

## The Differences in the Uses of Intensive Information Search and In-store Information between Female and Male Shoppers in South Africa

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**ABSTRACT** The uses of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers are not well understood and have rarely been addressed globally. The study establishes a base level of understanding of the operational core values of the uses of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers in a developing country. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires in a survey. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings show that product awareness, as one of the fundamental dimensions of brand equity, is a prerequisite for the market success of both, durables and non-durable brands. The field survey confirmed some of the differences to include non-durability of tangible products; there is a stronger limitation to brand choice share growth as brand unaided awareness grows, in comparison to the case of durable goods. The findings also identified the search for solutions to the differences faced by business owners and consumers by providing an insight for further research regarding the institutional weaknesses and policy issues in this part of the world. The implications of the findings are that unless the limitations named above are resolved, businesses in the developing nations will continue to experience poor economic growth and display inferior competitiveness. Recommendations to overcome these differences are suggested.

### INTRODUCTION

In most economies, shopping is considered to be the female's domain where the woman is viewed as the household's primary purchasing agent. While situations may force males to participate more in shopping activities, especially when they live as single parents or single adults, females still seem to carry the major shopping loads in the household. In most surveys of shopping behavior, female shoppers continue to outnumber male shoppers. In the previous study carried out by Buttle (1992) seventy-three percent of qualified food shopping respondents were females. However, despite these historical trends, there seem to be a substantial number of male shoppers, even if they are in the minority in supermarkets and shopping centers, to warrant attention. Fram and Axelrod (1990) argue that

some researchers have started to focus on male-female differences in shopping behavior. Some of the observed differences in male-female shopping behavior seem to be statistical artifacts and disappear with appropriate analysis. It seems true that men spend less time on food shopping than women. Sherry and McGrath (1989) suggest that women are much more active shoppers. Evidence provided by Caplow (1982) argues that women purchase eighty-four percent of all gifts. A recent survey determined that women are more likely than men to say they have been influenced by marketing tactics aimed at getting them to buy. According to Speer (1997), women generally finish their shopping earlier than men. Shopping is commonly construed as women's work. The results of the study conducted by Fischer and Arnold (1994) suggest that women are more involved than men in the activity of shopping. Darley and Smith (1995) argue that, because men and women often occupy different social roles, they are subjected to different social pressures. It has been suggested that, compared to males, females are more likely to conform and are more influential. Worchel and Cooper (1976) suggest that these differences in conformity rates may be attributable to

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the gender socialization process, while men are taught to be independent thinkers and to assert themselves, women generally are not similarly encouraged. Evidence provided by South and Spitze (1994) reflects that shopping is also a gendered activity. Available research on shopping behavior seems to suggest that it is women who go shopping and shopping is categorized as a female typed activity. The survey responses suggest that shopping is still largely a female activity, particularly for household groceries but not for male clothing.

Buttle (1992) concludes that studies have shown that men and women differ in aspects of their consumer behaviors from the products they buy. Females appear to comprehensively acquire in-store information, whereas males appear to heuristically limit their search to a smaller subset of in-store information. More specifically, females scored significantly higher than males on both, general and specific information search.

### **Research Objectives**

The overall purpose of this research is to identify the differences in the use of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers as well as to determine factors that influence differences in the use of intensive information search and in-store information. The research targeted the marketing managers, male and female customers in the supermarkets and clothing stores in Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape province of South Africa. It is anticipated that the study could provide practical solutions to the observed factors that influence the differences.

### **Shopping Perspective and Various Shopper Behaviors**

Traditionally, shopping has been viewed as a low skill, repetitive, tedious and economically insignificant act (Dholakia and Bagozzi 1999). Invariably classified as a female type task and a female responsibility, aside from the various political implications of such categorizations, shopping participation studies consistently identify that women shop more frequently and for longer periods of time than men (Underhill 1999). Johnson (2005) indicates that women actively seek more peer and expert recommendations than men before making a purchase and they also

conduct more research. The predominant involvement of women in shopping in general, and in terms of the demarcation of household responsibilities in particular, has been identified as being inextricably linked to gender roles and identify constructs. These constructs are formed upon a system of beliefs that identify and differentiate appropriate tasks for men and women in society. Defined and ratified by culture and it is a defining responsibility of women to assume responsibility for the household's shopping activity (Dholakia and Bagozzi 1999).

Other studies suggest that the changed and improved economic position of women in society, achieved primarily through their increased participation within the workforce, will inevitably reduce the gender differences in terms of shopping behavior, and in particular, the demarcation of shopping responsibilities within households (Eccles 1998; Elliott 1998; Woodruffe-Burton 1998). In support of this assertion, particular groups of men, such as those retired from work, and married men with working wives, have been found to take on a greater responsibility for grocery shopping in particular. Within the context of fashion purchase behavior, Woodruffe-Burton (1998) noted that in the 1990s a greater proportion of men have become active fashion shoppers, as evidenced by their taking full responsibility for purchase of their clothes. This change, she asserts, is symptomatic of a deeper reconfiguration of sexual stereotypes, a blurring of gender identities and a renegotiation of the role and responsibilities that partners have within marriage relationships. Similarly, Craik (1994) concluded that the advent of the new man would precipitate greater interest and involvement among men in the process of fashion shopping.

Yet, while these various studies assert the increased participation of men in the shopping process, others have suggested that the nature and extent of that involvement is dependent upon age, marital status and employment status. The work of Dholakia and Bagozzi (1999) acknowledge the increased shopping involvement of men, but also noted that the nature of that involvement was likely to be an informal and occasional occurrence. No consideration has been given in the literature to the fashion purchase behavior of married men. However, there is some evidence to suggest that women often either assume full responsibility for the

purchase of their partner's clothing or at least exert an influence over the timing, location and selection of fashion products (Underhill 1999). Shopping is one of the defining qualities of modern civilization. Just as social scientists study people in natural conditions, Underhill (1999) studies consumers in retail environments. He is no academic, however, but a "real world" consultant with such clients as McDonald's, General Mills, and the US Postal Service.

Details gathered from observation of consumers pinpoint to problems with the products, shelving, signage, register lines, and other factors as this form of monitoring prompted one of the key insights, which people are likely to be jostled from behind, which lead to shopper discomfort (dubbed "but sensitivity"). Underhill (1999) explores both similarities and differentiating features in the shopping experiences of varied groups, including the distinctive ways in which men and women browse and make purchasing decisions. His dissection of the retail industry finds much to criticize, but the book also dignifies shopping as a central focus of human activity. The author's company, whose work is cited throughout, has earned its way by spotting flaws and advising retail owners on how to fix them, not merely to boost profits, but because the profits come from improving the quality of shopping experience for customers. Underhill (1999) also analyzes the emerging arena of online shopping, offering tips for improved performance.

### **Gender Differences on Shopping**

Men and women have different views on shopping. Women find it an exciting, entertaining and fulfilling task, while men find shopping as an unpleasant chore. Women seem to be more fascinated by the idea of fashion and find an identity with their clothing. Men on the other hand, just view it as a way to clothe themselves, and do not find any real meaning in it (Johnson 2005). Dholakia and Bagozzi (1999) explain that the shopping experience as a whole for men is basically just to find a good deal and they are done, for women it is more about the quality and the styling. Fashion has mainly been aimed at women, and it has not been geared towards men much, until the last couple of years. Fashion magazines for men are increasingly being seen on newsstands now. For a long time it had been

pushed that the woman should be the fashion conscious one, while the male just wears his basic suit to the office. Times have changed a lot from the business suits to the casual jeans and T-shirt, now that younger people are becoming entrepreneurs. This is especially true in Southern California where many young men are starting their own line of extreme sports apparel, and they come in to work in basic T-shirt and pants (Buttle 1992).

Women still have to wear conservative clothing in order to be taken seriously, so this plays a part in the way they shop. When women go into a store it takes them a long time to figure out what to buy. For example, choosing what is appropriate for work and what is appropriate for leisure. Women also look for quality in their clothing, appropriate outfits and color combinations for almost every outfit they buy (Woodruffeburton et al. 1998). This means earrings, shoes, handbags, makeup and anything else they can think of. Friendliness is another weakness, when women start talking to sales associate they start to get influenced by whatever the sales associate tells them to buy at the store (Craik 1994). According to Dholakia and Bagozzi (1999), when men go into a store, they already know what they want to buy. They do not get easily sidetracked like women do in a store. When men find the shirt they are looking for, most of the times they never even try it on. Men do not shop for clothes as often as women because they really do not care about what the hot fashion trend of the moment is, or what season their shirt is for.

When a man shops for clothes it is because he has to, not because he wants to. Most of the time it's because he has worn down all of his clothes or they just do not fit him anymore. If he has to wear a suit to work, he will have a couple of them in his closet. Men would rather spend money on more meaningful things like cars or sports (Underhill 1999). That is not to say that all men are alike, there a few that stand out because of their impeccable fashion taste and love for shopping. These men are most likely celebrities, fashion designers, or fashion models. There is no woman that does not love shopping for clothing and trying clothes on like there's no tomorrow (Peterson 2009). Johnson (2005) indicates that men look on shopping as a mission. Men generally shop alone. Men seldom compare prices. They do not care if the item is on sale. Men really do not care about the color.

They sometimes compare quality, but usually only when it involves tools.

Women on the other hand, look upon shopping as a social event and love to bring their girl friends along. Mintell (1999) states that they enjoy taking several outfits into the dressing room to try on. All outfits may be the same style, cut and size but they are different colors and women love to try each one on and have their friends critique them. Women turn to compare their choices in greater detail. Price, quality, and whether their friends like it on them. Many times women will spend all day looking at several items in different stores and still not buy anything, which may actually be one man's dream. Women prefer to go shopping with girl friends rather than spouses. Again that may just be a dream of a man, that his wife will take someone else shopping and leave him at home to watch the ball game on television (TV). What can companies do with all this information gathered through observation of shopping habits (Johnson 2005)? It is very apparent from the previous studies that have been published, that men and women do shop very differently. For most men, shopping is a mission. For most women shopping is definitely a social event. Underhill (1999) indicates that men and women differ in just about every other way, so why should they not shop differently. The conventional wisdom on male shoppers is that they do not especially like to do it, which is why they don't do much of it.

It is a struggle just to get them to be patient with women while they shop. As a result, the entire shopping experience from packaging designs to advertising, to merchandising, to store design and fixtures is generally geared towards the female shopper. Women do have a greater affinity for a relaxed pace through stores, examining merchandise, comparing products and values, interacting with sales staff, asking questions, trying things on and ultimately making purchases. Most purchasing traditionally falls upon women, and they usually do it willingly even when shopping for mundane necessities, even when the experience brings no particular pleasure, women turn to do it in a dependable, agreeable fashion.

In addition, when a man takes clothing into a dressing room, the only thing that stops him from buying, is if it does not fit. Women, on the other hand, try things on as only part of the consideration process, and garments that fit just

fine may still be rejected on other grounds (Peterson 2009).

### **Married Males and Shopping**

Shopping plays an important role and contributes immensely to both the economic and social development of a nation. Below are some of its contributions to a developing economy.

### **Shopping Responsibility**

Craik (1994) suggests that shopping is still largely a female activity, particularly for household groceries but not female clothing. The occupational status of the wife seems to have an important bearing on the shopping responsibilities. While the wife has the primary shopping responsibility for household groceries all the married households, the female's responsibility is highest, when the wife is homemaker and the married male has the lowest level of primary responsibility in these households. Generally, married males claim primary responsibility for groceries in less than fifteen percent of the households. When the spouse is not the full-time homemaker, the married males seem to share responsibility for shopping groceries jointly. The supplementary role of the male in the household grocery shopping perhaps accounts for the lesser time spent on it and dollars spent at the supermarkets found in other studies. The picture is quite different when one considers shopping for male clothing. When asked who is primarily responsible for purchase of your own clothes, over fifty-six percent of the married men consider themselves the primary shopper and another 29.2 percent report sharing the responsibility with their spouses. The pattern of responsibility is different when the spouses are employed or retired and the males claim greater joint responsibility and slightly lower primary responsibility (Underhill 1999).

### **Frequency of and Satisfaction with Shopping**

Johnson (2005) suggests that even though married men do not bear the primary responsibility for the household's grocery shopping, they do visit stores. When asked how frequently they visited a retail store for the purchase of any item, the responses were affected by the males shopping responsibility, particularly for groceries.

Although married males who are responsible for their own clothing frequent stores more than those who share the responsibility or claim that their spouses are responsible, the relationship between the frequency of shopping at stores and primary responsibility for clothing shopping is not significant.

The shopping mall, on the other hand, elicits a different pattern of responses. Married men who claim joint shopping responsibility for their own clothes seem to enjoy the shopping mall even more than the men who claim primary responsibility. Reported enjoyment is lowest among those men who claim their spouse has a primary shopping responsibility for their husband's clothes. The relationship, however, is not statistically significant.

### **Shopping Orientation**

Woodruffe-burton et al. (1998) explains that even though married men have not taken over the shopping responsibility for household groceries, there are some changes taking place in their orientation towards shopping. These attitudinal changes should lead to greater behavioral changes in the future. When asked if shopping is primarily a woman's responsibility, most married men disagreed with the statement, regardless of their shopping responsibility. Disagreement is stronger among married men who consider themselves primarily responsible for shopping, groceries or clothes and less strong when their spouse is the primary shopper. The attitudinal response is thus consistent with their reported responsibility. When asked if their families primarily appreciate if they do the shopping, agreement is stronger when the man is the primary shopper, particularly for groceries (Johnson 2005).

The differences in perceived family appreciation are significant in the case of grocery shopping. Although in the desired direction, the differences are not significant in the case of shopping for clothing similarly, the data suggests that when the shopping is more personal as in the case of men's own clothes, even though men are more for it themselves, the social reinforcements are not as strong. The gender stereotyping of shopping is disagreed with but not as strongly as in the case of grocery shopping even though males are the primary shoppers in this case (Peterson 2009).

### **Acceptance of Future Retailing**

Because of positive attitudes towards shopping and reinforcement from household members, it is likely one is likely to see greater number of male shoppers in supermarkets carrying the primary responsibility. Underhill (1999) on the other hand, states that because the enjoyment of the shopping mall seems to be positively associated with joint responsibility, male shoppers are usually accompanied by their wives and family. Mintel (1999) discusses the various types of shopping outlets on several dimensions using a five-point scale. The overall perceptions of the shopping outlets suggest that there are enough gratifications received from out-of-home shopping that this mode of shopping is likely to remain popular.

Store shopping is considered to be more satisfying, enjoyable, fun and rewarding than either catalogue or online computer shopping services. In home shopping channels such as catalogue and online, computer shopping are perceived to be more efficient and convenient but also more expensive. People shop for different reasons and because of these reasons the married male shopper is still likely to visit the store to purchase groceries and clothes (Dholakia and Bagozzi 1999).

### **Shopping and Divorce**

According to Mintel (1999), divorce is a life changing experience, and in addition to the emotional and lifestyle disruptions that divorce precipitates, it is acknowledged that the end of a marriage has a detrimental effect upon the economic capabilities of those concerned. This inevitably affects not only these individuals' consumption capability, but also inevitably the manner in which they consume. Yet, despite the fact that divorce affects a sizeable proportion of the population and is known to have a claim part upon the nature of consumption, the nature and extent of the impact of divorce upon the shopping behavior has received little or no attention within the literature. Specifically within the context of fashion consumption, little is known, far less understood, about the implications of divorce upon the men's fashion buying behavior. Indeed, given that men have been variously described as under-confident, diffident and inexperienced fashion shoppers, such an understanding

may provide strategic opportunities, not least for those retailers operating within the men's fashion market.

### **Husband's Involvement in Fashion Shopping**

Mintel (1999) emphasized that when asked to identify who was primarily responsible for shopping of clothes when they were married, the majority of respondents indicated that their wives undertook most purchases for them. Furthermore, it was noted that their wives often made these purchases independently.

### **The Impact of Divorce upon Fashion Purchase Behavior**

Johnson (2005) indicates that divorcing and divorced men typically progress through behavioral stages in relation to fashion buying. At this point it is acknowledged that not all the divorced men were found to have progressed through the four stages. Furthermore, the speed by which each stage was reached varied among relevant participants and it was not always the case that the progression was linear.

The participants are greater in the shopping of personal clothes than in the shopping of groceries since more males claim primarily responsibility for the former category of products. The level of responsibility is influenced by the occupational status of the wife and the influence appears to be for groceries than for clothes. The trendsetter in terms of shopping, however, is likely to be the male grocery shopper. Although in a statistical minority, more men claim primarily responsibility for grocery shopping when the wife's occupation is not that of a homemaker. Not only do they claim greater shopping responsibility, they seem to hold stronger attitudes in favour of shopping as well. The male grocery shopper is being positively reinforced by the shopping experience. The ratings of different shopping channels suggest that innovations in retailing are not a major threat to current shopping patterns. Male shoppers will continue to physically patronize the stores.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive research design and survey research method for data collection. The study involved 23 marketing man-

agers and consumers shopping at supermarkets as well as clothing stores in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Data for the research study was collected through self-administered questionnaires and the use of convenience sampling method. Questions related to the use of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers are usually insightful. Participants in the survey were assured strict confidentiality in order to obtain the necessary information. Responsive questions such as the names and contact addresses of the respondents were removed from the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of structured questions, which made it easy for the respondents to indicate their views. The use of a five-point Likert scale questions enabled respondents to indicate their opinion on various differences and factors determining the use of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers that impact the socio-economic growth and development on the consumers purchasing behaviors. The Likert scale is a scale in which respondents indicate their level of agreement with statements that express a favorable or unfavorable attitude towards a concept being measured, comprising of five categories (Cooper and Schindler 2003). Primarily five-point Likert scale's questions, which consist of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree questions except for demographic questions were used. The data analysis included Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), using descriptive statistics as the statistical tool. A descriptive data analysis was used to establish any gender differences in the search of product, service and shop information before purchasing goods and services. The empirical research for the study was conducted in the main survey.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study confirmed that the study of consumer behavior in the South African economy is an important facet in the marketing scene particularly the marketing of goods and services. It is important for marketers to understand the determinants of consumer behavior. Understanding the behavior of consumers entails the future survival of the business in the long run. Product awareness, as one of the fundamental dimensions of brand equity, is a

prerequisite for the market success of both durables and non-durable brands. It represents a main factor for a brand to be included in the buying decision process consideration set, as most of the consumers prefer buying brands they are aware of (brands they are familiar with or, at least, they have heard of). Brand awareness influences consumers' perceived risk assessment and their confidence in the purchase decision, both in the case of durables and non-durables. Still, the importance of brand awareness in perceived risk assessment is significantly higher in the case of durables, which suggests that in order to reduce the perceived risk associated with brand choice, it is essential for brand awareness to be generated (at least at the unaided level), especially in the case of durables.

Moreover, considering the fact that the perceived risk associated with buying a brand with no aided awareness is similarly high, no matter the age, education, income or gender of consumers, there is no sense in market segmentation (considering the abovementioned demographics) in order to identify consumer categories for which brand awareness does not influence perceived risk assessment. The findings also show that by understanding the needs and wants of consumers, the marketers can formulate effective marketing and advertising strategies based on their target markets. Conclusively, it was also observed that some of the respondents highlighted that supermarkets and clothing stores should always strive to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers.

### **Characteristics of Sampled Respondents**

The gender of respondents shows that 43.5 percent were males, whereas fifty-six point five percent females were included in the survey.

The age group occupied by the respondents indicates that 56.5 percent of the respondents were below 25 years, while 21.7 percent were between 25-35 years, 8.7 percent were between 36-45 years and 8.7 percent were above 45 years. As observed above, the majority of the respondents are below the age of 25 years while the categories of 36-45 years, and 45 years and above have the lowest count. This is a natural situation, but the respondents below the age of 35 years are also increasing gradually, which may be due to more business exposure.

The distribution of respondents by marital status indicates that 78.3 percent of the respondents were single, while 17.4 percent were married. The race distribution of respondents in the survey indicated that a hundred percent of them were black, while white, colored, Asian and others were zero percent. It shows that as per the distribution of respondents according to race, all of the respondents were blacks.

### **Impact of Sampled Product and Service Intensive Information Search**

The comparison of prices in shops before purchasing shows that 82.6 percent of the respondents compare prices in shops before purchasing goods, thirteen percent disagree and 4.3 percent were neutral. Of these, 13 respondents representing 56.5 percent were females who agree that they compare prices, 6 respondents representing 26.1 percent males agree comparing prices, 3 respondents representing thirteen percent males disagree and only 1 respondent representing 4.3 percent male were neutral. These results are in agreement with the findings by Peterson (2009), when he observed that the buyer finds different rates, services and offers of the product that he/she wishes to buy and then selects the most convenient option.

The consideration of the brand name before buying any product by the respondents indicates that 17 respondents representing 73.9 percent agree that they consider the brand name before they buy a product, 6 respondents representing twenty-six percent were neutral and 3 respondents representing thirteen percent disagree. Of these 13 respondents representing 56.5 percent were females who agree, 4 respondents representing 17.39 percent were males who agree, 3 respondents representing thirteen percent males were neutral and disagree. The results of this study are in agreement with the results of the study conducted by Farquhar (1989), who observed that building a strong brand in the consumers' minds means creating a positive brand evaluation, an accessible brand attitude, and a consistent brand image, the accessible brand attitude actually refers to what the others term as awareness.

The information gathered from the respondents based on their intention to whether they engage in window shopping before buying or not, shows that 16 respondents representing

69.56 percent agreed that they engage in window shopping before buying, 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent were neutral, 5 respondents representing 21.73 percent disagreed. Of these 13 respondents representing 56.5 percent were females who agreed, 3 respondents representing thirteen percent males who agree, 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent males were neutral and 5 respondents representing 22.7 percent males disagree. Considering Farquhar's (1989) approach of brand equity, the accessible attitude he refers to is related to how quickly a consumer can retrieve brand elements stored in his/her memory (brand awareness). The attitude activation is sometimes "automatic" (it occurs spontaneously upon the mere observation of the attitude object) and sometimes "controlled" (the active attention of the individual to retrieve previously stored evaluation is required). Farquhar (2000), points out that only a high accessible attitude (brands with a high level of awareness) can be relevant when purchasing or repurchasing a brand.

The findings also indicates that 14 respondents representing 60.86 percent agreed that they seek the approval of trusted experts before making a purchase while 5 respondents representing 21.73 percent disagreed, 4 respondents representing 17.39 percent were neutral. Of these 8 respondents representing 34.78 percent females agree, while 6 respondents representing 26.08 percent males agree, 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent females were neutral and 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent males were neutral; 3 respondents representing 13.04 percent females disagree and 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent disagree. This means that most consumers seek the approval of a trusted expert when purchasing a product.

The information collected from the respondents based on their intention to whether they should consult friends and family before making a purchase shows that 10 respondents representing 43.47 percent agreed to consulting friends and family before making a purchase, 10 respondents representing 43.47 percent disagree, and 3 respondents representing 13.04 percent were neutral. Of these 6 respondents representing 26.08 percent females agree, 4 respondents representing 17.39 percent males agreed; 3 respondents representing 13.04 percent males were neutral; 5 respondents representing 43.47 percent females and males disagree. This means

that their decision to purchase is either influenced by confidence in genuine products or friends and family. Customer confidence in genuine products is sometimes encouraged by the assurance that in the event whereby the product does not meet the required standards in terms of performance or quality, the product is influenced by friends or family.

The respondents representing 65.12 percent agreed that they search for advertisement information on the performance of a product or service before purchasing while 6 respondents representing 26.08 percent disagree, and 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent were neutral. This result is caused by the fact that some consumers have access to radio, television, in-store promotion or any other means of advertisement. The results indicate that advertisements do attract consumers to purchase products.

The finding also shows that 17 respondents representing 73.9 percent agreed that before making a purchase they enquire about its benefits from a person who already owns the product, while 5 respondents representing 21.73 percent disagree and only 1 respondent representing 4.34 percent were neutral. Some consumers enquire about products before considering them for purchase.

### **Impact of Sampled Product and Service In-store Information Search**

The result shows that 22 respondents representing 95.65 percent agreed that they check for the expiry date before purchasing any product, while only 1 respondent representing 4.34 percent were neutral and none disagree.

The information obtained from the respondents indicates that, 15 respondents representing 65.12 percent of the respondents agreed that they look for customer care or satisfaction inside the store, while 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent were neutral, and 6 respondents representing 26.08 percent disagree.

Regarding the neatness of the shop before purchasing any product, the finding indicates that 21 respondents representing 91.3 percent agree that they considered the neatness of the shop before purchasing any product, while 1 respondent representing 4.34 percent responded were neutral, and 1 respondent representing 4.34 percent disagrees.



The information collected concerning service delivery when purchasing a product or service shows that 21 respondents representing 91.3 percent also agree that they considered service delivery when purchasing a product/service in the store, while 21 respondents representing 91.3 percent agreed, 2 respondents representing 8.69 percent were neutral and none disagreed.

In terms of the employees' willingness to assist in any matter in the shop, the results show that 17 respondents representing 73.9 percent agreed that in the shop, they consider the employees' willingness to assist in any matter, while 3 respondents representing 13.04 percent were neutral, and 3 respondents representing 13.04 percent disagree.

### CONCLUSION

This study makes an effort to contribute to the area of the differences in the use of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers and has shown findings and recommendations. The literature review presented various elements within the field of finance, market, information technology and infrastructure, among others. The goal of the study was to present a conceptual framework that would provide a useful structure for managers developing brand strategies and researchers studying brand equity. The study has built a theoretical foundation based on past studies on consumer behavior that should be useful in addressing some of the new challenges in developing brand strategies that have arisen because of changes in the marketing environment. Though many of the ideas expressed in this conceptual framework may be familiar to managers, its value is integrating these various notions to provide a comprehensive picture of how marketers can create value for a brand. Consumers differed in their perception towards brand products. In this case, brand products were judged. Findings show that success of brands may not only depend on the maintenance of high level of intrinsic product quality but also making an investment to develop a strong brand image.

Generally, the establishing of a strong brand image without delivering a corresponding high level of real product quality may result in disconfirmation of perceived quality of the brands.

This makes brand marketers vulnerable if quality control systems fail or internal cost cutting measures lead to quality variation. Although the research results should be adjusted considering other factors, which could impact the consumers' buying decision, they suggest that in the case of non-durables there is a stronger limitation to brand choice share growth as brand unaided awareness grows, in comparison to the case of durables. Actually, if it is to be considered, an unaided brand awareness based monopoly could be generated only in the case of durables.

A good understanding of the differences in the use of intensive information search and in-store information between male and female shoppers in South Africa has been clearly identified and discussed in details and recommendations or suggestions to these issues have also been discussed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This section focuses on recommendations to business managers in developing countries on how their business performances can be improved effectively and efficiently in order to meet the competitive markets and environmental challenges. Some of these recommendations and how it could be improved are directed to the management, marketing managers as well as the research department. These are discussed below as follows.

#### Recommendations to the Management

In order for the management to improve their sales of products in any business environment, the respondents highlighted that they should:

- ♦ Target paydays and make prices more affordable especially for low-income earners and have someone to assist and educate consumers.
- ♦ Display the products better and place them on the nearest shelves so that they can be easily identified and put them on specials such as, "buy one get one free".
- ♦ Increase advert at local radio stations and carry out public promotions.
- ♦ Make use of television advertisements as they are extremely influential and many people are in possession of TVs.

## Product Strategy

It is recommended that retailers have a choice, by either being passive distributors of manufacturers' brand or active marketers of their own proprietary brands. Active marketing implies investment in creating a high quality image for the products and commitment of offering a level of real quality that is equal to or surpasses that of unbranded product. Product strategy should therefore entail the use of imaginative and pleasing package designs that differentiate brands from the competition and prompt impulsive purchase. Also, active marketing of brands should necessitate greater emphasis on promotional campaigns that focus on the real intrinsic product benefits associated with these brands.

## AREA OF FURTHER RESEARCH

In the presentation of a framework for consumer perception towards different brands, several constructs and relationships were discussed. Additional study is necessary both, to refine this framework and to suggest other implications for marketing strategies. Undoubtedly, previous studies may be of help in this effort. Because this study was conducted with a different purpose in mind however, insights may be gained by considering it from the potential broader perspective of buying behavior between males and females. Further, researchers should establish the numerous tradeoffs in choice criteria by suggesting when certain characteristics of the brand identities should be emphasized.

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