Affective image	The affective image of a brand can be summarised as of a set of feelings – both positive and negative – that consumers experience when they are exposed to the image of a brand.	Hosany <i>et al.</i> (2006:640); Salinas and Pérez (2009:55); Smith and Leiserowitz (2012:1021)
Reputation	The reputation of a brand involves consumers taking prior associations of a brand into account to predict the future conduct of that brand, which ultimately creates consumers' long-term perception of a brand.	Balmer (2009:558); Belch and Belch (2012:101); Fombrun and Van Riel (1997:6); Martenson (2007:546)

Belch and Belch (2012:101) propound that the most effective way for brands to attract new consumers and to develop positive perceptions of the brand, is to build a reputation of extraordinary consumer service. Furthermore, Yusof and Ariffin (2016:355) found that consumers

who perceive a brand's image as functional are positively inclined to be loyal towards that brand. Thus, as evident from the descriptions in Table 2-4, it is important for brands to note that the three dimensions play a fundamental role in the development of a brand's image, and it is vital for consumers to perceive a brand as useful because offers value-adding products. Then, consumers will develop positive emotions towards a brand, which will ultimately result in the brand developing a positive reputation (Chen & Chen, 2014:84; Lau & Lee, 1999:361; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997:6).

### **2.5.2 Relationship between brand image and consumer self-image**

He *et al.* (2016:17) add that organisations' development of a well-defined brand image allows consumers to create a unique self-image, which will enhance their individual self-image, because consumers' perceived ownership of a brand contributes to their individualistic self-image and serves as an extension of themselves. Yusof and Ariffin (2016:356) also note that brands should seek to portray a brand image that is similar to that of the consumers with whom they wish to build a relationship, since consumers' self-congruency affects their loyalty towards the brand as well as their willingness to build an emotionally-laden bond with the brand. Hutter *et al.* (2013:345) and Lee *et al.* (2014:8) acknowledge that consumers will not be able to cultivate associations with the brand through cognition, affection and evaluation if the brand's image is not present in the mind of consumers, because consumers identify within themselves certain aspects of the brand's image. Therefore, brands should aim to portray a confident brand image that is ever-present in the minds of consumers, which will ultimately contribute to consumers' trust in the brand, because consumers will be able to relate their individual self-image with the image of the brand (Alhaddad, 2015:142; Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009:462; Yusof & Ariffin, 2016:356). Consumers' purchasing decisions as well as their willingness to pay a premium price will be positively influenced by positive associations that they make between themselves and a brand, and their feelings that the image a brand portrays symbolises their individualistic self-image (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Yu *et al.*, 2013:608).

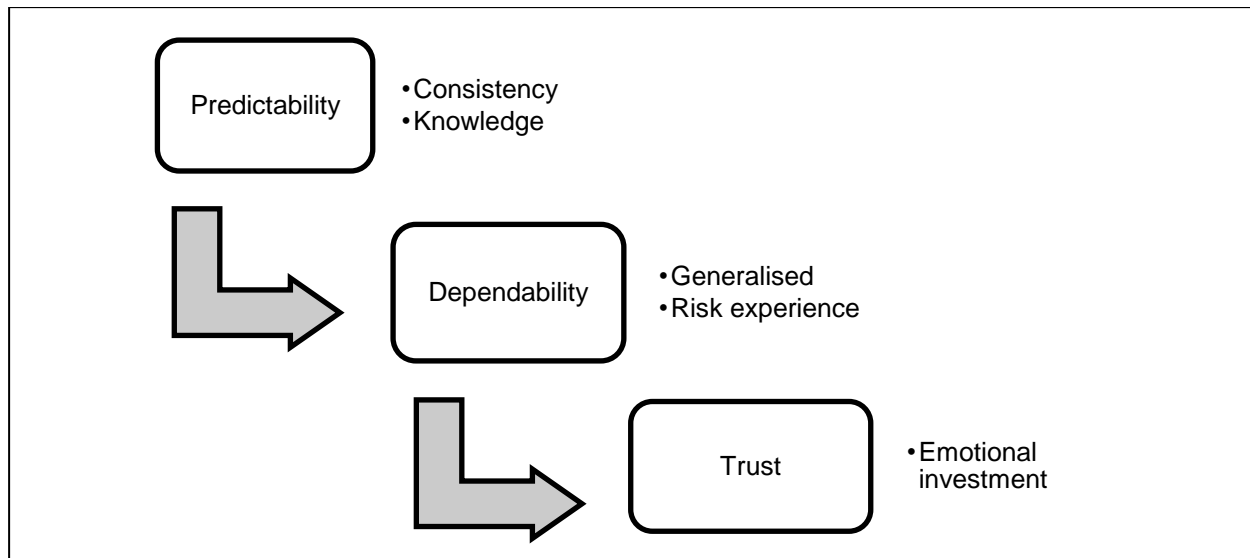
Of late, a trend has emerged where traditionally unbranded products have become branded (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:335). For that reason, the absolute fit of a brand's image has become pivotal because it significantly determines consumers' decisions as to whether they will be inclined to purchase an extension of a brand (Riley *et al.*, 2014:918). Moreover, it is important within the context of this study for vehicle brands to develop and maintain a positive brand image simultaneously in order to satisfy consumers' needs and to enhance their trust, to ensure that vehicle buyers are positively inclined to purchase the vehicle brand (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016:268).

## **2.6 BRAND TRUST**

In order to understand the relationship that consumers cultivate with brands, it is important to understand the effect that brand trust has on this relationship, because trust often drives successful consumer-brand relationships (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987:25; Garbarino & Johnson 1999:81; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:34). Moreover, Lii and Lee (2012:14-15) suggest that the level of trust that consumers experience is reflected in their attitude towards a brand. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:82) define brand trust as the willingness that consumers show when relying on a brand's ability to perform certain stated functions. Furthermore, Dalziel *et al.* (2011:421) and Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001:1254) note that brand trust encapsulates the underlying reasons – which are ultimately represented in a brand's perceived capacity and intention – to perform certain stated functions that drive consumers' willingness to rely on a brand. Thus, trust can be described as a multidisciplinary construct. It can be perceived as a positive concept, as it adds to the depth of the construct, but the number of various divergent scholarly understandings may impede the integration of different perspectives – this means there is little consensus on the nature of trust.

### **2.6.1 Development of brand trust**

Consumer behaviour theory explains that past experiences and prior interactions can both develop and evolve trust within consumers, because these past experiences and prior interactions proceed through the stages of predictability, to dependability, to trust, ultimately allowing consumers to experience lower levels of uncertainty and higher levels of faith (Babin & Harris, 2016:149, Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). Consumers' emotional involvement develop through stages, from predictability, to dependability, to trust, ultimately forming the hierarchy of emotional involvement (Elliot & Percy, 2007:31). These are illustrated in Figure 2-5 below.

**Figure 2-5: Hierarchy of emotional involvement**

Source: Adopted from Elliot and Percy (2007:31).

As depicted in Figure 2-5, a certain level of trust is reached between two individuals when these individuals become emotionally invested in one another, and this leads to individuals' dependence to evolve from their dependence on rational cognition to their dependence on emotions and sentiment (Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Nikolova *et al.*, 2015:242). Moreover, Bidmon (2017:17) and Lee *et al.* (2014:298) hold that a brand's efforts to build a positive emotional attachment through exchanges between itself and consumers will ultimately lead to brand trust. *Predictability*, which is the first of the stages in the development of emotional investment, is the result of a brand that allows consumers to predict this brand's performance due to the consistent behaviour of the brand, from which consumers are able to shape their knowledge of a brand's behaviour (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:575; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Lau & Lee, 1999:361; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). Additionally, predictability also enhances the brand trust that consumers experience, because predictability allows consumers to form positive expectations due to a sense of security they experience (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001:1254; Lau & Lee, 1999:360).

The second stage, *dependability*, requires that consumers experience a brand to allow their focus to shift from specific behaviour displayed by a brand towards a brand's generalised behaviour that also has a bearing on the level of risk that consumers are willing to take (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). The third and final stage of emotional involvement is *trust*, which is described in the literature of marketing and branding as an antecedent of relationship commitment since it plays an essential role in the development and

maintenance of long-term relationships and it also facilitates consumers' attachment towards a brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:20; Phan & Ghantous, 2013:472; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:30).

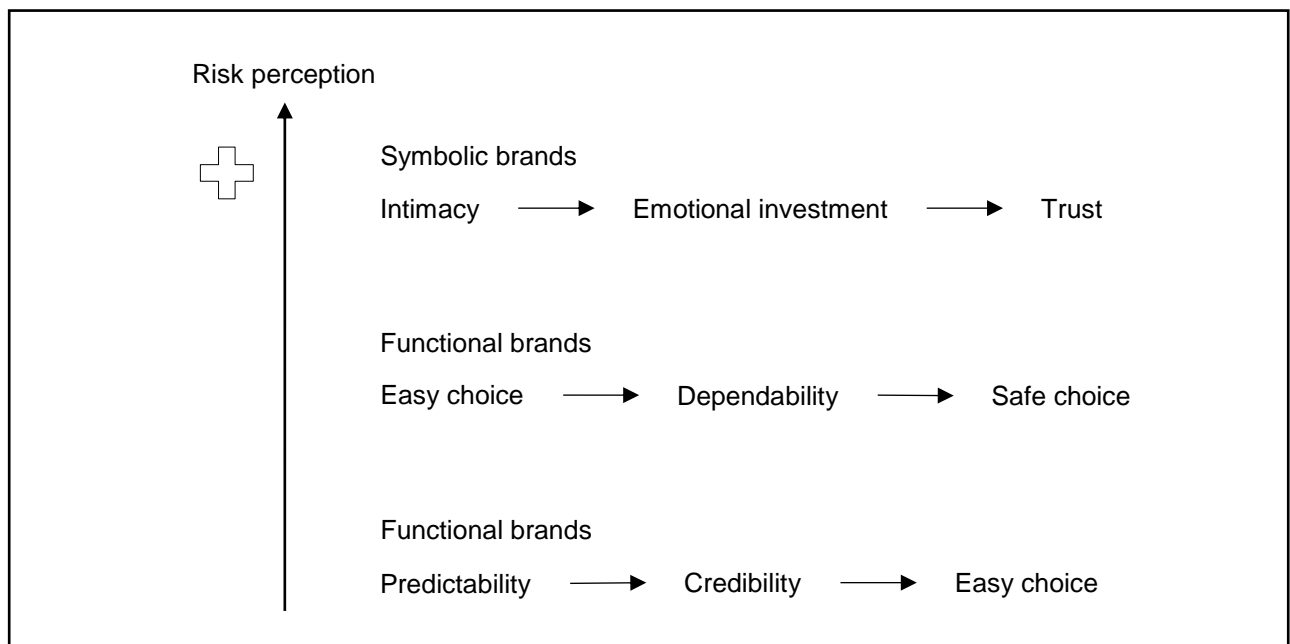
### 2.6.2 Characteristics of trust

Numerous scholars believe that trust can be conceptualised by means of several characteristics. Morgan and Hunt (1994:24) suggest that trust entails reliability and integrity, while Delgado-Ballester (2004:586) feels that trust is characterised by reliability and intention. Additionally, Erciş *et al.* (2012:1398) argue that the foundation of trust in brand comprises the reliability and honesty of a brand. *Reliability* as a dimension of a brand refers to the functional capabilities and physical attributes of a brand's products, and these ultimately construct perceptions of the performance of the brand, whereas *intention* as a dimension of a brand comprises the beliefs and meanings of a brand's physical functioning (Delgado-Ballester, 2004:586-587). Furthermore, brand intentions (i.e. benevolence and integrity) may result in experiences that consumers consider worthy of recreation, as it is considered to be the part of the brand that is regarded favourably by consumers (Delgado-Ballester, 2004:586-587; Hegner & Jevons, 2016:63; Jung *et al.*, 2014:586).

### 2.6.3 Association of trust towards a brand

According to Elliot and Percy (2007:32), consumers develop trust towards a brand by relating to either functional or symbolic brands, as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

**Figure 2-6: Brand trust association**



Source: Adopted from Elliot and Percy (2007:32).



Figure 2-6 depicts an integrative model of trust and consumer brands, where functional brands are at the lowest perceived level of risk due to these brands being perceived as predictable and credible (making them familiar in nature), while symbolic brands are at the other end of the spectrum since they are perceived as high risk. This compels symbolic brands to provide consumers with a certain level of trust gained through consumer-brand intimacy and emotional investment (Elliot & Percy, 2007:31-32). Consumers feel that they have an easy and safe choice when determining which functional brand to purchase if the products of functional brands have tangible benefits that consumers are able to experience (Kardes *et al.*, 2011:279; Landa, 2006:146). Symbolic brands, on the other hand, have a significant badge value that offers consumers the ability to communicate their individual selves by means of the products of the brand (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:44).

#### **2.6.4 Importance of brand trust**

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2001:1254) that brand trust, which a brand can encourage through honest information and communication as well as non-opportunistic behaviour, is of vital importance in the developing a sense commitment in consumers towards a brand. In particular, vehicle brands should aim at developing and supplying vehicles to consumers that are constantly innovative and of good quality to ensure that consumers continually perceive their brands as trustworthy – this will enhance trust in the brand (Hanaysha & Hilman, 2015:99; Hegner & Jevons, 2016:65). Brand trust also impacts the success of a brand to extend its product or service offerings, because a higher degree of trust compensates for a lack of knowledge about the brand extension and lowers the risk perceived by consumers. This results in consumers showing a greater willingness to purchase the brand extension (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014:163; Kim & Jones 2009:294). Additionally, brand trust has a significant influence on the tolerance levels that consumers experience towards the prices of a brand's product or service offerings (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán, 2001:1254). Furthermore, Becerra and Korgaonkar (2011:948) and Tsai *et al.* (2015:362) note that trust allows the brand to increase purchases and decrease shopping cart abandonment, ultimately enabling the brand to increase consumers' willingness to rely on the brand. Brands ultimately seek to develop their consumers' brand trust, which is positively influenced by a brand's ability to portray a sincere and competent brand personality that will result in a long-term relationship between a brand and its consumers (Bekk *et al.*, 2016:525; Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009:466; Dommer *et al.*, 2015:15; Louis & Lombart, 2010:126).

### **2.7 BRAND PERSONALITY**

Brands have established a signal effect, based on the image of the brand's consumers or the personality of the brand itself, and this means that consumers may shift their focus from the utility

advantages they ought to gain from a product offering towards the symbolic meaning represented by said product offering, which is encapsulated in the personality of the brand, and it follows that brands can be perceived as commodity signs (Elliot, 1997:286; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004:206). Aaker (1997:347) argues that brands are similar to people with regard to the fact that they possess a unique brand personality, which can be described as a set of human characteristics that are associated with a brand. Furthermore, Kardes *et al.* (2011:243) describe brand personality as presenting the human component of the image the brand wishes to communicate to consumers.

### **2.7.1 Big Five personality traits**

Numerous scholars believe that a personality (human or otherwise) comprises certain traits that can be methodically described as the styles of thinking, feeling, and acting that are similar to those of an individual (McCrae & Costa, 1987:81; McCrae & Costa, 1997:509). The Big Five dimensions help humans – by means of natural language terms – to describe their own as well as others' actions (Goldberg, 1993:31-32). These Big Five dimensions provide a useful taxonomy that is used to study human personality traits (Barrick & Mount, 1991:5). Decades of research on the taxonomy of human personality brought about a consensus on the five dimensions that depict human personality comprehensively (John & Srivastava, 1999:103). These dimensions and the traits they entail are shown in Table 2-5 below.

**Table 2-5: Big Five model of personality traits**

<b>Trait</b>	<b>Description</b>
Openness or intellect	Curious, original, intellectual, creative, and open to new ideas
Conscientiousness	Organised, systematic, punctual, achievement-oriented, and dependable
Extraversion or surgency	Outgoing, talkative, sociable, and enjoys socialising
Agreeableness	Affable, tolerant, sensitive, trusting, kind, and warm
Emotional stability versus neuroticism	Anxious, irritable, temperamental, and moody

Source: Adapted from John and Srivastava (1999:103).

From Table 2-5, it can be seen that the five dimensions that present a comprehensive description of personality are extraversion or surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability versus neuroticism, and openness or intellect (John & Srivastava, 1999:103). Each of these personality traits are present in individuals, and how individuals rate certain individualistic traits (on a spectrum of high to low) relates to the uniqueness of each individual's personality

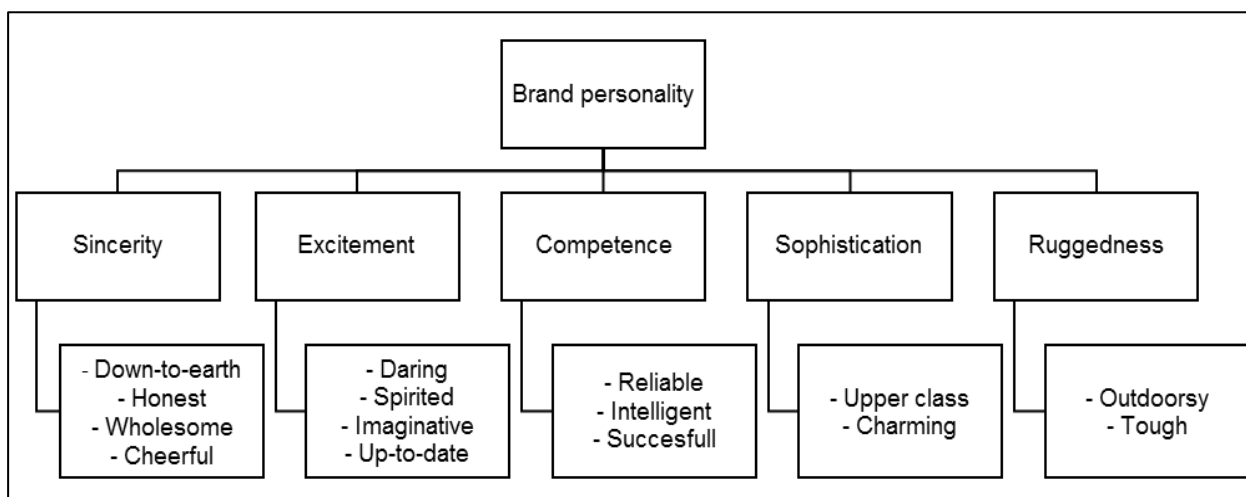
(Aaker, 1997:353; Babin & Harris, 2016:119; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:244-245; Goldberg 1993:31-32; John & Srivastava, 1999:126-129).

To enhance their interaction with the nonmaterial world, consumers seek to humanise the products that brands have on offer by assigning human characteristics to those brands (Aaker, 1997:347; Babin & Harris, 2016:119; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:244-245; Freling & Forbes, 2005:412). Therefore, the Big Five model of personality traits may shed light on the formation of a brand's personality.

### **2.7.2 Brand personality framework**

Aaker (1997:347) defines the personality of individuals by assigning characteristics to each individual, but these are different from the traits assigned by psychology scholars. Moreover, Aaker (1997:353) posited a five-factor structure, which entails that consumers perceive brands as having five distinctive personality dimensions. Through the course of developing the five-factor structure, which is illustrated in Figure 2-7 below, three dimensions of the Big Five dimensions' model were used, as well as dimensions such as socio-demographic characteristics and various identity concepts (Aaker, 1997:347; Geuens *et al.*, 2009:98-99).

**Figure 2-7: A brand personality framework**



Source: Adapted from Aaker (1997:352).

Even though a brand personality framework has existed for some time, Azoulay and Kapferer (2003:15) argue that a need has risen to improve the rigour, in relation with and pertinent to brands, of the definition of the notion of brand personality as a human trait. In response to the call for a more rigorous definition, Geuens *et al.* (2009:106) propose a scale to measure brand personality that comprises twelve items and five factors, including activity, responsibility,

aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality, that academic scholars, as well as managers in an organisation can implement. Subsequently, Louis and Lombart (2010:115) proposed a more thorough definition of brand personality by asserting that brand personality is the complete set of traits that individuals use when portraying their characteristics and when these individuals seek to associate with a brand.

### **2.7.3 Importance of brand personality**

Organisations strive towards building a brand personality that is both appealing and compatible with the organisation's set target market, which can be perceived as a challenge within itself (Müller, 2014:532). Brand personality, according to Das (2014:136) and Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996), allows consumers to perceive the brand in such an instrumental manner that the personality of the brand assists them in social interactions as well as in the establishment of their interpersonal relationships, which ultimately strengthens consumers' brand loyalty. It is for this reason that organisations need to pursue the implementation of these instruments, because a distinctive brand personality offer organisations the opportunity to differentiate their products or services from competitors, in this manner creating certain consumer expectations about key brand characteristics. These, in turn, serve as a foundation for the organisation's establishment of a long-term relationship with its consumers (Babin & Harris, 2016:119; Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009:467; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:366-367; Rajagopal, 2006:55-57). The marketing efforts of vehicle brands ought to incorporate realistic images of the vehicle brand's key personality traits because this may enhance consumers' trust in the brand, which will ultimately lead to repeat purchases (Ha & Janda, 2014:227).

Within the competitive global environment, organisations seek to ease consumers' ability to notice, recognise, recall and purchase their specific brands. Therefore, organisations should develop their extension product offerings in such a manner that consumers are able to relate to the personality of the brand extension, as such extensions portray fundamental characteristics of the parent brand as well as unique individual characteristics (Chiu *et al.*, 2017:169; Martínez & De Chernatony, 2004:50; Muhammed *et al.*, 2017:27; Romaniuk *et al.*, 2007:52).

## **2.8 BRAND EXTENSION**

Semenik *et al.* (2012:26) and Wood (2000:668) define brand extension – also described as a brand variant – as an existing brand's variation of their current product and service offering towards new areas of product development or service delivery. Also, De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:357), Kardes (2011:353) and Landa (2006:5) suggest that a brand extension occurs when a new product or service offering, which contains characteristics of the existing

brand, is developed but the new product or service offering offers different and supplementary benefits that may attract new target markets. Furthermore, numerous scholars (Aaker & Keller, 1990:39-40; Boush & Loken, 1991:26-27; Hoyer *et al.*, 2013:109-110; Klink & Smith, 2001:333; Martínez & De Chernatony, 2004:47; Riley *et al.*, 2014:918-919; Völckner & Sattler, 2006:29) concur that consumers' assessment of a specific brand's extension of products or services relies on various factors, including the image of the parent brand, the category within which the extension takes place, the individual characteristics that the brand extension portrays, as well as the consumer's perceived fit with the brand extension.

Various risks exist when brands seek to extend their product or service offerings. Nonetheless, drivers of successful brand extensions have been thoroughly researched in order to prevent the dilution of the brand name, and the following conclusions have been reached:

- Organisations should ensure that there is an actual fit between the parent brand and the brand extension throughout all the facets of the organisation, including advertising. Advertisements should illustrate characteristics of the parent brand to which consumers would be more susceptible (Ferguson *et al.*, 2016:348; Monga & John 2010:90; Völckner & Sattler, 2006:30; Völckner *et al.*, 2010:392).
- The prospect of a change in consumers' preference towards brand extension could be aided if the organisation presents visual information and comparisons about rival brands in order to suggest the validity of a brand's extension (Meyvis *et al.*, 2012:213).
- The perceptions of consumers regarding their experience with the parent brand and their attitudes towards the brand's extension may affect the likelihood of them accepting the brand extension which, in turn, may have a bearing on the success of the brand extension (Broniarczyk & Alba, 1994:227; Hem *et al.*, 2003:798-799; Hem *et al.*, 2014:1594; Völckner & Sattler, 2006:30; Völckner *et al.*, 2010:392).
- Consumers' acceptance of a brand extension could be aided through retailers that stock the manufacturer's product offerings, so that consumers perceive that retailers also accept the brand extension (Völckner & Sattler, 2006:30).
- The actual size of the brand, which is measured in terms of market share or the number of consumers, influences consumers' perceived fit as well as their evaluation of the brand's extension (Riley *et al.*, 2014:918; Romaniuk *et al.*, 2007:52).

- Keller and Sood (2003:12) and Michel and Donthu (2014:2614) suggest that the most valuable asset of an organisation are the brand names with which that organisation associates. As a result, understanding the advantages and disadvantages of brand extensions is necessary. Table 2-6 describes the advantages and disadvantages associated with brand extensions.

**Table 2-6: Advantages and disadvantages of brand extension**

Advantages	Disadvantages
New product introduction costs are lower, consumers become aware of brand faster, which leads to a faster creation of a positive brand attitude.	Consumers may potentially become confused.
Reduction of risk-averse consumers' risk of trial.	Cannibalisation of parent brand's sales
Consumer base increases with the extension of the brand.	Extension opportunities may become limited.
Brand attitude towards parent brand is stronger.	
Extension opportunities are increased.	
Quality associations with the parent brand facilitate associations of quality with the brand extension.	Perceived quality of parent brand may deteriorate through the implementation of a brand extension.

Source: Adapted from De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:358-359) and Elliot and Percy (2007:194).

Enhancing the appeal of the parent brand is of the utmost importance for the brand extension, because consumers may perceive the overall brand negatively after an undesirable encounter with the brand extension, and this will result in a dilution of consumers' intention to purchase (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:358-359; Hanslin & Rindell, 2014:163). Additionally, a level of affect towards the brand extension is created by consumers' perceived fit of the brand personality and brand image of the brand extension in relation with the parent brand (Ferguson *et al.*, 2016:350; Riley *et al.*, 2014:919). However, too many similarities between the parent brand and brand extension may lead to confusion, resulting in consumers taking their purchasing power elsewhere (Sood & Keller, 2012:380; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2001:14). The focus of the present study is on consumers' attitudes towards brand extension and their willingness to purchase such a brand extension. This is discussed in the next section.

### **2.8.1 Brand extension attitude**

Martinez *et al.* (2009:311) note that a brand extension has direct benefits for the organisation, underlining the notion that the brand may be perceived as one of the organisation's most valuable

assets. Consumers' attitudes towards a brand extension, which help to bridge the gap between their perceived fit and assessment of a new product, are an outcome of their overall evaluation of that brand (Keller, 1993:5; Wang *et al.*, 2017:86). In addition, Arslan and Altuna (2010:177) and Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) propound that consumers' attitudes towards a brand extension affect their overall image of the brand. Therefore, it is crucial for organisations to understand that consumers' attitudes towards a brand extension consist of their *favourability* and *perceived quality* of the extension as well as their *likelihood of trying* the extension (Salinas & Pérez, 2009:55).

*Favourability* entails that consumers develop a degree of acceptance towards a brand extension, by trusting that the brand extension have the characteristics and benefits to satisfy their needs and perceiving the brand image fit as suitable (Keller, 1993:5; Som & Pape, 2015:34). Strong brand trust, according to Dwivedi and Merrilees (2013:458) and Wu and Yen (2007:338), affects consumers' favourable attitude towards an extension of a brand, even if there are only small similarities between the brand extension and the parent brand. Furthermore, various scholars (Martinez *et al.*, 2009:311; Muhammed *et al.*, 2016:26; Som & Pape, 2015:34) recognise that consumers' perceived favourability towards a brand's image enhances their acceptance of the brand extension, and that these consumers will have favourable attitudes towards the brand extension if they perceive the parent brand image as favourable. Within the context of this study, it is essential for vehicle brands to develop their extension product offerings to emphasise the symbolic characteristics of the vehicle brand, which comprise of the aesthetic appeal and positive meaning of the brand, in order to enhance consumers' perceived favourability (Kumar *et al.*, 2015:727; Reddy *et al.*, 2009:193).

Consumers' attitude towards a brand extension of a specific brand is driven by their *perceived quality* of the parent brand, which entails that attitudes towards the brand extension will be favourable if consumers perceive the parent brand as an image of quality (Chiu *et al.*, 2017:160). Furthermore, Muhammed *et al.* (2016:26) and Wu and Yen (2007:338) reiterate that the similarity between the parent brand and the brand extension is very important, since the perceived quality perceptions that consumers have of the parent brand affect their attitudes towards an extension of the brand. Consumers may experience an enhanced positive attitude towards the extension of a high quality brand, even if the resemblance of the brand extension is perceived as broad, because consumers tend to perceive high-quality brands as credible and trustworthy (Broniarczyk & Gershoff, 2003:172-173). Also, Arslan and Altuna (2010:177) and Muhammed *et al.* (2016:26) note that an appropriate fit between the parent brand and the brand extension will allow consumers to perceive said brand extension as a quality product offering.

Various scholars (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013:458; Spiggle *et al.*, 2012:979; Wu & Yen, 2007:339) suggest that consumers' *likelihood of trying* a brand extension is established through the dimensions of *favourability* and *perceived quality*, as their purchase intentions towards brand extensions are based on trust, together with a degree of similarity between the parent brand and the brand extension.

## **2.9 PURCHASE INTENTION**

Consumers base their purchase intentions on an ongoing process, where they seek to match their motives for purchasing a brand with the unique attributes or characteristics of the brand they are considering to purchase (Belch & Belch, 2012:129). Therefore, purchase intention can be described as consumers' intention or predisposition to purchase a brand in the near future (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975:288; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). Ajzen and Driver (1992:207-209) and Schossler *et al.* (2006:139-140) note that consumers' intentions have a significant effect on their actions, therefore various scholarly studies focus on purchase intent instead of purchase behaviour since consumers' intentions are more likely to have a positive influence on their purchasing actions.

### **2.9.1 Foundation of purchase intention**

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:14-16) introduced the theory of reasoned action, which entails that a consumer's behaviour is driven by rational thought rather than external forces, as consumers apply information available to them to ultimately make a conscious choice. Therefore, the theory of reasoned action regards consumers' intentions to perform a behaviour as an immediate antecedent of their actions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:5). *Attitude* and *subjective norms*, according to the theory of reasoned action, constitute the basic factors used to predict a consumer's intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:6).

*Attitude* refers to the judgement that a consumer makes with regard to the behaviour they intend to perform, which entails whether this behaviour is good or bad, and whether the consumer is in favour of, or against performing the intended behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:6). Numerous studies (Baker *et al.*, 2007:369; Cheng *et al.*, 2006:109; Paul *et al.*, 2016:129; Untaru *et al.*, 2016:56) indicate that the attitude that a consumer displays impacts on his or her intention to purchase a product or to perform an action. Moreover, Belleau *et al.* (2007:254) suggest that the more favourable a consumer's attitude toward the behaviour, the more inclined this consumer would be to purchase a product.



*Subjective norms* refer to the pressure that a consumer experiences to conform to expectations set by people the consumer deems important (Ajzen, 1991:188; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:6). Mathieson (1991:176) describes normative beliefs, which is a component of subjective norms, as a consumer's perception of a significant referent's opinion of the performance behaviour of the consumer. In addition, a consumer's peers and his or her superiors determine the consumer's normative influences. Nevertheless, the effect of these subjective norms on a consumer's purchase intention may not be as significant (Belleau *et al.*, 2007:254; Paul *et al.*, 2016:129). However, Cheng *et al.* (2006:109-110) and Hsu *et al.* (2017:150) believe that a consumer's subjective norms actually have a significant bearing on their intent to purchase a product or perform an action.

### **2.9.2 Influencers of consumers' purchase intention**

Even though consumers' purchase intentions can be considered as reasonably reliable, organisations should not assume that the purchase intent that consumers express is fixed, and therefore organisations should implement purchase intent as a marketing objective in order to reduce the risk of assumption (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). It is very important for vehicle brands to develop a comprehensive understanding of consumers' needs and wants in order to entice these consumers' intentions to purchase (Ali *et al.*, 2016:11). Numerous factors that should be taken into consideration have a bearing on consumers' purchase intentions:

- The quality of the service, as well as the level of consumers' satisfaction have a strong impact on consumers' intention to purchase (Cronin Jr. & Taylor, 1992:65). Additionally, Taylor and Baker (1994:172) observed a definite intent to purchase when consumers perceive both service quality and satisfaction as high.
- The attachment that consumers experience towards a brand, which include positive emotions and a certain level of trust, has a significant effect on their intention to purchase (Rose *et al.*, 2016:941). Moreover, consumers are more inclined to recommend and purchase a brand to which they are attached, because brand attachment serves as an affirmation of the relationship between consumers and a brand (Beck & Dagogo-Jack, 2014:408).
- The ethical behaviour of an organisation strongly influences consumers' intent to purchase, because consumers are inclined to pay a higher price if an organisation meets their expectations of ethical corporate behaviour (Creyer, 1997:428).

- The impact of the self on consumers' purchase intention refers to the way in which consumers perceive the functional, experiential and symbolic values offered by a brand, with consumers ultimately taking the functional and experiential value of a brand into consideration as opposed to the symbolic value of a brand (Hung *et al.*, 2011:463-464). Therefore, consumers' purchase intention of a product is higher when they align their individual characteristic with the personality of a brand (Beck & Dagogo-Jack, 2014:408; Wang & Yang, 2008:469).
- The level of a brand's credibility influences the purchasing decisions of consumers because purchase intention is greater when consumers perceive a brand as being highly credible (Wang & Yang, 2010:185). Communicating the credible and competent features of the brand to consumers facilitates the development of consumers' trust towards the brand, which ultimately influences consumers' intention to purchase positively (Punyatoya, 2014:287; Sichtmann, 2007:1011).
- The objectives of a brand ought to include the development and maintenance of a positive brand image throughout their various product offerings, which include extensions of the brand, because positive brand image and the overall fit of the brand extension to the core image of the brand facilitate consumers' intention to purchase (Ali *et al.*, 2016:11; Wang *et al.*, 2017:96; Wang & Tsai, 2014:35).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to lay the foundation for Chapters 4 and 5 by presenting a literature survey on each of the constructs relevant to this study. Chapter 4 presents the first article that sets out to determine the antecedents (i.e. brand image, brand personality, brand trust) of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. The second article (presented in Chapter 5) aims to determine the consequences (i.e. brand extension attitude, purchase intention) of vehicle buyers' brand attachment.

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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides insight into the research methodology that was followed in this study, and which facilitated the development of a foundation for the presentation of valid and reliable results as well as the conclusions that were drawn. The chapter commences with a description of the concept of marketing research, by defining marketing research, highlighting the importance thereof, and also indicating those factors that might influence marketing research decisions. The basis of this chapter entails the stages in the marketing research process that subsequently guides the undertaking of scientific marketing research. Throughout this chapter, each of the various stages of the marketing research process are described and their application in this study is presented.

#### 3.2 MARKETING RESEARCH

Marketing research is a fundamental component of the marketing function of an organisation, since it supports the marketing decision-making process as a whole, and offers an organisation the opportunity to better understand its brand (Landa, 2006:30; Proctor, 2005:3; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:14-15). Marketing research allows an organisation to identify marketing opportunities and problems, to evaluate marketing concepts, monitor performance and to gain a general understanding of the organisation's marketing process, which further decreases an organisations risk of making poor decisions (Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:126; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:6). Various definitions of marketing research exist within the marketing literature, Table 3-1 presents a few of the most prominent definitions.

**Table 3-1: Definitions of marketing research**

Definition	Source
Marketing research entails the systematic and objective collection of information in order to analyse and interpret said information through recognised scientific techniques in order to assist decision-making related to marketing problems.	Tustin <i>et al.</i> (2005:7)
Marketing research comprises a process that designs, collects, analyses and reports information in order to assist an organisation in solving a specific marketing problem.	Burns and Bush (2006:7)

**Table 3-1: Definitions of marketing research (cont.)**

Definition	Source
Marketing research can be described as the planning, collection and analysis of data relevant to marketing decision-making to further communicate the results of the aforementioned analysis to the management of an organisation.	McDaniel and Gates (2010:7)
Marketing research consists of systematically and objectively identifying, collecting, analysing, distributing and using information for the sole purpose of assisting decision-making essential to the identification and solution of marketing problems.	Malhotra <i>et al.</i> (2013:39)
Marketing research includes activities involving defining marketing problems and opportunities, evaluating marketing ideas, performance monitoring and gaining a general understanding of the marketing process.	Zikmund and Babin (2013:6)
Marketing research requires a process to be followed, which entails information collected through surveys or product testing, in order to assist an organisation in its assessment of the viability of a new product.	Cant and Van Heerden (2015:127)

From Table 3-1 it is evident that certain elements within the various marketing research definitions are congruent. Consequently, based on the abovementioned definitions, and for the purpose of this study, marketing research is defined as:

*an organisation's systematic and objective identification and collection of information through surveys and/or product testing in order to analyse and implement said information to assist the decision-making process during an organisation's effort to address and solve a marketing-related problem.*

### 3.2.1 Importance of marketing research

Burns and Bush (2014:35) propound that marketing research is of utmost importance for an organisation as it allows the organisation to obtain information from consumers regarding their wants, needs and preferences. Subsequently, it facilitates an organisation's decision-making process about the implementation of strategies and tactics necessary to achieve consumer satisfaction (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:14). Scholars, Berndt and Petzer (2011:5-6), Burns and Bush (2014:35-38), Cant and Van Heerden (2015:125), and Zikmund and Babin (2013:14-19) identify the following aspects that illustrate the importance and value of marketing research:

- Marketing research allows an organisation to identify and evaluate relevant opportunities and problems within a competitive marketplace, in order to assist in the long-term creation of consumer-organisation relationships within the market.

- Marketing research supports the generation, refinement and evaluation of prospective actions that an organisation intends to take within a competitive marketplace.
- Marketing research enables an organisation to monitor its performance within the competitive marketplace, through assessing whether strategic actions were effectively executed and objectives were reached.

### **3.2.2 Factors influencing marketing research decisions**

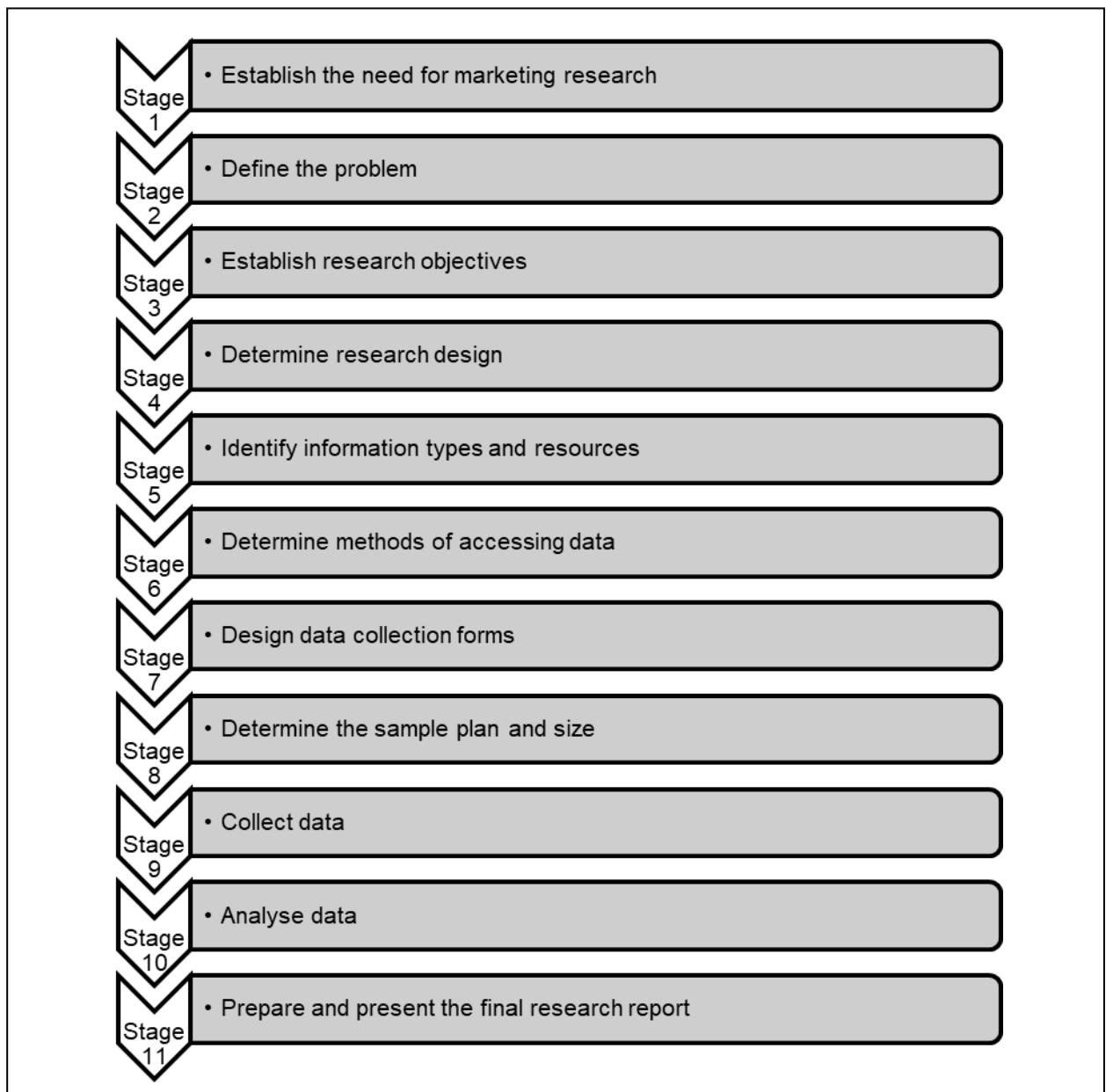
Aaker *et al.* (2011:19) and Zikmund and Babin (2013:20) indicate that there are certain factors that researchers need to be aware of, that may have an effect on their ability to acquire suitable and accurate results. The factors that determine the need for marketing research are:

- *Time* is crucial when organisations are making a decision regarding whether or not to conduct marketing research (Burns & Bush, 2014:71). Thorough research, which yields suitable and accurate results, often requires a great deal of time (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:20). Therefore, marketing research can only be conducted if sufficient time is available before the results are required by the organisation in order to make marketing decisions (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:15).
- *Type and nature of information sought* influence the decision as to whether marketing research should be conducted (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:19). Burns and Bush (2014:71) state that if the information that the organisation requires is readily available, there is no need to conduct marketing research. Marketing research should thus only be conducted in a timely manner and when there is a lack of suitable information from appropriate sources (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:20).
- A *cost-benefit analysis* should be performed by an organisation in order to determine the value of the information that is to be collected through marketing research (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:20). Marketing research should not be undertaken if the cost-benefit analysis indicates that the cost outweighs the value of the research (Burns & Bush, 2014:72).
- *Availability of resources* determines whether an organisation will be able to conduct marketing research (Burns & Bush, 2014:71). Researchers need to confirm that sufficient financial and human resources are available before attempting to conduct marketing research (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:20). A lack of resources may impede certain aspects of the research, including the organisation's ability to apply the research findings in its daily operations (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:15).

### 3.3 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:42) and Shiu *et al.* (2009:46) define the marketing research process as the methodical task stages that need to be accomplished in the course of the marketing research. These include the collection, analysis, interpretation, and transformation of data into information that will guide an organisation's decision-making process. Figure 3-1 illustrates the stages of the marketing research process that were also followed in this study.

**Figure 3-1: Stages in the marketing research process**



Source: Adopted from Burns and Bush (2014:69).

Aaker *et al.* (2011:49) note that the stages of the marketing research process do not function in isolation, but rather facilitate and enable an organisation to develop various strategies, programmes and action plans throughout its ongoing planning process. The marketing research process chosen for this study is that of Burns and Bush (2014:69) and comprises of 11 stages as illustrated in Figure 3-1.

### **3.3.1 Stage 1: Establish the need for marketing research**

The need for marketing research arises when an organisation has to make a decision, but the information available to the organisation is inadequate (Burns & Bush, 2014:70). For this reason, Feinberg *et al.* (2013:28) suggest that organisations should define the need for marketing research in an evident manner to ensure that applicable information is acquired, which will facilitate the marketing decision-making process. The need for marketing research, for the purpose of this study, stemmed from the in-depth literature review provided in Chapter 2, as well as the limited research available on vehicle buyers' brand attachment.

### **3.3.2 Stage 2: Define the problem**

Problem definition is regarded as a crucial stage in the marketing research process (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:27; Burns & Bush, 2014:70). The research problem indicates the topic of the study and offers the necessary direction with a view to conduct applicable marketing research (Tuckman & Harper, 2012:22; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:77; Wiid & Diggines, 2009:47). Consequently, defining the research problem is salient, because an unclear research problem may lead to research objectives that are incorrectly formulated, resulting in time and monetary resources being wasted on the research process (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:72; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:41).

The research problem of this study was identified from existing literature and a need for particular information regarding vehicle buyers' brand attachment. The research problem was identified and discussed in Chapter 1 (refer to section 1.2), and can be summarised as follows:

Throughout the years, consumers' drive to purchase a vehicle (either new or pre-owned) is driven by a utilitarian need rather than by consumers viewing the ownership of a vehicle as a status symbol. Additionally, consumers are unwilling to pursue the vehicle purchasing process from an industry they are detached from, as there are various means of public transport available to them. Therefore, vehicle brands should ensure that they offer their consumers a differentiated new or pre-owned vehicle by including attributes such as a comprehensive service warranty, greater engine power, more driving comfort, more effective fuel consumption and enhanced vehicle safety. Moreover, vehicle brands should alter their focus towards

enhancing their consumers' attachment towards the brand as attachment may facilitate vehicle brands' effort to differentiate themselves within the competitive automotive industry.

Existing literature proposes that the attachment that consumers experience towards a brand is positively influenced by their trust in their specific brand, as well as the personality and brand image perception of the brand. In addition, extant literature also suggests that consumers' brand attachment have a positive influence on their purchase intentions and willingness to purchase an extension of a brand.

With regard to the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment, no apparent investigation has been conducted in the South African automotive industry. Gaining knowledge regarding the brand attachment of vehicle buyers may facilitate vehicle brands' recognition of the positive influence that brand trust, brand image and brand personality have on the brand attachment of consumers. A supplementary understanding of the positive influence that a strong brand attachment has on consumers' purchase intention and willingness to purchase an extension of the vehicle brand can also be gained.

Vehicle brands may be assisted by this study, as it may help them to develop a trustworthy brand that is appealing towards, and compatible with the individual personalities of the brand's consumers. It may also support vehicle brands to develop a brand image that consumers perceive as an extension of themselves; this may result in consumers showing a favourable purchase intention as well as a willingness to purchase extensions of the brand.

### **3.3.3 Stage 3: Establish research objectives**

A research objective is a terminologically accurate statement that entails the goals that researchers intend to achieve by conducting marketing research (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:54; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:56).

The primary objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and to establish whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to pursue other extensions of the vehicle brand.

The secondary objectives support the abovementioned primary objective, namely to:

- 1) Describe the sample profile.
- 2) Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.

- 3) Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.
- 4) Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.
- 5) Determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their vehicle brand.
- 6) Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.
- 7) Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their vehicle brand.
- 8) Determine the interrelationships between brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention

#### **3.3.4 Stage 4: Determine research design**

The purpose of the research design, also known as the detailed blueprint, is to act as a guide that enables the study to be steered towards its stated objectives (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:70; Burns & Bush, 2014:98). An appropriate research design will ensure that the marketing research is conducted in an effective and efficient manner (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:54; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:104). A number of scholars (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:72-74; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:54-60; Hair *et al.*, 2006:63-64; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:104-115) indicate three types of research designs, namely exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research, which are subsequently discussed.

##### **(i) Exploratory research design**

An exploratory research design is as research that provides the researcher with direction and insight about broad and unclear research problems (Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:133). This type of design, according to Aaker *et al.* (2011:72), involves primary and secondary data being collected and interpreted in an unstructured manner, in order to gain sought-after insights. Such a design guides a specific course of action by means of a funnel approach, which narrows numerous strategic problems or opportunities down, rather than providing definite information (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:54; Hair *et al.*, 2006:63). Furthermore, exploratory research includes the use of methods such as literature reviews, experience surveys, and focus groups to obtain the data (Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:133; Wiid & Diggines, 2009:55).

##### **(ii) Descriptive research design**

A descriptive research design can be defined as conclusive research that aims to describe the characteristics of objects, people, groups, organisations and environments to enable

the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these characteristics (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:54; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:108). Researchers conduct descriptive research when they have knowledge about, or understand the marketing situation and the relationship captured within the research problem (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:56; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57). Moreover, this research design is conducted when the researcher wants answers to the “who, what, when, where, why and how” questions (Burns & Bush, 2014:103; Smith & Albaum, 2012:16; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:86). The formulation of specific hypotheses allows a descriptive research design to be pre-planned and structured in nature (Malhotra *et al.*, 2012:90; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:106). Therefore, Malhotra *et al.* (2013:108) note that descriptive research incorporates quantitative primary data analysis, surveys, panels, observations and other data to collect relevant information.

(iii) Causal research design

Causal research assists marketing managers in their decision-making process, as this method aims to obtain justifiable and valid evidence of cause-and-effect relationships (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:32; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:115). Burns and Bush (2014:107) state that the use of experiments determine causal relationships. In addition, Aaker *et al.* (2011:304) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:115) define experimental research as the manipulation of the independent variable(s) in order to measure the effect of this manipulation on the dependent variable(s). The manipulation of variables in the form of ‘if-then’ statements enables researchers to determine cause-and-effect relationships (Shiu *et al.*, 2009:62). These conditional ‘if-then’ statements contribute to a better understanding of a marketing phenomenon when depicted in the form of ‘if x, then y’ (Burns & Bush, 2014:107). The manipulation of causal research can only take place in reasonably controlled environments, which include field or laboratory experiments (Malhotra, 2013:115; Wiid & Diggines, 2009:56). Furthermore, managers within an organisation might not be willing to conduct causal research, due to the intrinsic nature of this type research design and the extensive time needed to conduct this type of research (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:52).

After taking the research objectives and information requirements of this study into consideration, the **descriptive research design was chosen for this study**. This type of research design was deemed applicable, because the aim of this study is to determine the factors that influence vehicle buyers’ attachment to certain vehicle brands, and to establish whether buyers’ brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to pursue other extensions of the brand. The research problem and formulated hypotheses of this study confirm that this study is pre-planned and structured (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:106). Additionally, this study aims to uncover



characteristics (i.e. brand trust, brand image and brand personality) that have an effect on consumers' brand attachment, and to determine whether that attachment towards a brand will affect consumers' purchase intention and willingness to purchase a brand extension. These issues confirm that using a descriptive research design is appropriate for this study (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:106; Smith & Albaum, 2012:15).

### **3.3.5 Stage 5: Identify information types and sources**

The unique nature of a research project necessitates the selection of the most appropriate data collection method to obtain the relevant data (Stewart, 2005:116). Two categories, namely primary and secondary data sources, allow researchers access to infinite data sources in order to collect relevant data (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:33; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:133; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:88). Table 3-2 below offers a comparison of primary and secondary data.

**Table 3-2: A comparison of primary and secondary data**

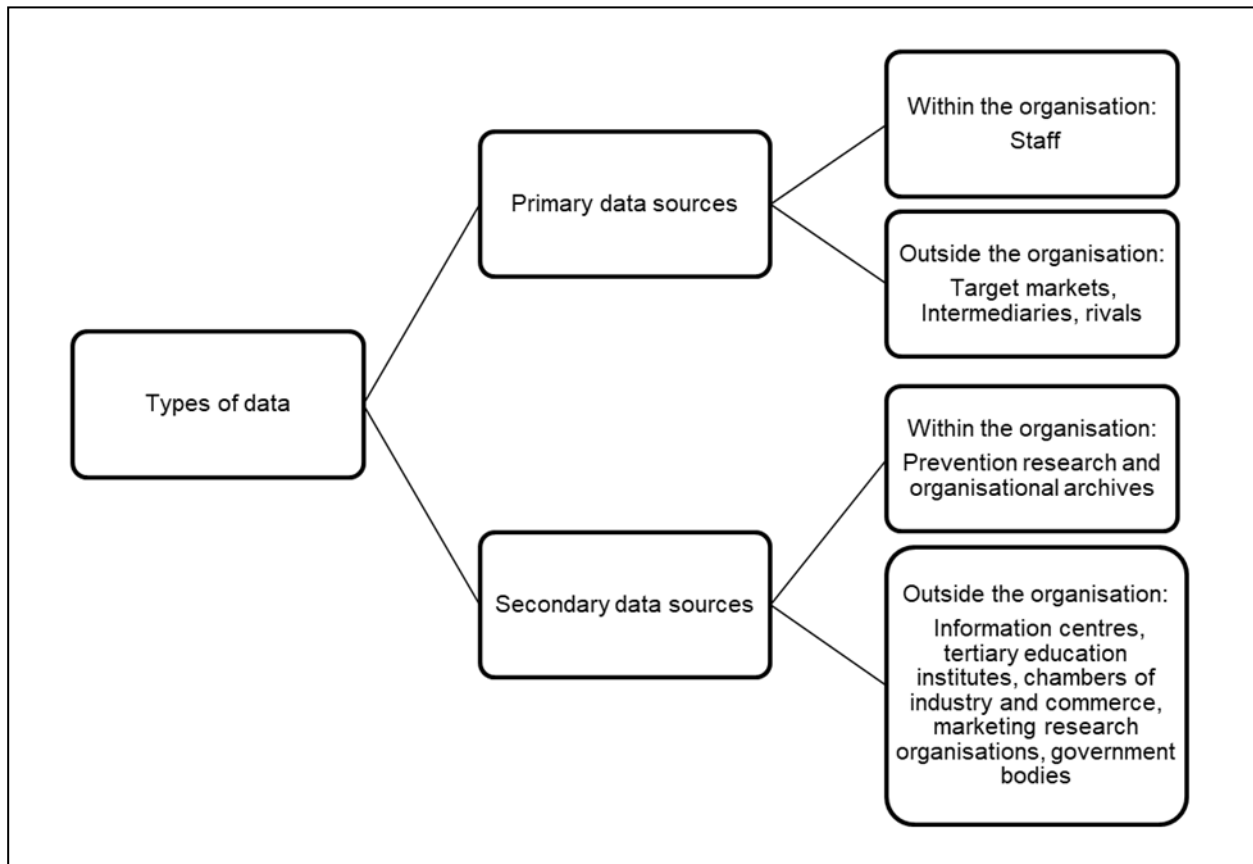
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Primary data</b>	<b>Secondary data</b>
<b>Collection purpose</b>	For the problem at hand	For other problems
<b>Collection process</b>	Very involved	Rapid and easy
<b>Collection cost</b>	High	Relatively low
<b>Collection time</b>	Long	Short

Source: Adopted from Berndt and Petzer (2011:42-43) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:133).

As shown in Table 3-2, primary data is collected when the problem at hand needs to be addressed, whereas secondary data has already been collected and published in order to address a different problem (Burns & Bush, 2014:75; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:69). The present study made use of both primary and secondary data, and the process followed to access both the primary and secondary data is discussed in the stages that follow.

### **3.3.6 Stage 6: Determine methods of accessing data**

Burns and Bush (2014:74) note that accessing *primary data* is a complex process, whereas *secondary data* can be obtained quickly and inexpensively (as illustrated in Table 3-2). Therefore, researchers should first pursue collecting secondary data (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:93; Burns & Bush, 2014:74). Figure 3-2 illustrates the primary and secondary data sources and the locations from which researchers may acquire them.

**Figure 3-2: Types and locations of data sources**

Source: Adopted from Cant and Van Heerden (2015:136).

Figure 3-2 provides a brief overview of the various data sources available to researchers. Importantly, researchers should consider the applicability, accuracy, reliability and timeliness of secondary data sources before making use of such sources (Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:136). The two data sources available to researchers and the manner in which they assist the research process as well as its findings, are consequently discussed.

### 3.3.6.1 Secondary data sources

Researchers should initiate their data collection efforts from secondary data that already exists and is readily accessible (Burns & Bush, 2014:74; Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:142). Several researchers (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:93; Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:136; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:69; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:132; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:45) define secondary data as data that has been previously collected and recorded for a purpose other than the study or problem at hand. Berndt and Petzer (2011:42) and Zikmund and Babin (2013:128) state that secondary data has already been assembled and is therefore historical in nature, which allows researchers to collect secondary data without being entirely immersed in the research process. Feinberg *et al.* (2013:69)

indicate that secondary data can further be categorised into internal and external data sources. Internal data originates from within the organisation for which the marketing research is conducted, whereas external data originates from external parties outside of the organisation (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:42). As illustrated in Figure 3-2, internal data entails prevention research and organisational archives, which may include sales reports, budgets and schedules of expenditure as well as recorded advertising and promotional efforts (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:95; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:69). On the other hand, external data includes research compiled by various authorities and governing bodies, tertiary education institutes as well as marketing research organisations (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:95; Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:136).

Researchers Aaker *et al.* (2011:94), Malhotra *et al.* (2013:133), and Zikmund and Babin (2013:128) suggest that the most significant benefits of using secondary data is that it saves researchers a significant amount of time and money. However, despite these benefits, a number of limitations also exist (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:94). Table 3-3 highlights some of the benefits and limitations of secondary data.

**Table 3-3: Benefits and limitations of secondary data**

Benefits	Limitations
Low cost	Collected for another purpose
Less effort expended	No control over data collection
Less time taken	May not be very accurate
Sometimes more accurate than primary data	May not be reported in the required form
Some information can only be obtained from secondary data	May be outdated
	May not meet data requirements
	A number of assumptions have to be made

Source: Adopted from Aaker *et al.* (2011:95).

The instantaneous and cost-effective nature of secondary data benefits researchers greatly, especially when secondary data sources are accessed electronically (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:128). However, Table 3-3 shows that the usefulness of secondary data may be limited, as its relevance and accuracy are not focused on the research problem at hand (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:94-95). Therefore, researchers should evaluate the limitations of secondary research during the process of acquiring secondary research data sources, which should be exhausted before proceeding to collect primary data (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:133).

**For the purpose of this study**, secondary research was conducted using a variety of academic sources in order to present an extensive literature review (Chapter 2). These academic sources include marketing journals (such as *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Journal of Product and Brand Management*) as well as textbooks. The constructs identified (as a result of the research problem) from the secondary data include brand attachment, brand trust, brand image, brand personality, brand extension and purchase intention. Therefore, the literature review (Chapter 2) included an examination of previous research of relevant fields, namely consumer behaviour and branding. The secondary data acquired from the literature review was subsequently incorporated during the development of the primary research instrument (Appendix A) used in this study.

### **3.3.6.2 Primary data sources**

Primary data originates from research conducted in order to address the specific research problem at hand (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:171). In addition, primary data can be acquired by means of two comprehensive categories, namely qualitative research or quantitative research (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:45). *Qualitative research*, as defined by Burns and Bush (2014:146), is unstructured exploratory research that involves the collection, analysis, interpretation and observation of what people do and say. *Quantitative research*, in contrast, is research that applies some form of statistical analysis and seeks to quantify the data (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:171). Table 3-4 summarises the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

**Table 3-4: Qualitative versus quantitative research**

Characteristic	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Objective	Gaining a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations	Quantifying data and generalising results from the sample to the population of interest
Sample	Small number of non-representative cases	Large number of representative cases
Data collection	Unstructured	Structured
Data analysis	Non-statistical	Statistical
Outcome	Develop an initial understanding	Recommend a final course of action

Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:171).

Feinberg *et al.* (2013:218) note that distinct data collection techniques form the foundation of both qualitative and quantitative research. These data collection techniques are briefly explained in the following sections.

#### 3.3.6.2.1 Qualitative data collection techniques

Qualitative data collection techniques are relatively unstructured in nature, since no rigid format is applied, and allows respondents to answer at length (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:218). Several scholars (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:46; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:218-220; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:174; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:107) note that focus groups, in-depth interviews and projective techniques are the most commonly used techniques to collect qualitative data. The three types of qualitative data collection techniques are discussed as follow:

(i) Focus groups

Focus groups are described as a discussion between a group of respondents, resulting in the researcher obtaining possible ideas or solutions that are relevant to the marketing problem (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:167). Zikmund and Babin (2013:108) mention that a focus group is led by a qualified moderator who, by using a flexible approach, encourages respondents to have a dialogue among themselves. Many researchers regard focus groups as synonymous with qualitative research (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:174). Focus groups may be perceived as similar to unstructured in-depth interviews with the greatest difference being that a moderator is only passively involved in focus groups (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:167-168).

(ii) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are unstructured, direct, personal interviews between a qualified interviewer and a respondent with a view to enable the interviewer to discover the respondent's motivations, opinions, outlook and feelings regarding the discussion topic (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:185). This qualitative data collection technique often yields rich, deep responses as researchers can probe and ask additional questions during the course of the interview (Burns & Bush, 2014:158). Aaker *et al.* (2011:166) add that the success of an in-depth interview relies on the communication skills of the interviewer.

(iii) Projective techniques

Projective techniques entail situations where respondents are positioned within simulated activities, and which may result in respondents divulging information they would not as easily disclose when asked directly (Burns & Bush, 2014:159). This research technique allows respondents to interpret a situation by means of their personal experiences, personalities and attitudes (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:115). Aaker *et al.* (2011:177) and Burns and Bush (2014:160) note that researchers generally use word-association tests, sentence-completion tests, picture tests, cartoon and balloon tests and role-playing activity as projective techniques.

### 3.3.6.2.2 Quantitative data collection techniques

Feinberg *et al.* (2013:236) indicate that quantitative research is associated with conclusive research, and for this reason quantitative researchers make use of two data collection techniques. These quantitative data collection techniques, namely surveys and observations, are consequently discussed.

#### (i) Surveys

Surveys are structured questionnaires that are designed to elicit certain information from respondents who form part of a sample of the population (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:209). Zikmund and Babin (2013:152) refer to surveys as data collection techniques that describe respondents' beliefs, attitudes and reasoning towards a specific marketing activity. Table 3-5 below summarises the different types of data collection techniques used in survey research.

**Table 3-5: Data collection and computer technology**

Characteristic	No computer	Computer
Interviewer	Person-administered	Computer-assisted
No interviewer	Self-administered	Computer-administered

Source: Adapted from Burns and Bush (2014:175).

From Table 3-5 it is clear that survey data collection is a combination of traditional, low-technology techniques as well as contemporary, high-technology techniques (Burns & Bush, 2014:175). **Person-administered surveys** involve a respondent being interviewed either in person or telephonically without – as noted in Table 3-5 – high-technology involvement (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:48; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:160). Malhotra *et al.* (2013:213-214) state that person-administered surveys can be categorised as follows:

- *Personal in-home interviews*, which refer a situation where to respondents are interviewed face-to-face by the interviewer inside their own homes.
- *Mall-intercept personal interviews* take place when an interviewer intercepts a respondent he or she said respondent is shopping and administers a questionnaire face-to-face.

- *Computer-assisted personal interviews* involves a respondent sitting in front of a computer screen and completing a questionnaire, while being assisted by courteous error messages and colourful on-screen stimuli.

Burns and Bush (2014:178) define **self-administered surveys** as surveys that respondents complete on their own without being assisted by interviewers or computer agents. The respondent receives and completes the questionnaire and returns it by means of mail or delivery (Cant & Van Heerden, 2015:141). Advantages of self-administered surveys include that the researcher can reduce cost, and respondents' control is important, and there is no interviewer-evaluation apprehension (Burns & Bush, 2014:178).

Computer-administered surveys resemble self-administered surveys, with the only difference being that respondents can complete the survey using a computer and the internet (Burns & Bush, 2014:179). These questionnaires, which are generally web-based, can be electronically completed, using computers or handheld devices, and submitted online (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:238; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:178). Additionally, Berndt and Petzer (2011:49) indicate that computer-administered surveys can be sent by researchers and received by respondents by means of e-mails.

#### (ii) Observations

Observations refer to the systematic process of a researcher, who firstly recognises and then records the behaviour of individuals, objects or events (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:250; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:236). According to Aaker *et al.* (2011:188), observations as a research technique have its limitations, due to researchers being unable to observe individuals' motives, attitudes or intentions. Respondents' behavioural patterns are recorded by qualified human observers or various devices such as film, cameras, audio-tapes, computers and hand-written notes (Blumberg *et al.*, 2011:353). Zikmund and Babin (2013:192) note the following methods of observation used by researchers:

- *Visible observation* refers to observation that takes place when the individual is aware of the researcher's presence.
- *Hidden observation*, which is unobtrusive in nature, entails that the individual is completely unaware that the researcher is observing his or her behaviour.

**For the purpose of this study**, computer-administered surveys were used, with questionnaires developed on Google Docs. The benefits associated with Google Docs include that the questionnaire can be completed on a mobile device, there is a wide variety of question types

available, and it does not entail additional costs. These benefits made Google Docs a logical choice for the researcher. The questionnaires were distributed on Facebook and targeted a relatively small representative population of vehicle owners in Gauteng. Respondents were asked to complete and submit the electronic questionnaire in order to gain information regarding the research objective of this study.

### **3.3.7 Stage 7: Design data collection forms**

Surveys – which were used in this study to acquire the primary data – require a standardised data collection process to ensure the consistency of the data and to enable uniform and coherent analysis (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:322). A questionnaire is a structured data collection method that is designed to collect data from respondents by means of a series of either written or verbal questions (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:264). Burns and Bush (2014:214) specify six key functions of a questionnaire, namely: (1) it helps to transform the research objectives into detailed questions that respondents will answer; (2) questions and response categories are standardised to ensure that respondents are exposed to identical stimuli; (3) respondents are motivated to cooperate through the wording, question flow and appearance of the questionnaire; (4) questionnaires are regarded as lasting records of research; (5) they can accelerate the data analysis process, especially when data is collected online; (6) researchers use questionnaires as a measurement of quality control.

The sections below provide an overview of the different measurement scales and question response formats that facilitated enabled the development of the questionnaire used in this study.

#### **3.3.7.1 Scales of measurement**

Aaker *et al.* (2011:249) define measurement as a standardised process involving numbers or other symbols being assigned, according to pre-specified rules, to certain characteristics of the items that the researcher seeks to determine. The richness of data captured by different measurement scales is uneven (Hair *et al.*, 2010:153; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:249). For that reason, there are four basic measurement scales, namely nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:281; Phellas *et al.*, 2011:196). A discussion on each of the four basic measurement scales follows.

- **Nominal scales** are regarded as the most basic level of measurement (Hair *et al.*, 2010:153; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:249). These scales assign numbers to objects for the sole purpose of identification or classification (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:119). Nominally scaled variables can include gender, race, marital status, or employment status (Aaker *et al.*,



2011:250). The amount number of characteristics that an object has is not reflected by the numbers in a nominal scale (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:282).

- **Ordinal scales** allow researchers to assign a rank order to the answers of respondents (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:274; Burns & Bush, 2014:205). Ordinal scales assist researchers to determine whether an object possess more or fewer characteristic than other objects (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:283) to aid in defining the ordered relationship amongst objects (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:119).
- **Interval scales** have properties relating to both nominal and ordinal scales (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:253; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:252). These scales use numbers to rate objects in such a manner that an equal numerical distance on the scale signifies the equal distances in the characteristic that is being measured (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:122; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:284).
- **Ratio scales** embody the properties of interval scales with the added attribute that these scales represent absolute quantities in the form of an absolute zero (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:253). Ratio scales enable researchers to identify, classify and rank objects and to compare intervals or differences between objects (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:285). These scales can be characterised as the highest form of measurement (Hair *et al.*, 2010:155; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:253).

The questionnaire design used for the purpose of this study included nominal, ordinal and interval measurement scales. The use of nominal data allowed for attaining descriptive statistics, including the development of a detailed profile of vehicle buyers in Gauteng. Interval scales were used in the form of 5-point Likert scales, and this allowed order to be assigned to participants' responses pertaining to the central constructs of the study, but no definite zero point existed. Furthermore, ordinal scales were used to gather data relating to the aspects that most attract vehicle buyers to purchase a specific vehicle brand.

### **3.3.7.2 Question response formats**

Feinberg *et al.* (2013:272) hold that researchers have a choice between two response formats in a questionnaire, depending on the degree of structure they wish to impose on respondents' answers. These two response formats are unstructured (open-ended) and structured (fixed-alternative) questions (Hair *et al.*, 2010:180; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:282). *Unstructured questions* are open-ended questions that are also referred to as free-response or free-answer questions. These questions allow respondents to provide answers in their own words (Malhotra *et al.*,

2013:340). Open-ended questions are useful when the researcher pursues an exploratory research design (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:283). These questions assist researchers in gaining deeper insights into a particular aspect as unprompted answers result in richness and depth of information that answers to fixed-alternative questions cannot reveal (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). However, scholars Feinberg *et al.* (2013:274-275) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:340) indicate certain disadvantages associated with open-ended questionnaires, namely:

- Interviewer bias is likely when respondents' answers are noted, since the skills of the interviewer may affect the data. Therefore, interviewers should opt for a recording device when verbatim answers are required.
- Open-ended questions are timeous because respondents answer questions in detail.
- The research may be costly, because coding and analysis of open-ended questions require researchers to have specialist knowledge.

*Structured questions* are fixed-alternative questions that offer respondents a limited option of answers, enabling the researcher to acquire the exact information needed to address the research problem (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:297). A fixed-alternative question, according to Malhotra *et al.* (2013:341), may be categorised as multiple choice, dichotomous or a scale. These are subsequently explained.

- **Multiple choice questions** involve respondents selecting an answer from a fixed list that contains pre-determined answers (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:276). Respondents may be asked to choose one or more of the alternative answers that best represent their point of view (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:341; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:398).
- **Dichotomous questions** allow respondents a choice of only two response alternatives, namely yes or no (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:309; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:341). These alternative responses are often supplemented by neutral alternatives, including 'no option' and 'don't know' (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:278).
- **Scale questions** comprise questions that are developed in such a manner that the different response choices measure respondents' intensity of feeling towards the measured item (Craig & Douglas, 2005:267; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:299). Hair *et al.* (2010:166) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:287) define comparative scales as a scaling technique where a stimulus item is scaled to ensure that this item is independent of the other stimulus items in

the stimulus set. Non-comparative scales, on the other hand, present two items and ask the respondent to select an item in accordance with set criteria (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:287).

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:304) note that non-comparative techniques, which are generally used in marketing research, can be categorised as continuous and itemised rating scales. These are presented in Table 3-6.

**Table 3-6: Basic non-comparative scales**

Scale	Basic characteristics	Benefits	Limitations
Continuous rating scale	Respondents rate an item by placing a mark on a continuous line	Constructed easily	Scoring can appear difficult unless it is computerised
Itemised rating scales:			
Likert scale	Respondents indicate their degree of agreement on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree to 5 (strongly agree)	Constructed, administered and understood with ease	Time-consuming
Semantic differential	Respondents rate an item on a 7-point rating scale with bipolar adjectives at each end of the scale	Appropriate for a number of situations	Controversy exists whether or not the data has an interval
Stapel scale	A ten-point, unipolar scale with no neutral point	Constructed easily and administered by telephone	Application is difficult and confusing

Source: Adapted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:304).

The questionnaire designed for the purpose of this study mostly used fixed-alternative questions. These questions are not only easier for respondents to answer, but they also take up less of respondents' time (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). Additionally, these questions helped the researcher in the coding, tabulation and in the interpretation of the collected data (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:284). The questionnaire includes all three of the fixed-alternative formats, namely dichotomous, multiple-choice and scale questions. It also contains two open-ended questions where respondents were asked to indicate the year that they were born, as well as the number of years they have been associated with their current vehicle brand. The questionnaire concluded with Likert-scale questions that were asked to determine respondents' agreement with the particular statements that measured the study's constructs (brand attachment, brand trust, brand image, brand personality, purchase intention and brand extension attitude).

### **3.3.7.3 Question sequence**

The sequence of the questions in the questionnaire should encourage respondents' participation and cooperation when completing the questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire must be simple, interesting and understandable (Burns & Bush, 2014:225; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:294). Researchers should aim to reduce order bias by developing the questionnaire in such a manner that the question sequencing does not affect respondents' answers (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:294). Aaker *et al.* (2010:289) suggest the following basic guidelines regarding the sequencing of a questionnaire:

- The questionnaire should begin with a non-threatening question that establishes rapport and allows respondents to develop confidence in their ability to complete the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire should have a logical flow by first concluding questions about one topic before moving on to the next topic.
- The questionnaire can follow the funnel approach when asking questions. This approach can be described as first asking general questions about a certain topic before focussing on more specific questions about the topic.
- Questions that are sensitive and difficult in to answer should be placed at the end of the questionnaire.

### **3.3.7.4 Questionnaire layout**

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:349) state that the results acquired from a questionnaire may be affected by the format, spacing and positioning of the questions. The questionnaire that was developed for the purpose of this study is a computer-administered questionnaire, which entails limited interactivity between the respondents and the researcher. Therefore, the questionnaire displays included a status bar that visually indicated the portion of the questionnaire that a respondent has completed, as well as prompts that informed respondents if they have skipped a question that needed to be answered. This function was included to ensure complete information (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:300-301).

### **3.3.7.5 Pre-testing**

A pre-test entails a process where a dry-run of the survey is conducted on a small, representative sample of the respondents to detect errors in the questionnaire before the questionnaire is publically distributed (Burns & Bush, 2014:229; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:302). Malhotra *et al.*

(2013:351) note that all facets of the questionnaire should be tested during the pre-test, including difficulty levels of the questions, sequence, form and layout, as well as questions' wording and content.

**For the purpose of this study**, the pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted among 10 respondents from the targeted population in order to identify problems that the respondents experienced when completing the questionnaire (Burns & Bush, 2014:229; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:351). Certain adjustments were made as shown in Table 3-7, based on the feedback received from the pre-test respondents.

**Table 3-7: Adjustments made to the questionnaire**

Section	Pre-test questionnaire	Final questionnaire
Screening questions	Do you have a valid driver's licence? Are you the current owner of a vehicle? Are you planning to purchase a new vehicle within the next year?	Are you the current owner of a vehicle?  Are you planning to remain with your current vehicle brand?
Section B Question 9	How long are you associated with your current vehicle brand? Indicate in years and months.	How long have you been associated with your current vehicle brand? Indicate in years.
Section C – Section H Statement explanation	Keeping the vehicle brand you intend to purchase in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'strongly disagree' and 5 is 'strongly agree'.	Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements, on a scale of 1 to 5.

### 3.3.7.6 Overview of final questionnaire

The questionnaire that was developed for the purpose of the study took into consideration: (1) the secondary data that was collected and discussed in Chapter 2; (2) guidelines set out by similar studies on the topics of brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension attitudes and purchase intention; (3) the research objectives that were formulated and discussed in Chapter 1. The final questionnaire used in this study appears in Appendix A. The final questionnaire consisted of eight sections.

- **Section A** aimed to obtain general demographic information from respondents, including their gender, ethnicity, age, level of education, and employment status.

- **Section B** set out to obtain information regarding consumers' patronage behaviours and choices such as the vehicle brand they currently own, how long they have been associated with the brand, who mainly influence their vehicle brand choice, how often they purchase a new vehicle, and which aspect of a vehicle they rate as the most important.
- **Section C** measured respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding their attachment towards their current vehicle brand.
- **Section D** determined respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding their trust in their current vehicle brand.
- **Section E** aimed to measure respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding their perceptions of the personality of their current vehicle brand.
- **Section F** determined respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding the image perceptions of their current vehicle brand.
- **Section G** set out to measure respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding their intention to purchase their current vehicle brand.
- **Section H** measured respondents' level of agreement with statements regarding their attitude towards a brand extension of their current vehicle brand.

Table 3-8 summarises the statements used in this study in relation to the sources from which the statements were obtained. Furthermore, relevant levels of measurement and response formats used for each statement are indicated in the table. Where applicable, relevant research objectives and hypotheses are indicated.

**Table 3-8: Summary of questions in relation to sources used, response format, measurement level, secondary objectives and hypotheses**

Question / statement	Source	Response format	Level of measurement	Secondary objective	Hypothesis
<b>Screening questions</b>					
Are you the current owner of a vehicle?	Self-generated	Dichotomous	Nominal	-	-
Are you planning to remain with your current vehicle brand?				-	-

**Table 3-8: Summary of questions in relation to sources used, response format, measurement level, secondary objectives and hypotheses (cont.)**

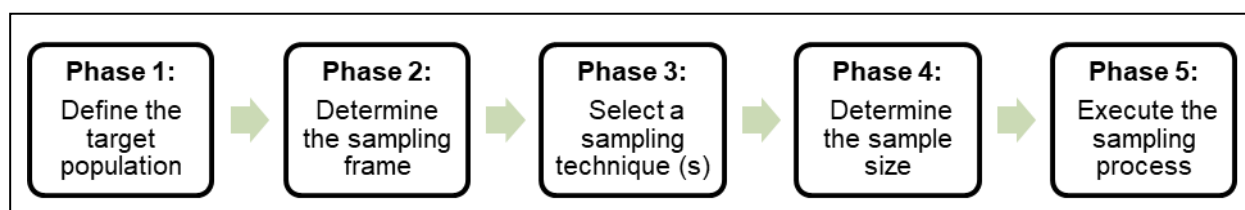
Question / statement	Source	Response format	Level of measurement	Secondary objective	Hypothesis
Section A: Demographic information					
In which year were you born?	Self-generated	Open-ended	Nominal and ordinal	1	-
What is your gender?		Dichotomous	Nominal		-
What is your highest level of education?		Multiple-choice	Ordinal		-
Please indicate your ethnicity			Nominal		-
Which one of the following options best describes your employment status?			Nominal		-
Section B: Consumer behaviour					
Which one of the following vehicle brands do you currently own?	Self-generated	Multiple-choice	Nominal	2	-
How long have you been associated with your current vehicle brand?		Open-ended	Nominal and ordinal		-
Who mainly influences your vehicle brand choice?		Multiple-choice	Nominal		-
How often do you purchase a new vehicle?		Multiple-choice	Nominal		-
Which three aspects most attract you to purchase a specific vehicle brand?		Multiple-choice	Ordinal		-
Section C: Brand attachment					
Statement 1 to 10	Malär <i>et al.</i> (2011:48) and Thomson <i>et al.</i> (2005:87)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	3	-
Section D: Brand trust					
Statement 1 to 3	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:87)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	5	H <sub>2</sub>
Statement 4 to 6	Delgado-Ballester (2004:586)				

**Table 3-8: Summary of questions in relation to sources used, response format, measurement level, secondary objectives and hypotheses (cont.)**

Question / statement	Source	Response format	Level of measurement	Secondary objective	Hypothesis
<b>Section E: Brand personality</b>					
Statement 1 to 10	Aaker (1997:351) and Romaniuk (2008:157)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	6	H <sub>3</sub>
<b>Section F: Brand image perception</b>					
Statement 1 to 8	Salinas and Pérez (2009:55)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	4	H <sub>1</sub>
<b>Section G: Purchase intention</b>					
Statement 1 to 4	Kaufmann <i>et al.</i> (2016:5745)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	7	H <sub>4</sub>
<b>Section H: Brand extension attitude</b>					
Statement 1 to 5	Aaker and Keller (1990:35) and Salinas and Pérez (2009:55)	Multi-item scale; Likert-type	Interval	8	H <sub>5</sub>

### 3.3.8 Stage 8: Determine the sample plan and size

Sampling is of vital importance to the research process since the cost, time and amount of human resources necessary to gather data from the entire population may render a study unfeasible (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:337; Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:298). A sample can be defined as a subset or a specific part of a larger population (Burns & Bush, 2014:239; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:312). Aaker *et al.* (2011:336) state that it is essential for researchers to take various factors into consideration when deciding to use a sample to obtain information. Figure 3-3 illustrates the phases of the sampling design process. These are discussed below.

**Figure 3-3: The sampling design process**

Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:368).



### **3.3.8.1 Phase 1: Define the target population**

Figure 3-3 indicates that the first phase of selecting a sample is to define the target population. Malhotra *et al.* (2012:196) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:367) state that a target population refers to the collection of elements to whom questions shall be asked to enable the researcher to gather essential information in order to draw conclusions. According to Berndt and Petzer (2011:33), using a census would be unfeasible, since a census involves collecting primary data from all individuals of a defined population. Therefore, this phase is crucial in the data collection process, because a clearly defined target population assists the researcher to identify the correct sample to use (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:336; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:485).

According to Berndt and Petzer (2011:171) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:368), it is essential that the target population selected for a research study is defined in terms of elements, sampling units, extent and time. **The target population of this study** included consumers residing in Gauteng (extent), who own a vehicle, and who plan to remain with their current vehicle brand when purchasing a new vehicle (element and sample unit) over the next year (time).

### **3.3.8.2 Phase 2: Determine the sampling frame**

A sampling frame, as described by Berndt and Petzer (2011:171) and Feinberg *et al.* (2013:302), is a complete list comprising of all the available sample units from which the researcher can select at this point in the sampling process. Another term for a sampling frame is the working population, since the units of the working population will ultimately be used in the analysis of a study (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:317). It is important that researchers should ensure that the sampling frame accounts for the targeted population in order to avoid the sampling frame error (Burns & Bush, 2014:240; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:317).

**In this study**, a sampling frame could not be obtained, given that the privacy rights of South Africans made procuring particulars on consumers' vehicle ownership status impossible. Therefore, given the absence of a sampling frame and the use of a computer-administered questionnaire, invitations to participate in the questionnaire were posted on various Gauteng-based community Facebook pages. The computer-administered questionnaire included two screening questions that determined whether respondents own a vehicle and whether they are planning to remain with their current vehicle brand. These screening questions guaranteed that the criteria of the target population were met. Confirmation that each respondent has only completed one questionnaire was achieved by developing the computer-administered questionnaire in such a way that respondents were only able to submit an answer once.

### 3.3.8.3 Phase 3: Select a sampling technique(s)

The third phase entails that a particular sampling technique is chosen by the researcher to facilitate the drawing of a sample. Feinberg *et al.* (2013:298) and Hair *et al.* (2006:308) summarise sampling as the process where a selected number of elements within a larger group are selected to obtain information from. Zikmund and Babin (2013:322) note that there are several sampling plans available to researchers. These can be grouped into two classifications, namely probability sampling techniques and non-probability sampling techniques.

*Probability sampling* is a sampling technique that allows every member of the population a known (non-zero) chance of selection (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:342; Burns & Bush, 2014:242). On the other hand, *non-probability sampling* relies on the researcher's judgement, as this sampling technique does not entail selecting population members by chance (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:304; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:372). Table 3-9 depicts the different probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

**Table 3-9: Probability and non-probability sampling techniques**

Probability sampling	
Simple random sampling	This sampling method ensures an equal chance of inclusion in a sample to each element of a population (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:325). Moreover, it entails that the researcher makes use of a random selection process, which may include the use of random numbers from a computer or random digit dialling (Burns & Bush, 2014:243).
Systematic sampling	Malhotra <i>et al.</i> (2013:378) describe systematic sampling as a technique where the sample is chosen through a selection process, which involves the selection of a random starting point and from that point onward selecting every successive $k$ th element within the sampling frame.
Cluster sampling	Initially, this sampling technique requires that the target population is divided into both mutually exclusive and collectively comprehensive clusters. Subsequently, a simple random sampling is used to select a random sample of these clusters (Malhotra <i>et al.</i> , 2013:381).
Stratified sampling	This entails that subsamples that share certain core characteristics are drawn from each stratum of the target population using simple random sampling (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:326). Burns and Bush (2014:243) are of the opinion that this sampling technique should be used when the target population key characteristics are skewed.

**Table 3-9: Probability and non-probability sampling techniques (cont.)**

<b>Non-probability sampling</b>	
Convenience sampling	This sampling technique, as the name implies, chooses people or units on the basis of convenience to the researcher (Feinberg <i>et al.</i> , 2013:304). Therefore, researchers are able to obtain information from respondents both quickly and economically using this technique (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:323).
Judgement sampling	The judgement of the researcher determines the target population elements that are chosen (Malhotra <i>et al.</i> , 2013:374). For that reason, certain elements of the target population have a smaller chance selection than others (Burns & Bush, 2014:255).
Quota sampling	This sampling technique allows elements to be included in the sample on the basis that they meet the researcher's pre-determined characteristics, which are typically demographic (Feinberg <i>et al.</i> , 2013:305).
Snowball sampling	Involves respondents are initially chosen at random and additional respondents are selected through referrals or information provided by initial respondents (Malhotra <i>et al.</i> , 2013:376).

**Non-probability, convenience sampling was used for this study.** The main reason for using non-probability sampling is that there were no databases available from which a sampling framework could be constructed, and convenience sampling enabled the researcher to gather the appropriate number of vehicle buyers in order to measure the hypotheses (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:304).

#### **3.3.8.4 Phase 4: Determine the sample size**

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:370) note that the size of a sample refers to the number of elements included in the study. Additionally, these authors note that sample size, the importance of conclusions, the nature of the research, the number of variables, the nature of the analysis, incident and completion rates, as well as resource constraints should be considered when the sample size is determined. Furthermore, the sample size is influenced by whether or not probability or non-probability sampling techniques are used in the study (Hair *et al.*, 2010:142). The use of sample formulas is not applicable when non-probability sampling is used, because non-probability sample sizes are determined by means subjective and intuitive decisions based on past academic or industry research as well as the extent of research available (Burns & Bush, 2014:266; Hair *et al.*, 2010:142).

**This study** can be described as problem-solving in nature, which according to Malhotra *et al.* (2013:370), requires 300 to 500 respondents to ensure that the findings of the study are accurate.

As a result, the researcher decided that the sample size should consist of at least 300 respondents.

### **3.3.8.5 Phase 5: Execute the sampling process**

The final phase in the sampling process involves executing the process by detailing the specifications of the sample design, which include the sampling frame, unit, technique and size that will be applied (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:70; Wiid & Diggines, 2009:214). Table 3-10 summarises the sample plan of this study.

**Table 3-10: Sample plan of this study**

<b>Population</b>	Consumers residing in Gauteng who own a vehicle and plan to remain with their current vehicle brand when purchasing a new vehicle.
<b>Sampling frame</b>	No sampling frame was available.
<b>Sampling element and unit</b>	Consumers who seek to purchase the same vehicle brand that they currently own.
<b>Sampling method and technique</b>	Non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling technique.
<b>Sample size</b>	300 respondents.

### **3.3.9 Stage 9: Collecting data**

The previous stage in the marketing research process identified the target population from which information would be gathered. This stage entails collecting the actual information from the target population (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:202). Scholars Zikmund and Babin (2013:64) indicate that there are various techniques, as discussed in the previous stage, that each require different methods of data collection. As a result, if the research needs to do fieldwork, fieldworkers must be selected, trained and supervised throughout the data collection process (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:428).

**In this study**, computer-administered questionnaires were electronically distributed by the researcher to various public and closed Facebook community groups in Gauteng from 1 July 2017 to 30 August 2017. Daily Facebook posts were made, which included a message to encourage members of these Facebook groups to complete the questionnaire. This message was also accompanied by a link to the actual questionnaire. The questionnaire itself contained a short overview of the study, an explanation of the study's objectives, and the privacy rights of

respondents. The sample realisation rate of the questionnaires ultimately amounted to 332 completed questionnaires.

### **3.3.10 Stage 10: Data analysis**

Zikmund and Babin (2013:64) describe data analysis as a process that includes determining consistent patterns through computation to enable a summary of relevant details, which will in turn yield a better understanding of the gathered information. The raw data collected from the questionnaires need to undergo preliminary preparation before any of the data can be analysed by means of statistical techniques (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:381; Hair *et al.*, 2011:295). The initial data preparation is important, since data may be rendered worthless if not cleaned properly and if errors are not identified and corrected before the data is analysed (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:446). A number of scholars (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:381; Hair *et al.*, 2011:295; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:447) note that the initial data preparation process involves the editing, coding, transcribing and cleaning of data, which are discussed below.

- *Editing* refers to a review of the questionnaire to identify omissions, ambiguities and errors that may have occurred in the responses (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:64). This process may require researchers to return incomplete or ambiguous questionnaires to respondents to complete, or discarding of them (Aaker *et al.*, 2011:381; Hair *et al.*, 2011:296).
- *Coding* is the process of allocating a code, which is usually in numerical form, to each of the possible responses to of each question in the questionnaire (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:351; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:448; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:502).
- *Transcribing* the data entails transmitting the coded data obtained from the questionnaire onto a computer into a statistical program (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:453; Hair *et al.*, 2010:246).
- *Data cleaning* involves that the researcher examined the captured data carefully in order to identify consistency and address missing responses (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:455).

The data preparation process of this study entailed manually checking each of the completed computer-administered questionnaires for completeness, consistency and accuracy. The questionnaire was developed in such a manner that prompts would appear if a respondent did not complete the questionnaire, so that respondents could only submit their questionnaire if all the answers had been completed. Data coding was also done manually. The SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 24 was used to construct the data set and capture the data.

With the conclusion of the data preparation process, the section that follows describes the data analysis techniques used in this study.

### 3.3.11 Data analysis techniques used in this study

Summarising data from the coded raw data obtained from the questionnaires may pose a challenge for researchers, as it entails the process of computing a number of measures that which characterises the data set in order to complete the description of the data matrix (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:393; Hair *et al.*, 2011:299). Moreover, Burns and Bush (2014:317) note that marketing researchers can use five data analysis techniques, namely descriptive analysis, inferential analysis, difference analysis, association analysis and predictive analysis to analyse a data set. The following sections briefly discusses the techniques used in the data analysis of this study.

#### 3.3.11.1 Descriptive statistical techniques

Descriptive statistics form the basis for subsequent inferential statistical analysis, as it can be described as the elementary transformation of data that entails portraying of the data set's characteristics such as the central tendency, variability and distribution (Burns & Bush, 2014:318; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:484). Aaker *et al.* (2011:446) and Zikmund and Babin (2012:336) further note that descriptive statistics help researchers to determine certain characteristics and trends in the data set by means of analysing of one variable (univariate analysis), two variables (bivariate analysis), or more than two variables (multivariate analysis). Numerous scholars (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:365; Burns & Bush, 2014:320; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:479; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:406-407; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:529-533) indicate that generally used frequency associated statistics include the measure of location or central tendency (mean) and the measure of inconsistency and dispersion (standard deviation). Table 3-11 depicts the descriptive techniques that were used in this study.

**Table 3-11: Descriptive statistical techniques used in this study**

Descriptive statistical techniques	Definition	Application of the descriptive statistical techniques
Frequency	Frequency is generally described as the simplest form of statistical description. It points out the number of times a certain response of a variable occurs in every category (Zikmund & Babin, 2012:337).	Table 4-1
Percentage	Percentage is a representation of the proportion of respondents that answered a question in a certain manner, typically stated in % (Aaker <i>et al.</i> , 2011:387).	Table 4-1

**Table 3-11: Descriptive statistical techniques used in this study (cont.)**

Descriptive statistical techniques	Definition	Application of the descriptive statistical techniques
<b>Mean</b>	The mean refers to the average number that characterises a set of numbers (Burns & Bush, 2014:320). Calculating the mean requires dividing the total sum of all observations by the total number of observations (McDaniel & Gates, 2010:406).	Table 4-3 Table 5-1
<b>Standard deviation</b>	Standard deviation assists researchers in determining the degree of variance that exists between various respondents within the sample (Feinberg <i>et al.</i> , 2013:398; Mazzocchi, 2011:385). Standard deviation points toward a small variance when the data points are clustered around the mean, whereas scattered data points indicate a large variance (Malhotra <i>et al.</i> , 2013:481).	Table 4-3 Table 5-1

**For the purpose of this study**, the frequencies and percentages of the sample profile of respondents were calculated. Furthermore, the means and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for each of the statements that measured the main constructs of this study (i.e. brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension attitudes, purchase intention).

### 3.3.11.2 Assessing reliability and validity

Marketing researchers ultimately seek to use of reliable and valid measurement scales when conducting research (Burns & Bush, 2014:214). Reliability, as defined by Hair *et al.* (2011:233) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:317), is the number of consistent results a scale can produce when a certain characteristic is repeatedly measured on the specific scale. In other words, reliability indicates that the measurement scale is internally consistent (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). Several scholars (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:132; Hair *et al.*, 2011:233; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:317-318; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257) indicate the following approaches that can be used to assess reliability:

- *Test-retest reliability* comprises repeatedly measuring the same respondents using the same measurement device under circumstances that are judged to be comparable (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:132). The results, which is calculated by means of a correlation coefficient, are compared in order to determine their similarity. A high similarity indicates a high test-retest reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2011:234).

- *Alternative-forms reliability* refers to the same respondents being measured at two different times using two equivalent sets of scales (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:317).
- *Internal consistency reliability* measures the consistency of results acquired from several items within a summated scale (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318). Researchers use internal consistency reliability to describe the homogeneity of a scale (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). Each item presented in the scale measures an aspect of the construct measured by the scale as a whole (Hair *et al.*, 2011:235). Evaluating internal consistency generally involves either the split-half or the coefficient alpha (Cronbach's alpha) technique (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:403). The split-half technique assesses internal consistency by dividing a multi-item scale into equivalent groups and comparing the result of these groups (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:132; Field, 2005:667). Researchers consider a scale to be reliable when the two equivalent groups correlate highly (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). The Cronbach's alpha refers to the average of all of the possible split-half coefficients that resulted from the various ways the scale item was split (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318; Shiu *et al.*, 2009:403). Cronbach's alpha ranges from zero to one, and a value of 0.70 or above is deemed acceptable (Hair *et al.*, 2011:235).

**For the purpose of this study**, the reliability of the constructs (brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension attitudes and purchase intention) was measured by means of their Cronbach's alpha values. The scales measuring these constructs were considered reliable when the Cronbach's alpha value is 0.70, or exceeds 0.70 (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257).

Zikmund and Babin (2013:258) note that a good scale should be both precise and accurate. Validity is the accuracy of a measurement instrument (Burns & Bush, 2014:214). Therefore, validity can be defined as the extent to which scale scores truly reflect the characteristics that are being measured (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:281; Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:256). No measurement error ought to occur if a scale is perfectly valid (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318). Various scholars (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:130; Hair *et al.*, 2011:238-239; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318-319; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:258-259) indicate that the three basic types of validity that can be determined, namely:

- *Content validity*, also known as face validity, entails the use of a few expert judges to evaluate whether the scale-items found in the questionnaire relate to the constructs measured by the questionnaire (Hair *et al.*, 2010:158; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:258). Additionally, content validity is established when the representativeness of the items used



in a scale to measure a certain construct is determined or assessed by experienced authors (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:131). Malhotra *et al.* (2013:318) indicate that content validity facilitates the interpretation of scale scores rather than determining scale validity, as on its own, content validity is insufficient to measure the validity of a scale.

- *Criterion validity* establishes whether the measurement scale correlates with other variables that have been selected as meaningful criteria (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:318; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:259). Criterion validity may be categorised as either concurrent validity or predictive validity. *Concurrent validity* is established when two measurements are administered at the same time, whereas *predictive validity* stipulates that a measure can predict a future event accurately (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:131).
- *Construct validity* is established when a measurement scale reliably measures and truthfully represents the marketing phenomenon that is being studied (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:130; Hair *et al.*, 2011:239). According to Hair *et al.* (2011:239), discriminant validity and convergent validity are determined in order to assess construct validity. *Convergent validity* demonstrates how high the level of validity between measures of the same construct is (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:130). *Discriminant validity* refers to the how low the levels of correlation is between the measure and measures that differ from it (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:260).

Content and construct validity was assessed for the purpose of this study. Content validity was established by developing the questionnaire based on scales adapted from previous research gleaned from the literature review in Chapter 2. In addition (as discussed in section 3.3.7.5), the questionnaire was pre-tested among 10 respondents. The main constructs of this study (i.e. brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, brand personality, brand extension attitudes, purchase intention) were further validated by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The section below describes the process of factor analysis and the confirmatory factor analysis used to determine construct validity.

### **3.3.11.3 Multivariate data analysis**

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:461) and Zikmund and Babin (2013:372) indicate that statistical data analysis techniques can be either classified as univariate or multivariate techniques. Aaker *et al.* (2011:393) define univariate techniques as an appropriate analysis technique when there is only a single measurement of each sample object, or when there are a number of measurements on each sample object but the variables are individually analysed in isolation. In contrast, multivariate techniques aim to analyse two or more measurement elements simultaneously in order to

determine the relationship between those elements (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:461). More specifically, multivariate techniques can be characterised as interdependence or dependence techniques (Hair *et al.*, 2011:359). Feinberg *et al.* (2013:477) define these multivariate techniques as follows:

- *Interdependence technique* involves interrelating a group of variables to facilitate the interpretation of data structures, without a distinction being made whether these variables are used to predict other variables.
- *Dependence technique* aims to relate a dependent variable to the remaining independent variables.

This study used factor analysis as a multivariate interdependence technique. Factor analysis is the general description for a class of procedures that primarily takes place in order to reduce and summarise a large number of variables (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:480; Pallant, 2013:188). Malhotra *et al.* (2013:622-623) indicate that factor analysis can be classified as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) or exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Researchers perform a CFA when they need to statistically test specific hypotheses with regard to the structure and relation between latent variables underlying the data (Field, 2006:726; Mazzocchi, 2011:378). In contrast, an EFA is conducted when researchers did not make any preceding assumptions on the factor loadings (Field, 2006:726; Pallant, 2013:188). Feinberg *et al.* (2013:485) note that three steps are essential when seeking a factor analysis solution, namely:

- **Step 1:** Factor extraction involves the search for a set of factors that constitute a linear combination of the variables within the correlation matrix (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:485). Pallant (2013:190) notes that the principal components analysis is the most frequently used extraction approach. Principal components analysis takes into consideration the total variance within the data (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:629). Furthermore, Feinberg *et al.* (2013:485) state that very important that the factors are uncorrelated during the procedure of factor extraction.
- **Step 2:** Factor rotation techniques can be applied to facilitate the interpretation of the factor matrix (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:485). Rotation methods can be categorised as orthogonal or oblique methods, from which varimax orthogonal rotation method is the most frequently used (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:51; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:631; Mazzocchi, 2011:228). The varimax procedure facilitates the interpretability of factors through high loadings on factors in order to minimise the number of variables (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010:51; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:631). Furthermore, Shiu *et al.* (2009:631) state that high loadings on a specific

factor facilitates the factor-naming process, which should be done once the factors have been identified.

- **Step 3:** Application and interpretation entail a full-scale factor analysis of the data acquired from the questionnaire (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:486). For the purpose of this study, a CFA was completed in order to ratify the researcher's theoretical expectations with regard to the factor structure and to determine whether the theory of the factor structure fits the observations made in this study.

#### **3.3.11.4 Structural equation modelling (SEM)**

Structural equation modelling (SEM) enables researchers to assess the theoretical relationships that were suggested and to test the measurement properties by means of a single confirmatory, multivariate technique (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:710). According to Mazzocchi (2011:385), SEM can be defined as a multivariate statistical model that enables researchers to determine and assess a number of concurrent relationships that involve various dependent and explanatory variables; it also allows the inclusion of latent variables. For that reason, SEM helps researchers to assess each independent variable's importance within the overall model and to determine the model's overall fit with the data that was collected, by means of multiple regression and factor analytic techniques (Pallant, 2010:105).

SEM enables the formation of a correlation matrix as soon as a theoretical model is developed that includes the hypothesised relationship between variables (Bowen & Guo, 2011:17). In order to determine the relationship between the variables in the model, a maximum likelihood estimation procedure is conducted (Blunch, 2013:72). Subsequently, a comparison between the proposed theoretical model and the observed data (the correlation matrix) is completed, after which SEM calculates how the interrelationships between the predicted variables and the observed variables match (Meyers *et al.*, 2006:614).

According to Foster *et al.* (2006:103), SEM is an advancement of path analysis. Mazzocchi (2011:319) points out that SEM is a comprehensive method that includes the following techniques:

- *Confirmatory factor analysis* is a type of factor analysis that involves an assumption being made, based on previous research, regarding factor quantity and the loadings of the original variables. Therefore, this technique entails that the researcher runs the factor analysis on the premise of these assumptions, after which the results are evaluated with some goodness-of-fit diagnostics.

- *Path analysis* can be described as an expansion of multiple regression, where a correlation between explanatory variables is sought and a causal relationship is ultimately assumed. As a result, this technique involves that the researcher organises and illustrates pathways by means of multiple regression in order to test the hypotheses and to determine the significance of the various paths.
- *Multivariate regression analysis*, which is also known as simultaneous equation systems, is a technique applied in SEM that comprises a system of regression equation. This entails that the dependent variable in a certain equation must be able to appear on the right-hand side of another equation.

Furthermore, SEM allows one to evaluate the importance of the variables and to assess the overall fit of the researcher's model by focussing on the  $\chi^2$  goodness-of-fit test (Pallant, 2010:103; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:385). The main purpose of SEM is to conclude whether the proposed theoretical model is supported by the collected research data (Schreiber, 2008:84). As a result, various fit indices should be reported in order to conclude the level of fit between the collected data and the hypothesised model (Blunch, 2013:117). Hooper *et al.* (2008:56) and Jackson *et al.* (2009:19) note that the indices associated with SEM consist of the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) and its associated degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). In addition, Kenny (2015) adds that due to the high level of correlation between the TLI and CFI, the researcher should only report on one of the two fit indices. Subsequently, Table 3-12 indicates these indices.

**Table 3-12: List of fit indices**

Type of fit indices	Defined	Recommended cut-off value
Relative Chi-square ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) (Chi square/ degrees of freedom)	The chi-square test allows for evaluating the overall model fit, which enables the researcher to establish whether the model fits well in general and not specifically compared with a baseline model (McDonald & Ho, 2002:72).	$\leq 5.00$ Wheaton <i>et al.</i> (1977:99)
RMSEA	RMSEA is recognised as the general and recommended fit index, since it portrays a model's general amount of misfit per degree of freedom (Foster <i>et al.</i> , 2006:109).	$< 0.05$ = good fit $\leq 0.08$ = acceptable fit $\leq 0.10$ = average fit Hoe (2008:78) and McDonald and Ho (2002:72)

**Table 3-12: List of fit indices**

Type of fit indices	Defined	Recommended cut-off value
CFI	CFI represents an indicator of relative non-centrality between the hypothesised model and the baseline model (also known as the null model) of modified independence, where variances in error are solely estimated (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012:28).	$\geq 0.90$ or $\geq 0.80$ Hoe (2008:78); Hu and Bentler (1999:27)
TLI	TLI is a highly recommended comparative index conducted between the proposed null and the null models adjusted for degrees of freedom (Cullinane, 2011:484).	$\geq 0.95$ Schumacker and Lomax (2010:76)

For the purpose of this study, SEM was conducted in order to determine the interrelationship of the constructs depicted in the proposed theoretical model. Also, the researcher obtained the structural model through the measurement and path model, which were derived from the SEM results. The fit indices that were reported in this study were the  $\chi^2$  value and its degrees of freedom, the CFI and the RMSEA with their respective recommended cut-off values.

### 3.3.12 Stage 11: Preparation and presentation of the final research report

Burns and Bush (2014:77) note that the final stage of preparing and presenting the final research report is crucial, as it is often the only record of the research project that the client is interested in. Chapters 4 and 5 address the main aim and objectives of this study, followed by a concluding chapter (Chapter 6) that summarises the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## 3.4 CONCLUSION

The research methodology of this study entailed a detailed discussion of each of the stages in the marketing research process. The research problem and objectives of this study were clarified, and the research design, the research method, and sample used in this study were discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the data collection process, the data analysis techniques, and the presentation of the results from the primary research.

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## CHAPTER 4: ARTICLE 1

### ANTECEDENTS OF VEHICLE BUYERS' BRAND ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOUR

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#### ABSTRACT

The South African automotive industry is considered to be highly competitive, a situation that has resulted in vehicle brands shifting their focus towards enhancing consumers' attachment to their brand in order to differentiate themselves from competitors within the industry. The unsettling South African economic climate, the increasing number of light passenger vehicle brands available in the industry, as well as some of the recent vehicle malfunctioning scandals, led to consumers losing confidence in, and becoming detached from the industry. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to investigate those antecedents that significantly influence vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. The research design is descriptive in nature with a quantitative approach being applied. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to acquire a sample of 332 respondents by distributing a computer-administered questionnaire on Facebook to respondents in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The empirical results of this paper established that brand image, brand trust and brand personality influence consumers' brand attachment, with brand personality having the strongest influence. Based on these results, it is recommended that vehicle brands should specifically focus on enhancing their brand personality, because consumers who identify their individualistic selves in the personality of the brand become more attached to that brand.

**Keywords:** automotive industry, brand attachment, brand image, brand personality, brand trust

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The dynamic automotive industry forms an integral part of the manufacturing industry, as it contributed R4 337 billion to the South African GDP in 2016, making it the leading contributor to South Africa's economic prosperity (AIEC, 2017:6-7; Naude & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:83; Smith, 2017). Moreover, the South African automotive industry is considered to be one of the world's most competitive trading environments, since consumers have the luxury of being able to

choose between a variety of 55 brands, which include 3 458 different passenger vehicles (AIEC, 2017:16; Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:356; NAAMSA, 2017b). Consequently, the variety of brands available to consumers resulted in 7 097 726 light passenger vehicles being registered in South Africa, resulting in a vehicle ownership ratio of 180 passenger vehicles per 1 000 individuals (AIEC, 2017:16; ENATIS, 2017).

Nevertheless, due to the unsettled economic climate in South Africa, consumers' disposable income is lower, which results in decreased levels of consumer confidence when deciding to purchase these high-value products (Bubear, 2017; Smith, 2017). Contributing to consumers becoming detached and their loss of confidence in vehicle brands, is the recent malfunctioning scandals that occurred, such as the most recent malfunctioning of Ford Kuga engines (AIEC, 2017:6; Bubear, 2017; Wheels24, 2017). Therefore, branding has come to be important for manufacturers within the automotive industry, developing a personality to be attached to a vehicle brand, which assists consumers to formulate an association – and ultimately an attachment – with the brand (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136).

The introduction of public transportation systems such as Uber, the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit System and the Gautrain (located in Gauteng) made various alternative modes of transport available to consumers (Gautrain, 2016; Rea Vaya, 2016; Uber, 2017). These alternative modes of transportation resulted in consumers developing a different perspective on the concept of vehicle ownership (Kolver, 2014; Parker *et al.*, 2016). For this reason, it can be argued that vehicle brands should cultivate a fit between the personal image of the consumer and the brand image they portray, as this may assist in the development of consumers' emotional attachment towards their vehicle brand (Hutter *et al.*, 2013:345; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8).

According to Ipsos (2014), more than a third (35%) of current vehicle owners proclaimed that they are considering purchasing an alternative vehicle brand with their prospective purchase, which further attests to consumers' loss of confidence in, and lack of emotional attachment to their vehicle brands (Shirin & Puth, 2011:11913). In light of this, vehicle brands should make the development of consumer brand attachment the main objective of their marketing activities (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). The ability of consumers to relate their individualistic personalities to the unique personality of the vehicle brand, as well as the vehicle brand's ability to perform a stated function, helps to develop an emotional attachment toward a brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). Thus, the purpose of this article is to investigate the antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour.

The structure of this article entails a literature review, after which the research problem is formulated in order to direct the research objectives. Then, the research methodology and results are discussed, followed by a discussion of the managerial implications and recommendations, concluding with the limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **4.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The discipline of branding forms the foundation of this paper. A brand serves as the personification of the signs and symbols with which consumers have a desire to identify or belong to (Bastos & Levy, 2012:349). Branding involves the developmental process that a brand implements in order to create a distinct name, logo, term or design that are captured in the individualistic brand name or logo that is eventually lodged in consumers' minds and hearts (Armstrong & Kotler 2011:243-244; Duncan, 2005:71; Landa, 2006:9). Because branding allows consumers the ability to assign responsibility to the source or manufacturer, it decreases consumers' perceived risk, and this results in the development of trust in the brand (Duncan, 2005:92; Kapferer, 2008:37; Keller, 2013:34; Landa, 2006:55-56). Additionally, branding facilitates consumers' association with a brand, because the image that the brand portrays and the personality it embodies comprise certain characteristics with which consumers identify and strive towards in order to attain their ideal selves (Duncan, 2005:92; Keller, 2013:34; Landa, 2006:57-58). Branding also helps to establish a relationship between consumers and the brand, and the level of attachment that consumers may experience towards a brand may influence the probability of them purchasing the brand's products or services (David & Bearden, 2017:48; David *et al.*, 2017:9; Keller, 2013:34).

### **4.2.1 Brand attachment**

Schmitt (2012:9) describes brand attachment as the approach that consumers apply in order to feel related to a brand. In addition, if such a relation towards a brand is sustained over a prolonged period of time, it may result in the tendency of a consumer to become emotionally attached to said brand (Ghose & Lowengart, 2013:14-15; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88). Brand attachment developed from attachment theory, which is defined as the developmental relationship constructed between an infant and caregiver (Bowlby, 1974:350). Moreover, various scholars (Belk, 1988:160; Feldman, 1996:419; Park *et al.*, 2010:4; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89) note that attachment is not strictly bound to a personal context, since consumers may also experience emotional bonds with brands. The level of dependence that consumers experience with regard to their primary "caregivers" affects whether they would be prone to establish an emotional bond with their preferred brands (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Bidmon, 2017:180). In addition, consumers who experience a higher level of trust in a brand will have faith in said brand to not break promises

or take advantage of consumers' vulnerabilities. Such a relationship generally results in the enhancement of an affectionate bond, which constitutes a critical part of consumers' emotional brand attachment (Belaid & Behi, 2011:39; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624).

Thomson *et al.* (2005:80) conceptualise that emotional bonding – in the form of affection, passion and connection – has a significant effect on consumers' emotional brand attachment. The conceptualisation of this dimension is predicated on the premise that consumers can express the emotional attachment that they experience towards a brand (Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88). Additionally, consumers' emotional and cognitive bonding, which is visible through their self-connection with a brand, leads towards brand attachment (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:620-621; Park *et al.*, 2010:5-6). Consumers who are emotionally attached to a brand have the habit of evaluating the various benefits that the brand has to offer as well as the overall utility they obtain from the brand in a positive manner (Cheng *et al.*, 2016:11). Consumers who experience a heightened level of attachment towards a brand may, according to Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290), Sarkar and Roy (2016:475) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:88), be more willing to pay a premium price for and purchase an extension of the brand, and are likely to be more inclined to forgive product failures the brand may have in the future.

Thus, creating a brand image that consumers not only deem emotionally desirable but also socially desirable, enhances the strength of the emotional attachment that consumers experience towards a brand, since consumers are able to envision their ideal self-concepts within the image of the brand (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987:51; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89).

#### **4.2.2 Brand image**

The emotions, attitudes and ideas consumers have with regard to a brand serves as the foundation upon which they develop an image of a brand, and also facilitate their purchasing decisions and behaviours (Gardner & Levy, 1955:35). Brand image, as defined by Aaker (1997:71) entails the manner in which consumers identify a brand. Moreover, consumers formulate their individualised image of a brand based upon a collection of their perceptions and associations of the brand (Keller, 1993:3). More recently, brand image has been defined by scholars as those cognitive, affective and evaluative processes that consumers undergo in order to cultivate certain connotations and perceptions that ultimately facilitates their conception of a brand image (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Arai *et al.*, 2013:384; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8; Roy & Banerjee, 2014:2).

Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) propound that the image of a brand generally consists of three dimensions, namely functional image, affective image and reputation. The functional image of a brand can be described as consumers' observation of both the tangible and product-related characteristics of a brand's products, which include the quality and usage characteristics of said products (Chen & Chen, 2014:84; He & Lai, 2014:252; Roth, 1995:56). The collection of feelings, both positive and negative, that consumers experience when exposed to a brand's image represents the affective image of a brand (Hosany *et al.*, 2006:640; Salinas & Pérez, 2009:55; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2012:1021). Furthermore, the reputation of a brand contributes towards consumers' long-term opinion of a brand, as previous behaviour of a brand often determines future conduct (Balmer, 2009:558; Belch & Belch, 2012:101; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997:6; Martenson, 2007:546).

Consumers' willingness to develop an emotional bond with a brand may be assisted by the brand's efforts to portray its brand image in such a way that consumers are able to relate their individual selves to the image of the brand (Yusof & Ariffin, 2016:356). A distinct brand image offers consumers the opportunity to develop a unique-self-image, as perceived ownership of a brand's attributes enhances consumers' individual self-image through the brand being perceived as an extension of themselves (He *et al.*, 2016:17). Brands ought to aim their attention to the development of a confident brand image, which is constantly present in the minds of consumers, as such confident brand image facilitates consumers' perceived trust of the brand, and allows them the opportunity to form a relationship between their individual self-images and the image of the brand (Alhaddad, 2015:142; Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009:462; Yusof & Ariffin, 2016:356). Moreover, Anselmsson *et al.* (2014:96) and Yu *et al.* (2013:608) indicate that the positive associations made by consumers between themselves and a brand, and their recognition that the image that the brand portrays serves as an extension of their individual self-image, motivate consumers' decision to purchase and their willingness to pay a premium price.

#### **4.2.3 Brand trust**

The formation of a consumer-brand relationship is often driven by trust, and for this reason it is crucial for brands to understand the effects of brand trust on said relationship (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987:25; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999:81; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:34). Brand trust, as defined by Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:82), refers to the inclination that consumers demonstrate to rely on a brand's competence to carry out a promised function. Additionally, consumers' level of brand trust may be represented by the attitude they portray towards a brand (Lii & Lee, 2012:14-15).

Consumers' brand trust can be enhanced by the development of an emotional attachment with a brand, because an emotional attachment entails the development of trust that is reached when

consumers rely less on their rational cognition and more on their emotions and sentiment (Bidmon, 2017:17; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Nikolova *et al.*, 2015:242). The development of consumers' emotional involvement entails an evolution – through the stages from predictability, to dependability on towards trust, which is based on consumers' previous experiences and prior interactions (Babin & Harris, 2016:149, Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). Predictability can be viewed as an outcome of a brand's consistent behaviour with regard to its performance, which helps consumers in to have knowledge of, and to understand a brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011:20; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:575; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Lau & Lee, 1999:361; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). On the other hand, dependability is developed when consumers experience a brand holistically, which allows them to adapt their focus away from specific brand behaviour and more towards generalised brand behaviour, and this further alleviates the level of perceived risk consumers experience (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98). Trust, which is the concluding stage of consumers' formation of emotional attachment, is regarded in the marketing and branding literature as a predictor of consumers' committed relationship to a brand and is also a pivotal facilitator in the development of consumers' attachment towards a brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:20; Phan & Ghantous, 2013:472; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:30).

In the marketing literature, reliability has been identified as a key characteristic of trust (Erciş *et al.*, 2012:1398; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:586; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:24). Delgado-Ballester (2004:586) are of the opinion that consumers evaluate a brand's reliability (and the related product) by means of its functional capabilities and physical attributes. A brand's intention (i.e. benevolence and integrity), in turn, is regarded as another key characteristic of trust that may facilitate consumers' repurchase intentions since it involves a brand's favourable conduct towards consumers that they may deem worthy of recreating (Delgado-Ballester, 2004:586-587; Hegner & Jevons, 2016:63; Jung *et al.*, 2014:586).

#### **4.2.4 Brand personality**

Brand personality is conceptualised as a collection of human characteristics with which a brand is associated (Aaker, 1997:347). The composition of a personality, according to McCrae and Costa (1987:81) and McCrae and Costa (1997:509), entails specific traits that can be summarised as the personal feelings, thoughts and actions of an individual. It can therefore be argued that the personality of a brand embodies the human element of the image that a brand aims to portray to consumers (Kardes *et al.*, 2011:243).

Ample research on the subject of the taxonomy of human personalities indicate five dimensions that represent an individuals' personality comprehensively (John & Srivastava, 1999:103). The

Big Five dimensions, as they are known, facilitate individuals in their attempt to generate a description of both their own actions and the actions of others through the use of natural language terms (Goldberg, 1993:31-32). These Big Five dimensions, that are used to provide a thorough depiction of a personality, comprise of extraversion or surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability versus neuroticism, and openness or intellect (John & Srivastava, 1999:103). Each of these personality traits is rooted in every individual. The manner in which individuals perceive their level of association with a specific trait, from low to high, establishes their personality (Aaker, 1997:353; Babin & Harris, 2016:119; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:244-245; Goldberg 1993:31-32; John & Srivastava, 1999:126-129).

In order to develop a personal connection and with a view to enhance their interactions with brands, consumers seek to assign certain human characteristics to the products that a brand has to offer (Aaker, 1997:347; Babin & Harris, 2016:119; De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003:244-245; Freling & Forbes, 2005:412). Therefore, Aaker (1997:347) defined brand personality in light of the definition of an individual's personality, by assigning human characteristics that are associated with a brand. These characteristics form part of a five-factor structure developed by Aaker (1997:347) with the sincerity, excitement and competence dimensions relating to the Big Five dimensions, and the ruggedness and sophistication dimensions regarded as personality dimensions that individuals strive towards, but do not necessarily have. Azoulay and Kapferer (2003:150) indicated that there is an increased need for a fully rounded definition of the construct of brand personality as a human trait, both applicable and relating to brands. Geuens *et al.* (2009:106) answered this need for a more functional definition with the development of a scale that contains twelve items and five factors, which comprise of activity, responsibility, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality. These measure brand personalities both in a managerial and academic setting. Additionally, Louis and Lombart (2010:115) compiled a more detailed definition of brand personality, which purports that the personality of a brand entails the comprehensive collection of traits that individuals implement when seeking a connotation with a brand; these are also used to portray their individual characteristics.

The implementation of these measurement instruments enables brands to address the challenge of developing a brand personality that is both attractive and attuned to the set target market (Müller, 2014:532). Additionally, a brand personality offers brands the opportunity to differentiate their product or service offerings from the market by enhancing consumers' expectations with regard to key characteristics. It also facilitates laying the foundations of a long-term relationship with consumers (Babin & Harris, 2016:119; Bouhlej *et al.*, 2009:467; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013:366-367; Rajagopal, 2006:55-57).

#### **4.2.5 The relationship between constructs**

A number of studies have been conducted with a view to examine the relationship between brand attachment and the antecedents thereof, which include brand image, brand trust and brand personality. Dennis *et al.* (2016:3055), Japtura *et al.* (2016:11) and Veasna *et al.* (2013:523) provide evidence that brand image, with which consumers identify their ideal selves, influences brand attachment in a positive manner. Particularly relating to the relationship between brand attachment and brand trust, Esch *et al.* (2006:103) and Frasquet *et al.* (2017:618) provide empirical evidence to support the notion that consumers' trust in a brand enhances their degree of brand attachment. Furthermore, the research of Louis and Lombart (2010:122) and Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) established that consumers whose individual personalities are reflected by brands are more prone to develop an attachment with said brand.

### **4.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES**

Increased competition within the South African automotive industry as a result of the 55 passenger vehicle brands as well as various alternative modes of public transport on offer to consumers (AIEC, 2017:16, Minnie, 2017); the decline in vehicle sales as a result of the recent economic downturn (NAAMSA, 2017a; Wesbank, 2017); and the frequent vehicle recall and malfunctioning scandals within the industry have resulted in consumers detaching from the industry since they have lost confidence (AIEC, 2017:6; Bubear, 2017; Wheels24, 2017). A further indication of deterioration in the attachment that consumers feel towards their vehicle brand, is that 35% of current vehicle owners stated that they are willing to consider the possibility of purchasing another vehicle brand (Ipsos, 2014). For this reason, it has become salient for vehicle brands to enhance consumers' attachment towards their brand in order to ensure longevity throughout the consumer-brand relationship (Park *et al.*, 2010:14). As argued above, creating a brand image that consumers deem desirable, and developing a brand personality that reflects the individual characteristics that consumers regard as important, facilitate the formation of an emotional attachment towards a brand (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). Additionally, consumers' degree of trust with regard to the brand facilitates the level of attachment that they experience towards a brand (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624).

It appears that no investigation on the topic of consumers' brand attachment within the South African automotive industry has yet been undertaken. Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate the antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour in order to determine whether brand image, brand trust and brand personality have an influence on the brand attachment behaviour of vehicle buyers. To address the aim of this paper, the following objectives were formulated, namely to:



- 1) Describe the sample profile.
- 2) Determine the validity and reliability of the measurement scales for brand attachment, brand image, brand trust and brand personality.
- 3) Determine the brand attachment respondents have towards their vehicle brand.
- 4) Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.
- 5) Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.
- 6) Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.
- 7) Determine the interrelationship between brand attachment, brand image, brand trust, and brand personality.

Based on the above literature discussion and formulated objectives, the following hypotheses were subsequently formulated for this paper:

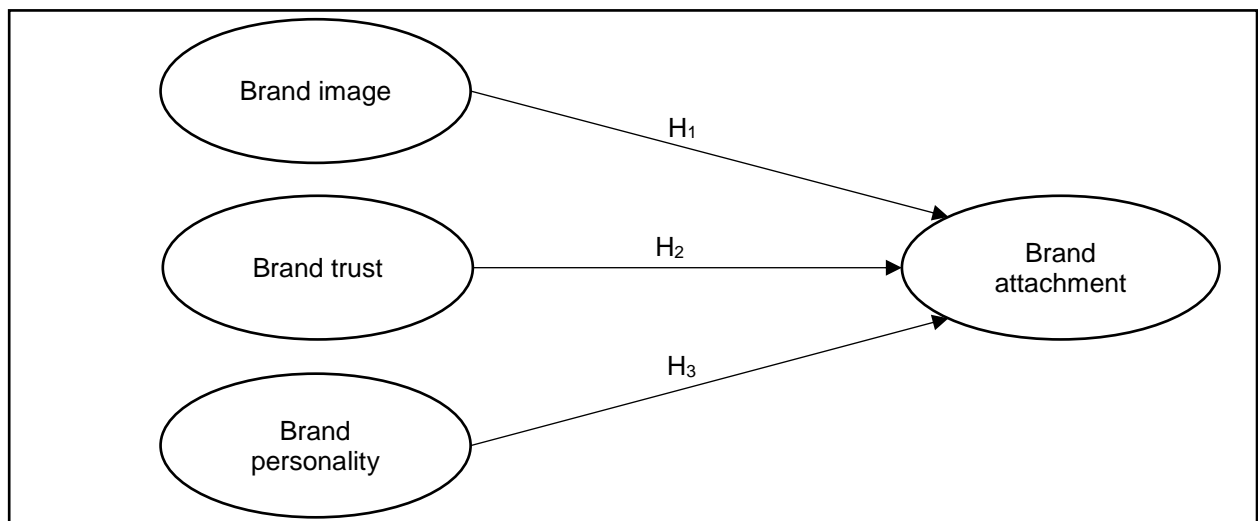
H<sub>1</sub>: Brand image statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

H<sub>2</sub>: Brand trust statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

H<sub>3</sub>: Brand personality statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

Figure 4-1 below depicts the conceptual model that has been developed for this paper.

**Figure 4-1: Conceptual model**



Source: Researcher's own construct.

## **4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.4.1 Research design, target population and sampling**

For the purpose of this paper, a quantitative descriptive research design was chosen in order to allow the researcher to test the formulated hypotheses (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:106). The target population comprised of consumers who reside in Gauteng, who own a vehicle, and plan to purchase the same vehicle brand they currently own when purchasing a new vehicle within the next year. Furthermore, the selection of respondents took place in the form of non-probability convenience sampling, as no databases were publically available from which a sampling framework could be obtained (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:304).

### **4.4.2 Questionnaire design and data collection**

The computer-administered questionnaire (see Appendix A), which was developed using Google Docs, contributes to the descriptive research design (Burns & Bush, 2014:178). The questionnaire was distributed by means of the social media platform, Facebook. Respondents were asked to voluntarily complete and submit the electronic questionnaire. Respondents' anonymity was guaranteed, as no questions were asked in which respondents had to divulge any private or detectable information.

The questionnaire commenced with a preamble that clarified the purpose of the research and explained respondents' rights, followed by two screening questions. The screening questions were developed to ensure that respondents do own a vehicle and plan to remain with their brand, which as previous research notes, is a result of respondents experiencing emotional attachment towards their vehicle brand (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:627). Furthermore, the questionnaire comprised six more sections. Sections A and B aimed to determine the demographic information and patronage behaviours of respondents respectively. The researcher made use of five-point unlabelled Likert scales in Sections C to F (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree), in order to measure respondents' agreement with statements in these sections. Section C measured respondents' brand attachment by means of a scale that was adopted from Malär *et al.* (2011:48) and Thomson *et al.* (2005). Section D captured respondents' level of agreement with three scale items adopted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:87) and three scale items adopted from Delgado-Ballester (2004:586) with regard to respondents' level of brand trust in their current vehicle brand. Ten items, adapted from Aaker (1997:351) and Romaniuk (2008), were used in Section E to measure respondents' agreement with statements regarding the brand personality of their current vehicle brand. Finally, Section F determined

respondents' agreement with statements regarding the brand image perception of their current vehicle brand, using a scale adopted from Salinas and Pérez (2009:55).

A pilot study was conducted among 10 respondents from within the target population in order to allow the researcher to identify broad-spectrum misunderstandings relating to the wording of the questionnaire that respondents may experience (Burns & Bush, 2014:229; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:351). After few technical and wording issues were addressed, the finalised questionnaire was electronically distributed to various public and closed Gauteng-based Facebook community groups, which yielded 332 viable questionnaires for analysis.

#### **4.4.3 Data analysis**

The data preparation process comprised of the researcher manually checking the completed questionnaires in order to determine completeness, consistency and accuracy. Thereafter, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 24) was used to capture, clean and analyse the data. The analyses conducted for this paper included frequency calculations for all demographic and patronage behavioural variables, as well as the calculation of means and standard deviations for all of the constructs. A confidence level of 95% and a subsequent significance level of 0.05 was used for the hypotheses testing of this paper (Hair *et al.*, 2013:281). Construct reliability is part of validity testing, which was done by means of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Internal consistency reliability was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient values, and reliability was established if the Cronbach's alpha value exceeded 0.70 (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257).

A standard multiple regression analysis was then conducted to address the formulated hypotheses, and therefore to conclude whether respondents' brand trust, brand personality and brand image perception significantly influence their brand attachment (Hair *et al.*, 2014:157).

### **4.5 RESULTS**

#### **4.5.1 Sample profile**

A total of 332 respondents participated in the study. The frequencies (F) and percentages (%) regarding the demographic variables and the patronage behaviours of respondents are depicted in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1: Sample profile**

Variable	Response categories	F	%
Gender	Male	80	24.1
	Female	252	75.9
Age	Younger than 29	50	17.3
	29 to 38 years	123	42.6
	39 to 48 years	59	20.4
	49 to 58 years	40	13.8
	59 years and older	17	5.9
	Missing frequencies	43	13.0
Ethnicity	Asian	2	0.6
	Indian	3	0.9
	White	326	98.5
	Missing frequencies	1	0.3
Education	Some high school	2	0.6
	Matric/Grade 12 completed	44	13.3
	Technical college diploma	36	10.8
	University or Technology diploma	51	15.4
	University degree	110	33.1
	Post graduate degree	89	26.8
Employment status	Self-employed	94	28.3
	Full-time employed by an organisation	193	58.1
	Part-time employed by an organisation	14	4.2
	Full-time student	11	3.3
	Housewife or househusband	12	3.6
	Retired	3	0.9
	Unemployed	3	0.9
	Other	2	0.6

Table 4-1: Sample profile (cont.)

Variable	Response categories	F	%
Owned vehicle brand	Volkswagen	51	15.4
	Toyota	40	12.0
	Ford	88	26.5
	Nissan	12	3.6
	Mazda	9	2.7
	Renault	11	3.3
	BMW	18	5.4
	Mercedes-Benz	15	4.5
	Isuzu	4	1.2
	Chevrolet	2	0.6
	Other	82	24.7
Duration with the vehicle brand	1 to 2 years	118	35.5
	3 to 4 years	40	12.0
	5 to 6 years	47	14.2
	7 to 8 years	35	10.5
	9 to 10 years	22	6.6
	Longer than 10 years	70	21.1
Influencers	Family	195	58.7
	Friends	19	5.7
	Acquaintances	8	2.4
	Celebrities	2	0.6
	Co-workers	5	1.5
	Religious leaders	3	0.9
	Other	100	30.1
Regularity of purchasing a new vehicle	Yearly	3	0.9
	Every 2 years	16	4.8
	Every 3 years	100	30.1
	Every 4 years	41	12.3
	Every 5 years	36	10.8
	Longer than every 5 years	136	41.0

**Table 4-1: Sample profile (cont.)**

Variable	Response categories	F	%
1 <sup>st</sup> most important vehicle attraction	Comprehensive service-warranty	26	7.8
	Storage space (boot capacity or loading capacity)	39	11.7
	Fuel consumption	57	17.2
	On-board entertainment system	7	2.1
	Comfort	1	0.3
	Engine's power	42	12.7
	Euro NCAP safety-rating	20	6.0
	Cost of ownership	45	13.6
	Resale value	95	28.6
2 <sup>nd</sup> most important vehicle attraction	Comprehensive service-warranty	26	7.8
	Storage space (boot capacity or loading capacity)	22	6.6
	Fuel consumption	112	33.7
	On-board entertainment system	8	2.4
	Engine's power	42	12.7
	Euro NCAP safety rating	30	9.0
	Cost of ownership	54	16.3
	Resale value	38	11.4
3 <sup>rd</sup> most important vehicle attraction	Comprehensive service-warranty	25	7.8
	Storage space (boot capacity or loading capacity)	40	12.0
	Fuel consumption	62	18.7
	On-board entertainment system	25	7.5
	Comfort	2	0.6
	Engine's power	32	9.6
	Euro NCAP safety rating	12	3.6
	Cost of ownership	94	28.3
	Resale value	40	12.0

With regard to gender distribution, Table 4-1 indicates that the majority of respondents (75.9%) are female, and the majority of respondents (42.6%) were in the 29 to 38 years age group. Furthermore, with regard to ethnic representation, the majority of respondents (98.5%) are white, with the highest level of education (33.1%) as a university degree. Furthermore, Table 4-1 shows that the majority of respondents (58.1%) are full-time employed by an organisation.

With regard to the vehicle brands that respondents owned, the majority owned a Ford (26.5%). It can be further observed from Table 4-1 that the majority of respondents (35.5%) owned their specified vehicle brand between one and two years, with 21.1% of respondents owning their vehicle brand for longer than 10 years. Just over a half of the respondents (58.7%) are influenced by their families when purchasing a new vehicle. The majority of respondents (41%) purchase a new vehicle at intervals of longer than five years. Furthermore, with regard to the aspects of a vehicle that most attract buyers, most respondents (28.6%) indicated that the resale value of the vehicle is the most important aspect. The second most important aspect, as specified by respondents (33.7%), is the fuel consumption of the vehicle, and the third most important aspect that respondents (28.3%) indicated are the costs involved in the ownership of the vehicle.

#### 4.5.2 Validity and reliability

All of the items used in this research were adopted from existing scales measuring brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:87; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:586), brand image (Salinas & Pérez, 2009:55), brand personality (Aaker, 1997:351; Romaniuk, 2008:157), and brand attachment (Malär *et al.*, 2011:48 & Thomson *et al.*, 2005:87). These scholars found the scales to be valid and reliable to measure these constructs in their studies, thus confirming face validity.

To further address the validity and reliability of these measures, a CFA was conducted. All items loaded significantly onto their respective constructs ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the standardised factor loadings (indicated in Table 4-2) were all well above the lower limit of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2014:617). Table 4-2 also indicates the AVE values for each construct, which were all above 0.50. Finally, all constructs were found to be reliable, as the construct reliability values and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70. Based on these results, convergent validity is confirmed.

**Table 4-2: Validity and reliability**

Construct, item	Standardised factor loadings	AVE	Construct reliability	Cronbach's alpha values
<i>Brand trust</i>		0.862	0.974	0.97
I trust this brand.	0.931			
This is an honest brand.	0.871			
This brand is safe.	0.951			
This brand would make an effort to satisfy me.	0.859			
This brand meets my expectations.	0.969			
I am confident in this brand.	0.982			

**Table 4-2: Validity and reliability (cont.)**

Construct, item	Standardised factor loadings	AVE	Construct reliability	Cronbach's alpha values
<i>Brand image perception</i>		<i>0.790</i>	<i>0.949</i>	<i>0.89</i>
The product of the brand has a high quality.	0.924			
The brand's products have better characteristics than its competitors.	0.893			
This is a brand that does not disappoint its customers	0.780			
This is one of the best brands in the sector.	0.923			
This brand is very established in the market.	0.915			
<i>Brand personality</i>		<i>0.814</i>	<i>0.972</i>	<i>0.96</i>
This brand is glamorous.	0.903			
The brand is good looking.	0.933			
The brand is family-orientated.	0.887			
The brand is sentimental.	0.854			
The brand is exciting.	0.954			
The brand is spirited.	0.923			
The brand is daring.	0.905			
The brand is tough.	0.852			
<i>Brand attachment</i>		<i>0.876</i>	<i>0.986</i>	<i>0.98</i>
My brand makes me feel peaceful.	0.914			
My brand makes me feel loved.	0.929			
My brand makes me feel friendly.	0.946			
My brand makes me feel affectionate.	0.946			
My brand makes me feel attached.	0.954			
My brand makes me feel bonded.	0.949			
My brand makes me feel connected.	0.940			
My brand makes me feel passionate.	0.934			
My brand makes me feel delighted.	0.915			
My brand makes me feel captivated.	0.932			



### 4.5.3 Overall mean scores

Table 4-3 provides an exposition of the overall mean scores and standard deviations (SD) that were calculated for each of the constructs used in the study (i.e. brand attachment, brand trust, brand image perception and brand personality).

**Table 4-3: Overall mean scores**

Constructs	Mean	SD
Brand attachment	2.58	1.181
Brand trust	3.56	0.968
Brand image	3.53	0.901
Brand personality	2.78	1.036

Since a five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the items within each construct of the study, it is apparent from Table 4-3 that respondents generally agreed with the items that measured their brand trust (mean = 3.56) and their brand image (mean = 3.53). Furthermore, although respondents concurred with brand attachment (mean = 2.58) and brand personality (mean = 2.78), the stated agreements are fewer than those related to brand trust and brand image. Consequently, it can be concluded that the respondents who participated in the study lean towards trusting their brand and have a moderate attachment with that brand as well as a positive connotation with the image and personality of the brand.

### 4.5.4 Hypotheses testing

A standard multiple regression was conducted to test the hypotheses of the study. Respondents' level of brand attachment, brand trust, brand image and brand personality were measured, which allowed the researcher to conduct a standard multiple regression analysis in order to determine whether consumers' brand trust, brand image and brand personality statistically significantly influence their brand attachment towards their current vehicle brand. In order for the multiple regression analysis to be conducted, the researcher confirmed that the assumptions in relation with the sample size, the degree of correlation between independent variables, whether outliers were present in the data, a linear relationship amongst pairs of variables and whether equal variance existed between groups, were established (Hair *et al.*, 2014:178; Pallant, 2016:151-152; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014:666-667). Table 4-4 below provides a summarised representation of the multiple regression model.

**Table 4-4: Standard multiple regression model summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.855	0.730	0.728	0.616

a. Predictors variables: (Constant), Brand personality, Brand trust, Brand image

b. Dependent variable: Brand attachment

Table 4-4 shows that respondents' brand trust, brand image and brand personality explain 73% of the variance related to their brand attachment towards their current vehicle brand. Table 4-5 represents the significance values and the standardised beta coefficient values.

**Table 4-5: Coefficient table**

Model		Standardised coefficient $\beta$ -value	p-value
1	(Constant)		0.808
	Brand image	-0.205	0.002*
	Brand trust	0.286	0.000*
	Brand personality	0.785	0.000*

\*p-value < 0.05 is statistically significant

Apparent from Table 4-5 is that all three predicting variables (i.e. brand image, brand trust and brand personality) have a statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) influence on brand attachment. Brand personality has the most prominent statistically significant influence on brand attachment, with a large and positive standardised coefficient value ( $\beta$ -value = 0.785). Additionally, it can be derived from Table 4-5 that brand image has a small and negative ( $\beta$ -value = -0.205) statistically significant influence on respondents' brand attachment. Brand trust, as depicted in Table 4-5, has a small and positive ( $\beta$ -value = 0.286) statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) influence on respondents' brand attachment. Therefore, based on these results,  $H_1$  to  $H_3$  can be accepted, since brand image, brand trust, as well as brand personality statistically significantly influence respondents' brand attachment.

#### 4.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Within the marketing literature, numerous scholars (Bidmon, 2017:17; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Veasna *et al.*, 2013:523) note that consumers' trust in a brand, their perception of the brand image as well as their relation towards the personality of the brand

positively influence their brand attachment. As a result, this paper investigated the antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment.

The respondents who participated in the study were mainly white females ranging between the ages of 29 to 38. They can be regarded as well-educated since most of them have a university or post-graduate degree, and are full-time employed by an organisation. Moreover, the majority of respondents own a Ford, with most respondents stating that they have owned their specific vehicle brand for longer than a period of three years with their respective families acting as their main influencers when choosing a specific vehicle brand to purchase. In addition, most respondents noted that they purchase a new vehicle every five years or more.

The results further indicated that the scales used to measure the constructs of the study (i.e. brand attachment, brand trust, brand image and brand personality) can be considered valid and reliable. Respondents evaluated their specific vehicle brands with regard to statements made on the topic of the constructs of the study, which resulted in them rating their respective vehicle brands above the mid-point on each of the of the five-point scales that measured the constructs. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents are in average agreement with the constructs of the study.

According to the results of the standard multiple regression analysis, brand image, brand trust and brand personality were found to statistically significantly influence respondents' brand attachment (explaining 73% of the variance in brand attachment). Subsequently, all three hypotheses ( $H_1$  to  $H_3$ ) were accepted.

This outcome supports the findings of Malär *et al.* (2011:46) who noted that consumers experience optimal brand attachment when they perceive their individual selves to be incorporated in the brand's personality. Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996) similarly noted that consumers are willing to establish an attachment with a brand when said brand's personality represents certain characteristics consumers regard unique to themselves. Furthermore, Japtura *et al.* (2016:11) and Yusof and Ariffin (2016:355) noted that a brand image that coincides with the ideal self-image of consumers significantly influence their attachment towards a brand. Belaid and Behi (2011:39) and Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) further found that consumers' trust towards a brand enhances the level of brand attachment they experience.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that brand personality has the largest positive statistical significant influence on respondents' brand attachment. Consequently, brands ought to focus on the development of a distinctive, strong and established brand personality with which consumers can relate their own individualistic personalities in order to enhance their brand attachment.

## **4.7 MANAGERIAL RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The variety of vehicle brands on offer, as well as the competitive nature of the South African automotive industry, have compelled vehicle brands to differentiate themselves with the establishment of consumers' brand attachment by focussing on brand trust, brand image and brand attachment to facilitate developing brand attachment (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Japtura *et al.*, 2016:11; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Naude & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:83). Among the three antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour, the overall items of brand trust measured the highest, whereas the overall items of brand personality measured the lowest. For this reason, vehicle brands should focus their attention on establishing a brand personality with which consumers can identify their individual selves, in order to strengthen consumers' brand attachment.

Moreover, brand image, brand trust and brand personality, as demonstrated by the empirical results, have a statistically significant influence on consumers' brand attachment towards their specific vehicle brand. However, the empirical results showed that brand personality has the largest statistically significant influence on the attachment that consumers have towards their vehicle brand. Thus, vehicle brands should focus on improving the ways in which they portray their brand personalities, in order to facilitate consumers to establish a relationship between their individual selves and the personality of their specific vehicle brand.

Vehicle brands can improve their brand personality through associating the personality of the brand with a specific human characteristic, with which the target market of said vehicle brand are able to relate. Such an improvement may assist vehicle brands to attain a competitive advantage within the South African automotive industry. Babin and Harris (2016:119) note that vehicle brands should present a strong brand concept to ensure that the brand's personality, which consumers recognise, are akin to the personality promoted by the brand. Therefore, vehicle brands need to ensure that the brand personality it portrays incorporates the traits that are associated with a strong brand concept in order facilitate consumers' attachment towards the brand even more.

With respect to the personality traits that emerged from the empirical results, it appears that consumers do not perceive their specific vehicle brand's personality to be predominantly sentimental and tough. Vehicle brands can thus focus on these traits in their advertisements and promotional platforms portraying scenarios that consumers perceive as emotional, in order to strengthen consumers' emotional attachment. Vehicle brands can also portray scenarios on advertisement and promotional platforms where the vehicle is depicted as tough. Additionally, consumers perceived their specific vehicle brand's personalities to be good-looking and exciting

for the most part. This implies that vehicle brands should expand on the traits of being good-looking and exciting by developing new vehicle models that appear good-looking to their targeted consumers and that comprise exciting features.

As a final point, it is important for vehicle brands to note that, although they primarily need to focus on enhancing the brand's personality in order to facilitate consumers' emotional attachment, they need to ensure that improving brand trust and brand image as predictors of brand attachment are not neglected.

#### **4.8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS**

The present research and findings were limited to respondents residing in Gauteng. As a result, the findings cannot be generalised to other geographical areas of South Africa, since the findings are specific to respondents who participated in this research. The use of non-probability convenience sampling allows for the opportunity to suggest that future research should use a different methodological approach, which includes the use of probability sampling and longitudinal data. The researcher experienced a reluctance to repetitively share the computer-administered questionnaire on the Facebook community groups, as the researcher feared bombarding respondents who have already submitted their responses. Furthermore, since respondents are predominantly female, a more coherent picture of consumers' brand attachment may be gained if the demographic variable of gender is more uniformly distributed. The present article did not focus on the brand attachment towards specific vehicle brands; rather on vehicles brands in general and therefore, future research can involve specific vehicle brands to measure their targeted consumers' attachment towards the brand. In conclusion, other possible antecedents that have a significant influence on consumers' brand attachment should be investigated in future research.

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## MAIN FINDINGS FROM ARTICLE 1 CONTRIBUTING TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

**Main finding 4.1:** The measurement scale of brand attachment used in this paper, with items adopted from Malär *et al.* (2011:48) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:87), is valid and reliable to measure vehicle buyers' brand attachment, specifically in Gauteng.

**Main finding 4.2:** The measurement scale of brand image perception used in this paper, with items adopted from Salinas and Pérez (2009:55), is valid and reliable to measure vehicle buyers' brand image perception, specifically in Gauteng.

**Main finding 4.3:** The measurement scale of brand trust used in this paper, with items adopted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:87) and Delgado-Ballester (2004:586), is valid and reliable to measure vehicle buyers' brand trust, specifically in Gauteng.

**Main finding 4.4:** The measurement scale of brand personality used in this paper, with items adopted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:87) and Delgado-Ballester (2004:586), is valid and reliable to measure vehicle buyers' brand personality, specifically in Gauteng.

**Main finding 4.5:** Brand personality has a large statistically significant and positive influence on respondents' attachment to their vehicle brand.

**Main finding 4.6:** Brand trust has a small statistically significant and positive influence on respondents' attachment to their vehicle brand.

**Main finding 4.7:** Brand image has a small statistically significant and negative influence on respondents' attachment to their vehicle brand.

## CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 2

### INVESTIGATING BRAND ATTACHMENT WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Due to the highly competitive nature of the South African automotive industry, and the country's unstable economic climate, consumers are increasingly losing confidence in their vehicle brands. Consequently, vehicle brands have realised that they need to focus on the improvement of their consumers' brand attachment, in order to ensure their sustainability. This paper, therefore, investigates both the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. This paper used a descriptive research design, which applied the quantitative data collection technique of computer-administered questionnaires that allowed for the distribution of questionnaires to both the public and closed community groups of the social media platform Facebook, in order to collect the responses of 332 individuals residing in Gauteng. The results established that brand personality influences brand attachment, and that brand attachment have an influence on purchase intention and also a significant influence on consumers' brand extension attitude. As a result, vehicle brands ought to focus on the development of their brand's personality to ensure the continuous enhancement of consumers' brand attachment, which should significantly increase said consumers' willingness to purchase an extension of the vehicle brand.

**Keywords:** automotive industry, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, brand personality, purchase intention

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The South African automotive industry may be regarded as a fundamental part of the country's manufacturing industry, since it is a leading contributor to economic prosperity with its R4 337 billion contribution to the South African GDP in 2016 (AIEC, 2017:6-7; Naude & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:83; Smith, 2017). The South African automotive industry provides consumers with a selection of 55 brands (comprising of 3 458 different passenger vehicle models), and therefore it

is considered to be one of the most competitive trading environments in the world (AIEC, 2017:16; Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:356; NAAMSA, 2017b). Moreover, the AIEC (2017:16) and ENATIS (2017) reported that 7 097 726 passenger vehicles were registered in South Africa in 2017, which might be a result of the luxury of choice consumers have with regard to vehicle brands.

Nonetheless, South African consumers are currently experiencing decreased levels of confidence when deciding to purchase high-value products such as vehicles (Bubear, 2017; Smith, 2017). In addition, the recent malfunctioning scandals that transpired (as discussed in section 1.3.3) contributed to consumers' loss of confidence in and detachment from vehicle brands (AIEC, 2015:6; Bubear, 2017; Wheels24, 2017). Thus, manufacturers in the automotive industry need to realise the importance of branding, as it provides them with the opportunity to attach a personality to a vehicle brand with which consumers are able to associate, that ultimately results in an attachment towards a specific vehicle brand (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136).

Recently, alternative modes of transport were introduced to consumers, including various public transport systems such as the Gautrain (located in Gauteng), Uber, and the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit System (Gautrain, 2016; Rea Vaya, 2016; Uber, 2017). The result is that consumers have altered their perspective with regard to owning a vehicle, and this shift coincides with consumers' loss of confidence in, and absence of emotional attachment towards vehicle brands (Kolver, 2014; Parker *et al.*, 2016; Shirin & Puth, 2011:11913). Additionally, Ipsos (2014) notes that 35% of current vehicle owners indicated that they would consider a different brand when purchasing a new vehicle. Consequently, vehicle brands ought to prioritise establishing brand attachment through their various marketing activities, because consumers who experience a greater level of attachment towards a brand have a greater inclination to repurchase a specific brand or an extension of that brand (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). Therefore, the purpose of this article is to investigate the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. First, a literature review is presented pertaining to relevant concepts that form the focus of this research, and then the empirical results are presented and discussed, followed by recommendations to the automotive industry regarding their branding efforts.

## **5.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A brand allows an organisation to differentiate itself from competitors by means of the personification of signs and symbols, and this facilitates consumers' recognition and sense of belonging to the brand (Bastos & Levy, 2012:349). Furthermore, branding comprises a developmental process involving the creation of a distinctive name, logo, term, or design that is

encapsulated in the individual brand name or logo of an organisation, which is ultimately lodged in the minds and hearts of consumers (Armstrong & Kotler, 2011:243-244; Landa, 2006:9). Branding, therefore, serves as a facilitator of consumers' association with the brand, because the personality of the brand may represent certain individual characteristics with which consumers identify (Duncan, 2005:92). Branding further allows the organisation to develop characteristic markers that are specific to a brand, which ultimately enables the formulation of the consumer-brand relationship; this can also enhance consumers' intention to purchase a brand as a result of the confidence consumers have in a brand and the extent to which they identify with a particular brand (Kerin *et al.*, 2013:278; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136). David and Bearden (2017:48) note that the construction of a consumer-brand relationship is facilitated by branding and that consumers' levels of attachment may significantly influence their intention to purchase several of a brand's products.

### **5.2.1 Brand attachment**

Bowlby (1974:350) explains that the attachment theory, which forms the foundation of brand attachment, comprises of the establishment of a developmental relationship between an infant and its caregiver. This attachment can also be relevant in terms of branding. Park *et al.* (2010:4) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:88) describe brand attachment as a multi-faceted concept that describes consumers' ability to not only form an emotionally-laden bond with a specific brand, but also with a certain place. Brand attachment develops from consumers' desire to experience a social connectedness, and is therefore referred to as the connection that consumers experience between themselves and a brand (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017:366; Park *et al.*, 2010:2). Consumers experience this sense of connectedness with a brand when a gradual sense of brand attachment is sustained over a period of time. This is supported by consumers' tendency to become emotionally attached to a brand (Ghose & Lowengart, 2013:14-15; Schmitt, 2012:9). Interestingly, consumers' inclination to form an emotional bond with only a limited number of brands is dependent on the level of dependence they experienced towards their primary caregivers during their childhood (Belaid & Behi, 2011:19; Bidmon, 2017:180). According to Japtura *et al.* (2014:626) and Mikulincer and Shaver (2008:503), consumers who consider their relationship with a brand to be based on their attachment towards said brand tend to experience a greater sense of security.

Based on the premise that consumers are able to articulate the emotional attachment towards a brand, Thomson *et al.* (2005:80) conceptualised affection, passion and connection as specific dimensions that could influence consumers' emotional attachment towards a brand. Vehicle brands have the opportunity to enhance consumers' brand attachment by portraying their brands



as genuine and truthful throughout their various marketing platforms (Loureiro *et al.*, 2017:9). Enhancing consumers' brand attachment is of the utmost importance to an organisation, because consumers who experience a high level of attachment towards a brand may be positively inclined to purchase the brand, as well as extensions of the brand's product offerings, and may additionally be willing to forgive service failures when they occur (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:626; Sarkar & Roy, 2016:475). Consumers' level of brand attachment will be optimal when they perceive particular characteristics of a brand to reflect their individual personalities, which may also result in consumers having a negative predisposition towards brands that do not represent those individual personality traits (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012:108; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009:996).

### **5.2.2 Brand personality**

According to Aaker (1997:347), brand personality represents a set of human characteristics with which a brand is able to relate. John and Srivastava (1999:103) established that individuals' personalities are broadly represented by five dimensions, namely extraversion or surgency, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability versus neuroticism, and openness or intellect. From these dimensions, the Big Five Model was developed, which describe the individual's own actions as well as actions of other peoples by means of natural language terms (Goldberg, 1993:31-32). Aaker (1997:347) subsequently developed a brand personality model based on the dimensions of the Big Five Model, which reflects individuals' personality dimensions. During the course of consumers' pursuit to enhance their interactions and personal associations with brands, they tend to humanise a brand's product offerings by assigning particular human characteristics to these brands (Aaker, 1997:347; Babin & Harris, 2016:119).

The ability that consumers have to distinguish between product offerings that are indistinctive, in terms of physical attributes, is greater when they perceive the brand's personality as strong and favourable (Freling & Forbes, 2005:410). Moreover, Das (2014:136) and Swaminathan *et al.* (2009:996) believe that a brand's personality facilitates both consumers' social interactions and relationship-building efforts with a brand. Vehicle brands therefore have the opportunity to enhance consumers' repeat purchasing inclinations by incorporating accurate images regarding the key personality traits of the brand throughout their various marketing platforms (Ha & Janda, 2014:227). Developing a distinct parent brand personality will further assist consumers' acceptance of an extension product offering (Ferguson *et al.*, 2016:350).

### **5.2.3 Brand extension attitude**

Brand extension entails a brand venturing into new areas of product development and service offerings, which entails that the brand offers consumers variations of its existing products and

service offerings (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:26; Wood, 2000:668). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003:357) and Landa (2006:5) note that a brand extension occurs when the core characteristics of the parent brand are embedded in the development of a new product or service offering, which offers consumers different and added benefits. This results in attracting new target markets. Consumers' overall evaluation of a brand, which is the result of their assessment regarding the perceived fit of the new product in relation with the parent brand, has an effect on consumers' attitude towards a brand extension (Keller, 1993:5; Wang *et al.*, 2017:86).

According to Salinas and Pérez (2009:55), consumers' attitude towards an extension of a brand may have an impact on the image of the brand. Therefore, organisations' understanding of the aspects that influence consumers' attitude towards a brand extension (which includes their perceptions of favourability, of perceived quality and the likelihood that they would try out the extension), is pivotal (Salinas & Pérez, 2009:55). Chiu *et al.* (2017:170) regard consumers' attitude as the main factor that influences their intention to accept or adopt a brand extension. Therefore, vehicle brands ought to emphasise those characteristics that consumers perceive as symbolic, as this is likely to contribute towards consumers' perceived favourability of the brand (Kumar *et al.*, 2015:727; Reddy *et al.*, 2009:193). Furthermore, the likelihood of consumers to be willing to try a brand extension is predicated on whether they perceive such a brand extension as favourable and of good quality. This is the case because consumers' intent to purchase is driven by their trust in the brand along with a perceived level of similarity between the brand extension and the parent brand (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013:458; Spiggle *et al.*, 2012:979; Wu & Yen, 2007:339).

#### **5.2.4 Purchase intention**

The intention or tendency that consumers have to prospectively purchase a brand is known as purchase intention (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). Consumers' purchase intentions are based on the theory of reasoned action, which suggests that consumers' actions are a direct consequence of their intention to execute a behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:5). As a result, purchase intent rather than purchase behaviour became the focus of recent studies, since consumers' intention to purchase should have a more significant positive effect on their purchasing action (Schossler *et al.*, 2006:139-140).

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:6) noted that consumers' attitude and subjective norms are indicative of their intention to purchase. Consumers' intention to purchase a product is heightened when their attitude towards the purchasing action is favourable (Belleau *et al.*, 2007:254). Moreover, consumers' attempt to act in accordance with the subjective norms set out by reference groups

they deem important, act as a positive motivator of the intention that consumers have to purchase a product or to perform an action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980:6; Hsu *et al.*, 2017:150).

The intention that consumers express to purchase a brand's product offerings should be regarded as reliable but not as fixed, and thus the risk of assumption could be decreased if organisations incorporated purchase intent within their marketing objectives (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). Vehicle brands' proper understanding of consumers' desires and needs can allow them to enhance consumers' purchase intention optimally (Ali *et al.*, 2016:11). Consumers' purchase intentions, according to Rose *et al.* (2016:941), may be significantly affected by their brand attachment, which is based on a certain level of trust and perceived positive emotions. Additionally, when consumers perceive particular individual characteristics of themselves in the personality of a brand, the result may be an increased purchase intention (Beck & Dagogo-Jack, 2014:408; Wang & Yang, 2008:469). Furthermore, consumers' intention to purchase a brand's product offerings tend to increase when they feel that the extension of the brand portrays and fits into the positive brand image of the parent brand (Wang *et al.*, 2017:96; Wang & Tsai, 2014:35).

### **5.2.5 The relationship between the theoretical constructs**

Several studies have explored the relationship between brand personality and brand attachment as well as the consequences of consumers' brand attachment – including purchase intention and brand extension attitude. Louis and Lombart (2010:122) and Japtura *et al.* (2014:624) propound that consumers who consider the personality of the brand as a reflection of their individual personalities are more inclined to develop an attachment towards that brand. With regard to consumers' purchase intention, numerous scholars (Beck & Dagogo-Jack, 2014:408; Cheng *et al.*, 2016:11; Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624) found positive evidence that shows that emotionally attached consumers are inclined to draw favourable conclusions when evaluating the utility of a brand, and it follows that these consumers would be positively motivated to purchase a brand's products or services. Furthermore, Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) and He *et al.* (2016:250) established that indicating that consumers' willingness to purchase an extension of a brand would be favourable if they experience greater levels of attachment towards the parent brand.

Based on the above literature discussion, the following alternative hypotheses are presented:

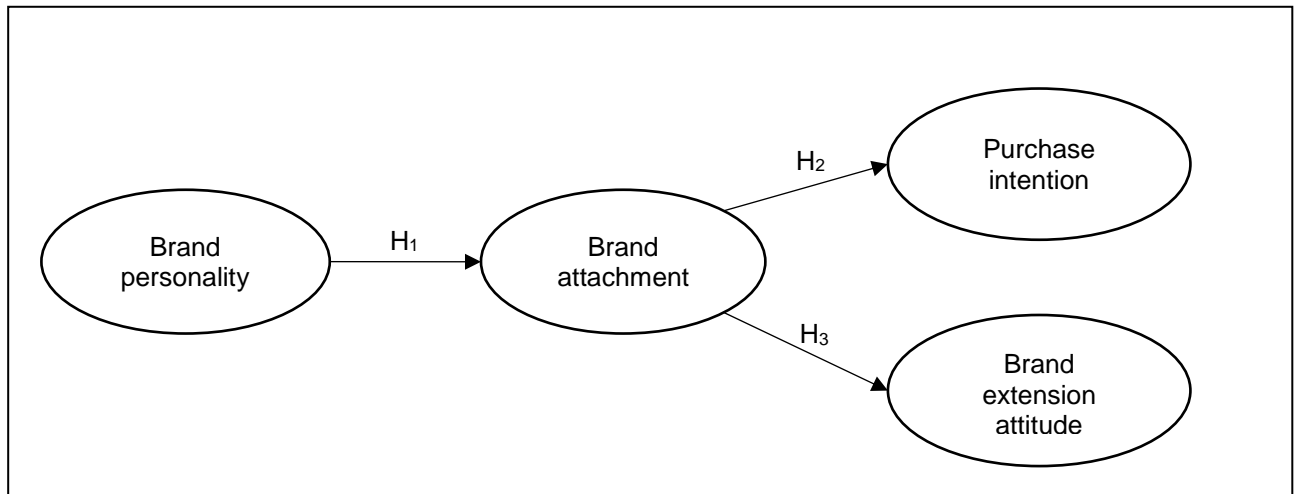
H<sub>1</sub>: Brand personality statistically significantly influences respondents' brand attachment.

H<sub>2</sub>: Brand attachment statistically significantly influences respondents' purchase intention.

H<sub>3</sub>: Brand attachment statistically significantly influences respondents' brand extension attitudes.

Figure 5-1 below depicts the conceptual model that has been developed based on these hypotheses.

**Figure 5-1: Conceptual model**



### 5.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

A visible deterioration in consumers' attachment towards vehicle brands can be detected, since 35% of current vehicle owners have recently indicated that they may be inclined to explore a different vehicle brand with their next purchase (Ipsos, 2014). The reasons for this deterioration of consumers' attachment to brand include the recent recall and malfunctioning of vehicles (AIEC, 2017:6; Bubear, 2017; Wheels24, 2017), an economic downturn that resulted in decline in vehicle sales (NAAMSA, 2017a; Wesbank, 2017), and an increasing variety of alternative modes of transport on offer (Minnie, 2017). Additionally, competition within the South African automotive industry is constantly increasing, as there are 55 passenger vehicle brands available to choose from (AIEC, 2017:16). Hence, Park *et al.* (2010:14) note that vehicle brands should focus on the development of consumers' brand attachment in order to ensure the consumer-brand relationship's prolonged existence. Developing emotional brand attachment in consumers is enhanced by creating a brand personality, which mirrors the individualistic personalities of these consumers (Bouhlei *et al.*, 2011:218; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) and Malär *et al.* (2011:46) add that developing consumers' attachment towards a brand is of vital importance, because brand attachment enhances consumers' intention to purchase a brand or an extension of that brand. Beck and Dagogo-Jack

(2014:408) further note that consumers' intention to purchase or to recommend a brand is increased by their attachment towards the brand, since consumers perceive brand attachment as a confirmation of the relationship that exists between a brand and its consumers.

In the South African automotive industry, no investigation has been undertaken on the topic of vehicle buyers' brand attachment. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour to determine whether the significant influence of brand personality on consumers' brand attachment has an influence on the brand extension attitude and purchase intention of vehicle buyers. Accordingly, the following objectives are presented, namely to:

- 1) Describe the sample profile.
- 2) Determine the validity and reliability of the measurement scales for brand attachment, brand extension attitude, brand personality and purchase intention.
- 3) Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.
- 4) Determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their vehicle brand.
- 5) Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.
- 6) Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their vehicle brand.
- 7) Determine the interrelationship between brand attachment, brand extension attitude, brand personality and purchase intention.

## **5.4 METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative descriptive research design was implemented in this research. The target population of this research included consumers who reside in Gauteng, who own a vehicle, and who plan to purchase the same vehicle brand they currently own when buying a new vehicle within the next year. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to select respondents, since no databases were publically available from which a sampling framework could be gathered.

Non-probability convenience sampling, by means of a computer-administered survey (developed with Google Docs), was used to collect the sample elements. The questionnaire was distributed on Facebook, which required the researcher to ask respondents to complete and submit the electronic questionnaire voluntarily. In addition, by not asking questions where respondents had

to disclose any private or detectable information, the researcher ensured that respondents' replies remained anonymous.

The questionnaire included a preamble that provided respondents with an explanation of the purpose of the research, as well as their rights. The preamble was followed by two screening questions, with the aim of confirming that a respondent owns a vehicle and plans to remain with their current brand during their next vehicle purchase. These screening questions were developed from the research of Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) and Japtura *et al.* (2014:627) to ensure that respondents' emotional attachment towards their vehicle brand is confirmed. The questionnaire further consisted of six sections, where the main objective of Sections A and B was to determine both the demographic information and patronage behaviours of respondents. In Sections C to F, unlabelled Likert scales (where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) were used to measure respondents' agreement with the statements made within the respective sections. *Brand attachment* was measured using scale items adopted from Malär *et al.* (2011:48) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:87). *Brand personality* was measured using scale items adopted from Aaker (1997:351) and Romaniuk (2008:157). Respondents' *purchase intention* was measured using items adopted from Kaufmann *et al.* (2016:5745), and *brand extension* was measured by means of items adopted from Aaker and Keller (1990:35) and Salinas and Pérez (2009:55).

A pilot test was conducted among 10 respondents from the target population to ensure that possible misunderstandings respondents might experience regarding the manner in which the questionnaire is phrased, were identified and corrected. Thereafter, the finalised questionnaire was distributed electronically to a number of public and closed Gauteng-based Facebook community groups, which yielded 332 usable questionnaires for the data analysis.

The data that was collected was captured, cleaned and analysed by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) (version 24). Frequencies and percentages were calculated to analyse the demographic profile and patronage behaviours of respondents (sample profile), and means and standard deviations were calculated to describe the constructs under investigation.

To determine the validity and reliability of the measures used in this research, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were conducted. Cronbach's alpha values determine the internal consistency reliability of the constructs of this paper (i.e. brand attachment, brand personality, brand extension attitudes and purchase intention), and confirmation of reliability was established if the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70 (Field, 2013: 679). Structural equation modelling was used to determine the interrelationship between brand personality, brand attachment, purchase intention and brand extension attitude. The SEM

results allowed the researcher to attain the structural model by means of the measurement and path model. The fit indices that were reported comprised of the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) and its associated degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), with their respective recommended cut-off values.

## **5.5 RESULTS**

### **5.5.1 Descriptive statistics**

The results of the descriptive statistics, which include frequencies and percentages, were calculated from the demographic and patronage behaviour variables in order to describe the sample profile. Of the 322 respondents who participated in the research, 75.9% were female and 98.5% were white. Also, the majority of respondents (42.6%) were between the age of 28 and 39. The majority of respondents were either full-time employed by an organisation (58.2%) or self-employed (28.3%). Furthermore, 33.1% of respondents indicated that held obtained a university degree, with (26.8%) holding a postgraduate qualification.

The majority of respondents (26.5%) indicated that they own a Ford. With regard to the duration of vehicle brand ownership, 35.5% of respondents indicated that they have owned their specific vehicle brand for between one and two years, whereas 21.1% of respondents indicated that they have owned their specified vehicle brand for longer than 10 years. Furthermore, 58.7% of respondents are of the opinion that their family members are the main influencers with regard to their vehicle brand choice. The majority of respondents (41.0%) also indicated that they purchase a new vehicle at intervals of 10 years or longer. Most of the respondents (28.6%) noted that the resale value of a vehicle is the most important attraction, with fuel consumption (33.7%) being the second most important, and cost of ownership (28.3%) being the third most important attraction aspects when purchasing a vehicle brand.

As indicated in Table 5-1, the overall mean scores of the constructs demonstrate that respondents rated purchase intention the highest (mean = 3.59), followed by brand extension attitude (mean = 3.16), brand personality (mean = 2.78) and brand attachment (mean = 2.58). Thus, it can be concluded that respondents are in agreement with the measured statements.

### **5.5.2 Validity and reliability**

The overall mean scores of the constructs, as shown in Table 5-1, varied between 2.58 and 3.59. As a result, these scores can be considered as relatively positive, because all the constructs were measured on five-point Likert scales. Face validity was confirmed by means of existing scales,

which measured each particular construct of this paper. Table 5-1 depicts the means, covariances, and average variance extracted (AVE) (on the diagonal) for each construct.

**Table 5-1: Means and covariance matrix for the latent variable with AVE on the diagonal**

Variable	Mean	Purchase intention	Brand attachment	Brand personality	Brand extension attitude
Purchase intention	3.59	<b>0.965</b>			
Brand attachment	2.58	0.252	<b>0.936</b>		
Brand personality	2.78	0.270	0.853	<b>0.902</b>	
Brand extension attitude	3.16	0.834	0.397	0.455	<b>0.864</b>

Note: All correlations are significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

It is evident from Table 5-2 that the AVE values for purchase intention, brand attachment, brand personality and brand extension attitude were larger than 0.50, thus signifying convergent validity (Hair *et al.*, 2014:618-619). Table 5-2 presents the factor loadings, the construct reliability (CR), and the Cronbach's alpha values for the respective constructs.

**Table 5-2: Reliability and convergent validity results**

Construct and items	Standardised factor loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
<i>Brand attachment</i>		0.936	0.986	0.986
My brand makes me feel captivated.	0.932			
My brand makes me feel delighted.	0.914			
My brand makes me feel passionate.	0.934			
My brand makes me feel connected.	0.940			
My brand makes me feel bonded.	0.950			
My brand makes me feel attached.	0.954			
My brand makes me feel affectionate.	0.946			
My brand makes me feel friendly.	0.946			
My brand makes me feel peaceful.	0.913			
My brand makes me feel loved.	0.929			



**Table 5-2: Reliability and convergent validity results (cont.)**

Construct and items	Standardised factor loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
<i>Brand personality</i>		0.902	0.972	0.972
The brand is tough.	0.851			
The brand is daring.	0.905			
The brand is spirited.	0.923			
The brand is exciting.	0.955			
The brand is sentimental.	0.853			
The brand is family-orientated.	0.887			
The brand is good-looking.	0.933			
The brand is glamorous.	0.903			
<i>Purchase intention</i>		0.965	0.982	0.981
Purchasing this brand is my first choice.	0.925			
I intend to purchase this brand when I need a car in the future.	0.981			
If I would purchase a vehicle now, I would buy this brand.	0.984			
I intend to purchase this brand in the future.	0.970			
<i>Brand extension attitude</i>		0.864	0.919	0.917
I perceive the quality of the brand's extension product as good.	0.963			
I am in favour of purchasing an extension product of the brand.	0.556			
The extension product of the brand complements the original product.	0.967			
The extension product of the brand will act as a suitable substitute for the original.	0.904			

From Table 5-2, it can be observed that the items loaded significantly onto their respective constructs ( $p < 0.01$ ), and all of the standardised factor loadings (except brand extension attitude statement three: "I will consider trying the brand extension product") were, as Hair *et al.* (2014:617) suggested, above the lower limit cut-off value of 0.50. As a result, the brand extension attitude statement (statement three) was discarded due to its low factor loading. Furthermore, the construct reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values for all of the constructs exceeded the recommended value of 0.70 (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). Thus, one can glean from these findings that the latent variables of brand attachment, brand extension attitude, brand personality and purchase intention have reliability and convergent validity.

A further evaluation of the construct validity was conducted by means of a CFA. The Chi-square/degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) ratio of 5.844 was above the cut-off point as suggested by Wheaton *et al.* (1977:99). However, according to Hooper *et al.* (2008:54), the Chi-square estimate may be sensitive to discrepancies if the sample size is relatively large, as is the case with this research ( $n = 332$ ). As a result, the model fit statistics also had to be reported. Both the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) values are greater than 0.90, with their values at 0.911 and 0.904 respectively, which indicated that they were above their required cut-off values (Hoe, 2008:78; Hu & Bentler, 1999:27; Tucker & Lewis, 1973:7-8). In addition, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value is 0.056, indicating an acceptable model fit (Hoe, 2008:78; McDonald & Ho, 2002:72), and thus confirming construct validity.

### 5.5.3 Structural model analysis

SEM was conducted to test the hypotheses formulated for this paper. Table 5-3 presents the results from the analysis.

**Table 5-3: SEM results for measurement model**

Path	Standardised effect ( $\beta$ -weight)	Hypothesis result
H <sub>1</sub> : Brand personality → Brand attachment	0.854***	Supported
H <sub>2</sub> : Brand attachment → Purchase intention	0.258***	Supported
H <sub>3</sub> : Brand attachment → Brand extension attitude	0.405***	Supported
<b>Model fit statistics</b>		
$\chi^2/df$	5.032	
CFI	0.921	
TLI	0.908	
RMSEA	0.071	

Note: Relationship is statistically significant at: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

It is evident from Table 5-3 that the Chi-square/degrees of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ) ratio is 5.032. With reference to Wheaton *et al.* (1977:99), this ratio is marginally above the cut-off value of 5.00. However, this may be attributed to the large sample size as suggested by Hooper *et al.* (2008:54). Additionally, it is apparent that the TLI (0.908) and CFI (0.921) are above the recommended cut-off value of 0.90 (Hoe, 2008:78; Hu & Bentler, 1999:27; Tucker & Lewis, 1973:7-8). The RMSEA value of 0.071 can be noted as an acceptable fit – with reference to Hoe (2008:78) and McDonald and Ho (2002:72). Thus, it can be concluded that the model fits the observed data reasonably well.

Furthermore, Table 5-3 indicates that the standardised regression weights with regard to all of the hypothesised relationships between constructs are positive, as they range from 0.258 to 0.854. Brand personality has a positive and significant influence on brand attachment, meaning that  $H_1$  can be accepted. In addition, brand attachment was found to have a positive and significant influence on respondents' purchase intentions, meaning that  $H_2$  can be accepted. Finally, brand attachment was also established to have a positive and significant influence on respondents' brand extension attitudes, and therefore,  $H_3$  can be accepted.

## **5.6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

A number of observations can be made based on these empirical results. Firstly, it seems evident respondents qualified for participation in the research, since the majority of respondents are white females between the ages of 29 to 38, which is indicative of their established lifestyles. Additionally, most of the respondents are full-time employed by an organisation, with most of them holding a university or post-graduate degree, which indicates that they are well-educated. Secondly, it can be observed that respondents have owned their specific vehicle brand for longer than three years, with the majority vehicle brand owned by respondents being Ford. Furthermore, it can be observed that respondents are mainly influenced by the opinions of their family members when purchasing a new vehicle every five years or more. The fourth observation that can be made is that vehicle brands ought to focus on the development of brand attachment and brand personality, because respondents were least in agreement with statements made regarding these constructs.

According to the results of the SEM, one can conclude that all three hypotheses ( $H_1$  to  $H_3$ ) can be accepted as the standardised regression weights achieved were all positive and significant. Moreover, the results indicate a reasonable fit between the model and the observed data.

From the results, it can further be observed that brand personality significantly influences brand attachment; this is in line with the findings of Malär *et al.* (2011:46), who found that consumers tend to have an optimal attachment experience towards a brand when their individual selves are incorporated in the personality of the brand. It can also be observed that brand attachment significantly influences purchase intention, which concurs with the findings of Rose *et al.* (2016:941) who found that the purchase intent displayed by consumers is significantly influenced by their attachment towards a brand – this attachment is established by the positive emotions and level of trust that they have towards a brand. Furthermore, an observation can be made that brand attachment significantly influences brand extension attitude. This result is in line with the findings of Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290), who found that consumers' willingness to purchase a brand extension is significantly influenced by the level of attachment that they experience towards the

parent brand. Therefore, vehicle brands should focus on incorporating the distinct individual personalities of their target market into their core product offerings and also their extended product ranges.

## **5.7 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to the empirical results, brand personality significantly influences consumers' brand attachment. Therefore, it is imperative for vehicle brands to develop distinctive, individual brand personalities with which consumers are able to relate. Babin and Harris (2016:119) note that consumers' ability to distinguish brands from one another is facilitated by strong brand concepts, which are part and parcel of the personality of the brand. For this reason, it is important for vehicle brands to ensure that the traits found within the strong brand concept are incorporated into the brand personality that is presented to consumers; this is likely to enhance consumers' brand attachment.

With regard to the brand extension attitude that consumers display, the empirical results indicated that consumers are not always in favour of purchasing the extension product of a brand. Vehicle brands can, therefore, focus on developing favourable perceptions among consumers towards their brand and its extensions. Scholars Keller (1993:5), and Som and Pape (2015:34) believe that consumers need to experience a degree of acceptance towards the brand extension in order to regard the brand as favourable, and this requires them to trust that the brand extension has the characteristics and benefits that will satisfy their needs. In addition, the empirical results indicated that brand attachment has a strong influence on respondents' brand extension attitudes, and since brand personality influences brand attachment, vehicle brands need to establish a distinct personality for their brand with which consumers can associate. Thus, it would be beneficial for vehicle brands to place focus on portraying the brand's symbolic characteristics, which comprises the brand's aesthetic appeal and positive meaning, to ultimately increase consumers' favourable perceptions towards the brand and its extensions.

Lastly, the empirical results indicate that brand attachment influences purchase intention, but not as strongly. This implies that vehicle brands should investigate additional factors that may significantly predict consumers' purchase intention, in order to remain competitive within the South African automotive industry.

## **5.8 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS**

The results obtained from this research cannot be generalised to other geographical areas within South Africa, since they are based on responses obtained from vehicle owners who reside in

Gauteng. South African consumers are culturally diverse, which means that one can expect diverse consumer decision-making processes throughout the country; this makes it difficult to predict the consequences of vehicle buyer's brand attachment in the larger population. As a result, it is suggested that a similar research project should be conducted on a national level. The present research used non-probability convenience sampling, and therefore it is recommended that future research can apply probability sampling and longitudinal research as alternative methodological approaches. Moreover, this research elicited participation from mostly female respondents, which means that a more representative spread of gender is needed in future research, in order to gain a more coherent picture of consumers' brand attachment. The distribution of the computer-administered questionnaires on Facebook community groups resulted in the researcher feeling hesitant to repetitively share the questionnaire, in fear of bombarding respondents who may have already submitted their responses. Future research may also seek to investigate other possible consequences of vehicle buyer's brand attachment.

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## MAIN FINDINGS FROM ARTICLE 2 CONTRIBUTING TO THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

**Main finding 5.1:** The brand attachment measurement scale used in this paper, with items adopted from Malär *et al.* (2011:48) and Thomson *et al.* (2005:87), is valid and reliable for the study population, specifically to measure vehicle buyers' brand attachment in Gauteng.

**Main finding 5.2:** The brand personality measurement scale used in this paper, with items adopted from Aaker (1997:351) and Romaniuk (2008:157), is valid and reliable for the study population, specifically to measure vehicle buyers' brand attachment in Gauteng.

**Main finding 5.3:** The brand extension attitude measurement scale used in this paper, with items adopted from Aaker and Keller (1990:35) and Salinas and Pérez (2009:55), is valid and reliable for the study population, specifically to measure vehicle buyers' brand attachment in Gauteng.

**Main finding 5.4:** The purchase intention measurement scale used in this paper, with items adopted from Kaufmann *et al.* (2016:5745), is valid and reliable for the study population, specifically to measure vehicle buyers' brand attachment in Gauteng.

**Main finding 5.5:** The vehicle's brand personality predicts respondents' brand attachment.

**Main finding 5.6:** Respondents' attachment to their vehicle brand predicts their purchase intention.

**Main finding 5.7:** Respondents' attachment to their vehicle brand predicts their brand extension attitude.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter concludes the study by providing conclusions and offering recommendations pertaining to the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour in the South African automotive industry. The chapter commences with an overview of the study, after which the conclusions and recommendations with regard to the secondary objectives of the study (see section 1.6) are discussed. Subsequently, a summary is provided of the link between the research objectives, hypotheses, the questions in the questionnaire, the main findings, and the conclusions and recommendations of the study. A discussion of the study's limitations and potential directions for future research concludes this chapter.

#### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

##### **6.2.1 Literature overview**

The competitive South African automotive industry, which in addition to the manufacturing of vehicles and car parts also includes the sales of both new and pre-owned vehicles, faces a number of challenges (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2011:356; Bubear, 2017; Stats SA, 2012:126; Stats SA, 2016:3). Some of these challenges, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.3), include:

- a decrease in global and national vehicle sales,
- an increase in competing vehicle brands,
- decreased consumer budget,
- the increasing availability of more reliable public transportation (such as car-pooling, ride-sharing, Uber, Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit System, and the Gautrain),
- malfunctioning vehicle scandals, and
- the changing technological environment.

To address these challenges, it has become paramount for vehicle manufacturers to focus their marketing efforts on improving consumers' confidence in the South African automotive industry.

According to Fedorikhin *et al.* (2008:290) and Malär *et al.* (2011:46), the success of vehicle brands depends on the development of an attachment between the brand and consumers, as more than a third of vehicle owners in South Africa indicated that they are considering an alternative vehicle brand for their future new or pre-owned vehicle purchase (Ipsos, 2014). Keller and Lehmann (2006), Semenik *et al.* (2012:136), and Tsai *et al.* (2015:371) further note that a strong brand promotes a level of trust, which may improve consumers' purchase intentions. Vehicle brands, therefore, need to consider improving their overall brand by keeping aspects such as the personality of the brand, the brand image, and the associated trust in mind. If consumers are able to relate to a brand, they will be more inclined to attach themselves to the brand, resulting in an emotional level of trust and commitment (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46).

Various scholars (Hutter *et al.*, 2013:345; Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8) argue that cultivating a fit between consumers' personal image and the image of the brand further aids the development of consumers' emotional attachment towards a vehicle brand. Branding enhances the level of trust that consumers experience towards a brand, which positively affects their identification and perception of a brand, subsequently enhancing their intent to purchase that brand (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Tsai *et al.*, 2015:371). The further implementation of branding in the marketing efforts of vehicle manufacturers enables the development of a brand personality with which consumers can associate and ultimately become attached to (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:621; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Semenik *et al.*, 2012:136).

Developing emotional brand attachment towards a brand in consumers is further aided when consumers can recognise their individual personalities in the unique personality of the vehicle brand (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46). This notion concurs with statements by scholars (Fedorikhin *et al.*, 2008:290; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Rose *et al.*, 2016:941) that vehicle brands can benefit from developing brand attachment through their marketing actions, since an enhanced level of brand attachment may positively incline consumers to purchase a certain brand or an extension of that brand. Consumers' purchase intentions, according to Hammerl *et al.* (2016:37), are further subjected to the opinion of the consumer's reference group's perceived beliefs regarding the brand.

Based on the literature study (in Chapter 2), brand image, brand trust and brand personality were identified as potential factors that might influence vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. In addition, the literature underlined various possible outcomes of brand attachment (see section 2.4.3), including (1) an increase in consumers' value perceptions of the brand, (2) an increase in consumers' repeat purchases, (3) an increase in consumers' willingness to pay a premium price, (4) an increase in consumers' willingness to purchase extensions of the brand, and (5) the

willingness of consumers to forgive service failures. For the purpose of this study, vehicle buyers' purchase intention and brand extension attitudes were investigated.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research exists with regard to the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment in the South African automotive industry. Furthermore, by investigating the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour, the researcher is able to gain greater insight into the various factors that influence consumers' attachment towards a brand, as well as the consequences of that brand attachment.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to determine the factors that influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and to establish whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to pursue other extensions of the vehicle brand.

The following secondary objectives, which were formulated in Chapter 1 (section 1.6), support the primary objective, namely to:

- 1) Describe the sample profile.
- 2) Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.
- 3) Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.
- 4) Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.
- 5) Determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their vehicle brand.
- 6) Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.
- 7) Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their vehicle brand.
- 8) Determine the interrelationships between brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention.

### **6.2.2 Empirical overview**

Referring to the research methodology discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7) and Chapter 3, the researcher implemented a research design that was descriptive in nature by applying a quantitative research approach. The population of the study included consumers who reside in Gauteng, own a vehicle, and plan to remain with the vehicle brand they currently own when

purchasing a new vehicle. The researcher opted to use non-probability convenience sampling, since a sampling frame could not be obtained due to the unavailability of detailed vehicle ownership records. Therefore, the researcher distributed computer-administered questionnaires on the social media platform Facebook in public and closed community groups within Gauteng. The 322 completed questionnaires were analysed using SPSS and AMOS (version 24). The methodology and results of this study were presented in two articles (Chapters 4 and 5) to be considered for publication in nationally accredited academic journals.

As discussed in the literature (section 2.4.4 and section 4.1), a number of factors contributed to consumers' emotional detachment from vehicle brands. The first article (Chapter 4), therefore, investigated brand image, brand trust, and brand personality as antecedents of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. The results of this article (section 4.5.4) established that brand personality had the strongest significant influence on brand attachment (main finding 4.5). Furthermore, it was determined that brand trust had a small but positive influence on brand attachment (main finding 4.6), whereas brand image had a small, but negative influence on brand attachment (main finding 4.7). As a result, it was suggested that vehicle brands should emphasise developing a strong, unique and reputable brand personality, in order to aid consumers' recognition of their own individual personalities with that of the brand, to ultimately enhance their attachment towards the brand.

The second article (Chapter 5) argued that both the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour should be investigated in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of consumers' brand attachment. Due to the results obtained in the first article (Chapter 4), the researcher made the decision to focus solely on brand personality as a predictor of vehicle buyers' brand attachment. The purchase intention and brand extension attitudes of vehicle buyers were regarded as consequences of brand attachment. A structural equation modelling analysis determined that brand personality significantly influences consumers' brand attachment (main finding 5.5). Moreover, it was found that brand attachment significantly influences both the purchase intention of consumers (main finding 5.6), as well as their brand extension attitude (main finding 5.7). Chapter 5 (section 5.7) concluded with the suggestion that vehicle brands should aim to integrate the distinct individualistic personalities of their target consumers in their core product offerings as well as extended product ranges of the brand.



## 6.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents conclusions and proposes recommendations for each of the secondary objectives of the study. These conclusions and recommendations are based on the theoretical background (Chapter 2) and the empirical results (Chapter 4 and 5) of the study.

### 6.3.1 Secondary objective 1

Describe the sample profile.
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Section 4.5.1 and 5.5.1 described the sample profile of the study. The descriptive statistics of the respondents who participated in the study was determined by the SPSS (version 24). The results indicated that the majority of respondents (75.9%) were female. As illustrated in section 4.5.1, the majority of respondents were white (98.5%) with the remainder being either Indian (0.9%) or coloured (0.6%). The results further revealed that the majority of respondents (42.6%) were between 28 and 39 years of age. More than half of the respondents (58.6%) were full-time employed by an organisation and had obtained a university degree (33.1%) or a post-graduate degree (28.6%).

The results also showed that the majority of respondents (26.5%) own a Ford. In terms of the duration of ownership, 35.5% of respondents indicated that they have owned their specific vehicle brand for between one and two years, and 21.1% of respondents indicated that they have owned their specific vehicle brand for a period longer than 10 years. More than half of the respondents (58.7%) indicated that their vehicle brand choice is mainly influenced by their family members, with 41.0% of respondents indicating that they purchase a new vehicle in intervals of 10 years or longer. Lastly, in terms of the most important attractions when purchasing a new vehicle, the majority of respondents (28.6%) indicated that the most important attraction is the resale value of the vehicle, 33.7% of respondents indicated that the fuel consumption of a vehicle is the second most important attraction, with 28.3% of respondents indicating that the cost of ownership is the third most important attraction when purchasing a new vehicle.

**Conclusion 1.1:** The results discussed provided marketing researchers and managers with a better understanding of the respondents who partook in the study.

**Recommendation 1.1:** Vehicle brands need to develop a more uniform representation of the target population in terms of gender and ethnicity, which should provide them with useful and relevant information for market segmentation purposes.

**6.3.2 Secondary objective 2**

Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.

Brand personality was described (in section 2.7) as the set of human characteristics with which a brand associate itself (Aaker, 1997:347). Several scholars (Babin & Harris, 2016:119; Bouhlel *et al.*, 2009:467; Rajagopal, 2006:55-57) indicate that a brand's personality assist with the brand's efforts to differentiate themselves from the market, by improving consumers' perceived expectations regarding important characteristics, and it also contributes towards the brand's efforts to build a long-term consumer-brand relationship.

The personality of a brand, as discussed in section 2.7.2, 4.2.4 and 5.2.2, entails certain characteristics (i.e. sincerity, excitement and competence, ruggedness and sophistication) that form part of the five-factor structure developed by Aaker (1997:347) that is used to measure the personality of a brand. The implementation of this measurement instrument allows brands the opportunity to develop a personality that the target market perceives as attractive and familiar (Müller, 2014:532). Furthermore, a brand's ability to portray a distinct parent brand personality will facilitate consumers' acceptance of alternative product offerings by the brand (Ferguson *et al.*, 2016:350).

As a result, secondary objective 2, aimed to determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand. The results (in sections 4.5.3 and 5.5.3) obtained by means of a five-point Likert scale indicated that respondents generally have a positive association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand. Sections 4.5.2 and 5.5.2 also pointed out that the measurement scale used to measure respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand were valid and reliable. (Secondary objective 2 is addressed by main findings 4.4 and 5.2.)

**Conclusion 2.1:** Respondents generally had a positive association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.

**Recommendation 2.1:** Vehicle brands need to develop a distinct brand personality that consumers are able to relate to. Using the brand personality traits of sincerity, excitement and competence, ruggedness and sophistication throughout the marketing platforms of the vehicle brand would help consumers to identify the brand with greater ease, because they will be able to perceive their individual personalities with the distinct personality of the brand.

**Recommendation 2.2:** Vehicle brands need to incorporate a distinct brand personality in their extended product offerings. The specific brand personality trait of the vehicle brand, which may be either sincerity, excitement, competence, ruggedness or sophistication, needs to be identifiable in all of the marketing efforts of the brand's extended product offerings.

### **6.3.3 Secondary objective 3**

Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.

Brand image, according to Aaker (1996:71), is the way in which consumers recognise a brand, as discussed in sections 2.5 and 4.2.2. Brand image is described as the cognitive, affective and evaluative processes that consumers use to develop their associations and perceptions with the brand, which will ultimately influence their brand image perceptions (Anselmsson *et al.*, 2014:96; Arai *et al.*, 2013:384; Lee *et al.*, 2014:8; Roy & Banerjee, 2014:2).

Section 2.5.1 and 4.2.2 indicated that Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) note the dimensions of a brand's image as typically comprising of the functional image, the affective image and the reputation.

- *Functional image:* this entails the observation that consumers make regarding the tangible and product-related characteristics of a brand's product-offerings (Chen & Chen, 2014:84; He & Lai, 2014:252).
- *Affective image:* this involves the positive and negative emotions that consumers experience when exposed to a brand's image (Hosany *et al.*, 2006:640; Salinas & Pérez, 2009:55).
- *Reputation:* this refers to the previous behaviour of a brand that affects consumers' opinions of the brand (Belch & Belch, 2012:101; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997:6).

As discussed in section 2.5.1, the dimensions of a brand image are of vital importance, as consumers' ability to perceive value-adding product-offerings as useful translates into positive emotions towards the brand, which ultimately result in the brand having a positive reputation (Chen & Chen, 2014:84; Lau & Lee, 1999:361; Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997:6).

Taking the importance of the brand image dimensions into consideration, secondary objective 3 set out to determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand. The results (in section 4.5.2) showed that the measurement scale used to measure respondents' brand image

perceptions of their vehicle brand were valid and reliable. In section 4.5.3, respondents indicated that they generally have a positive perception of their vehicle brand. (Secondary objective 3 is addressed by main finding 4.2.)

**Conclusion 3.1:** Respondents generally have a positive connotation with the image of their vehicle brand.

**Recommendation 3.1:** Vehicle brands need to ensure that they develop and maintain the functional image, affective image and reputation of their brands in order to enhance consumers' brand image perception. This could be achieved by vehicle brands making sure that their product offerings perform functionally as stated by marketing efforts, since that will result in consumers developing a positive image, which will contribute towards building a strong reputation for the vehicle brand.

**Recommendation 3.2:** Vehicle brands need to make sure that they portray a constant brand image throughout their various product ranges. All of the extended ranges that the vehicle brand has on offer need to maintain the same standard of tangible and product-related characteristics.

#### **6.3.4 Secondary objective 4**

Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.
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Brand trust, as discussed in section 2.6, refers to a consumer's willingness to depend on the ability of a brand to execute specified functions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001:82). The literature review (in section 2.6.1 and 4.2.3) indicated that consumers' trust in a brand is a result of their emotional involvement with a brand, which is developed through the stages of predictability, dependability on towards trust (Babin & Harris, 2016:149, Japtura *et al.*, 2014:624; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98).

- *Predictability:* this entails the consistent behaviour portrayed by a brand that allows consumers to predict the brand's future performances (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Delgado-Ballester, 2004:575; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98).
- *Dependability:* this is the result of extensive interaction between consumer and the brand to allow consumers to focus less on specific behaviour portrayed by the brand, and more on the general behaviour of the brand (Belaid & Behi, 2011:46; Rempel *et al.*, 1985:95-98).

- *Trust*: this is regarded as the conclusion of consumers' involvement and facilitates consumers' attachment to a brand (Phan & Ghantous, 2013:472; Schiffman *et al.*, 2010:30).

Section 2.6.2 and 4.2.3 further explored the characteristics of trust (i.e. reliability and intention), as identified by Delgado-Ballester (2004:586-587).

- *Reliability*: this refers to a brand's performance, which entails the brand's ability to provide the functional capabilities and physical attributes of its product-offerings.
- *Intention*: this entails the favourable conduct that brands portray towards consumers, which consumers consider worthy of recreation.

Brand trust lowers consumers' perceived risk, resulting them demonstrating a positive intention to purchase extended product-offerings of a brand (Hanslin & Rindell, 2014:163; Kim & Jones 2009:294). Therefore, secondary objective 4 set out to determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brands. The results, discussed in section 4.5.2, found the measurement scale used to measure respondents' brand trust towards their vehicle brand valid and reliable. The results (in section 4.5.3) further indicated that respondents tend to trust their vehicle brands. (Secondary objective 4 is addressed by main finding 4.3.)

**Conclusion 4.1:** Respondents tend to trust their vehicle brands.

**Recommendation 4.1:** Vehicle brands must instil trust in their consumers, since this will facilitate their acceptance of brand extensions. This will be possible if vehicle brands constantly deliver innovative and vehicles of good quality to consumers.

**Recommendation 4.2:** Vehicle brands must develop and maintain consumers' brand trust, in order to build a relationship between the brand and the consumer, from which both may benefit. The continuous deliverance of vehicles that are of good quality, and which perform functionally as specified, will lead consumers to trust the vehicle brand.

### 6.3.5 Secondary objective 5

Determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their vehicle brand.

Brand attachment was described in section 2.4 as consumers' fulfilment of their desire to experience a connection or sense of relation between themselves and a brand (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017:366; Schmitt, 2012:9). The development of consumers' connection with a brand

over a prolonged period of time may result in them becoming emotionally attached to a brand (Ghose & Lowengart, 2013:14-15; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:88). The literature review (in section 2.4.1) explained that brand attachment derives from attachment theory, which Bowlby (1974:350) describes as the developmental relationship that is formed between an infant and its caregiver.

Thomson *et al.* (2005:88) conceptualised (as discussed in 2.4.2) that the dimensions of affection, passion and connection may influence consumers' emotional brand attachment, on the basis that they can express their emotional attachment towards a brand.

- *Affection*: affectionate, loved, peaceful, friendly.
- *Passion*: passionate, delighted, captivated.
- *Connection*: attached, bonded, connected.

Developing and maintaining consumers' brand attachment are essential, since higher levels of consumer attachment towards a brand may result in them being more willing to purchase a brand and its extended product-offerings, and they will be more prone to forgive service failures (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:626; Sarkar & Roy, 2016:475). Therefore, the goal of secondary objective 5 was to determine the brand attachment that respondents have towards their preferred vehicle brands. The results (in section 4.5.3 and 5.5.3), acquired by using a five-point Likert scale, indicated that respondents experience a moderate attachment towards their vehicle brands. Sections 4.5.2 and 5.5.2 further indicated that the measurement scale used to measure respondents' brand attachment towards their preferred vehicle brands was valid and reliable. (Secondary objective 5 is addressed by main findings 4.1 and 5.1.)

**Conclusion 5.1:** Respondents' brand attachment towards their preferred vehicle brands is moderate.

**Recommendation 5.1:** Vehicle brands ought to focus on the development of the dimensions of brand attachment by portraying these dimensions of brand attachment throughout various marketing platforms.

**Recommendation 5.2:** Vehicle brands should enhance and maintain consumers' brand attachment as this may result in an extended relationship. This could be achieved by the vehicle brand portraying their brand as genuine and truthful in all of their marketing communications.

**6.3.6 Secondary objective 6**

Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.

The brand extension attitude of consumers (discussed in section 2.8.1) is affected by their overall evaluation of a brand, which results from whether they perceive the extended product offering of the brand to fit with the parent brand (Keller, 1993:5; Wang *et al.*, 2017:86). The literature review (in section 2.8 and 5.2.3) indicated that brand extension involves a brand offering variations of its current product and service offerings to consumers as it ventures into new areas of product development and service offerings (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:26; Wood, 2000:668).

Salinas and Pérez (2009:55) explain (as in section 2.8.1) that it is vital for brands to understand that consumers' brand extension attitudes comprise their favourability, perceived quality and likelihood of trying the brand extension.

- *Favourability*: this is consumers' acceptance of a brand extension, by perceiving the brand image fit as appropriate and trusting that the brand extension has the benefits and characteristics to satisfy their needs (Keller, 1993:5; Som & Pape, 2015:34).
- *Perceived quality*: this entails consumers' perception that the brand extension will be a quality product-offering if the parent brand portrays a brand image of quality (Chiu *et al.*, 2017:160).
- *Likelihood of trying the brand extension*: this is the result of consumers' favourable perceived quality of the brand extension (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2013:458; Spiggle *et al.*, 2012:979; Wu & Yen, 2007:339).

Consequently, secondary objective 6 intended to determine respondents' attitudes towards the brand extension of their vehicle brands. The results (in section 5.5.2) indicated that the latent variables of brand extension attitude were reliable and valid. Furthermore, the results indicated that respondents felt that they generally have a positive attitude towards brand extensions of their vehicle brands. (Secondary objective 6 is addressed by main finding 5.3.)

**Conclusion 6.1:** Respondents tend to have a positive attitude towards brand extensions of their vehicle brands.

**Recommendation 6.1:** Vehicle brands need to enhance consumers' favourable perceptions of brand extensions. In order for a brand to enhance consumers' perceptions, vehicle brands should

highlight both the aesthetic appeal and positive meaning of the brand when communicating these symbolic characteristics of the vehicle brand to consumers.

### 6.3.7 Secondary objective 7

Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their vehicle brand.

Purchase intention is the intention or inclination that consumers express to purchase a specific brand in the future (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:6) explain (in section 2.9.1) that consumers' attitudes and subjective norms are used, according to the theory of reasoned action, to determine their purchase intentions.

- *Attitude*: this entails consumers' behavioural decisions as to whether or not they intend to perform a certain behaviour.
- *Subjective norms*: these are the expectations set by consumers' reference groups that they are likely to agree with.

Section 2.9.2 and 5.2.4 argued that the purchase intent of consumers' should not be presumed as fixed, and that brands ought to incorporate consumers' purchase intent throughout their marketing communications (Semenik *et al.*, 2012:295). For that reason, secondary objective 7, aimed to determine respondents' purchase intentions towards their preferred vehicle brands. The results (in section 5.5.2) indicated that the latent variables for purchase intention had reliability and convergent validity. The results also indicated that respondents generally intend to purchase their current vehicle brands in the future. (Secondary objective 7 is addressed by main finding 5.4.)

**Conclusion 7.1:** Respondents intend to purchase their vehicle brands with their next purchase of a new vehicle.

**Recommendation 7.1:** Vehicle brands need to define their target market's most prominent reference group and use this reference group as a motivator of consumers' purchase intentions.

**Recommendation 7.2:** Vehicle brands need to positively influence consumers' attitude towards purchasing the specific brand through their various marketing platforms.



**6.3.8 Secondary objective 8**

Determine the interrelationships between brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention.

Section 1.5 and the detailed review in Chapter 2 revealed that an interrelationship exists among the constructs of brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention. The emotional attachment that consumers experience towards a brand will improve when a brand develops a brand image that consumer regard as both emotionally and socially desirable, and when consumers can recognise their ideal self-concepts in the image of the brand (Bahri-Ammari *et al.*, 2016:575; Malär *et al.*, 2011:46; Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987:51; Thomson *et al.*, 2005:89). Consumers' emotional attachment towards a brand will be enhanced by developing brand trust, because consumers depend less on rational cognition and more on their emotions and sentiments when experiencing brand trust (Bidmon, 2017:17; Elliot & Percy, 2007:31; Nikolova *et al.*, 2015:242). Furthermore, the level of emotional attachment that consumers experience towards a brand will increase when they can associate their individual personalities within the characteristics of a brand (Hwang & Kandampully, 2012:108; Swaminathan *et al.*, 2009:996).

Secondary objective 8 is therefore supported by the hypotheses set in Chapter 1 ( $H_1$  to  $H_3$ ) and Chapter 4 ( $H_1$  to  $H_3$ ). The results of the standard multiple regression, completed in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.4), determined that 73% of the variance found in respondents' brand attachment towards their current vehicle brands can be explained by brand trust, brand image and brand personality. The standard multiple regression further indicated that:

- Brand personality most noticeably, statistically significantly influence respondents' brand attachment.
- Brand image has a small, but negative, statistically significant influence on respondents' brand attachment.
- Brand trust has a small, but positive, statistically significant influence respondents' brand attachment.

Additionally, consumers who experience a higher level of brand attachment may be positively motivated towards purchasing a brand and its extended product offerings (Japtura *et al.*, 2014:626; Sarkar & Roy, 2016:475).

Chapter 5 (section 5.5.3) applied a SEM analysis in order to investigate the relationship between the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour. The fit of the model to the data was acceptable (as indicated in section 5.5.3). The results of the SEM analysis further indicated that brand personality statistically significantly influences brand attachment. In addition, brand attachment statistically significantly influences purchase intention and brand extension attitude. (Secondary objective 8 is addressed by main findings 4.5 to 4.7 and 5.5 to 5.7.)

**Conclusion 8.1:** Respondents' association with the personality of their vehicle brand statistically significantly and positively influences their brand attachment.

**Recommendation 8.1:** Vehicle brands ought to develop and maintain distinct brand personalities throughout their various extend product ranges (see recommendation 2.2).

**Conclusion 8.2:** Respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brands statistically significantly influence their brand attachment in a negative way.

**Recommendation 8.2:** Vehicle brands should constantly aim to portray a functional brand image in order to enhance respondents' brand image perceptions.

**Conclusion 8.3:** Respondents' brand trust towards their vehicle brand statistically significantly, and positively influences their brand attachment.

**Recommendation 8.3:** Vehicle brands should constantly aim to establish and maintain brand trust by constantly delivering on their functional capabilities.

**Conclusion 8.4:** Respondents' brand attachment towards their vehicle brands has a small statistically significant influence on their purchase intentions.

**Recommendation 8.4:** In order for vehicle brands to enhance consumers' purchase intentions, they need to identify other factors that may influence consumers' purchase intentions.

**Conclusion 8.5:** Respondents' brand attachment towards their vehicle brand has a statistically significant influence on their brand extension attitudes.

**Recommendation 8.5:** Vehicle brands ought to focus on developing consumers' perceived favourability towards the brand in order to improve their likelihood of purchasing extensions of the brand.

## 6.4 THE LINKS BETWEEN THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, HYPOTHESES, QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE, MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 6-1 below indicates the links between the secondary research objectives, questions in the questionnaire, hypotheses, main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

**Table 6-1: Links between secondary objectives, questions, hypotheses, main findings, conclusions and recommendations**

Questions	Hypotheses	Main finding(s)	Conclusion(s)	Recommendation(s)
<b>Secondary objective 1: Describe the sample profile.</b>				
Section A and B	–			
<b>Secondary objective 2: Determine respondents' association with the brand personality of their vehicle brand.</b>				
Section E	–	4.4 & 5.2	2.1	2.1 – 2.2
<b>Secondary objective 3: Determine respondents' brand image perceptions of their vehicle brand.</b>				
Section F	–	4.2	3.1	3.1 – 3.2
<b>Secondary objective 4: Determine respondents' trust in their vehicle brand.</b>				
Section D	–	4.3	4.1	4.1 – 4.2
<b>Secondary objective 5: Determine the brand attachment respondents have towards their preferred vehicle brand.</b>				
Section C	–	4.1 & 5.1	5.1	5.1 – 5.2
<b>Secondary objective 6: Determine respondents' attitude towards the brand extension of their vehicle brand.</b>				
Section H	–	5.3	6.1	6.1
<b>Secondary objective 7: Determine respondents' purchase intention towards their preferred vehicle brand.</b>				
Section G	–	5.4	7.1	7.1 – 7.2
<b>Secondary objective 8: Determine the interrelationships between brand personality, brand image, brand trust, brand attachment, brand extension attitude, and purchase intention.</b>				
Section C – Section H	H <sub>1</sub> – H <sub>6</sub>	4.5 – 4.7 & 5.5 – 5.7	8.1 – 8.5	8.1 – 8.5

## 6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations relating to the literature review include the following:

- To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have been conducted to investigate the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour within the South African automotive industry. Consequently, the researcher was subject to depending largely on theoretical backgrounds that focused on other industries.
- The quality of the secondary scholarly resources, with regard to the automotive industry in South Africa, were limited to an extent. This resulted in the researcher having to rely on generic online platforms in order to acquire information about the South African automotive industry.

Limitations relating to the empirical research include:

- The results obtained from the study cannot be generalised to other geographical areas within South Africa, since the researcher chose to base the research findings on responses from vehicle buyers in Gauteng.
- The generalisability of the results is limited because the research findings are based on responses from a specific industry, namely the automotive industry.
- The researcher experienced a sense of reluctance during the distribution of the computer administered questionnaires on both public and closed Facebook groups. The reason for this is that the researcher did not want to bombard the anonymous respondents with frequent reminders, in fear of upsetting those respondents who have already completed the questionnaire.
- The use of non-probability convenience sampling restricted the research findings from being generalised beyond the respondents who participated in the study.
- The predominance of female and white respondents resulted in an unequally represented target population with regard to demographics.
- The study focused on two consequences of vehicle buyers' brand attachment (i.e. purchase intention and brand extension attitude). Several scholarly studies have indicated that there are a number of consequences, which can be investigated.

In light of these limitations, it is possible to make a number of recommendations for future research, which are discussed below.

### **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The proposed recommendations for future research include:

- Future research ought to make use of probability sampling across a number of industries, throughout the whole of South Africa, in order to generalise the findings of the study.
- Future research could be conducted from a longitudinal perspective, since several researchers have indicated that consumers' attachment towards a brand is built over a period of time.
- Future research can focus on measuring consumers' brand attachment towards a specific vehicle brand and model, in order to gain a more comprehensive perspective of vehicle buyers' brand attachment behaviour.
- Future research may consider using larger sample size, as this will result in a more uniform representation of the target population.
- Future research may also explore alternative antecedents and consequences of brand attachment, as a number of studies have suggested several alternatives.

### **6.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter offered the conclusion of the study. The chapter commenced with an overview of the study, after which the conclusions and recommendations were discussed. These conclusions and recommendations are based on the main findings formulated in Chapters 4 and 5. Figure 6-1 provided an overview of the link between this study's overall objectives, hypotheses, questions from the questionnaire, main findings, conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, limitations related to both the literature review and empirical results of the study were provided. In conclusion, suggestions for future research were made.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THIS STUDY

#### Vehicle buyers' brand attachment

This survey forms part of a Master's study in Marketing Management at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), with a specific focus on vehicle buyers' brand attachment.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to determine which factors influence vehicle buyers' attachment to certain vehicle brands, and whether buyers' brand attachment significantly influences their purchase intention and willingness to pursue other extensions of the brand.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

Taking part in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the process at any time. All information provided by you will be completely anonymous and will be treated with the utmost standard of privacy and confidentiality. The data obtained from this survey will be stored in a secure location, and destroyed within the next three years. No information will be disclosed to any other parties, and no information will be reported on an individual basis.

Results:

The research results will only be used empirically for the written dissertation of the study. All participants are welcome to request results upon completion of this study.

Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. When evaluating a question, please answer from your own perspective, by marking or completing where required. Please accept my thanks, in anticipation of your willingness to participate in this research. Should you have any questions, please contact Dr N Mackay at [12194778@nwu.ac.za](mailto:12194778@nwu.ac.za).

Lizelle Vercueil

Supervisor: Dr N Mackay

**\*Required**

#### Screening question

1. Are you the current owner of a vehicle? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐

Yes

☐

No

*Stop filling out this form.*

#### Screening question

2. Are you planning to remain with your current vehicle brand? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐

Yes

☐

No

*Stop filling out this form.*

## Section A - Demographic information

3. In which year were you born?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Please indicate your gender:

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Please indicate your highest level of education:

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Some primary school
- ☐ Primary school completed
- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ Matric / Grade 12 completed
- ☐ Technical College diploma
- ☐ University or Technology diploma
- ☐ University degree (B-degree or Honours)
- ☐ Postgraduate degree (Masters or Doctorate)

6. Please indicate your ethnicity:

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Coloured
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which ONE of the following options best describes your employment status?

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Full-time employed by an organisation
- ☐ Part-time employed by an organisation
- ☐ Full-time student
- ☐ Housewife or Househusband
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section B - Consumer behaviour

8. Which **ONE** of the following vehicle brands do you currently own? Select **ONLY** your preferred brand of vehicle if you own more than **ONE** brand. \*

*Tick all that apply.*



☐ Volkswagen



☐ Toyota



☐ Ford



☐ Nissan



☐ Mazda



☐ Renault



☐ BMW



Mercedes-Benz

☐ Mercedes-Benz

**ISUZU**

☐ Isuzu



☐ Chevrolet

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

9. **How long have you been associated with your current vehicle brand? Indicate in YEARS. \***

\_\_\_\_\_

10. **Who MAINLY influences your vehicle brand choice? \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Acquaintances
- ☐ Celebrities (actors, actresses, sport stars, musicians)
- ☐ Co-workers
- ☐ Religious leaders
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. **How often do you purchase a new vehicle? \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- ☐ Yearly
- ☐ Every 2 years
- ☐ Every 3 years
- ☐ Every 4 years
- ☐ Every 5 years
- ☐ Longer than every 5 years

### Which THREE aspects most attract you to purchase a specific vehicle brand?

12. **1<sup>st</sup> most important aspect:** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Resale value
- ☐ Fuel consumption
- ☐ On-board entertainment system
- ☐ Engine's power
- ☐ Comprehensive service-warranty
- ☐ Maintenance cost
- ☐ Storage space (Boot capacity or loading capacity)
- ☐ Euro NCAP safety-rating

13. **2<sup>nd</sup> most important aspect:** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ On-board entertainment system
- ☐ Comprehensive service-warranty
- ☐ Engine's power
- ☐ Maintenance cost
- ☐ Euro NCAP safety-rating
- ☐ Resale value
- ☐ Fuel consumption
- ☐ Storage space (Boot capacity or loading capacity)

14. **3<sup>rd</sup> most important aspect:** \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Resale value
- ☐ Fuel consumption
- ☐ On-board entertainment system
- ☐ Maintenance cost
- ☐ Euro NCAP safety-rating
- ☐ Storage space (Boot capacity or loading capacity)
- ☐ Comprehensive service-warranty
- ☐ Engine's power

## Section C - Brand attachment

15. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
My brand makes me feel <b>loved</b> (precious, liked, adored).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>peaceful</b> (calm, serene).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>friendly</b> (welcoming, approachable, responsive).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>affectionate</b> (warm, caring, loving).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>attached</b> (close, involved, committed).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>bonded</b> (united, joined, merged).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>connected</b> (linked, associated, related).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>passionate</b> (enthusiastic).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>delighted</b> (pleased, happy).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My brand makes me feel <b>captivated</b> (fascinated, charmed).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section D - Brand trust

16. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
I trust this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is an honest brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is safe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand would make an effort to satisfy me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand meets my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident in this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Section E - Brand personality

17. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
This brand is glamorous.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is good looking.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is family orientated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is sentimental.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is exciting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is spirited	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is daring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is successful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is reliable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is tough.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section F - Brand image perception

18. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
The products of this brand is of high quality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand's products have better characteristics than its competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The products of competitor brands are usually cheaper.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is nice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand has a personality that distinguishes itself from competitors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is a brand that does not disappoint its customers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is one of the best brands in the sector.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This brand is very established in the market.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Section G - Purchase intention

19. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
I intend to purchase this brand in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I would purchase a vehicle now, I would buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I intend to purchase this brand when I need a car in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Purchasing this brand is my first choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Section H - Brand extension attitude

In this questionnaire, brand extension attitude refers to your attitude toward considering purchasing an extension product of the brand you primarily wished to purchase.

For example, you wish to purchase the Volkswagen Polo Vivo Hatch Conceptline but will consider purchasing the Volkswagen Polo Vivo Hatch Storm or the Volkswagen Polo Vivo Hatch Maxx.

20. Keeping your vehicle brand in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. \*

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
I am in favour of purchasing an extension product of this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I perceive the quality of this brand's extension product(s) as good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will consider trying this brand's extension product(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The extension product(s) of this brand complements the original product.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The extension product(s) of this brand will act as a suitable substitute for the original product of the brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## APPENDIX B

### LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

#### Declaration

---

This is to declare that I, L Rathbone

Language editor and translator

have language edited the dissertation

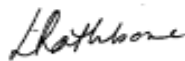
with the title

Investigating the antecedents and consequences of vehicle buyers' brand  
attachment behaviour

by

L Vercueil

23383828



*Date: 17 November 2017*