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FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF RETAIL AND LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT

**The impact of branding strategies on consumer behavior: A case of Kopje
Spares in Zimbabwe.**

BY

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirement of Bachelor of Commerce in Retail
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Patience and my children, Elton, Emmanuel Junior, Hillary and Deon, for their unwavering support and understanding during my pursuit of this degree. Patience's unconditional love and understanding were essential to my success, and her kindness and patience provided me with inspiration and strength during the challenging times in this academic endeavour. My four wonderful children provided further motivation to be an example to them and kept me focused on completing my educational goals. I feel special gratitude to my wonderful late parents, whose guidance and love during my childhood and throughout their life as well as their belief in the importance of education instilled in me a sense of lasting curiosity and love for learning.

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ABSTRACT

Modern-day consumers have become so conscious about the product brands they buy and their behaviours and preferences have always been shifting. In response, businesses ought to employ effective branding strategies that directly address the shifting behaviours of consumers. This study was focused on studying the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares - a retailer and wholesaler of automobile products in Zimbabwe. A mixed methodology and descriptive case study design was followed in conducting this research. Quantitative data for the study was collected using structured self-administered questionnaires from 64 customers that have been transacting with Kopje Spares for at least five years. Descriptive statistics - descriptive frequencies, percentages, mean and mode and standard deviation were the analyses used to describe the research findings. The findings emerging from the key informant interviews involving 3 top managers drawn from the case study company were used as corroborating evidence to the quantitative findings. Quality of automobile products, experiences of friends and relatives with the automobile products on offer, brand exclusiveness and uniqueness, shop image or overall company brand and visible exterior brand attributes of the automobile products were found to be the most crucial elements of brand positioning strategy in the automobile industry. In terms of brand extensions, the consumer prefers new automobile brand extensions, if the existing parent brand is strong and successful, new brand extension fits well with the quality of the existing parent product, the consumers had previous superior experience with the existing parent product, new brand extension has superior and innovative features and if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands. In addition, brand sponsorship positively influence the attitudinal beliefs of consumers by altering their beliefs of perceptions toward liking the sponsoring brand or company; this then positively influence the perceptions of consumers regarding the image of the involved automobile company. Correlation analysis demonstrated that brand positioning; brand sponsorship and brand extension have a statistically significant positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. This study recommends that utmost attention should be given to the quality of the automobile products they sell since customers in this industry value quality, durability and reputation of the product manufacturer. These automobile companies should always forge alliances with internationally recognised automobile products manufacturers with renowned brands.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DEFINITION OF THE KEY TERMS

Brand refers to a name or designation, icon or emblem or design or blends of these elements which identifies and differentiate a product or service of a certain organisation from those offered by other in a market.

Consumer behaviour refers to a set of undertakings and processes that persons or groups apply when choosing or consume and experience products and services. This entails the way people make buying decisions on the premise of available resources which may include financial resources, effort and time.

Branding strategies are the tactical plans, activities and actions employed to make consumers aware about a brand with a possibility of winning customers to purchase the product brand or service on offer with loyalty.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SME:	Small to Medium Enterprises
RBZ:	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
AAZ:	Automobile Association of Zimbabwe
COVID-19:	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The modern-day marketplace is swiftly changing and characterised by shifting consumer purchasing behaviours, customer sophistication, drastic reductions in market information asymmetry, and extreme market rivalry with less differentiated automobile and technological products. Creation of strong brands through various branding strategies is thus critical to ensure product offerings that meet the shifting consumer preferences. Branding strategies such as brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship sustain businesses in-line with the consumer preferences especially in the context of automobile spares' retail companies.

This research is focused on studying the relationship between branding strategies and consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares in Zimbabwe - a retail company in the trade of automobile spares. This chapter introduces the topic, provides background to the study, statement of the problem, broad aim, research objectives and research questions. The significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions and limitations of the study are also presented in this foundational chapter.

1.2 Background to the study

Modern-day consumers have become so conscious about the product brands they buy and consume. It is in that vein that businesses leverage strong brands to achieve a competitive advantage over market rivals as well as to grow their businesses (Riaz, 2015; Mwambusi, 2015). According to Sammut-Bonnici (2015, p.1) a brand is “a set of tangible and intangible attributes designed to create awareness and identity, and to build the reputation of a product, service, person, place, or organization”. The word brand originated from brandr (an old Norsk word) referring to burning – an ancient practice used to mark livestock for easy identification and classification of ownership of animals by owner (Erichson and Weiber, 2013).

In the early times before the 1300 B.C., branding was used by craftsmen to identify the crafted products of their labour so that prospective customers could easily recognise their products (Haubmann, 2016). Branding was also used in the ancient times in marking pottery products to label products which were being sold in distant markets different from where they would have been manufactured (Backhaus, Steiner, & Lügger, 2011). The concept of branding evolved into use of industrial branding strategies by various businesses (Backhaus, and Voeth, 2011).

Effective branding strategies should be seen making consumers aware about a brand with a possibility of winning customers to purchase the product brand or service on offer. The branding strategies employed by organisations should aim to expand brand knowledge amongst the consumers. As consumers become more aware of the brand on offer in terms of brand knowledge related to price, availability and reliability among other factors, they become more attracted towards the brand (Sarwar, Aftab and Iqbal, 2014). According to Sarwar, Aftab and Iqbal (2014), innovative branding strategies are more required in an effort to make brands globally known and strong in the face of the prevailing globalisation and increased competition. Globalisation has led to the decline to attaching importance to national borders with a shift towards emphasis on what the consumers actually demand in terms of brands that directly satisfy their needs (Gajjar, 2013).

In the context of this study, it is important to study branding in view of consumer buying behaviour. The study is focused on studying consumer buying behaviour from the perspective of the influence stemming from branding strategies - brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship. It is critical to note that people perceive the brands differently according to their preferences and sometimes based on past experiences and their decisions are directly or indirectly related to these perspectives (Sarwar, Aftab and Iqbal, 2014). The researcher conceptualised that perceptions on brands by consumers differ based on culture, personal values, industry and market.

The Zimbabwean economy is currently volatile, of which majority of the automobile spares are sourced from distant foreign suppliers. The situation is exacerbated by the proliferation and flooding of the market with novel and old brands, of which “strength of brand war is increasing day by day” (Mwambusi, 2015, p.2). That has given rise to business viability

problems for several Zimbabwean industries including the automobile spares' industry in general and Kopje Spares in particular.

Kopje Spares is a Zimbabwean company involved in the wholesaling and retailing of automotive spares and accessories. The company has a strategically positioned branch network covering five cities and or towns in Zimbabwe which include Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Mutare and Kwekwe. The company sells different automobile spares including brake and clutch components, suspension components, lubricants, timing components, electrical and ignition components, engine and gear box components, body parts among other vehicle spares. Though Kopje Spares has been operating for at least 18 years now, the company has of late been facing fierce competition from sprouting companies in the automobile spares' industry. The relentless escalation in market rivalry with less differentiated automobile products has progressively shifted power from sellers to customers.

Consumer demands in market with multiple suppliers of less differentiated automobile spares have dominated the local Zimbabwean market. That has given rise to business viability problems for several Zimbabwean industries including automobile spares industry. This business environment war can only be won with companies applying superior branding strategies. Kopje Spares should thus be seen exerting concerted effort towards growing the prominence of its brand. The company has been applying a number of branding strategies including brand sponsorship, brand positioning and brand extension. In terms of brand sponsorship, Kopje Spares have recently acquired a Yutong franchise. Yutong is an international automobile company headquartered in China. The manufacturing brand of Yutong is now featuring together with Kopje Spares' brand in advertisements sponsored by Yutong. This is reaching the local market as co-branding with the logos of Yutong and Kopje Spares; which in turn helps Kopje Spares to entrench its brand on the local market.

In terms of brand positioning, Kopje Spares has been using different branding and marketing approaches. The company has been using its website, exhibitions, social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsup), outdoor advertising and print media to strongly position its brand in the minds of customers for active recall and recognition. Though Kopje Spares has been making strides in branding and marketing, the managing director indicated through the 2018 annual report that all the branding practices should be well-structured for business

sustainability in-line with the current consumer behaviours. It is thus necessary to understand branding strategies of the automobile industry in relation to consumer behaviour in Zimbabwe's volatile economy which is coupled with the unprecedented increased global competition.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Given the relentless brand wars which are being escalated by the proliferation of novel and old brands in Zimbabwe's automobile spare's industry (Mwambusi, 2015), Kopje Spares cannot continue to operate without well stipulated branding strategies. Kopje Spares (PVT) Limited has been failing to effectively deliver a brand that resonates with the shifting needs of modern consumer's preferences and tastes resulting into a fall in its daily customer count. The Managing Director reported during his 2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM) a trend whereby the clientele base was declining year on year by 13.2%; 19.7% and 22.4% in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively, despite a 40% increase in the importation of second hand cars from Asia, South Africa and Europe (Chronicle, 2018). The Managing Director also attributed the dwindling customer base as the main cause of the company failing to attain its revenue budgets during the period under review. The increase in brand wars in the industry within which Kopje Spares is operating was noted in the cited reports as a key factor. "The strength of brand wars is increasing day by day" (Mwambusi,2015) and that has given rise to business viability problems for several Zimbabwean industries including the automobile spares' industry. If Kopje Spares continue to operate devoid of sound brand management principles, the company risks losing more customers to rivals resulting in business sustainability challenges for the company. It is on that backdrop that this study pursues to study the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares.

1.4 Broad Aim

The aim of this study entails assessment of the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares which is a retail company in the trade of automobile spares in Zimbabwe.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To assess the effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions.
2. To evaluate the influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image.
3. To examine the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions?
2. What influence does brand sponsorship have on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image?
3. What is the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is significant to a number of stakeholders as follows:

To the researcher:

- The researcher is going through numerous stages of the research process including topic formulation, problem identification, literature review, research methodology application, research ethics, data analysis, interpretation of finding and report writing. As such, the researcher is acquainted with a lot of research experience crucial for future research activities.
- This proposed research project is carried out in partial fulfillment of Bachelor's degree in Retail and Logistics Management. Attainment of the full academic qualification is also dependent on this research work.

To the industry and organisation:

- The study results is set to reinvigorate and remind automobile firms about the perceptions and attitude of prospective consumers in relation to branding strategies which are effective for the automobile industry.
- The outcomes and recommendations of the study help senior company executives, marketing managers and branding managers to better reposition their brands and

branding strategies to directly address the unprecedented shifting consumer behaviour in a volatile economy such as Zimbabwe.

To the community:

- Principally the study is anticipated to serve as reference work to future researchers and practitioners who may dedicate their research work towards expanding knowledge on branding in-line with consumer behaviour.
- This study is dedicated to studying branding strategies and their relations to consumer buying behaviour in the context of the automobile spares industry which has not been given more attention by researchers especially the local ones.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

Contextually, this research project is focused on studying the relationship between branding strategies and consumer behaviour in the context of a Zimbabwean company that is into retailing and wholesaling of automobile spares – Kopje Spares. The geographical scope of the study is limited to Zimbabwean cities and towns where Kopje Spares is operating; of which data for the study will be collected from customers drawn from the various branches of Kopje Spares. The target respondents will be limited to customers that have been transacting with Kopje Spares for at least five years based on the company’s existing customer database. This is to ensure that data is extracted from customers that have known Kopje Spares for some time to enhance data credibility. The time period for this study is cross sectional meaning data would be taken once in the life time of the study.

1.8 Assumptions

This study is premised on the following assumptions:

- i. The environment in which the respondents targeted by this study operate offers them the same opportunities and poses the same challenges to them.
- ii. Responses that are received from survey participants are expected to be honest and reflect their true perceptions.
- iii. The sample for the study is anticipated to be a true representation of the target population.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The researcher envisages a number of limitations which affect the smooth flow of this study.

- Time and financial constraints are limiting the research scope and sample size. Time to conduct the research is limited thus limiting the number of automobile companies to be included in the study. The researcher is resorting to a case study involving a single company but ensuring extensive empirical enquiry of the selected single case.
- Reluctance to provide data by the target respondents citing challenges of busy schedules, delays in completing the issued questionnaires by respondents and data confidentiality issues. In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the researcher is designing the questionnaires to be self-administered questionnaires so that the target respondents complete them at their own free and convenient times.

1.10 Dissertation Structure

This part of the study outlines how the entire research work is organised. The study is structured into five chapters as follows.

Chapter 1: This is the first chapter which forms the introductory part of the study as it set the foundation introducing the main research concepts, background to the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation and limitations of to the study.

Chapter 2: The chapter is predominantly about literature review. This segment of the study houses both theoretical literature and empirical literature relating to research objectives' themes. Review of the literature also reveals the research gaps motivating this research enquiry.

Chapter 3: The chapter dwells on the research methodology which outlines the research design, research approach, target population, sampling, data collection methods, research instruments and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4: The chapter is focused on data analysis, presentation of data analysis results and discussion of the research results.

Chapter 5: This is the last chapter of the study which presents the conclusions of the entire

research including conclusions of the research findings as well as recommendations based on the research findings.

1.11 Chapter Summary

The foregoing chapter introduced the research topic as well as the main research concepts through the background to the study. Statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study and dissertation structure are outlined in this chapter. The next chapter is predominantly about the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the study focuses on review of literature in connection with the themes emerging from the research objectives. Section 2.2 provides the theoretical literature on branding strategies followed by the conceptual framework guiding this research enquiry on section 2.3. Section 2.4 to section 2.6 presents literature pertaining to brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship which are independent variables. Section 2.7 presents literature on consumer behaviour and purchasing intentions. Section 2.8 reviews empirical literature related to branding strategies and consumer behaviour. Section 2.9 shows the research gap motivating this research work. Lastly, this chapter is finalised by the chapter summary of this chapter.

2.2 Branding and branding strategies

Branding is one of the most principal components in any business or corporate strategy and is central to developing customer value as well as enhancing business competitiveness (Holt, 2015; Mohammadian & Ronaghi, 2010). Branding is defined as the course of creating a relationship between an organization's offerings and emotional perception of consumers with an aim of differentiating the products and services amongst rivals thereby creating customer loyalty (Hislop, 2011). Branding works as a memory signal that enables customers to quickly recall and recognize a product or service offered on the market (Iqbal, 2014; Chovanová, Korshunov and Babčanová, 2015). Product recall and recognition could be an outcome of past brand experience by the customers, brand perceptions and brand associations.

According to Mohammadian & Ronaghi (2010), a brand with good image creates a long-lasting positive impression in the minds of customers. Branding has been necessitated by the fact that products being offered on market are not significantly different; as such it is branding that brings about a distinction and preference of one company's product over those of rivals (Baawahkyei, 2016; Mohammadian & Ronaghi, 2010). This was also supported by the American Marketing

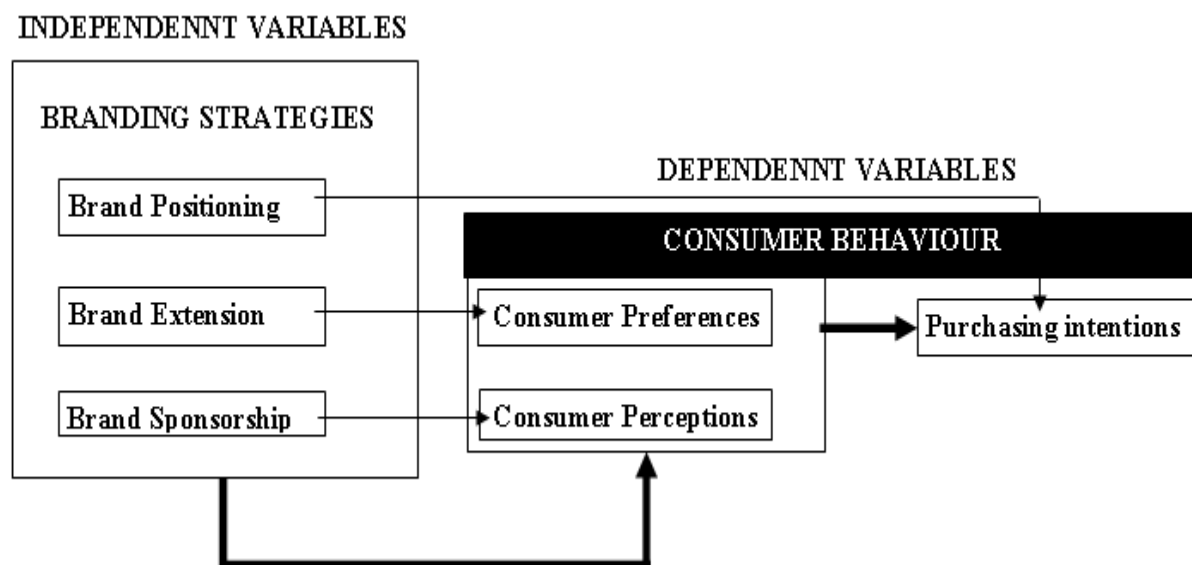
Association (2014) which postulates that products and services are branded to ensure uniqueness which make them appear distinct and superior in a particular industry.

The American Marketing Association (2014) highlighted that products and services could be branded using a name, symbol, logos, terms, designs and can be a combination of these constructs. Though branding strategies are useful to drive increased sales and maximise market share among other outcomes as highlighted by Zhang (2015), the emphasis of this study is on the influence of brand strategies on consumer buying behaviour. Kotler et al. (2013) propound that branding strategies are an integral component of any organisation’s total marketing. This study is focused on branding strategies which include brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship, all in relation to consumer behaviour. The flow of relationships amongst the research variables are depicted in the conceptual framework depicted in in Figure 2.1 below.

2.3 Conceptual framework

The conceptualised flow of relationships amongst the research variables especially the independent variables and dependent variables are depicted in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework



Source: Author’s own conception

Branding strategies shown in Figure 2.1 above represent the independent variables. These independent variables entail the three branding strategies covered in this present study which include brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship. In the diagram above, consumer behaviour (dependent variable) constitute consumer preferences and consumer perceptions connected to purchasing intentions. The depicted relationship shows that consumer behaviour is dependent on branding strategies. In the assumed depicted relationships, brand extension has a direct relationship with consumer preferences. This means that any efforts to improve brand extension strategies should be seen improving consumer preferences toward the strategically extended brand.

A direct relationship between brand sponsorship and consumer perceptions is also reflected in the conceptual framework. This demonstrates that brand sponsorship activities and events enhance positive perceptions of consumers toward the brands showcased through the sponsored brands. A direct impact on purchase intentions is anticipated to emerge from a firm's brand positioning efforts. Thus, as the firm strategically position their products, services and brand in the mind of customers, there are high chances of emotionally attaching consumers to the brand and ultimately leading to purchase intentions. In further explaining the framework, a direct relationship of consumer preferences and or consumer perceptions with purchasing intentions is also demonstrated. This means that as perceptions and preferences of consumers are positively influenced, they result into positive purchasing intentions.

2.4 Brand positioning and consumer behaviour

Brand positioning is the process of designing a firm's offering as well as its image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the prospective customers (Jalkala and Kerañen, 2016). Brand positioning is basically defined as the product and brand attributes communicated to the mind of the customers. Brand positioning represents the expansion by which marketers try to generate a figure in the minds of their targeted consumers for their product (Azmat, 2015). Typically, a successful positioning strategy is linked to firm's key capabilities illuminating the firm's unique way of delivering value to customers (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010). Chenguang (2017) intimated that brand positioning features include time, location, price, variety (assortment), quality product, store image and service

According to Azmat (2015) the effect of branding positioning strategies on consumer perception revolves around three brand positioning strategies: beneficial positioning, psychological or surrogate and competitive positioning. The brand positioning strategies are explained by Azmat (2015) as follows:

- Psychological or surrogate positioning – is when a brand is created and positioned through a psychological theme which is basically designed to make consumer connections about exterior attributes of the brand. These physical attributes include the brand name, logo design and features as well as corporate colours. In this case, the customer is mainly attracted by physical attributes of the brand more than the features and benefits derived from the product.
- Competitive Positioning - focuses the product on offer, service and the firm itself aside from the company's rivals. It is basically the degree to which a product is differentiated from rival products and the value derived from the product in comparison with competitors. This entails making out a mark on the competitive front by placing a firm's pledge in view of achieving success and winning the minds of customers as well as earning the confidence and trust of consumers. A firm's drive is to be really known for something innovative and exclusive.

The emphasis of brand positioning is mainly on a brand's exclusiveness and its attributes which allow it to be different and unique from the perspective of consumers. In brand positioning, a firm should assess the rival brands and how those brands are currently positioned and defining the target market variety of channels could be employed to strongly position the firm's brand on the market. These channels might include social media marketing, print media, road shows and outdoor advertising (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010; Azmat, 2015). A study by Fuchs and Diamantopoulos (2010) revealed that that consumers tend to respond best to benefit-based positioning strategies.

Among other positioning tactics, the study undertaken by Azmat (2015) confirmed it is the psychological positioning that had a significant positive effect on consumer perception. Otherwise, beneficial and competitive positioning had a negative effect on consumer perception. Another past study by Hooley, Piercy and Nicoulaud (2012) demonstrated the brand positioning strategy lead to increased business performance. These authors also found out that businesses that leverage cost leadership positing strategy are able to attract their target markets for their brands in comparison with competitors. Brand positioning was found to have a positive impact

on consumer brand perception which subsequently leads to company performance (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010). Unlike these studies, the present study concentrates not on branding strategies versus bundled company performance but rather exclusively on consumer buying behaviour.

A study by Orton-Jones (2015) concluded that well-positioned firms employing the right branding strategies would be more resolute and consistent with the perceptions of customers. Resultantly, such firms outperform competitors' brands that lack clear positioning strategies and brand management skills. The author also highlighted that customers are not only wooed by a new logo which lacks a well-positioning strategy for the brand (Orton-Jones, 2015).

Another study by Jalkala and Keraänen (2016) identified four possible brand positioning strategies for industrial firms which comprised of customer value diagnostic, global solution integration, high quality sub-systems provision, and long-term service partnerships. Brand positioning and these four brand positioning dimensions positively impacted consumer perceptions and other firm performance outcomes. That study highlighted that managers need to identify the capabilities that are central to delivering customer value and acquire and/or develop capability configurations that differentiate their brand positioning from competitors. The current research is uniquely focused on the effect of brand positioning on customers' purchasing intentions.

2.5 Brand extension and consumer behaviour

Brand extension is defined as marketing strategy in which a firm uses an existing successful brand with a well-developed image in a new or modified product category (Arslan & Altuna, 2010). Brand extension helps companies in many ways such as minimising the risk of introducing a new product, reducing the cost of promotion and increasing the acceptability of the new product by consumers (Pune, 2012). Brand extension could be achieved in a number of forms which may include market extension, brand prestige extension, brand distinction extension, product extension, companion brand extension, expertise extension, customer franchise extension and popularly used line extension (Pune, 2012; Davis, 2010; Arslan & Altuna, 2010).

Davis (2010) postulates that line extensions involves taking an existing product and modifying its attributes such as new packaging, formulation, new ingredient, new feature and minor feature modification then placing the newly extended product and distributing it to customers. Anandan (2014) recommended line extensions as one of the most economical and fastest way of introducing a new product. Chandarasekar (2010) describes line extensions as a company's way of dealing with the needs of customers and these extensions are often guided by market research. Therefore businesses with a successful product line can introduce product line extension to target new geographical areas, target different audiences or meet particular price points (Chandarasekar, 2010).

Gidden (2010) highlighted that brand line extensions reduce risk associated with new product development. Among the range of strategies available to a company, line extensions are an important way to keep a brand alive and to realize incremental financial growth. New line extensions increase their parent brand's consumer base and eventually assist in growing parent brand franchise. Promotional costs are much lower for a line extension than for a completely new product and this helps in reducing costs associated with launching completely new products and increases the profitability of the brand at a reduced cost.

2.6 Brand Sponsorship and consumer behaviour

Brand sponsorship occurs when a company funds activities, programs or events in which the sponsoring firm showcases its brand, products and services using various promotional materials (Mason, 2015). Brand sponsorship has become a popular marketing vehicle. Olson (2010); showed that high fit sponsorships lead to more favourable consumer attitudes. Olson (2010) demonstrates that brand sponsoring generates positive feelings and overall liking toward the sponsoring brand. The corporate sponsorship aspect leads to enhancing brand awareness (recognition and recall) and creating positive consumer preferences.

According to De Houwer (2014), airing a brand with a positive affective stimulus which is the event invokes an evaluative conditioning procedure, such that the brand benefits from the positive affective stimulus (Sweldens et al., 2010). Therefore, the more a consumer likes a sponsored event, the more he or she generates positive affect toward the sponsoring brand. The sponsorship that links the brand to the event in turn should facilitate the transfer of positive effect

from the event to the sponsor (Sweldens et al., 2010). Mason (2015), highlights that the ultimate goal of brand sponsorship is to change the entire attitude of consumers resulting into positive buying behaviours.

In a study conducted by Mazodier and Merunka (2012), it established that managers of various companies are increasingly pursuing to positively alter consumer behaviour and to build customer loyalty through sponsoring of activities. That study indicated that a fit between the event and the brand has a positive effect on brand affect, through attitude toward the sponsorship, and on brand trust, such that it ultimately influences brand loyalty. The results obtained by Mazodier and Merunka (2012) were based on an experimental research design. The present study is based on the descriptive research design which is bound to bring about different results.

Renard and Sitz (2011) developed a brand model based on maximising sponsorship opportunities. That study was based on review of literature for research data. The paper reveals that the key success factor for a sponsored party is to act as a brand. This brand should have four strong pillars to build its brand essence: its own identity, a clear offer for a value creation process, an organisation to support this offer in line with strategic alliances of the sponsor and identified targets or consumers. The present study is different in that it is only based on literature review data but based on empirical collection of primary data through structured questionnaires and interviews. The study is also not limited to brand sponsorship only but also brand positioning and brand extension variables.

2.7 Consumer Behaviour and purchasing intentions

Consumer behaviour is defined by Rani (2014) as a process of selecting, ordering, buying and consuming goods and services in order to satisfy needs and wants. Alemayehu (2017) postulates that formulating marketing strategies should not be founded on intuition but rather on the actual consumer behaviour which is essential for developing marketing strategies that resonate with the existing consumer behaviours. This raises the chance of a company's success. Understanding information of consumers pertaining to their behaviours help companies to tailor-make strategies which directly suit the ensuing consumer behaviours (Alemayehu, 2017).

Customers perceive brands in different ways based on their varying preferences and sometimes consumer preferences are founded on past experiences (Sarwar, and Aftab Iqbal, 2016). This then directly or indirectly influence the buying process decisions related to the preferences and perspectives of the consumers (Sarwar, and Aftab Iqbal, 2016). Thus, consumer behaviour entails aspects of consumer perceptions and consumer preferences related to past experiences which then lead to consumer choices and actual purchasing intentions. In that vein, three key variables related to consumer behaviour are considered in this present study. These include consumer perceptions, consumer preferences and ultimately purchasing intentions. When consumers are about to purchase a product, they develop a perceived degree of anticipated satisfaction or experience of the product or brand they require especially when they understand the brand of the organization (Kyei, 2016).

In terms of consumer brand preference, consumers categorically choose certain products or brands ahead of others within the same industry or sector (Kotler and Keller, 2012). In the automobile industry, consumer brand preferences are influenced by a number of factors which include income level, social status, product or brand image, quality of product, product or brand price, brand participation, brand involvement, consumer awareness and related information about the automobile products they require (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Customers usually prefer automobile products that can be acquired with high quality but at low price and this depend on the income level and social statuses of the consumers (Kwok, Uncles, & Huang, 2006). The elite class are sometimes more concerned about the quality and image of the products.

Consumer behaviour and the buying process develop to a stage where customers make purchase intentions. Purchase intentions are closely connected to the plan of consumers in making actual purchases at a given time period ((Pi et al., 2011; Madahi & Sukati, 2012). Purchasing intentions could also be arising from an urge or motivation developing in a consumer's mind to acquire a particular brand and the purchasing intentions are usually based on needs, attitudes and perceptions towards a brand – consumer behaviour (Madahi & Sukati, 2012). Purchasing intentions may result into the actual final purchase of a brand as well as repeat purchases (Alemayehu, 2017; Tariq et al., 2013).

According to Tariq et al. (2013), buying intention is a multi-step process which involves collection of information related to the preferred brand by a customer, evaluate the brand

attributes based on prior or current brand knowledge and experiences. Finally, if the product suits their needs or wants, they buy the brand in the current period as well as in the future. Buying intentions could be assessed based on consumer interests and feelings towards a brand, consumer attendance of exhibitions or sponsored events by the branding company, and consumer level of information and knowledge pertaining to the brand which makes them consider buying the brand (Hosein, 2012).

2.8 Empirical Evidence

Singh (2013) carried out a study to understand the effect of branding strategy on consumer buying behaviour. The study demonstrated that a firm's branding strategy influence the product markets as well as market dynamics. Results of the study revealed the significance of a brand in signalling quality and consistency. The physical product and the notional images that go with brand combines very well to strength positioning of a brand in the minds of the consumers (Singh, 2013).

Durmaz and Yaşar, (2016) conducted a study on branding strategies. Research findings by these authors revealed that branding strategies are effective if they are implemented in line with a company's business strategy which integrates all product brands. The findings also indicated that branding strategies should be corroborated with a promise that state and showcase the brand in the best way coupled with advertising and marketing strategies. All these supporting strategies would be expected to popularise the brand against competition. Additional results in the study pointed out that the current and future buying tendencies of customers should be considered in the holistic branding strategies Durmaz and Yaşar, (2016).

Azmat and Lakhani (2019) carried out a study to evaluate the effect of brand positioning strategies on consumer standpoint. The study was conducted from a consumer's perception view. Three brand positing strategies which include beneficial positioning, psychological positioning and competitive positioning were considered in the study. Psychological branding showed the highest positive response to customers especially after seeing television commercials of particular brands. Those prior encounters with advertised brands tend to create a positive image through psychological positioning which builds on human psychology. The other two positioning strategies came out on the negative side of consumer perceptions. Thus, brand managers should employ holistic market efforts that make customers recall their brands for a long future period.

The efforts should also be reinforced by selling quality products representing the brand. Testing of the hypothesis showed that psychological positioning had a positive relationship with consumer perception whereas competitive and beneficial positioning were negatively related with consumer perception.

Jalkala and Keränen (2014) conducted a study with the aim to examine the possible branding strategies adopted by industrial firms delivering customer solutions. A multiple case study research design was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from twenty two business managers. The study found that the industrial firms should make use of brand positioning strategies which are developed around internal capabilities of a firm. The study also found that value delivery, relational support and harmonisation of supply chain players were amongst the essential brand positioning attributes for the companies. As part of brand positioning, a company is expected to craft and integrate systems on a global scale in order to deliver the greatest value to customers. By so doing, even if a company with an unrecognised brand name but leveraging global scale networks and branded supplies, then it would be able to utilise a wide range of trusted products and brands to manage its customer's long-term support, maintenance, and system optimization activities.

Sarwar, Aftab, Iqbal (2016) conducted a study assessing the effect of branding initiatives on consumer behaviour. That study confirmed a positive correlation between branding initiatives and consumer behaviour. The study demonstrated that brand positioning efforts should be seen winning customers through conveyance of information about a company's product quality and prices. If customers become aware of these elements, they become attracted to the product brand. The study also revealed that consumers who are more social are influenced by product and services' experiences of friends and relatives with a particular brand. These experiences are usually shared on various social media such as Facebook (Sarwar, Aftab, Iqbal, 2016). Similarly, previous research revealed that a brand image spruced up through various brandings strategies positively influence consumer buying behaviour (Zhang, 2015). The study by Zhang (2015) also found that perceived and actual consumer satisfaction is highly linked with the brand image of a product or organisation. Tu et al. (2012) also confirmed in a past study that branding strategies and corporate branding image directly impact customer satisfaction and that has a positive bearing on future buying behaviours of the customers.

The impact of a business brand and branding efforts on consumer behaviour was conducted in a study conducted by Chovanová, Korshunov and Babčanová (2015). A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 1250 respondents over a period of six months in Slovakia. This study also confirmed a direct relationship between a company's brand and consumer behaviour. Marketing activities which are instrumental in brand positioning were found as essential in generating brand association and positively affecting the minds of customers toward actual purchases. In the branding positioning efforts, quality of the products on offer was highly rated as a key factor.

Abdul - Aziz (2016) carried out a study to ascertain the effect of a brand on the buying behaviours of consumers in Accra, Ghana. The study discovered that customers are lured by various psychological and beneficial positioning elements which include packaging, labelling – factors that enhance the image of the product on offer as well as generating visual appeals for it. That study also revealed that consumers are positively influenced by the quality of a brand or product before making purchasing decision. Abdul - Aziz (2016) found that social networks of relatives, family members, reference groups and friends play a significant part in affecting the purchasing decision of consumers as also found in a past study by Carlberg and Kjellberg (2018). The study concluded that brand positioning and brand extension should take into account improved services in the actual delivery of products to customers, product and services' innovation and differentiation in order to positively influence consumer buying behaviours (Abdul – Aziz, 2016).

Nadzri, Musa, Muda & Hassan (2015) investigated the effects of brand experience within the National Automotive Industry in Malaysia. Results of the study revealed that automotive companies were failing to create a strong brand image which in turn impacted the experiences of customers in Malaysia. The study found that brand image; car brand attributes and brand experience of the car users influence consumer perceptions. Thus, the study concluded that automotive players must create strong brand uniqueness emotionally and cognitively implanted into the minds of customers. Higher prices for branded cars were favoured by the customers since they believed that they derive more value from the internationally branded goods than the locally produced goods.

Zia and Sohail (2016) also undertook a study in the automobile industry. The study investigated factors influencing consumer brand preferences with specific focus on brand participation, brand advocacy, brand engagement, quality and price of brand. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 120 residents in Lahore, Pakistan. The research results showed a significant positive impact of brand participation, brand advocacy and brand engagement and brand quality and brand price on consumer brand preference. Brand price had the least influence on brand preference. Thus, the study concluded that customers give more value to advice and referrals given by friends, relatives and general brand users who had previous experiences with brand on offer. Brand engagement and brand quality had the greatest influence on brand preference by consumers (Zia and Sohail, 2016). Thus branding strategies such as positioning, sponsorship and extension employed by companies should give precedence to brand involvement, brand quality, brand participations and lastly brand price in that order.

Another study was carried out in the automotive industry of Ethiopia to assess factors which influence brand choice (Alemayehu, 2017). The survey method was used to collect data from 300 conveniently sampled respondents. This study was based on a framework with five consumption components: functional, social, emotional, conditional and epistemic issues. Among the top significant determinants of brand preference were brand name, attributes, emotional connection, company image, automobile spare part, product accessibility and price. Unlike Zia and Sohail (2016) which found product price to be the least influential, Alemayehu (2017) found that automobile dealers should segment their markets and charge reasonable price, provide maintenance support, and advertisements that emotionally connect customers with the image of automobile products. Thus the psychological positioning strategy is key in the buying behaviour of customers in the automobile industry.

Carlberg and Kjellberg (2018) carried out a study focused on branding in the automotive industry in Sweden. The main aim of the study was to analyse and attain an in-depth understanding of the role prior and current experience and the ultimate effect on the consumer buying process with specific focus to the premium market segment. The study was qualitative and it employed semi-structured interviews to collect data from respondents. Brand positioning strategies in a drive to enhance product brand experience were found to have a direct impact on customers' buying decisions in the automobile industry. Branding strategies were seen to be positively influencing customers to attach meanings, values, stimulated emotions and positive perceptions about a

brand. That improved brand experience which then plays a key role in the subsequent purchasing decision process of customers in the automobile industry. Branding should therefore be targeted to positively affect brand experiences of the social network including friends, relatives and close associates who then broadcast their experiences to other potential automobile customers (Carlberg and Kjellberg, 2018).

Hussain and Rashid (2016) conducted a secondary research that reviewed studies on brand extension and ascertained the key elements for successful brand extension. Six brand extension fundamentals were ascertained as follows: parent brand strength, parent brand quality, parent brand image, marketing support, parent brand fit and parent brand consumer or customer experience. All these highlighted key elements had a significant positive relationship with a company's ability to extend its brand. The current study is not only limited to brand extension but it goes further to study the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences. Other branding strategies other than brand extension – brand positioning and brand sponsorship are also covered in this current study.

As demonstrated by Hussain and Rashid (2016), the importance of the quality of the parent brand was also found as a key component of brand extension success in another past study carried out by Volckner et al (2010). The parent brand quality factor was more essential than perceived fit between the brand and its extensions (Volckner et al, 2010). These authors also highlighted key dimensions of parent brand quality – the physical service environment, service outcome quality, interactions of service employees with customers. Similarly, Muhammad, Gill and Murad (2016) confirmed that the initial parent brand image and parent brand quality have a significant positive impact on brand extension attitude. These results were confirmed through correlation and linear regression analysis computed in a survey research involving 200 conveniently selected brand buyers.

In Pakistani, Kazmi and Rashidi (2012) studied the effects of brand extension strategies on consumer buying decisions. That study demonstrated that brand extension strategies effectively help companies to capture and consolidate its market share. The study also indicated the effectiveness of brand extension strategies in increasing a company's product range, developing strong perception in the minds of consumers. However, the study found out that the company's image is distorted if there is unidentifiable point of differentiations between the parent brand and

its extensions. The company's image could be distorted if the child brand is portraying to be the same as the parent brand yet its features are not consistent with features of the parent brand. Brand dilution is the other issue raised in the study since too many brand extensions with very minimal unidentifiable differences may dilute the actual uniqueness of the parent brand.

The quantitative study by the Pimenta et al (2014) evaluated brand extensions in an experiment-based research with a service sector. That research also analysed the impact of different brand positioning and brand extension components –consumer evaluation brand names which are arbitrary, descriptive and suggestive, perceived similarities and quality pertaining to brand extensions in services. Multiple Analyses Of Variance was used to measure the significance of brand names and similarities on attitude and intention to use extended brand by consumers. The study results recognised transfer of perceived quality from parent services to extended service. The perceived quality in the extended service was found to be more important than any risks around similarity and brand names in extended brands (Pimenta et al, 2014).

Yasir et al (2013) carried out a study in Pakistani concerning consumer evaluation of brand extension. Four brand extension variables including innovativeness, multiple brand extensions, brand extension fit, brand concept and consistency were evaluated. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 110 conveniently sampled participants. The collected quantitative data was collected and analysed using the regression analysis to measure relationships amongst the key research variables. The study results demonstrated that consumer assessments would be positive for brand extensions that have an existing durable reputation for launching multiple brands. The level of brand consumer innovativeness proved to have a positive impact on consumer evaluations of brand extensions; thus companies that seek to extend its brands should target innovative consumers.

Mason (2015) carried out a study of how consumer behaviour is influenced by corporate sport sponsorship. The study provided findings which pointed out that brand sponsorship influence attitudinal beliefs of consumers by altering their beliefs of perceptions towards a brand. Sponsorship activities and events are crucial in dealing with cognitive changes. The study pointed out that corporate or brand sponsorship alters the entire attitude of customers resulting into positive buying behaviours.

Khuong and Chau (2017) undertook a study in Vietnam to examine the effect of event sponsorship on customers' brand trust and word of mouth towards the sponsor's brands and products. The quantitative research approach was adopted in which data was collected from 227 Toyota customers and football fans in Binh Duong province in Vietnam. Brand sponsorship was found to be a strong marketing tool for Toyota in building customers' brand trust and snowballing references for the sponsor's products and brands. The sponsored event created positive attitudes in the participants thus creating a strong connection with the sponsoring company. That study recommended use of sport sponsorship programs to companies in order to positively affect the preferences of consumers and ultimately their buying decisions. Khuong and Chau (2017) research was undertaken in a service sector, the current study is differently undertaken in the context of an automobile company which is into the trade of tangible goods – automobiles and automobile spares.

2.9 Research Gap

The available literature summarised in this study revealed a dearth of literature around application of specific branding strategies vis-a-vis consumer buying behaviour in the automobile industry. The dearth of literature is even worse in the context of Zimbabwe's automobile industry. Past studies including (Azmat, 2015; Hooley, Piercy and Nicoulaud, 2012; Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010) were more biased towards brand positioning. The current study is not limited to brand positioning only but to other branding strategies such as brand extension and brand sponsorship in relation to consumer behaviour. Unlike the study by Hussain and Rashid (2016), the current study is not only limited to brand extension but it goes further to study the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences. Other branding strategies other than brand extension – brand positioning and brand sponsorship are also covered in this current study.

The results obtained by Mazodier and Merunka (2012) on brand sponsorship were based on an experimental research design. The present study is based on the descriptive research design which is bound to bring about different results. Renard and Sitz (2014) also concentrated on brand sponsorship, yet the current study is not limited to brand sponsorship only but also brand positioning and brand extension variables. Hussain and Rashid's (2016) was a secondary research with emphasis on brand extension whereas the current study is a primary research holistically covering brand extension, brand positioning and brand sponsorship. Khuong and

Chau (2017) was undertaken in a service sector, the current study is differently undertaken in the context of an automobile company which is into the trade of tangible goods – automobile spares.

Previous research conducted in the automobile industry by Zia and Sohail (2016) was on brand preferences; Nadzri et al, (2015) was focused on antecedents of brand experience within the National Automotive Industry in Malaysia; Alemayehu (2017) assessed factors which influence brand choice in Ethiopia; and Carlberg and Kjellberg (2018) was on branding in the automotive industry in Sweden. The current study is uniquely focused on the nexus between an array of branding strategies (brand extension, brand positioning and brand sponsorship) and consumer behaviour in Zimbabwe's automotive industry. Actually, Zimbabwe's economic environment is at a different level of economic development and with the dearth of studies on branding strategies in the automotive industry; the local and universal body of literature is set to gain new knowledge on branding strategies and consumer behaviour from the perspective of Zimbabwe's perspective.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This foregoing chapter comprehensively provided theoretical and empirical literature related the research variables and objectives. The chapter captures literature on branding strategies: brand positioning, extension, sponsorship and consumer behaviour. A conceptual framework showing the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was also developed and presented. The researcher also reveals the research gap motivating this research work. The next chapter outlines the research methodology applied in this present research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Leedy & Ormrod (2013) define research methodology as a systematic approach and set of procedures adopted in a study in order to answer the raised research questions. It entails processes of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of results. The research design, research philosophy, target population and sample size determination are part of the research methodology. Sampling techniques, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation procedures are part of this section. Ethical considerations, issues of validity and reliability of data collection instruments are also discussed in the chapter.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a set of assumptions and beliefs that guides the stance or viewpoint assumed by the researcher in investigating phenomena and developing knowledge through research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015). This research is underpinned by the pragmatist philosophy. The pragmatism is preferred in this since it resonates with the research approach also adopted in this study – the mixed methods approach. This stance is supported by Morgan (2007) who advanced that pragmatism is a philosophy that liberally draws from the qualitative and quantitative research assumptions and principles. The pragmatic philosophy is defined by Creswell (2009) as a pluralistic approach that strives to reconcile objectivism and subjectivism, facts and values, accurate and rigorous knowledge and different contextualized experiences.

Pragmatism is favoured in this research since it concentrates on being a research problem-centred and real-world practice oriented philosophy. In that vein, this research is driven by the stated research problem pertaining to a chosen company (Kopje Spares Private Limited) which is lacking effective delivery of branding strategies that resonates with the shifting needs of modern

consumers resulting into a fall in the daily customer count. To fully prescribe branding strategies that resolve the highlighted status quo, the pragmatist view perfectly fits the study since it advances use of different types of knowledge and available research methods to develop knowledge pertaining to the phenomenon currently under study.

Triangulation of research methods including use of structured questionnaires and interviews in collection of the research data is associated with the pragmatist approach. Application of multiple data collection approaches in carrying out this research result to a comprehensive study of the phenomenon from both the quantitative and qualitative research perspectives.

3.3 Research Design

This study is adopting a mixed methods approach. Creswell (2012) posits that a mixed methods approach is an approach to a research enquiry which integrates both the qualitative and quantitative forms. A self-administered questionnaire is going to be used to collect quantitative data from the Kopje Spares customers. In collecting additional qualitative data for the study, in-depth interviews are used to extract data from the key informants of the study. These key informants comprise of Kopje spares senior managers. A descriptive case study design is adopted in this study. The descriptive research design is a study that scrutinises the situation, as it exists in its present state. This study is focused on examining the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour. Descriptive studies which involve measurement of the correlation between two or more variables then resonates with the stated objectives earmarking examination of the impact of brand positioning, brand extension and brand sponsorship on consumer behaviour.

The case study component of the adopted research design involves an in-depth empirical enquiry of the branding strategies in Kopje Spares as the case. Though the case study strategy adopted in this study is a single case, a case study is advantageous in that it enables a detailed enquiry of the selected case – Kopje Spares Private Limited. In order to achieve a full empirical enquiry of the selected case, both the quantitative data collection approach (structured questionnaire) and qualitative data collection approach (interviews) are applied.

3.4 Target population

The population targeted by this study involves Kopje Spares' customers who are drawn from the company's customer database. The targeted customers are those customers that have been actively transacting with Kopje Spares' for at least 5 years. Based on the December 2019 customer database of Kopje Spares, 942 customers have been actively purchasing automobile products from Kopje Spares. As such, 942 is the target population for the study. The company's overall customer database which is the basis for target population definition in this study is covering Kopje Spares' seven branches located in Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru, Mutare, and Kwekwe.

3.3 Sampling techniques and sample size

The sampling procedure adopted in this study is outlined by the researcher. The sample size is also computed to determine the actual sample frame from which the research data are collected.

3.3.1 Sample procedure

Kopje Spares has seven branches in five cities and or towns in Zimbabwe. The targeted Kopje Spares customers participating in the study are grouped by branch or town from which their accounts are managed. Since the seven branches are viewed as heterogeneous segments with homogenous customers and characteristics within them, Stratified Random Sampling technique suits this population distribution. In that vein, Proportional Stratified Random Sampling is then applied to segment the customers (the intended respondents) by branch or town. After segmenting the customers' population by branch, proportional sampling is applied to ensure that the size of the sample per stratum or branch is proportional to the size of the population of the stratum in relation to the entire population across all the branches. To select the actual respondents from each stratum, a proportional random sample is then selected.

The upside of Proportional Stratified Random Sampling is that it minimises the sampling error which is synonymous with sole application of Simple Random Sampling technique. All strata or branches are fairly represented in the final sample set since a proportional sample is drawn from each stratum. Thus, Proportional Stratified Random Sampling ensures high representativeness of responses across the targeted population.

Judgmental sampling is applied in selecting the interview key informants. Judgmental sampling which is also called purposive sampling is preferred since it ensures direct selection of research participants that are highly knowledgeable about the phenomenon being studied. In the context of this study, the senior managers of Kopje Spares including the marketing executive are strategically positioned to understand the issues of branding strategies and consumer behaviour within the company. Three additional key informants are earmarked to be part of the final judgmental sample of the study –Managing Director, Finance Manager and Operations Manager. Thus, these senior managers are purposively selected to provide data that directly suit the research questions and goals.

3.3.2 Sample size

The sample size is determined using the Raosoft online sample size calculator (www.raosoft.com). The following parameters are inputted into the calculator: margin of error 10%, confidence interval 95%, population size 942 and response distribution 50%. The sample size calculator retained a sample size of 88. Thus, data for this study are collected from a determined sample size of 88.

3.4 Data sources

Most of the data to be used in this study are quantitative. The primary quantitative data are collected from Kopje Spares customers drawn from its seven branches located in five cities and or towns in Zimbabwe. The targeted customer should have been actively transacting with the company for at least 5 years. Additional qualitative data are collected from three senior managers of Kopje spares (the key informants). Thus, a quantitative research instrument as well as qualitative research instrument is required.

3.5 Research Instruments

Since this study is a mixed methods research, primary data in this research are extracted using primary data collection tools. A key advantage of using primary data is that the data are original

and reliable. These advantages hold true, since primary data are directly extracted from the research participants through first-hand experience. This kind of data is essential in directly addressing the research questions of the study. A self-administered questionnaire is designed to collect primary quantitative data from the targeted population – Kopje Spares Customers. An interview guide is also employed in extracting the qualitative data.

3.5.1 Self-administered questionnaire

A self-administrated questionnaire is used to collect quantitative data from the Kopje Spares customers. The questionnaire is designed to predominantly make use of closed questions on a categorical scale and majority of the closed questions on a Likert-scale. The respondents are expected to rate the effect of branding strategies on various consumer behaviour variables through Likert-Scale questions. The Likert-scale questions are designed to span from strongly disagree (1) disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree (5). Data on perceptions of customers pertaining to rating of the influence of the various branding strategies in view of consumer behaviour are ascertained. The structured questionnaires to be used in this study would be designed to cover all the themes emerging from the research questions raised in this study.

The questionnaire is designed with four sections as follows: the first section carries questions for extracting demographic information about the customers involved in the quantitative data collection exercise. Questionnaire questions for the three subsequent sections emerge from the effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions, the influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image, and the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences. Thus the questionnaire is designed to cover all the critical thematic areas emerging from the research questions

Likert scale questions and closed questions are advantageous in that statistical computations such as frequencies, percentages, the mean, standard deviation and correlational analysis could be applied on the various data collection variables. Collecting data through structured questionnaires simplifies the data collection exercise since the questionnaires could be administered and completed by respondents concurrently. Simultaneous administering and completion of questionnaires result into considerable time and huge costs savings.

In the context, of the current global coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic, data collection using self-administered questionnaires minimises the time of contact between the researcher and respondents. Thus, a self-administered questionnaire is a tool that can be easily accepted by respondents in the context of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. Self-administered questionnaires also provide the advantage of anonymity to the respondents since they are completed in the absence of the researcher. In light of that, respondents are more likely to provide candid, unbiased and honest responses since their identities are anonymous.

3.5.2 Interview Guide

An interview guide is employed to extract qualitative data from the earmarked key informants. The interview guide makes use of open-ended questions to solicit qualitative evidence from the study key informants (Kopje Spares Senior Managers). Four key informants including the Marketing Executive, Managing Director, Finance Manager and Operations Manager are earmarked as the research key informants. The interview questions would be designed in a way that ensures that they cascade from all the three research questions raised in this study. As long as interview appointments are observed, interviews provide a platform for instantaneous feedback which is crucial for avoiding delays in light of the stipulated research schedule.

Unclear questions from the perspective of the research respondents are instantly clarified by the researcher since interview-based data collection processes directly involve the researcher. Clarification of vague or elusive interview questions ensures that the interview questions are responded to in the correctly expected way. This enhances data validity and validity in final research results is also enhanced.

3.6 Data collection procedure and administration

The self-administered questionnaire is the main research instrument in this study; of which majority of the respondent complete this data collection instrument in the absence of the researcher. This also means that the questionnaire respondents complete the questionnaires at their own convenient times and private environments. The data collection procedure involves sending the questionnaires to respondents digitally through electronic mail. This present research is being carried out at a time when the deadly COVID-19 is spreading locally and globally. The

government of Zimbabwe has instituted travel restrictions and is encouraging adequate social distancing in response to COVID-19 outbreak. In that vein, distributing questionnaires through email which are self-administered minimises contact between the researcher and participants' in-line with the prevailing government call.

After completing the questionnaires, respondents send back the completed questionnaires via email. In terms of the in-depth interviews, interview appointments are booked with the prospective interviewees one week before the interview date. Depending on the availability of the targeted interview respondents, the interviews are conducted via the telephone medium or face-to-face. Since the interviews would be involving a few key informants, it is easy to manage the interview appointments and sessions.

3.7 Pilot Study

Most of the empirical data for the study are being collected through the structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is thus pilot tested before it is used for the actual and larger-scale data collection exercise. Respondents for the pilot study are drawn from the same targeted study setting – Kopje Spares customers. However, the pilot study is only targeted to kopje spares customers who have been transacting with Kopje Spares for less than five years. The concept is to ensure that the pilot study participants are not part of actual and final study sample from which the research data are actually collected from. The other idea is to make sure that pilot study participants have the same characteristics with those of respondents intended to participate in the actual data collection exercise. In administering the questionnaires for pre-testing, the questionnaires are distributed to 15 respondents in the same study setting.

The pilot study is an essential procedure which will facilitate obtaining of feedback from the pilot test participants pertaining to user-friendliness of the data collection instrument and whether the questionnaire is understandable from the respondents' perspective. The feedback is indispensable in realigning and rewording questions that appear to be difficult to understand from the viewpoint of the respondents. Ambiguity and double-barrelled questions are adjusted accordingly as guided by the feedback from the pilot study participants. By and large, the pilot study enables the researcher to revise and improve the questionnaire to ensure that the

instruments are consistently measuring what it is intended to measure. Ultimately, the pilot study enhances reliability and validity of the data collected which are critical aspects in any research.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of findings

Validity refers to the degree to which a data collection instrument measures what is designed to measure (Creswell, 2012). One of ensuring validity of a data collection instrument is through engaging academic experts. In this study, the researcher is engaging the expert guidance of the Midlands State University lecturers including the dissertation supervisor. This ensures that data collection instruments are in line with the raised research constructs.

Reliability in research is the degree to which a data collection instrument provides stable and consistent results (Creswell, 2012). In this study the inter-item internal consistency of the questionnaire is tested through computation of the Cronbach's Alpha (reliability score) in SPSS 20.0. An aggregate Cronbach's alpha for all the questionnaire variables is then computed and presented. The universally accepted Cronbach's alpha to deem a research instrument reliable should be at least 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

3.9 Data analysis and presentation tools

The collected research data are subjected to the full data analysis procedure which includes data preparation and the actual statistical analysis of the data. After gathering the data, the data are subjected to the cleaning or editing process which comprises checking and dealing with data consistency and completeness. Quantitative data are coded, tabulated and analysed using SPSS version 20. Statistical analyses using SPSS 20.0 are computed and these include descriptive frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency (mean), measure of dispersion (standard deviation), cross tabulations and correlation analysis results. The research results are summarised and presented in the form of tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The quantitative analysis findings are supported by qualitative data collected through in-depth key informant interviews as well as data emerging from the empirical literature.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

A number of critical research ethics are observed in the processes involved in this research work. Informed consent is sought from Kopje Spares – the organisation in which the study is contextualised for the case study. Informed consent from each individual respondent is also sought to ensure voluntary participation by the targeted respondents. The questionnaires would be designed with an instruction which inform respondents to avoid providing their identity details on the questionnaires. The respondents are also notified that their responses will be reported in general terms and not tied back to individual identities. This means that the questionnaires are completed anonymously in order to maintain research ethics of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. The collected data are also only used for academic purposes.

The respondents are also openly informed that the data collection exercise is by voluntary participation and every respondent has the right to withdraw from the exercise at any time. All the views given by the respondents are equally respected since standardized research instruments are employed in the data collection exercise. Secondary sources from which data is collected to use in the study are acknowledged using an accredited referencing system. The Harvard Referencing System is used for both in-text citation and reference list. An Anti-plagiarism checker is applied on the entire research work to ensure that this study is original.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the adopted research methodology in addressing the research questions. It entails tools and procedures of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of results. The research design, research philosophy, target population and sample size determination are part of this research methodology chapter. Sampling techniques, data collection procedures, data analysis and presentation procedures are part of this section. Ethical considerations, issues of validity and reliability of data collection instruments are also discussed in the chapter.

The subsequent chapter dwells on data analysis, presentation and discussion.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study entailed studying the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares - a retail company in the trade of automobile products in Zimbabwe. In order to achieve this aim, qualitative and quantitative research data with an inclination towards quantitative data were collected from Kopje Spares customers and analysed thereof. The quantitative data which constituted bulky of the collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0. Descriptive statistics in the form of descriptive frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency (Mean and Mode) and measure of dispersions (Standard deviation) were computed in the data analysis process.

Measurement of the impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour was ascertained based on inferential statistical analysis – correlation analysis. The findings emerging from the key informant interviews were used as corroborating evidence to the quantitative findings. In addition, empirical literature findings reviewed in this study were used applied to discuss the research findings obtained in this present study. The researcher began by analysing the response rate of the distributed questionnaires as well as the demographics of the research participants.

4.2 Response Rate Analysis

Eighty-eight (88) questionnaires were distributed to the targeted survey respondents and the results of the response rate are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Number of Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Successfully completed	Response Rate
88	64	72%

Of the 88 targeted questionnaire respondents, 64 of them successfully participated in completing and returning completed questionnaires to the researcher. This translates to a 72% response rate. The questionnaires were administered at a time where all Zimbabweans were under restricted physical movements (lockdown) due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it proved to be practically impossible to reach every targeted respondent due to movement restrictions. Some of the targeted participants did not even have an internet connection and internet-connected devices to enable them to participate in the survey. However, the response rate was relatively good to enable the researcher to proceed with the data analysis process and report the research findings thereof. A questionnaire response rate of at least 60% is taken by Fincham (2008) as commendable enough to allow credible data analysis and report of findings. In this present study, the 60% rate was exceeded and that gave confidence to the researcher to proceed with data analysis and reporting of the research findings.

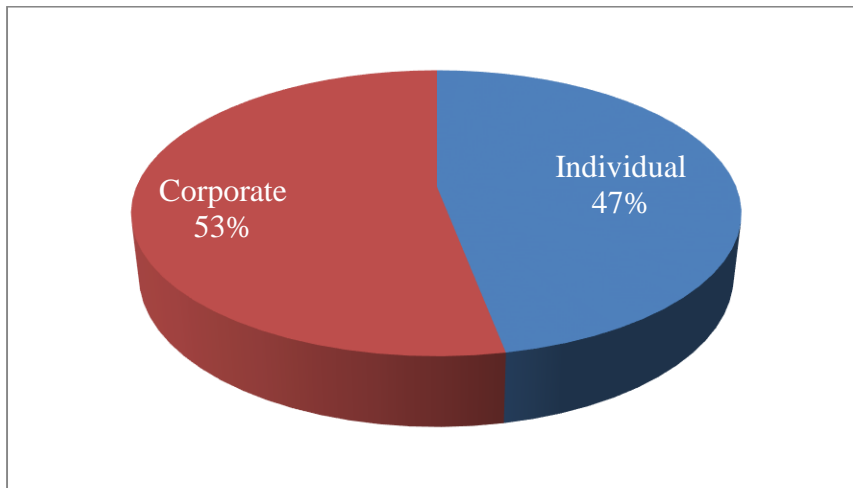
4.3 Demographic information of the respondents

The type of client or customer who responded to the questionnaire, their education level and the number of years they have been working in Kopje Spares were analysed.

4.3.1 Type of client

The researcher collected information to understand whether the participants were individual or corporate clients or customers. Accordingly, the results are summarised in the pie chart below (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Type of Client



Source: Primary Data

(N = 64)

Figure 4.1 above shows that 53% of the clients were corporate clients and 47% were individual walk-in customers. It was interesting to note that corporate clients participated in the survey. Corporate clients are usually guided by professional guidelines and competitive strategies when procuring items from suppliers or vendors. As such, corporate clients were expected to have crucial views about branding strategies and their behaviours as buyers of automobile products. The total sets of views extracted from the customers were balanced given that 47% individual walk-in customers were also involved as research data providers. Perceptions of both individual and corporate clients were equally important in fully understanding the effect of branding strategies on consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares.

4.3.2 Education Level

Distribution of the respondents based on their levels of education is depicted in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Education Level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	'O' Level	5	7.8	7.8	7.8
	'A Level	11	17.2	17.2	25.0
	Diploma	13	20.3	20.3	45.3
	Undergraduate Degree	30	46.9	46.9	92.2
	Postgraduate Degree	5	7.8	7.8	100.0
	Total	64	100.0	100.0	

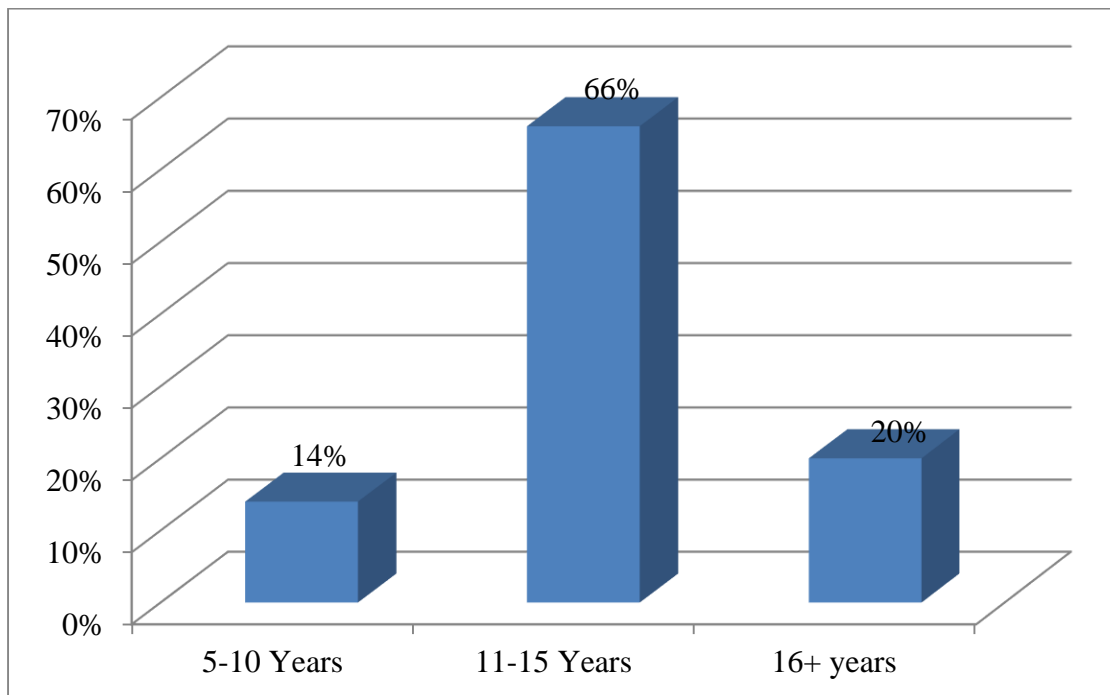
Source: Primary Data

Table 4.2 above portrays that 8% of the respondents were educated to the ordinary level certificate, 17% had reached advanced level, 20% were diploma holders, 8 % had postgraduate qualifications and majority of the respondents (47%) were undergraduate degree holders. It was encouraging to note that most of the respondents had at least a diploma qualification and this therefore means majority of the participants were educationally empowered enough to understand the concepts and issues which were probed through the questionnaire. Having respondents who are better predisposed to understand the probed concepts and issues aided to the validity and reliability of the extracted research data. As a result, credibility of the research results could be trusted.

4.3.3 Number of years buying products from Kopje Spares

The number of years in which the research participants were involved with Kopje spares as customer are reflected Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2 Number of years buying products from Kopje Spares



Source: Primary Data

(N = 64)

Results in Figure 4.2 above reveal that 14% customers had been buying from Kopje Spares for a period stretching between 5 to 10 years; 66% had been Kopje Spares' customers for 11-15 years and 20% were Kopje Spares' customers for at least 16 years. Data for the study was collected from a big number of customers (86%) who had at least 11 years of knowledge about Kopje Spares from a customer perspective. It was imperative to extract research data from customers with more knowledge concerning branding strategies that suits Kopje Spares as an automobile retailer or wholesaler. This helps in ensuring that the collected data is credible for generalisability of the study results.

4.4 The effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions

The first objective of this study entailed assessing the effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions. Results related to this study are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 The effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions

N = 64	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
I value the visible exterior brand attributes of automobile products when making a decision to buy	6%	20%	61%	13%	100%
I strongly consider brand exclusiveness and uniqueness when I make a decision to buy automobile products	6%	14%	60%	20%	100%
I value automobile product quality	-	14%	36%	50%	100%
The shop image or overall company brand from which I am directly buying automobile products matters the most to me		19%	48%	33%	100%
The service I receive when making a decision to buy automobile products strongly influence my decision	1%	33%	50%	16%	100%
The location of where I should buy automobile products usually influence my intention to buy	2%	33%	65%	-	100%
I always choose to buy automobile products advertised through various channels	16%	31%	53%	-	100%
I consider price of automobile products is a key factor to me when buying	2%	17%	55%	26%	100%
Product and services' experiences of friends and relatives with particular automobile products strongly influence my decision to buy the same shop	-	17%	44%	39%	100%

Source: Primary Data

Research findings in table 4.3 above indicate that 61% of the total number of respondents agreed and 13% strongly agreed they value the visible exterior brand attributes of the automobile products when deciding to buy. In related results, 80% of respondents (60% agreed and 20% strongly agreed) concurred that they strongly agree that brand exclusiveness and uniqueness are considered when they decide to buy automobile products. A whopping 86% either agreed or strongly agreed that they strongly value automobile products' quality when deciding to buy the products. It also emerged from the key informant interviews that customers consider automobile product names, quality, symbols, or logos of the manufactures branded on the products they buy. Key informant 1 said,

“The brand names of automobile products, their historically known durability and effectiveness strongly affect the purchasing intentions of customers. Kopje Spares have managed to create alliances with reputable manufacturers of automobile products to ensure that it offers its customers with internationally recognised strong brands. By so doing, the company has managed to provide automobile brands with exterior brand attributes of renowned international manufacturers and that helps to make consumer connections about exterior attributes of the brand”

In a past study, Iqbal (2014) highlighted that brand attributes work as a memory signal that

enables customers to quickly recall and recognize a product or service offered on the market. Thus, it could be deduced that product recall and recognition could be an outcome of the past brand experience by the customers, brand perceptions and brand associations brought about by positioning the value of automobile products in the minds of customers. In related results Key informant 3 said,

“The emphasis in automobile business is always to offer strong brands which are mainly centred on brands’ exclusiveness, durability and attributes that allow the automobile products to be perceived as different, unique and effective from the perspective of consumers. The quality of automobile products strongly matters for the motorists especially when buying spare parts and lubricants that are required to maintain the value of their vehicles”

By and large, it could be noted that customers attach a lot of value on the quality of automobile products they would want to buy; the exterior product attributes as well as the exclusiveness and uniqueness of the products. According to Mohammadian and Ronaghi (2010), a brand with a good image and of good quality creates a long-lasting positive impression in the minds of customers. Additional descriptive statistical results on brand positioning are shown in Table 4.4 below

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics: The effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions

	N		Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing			
The shop image or overall company brand from which I am directly buying automobile products matters the most to me	64	0	4.14	4	0.71
The service I receive when making a decision to buy automobile products strongly influence my decision	64	0	3.8	4	0.717
The location of where I should buy automobile products usually influence my intention to buy	64	0	3.64	4	0.515
The price of automobile products is a key factor to me when buying	64	0	4.06	4	0.71
Product and services’ experiences of friends and relatives with particular automobile products strongly influence my decision to buy the same shop	64	0	4.22	4	0.723

Source: Primary Data

Besides the automobile products on offer in a shop, the shop image or overall company brand from which customers are directly buying automobile products also matters as highlighted by the mean score 4.14 (SD = 0.71). This means score (Agree = 4) demonstrates that on average, the Kopje Spares customers were typically concurring that the overall company brand and shop image selling the automobile products matters as a component of branding strategies set out to positively influence the consumer purchasing intentions. The standard deviation was less than one and that signifies that the responses given by the respondents about the importance of shop image and company brand were closely related. The study by Zhang (2015) also found that perceived and actual consumer purchasing intentions are highly linked with the brand image of a product or organisation.

Majority of the respondents reflected by the mode (agree = 4) also demonstrate that the following elements matter when customers are deciding to buy automobile products: the customer service provided to a customer as they process the decision to buy automobile products (66%); product location (65%); product price (81%); and experiences of friends and relatives with the particular automobile products to be purchased by the deciding customers (83%). It also emerged from the interview findings that prior experiences of the acquaintances and close family members with the automobile products being offered has a strong bearing on the purchasing decision of customers.

Abdul - Aziz (2016) found that social networks of relatives, family members, reference groups and friends play a significant part in affecting the purchasing decision of consumers as also found in a past study by Carlberg and Kjellberg (2018). Usually, automobile products are high valued products and customers could not be seen making an uncalculated and rushed decision as they part with their hard-earned money. In that vein, they always want to seek opinions of close acquaintances and colleagues when buying some of these high-valued automobile products so much that they acquire spares or products good enough to maintain the value of their products.

Since 81% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed they consider product price when deciding to buy automobile products; thus, price is a key factor when positioning automobile products for influencing positive buying intentions. Key informant 2 stated that:

“The Zimbabwean economy is characterized by a liquidity crisis coupled with hyperinflationary pressures eroding the value of low disposable incomes earned by

individuals as well as incomes generated by companies. Thus, in as many customers value the quality of automobile products when making the buying decision, they end up going for cheaper products that they can afford with the low incomes they are getting, In the context of the Zimbabwean Market, price of the automobile products offer matter to customers”.

Additional results show only a fair number of respondents (53%) who buy automobile products advertised through various marketing channels; 31% were neutral and 16% disagreed. Thus, it is evident that some of the customers are not moved by adverts when making purchasing intentions. Information that came out of the interviews reveals that in the automobile industry, some customers choose to be guided by referrals and advices from their car mechanics, acquaintances and family members who would have prior experiences with the automobile products on offer. As a result, they are found giving value to those referrals or advices rather than being influenced by commercial adverts.

By and large, the results discussed above show that purchasing intentions towards automobile products are influenced by brand positioning strategies employed by an automobile company. In further analyses to measure the effect of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intention, correlation analysis was carried out. The results are depicted in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5 Correlation between brand positioning strategies and consumer purchasing intentions

		Consumer purchasing intentions	Brand_Potionining_Average
Consumer purchasing intentions	Pearson Correlation	1	.813**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
Brand_Potionining_Average	Pearson Correlation	.813**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS output

Correlation analysis was computed in SPSS to test the relationship between brand positioning strategies and consumer purchase intentions. There was a statistically positive significant relationship between brand positioning strategies and consumer purchase intentions, $r(64) = +0.813$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed. This means that there is a strong positive relationship between the application of brand positioning strategies and consumer purchase intentions. The statistically significant positive relationship indicates that an automobile company improves on the application of its branding strategies; correspondingly, consumer purchase intentions are positively influenced. Typically, a successful positioning strategy is linked to a firm's key capabilities illuminating the firm's unique way of delivering value to customers (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010).

4.5 The influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image

Mazodier and Merunka (2012) established that managers of various companies are increasingly pursuing to positively alter consumer behaviour and to build customer loyalty through sponsoring of activities. The second objective formulated in this study was focused on evaluating the influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image. Results associated with this objective are presented in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6 The influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image

N = 64	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Showcasing an automobile firm brand through sponsored events and activities, enhances positive feelings towards the image of the company	14%	25%	61%	-	100%
Showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities facilitate the transfer of positive effect from the event to the sponsoring brand	17%	22%	61%	-	100%
Showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities positively alter consumer behaviour and build customer loyalty	11%	34%	55%	-	100%
Corporate sponsorship by automobile firm aspect leads to overall liking of the company brand	12%	19%	56%	13%	100%

Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 4.6 above show varying views on the influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image. Sixty-one percent (61%) were of the perception that showcasing an automobile firm brand through sponsored events and activities enhances positive feelings towards the image of the company. As the automobile company sponsors events and activities, it facilitates the transfer of positive effects from the event to the sponsoring brand. In related results, 69% (56% agreed and 13% strongly agreed) indicated that corporate sponsorship by the automobile firm aspect leads to the overall liking of the company brand. Supporting evidence extracted from interviews shows that a fit between the event and the brand has a positive effect on brand effect, through attitude toward the sponsorship, and on brand trust, such that it ultimately positively influences how the image of an automobile company is viewed by both the existing and prospective customers. In line with these findings, Key informant 1 categorically said,

“Brand sponsorship is a popular marketing vehicle that leads to more favourable consumer attitudes, generates positive feelings and overall liking of the sponsoring company and brand. The corporate sponsorship aspect then leads to enhancing brand recognition and popularity and that ultimately spruce up the image of a company's overall image. Kopje Spares has managed to grow its popularity through sponsoring events like clean up campaigns that involved the company employees wearing T-shirts and caps branded with company logos and product brands. A positive effect on brand popularity and image was even generated by including some of the customers in the clean-up campaigns”.

These results were in harmony with De Houwer (2014) who highlighted in a past study that airing a brand with a positive affective stimulus which is the event invokes an evaluative conditioning procedure, such that the brand benefits from the positive affective stimulus. Sweldens et al. (2010) found in the past study that the sponsorship that links the brand to the event, in turn, facilitates the transfer of positive effect from the event to the sponsor.

On the other hand, at least 31% of the total number of respondents either disagreed or were neutral that corporate sponsorship by automobile firms leads to the overall liking of the company brand. This set of respondents did not out-rightly agree that showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities enhance positive customer perceptions towards a company's overall image. Related interview findings showed that not all customers are lured or

positively moved by showcasing brands through sponsored events or activities. Some of the customers think that companies would be sometimes concentrating on popularising themselves rather than investing in customer care and providing high-quality automobile products.

It was however important to note that though some of the respondents were of the view that corporate sponsorship by automobile firms does not generate positive feelings toward the overall liking of a company brand; the majority of the respondents (at least 60%) were of the opposite view. Inferential statistical results confirmed a positive relationship between brand sponsorship and consumer perceptions of company image.

Table 4.7 Correlation between brand sponsorship strategy and consumer perceptions of company image

		Brand_Sponsorship _Average	Consumer Perceptions of Company Image
Brand_Sponsorship_ Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.979**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
Consumer Perceptions of Company Image	Pearson Correlation	.979**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS output

Correlation analysis was computed in SPSS to test the relationship between brand sponsorship strategy and consumer perceptions of company image. There were a statistically strong positive significant relationship between brand sponsorship strategy and consumer perceptions of company image, $r(64) = +0.979$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed. This means that there is a strong positive relationship between investment in brand sponsorship strategy and consumer perceptions of company image. This statistically significant positive relationship indicates that as an automobile company increases its investment and efforts toward the brand sponsorship strategy, an improvement in creating positive perceptions of a company image is realised.

A past study by Khuong and Chau (2017) proved that brand sponsorship is a strong marketing tool for Toyota in building customers' brand trust and snowballing references for the sponsor's

products and brands. The sponsored events were found to be creating positive attitudes in the participants thus creating a strong connection with the sponsoring company Khuong and Chau (2017 then recommended the use of sport sponsorship programs to companies to positively affect the preferences of consumers and ultimately their buying decisions. The study by Mason (2015) also pointed out that brand sponsorship influences attitudinal beliefs of consumers by altering their beliefs of perceptions towards a brand. Sponsorship activities and events are crucial in dealing with cognitive changes. Corporate or brand sponsorship alters the entire attitude of customers resulting in positive buying behaviours.

4.6 The effect of brand extension on consumer preferences

Anandan (2014) recommended line extensions as one of the most economical and fastest way of introducing a new product. The present study in particular examined the effect of brand extension on consumer preferences in one of the research objectives. The descriptive statistical results in line with addressing the research objective are shown in Table 4.8 below

Table 4.8 The effect of brand extension on consumer preferences

N = 64	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Prefer new brand extension with strong existing parent brand	2%	15.6	52%	31%	100%	4.13	4	.724
Prefer new brand extension which fit well with the quality of the existing parent product	13%	12%	75%	-	100%	3.63	4	.701
Prefer new brand extension if I had previous superior experience with the existing parent product	12%	13%	75%	-	100%	3.63	4	.701
Prefer new brand extension with superior and innovative features	2%	16%	45%	38%	100%	4.19	4	.753
Prefer new automobile products introduced in new geographical markets as an extension of an existing parent product.	14%	27%	59%	-	100%	3.45	4	.733
Prefer brand extensions if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands	13%	17%	58%	12%	100%	3.70	4	.849

Source: Primary Data

Results in Table 4.8 above bear testimony that new brand extensions positively influence consumer preferences. At least 81% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer new automobile brand extensions with strong existing parent brand or product as

well as if the newly introduced automobile brand extensions have superior and innovative features. Actually, mean scores ranging between 3.63 (SD = .0701) and 4.19 (SD = 0.753) demonstrate that consumers generally prefer brand extensions with strong parent brands, innovative features, fitting very well with the quality of the existing parent product and if the customer had a superior experience with the existing parent product. The level of brand-consumer innovativeness proved to have a positive impact on consumer evaluations of brand extensions (Yasir et al, 2013); thus companies that seek to extend its brands should target innovative consumers.

This means that if customers previously derived a commendable level of satisfaction from the existing parent product, they feel compelled to try the new product extensions with expectations to enjoy better satisfaction in new product extensions. Surely, if the new extensions come with better quality and innovative features, the new brand extensions are highly likely to be preferred more consumers leading to great success. The importance of the quality of the parent brand was also found as a key component of brand extension success in another past study carried out by (Volckner et al, 2010; Hussain and Rashid, 2016). Similarly, Muhammad, Gill and Murad (2016) confirmed that the initial parent brand image and parent brand quality have a significant positive impact on brand extension attitude. These results were also confirmed through a key informant interview where Key informant 3 said,

“In the motoring industry, motorists are more concerned with the quality of automobile products rather than being excited by new introductions in the form of brand extensions. The key dimensions of the parent brand quality and previous experiences with parent products considered by the customers include – product durability, genuineness of the product, manufacturer reputation, the physical service environment, service outcome quality, interactions of service employees with customers.”

In related results, 75% of survey participants also preferred new brand extensions which fit well with the quality of the existing parent product or if they had a previous superior experience with the existing parent product. Based on the computed mode (agree = 4), the majority of the respondents prefer brand extensions if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands. In support of these results, key informant 2 said, *“The*

study results demonstrated that consumer assessments and perceptions are usually positive for brand extensions that have an existing durable reputation for launching multiple brands”

In further results, the effect of brand extension on consumer preferences was measured using correlation analysis. The results are shown in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Correlation between brand extension and consumer preferences

		Consumer Preferences	Brand_Extension_Average
Consumer Preferences	Pearson Correlation	1	.787**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	64	64
Brand_Extension_Average	Pearson Correlation	.787**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	64	64

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

Source: SPSS output

Correlation analysis was computed in SPSS to test the relationship between brand extension strategy and consumer preferences of automobile products. There was a statistically strong positive significant relationship between brand extension strategy and consumer preferences of automobile products, $r(64) = +0.787$, $p < 0.01$, two-tailed. This means that there is a strong positive relationship between the introduction of an automobile brand extension and brand sponsorship strategy and consumer preferences of the automobile product. This statistically significant positive relationship indicates that as an automobile company enhances strategies towards new brand extensions, the preferences of consumers are positively influenced.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The foregoing chapter entailed the presentation of the research results, analysis and discussion of the research findings. Descriptive statistics in the form of descriptive frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency (Mean and Mode) and measure of dispersions (Standard deviation) were computed in the data analysis process. Measurement of the relationship between branding strategies and consumer behaviour was ascertained based on inferential statistical analyses – correlation analyses. The findings emerging from

the key informant interviews were used as corroborating evidence to the quantitative findings. In addition, empirical literature findings reviewed in this study were used applied to discuss the research findings obtained in this present study.

The research results demonstrated brand positioning, brand sponsorship and brand extension have a statistically significant positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. The key dimensions in the brand positioning strategies valued by consumers shown by the results include the visible exterior brand attributes of automobile products, quality of the automobile products, brand exclusiveness and uniqueness, customer service received by the customer as they make their buying decisions, the shop image or overall company brand from which consumers directly buy the automobile products, and experiences of friends and relatives with the automobile products considered to be purchased by the consumers.

In terms of brand extensions, the consumer prefers new automobile brand extensions, if existing parent brand is strong and successful, new brand extension fit well with the quality of the existing parent product, the consumers had a previous superior experience with the existing parent product, new brand extension has superior and innovative features and if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands. Brand sponsorship was found to have a positive influence on the attitudinal beliefs of consumers by altering their beliefs of perceptions toward liking the sponsoring brand or company; this then positively influence the perceptions of consumers toward the image of the involved automobile company. By and large, it is critical for automobile companies to employ brand positioning, sponsorship and extension strategies in order to positively influence automobile consumer behaviours.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the final chapter of the study which summarises and concludes the entire study including the research findings. Recommendations based on the research findings were also provided in this last chapter of the study. However, the research began by revisiting the research objectives.

5.2 Research Objectives Revisited

The research objectives to be addressed in this are restated and shown below.

1. To assess the effects of brand positioning on consumer purchase intentions.
2. To evaluate the influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image.
3. To examine the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences.

5.3 General Summary

The aim of this study was focused on studying the relationship between branding strategies and consumer behaviour in the context of Kopje Spares - a retailer and wholesaler of automobile products in Zimbabwe. The study adopted a mixed methodology and was underpinned by the pragmatic philosophy which draws from both the quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The descriptive case study design was followed in conducting this research. Quantitative data for the study was collected using structured self-administered questionnaires from 64 customers that have been transacting with Kopje Spares for at least five years based on the company's current customer database. These questionnaire respondents were drawn from seven Kopje Spares Branches based on proportional stratified sampling.

Qualitative data was collected using key informant interviews involving three top managers within Kopje Spares. The quantitative data which constituted bulky of the collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0. Descriptive statistics in the form of descriptive frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency (Mean and Mode) and measure of dispersions (Standard deviation) were computed in the data analysis process. Measurement of the relationship between branding strategies and consumer behaviour was ascertained based on inferential statistical analysis – correlation analysis. The findings emerging from the key informant interviews were used as corroborating evidence to the quantitative findings. The specific research findings are summarised and concluded below.

5.3.1 Summary and conclusion of findings related to objective 1

Based on correlation analysis, a statistically strong positive significant relationship between brand positioning strategies and consumer purchase intentions was ascertained. The key dimensions in the brand positioning strategies valued by consumers as shown by the results include the visible exterior brand attributes of automobile products (81%), quality of the automobile products (86%), brand exclusiveness and uniqueness (80%), customer service received by the customer as they make their buying decisions (66%), the shop image or overall company brand from which consumers directly buy the automobile products (81%), and experiences of friends and relatives with the automobile products considered to be purchased by the consumers (83%).

Thus it could be concluded that the quality of the automobile products and experiences of friends and relatives with the automobile products considered to be purchased by the consumers proved to be the most critical elements within the brand positioning strategies. The results demonstrated that brand positioning has a strong positive influence on consumer purchasing intentions.

5.3.2 Summary and conclusion of findings related to objective 2

A statistically strong positive significant relationship between brand sponsorship strategy and consumer perceptions of company image were demonstrated based on correlation analysis results. The results indicated that corporate sponsorship by an automobile firm leads to the overall liking of the company (69%); Showcasing an automobile firm brand through sponsored

events and activities, enhances positive feelings towards the image of the company (61%); and Showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities facilitate the transfer of positive effect from the event to the sponsoring brand (61%).

It was concluded that the statistically significant positive relationship indicates that as the automobile company increases its investment and efforts toward the brand sponsorship strategy, an improvement in creating positive perceptions of a company image is realised.

5.3.3 Summary and conclusion of findings related to objective 3

Correlation analysis results proved a statistically strong positive significant relationship between brand extension strategy and consumer preferences of automobile products. In terms of brand extensions, consumer prefers new automobile brand extensions, if existing parent brand is strong and successful (83%), new brand extension fit well with the quality of the existing parent product (75%), the consumers had a previous superior experience with the existing parent product (75%), new brand extension has superior and innovative features (83%) and if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands (71%).

It was thus established and concluded that as the automobile company enhances its strategies towards new brand extensions, the preferences of consumers are positively influenced.

5.4 Conclusion

The research results demonstrated brand positioning, brand sponsorship and brand extension have a statistically significant positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. Quality of automobile products, experiences of friends and relatives with the automobile products on offer, brand exclusiveness and uniqueness, shop image or overall company brand and visible exterior brand attributes of the automobile products were found to be the most crucial elements of brand positioning strategy in the automobile industry. In terms of brand extensions, the consumer prefers new automobile brand extensions, if the existing parent brand is strong and successful, new brand extension fits well with the quality of the existing parent product, the consumers had previous superior experience with the existing parent product, new brand extension has superior and innovative features and if the launching company has a good reputation for launching successful multiple brands. In the automobile business, brand sponsorship positively influences the attitudinal beliefs of consumers by altering their beliefs of perceptions toward liking the

sponsoring brand or company; this then positively influence the perceptions of consumers toward the image of the involved automobile company.

5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations were submitted based on the research findings.

1. Automobile companies should give utmost attention to the quality of the automobile products they sell since customers in this industry value quality, durability and reputation of the product manufacturer. These automobile companies should always forge alliances with internationally recognised automobile products manufacturers with renowned brands.
2. Due to the prevailing economic hardship in Zimbabwe, automobile companies in Zimbabwe should segment their market and source relatively cheaper automobile products to cater to the low-end market and also in response to a difficult economic environment.
3. Branding should be targeted to positively affect brand experiences of the various social classes and networks including friends, relatives and close associates who then broadcast their experiences to other potential automobile customers.
4. Automobile companies should organise and sponsor numerous community-based programs to positively affect the preferences of consumers and ultimately their buying decisions. The sponsorship programs organised by companies should give precedence to customer participation to emotionally connect with customers and alter their beliefs of perceptions toward liking the sponsoring brand or company.
5. New product extensions should only be introduced if there is a strong business case that should involve new brand extensions with innovative features that will inevitably attract existing and prospective customers into buying the new introductions.

5.6 Area of further study

Future research practitioners should undertake a study earmarked on developing a model for implementing various branding extension strategies in line with various automobile product categories.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Emmanuel Chitowamombe, I am a Midlands State University student. I am currently studying towards the attainment of a Bachelor of Commerce in Retail and Logistics Management Honours Degree. I am conducting a research for my Bachelor's dissertation entitled "*The impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour: A case of Kopje Spares in Zimbabwe*". I therefore, kindly request your participation by responding to questions on this questionnaire. Participation in the study is voluntary. Whatever information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will not be tied back to you as an individual. If you are uncomfortable in answering any question, you do not have to answer it. I however hope that you will answer all the questions since your views are important to the success of this study.

Instructions:

1. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire.
2. Please respond by ticking [] the appropriate box/es where applicable and write in full in the spaces provided where specified.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Gender

Male	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Age 30 years and below 31-40Years
 41-50Years 51+years

3. Please indicate your level of education

Ordinary Level	Advanced Level	Diploma	Undergraduate Degree	Postgraduate Degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. For how long have been buying products from Kopje Spares (Private) Limited?

5-10 Years 11-15 Years 16+ years

5. Type of client

Individual Corporate\Company

SECTION B: The effects of brand positioning on consumer purchasing intentions

[Rate From: Strongly Disagree (SD) 1, Disagree (D) 2, Neutral (3), Agree (2) to Strongly Agree (1)]

6. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree on the following statements	1	2	3	4	5
a) I value the visible exterior brand attributes of automobile products when making a decision to buy					
b) I strongly consider brand exclusiveness and uniqueness when I make a decision to buy automobile spare parts					
c) I strongly value the quality of a brand when buying automobile products					
d) The shop image or overall company brand from which I am directly buying automobile products matters the most to me					
e) The service I receive when making a decision to buy automobile products strongly influence my decision					
f) The location of where I should buy automobile products usually influence my intention to buy					
g) The price of automobile products is a key factor to me when buying					
h) I always visit a shop with a wide range or variety of automobile products when I want to buy					
i) I always choose to buy automobile products advertised through various channels (Hint: Social media, exhibitions and print media)					
j) Product and services' experiences of friends and relatives with particular automobile products strongly influence my decision to buy the same shop					
7. The overall purchasing intentions of a consumer to purchase automobile products is dependent on value creation of the products in the minds of the consumers.					

SECTION C: The influence of brand sponsorship on consumer's perceptions of the overall company image

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree on the following statements. [Rate From: Strongly Disagree (SD) 1, Disagree (D) 2, Neutral (3), Agree (2) to Strongly Agree (1)]

8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree on the following statements	1	2	3	4	5
a) Showcasing an automobile firm brand through sponsored events and activities, enhances positive feelings towards the image of the company					
b) Showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities facilitate the transfer of positive effect from the event to the sponsoring brand					
c) Showcasing an automobile company brand through sponsored events and activities positively alter consumer behaviour and build customer loyalty					
d) Corporate sponsorship by automobile firm aspect leads to overall liking of the company brand					
9. The overall image of an automobile company is influenced by the company' effort towards brand sponsorship through sponsored events and activities.					

SECTION D: The impact of brand extension on consumer preferences

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree on the following statements. [Rate From: *Strongly Disagree (SD) 1, Disagree (D) 2, Neutral (3), Agree (2) to Strongly Agree (1)*]

	1	2	3	4	5
10. If a new automobile product is introduced as an extension of an existing parent product, I would strongly consider or prefer the new product if:					
a) The existing parent product is strong and successful to me					
b) The quality of the new product extension fit very well with the quality of the existing parent product					
c) I had previous superior experience with the existing parent product					
d) The new product has superior and innovative features					
e) The automobile product is introduced into a new geographical market as an extension of an existing parent product.					
f) The launching company has good reputation for launching successful multiple brands.					
g) Automobile brands' extension					
11. The preferences of customers toward offerings of an automobile company are influenced by the company's ability to introduce newly extended brands and products					

12. What branding strategies would you recommend for addressing the ever-changing needs of consumers and varying consumer behaviours?.....

.....

!!!END!!!

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE: Key Informant Top Managers

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

My name is Emmanuel Chitowamombe, I am a Midlands State University student. I am currently studying towards the attainment of a Bachelor's Degree in Retail and Logistics Management. I am conducting a research for my Bachelor's dissertation *entitled "The impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour: A case of Kopje Spares in Zimbabwe"*. I therefore, kindly request your participation in this interview. Participation in the study is voluntary. Whatever information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will not be tied back to you as an individual. If you are uncomfortable in answering any question, you do not have to answer it. I however hope that you will answer all the questions since your views are important to the success of this study.

1. For how long have you been working at Kopje Spares (Private) Limited?
2. What is the effect of visible exterior brand attributes of automobile products when a customer is intended to buy?
3. What is the effect of brand exclusiveness or uniqueness when a customer is intending to buy automobile products?
4. What do you think is strongly valued by a customer on the actual product when buying automobile products?
5. What exactly is considered about the shop or overall company itself when a customer intends to buy automobile products?
6. What influence does brand sponsorship have on overall company image?
7. Is the effect of showcasing an automobile firm's brand through sponsored events and activities?
8. What is the impact of brand extension on consumer preferences?
9. What exactly influence consumer preferences when buying new automobile products introduced or extended from an existing parent product?
10. What branding strategies would you recommend to address the ever-changing consumer needs?

!!!END!!!

APPENDIX 3: TURNITIN SUMMARY REPORT

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2% Achieving brand loyalty through sponsorship: the role of fit and self-congruity

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FACULTY OF COMMERCE

Department OF Retail and Logistics Management

The impact of branding strategies on consumer behaviour: A case of Kopje Spares in Zimbabwe.

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