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An investigation into the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in a contemporary business environment

By

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Supervisor: Professor N. Overton-de Klerk

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Dedication

I specially dedicate this thesis to the love of God poured into the hearts of people who helped me in completing my doctoral studies.

“The greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13)

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)

The Holy Bible
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Abstract

While the effectiveness of brand linkage strategy is internationally undisputed, no studies have empirically explored and identified the effectiveness of linked brands in the South African context. Brand linkage is an often used marketing strategy to leverage brands in a contemporary, postmodern business environment cluttered with me-too non-differentiated competing brands, and it has been referred to by various scholars in one form or another for seven decades. In most cases, the nature of brand linkage affects the relationships and interaction between customers and brands. Empirical research on brand linkage is limited to relatively few studies that have typically examined brands with fictitious products rather than real instances of brand linkages. This study is a unique attempt to understand the implications of brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions within the new business environment from a real-world perspective.

The present study contributes to brand linkage literature by redefining the concept brand linkage extending linkage to include co-branding, brand alliance and brand extension. Another original contribution to the field was the methodology undertaken, using a card-scoring method, which was implemented in a Pretest – Posttest Control Group Experimental Design. This research design was applied to determine how brand linkage affects the ratings and perceptions of the brands in question. Two brands namely Woolworths and Engen were selected and the linkage was examined among 250 respondents, consisting of four groups, with two groups being aware of the linkage and two groups not, some who were exposed to the intervention and some not. The study showed that there were statistically significant differences over time between pre and post intervention ratings of Engen for two groups that were exposed to a campaign depicting the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. Furthermore, findings indicate that the group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention. These findings have important implications in terms of the underlying theory and literature, as well as the development of brand linking strategies.

Key Words: Brand, Brand linkage, Brand rating, Brand perception, Brand relationship, Brand communication, Strategic communication, Stakeholder, Treatment or experiment or intervention, Card scoring method, Pretest – posttest control group experimental design, and Contemporary business environment
List of Acronyms

ACA – Association of Communication and Advertising
AMA – American Marketing Association
ASASA – Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa
BL-SBRBP – Brand Linkage – Strategic Brand Ratings and Brand Perceptions
BRC – Brand Relationship Communication
BRI – Brand Relationship-Interaction
BRQ – Brand Relationship Quality
BRT – Branding Relational Theory
CC – Corporate Citizenship
CCN – Consumer Citizenship Network
CSR/CSP – Corporate Social Responsibility/Performance
IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication
MBLC – Mission-Brand Linkage Character
MC – Marketing Communication
POP – Point of Purchase
SPSS – Statistical Package of Social Sciences
SRT – Stakeholder Relationship Theory
TCSI – Transformation and Corporate Social Investment
UIC – Unique Identifying Characteristics
USA/US – United States of America
USP – Unique Selling Proposition
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction and problem statement

“... It is vital to only conduct new research when a true need to understand the market arises”.
(Anders Hampf & Kirsti Lindberg-Repo, 2011:22)

1.1 Introduction

The conventional single-brand and stand-alone brands are increasingly rare, as social media and superconsumers continue to impair their survival. Brand linkages are more frequently used in a wide variety of brand categories. Brand linkages have become more relevant as a marketing strategy to leverage brands against postmodern markets because of the direct impact they have on the opportunities for creating brand value (Aaker, 2011; Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Kuhn, Alpert & Pope, 2008; Sweeney, 2003; Ueltschy, & Laroche, 2011; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). This significance has resulted in studies which aim to further investigate the factors that can influence the success for the brand linkage strategy (Knittel & Stango, 2012).

It is of paramount importance to note that the brand linkage concept goes beyond product concept. A product delivers certain tangible benefits (Stern, 2006), but a brand linkage offers both tangible and intangible or symbolic benefits to stakeholders within a complex reality. This is “theory that is meant to describe reality; hence, there will always be a need for new theories since the society and reality perpetually change” (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011:22). Unfortunately, marketing communication professionals and academics remain uninformed about the success or failures of brand linkage ventures which in reality may put the linked brands at risk. When business professionals apply the already unreal theoretical knowledge (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2002) on a brand linkage, they risk being “out of fit” and falling prey to becoming irrelevant to the new ever-changing business environmental factors. The uninformed professionals may

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1 "Postmodernism can therefore be described as a time characterised by an increasing awareness of the complexity of the world whereby ambiguity and disorder are accepted, as there is no ultimate reality and no absolute truth” (D’Ursoa, Disegna, Massaria & Osti, 2014:5).
place their hope on untested brand linkage principles that impact on brand relationships and strategic brand communication. Hence, most conclusions drawn from studying such precedent findings from academics can not be guaranteed to be perfectly valid, and consequently, these conclusions need to be tested with empirical studies.

Although increasing attention has been paid to the linked brand in family branding, co-branding and global branding literature (Bristow, Schneider & Schuler, 2002), it is theory in isolation to practical application especially in developing economies. As such, academic researchers’ theoretical interests often lead to studying brand linkage processes in isolation, leaving gaps as to how empirical research results apply to complex, real-world situations (Jevons et al., 2002). Without ‘real world’ findings, practitioners rely on their perceptions, unproven practices, and popular literature of brand linkage theoretical arguments. The popular reliance on brand linkage has grown as a result of proliferation and intense competition for brand value creation (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). Within this large and diverse literature, brand linkage research lacks balancing research to examine the impact of two or more brands that are appealing to the same customers (consumers), and multiple approaches to meet these complexities. For this reason, brand linkage practitioners of the 21st century must rethink their strategies and processes and ultimately enhance the value of their relationships with consumers and other businesses. This thesis is an attempt designed to address this gap.

An outline of chapters of this thesis is provided in section 1.13 and finally, the current chapter is summarised in section 1.14.

1.2 Overview of the study and problem orientation

For the purpose of this study, a brand linkage is regarded as an attempt to influence stakeholders’ or consumers’ perceptions and preferences of brands and their relationships through brand communication by businesses of two or more brands (see chapter 3). There is no substitute for brand linkage knowledge and experience because stakeholders are complex and interdependent and it is no longer easy to
control or penetrate the contemporary\textsuperscript{2} market through traditional brand communication methods (Aaker, 2011; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013:254; Gammoh & Voss, 2011:81). Brand linkage strategy should be prioritised to create sustainable competitiveness of the brand value. Many of the current brand linkage models lack the complete picture and the ability to integrate all research done in this field (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003; Lindberg-Repo & Brookes, 2004; Macnamara, 2010:16; Wansink, 2003; Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2004).

1.3 Background of the study

This study attempts to examine the implications of brand linkages within the new business environment. In most cases, the nature of brand linkages affects the brand perceptions, brand assessments as well as the relationships and interaction between customers and brands. Despite widespread recognition and application of brand linkages and brand relationship principles in the first world economies (Aaker, 2011; Swaminathan, Fox & Reddy, 2001), little empirical work has been done to examine the impact of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in a contemporary business environment.

In their prominent review of brand linkages and brand relationships, Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony (2002) were the first scholars to propose a classification of brand relationships by way of a brand-relationship-interaction matrix. They present evidence that the environment of increased communication that continues to develop as a result of new and improved technology, together with the increasing use of brand extension, co-branding and other associative techniques and effects, is resulting in an increasingly complicated set of relationships between brands (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). Estimates in 1997 indicate that 95% of 1600 new brand introductions every year from the United States were brand extensions (Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2005). In this study, brand extension entails the attempt

\textsuperscript{2} Contemproary market is used in the same context with postmodern market. Postmodern market refers to the state of attainment of the individual’s quest for liberation of consumption and buying behavior (Cova & Cova, 2009:82). In this context, the consumer behaviour becomes more fragmented, unpredictable and complex in search of emotional or symbolic experience through ‘bounderyless’ technology (Firat & Dholakia, 2010:125).
of a company to link positive attributes of one product to other new product ranges. This approach was used to launch Telkom’s cell phone network, Heita in 2010. Co-branding occurs when two or more different brand owners work together to form a separate and unique product (Palmer, 2009). It is sometimes referred to as a special case for brand extension because the goal is also to launch a new product (Park, 2008) and leverage a brand. In this way, Absa Bank co-branded with Barclays Bank PLC to form one brand.

Furthermore, previous studies found that brand equity (the tangible and intangible value of a brand) as perceived by consumers was improved as a result of co-branding and brand extensions, regardless of whether the co-branding partner is a high or low equity brand (Khobane, 2014; McCarthy & Von Hoene, 2014:4). As such, the belief “that a high equity brand would be denigrated by its pairing with a low equity brand was not supported” (Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2000:600). Keller (2008) suggests that brand assessment serves as the bridge between what happened to the brand in the past and what should happen to the brand in future relationships. In addition, scholars like Neale, Baazeem and Bougoure (2009) suggest that perceptions of brand extensions significantly influence parent-brand relationship quality and may therefore be an important dimension of brand relationship. Related brand extensions strengthen parent-brand relationship quality but unrelated extensions weaken parent-brand relationship quality (Neale et al., 2009). In this study, however, it is proposed that both brand extensions and co-branding will be regarded as forms of brand linkages. These strategies are vital since intense competition and high costs to enter new markets may force companies in various businesses to adopt the non-traditional, new brand linkage strategies, in an attempt to capitalise on their existing brand relationships.

Three factors have motivated this study. Firstly, there is a significant amount of research on the changing needs of today’s superconsumers3, which implies that brands cannot limit themselves to providing tangible or functional benefits (Bosman, 2010; Fioroni & Titterton, 2009; Schmitt, 2012). This is because, amongst others,

---

3 Superconsumer entails “an all-knowing, all-seeing, and globally-vocal consumer who has one life and access to many applications” (Bosman, 2010:3).
postmodern brand strategists regard ‘brand’ as an entity which has complex identities, making the need for a ‘polycontextual’ (many contexts) communication strategy vital (Heding, Knutzen & Bjerre, 2009; Schmitt, 2012). This new branding paradigm is based on the interpretive nature of brand and the value of brand, and the contemporary market is created by the ongoing interaction between marketers and proactive consumers (Heding et al., 2009; Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013:23).

The second factor is based on the argument that each brand can hardly be copied because it is the author of its own immutable rules and patterns (Aaker, 1996, 2011; De Chernatony, 2010; Fioroni & Titterton, 2009; Keller, 2008). Nevertheless, due to the proliferation of new media platforms, it is hard to break through a marketplace battlefield that is already crowded by brands (Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008), and it is difficult for brands to be visible and find space in the minds of the prosumers or consumers (Fill & Jameison, 2006). Keller and Lehmann (2003) claim that branding is all about understanding the customers’ mindset. Thirdly, in a new marketing environment where word of mouth transmits the extraordinary experiences of superconsumers through cyber space (Bosman, 2010), complexity and transcendence can erode the competitive advantage that brands have previously enjoyed, and spell the failure of brand relationships (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013:255; Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). Therefore, brand linkage strategy is perceived as an opportunity to leverage brands. The only problem is that there is a lack of empirical research to assess its effectiveness.

1.4 Problem statement

The effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions has been of increasing importance internationally (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister & Srivastava, 2006; McCarthy & Von Hoene, 2014:3), however the vast majority of related researches have measured this relationship indirectly through scenario analyses of hypothetical

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4 A prosumer refers to a consumer who becomes involved with designing or customizing brands for their own needs (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013:22).
brands rather than consumers’ perceptions, preferences and opinions that are based on real-world brands (Bengtsson & Servais, 2004; Cylkowski, 2007; Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Hadjicharalambous, 2006; Homburg & Bucerius, 2005). Also, due to the complexity of the market and buying situations, it is difficult to measure the precise contribution of a company’s brand linkage to the buying preference, recommendation intent and brand perceptions, among other aspects. Examining factors affecting the parent brand is impossible because of the confounding external effect if the nature of brand linkage is not held constant. It is imperative that companies effectively create and manage brand communication initiatives by observing all-round brand linkages touch points to find a strategic fit in the contemporary business environment. Although there are a wide variety of brand linkage studies, previous research resorted to experiments of fictitious brands (Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Van der Lans, Van den Bergh & Dieleman, 2014:10). For this reason, the use of fictitious brands makes it difficult to study the real world factors that are evoked by brand linkages. There is no lack of information, but a dearth of knowledge on this subject. To overcome this challenge, this thesis focuses on one of the first attempts on a real-world application of theory.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were to examine;

- The impact of brand linkages on stakeholder ratings of the brands in a real world contemporary business environment
- The impact of brand linkages on stakeholders’ perceptions of the brands, separately and jointly

As the field of study was a complex one, the choice of brand linkage to be researched was crucial. Ideally the brands would have to be linked but separately owned and appeal to the same target market (see chapter 6). This main objective was pursued through the following sub-objectives:

- To measure brand ratings and brand perceptions on linked brands
- To establish the impact of brand linkage on stakeholder relationships with brands
• To determine whether the brand linkage adds or detracts value from either brands
• To measure if the main parent or host brand gains from the linkage with the invited brand

1.6 Research questions

As indicated earlier, stakeholders are clearly involved in a two-way co-authoring process of brand culture which decreases managerial control of brands (Fioroni & Titterton, 2009:6). The arrival of new technology gives them the ability to easily access and search for information through the Internet which enables quick comparison of brands (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013). Only a few brands are so strong that they can align internal and external messages by reviewing the way they represent themselves in the new market environment. Ganzourov (2006:6) concludes that “One of the marketing’s big challenges is to ensure complete synchronisation between the internal and external words, between external promise and internal operational execution, and between sales and production. It is one thing to build a strong message framework but another to ensure that internal product development and operational execution align with that message framework”.

It is against this background that this study attempts to answer the following research question:

• What is the impact of brand linkages on stakeholder ratings of the brands in a real world contemporary business environment?
• What is the impact of brand linkages on stakeholders’ perceptions of the brands, separately and jointly?

Sub-research questions:

• What are the stakeholders’ ratings and perceptions of the linked brand?
• To what extent does the brand linkage add or detract value from either brand?
• What is the effect of brand linkages on stakeholder relationships with the
brands?

- Will the parent or host brand gain from the linkage with the invited brand?

1.7 Proposed model of the study

Following the argumentation proposals by Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony (2002) and Jones (2008) that marketing communication is now principally concerned with co-creation of linkages (value) and equity, connecting this to a stakeholder perspective on brand relationships, this thesis proposes a model for brand managers and practitioners in marketing communication that helps them to answer the two important questions asked of all brand professionals. Firstly, where does our brand linkage and brand relationship stand? Secondly, how does this co-created linkage and brand communication affect brand ratings and perceptions? This study begins by considering the challenges that brands faces today (Ariely & Berns, 2010; Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs, 2006; Bjerre, Heding & Knudtzen, 2008). It then looks at the relationship between the concepts of brand linkage, brand relationship and brand perception in the advent of the pervasive social media era. It therefore argues that brand linkage concerns the study of how the linkage is evaluated; brand assessment is concerned with the measurement of the stakeholder's ratings as well as perceptions of the brands as a result of exposure to a brand linkage campaign.

The model is holistic and attempts to incorporate a variety of contemporary ideas in brand linkages studies. This is then used as the basis for suggesting a multiple or poly-contextual approach to brand linkage assessment. In other words, this thesis is both empirical and conceptual in its approach and is intended to contribute to further research on the development of a framework for brand ratings and brand perceptions (see Figure 5.1).

1.8 Distinctiveness and contribution to knowledge in the field

Brand linkage appears not to be an emergent theme in the strategic communication industry but the way in which it is applied suffers from poor research in the dynamic and complex business environment. Hence, as one of the first attempts in literature,
This study takes into perspective brand linkage’s effect on brand ratings and brand perceptions, indirectly also shedding light on brand relationships and brand communication.

This thesis will address five important gaps. First, it aims to gain more conceptual clarity about the brand linkage strategy. Up to now, numerous definitions for the brand linkage strategy have been used yet there appears to be no consensus (Aaker, 2011; Balachander & Ghose, 2003; Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Jevons et al., 2002). Brand linkage has been defined in a very limited way and is often confused or misunderstood regarding the complex emerging post-modern organisational paradigm. Although brand linkage seems to exist in many forms, no studies have acknowledged it. To clarify the concept of brand linkage, a context and re-definition for the brand linkage strategy is presented by examining its application in the past and in the contemporary business environment.

Despite nexus searches, there is no evidence that any empirical research on brand linkages and how they affect brand assessments has ever been conducted in South Africa. Although brands and the linkages between them are of increasing importance to practitioners and researchers, most branding theories especially in the area of branding and relationship perspectives, are in the context of developed countries, with studies being conducted in Australia (Neale et al., 2009), the United States of America (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000), Sweden (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011) and the United Kingdom (Jevons et al., 2002; Fioroni & Titterton, 2009). The problem with many of the underlying theories is their inherent lack of evidence in some contexts.

Also, the potential contribution of this study can be discussed from both theoretical and practical perspectives (see more detail in section 8.3). This study contributes to a theoretical development in the field of strategic marketing communication in proposing a model to explain the brand assessments and brand perceptions, indirectly shedding more light on brand relationships among fuel service stations and fast food outlets within the convenient brand linkage market. It adds to previous knowledge by developing a model that explains how brand linkage influences
stakeholder perceptions. Since there are no studies that have focused on brand linkage from the stakeholder perspective in the real world, this study can provide new insights into the relationships among stakeholders and their experience with the linked brands. The most important theoretical contribution of this study is to initiate the development of theoretical foundations for brand assessments among brand linkage’s stakeholders.

Furthermore, it is believed that the approach to brand relationships as an interaction between brands and their stakeholders, not necessarily under the control of the organisation, is compatible with the emerging post-modern organisational paradigm (Toth, 2007). On the other hand, the findings of this study explain how brand linkage impacts stakeholders’ brand assessment. Thus, the findings will practically help strategic communication professionals, managers and marketers to build the competitive ‘renewable’ strategies of linked brands to ensure long term relationships with their stakeholders. Practical ways are indicated on how the parent brand can be assessed in the contemporary business environment and thus the findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Although card scoring methods are being used by market research companies, this study perhaps represents one of the first attempts to apply card scoring as a measuring instrument in the social sciences. In fact, to the researcher’s knowledge no existing study in any social sciences discipline has conducted empirical research using card scoring as a measuring instrument in a field experiment design. In this sense, this is a unique venture. The strength of this method is that it obviates the problems associated with verbal measuring instruments or scales. It provides a direct, clinical and quantitative measure of relative brand ratings. The proof of its effectiveness is revealed in the actual results.

1.9 Methodology overview

Quantitative research was used to collect the data, which involves the use of card scoring, an appropriate methodology for this study. Brand linkages’ effect on brand ratings and brand perceptions was examined through a Pretest-Posttest Control
Group Design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, 1966:13). A real life campaign of a South African brand linkage was chosen as the object of the study. A non-probability convenient sampling method was used to select 250 respondents who were randomly allocated to either experiment group or control group. Consequently, a convenient sample of respondents utilised for this study was based on their willingness to participate and accessibility to the researcher (Rutterford, 2012). There were four groups, assigned into two aware (experimental and control) groups, and two unaware (experimental and control) groups. All groups were pretested on the particular variable inherent in this study. The respondents were randomly assigned to either treatment group or control group (see chapter 6). The experiment group received the treatment (campaign) while the control group was not exposed to the campaign. Due to the explanatory nature of the research, the main aim was not to generalise the results. This approach was selected in order to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002).

1.10 Key theoretical concepts

Brand
For the purpose of this study, brand is defined as all intangible and tangible aspects of business (es) or person(s) able to create and sustain value in the community. In a business context, a brand is all ideas associated with products and services as perceived by stakeholders (superconsumers or prosumers). Allen, Fournier and Miller (2008:782) define brand as “repository of meanings for consumers to use in living their own lives”. As such, all stakeholders of the brand, including consumers, collaborate as proactive co-creators, co-idea, and co-producers of these brand meanings (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013). It would be tedious to review many different ways in which the word ‘brand’ is used. There is confusion and disagreement about the definition and therefore it is an ongoing theoretical development process. For this study a parent brand refers to the “main brand” being assessed (in this case, Engen is the parent or host brand). Consequently, the “invited brand” is the brand partnering with the parent brand (in this case, Woolworths is the invited or secondary brand).
Brand linkages
Brand linkage entails the business concept that the customers’ experience of two or more brands should intentionally or unintentionally create a brand relationship which grows business and is perceived as an important means for influencing consumers’ buying decisions and recommendations. At this point, brand linkage is the deliberate partnership of two or more brands (separately or co-owned) but the empirical study will consider separately owned brands that are targeting similar consumers (see chapter 6.3.2). Subsequently, it is the deliberate attempt to influence the consumer’s perceptions, opinions and preferences (attitudes or beliefs) of brand relationship by businesses of two or more brands in which the participants’ names are returned through strategic brand communication (Barger, Hemingway, Underwood, Velker & Winters, 2002; Gammoh & Voss, 2011:83). Examples of linked brands are Ferrari and Shell, Bacardi and Coke, Danone and Motta introduced Yolka, Dell and Intel. Providing a clear definition and context is essential because there are many types of joint cooperations between brands (see chapter 3.2.1). One of the involved brands is considered as the main brand which is also called “parent brand”, “primary brand” or “host brand”. The other partnering brand is the “invited brand” or “secondary brand”, whose aspects and attributes enhance the value of the main brand.

Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony (2002:4) argue that brand linkage is one of a number of ways in which “managers attempt to create and modify brand meaning in the eyes of consumer”. Complex brand linkages or endorsement strategies with multiple brands are universal because after they are established, consumers’ perceptions of brand relationship and the processing of brand value (Gammoh & Voss, 2011:81; Leuthesser et al., 2003; Schmitt, 2012) often changes. However, because most cooperations such as marriage of convenience, event marketing and cooperative advertising are short-lived which do not result in a major impact on brand relationships (Arens, Weigold & Arens, 2011; Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2011:267), these types of alliance are not the focus of this study (see chapters 3.2.1.7 and 6.3.1).

Brand rating
Brand ratings entail evaluation on the strength, risk and future potential of a brand
comparative to its competitors by means of scale. In this study the card scoring method is used to test the favourableness of parent brand linkage that is separately owned, while jointly targeting the same consumers.

**Brand perception**
Brand perceptions may be defined as the stakeholder's preferences, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, willingness to recommend to friends or relatives and purchase intention towards a brand across the categories that exist in the company or those that are easily available in the market and to the stakeholders. The interactive marketplace with new transactional and information technologies and complex consumer relationships is changing customers’ brand perceptions (Allen et al., 2008; Schmitt, 2012).

**Brand assessment**
In this study, brand assessments are used as generic concept including brand ratings and brand perceptions.

**Brand relationship**
Brand relationship refers to brand and consumer's interaction. Conceptions of brand relationships are based on aspects such as stakeholders’ perceptions, preferences, beliefs, experiences, and opinions which will be used interchangeably in this study. It is the symbolic assigning of human properties to a brand, leading to consumers interacting with a brand in the same way as with personal and social relationships (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013:253; Schmitt, 2012:11).

**Brand communication**
Brand communication entails all forms of messages portraying the brand internally or externally in customers' mind. Consumer engagement with a brand often results in higher levels of involvement with the brand, engenders brand loyalty, and develops strong brand relationships based on brand perception (Aaker, 1996). This engagement influences how consumers rate and perceive the brand. Forms of brand communication include all kinds of advertising, branding materials, editorial mentions, sponsorships, events, charity support, blogs, videos, social media: such as
using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Flickr to reach consumers in both presale and postsale. In the contemporary business market, such engagement may take the form of financial contributions, volunteer preferences, recommendations to others, or personal use of the services provided by the brand (Barney & Hesterly, 2008). The goal of the organisation should be to increase both engagement intensity and activity, thus creating deeper and more frequent opportunities for interaction of stakeholders with the brand (Cylkowski, 2007). Specifically, the study measures the influence of brand linkage-created communication on consumer ratings and perceptions of the brand.

**Contemporary business environment**

For the sake of this study this refers to the current unpredictable, dynamic or volatile market in which brands are cluttered (Smith & Zook, 2011:240). Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony (2002:7) describe it as business matrix where business matrix refers to the dynamic new business environments.

**Consumer, Stakeholder, Superconsumer, Prosumer or Customer**

The term consumers refers to individuals or groups of people who are end users of brands in exchange for products or services. In this thesis, inspired by dominant theories on the subject (Aaker, 2011; Bosman, 2010; De Chernatony, 2006; Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009; Overton-de Klerk, 2010), the use of the terms consumer, superconsumer, prosumer, customer or stakeholder is interchangeable. Consequently, the use of the terms superconsumer and prosumer is critically relevant in “comprehending societal changes stemming from the rise of social media…opportunities that digital technologies and augmented reality provide” for brand value co-creation (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013:22).

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5 However, practitioners might offer a quite different perspective, perhaps invoking the debate based on the varying sub-disciplines of the field of communication. This difference indicates how broad is the notion of stakeholder and how it can become quite complex once the context is different. Therefore, the concept stakeholder is wider, encompassing all the audiences of an organisation at a given time.
Strategic communication
Strategic communication entails purposeful communication to achieve a company’s mission (Hallahan et al., 2007). In this instance, strategic communication entails deliberate infusing of communication efforts with an agenda and a master plan to promote the brand linkage strategies of an organisation(s), urging human resources to do effectively specific actions, as well as advocacy of particular marketing and communication assignments. This refers to allround facilitation of contextual, social and business related messages for the attainment of desired business goals (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Vercič & Sriramesh, 2007; Oestreicher, 2009:2). Strategic communication involves “interactive marketing communication” as an emerging new paradigm (Glynn & Woodside, 2009; Hallahan et al., 2007; Overton-de Klerk, 2010).

Treatment or experiment or trial arm/group
These refer to respondents who received the intervention or campaign of Engen and Woolworths (Christensen, 2007:308; Kirk, 2013:26). The two experimental groups consist of an aware experimental group 1 and an unaware experimental group 2.

Control or no intervention groups
These refer to respondents who did not receive any intervention or exposure to the Engen - Woolworths campaign (Christensen, 2007:308; Kirk, 2013:26). The two control groups consist of an aware control group 3 and an unaware control group 4.

Card scoring method
The card scoring method entails the actual allocation of 99 cards into branded envelopes according to respondents’ favourableness before and after the intervention stages. It is a non-verbal method used to rate and assess the main (host or parent) brand against its competitors. This is similar to the method of voting or buying.

Pretest posttest control group design experiment
For the sake of this study, Pretesting is a process to determine which respondents to allocate to either experiment or control groups depending on their awareness of
the linkage before the intervention stage (Campbell & Stanley, 1966:25). In this thesis, it refers to the allocation of 99 cards into six well known fuel station brands for the first time according to respondents’ favourableness before the intervention stage. On the other hand, **Posttesting** is a process to assess participant ratings after the intervention stage (Campbell & Stanley, 1966:25). In particular, it refers to the allocation of 99 cards into six well known fuel station brands for the second time according to respondents’ favourableness after the intervention stage. The self-completion of the questionnaire by respondents forms part of the posttesting.

### 1.11 Delimitations of the study

As the ultimate purpose of this thesis is the implications of brand linkage and the effect on brand ratings and brand perceptions, a delimitation of the study should be made in order to concretise the findings. In general, the brand linkage used in this thesis is a widely investigated subject, and thus a lot of research has been conducted within these fields adding to this complexity (Balachander & Ghose, 2003; Beezy, 2007; Franco, 2001; Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Jevons et al., 2002; Keller, 2003a; Kim, Lavack & Smith, 2001; Lei, De Ruyter & Wetzels, 2008; Pontes & Jevons, 2009). However, the study has limited the use of theories, scholars and definitions to what is found relevant in terms of the problem statement.

Firstly, in this study a model of brand linkage – strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions is utilised to analyse brand assessments. This means the final framework will look at brand linkage from a consumer’s assessments of brands. The spectrum of consumers’ perceptions about brands is in reality much broader and complex, and includes highly variable and often elusive attributes to accurately describe emotional feelings (Dahlén, Lange & Smith, 2010; Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008; Igniyte, 2014). Other constructs that may form part of the framework are mentioned, though not operationalised. For example, brand communication and brand relationships are indirectly covered. The objective of a way of classification of a brand linkage and brand relationship and brand communication remains crucial. Similar expressions were used and validated in previous studies (Jevons et al., 2002), which were researching the effect of brand linkage. Thus, the framework
developed in this study will be most helpful in situations concerning brand assessments relating to brand linkages, and may be of limited use in other situations involving brand partnering in general.

Secondly, the focal research position is centered on one stakeholder - the consumer - and the strategic consequences for the company and its brand linkage strategies. It will amount to a micro-level analysis of the consumer, and a meso-level assessment of the strategic implications for the brand. The research was conducted on a business to stakeholder (consumer) market and the shift of Engen to its linkage with Woolworths. All the Woolworths benefits from Engen linkage issues are partially included due to the complexity of the study. More precisely, the empirical research was exclusively to analyse one way - Engen-Woolworths brand linkage on the specified markets, in this case fuel service stations and convenient food outlet. This was chosen as most consumers have an opinion regarding the brands and it is the partnership between South Africa’s premium food retailer and leading fuel brand Engen on the forecourt that have a unique population and a complimentary product category, which also in reality engages in brand linkages. Hence it makes the empirical analysis trustworthy and applicable in reality which has made it possible to create a deeper understanding of the relevant area.

In terms of geographical delimitation, the study is narrowed down to Gauteng Province of South Africa and consumers of the two selected linked brands’ consumers. There is no gender or demographic limitation applicable to this study. Furthermore, to focus on the part of brand linkages’ impact on brand assessments, the study only focuses on one part of the strategic communication elements that companies should consider when exposing their brand linkages to new settings. Topics of brand relationships and brand communication though mentioned in this study have been excluded because of the complexity of the field. Lastly, this study does not have as a focus to research the effect of brand linkage on factors such as social media and stakeholder relationships in general (Andersen, 2006; Evans & McKee, 2010; Hudson, Roth & Madden, 2012; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Pratt, 2009). This was discussed but not operationalised, since extensive literature already exists on the topic which indicates complex relationships (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster,
2008) it was excluded from the research scope.

1.12 Limitations

The research study is limited to a few aspects of brand linkage perspective:

- Firstly, it explores only one dimension of the one stakeholder-brand linkage insight, of the well-known two South African brands on fuel service station category and a fast or convenience food outlet.
- Secondly the experimental study has been conducted on a convenient young academic population group. Hence, the scale of the experiment can further be enlarged in future research. The use of quantitative findings is limiting as it does not necessarily reveal in-depth information behind the ratings and perceptions of consumers. Further study may need to utilise a qualitative orientation to clarify the complexity in such brand assessments.
- Thirdly, some extraneous variables which were ignored in the present study can be further controlled and the experiment can be strengthened as a generalised standardised research tool.
- Fourthly, 250 respondents were very close to provide statistically significance results of this study between the pretest and posttest on the four groups due to economic restraints. Further studies could increase the population size (with respect to racial, ethnic, and income factors), group size to six groups and examine this aspect to yield the effect of brand linkage.
- Finally, the proposed model for this study was in itself not operationalised (since it was not the objective of this study) and this is an opportunity for future studies.

1.13 Organisation of the study

Overview of the thesis is as follows:
Figure 1.1: Chapters overview of the study

Chapter 1
Introduction and problem statement

Chapter 2
Brands and stakeholder relationships

Chapter 3
Brand linkages and brand relationships

Chapter 4
Brand ratings and brand perceptions: the role of brand communication

Chapter 5
Brand linkage – strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions model

Chapter 6
Methodology

Chapter 7
Results

Chapter 8
Discussion

Chapter 9
Conclusions and recommendations for future research
In summary, this thesis is essentially about looking at the bigger picture of how marketing communications professionals can create a road map for a brand linkage’s future. It indicates future uncertainties and applications of brand linkage strategy that are both consistent and flexible when undertaking new business challenges. With the help of theoretical concepts and various examples, this is an effort to summarise the key and innovative brand linkage strategy that brands can utilise to maximise their value in long-term success.

1.14 Chapter summary

This introductory chapter provided a review of relevant conceptual information which forms part of the background to the study. It is a preview of brand linkage’s general overview with particular examples used globally and locally. The rationale and purpose of the study was discussed briefly. The use of brand linkage is one way to add brand value and create successful brand relationships in a contemporary business environment. When using the pretest-posttest card scoring experiment and questionnaire, the use of a brand linkage campaign has been shown to increase respondents’ preference on the partnering brands. Since this is one of the first experimental studies conducted in the social sciences regarding the use of brand linkage, this study was designed to determine if the use of a brand linkage campaign has a positive impact on respondents’ card scoring and brand perceptions.

Brand and stakeholder relationships with relevant literature that supports the study are discussed in chapter 2.
CHAPTER 2
Brands and stakeholder relationships

“We are living in thrilling times”.
(Mike Bosman, 2010)

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the literature of brands and stakeholder relationships will be reviewed. Underlying concepts relating to the brand and stakeholder relationships will be conceptualised in depth as the nature of the brand linkages affects the relationships and interaction between stakeholders (consumers) and the brands. Problems of brand communication and the need for an existential perspective (or the meaningful understanding of a complex and difficult reality) becomes the chapter’s central argument. It will also point briefly to a model of consumer-to-consumer and consumer-brand relationship and its effects on the brand relationship communication perspective. As such, the changing nature of the contemporary market place and the uncertainty of brand relationships are discussed to reveal the root problem the study attempts to address.

2.2 Brand communication problems
2.2.1 Brand is more than a product or service

A core focus of marketing communication is enhancing the connection between suppliers (firms) and final consumers. This argument is what Fournier (1998a) proposed in the building of brand relationship quality. Generally, it contributes to the interaction between the brand and consumers on a daily basis. It is through this process that the brand becomes something else besides a market technical category, consequently widening its own potential influence. Often, the connection between the two is not just a product or service offering, instead the connection is prompted by a relationship which is more often than not personified by a brand (McDonald, De Chernatony & Harris, 2001), or a mark. Bester (1999) and Robins (2006:2) postulate that “brand originates from the Old Norse brandr, meaning ‘to
burn’, from the ‘branding’ of livestock – a mark of distinction and differentiation, a sign of quality and trust. Over time, that trustmark has been established as a relationship, one which by securing stakeholders’ preference and loyalty sustains business’ future earnings”.

As Dahlén, Lange and Smith (2010:237) argue, “products are made in factories, but brands are born in many conversations which circulate culturally in the brand narratives of; the companies who send them out into the marketplace and infuse a positioning story into strategic and tactical communications wrapped around the brand; ... the culture industries who deconstruct and evaluate meaning; and the end users who negotiate meaning from brand communication, community and complicity”. This is different from previous studies because branding was all about creating functional value, both for customers, and for the company (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008:xv; Stern, 2006). This value is evaluated as the brand assessment stems from the products and services that companies create and bring to the market. Conversely, a brand extends further to encompass added values derived from factors such as the brand-customer relationships and business to business relationships.

It is well documented that “brand is name, term, sign, symbol or combination of them for the reason to distinguish and identify one product from another” (Keller, 2008:2). The above traditional brand definition was based on the law of business copyright issues but now brand is defined in relation to changing time and context (De Chernatony, 2009; Sonnega & Moon, 2011:3). A few definitions can be reviewed from various authors who expressed complexity in brands as follows: a brand is a cluster of functional and emotional benefits that extend a unique and welcomed promise (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003). As a brand is essentially a summary of associated values, it can increase the buyer’s confidence in their choice (Low & Blois, 2002; Michell, King & Reast, 2001). In other words it is the sum of all emotions, thoughts and recognitions that people in a target audience have about an organisation (McNamara, 2009). According to Meyers (2003:21) “a brand is the sum total [of] relationships among stakeholders, or the medium through which stakeholders interact and exchange with each other”. Thus, the brand can denote to
a value-added to differentiate a product and all-encompassing entity (Singh, Sharma, Deepak & Agrawal, 2010:8).

Furthermore, it is clear that the way consumers perceive brands is the most critical factor determining short and long-term business-to-consumer relationships (Fournier, 1998a). Hence, the term brand comprises of two meanings, firstly the brand identity as codified and communicated by the brand originator, and secondly the brand meanings drawn from the users or the consumer environment (Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2002:2). In a globally interactive era where products and services exist as digital information, meanings can be delivered through social media and other information-based channels and the potential for ‘drift’ between organisationally-determined meaning and user-perceived meanings, becomes very complex (Fioroni & Titterton, 2009). The superconsumers reinterpret brands according to their cultural backgrounds and own perspectives which can affect its meaning in such a way that the brand perception by the stakeholders can differ from the brand meaning communicated by the company (Fioroni & Titterton, 2009). Superconsumers will change and reshape their perceptions about brands in response to any brand communication from marketers, competitors, and other stakeholders. Brand linkages and brand relationship can be further understood by defining the core concepts applied by marketing practitioners. The shift from differentiation to distinction is also a significant driver of customers’ buying behaviour (Romaniuk, Sharp & Ehrenberg, 2007:47).

2.2.2 Distinctiveness of branding

The name is the first criteria of distinctiveness of a brand. This is protected by the law which confines duplication of another company’s trademarks names. Distinctiveness assist marketers to concentrate on refreshing, reminding customers of the same brand message rather than new unique points of differentiation (Romaniuk et al., 2007:50). Thus, the Nike Swoosh introduced in the 1970s appears to be a strongly consistent brand identifier. Uniqueness and prevalence are two important criteria for distinctive brand quality. Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg (2007:54) conclude that the prominence of distinctiveness is more valuable than
attempting to explore the unique selling propositions (USP) and more than trying to find unique identifying characteristics (UIC). In other words, brand distinctiveness, unlike differentiation, requires a new direction in brand research (Romaniuk et al., 2007). Similarly, Neumeier (2005) argues that marketing today is about creating tribes as a building block emanating from the previous years – 1900s features (what it is); 1925 benefits (what it does); 1950 experience (what you feel); 2000 until today identification (who you are). Some of the elements can include (Romaniuk et al., 2007:50):

- Colours - such as the Absa Bank red, FNB bank green;
- Logos - such as the McDonald’s arches;
- Taglines – such as Apple’s ‘think different’
- Symbols/characters - such as ‘the Swoosh’, for Nike;
- Celebrities – such as Tiger Woods for Nike; and
- Advertising styles – such as the MasterCard “priceless” campaign.

Of course, relationship, reputation, expectations and a promise were not at the core for a previous construct of the brand. Conversely, most scholars continued to rely on the brand definition given by the American Marketing Association:

“A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name” (Keller, 2008:2).

The above definition limits the brand to the company, a means to an end, the end being the establishment of competitiveness within a brand. However, this argument is now inadequate because “marketing today is a fraction of the brand equation” (Sonnega & Moon, 2011:3). Precisely, this implies that whenever a marketer creates a name, logo, or symbol, the marketer has created a brand, but the current marketing landscape has changed the view of a brand as ‘co-created’ and more than only the tangible attributes (Jones, 2008 in Hall & Jones, 2008). When individuals arrive at the same conclusion then can it be said to be a ‘brand’. Nevertheless, companies cannot control this process, the only option is for them to influence by communicating the qualities that make one product distinct from another product.
The company’s creation of brand is ‘the means’, while ‘the end’ is anonymous. Therefore, De Chernatony (2009:104) arrives at the understanding that a brand is complex having “a cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience”.

Sherry (2005 in Dahlén, Lange & Smith, 2010) believes that as a result of an overcrowded market place, a brand will be generating and articulating social values and myths, as a “marketing mythopeia” done by marketing communications functions to create and perpetuate deep meaning through narrative. Indeed, a good place to reconstruct is the ideal that a brand is more than a product, company logo or name. As significant as they are, brands can be difficult to understand and manage (Arvidsson, 2005; Grönroos, 2004). Hence, Bester (1999:6) proposes that “Brands must do a job for a sufficient number of individuals at an affordable price, which delivers sustainable profit. The job they do is both rational and emotional in the context of the individual’s socioeconomic environment”.

Davis’ (2005) assertion is undeniable that brands today are synonymous with the business and the style behind the product or service; they encompass the people working for the company and a philosophy and spirit that sustain it. Hence, brands offer a set of unique values, a vision and an attitude (Davis, 2005). This explanation implies that marketing or public relations practitioners encounter multiple stakeholders who have various interests. Dealing with such diverse influences of a brand needs a strategic goal from the top executives down to everyone who has stakes in a company. Again, Davis’ (2005) view of brand demonstrates the importance of the intangible (emotional) attributes above the tangible value (functional). Subsequently, if a brand also includes emotional feelings such as significance, confidence, safety and satisfaction then it can represent a lifestyle, a status and an empowerment.

Tustin and De Jongh (2008) suggest that a brand can also evoke negative feelings if experiences with it are disappointing, their negative attitude may influence the consumer’s purchase intent. For example, sponsors associated with Fédération Internationale de Football Association (in Spanish; FIFA) have expressed concern at
the damaging allegations of corruption (Bond, 2011). Major brand sponsors Coca-Cola, Adidas and Emirates expressed their concerns at the damage being done to FIFA by the alleged claims of corruption. The concern of these major sponsors is related to tarnishing of their brands’ reputation. A consumer’s decision to buy any of these sponsors’ products may mean partnership in a relationship that supports corruption, heavily influenced by their perceived risk.

Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster, (2008:xv) indicate that brand must address multiple audiences because brand audiences go beyond customers to include all stakeholders, and that these audiences exercise a wider range of discriminators, including both the intangible and the tangible product or service elements. In support of the concepts of intangibility and complexity, these authors highlight that there are a variety of contact points, or interfaces, between an organisation and its stakeholders (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008). Examples in South Africa include Standard Bank and British Airways teamed up to offer a credit card, or the partnership between Wimpy quick service restaurants and Engen fuel service stations. While brand is expressed through the company’s mission, core values, beliefs, communication, culture and overall design (Simoes & Dibb, 2001) consumers’ reception of brand is complex. It would be too smart, however, if that were the end of the debate and it certainly has not been. There is a high risk of complexity in a single brand. How complex then is the result of two linked brands?

2.2.3 The complexity in brand
2.2.3.1 Consumer involvement matrix

In addition, one thing that all contemporary research has agreed on is that different brands (including linked brands) have different degrees of importance in relationship to consumers. Alignment of the meaning of the importance of relationships turns a product and service (of a company) into a brand, and expresses the link such as self-brand connection and consumer-brand relationship between the brand and the consumer. This makes instinctive sense to most arguments. The basic idea of a matrix relating communication components to consumers’ response has been used to study consumers’ decision making process and to determine the “how” and “why”
of the use of brands. In the eighties Vaughn (1980) combined involvement theory with the concept of brain-specialisation and plotted the relationship between these ideas on a two-dimensional matrix called the Foote, Cone and Belding (FCB) model. In this model, the balance was developed with the degree of involvement between left-brain rational thinking and right-brain emotional response. As such, meaningful communications’ objectives have been labeled (amongst others) as ‘rational thinking’ and ‘emotional (social) response’. Hence, the matrix divides brand strategy into two dimensions based on thinking versus feeling, and low involvement versus high involvement (Thorson & Duffy, 2011). As Vaughn (1980, 1986:57) hypothesises that “...there are purchase decisions where thinking is most involved and others where feeling dominated; there are situations that require more involvement and those that require less”. Vaughn’s model is still relevant today as it inspired research on different versions of the Learn – Feel – Do sequence and suggested that decisions that fall in different decision-drivers should be treated differently in advertising and marketing strategies for each of the four quadrants (Thorson & Duffy, 2011; Vitale, 2006).

Figure 2.1 Consumer-brand involvement matrix

Think

High involvement

Feel

Quadrant 1

Quadrant 2

Quadrant 3

Quadrant 4

Low involvement

Rational

Emotional
Quadrant 3 – Low involvement / Thinking (Doer)

Products in this category (including many common household items such as razors, insect repellent, and household cleaners) involve little thought and a tendency to form buying habits for convenience (Vitale, 2006).

Quadrant 4 – Low involvement / Feeling (Self-satisfaction)

This product decision is emotional but requires little involvement, and is primarily dependent more on sensory feelings than emotional response which is reserved for those products that satisfy personal taste (for example, cigarettes, candy, beer, simple toys, candy, fresh fruit or snack food). Engen and Woolworths are likely to fall into quadrant 3 and 4 (Quadrant 1 and 2 are left out in this discussion).

2.2.3.2 Decision making and symbolism of brand: emotion and rationality

The tenets of social ‘interactionism’ propose that product symbolism is generated on the societal level, but may be consumed on the individual level. Brands are consumed on account of both their social reason (public) and private (emotion) meanings (Roberts, 2005:42). Roberts (2005:42) argues that the important difference between emotion and rationality reason is that emotions lead a consumer to take action about a brand while rational reasoning leads a consumer to meaningful conclusions. Brands were created to bring significant difference for endangered products – hard to distinguish from “chunks of gravel” because they represent value to the owners (Roberts, 2005:30). According to Keller (2008) their essence, their symbolic value, however, vests in the minds of individuals (consumers). Great brands are symbols for promises with fundamental meaning. Consumers are overwhelmed by choices they face every day. Hence, human attention has become the important currency (Roberts, 2005:33).

Brands that succeed are those which stand out for something with an important connotation. Connotation is a process of reinforcement, an individual’s predisposed interpretation of reality; even in the absence of awareness, great brands may lead to automatic behaviour and psychological responses (Ramsey & Skov, 2013:1). For instance, Apple’s success essentially cannot be separated from its founder’s vision.
that technology, marketing and sales alone are not sufficient to deliver corporate success. Creators and innovators are people who believe very strongly in the values of the company and would make their identity fit. The advertisement campaign “Think different” featuring Picasso, Einstein and Gandhi was described by Steve Jobs as a way for the company to remember who the heroes are and who Apple is (Burrows, 2004). This illustrates that “the empirical literature on emotion and rationality is thus very fragmented and sometimes seemingly inconsistent” (Pham, 2007:155).

In line with this argument, consumer decisions and actions are much more influenced by intuition and emotional responses than it was previously thought (Markič, 2009). Accordingly, “emotional states are incidental if their source is unrelated to the object of judgment or decision. Incidental emotional state has a variety of rational and irrational influences on judgments, decisions, and behaviours” (Pham, 2007:157). This implies that although emotional states influence customers’ reasoning processes, and therefore their logical rationality, a basic condition of logical rationality is a precision of perceptions and beliefs (Pham, 2007).

Du Plessis (2005:58) agrees with Pham (2007) that “Since emotion plays a key role in the directing of our attention, emotion informs the rational”. As such, it is emotions that govern all behaviour driving consumers’ unconscious reactions, but also determining what becomes conscious. “The emotional reaction and the rational interpretation, the ‘contextual memory’, are not only formed at the same, they are inextricably part of the same system” (Du Plessis, 2005:64). The study of Buyology (Lindstrom, 2010) is groundbreaking in consumer behaviour. Lindstrom, (2010:11) revealed “the hidden truths behind how branding and marketing messages work on the human brain, how our truest selves react to stimuli at a level far deeper than conscious thought, and how our unconscious minds control our behavior (usually the opposite of how we think we behave)“.

Moreover, one more question that is worth asking is, can any of these brand complex activities apply to consumers’ response to brands? If the answer is yes, then, what can lead practitioners to understand consumers’ behaviour since the
complexity of customer brand relationship is embedded in customer values. In responding to the above questions, the laddering approach is utilised in understanding individuals’ opinions, attitudes and beliefs (Vriens & Hofstede, 2000; Wansink, 2003) which highlight complex insights. Consumers’ choice of brand is determined by their interrelation of the attributes, consequences, and personal values for any given product (service) category (Ariely & Berns, 2010). Although consumer behaviour strives constantly to satisfy both biological and social needs, more spontaneous or impulsive processes, but often distraction and lack of time while consuming goods or making purchasing decisions, affect their behaviour (Schoen & Crilly, 2012). Thus, at actual purchase consumers’ judgments may occur nonconsciously or as a result of subliminal influences (Schoen & Crilly, 2012:2).

The starting point is consumers’ high awareness of brands. Though great “brand choreography” salience is high, many people use the brands which make them a source of positive relevance (Bester, 1999; Ramsøy & Skov, 2013:6). Improving brand preference was important in the previous findings because in today’s increasingly crowded consumer communication space, negatively preferred brands are not likely to have saliency (Ramsøy & Skov, 2013:5). Hence, brands with a high positive preference (liking) were significantly more likely to be perceived consciously than brands with a low preference rating (disliking). The same brands may attract negative salience and relevance. Salience entails how visible or prominent the brand is. By having one or more of three attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency (Cornelissen, 2011), brands evoke different responses. Experience can clash with expectations, as for instance, with buyer’s remorse (the sense of regret) following the purchase of an expensive brand. This is what Lantos (2011) calls cognitive dissonance, a psychologically uncomfortable state of tension caused by inconsistency among two or more attitude components (intra-attitude inconsistency). In a state of dissonance, customers may feel surprise, dread, guilt, anger, or embarrassment (Lantos, 2011). This negative salience, is not neutral disliking or not using brands, but indeed to others to destroy them purposively (Thomson, 2009). “It may seem paradoxical, but often the people who have the greatest motivation to harm a company are those who were once its most loyal customers” (Thomson, 2009:1). Thus, dissonance theory leads to the conclusion that humans are
sometimes rationalising but not always rational beings (Lantos, 2011). Brands and consumers also act likewise.

In their study, Johnson, Matear and Thomson (2011:120) find that consumers develop two kinds of positive brand relationships. First class had some consumers become so emotionally attached to a brand that they actually identify with it. Second class had others who trust the brand and are loyal to it, but the brand does not become part of their self-identity. It is the first class of consumer that represents the greatest potential harm to a company. “The investment of the self in a brand can become a huge liability if the relationship sours” (Johnson et al., 2011:109). Consumers will feel that they have lost an important part of who they are, and as a result, they have to reconstruct their identity. Also, when people feel betrayed by brands, they experience the same emotions people go through when a personal relationship ends (Johnson et al., 2011). Therefore, consumers establish relationships with brands based on their symbolic value.

2.2.3.3 Brands are embedded in language and culture imperatives

Most important, in this context, is usually the customers, whom brands try to convince who often behave ‘ritualistically’ with habits (Bester, 1999). According to Cornlissen (2011), customers have a need for economic, legal, ethic and philanthropic needs that brands may meet. The pressure is to trademark shapes, scents and sounds. Even colours are pushed instead of brands (Roberts, 2005:28). The new media environment has further complicated marketers’ challenge to develop effective and efficient marketing campaigns for a brand (Aaker, 2011). Valuing a brand has become a complex exercise for marketers because value is an intangible asset (Ramsøy & Skov, 2013). However, there are of course people, human resources, behind every brand. The people who have contact with consumers can bring harm or promotion to the brand. Of course, behind every action is a consequence. Brand promoters are also challenged with creating clear guidelines for employees who are representing their brand.

People are overwhelmed by the choices they face and human attention has become
marketers’ principal currency (Roberts, 2005:33). Thus, they buy from individuals they like and trust. Often they are individual “entrepreneurs who conceive of, manufacture and market brands” (Bester, 1999:126). Employees form part of the brand and they are integral to the delivered satisfaction of the brand’s promise in companies with strong or weak engagement strategies. All these individuals’ actions add or subtract concrete as well as abstract meaning to the brands they are involved with because “inducing strong emotional responses in consumers has an added benefit that it increases the likelihood of that brand being detected in a crowded environment” (Ramsøy & Skov, 2013:6). In addition, the postmodern communication (besides, even silence communicates) triggered the dearth of distance and does not happen in a vacuum (Hudson, Roth & Madden, 2012), it loosens the grip of geography. Beyond doubt, consumers will receive brand information in context, will assess this information, in context, and will react to this information, in context (Bester, 1999). Branding as a communicative form is thus instituting a new personality type and along with that, a new community of practice, an essential of brand language, where cultural forms of brands are made sense of retrospectively as a narrative (Wenger, 2000).

Brands have become a normal part of consumers’ lives (Smith & Zook, 2011). They are in fact a vital part of the postmodern emphasis on the quality of individuality in life. Indeed, in a consumer society, brands become part of the non-verbal language, in which Individuals buy and use brands in the context that makes sense to them (Aaker, 2011; Bester, 1999). The individual’s mind has shown that many contexts of use exist in which they chose brands that conform to their self-image (Gilmore & Pine II, 2009). When consumers engage with brands in a self-centered way, brands may evoke positive or negative moods and can make consumers feel happy and joyful or sad and angry (Schmitt, 2012:10). Although brands are seen as signifying individual selves (Fournier, 1998a) they may also be perceived as representative of a group, a society, or a culture (Schmitt, 2012:12). As cultural symbols, brands can stand for nations (Engen, McDonalds), continents (Amarula Beer, the spirit of Africa; Standard Bank), generations (Coca-Cola) and cultural values (NedBank). Woolworths is one brand that was presented as an exemplary symbol worthy of admiration and respect (Holt, 2004); by assuming the role of political, cultural icon
and assuming the mythical qualities of the former South African president Nelson Mandela after his death in 2013. The Soweto gospel choir sang a praise song for Mandela inside Woolworths and the song went viral. This is one incident where a brand assumes mythic qualities to market the brand value.

2.2.3.4 Consumer attitudes, values (terminal and instrumental values) and behaviours

The way the consumer processes information is important to marketing and communication practitioners. Attitudes are lasting as they tend to endure over time which can be positive or negative and tend to change if people have new experiences or reflections on the brand (Solomon, 2009:282). Brand attitude is a psychological tendency to assess the brand along a degree of favour or liking (Schmitt, 2012:13). Rokeach (1973) defines consumer attitude as an enduring organisation of interrelated beliefs that are all focused on a specific object or situation, while a value refers to a desirable “end state of existence” (terminal value) or a desirable “mode of behaviour” (instrumental value). If a brand is connected to a consumer based on attitude, Schmitt (2012:13) suggests that “attitudes are often not stable over time and the attitude behaviour link is weak and subject to numerous moderator effects”. Respect for values and beliefs supported by existing culture, invite perceived coherence and bestow authenticity in consumer brand relationship (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). Therefore, a consumer is conceived to have many thousands of attitudes but only dozens of values. “These relatively few values are conceived to have many of all man’s attitudes as well as his behaviour” (Ferrando, 2010:4).

Values help in providing decisions about the product, and are the key criterion for a brand to be judged as prestigious. Sweeney (2003) argues that people form value perceptions before they use a product or service. In other words, consumption of prestige brands may vary according to the susceptibility to others. As argued earlier, the close association between culture, values, and consumer behaviour (Tai, 2008) is a good way to understand the role of personal values in the choice of brands. Hence, brands are used to reflect oneself (Rokeach, 1973; Solomon, 2009).
Consumers’ attitude in developing economies like South Africa are increasingly motivated, created and developed by brands. “Society expects individuals to behave in accord with these values and the individual therefore applies values to influence behaviour. Brands are central to many of the individual’s behaviours and brands can be seen to support values” (Bester, 1999:115).

The value of brand to society is inevitable. It is all about relationships. All thriving brands boil down to building a very different relationship with customers than they have traditionally had. If organisations are to deliver the value customers need, understanding them and their needs, brand connection with customers must be richer and fuller (Tai, 2008). At the same time, if the customers are to have the assurance of receiving brand value from an organisation, understanding that value should be ensured. This implies investing time and effort in helping brand professionals to learn. This relationship is an investment that is sure to have a ‘profitable’ return.

Furthermore, although a brand can be introduced with communications through mass media or other channels, it is given life and value through experience in the form of linkages with other brands. As mentioned earlier, introduction is just a means and it is not all that a brand is about. Daily transactions, person to person communication, the promise of a brand and its actual delivery against that promise become a legacy that makes it more or less valuable over time (Sternthal & Lee, 2005). Great brands are determined by how consumers perceive them to be an immortal value because it is unlimited to time. Importantly, some types of the brand’s reputation, whether positive or negative, are created for every brand by autonomous (independent) experiences beyond a company’s control (Oestreicher, 2010).

This is the complex mode of the brand relationship in today’s virtual world. Competitors, the general business structure and sometimes past customers, communicate ideas that reflect on a brand. For instance, the South African mobile giant MTN faced lawsuits in 2012 for bribery and corruption within its Middle East disputed political nuclear insensitive Iranian market, which was victimisation from TuckCell (MTN competitor). It might have been prompted by USA’s international call
for sanctions on Iran’s controversial nuclear programme pursuit. This example demonstrates that even if a brand can simply blend into the background of others in the industry, it is a circumstance unlikely to benefit its ultimate success (Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). Significantly, brands are powerful business assets, and their growth should not be left to chance (Schmitt, 2012). Brand communication, therefore, is the life-blood of any successful brand relationship, but lack of consensus on brand definition still hinders the effectiveness of brand linkage and brand relationship with customers.

2.2.4 Marketing communication in society

Marketing and society are interwoven. Marketing communication constitutes an interactive dialogue between an organisation and its environment (Varey, 2002). Both theoretical and empirical research studies in the field of marketing communication include general considerations regarding brand communication’s campaigns, with creative, channel (media) selection process and specific communication techniques. Marketing communication is a multidimensional relationship to achieve business’ intended internal as well as external goals. It aims at creating and maintaining mutual healthy relationships between stakeholders and brand owners (Varey, 2002). According to Varey (2002) the impact of marketing communication is on (1) the level of knowledge about the company and its offer; (2) the attitudes and preferences of customers and; (3) the purchasing behavior of customers. Marketing aims to create and sustain “mutually satisfying exchanges of value between producer/servers and their customers. It has both a managerial orientation and an organizational/social function” (Varey, 2002:4). The following are essential aspects of marketing as exchange (Varey, 2002:5):

- Creating - Marketing helps to direct production to the creation of products that serve a purpose for buyers and consumers
- Sustaining - Marketing is a bridge between those people who have a need to be fulfilled though interaction
- Mutual - Neither party is exploiter of the other
- Satisfying - The outcome of the interaction is desirable
• Exchange - Products of value are traded

• Value - Parties are free to determine the worth, desirability, utility, and associated qualities

• Producer/server - The manufacturer who coordinates and delivers the product

• Customer - The person who makes the purchase

• Managerial orientation - Clearly understood relating of purposeful actions and decisions in the coordination of resource use

• Organizational function - The bringing about of a state or condition of being organized

However, “textbook presentations of marketing are based on limited real-world data. Most of the theory presented is drawn from US packaged consumer goods activity and cannot be generalized to the broader cultural domain of instrumentally oriented economy” (Varey, 2002:11). Most of the time, the scholarly work are less critical in their thinking when they are successful in terms of book sales. South African academics and practitioners default to mere bystanders, and fail to recognise the particular market environment from which much of the textbook content emanates. This results in a misfit. The everchanging local political and economic values continue to polarise the marketing exchange environment. Hence, it is crucially important for professionals to adjust to social value and benefits of marketing communication within its environment. If not managed this can result in “social costs, such as financial losses, dissatisfaction, health and safety problems, resources deletion, and discrimination” (Varey, 2002:335). Marketing strategies which violate stakeholders’ trust can become unsuccessful. Therefore, recognition of interaction, relationship, and the need for integration are becoming the foundations for marketing communication management’s success in today’s society (see chapter 4.4.4).

2.2.5 Gap between brand relationships and stakeholder-communication-oriented strategies

Recognition of the brand relationship communication oriented strategies as the backbone of every organisation, is where every business process is attuned to the
brand linkage process. Brand linkage processes such as in the case of Adidas - Polar Electro which created Project Fusion, which integrates heart rate and speed and distance monitoring equipment into sports apparel. The importance of this brand communication is to build and sustain the brand value (Holt, 2004), which is the value attached by customers that affects the profitability of related brand relationships with the linked brands’ stakeholders. According to Aaker, Fournier and Brasel (2004), Aggarwal (2004), and Fournier (1998a) a rather interesting perspective assumes that within such study of the phenomenon, the basic principles of interpersonal relations should be taken into consideration. That is, the consumers can, in fact, interact with the linked brands according to the modalities which reflect those produced among individuals (Fournier, 1998a). “These relations are significant in that they affect not only the quality of the focal brand engagement, but also the quality of the consumer’s life overall. Negative brand relationships can be damaging not only to consumers, but also to the companies involved” (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013:254). “Negative brand relationships are in fact more common than positive relationships, with an average split across categories of 55%/45% for negative and positive relationships, respectively” (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013:255). Therefore, brand relationship strategies are essential when identifying the key touch points and message on pre-purchase, during purchase and post-purchase of the brand.

It is also conceivable that communication enhances stakeholder engagement strategies on every linked brand. Customer service is clearly aware that the level of service it offers impacts the firm’s reputation (Rawlins, 2006). Subsequently, the rest of the stakeholders, either employees or business to business, competitors’ relationships, may build or destroy the organisation’s reputation (Reichheld, 2001). Stakeholder groups are a part of organisational life whether they are recognised by the organisation or not (Jones, 2008). It has become almost a proverb that current facts on the brands and the relationship between them has moved on from solely concentrating on customers to having a more balanced approach of satisfying all the stakeholders (Jones, 2008; Pratt, 2009; Rawlins, 2006).

The brand communication dimension is therefore instrumental in building awareness, positive linkages (associations), and long-term customer loyalty, and contributes to
trademark ownership and operational advantages such as channel and media influence. Consequently, the brand linkage is a cornerstone of brand relationship, since the linkage ties relationship to the form of brand communication in marketing messages. Prior research has yet to identify and analyse the operational implications of brand linkages and brand relationship in the new business environment. Compounding the challenge for long term business strategy continues in new ways. These changes are analytical or intuitive, logical or emotional, linear or spatial, numerical or visual, and verbal or physical (Neumeier, 2005). The continuously expanding global market has added new levels of complexity, and a host of new issues have arisen to accurately predicting any further linkages into a coherent framework. “The outcome is that there is more noise, and brands are moderated and mediated more, both by and through the use of the new communication mechanism that is the Internet” (Jevons et al., 2002:6; Hudson et al., 2012).

Consumers learn about different brands’ linkages, amongst other means, for example, through electronically communicating among themselves and thus they influence each other on brand choices or relationships. In this new branding world, word of mouth has inevitable implications. The functional value of a linked brand is not the main reason to meet consumer needs (De Chernatony, 2010; Egan, 2007; Gabbott & Jevons, 2009; Matten & Crane, 2005). The significance of eliciting users’ positive emotional responses is of paramount importance. This intangible and the tangible components of the brand (linkages) are now differentiated. Intangible processes have become more important factors in estimating brand assessments (Jones, 2008).

It is now accepted that emotional values are the leading aspects of the linked brands in this millennium (Van der Walt, 2011). They are extended beyond function, form and usability, to emotional dimensions that enrich users’ experience (Jones, 2008). Sonnega and Moon (2011:9) maintain that in this choice-laden market, consumers’ purchasing decisions process evolved to a more complex model which entails “greater management by brands of all relevant touch points to foster consumer loyalty and overall brand strength”. The expectations of stakeholders are based increasingly on these emotions evoked by the brands and its stakeholder
relationships. Hence, Doyle (2000) argues that customer satisfaction is a very poor measure of profitability. Jones (2008) agrees with Doyle's assertion as he adds that companies’ competitive advantage and profitability are often reliant on the many other relationships that develop inside and outside the firm. Expectations are formed through a combination of past experiences, word-of-mouth, advertising and communication. Nonetheless, this research examines a variety of factors, but frames them as contextual elements that influence the involvement of stakeholders. The study intentionally looks at the interplay between organisations and consumers, and particularly, how the brands interact with the individuals (stakeholders).

On the other hand, the above mentioned reasons imply that the existence of a high brand relationship quality broadens the meanings attributed to the brand. These meanings of brand go beyond the functional benefits that are offered by the product, but invoke the emotional responses of the users or non-users or other stakeholders. Again, factors such as reputation and image outweigh the tangible product attributes when purchasing decisions are taken (Bengtsson & Servais, 2004). Therefore, this process may include a vicarious experience, especially when achieved through a complex matrix of brand linkage (Jevons et al., 2002).

In summary, it is important to clarify that this work acknowledges that a linked brand is more than a product. The key assertion is that contemporary organisations operate in a context where social, political, economic, environmental, legal and regulatory factors can directly or indirectly impact how they do business (Pratt, 2009). It is therefore important for an entity to build and maintain strategic partnerships with stakeholders in order to minimise the social reputational risk from its brand relationships. A case of noticeable similarity is between two brands such as Shell and Ferrari, singularly original being linked. Is it easier for the consumers to transfer their positive attitudes about these brands to the new linked brand relationship quality, especially when referring to the capacity of the brand linkage to satisfy the benefits of a functional nature? This study therefore, further attempts to understand the uncertainty of brand relationship characteristics which are discussed in the next section.
2.3 Uncertainty of brand relationships

As the earlier argument purports that key characteristics of a brand relationship program are influenced by various factors, this puts greater emphasis on relationship and connection (communication). A certain brand may carry numerous and different meanings in the eyes of various consumers in diverse contexts and periods of time (Jacobsen, 1999 in Bengtsson & Servais, 2004). The relationship between the linked brands and stakeholder relationships was justified by different studies (Jevons et al., 2002; Jones, 2008). Hence, “Quality is no longer the functional quality of a product, but the quality of the firm as a whole. People have an opinion about everything, not only environment or ethics, people have an opinion about the whole” (Jacobsen, 1999:101 in Bengtsson & Servais, 2004:6). For instance, event sponsorship campaigns and other brand building activities that are intended (or unintended) for end-customers are likely to have an impact on the organisation itself (Jones, 2008) and its relationship with other stakeholders.

The brand linkage strategy provides a foundation for the development of brand building programs and typically includes the brand objectives, consistent brand name and identity systems, target audiences, positioning(s), key marketing communications messages and prioritisation of brand linkage touch points (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Keller, 2008; Park, 2008). This is an increasingly popular technique that marketers use in attempting to transfer the positive associations of the partner (constituent) brands to a newly formed co-brand (composite brand such as Ferrari and Shell). Every interaction with stakeholders constitutes a linked brand “touch point” and represents an opportunity to enhance the brand perception (Keller, 2008). This study investigates how one particular brand linkage strategy that is higher than co-branding can influence a company’s relationships with consumers. Park (2008) asserts that brand attachment (linkage) leads to various responses namely: brand relationship initiation behaviours of buying, brand relationship maintenance through repeat buying behaviours, brand relationship enhancement behaviours in the form of recommendation, postponement of purchase, price premium, participation in brand community and willingness to sacrifice one’s life for the linked brand.
To understand brand relationship characteristics, communication (connection) is measured by content, channels and processes, and the impact is vital. Consequently, “it is the consumer who integrates the time and situational factors that have been developing along with communication messages. Through comprehensive communication efforts the marketer can only create the circumstances needed for communication messages to be perceived in a relational context” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:191). The content of the communication relates to three types of messages (Wernerfelt, 1996). Generally, “it can be information about attributes of the brand, attempts to associate the brand with things that make processing and recall cheap or enjoyable (pretty women in beer commercials), or attempts to endow consumption of the brand with signaling value” (Wernerfelt, 1996:241). This means that everything a company does, and sometimes does not do, can send a brand linkage message with varying impact (Schutt, 2012). Social media (covered in chapter 4) is the most recent force behind the nature of brand relationships. Social media press releases, podcasts, vlogging, blogging, RSS feeds, online press portals, Wikis, consumer-generated content and social networking are buzzwords that have taken the business matrix by storm (Van der Walt, 2011). In fact, “Social media, or web 2.0, is all about relationships. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Social Bookmarking, Yelp, Google places - all- are about customers talking to customers, and customer talking to businesses” (McDonald, 2011:1). Therefore, brand relationship is now unpredictable.

One of the important aspects regarding brand relationship characteristics is based on stakeholder theory. Drawing from Freeman’s (1984) writing, Donaldson and Preston (1995) developed stakeholder theory based on three aspects: descriptive, instrumental and normative. They explain descriptive stakeholder theory as describing how a corporation deals with stakeholders. Instrumental theory is seen as the connection between how an organisation manages its stakeholders and the achievement of organisational goals. Finally, normative stakeholder theory is concerned with how a company should act towards its stakeholders. However, there are some fundamental inconsistencies between some definitions and the stakeholder relationship theory (Fassin, 2009). Stakeholder theory lacks a satisfactory conceptual approach for dealing with ethical problems that arise in
business decision making. Although normative stakeholder theories are among the recent studies, still lacking is the capacity to accommodate important moral concerns into business decision making (Orts & Strudler, 2009). Thus, the question of instrumental stakeholder theory is important.

At the same time, there is insufficient rigour in applying the framework to managerial, organisational and strategic issues while literature demonstrates that a success partnership (relationship) is an agreement about the cooperation rules (Kuhn, Alpert & Pope, 2008; Wolfe & Putler, 2002). A better level of consensus in brand relationship characteristics achieved through interaction means less conflict (Anderson, Naurus & Narayandas, 2009). However, as Fassin (2009) argues, the stakeholder theory, as with any new theory, suffers numerous shortcomings and imperfections owing in part to vagueness, ambiguity and breadth. As a result, stakeholder theory is seen as meaningless and ambiguous and is viewed as weak in theory which lacks practical usefulness of stakeholder relationship management (Fassin, 2009). Similarly, Orts and Strudler (2009) conclude that stakeholder theory as a recommended approach to deal with many of the real and everyday problems in business ethics is essentially empty of content and therefore inadequate. In essence, these scholars point out that the study of business ethics, as proposed, may need to move “beyond stakeholders” to answer the most serious and toughest ethical questions surrounding business and its social obligations (Orts & Strudler, 2009). To focus on some of the most significant ethical dilemmas faced in business contexts and to think through them without the artificial and unworkable constructs of various stakeholder theories would be a good starting point (Orts & Strudler, 2009). As a result, it seems more interesting and richer to consider brand linkage as coming from a paradoxical (inconsistent) stakeholder relationship.

2.3.1 Brand linkage a result of paradoxical stakeholder relationship

The term paradoxical stakeholder relationship refers to the inconsistent characteristics between the brand’s linkages and its customers. Verwey (2001:77) argues that:

“We are experiencing what Zohar (1997:24) refers to as a paradigm paradox -
needing our paradigms to make sense of the world, yet becoming trapped or constrained within the boundaries of our thinking and how it informs behaviour within these boundaries. The swift movement of technology, the mobility of organisations and people in the global world, the competition for markets and customers have all combined to ensure that the stable and developed world, modern economics has known, is forever gone”.

Consequently, a single company has literally thousands of interactions each day with customers, end users and other stakeholders both online and offline. Each interaction is an opportunity and platform to communicate or harm the brand linkage’s vital messages. Although the primary target for a branding strategy oftentimes is the end-customers, whether they are companies or consumers, the brand linkages have considerable impact on the relationships with all the stakeholders of the partnering companies (Jones, 2008). Hence, stakeholder communication is a complex endeavour per se, and more complex within the global context (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010).

In addition, public relations theory and stakeholder management literature converge in their discussion about the relationship characteristics of an organisation (Bowen, 2010; Jones, 2008; Margolis & Walsh, 2003). A strong collaboration between the marketing and communication function is highly recommended by these literatures. This is viewed as a means for reducing complexity when “marketing” and “communication” are organised as a united function, a reduction in the number of the inter-corporate network members (Oestreicher, 2009). Such a united structure enables more unity focus in managing multidimensional stakeholders’ expectations (Oestreicher, 2009). Moreover, branding theories need to probe the operation and implications of this new marketplace reality. As Keller (2003a:599) concludes, “the challenge and opportunity for consumer research…is fully appreciating the broad scope and complexity involved”. Lacking is a proactive approach for accommodating this scope and complexity, where once the consumers were viewed as passive, the marketing practitioners are now in danger of falling behind (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008).
Besides, the term ‘stakeholder’ has altered over time to mean almost totally the opposite to its original sense. A ‘stakeholder’ was someone who held money on behalf of two or more other people pending the resolution of an issue between them, usually the outcome of a wager (William, Werther & Chandler, 2011). Interestingly, a stakeholder was bound to hand over the money to the successful party. Stakeholders are the ones who influenced or are influencing the linked company’s attaining of its business mission. The stakeholder had a formal responsibility towards his principals. To deal with such constant change, situational theory regards stakeholders by their relationship to the situation (William et al., 2011). In this case, stakeholders become active publics that can influence the success of an organisation, or they can appeal to the other stakeholders with influence and should therefore become priority publics in communication strategies (Rawlins, 2006).

Importantly, the stakeholder management also discusses the brand relationships in terms of the attributes power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997; Pratt, 2009). The stakeholder typology model which was developed in the late ‘90s offered a new approach. Parties with only one of these attributes are latent stakeholders (Rawlins, 2006). For example, an activist group may have an urgent issue, but with neither power nor legitimacy, it can make demands without necessarily deserving much management attention (Rawlins, 2006). Two attributes characterise expectant stakeholders such as employees and investors, who always have a degree of power and a legitimate claim on the resources of the company.

Rawlins (2006) indicates that the parties with all three attributes are definitive stakeholders and always take top priority. These are key influencers who have a huge impact on other stakeholders such as the customers. Nevertheless, if an unpredicted change in the stakeholder status strikes, catastrophe defies all legitimacy. Indeed, today’s public manifest is in the active classification because of technological media (Bosman, 2010). Almost anyone can be a stakeholder having power, legitimacy and urgency because it is as easy as posting an entry on the Internet. They still have great power to signal their discontent if their demands are not met by withdrawing their custom or their capital. In essence, even consumers and business owners have become highly disparate groups of people with conflicting
interests which modern business is often hard to identify, let alone reconcile.

This has grown over time and the change is pervasive in contemporary stakeholder relationships. Recent efforts to articulate the nature of stakeholder relationship management offer a more extensive list of practices which taps beyond firms’ ability to monitor stakeholders’ interests and communicate with them (Freeman, 1984; 2001), engage them in dialogue (Payne & Calton, 2003), and avoid opportunistic behaviour toward firms (Jones, 2008). Stakeholder relationship is also regarded as an instrumental effect to the financial performance of the firm (Jones, 2008; Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Thus, Jones (2008) claims that the firms which effectively manage their stakeholder relationships will financially outperform firms that do not. The question remains is, what does it mean to manage stakeholders effectively?

Researchers in public relations discuss similar relationship variables (Hung, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), including control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment and trust. This gives birth to the new approach which begins by suggesting that stakeholders should be identified according to their connection to the organisation. It then proceeds to prioritise stakeholders by their attributes, their relationship to the issue, and ultimately their place in the communication strategy. As evidence for this, there is repeatedly recent appreciation that the stakeholder relationships are becoming more complex than before (Houy, Fettke & Loos, 2010; Wipperfürth, 2005). The reality is that the relationships change with the organisations, with changing circumstances and with changes in the personnel in partnerships (Hung, 2007). There is no doubt that the larger organisations are becoming, the greater the number of stakeholders they need to deal with. Organisations that are operating within the brand linkages strategy have more stakeholders than the ones on single branding strategy. Therefore, communication between, and among relational business partners, is complex.

Coombs (2000) concurs with other scholars that managing stakeholders is becoming increasingly complex. He introduces the notion of conceptualisation which is considered to incorporate three perspectives: the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders, the organisational legitimacy, and the causal
 attribution. For him, the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders is determined by a structural and a temporal dimension. The structural dimension entails the interdependence that characterises the relationship between an organisation that needs resources from the macro system in order to survive and the stakeholders who need the products or the services that the former provides them with. Thus, Coombs (2000) discusses the temporal dimension as the notion of relational history by which he understands the actions taken by the organisation in the past that are perceived by stakeholders as defining the values and characteristics of the organisation. Therefore, this complexity contributes to some form of crisis. A crisis is now regarded as an unpredictable event, a relational damage or a phase in the ongoing relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders. However, Coombs (2000) further admits the relational volatility and the fact that relationships may not progress and grow, rather they can fail; most ominously, he lacked to acknowledge the role played by new media and its multifaceted communication exchanges that have amplified the stakeholder relationships.

For that reason, it is a matter of concern that Pratt (2009) also suggests that for firms to relate with stakeholders, adoption of communitarianism and other mentioned elements; community engagement, mutuality of interests, common good, commerce and citizenship is required. In this case, unifying with community residents should be sought out and its citizenship, which cannot be creatively achieved anyhow, but through setting up of exemplary behavior in telling the truth, engaging in a struggle for equitable social order as well as embracing the ethical norms of human dignity (Pratt, 2009:852). The contrast behaviour is set by the Shell company (in Nigeria’s Niger Delta) example. When Shell oil treated the Ogoni peoples’ homeland with insular, arrogance, inward-looking, defensive and no communication, it impacted negatively with its linked parent brand in Britain (Pratt, 2009). Thus, Pratt (2009:856) advances that at organisational level “… the interplay of three dimensions: visibility, that is, how prominent a corporation is in a community, valence, that is, the tone in which or the extent to which, a corporation is perceived (or portrayed) in a generally positive and negative light and public salience, that is perceived (or portrayed) as relating directly to the common good of (all) stakeholders”.
Another attempt to reduce the complex nature of stakeholder relationship management is drawn from the various criticisms and suggestions made by Fassin (2009). The author proposes a refined stakeholder model called the stake model. This stake model introduced the new concepts of stakewatchers (mainly pressure groups) and stakekeepers (largely regulators) to help in clarification (Fassin, 2009). Specifically, Fassin (2009:127) argues that “this view better reflects the distinct activities of stakeholders in one of three groups: the stakeholder who holds a stake, the stakewatcher who watches the stake and the stakekeeper who keeps the stake”.

Apart from the above mentioned models, the stakeholder model, which dates back to Freeman (1984), is used again to identify the stakeholders by their relationship to the organisation: functional linkages (for example, suppliers provide raw materials while customers receive a company’s output), enabling linkages (investors and a favourable regulatory climate make business possible), normative linkages (industry groups and competitors influence the business environment), and diffused linkages (non-governmental organisations and media also can have a strong influence, even without a well-defined connection) (Rawlins, 2006).

As scholars criticized Freeman’s theory for not clarifying who is a stakeholder and who is not (Rawlins, 2006), Grunig and Repper (1992:128) incorporate the view that there has to be a differentiation between the terms “stakeholder” and “public” in the following way: organisations choose stakeholders by their marketing strategies, recruiting, and investment plans, but “publics arise on their own and choose the organisation for attention”. In addition, “publics form when stakeholders recognize one or more of the consequences (of the behaviour of the organisation) as a problem and organize to do something about it or them” (Tench & Yeomans, 2006:241). For example, employees, customers, shareholders, communities and suppliers are those most commonly classified as stakeholders within an organisation whilst publics can be employees, shareholders, political leaders and consumers. These publics are often segmented even further by demographics, geographies, or psychographics (Rawlins, 2006). Greenwood (2001) claims that the capacity of an organisation to ensure sustainable shareholders’ wealth is subject to the ways it deals with its relationship with crucial stakeholders. In other words, the stakeholder relationships
are only significant if these linkages are positively sustained. This is contrary to Davenport (2000), Ford (1990) and Pratt (2009) who contend that the organisation should relate to all stakeholders’ common good.

Adding to the stakeholder relationships complexity is the existence of the twin phenomena of the ethical consumer and the ethical investor (Creamer, 2007; Tustin & De Jongh, 2008; Van Jaarsveld, 2010; Yoon, 2011). These stakeholders select from the myriad of available goods and services and investments those which give them the greatest moral satisfaction (William et al., 2011). In their subjective judgment of reality, they may prefer to go against verbal or nonverbal communicated messages associated to any organisation at any given time (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). Surprisingly, some get professional advice, from ethical investment funds, but many more take their information from pressure groups, through the Internet and from each other (William et al., 2011). Therefore, there is a need for rigorous theoretical inspection with good empirical testing (Romaniuk, Sharp & Ehrenberg, 2007:43) since “science progresses not through consensus and the accumulation of conventional wisdom, but through competitive inquiry, questioning and testing”.

Thus, this study cannot ignore the four major gaps identified by Macnamara (2010:16) in public relations texts and reference books. First, despite a decade of increasing critical thinking, many public relations texts remain predominantly Western, grounded in positivism, functionalism, and systems theory, and dominated by US-centric theories and models of practice. Second, many public relations texts are largely devoid of critical analysis. Third, they are severely lacking in theoretical and practical engagement with social media. Fourth, research is mostly segregated as an “add on” rather than integrated into practices and activities. These gaps indicate a challenge for contemporary studies in stakeholder theory and for this reason this study attempts to provide a theoretical and practical engagement with social media within an African context. It will attempt to integrate the practices and activities related to stakeholders’ relationship rather than the usual add on. However, all the theory was discussed but not operationalised as it is very complex.
Putting all of this together, Westphalen (2004) agrees with Rawlins (2006) in that by communication of inherited values, an organisation gives sense to its economic activities. However, Luoma-aho and Paloviita (2010) criticise the stakeholder theory for assuming that the environment is static. The authors suggest that today’s organisation’s environment is marked by conflict of interest and the dynamic nature of its ecosystem has not been fully addressed. In today’s business, corporate social responsibility has become a more competitive advantage tool for many companies and at the same time less profitable (Macnamara, 2010). Hence, other brands take a more proactive role, with some building their clean, green image into their brands. Coca-Cola and Pepsi both carry the recycling emblem on their cans.

In particular, the Fortune 500 Reputation survey by Waddock and Graves (in Sadler, 2003:55) identifies links between positive stakeholder relationships, especially with employees, customers and communities, which results in good financial performance. As such, Merz, He and Vargo (2009) indicate that these groups have decisive influence on organisational welfare. Their suggestion is communication by a 360° radar, supporting that stakeholder orientation represents value and needs special skills of both marketers and communicators in providing important tangible contributions by improved relationships. Organisations are not acting in a vacuum, but are part of their direct and indirect changing environment, which is considered as further evidence that departmental barriers have become an obstacle for maximised performance (Pratt, 2009). Although developing positive relationships with stakeholders is a necessity for organisations, this is profoundly interrupted by consequences of the changing market place (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010).

2.3.2 Extent of the market place: A consequence to stakeholder relationships

The idea that a brand (company)’s own success partly depends on the performance of its surrounding ecosystem – the network of firms, institutions and stakeholders with which it interacts – is by no means new. Acknowledging the changing nature of the contemporary market place and the consequences behind it are the factors that affect the decision of both academics and marketing communication practitioners. Much attention within the academic and the practitioner communities in recent years
has been paid to issues concerning the phenomena of deregulation, emerging markets, consumer sovereignty and increasing consumers’ tastes and choices, which are all affecting development and deployment of the brand linkage strategies (Bosman, 2010; Lawer & Knox, 2006) and brand relationships. The experience of the new market shows that there are still clusters of values which promise a unique experience, but they also challenge traditional market norms (De Chernatony, 2006; Kim & Sriramesh, 2009). Such knowledge suggests that they do this either through radical ideas which innovatively redeploy organisations' communicated message within a unique business system (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Kucuk, 2009).

Most of the research focuses on the consumers’ side, yet there is a need to also consider researching the intermediary’s perspective (for instance, the value of the brand linkage to the intermediary’s business and the value of a consumer to an intermediary). Particularly, many channels (brand linkages) either intentionally (or unintentionally) may alter the original message and hence, affect the brand relationship at consumer level. The study by Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister and Srivastava (2006) expands on this description through a review on how the brand perception and customer ratings have been conceptualised. They offer a model on how the concepts can be linked, from the perspective of the producer and from the perspective of the intermediary. On this note, De Chernatony (2006) postulates that the brand (linkage) succeeds when internal and external stakeholders’ factors are addressed. Many successful firms no longer use traditional marketing techniques because they are no longer enough to keep up with the ever changing competitive market. “Behind each of these successes is a complex orchestration of activities that only appears inconsequential” (Wipperfürth, 2005:4). This is not just created through a dyadic relationship, be it between the linked brands and the consumer, “but is a multifarious (diverse) construct that is affected by, or is the sum of, a gamut of relationships” (Jones, 2008:43). As such, relevant organisational cultures help in building up effective brand relationships. The challenge is based on whether the organisations walk the talk by turning promises into practice. A drift from this integrity would spell danger on a linked organisation’s reputation and consumers will distance themselves from the brand (on its own) and its linkage partners.
Concurrently, De Chernatony (2000), Grönroos (2011), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000), and Vargo and Lusch (2010) argue that value is embedded in the co-creation process between the customer and the supplier, where the customer shifts from being a passive audience to an active player. In this case, focusing on the consumer's side and neglecting the intermediary linked brands would rob a company of all the implications that are based on other partnerships. As a result of the co-creation, there is an indication that the focus of scholars changed over time, for example, it turned to be cultural or context focus (discussed in earlier sections). In this regard, the prevalence of interactive media such as the Internet message boards and emails not only provide the linked brand(s) with the channels to reach the consumer, but more for the consumer and other stakeholders to communicate with the brands (Glynn & Woodside, 2009; McDonald, 2011). A new survey by Igniyte (2014) reveals that 75% of businesses believe negative content online is now their number one business worry. British companies lose an average of nearly £47,000 a year because of negative online content, which has become the top commercial concern for 75% of United Kingdom firms questioned in a new survey. Negative comment posted by competitors is considered to be the most damaging (43%), closely followed by malicious postings from disgruntled former employees (42%) and poor reviews (41%), but nearly a third (30%) also feel their online reputation has been damaged by current staff (Igniyte, 2014).

Over time, this current market matrix is a two-way interactive relationship and communication has become even much robust and more inexorable (Bosman, 2010; Jevons et al., 2002). Hence, Bjerre, Heding and Knudtzen (2008) propose that these technologically driven market changes often imply a need for the development of theoretical frameworks because new phenomena arise that cannot be explained by means of the existing theories. A need for new theoretical tools to explain new phenomena is the driver behind the two latest approaches (cultural and community perspectives). For this reason, Bjerre, Heding and Knudtzen (2008) further argue that technological and cultural changes have fundamentally changed the rules of the game in brand relationship management, similarly to stakeholder relationships. Therefore, cultural and contextual influences from the period 2000 and beyond add new perspectives to the brand (linkage) and relationships they have with customers.
In addition, this evolution has become a necessity for understanding and managing brand relationships which is affected by the brand linkage, especially because the Internet has pervasively changed the market place. Accordingly, in the community approach, practitioners in branding and marketing deal with various groups of empowered consumers who are able to collectively influence actions and take it into a direction contrary to the practitioners' intention (Bester, 1999; Bjerre et al., 2008). For example, new media is person-to-person, mass-to-mass, flexible (turnaround in minutes), has enormous potential reach, is inexpensive and interactive. In contrast, old or traditional media is expensive, one-way message communication with impersonal and inflexible attributes (Jevons et al., 2002). This means that the discipline of brand linkage and brand relationships has come a long way from the assumptions of linear communication behind the earlier approaches to accepting the chaotic autonomous consumer forces in this approach (Jevons et al., 2002). Thus, the cybernetic theory of relationships (Roiniotis, 2008) argues that it is impossible to stop interpersonal communication from happening because “communication is a form of behaviour, and since behaviour has no opposite ("nonbehaviour" does not exist), communication has no opposite” (Roiniotis, 2008:1). Even beyond the subconscious there is communication. Therefore, everything a member (employee) of the firms within a brand linkage partnership does can be considered a form of communication, even that of doing nothing.

In sum, it is of utmost significance for the firm to reinvent its process of brand relationship to better meet the requirements of the changing nature of the market place. Therefore, a more in depth review of brand linkages in the literature to clarify definitions is worthwhile.

### 2.3.3 Brand linkages in the literature

Brand linkage entails the business concept that the experience of two or more linked brands (Ferrari and Shell, Bacardi and Coke, Danone and Motta introduced Yolka, Dell and Intel) by customers should be associated (intentionally or unintentionally) somehow to the experience of a brand relationship in order to grow the business. Intentional cooperation in joint ventures are usually optimal when the magnitude of
contingencies facing a potential relationship. As such formal writing detailed performance contracts or service agreements between the parties would be impractically complex. Brand linkages, in the comprehensive sense, can be defined to include all instances where two or more linked brand names are presented jointly to the consumer (such as the Shell V-Power-Ferrari). It is a form of brand alliance. Although the concept of brand linkages and brand relationships is not new, the processes used in managing brand relationships are not fully explored (De Chernatony, 2009; Heding et al., 2009).

The uniqueness of a brand that is linked protects it from being duplicated. Thus, the organisation which focuses on its emotional (intangible) processes has better chances of surviving (Schmitt, 2012). However, there are several factors that shape the single brand strategy, but all may be summed up by the term brand linkages characteristics (discussed in chapter 3). An example from the retail industry indicates that some brands are ‘created’ through linkages, that is, small fashion brands being sold by high profile retailers like Harvey Nichols, Sachs Fifth Avenue or Liberty of London. At some point, they may then leverage this status to ‘branch-out’. Many iconic brands such as Calvin Klein were created by Bloomingdales this way. In 2003, Calvin Klein was purchased by Philips-Van Heusen, parent company to brands such as Izod, Tommy Hilfiger, Bass and Geoffrey Beene. Because Philips-Van Heusen (PVH) was already a well established company known for ownership of many successful brands, it was able to increase the price point of Calvin Klein products, improve the brand image, and create new competition for the brand. Bluemercury joined Macy’s, Inc. through acquisition in March 2015. With about 62 specialty stores in 18 states and online at bluemercury.com, Bluemercury was founded in 1999 and is widely recognized as the American’s largest and fastest-growing luxury beauty products and spa retail chain. In line with this thinking, linked brands employ symbols and slogans and the aim of this is to create lasting associations (linkages) in the minds of those who come across them. Hence, the Shell V-Power-Ferrari is a slogan for this brand linkage. This implies that the brand linkage is not about customers, but more to do with stakeholders as a whole.
2.3.4 Stakeholder not customer

Scholars agree that a one stakeholder (customer) focused brand strategy concept is outdated (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2004; Doyle, 2000; Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010; Pratt, 2009; Roper & Davies, 2007; William, Werther & Chandler, 2011; Wolfe & Patler, 2002). Jones (2008) proposes that brand relationships management among all stakeholders has become the crucial task on which companies’ competitive advantage stands or falls. The success of Acer Laptop and the Ferrari F1 team combined to present the stylish Acer-Ferrari Laptops, is one example of this (Acer, 2010). There is a need to focus on all stakeholders to have a successful brand relationship (Wolfe & Patler, 2002). The reason is that what could have been seen as a mark of success yesterday may be seen as a waste or a lack of depth consciousness in the future of any brand relationship. For instance, Pick n Pay and Nedbank’s Go Banking was one of the first well-communicated brand linkage ventures in six years (2002-2008). However, it failed to attract a lot of customers because Nedbank's customer base of about 90 000 clients was not enough to sustain it as a separate business. Hence, satisfying the interests of various stakeholder groups has recently attracted scholars’ interest.

Further, including all stakeholders presents different responsibilities to the marketing and communication practitioners. These responsibilities need to suit the present sophisticated and complex marketing environment. Besides, in the face of these sophisticated and cluttered market conditions, firms try to be heard (Clow & Baack, 2010). Other brands limit themselves to an inter-sectorial brand linkage strategy such as the case of Tiger Wheel & Tire and Hollard Insurance (tire insurance), Shoprite and Capitec Bank (money transfers), Edcon and FNB (home loans), Pep Stores and Nedbank (Pep Bank), Woolworths and Auto & General (car and home insurance). The complexity in the current market environment has been discussed by Clow and Baack (2010) who have identified the elements which characterise the new complexity of market environment which triggered this shift (covered in later sections on Stakeholder brand value 2.4.1). In essence, these elements help in the understanding of brand linkage and brand relationship in the contemporary market. Consequently, positive and negative images transfer between brands during
sponsorship brand linkage (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008) and this transfer process is highly effective in sport marketing due to the emotional orientation of sport consumption (Westberg & Wilson, 2011). For example, Westberg and Wilson (2011) acknowledge that linkages are crucial for brand relationship because negative incidents involving athletes representing the sport entity may also threaten the linked brands of both the sport and sponsor and can weaken or even dissolve the partnership.

The Tiger Woods adultery scandal is a typical example of a sport celebrity sponsorship whose popularity with fans and value to sponsors rested in no small way on his trustworthiness, integrity and honesty (Xenophon Strategies, 2009). Regarded as a brand, the golfer’s extramarital affairs with several women were made public during November 2009. After extensive media scrutiny of the golfer’s transgressions, his sponsors reacted differently from each other. Responses ranged from continuous support on one end of the continuum to total cut-off of the sponsorship relationship on the other. Sponsor organisations such as Gatorade, AT&T, Accenture, and Gillette distanced themselves immediately from the golfer, while Nike and EA Sports have continued to support him. It cost the rest of the golf industry a loss of $6.2 million. As such, the management of these experiences is seen as crucial in protecting the sport entity’s linked brand perception, as well as the sponsor’s brand, and ultimately the brand relationship (Westberg & Wilson, 2011). What then is the role of strategic communication within the stakeholder context?

2.4 Strategic communication and stakeholder concept

Under the new function of strategic communication, merging of both marketing and communication or public relations which usually operate separately is enhanced (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:179; Oestreicher, 2009). Often, within an enterprise’s business organisation, corporate communication is frequently split between the functions marketing and communication (Oestreicher, 2009). The differentiation is between market and non-market-related communication. A major focus on stakeholder communication was given to stakeholders, in particular communication, including public relations, is communication in a non-market context; while
marketing, including marketing communication, is a firm’s communication with all market participants on business and consumer levels (Oestreicher, 2009:2). Consequently, Hofmeyr and Parton (2006:8) suggest that “the challenge of brand value creation” can be divided into two components. First, there is “the communications challenge”; that is, in this case the challenges of shaping what people believe about the linked brands. Second, there is “the sales challenge”; meaning, the challenge of pulling marketing levers that will help sell linked brands. In other words, the first is about “what gets into the mind” while the second is about “what people do with what gets in”. Therefore, it is concluded that for the sake of a strategy-focused organisation, departmental restrictions diminish while appropriate configuration of resources and capabilities to meet demanding markets and to fulfill stakeholder expectations is now the priority (Jonhson, Scholes & Whittington, 2009; Oestreinsher, 2009).

Wide acceptance exists that it takes strategic communication to create a conceived linkage between the brands and its allies - the stakeholders. For example, The Art of Shaving designed the Fusion Chrome Collection (FCC), which is only compatible with Gillette blade cartridges. The power razor is the centerpiece of this partnership based on the FCC as its strategic communication strategy. As shown, there is evidence that within these organisations resulting synergies and cost-effectiveness of both marketing and communication contributes to their objectives, and support organisational progress, and value creation by closer collaboration and by stronger strategic direction concerning brand relationships (Oestreinsher, 2009). Smith and Zook (2011:2) state that “Marketing communications has inevitably changed forever with the advent of social media, crowd sourcing, changing media consumption and hyper competition”. Nonetheless, brand relationships are communication motivated both verbal and non-verbal. Thus, an analysis of brand communication in a two-way communication context that provides insight to these relationships. To the contrary, historically, companies have used different media to get their word out.

While a two-way communication deliberately involves not only asking questions on how communication strategy effectively reaches the customers but, rather more on how the customers reach the company (Evans & McKee, 2010). This is what
Overton-de Klerk and Oelofse (2010:391) call “dialogue and bottom-up communication with stakeholders”. Multiple roles in responding to strategic communications from both the stakeholders’ and organisation’s points of view are necessitated by the relationship between brand linkage and brand perception, the stakeholder brand value or equity. Therefore, the implications of strategic brand communication and stakeholder theory in a contemporary business environment are subsumed under three non-discrete elements of the brand relationship quality communication. These are stakeholder brand value, stakeholder-brand relationships and corporate social responsibility or corporate social performance (CSR/CSP).

2.4.1 Stakeholders’ brand value

The key role of branding is to differentiate the firm’s offer as evaluated by target stakeholders (consumers) with respect to competing offerings. This differentiation is perceived as distinctiveness. All great brand linkages are built on a bedrock of trust derived from customers’ experiences of purchasing and using products and services sold under the linked brand name. The resulting brand perception is then reinforced by excellent branding, usually playing a supporting role. It is envisaged that brand linkage considers the role of stakeholder relationships as instituted by branding formation, and brand perception considers the assessment of the brand linkage that is created through these relationships over time. Equally, Van Auken (2003:6) defines brand equity as the commercial value of all associations and expectations (positive and negative) that people have of an organisation and its products and services due to all experiences of, strategic communications with, and perceptions of the brand over time. For this reason, brand equity in this study is the outcome that accrues to a brand linkage measured through consumers’ experiences and perceptions.

When the brand linkage failure occurs, the partnering brands can risk alienating their stakeholders or consumers for failing to live up to a promise of value (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). Value then, entails both how much a linked brand experience is worth to a stakeholder (consumer) and what they expect of that linked brand. For example, Nike’s Swoosh. What happens when Nike and Apple brought music and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authenticity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existential- Intrapersonal and interpersonal or social</td>
<td>driven by and coincides with postmodern consumers’ quest for pleasure and fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>comes in the form of care, sincerity, and feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iconic</td>
<td>accurate reproduction of the original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential</td>
<td>is not consequential or without meaning, exerting influence on other entities, calling human beings to a higher goal and predicting a better way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>exists in the natural state, untouched by human hands; not artificial or synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original</td>
<td>imaginative, creative, or innovative in design: the first of its kind; not mimicked or copied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referential</td>
<td>experiential, or indexical authenticity … refers to or draws inspiration from some spatio-temporal connection to history</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staged</td>
<td>is based on an object’s degree of originality or an individual’s personal experience of originality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>allows for different interpretations of reality on the basis of consumers’ projections onto objects and is essentially symbolic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Molleda, 2009:93-94)
shoes to talk to an iPod? The sports kit may be perceived as providing brand relationship quality and at the same time entertain fans through a technologically advanced linked product. Similarly, Intel owes some of its strength to its Intel Inside ingredient brand linkage campaign, but more to its products' price performance, its strategic linkage with Microsoft and its dominance standards. Thus, there is dissimilarly in consumers' thoughts and feelings across culture or context that affects linked brands' value. Along this line, ten types of perceived authenticity genres from a strategic communication perspective have been suggested (see Table 2:1 - Molleda, 2009:93-94).

The agenda of strategic communication is purposive communication (Hallahan et al., 2007) endeavoured within a linked organisation’s permanent struggle for survival (Oestreinsher, 2009). Hence, Keller (2003b) posits that the firm's marketing communications contribute to brand equity. As mentioned earlier, brand linkage is the existing business concept that the experience of two or more linked brands (MasterCard and Virgin) by customers should be associated (intentionally or unintentionally) somehow to the experience of brand relationships in order to grow the business. Unfortunately, if the brand linkage is negatively experienced, a brand relationship is likely to harm the constituent businesses. This definition is not limited to controlled communication, but adds a multitude of participants into the communication process. Nevertheless, failures of linked brands and its message occur even in well-known brands. This outcome results when the message is not related to the linked brands' value. Assessing the value of a linked brand from a pure customer's perspective is necessary, yet not sufficient to assess the value of an entire brand relationship. Hence, an unwelcome brand linkage from the point of view of various stakeholders may create low brand equity in spite of some welcome attributes or sub-functions of the linked brands (Aaker, 2011).

For instance, the fatal incident encountered by the formerly GM owned SUV cult brand Hummer which had launched a mobile phone with a company named ‘Fly’. The product was, for lack of a better phrase, inadequate. Where the Hummer brand stood for rugged looks and go-anywhere attitude, the Fly Hummer phone stood for neither. The phone was perceived by the market as flimsy and basic, whereas the
Hummer brand stood for the opposite. The brand linkage was a failure where even Hummer car owners were also turned off by the entire exercise. It is therefore crucial for the communication practitioners to understand distinctiveness in their stakeholders regarding success in brand linkages.

2.4.1.1 Distinctiveness of the stakeholders and the linked brands

This also indicates that in the 21st century, the creation of value for companies increasingly depends on intangible assets such as knowledge, systems, data, intellectual property, brand (linkages) and marketing relationships (Ambler, Barwise & Higson, 2001; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009). All organisations have a range of stakeholders, but Friedman and Miles (2006) suggest that some are more significant than others. However, this statement is debatable in today’s market because consumers are leveraging the experiences of others, before they actually make a purchase themselves (Evans & McKee, 2010).

Brand linkages are an organisation’s distinct touch points. For example, formal arrangements include joint promotions, co-branding, alliances, and joint ventures (Baker & Saren, 2010). Some of the long term brand friendships side by side like Wimpy and Engen are often an established sort of mutual efforts co-branding. McDonalds and Coke, McDonalds and Disney, Shoprite and Computicket, KFC and Cadburys, Room Most typically associated with Coffees and Russell Hobbs. Significantly, sponsorship is increasingly the most used method for co-branding brand linkage. One aspect that is very complex is the extension of one brand within a co-branding brand linkage arrangement. For instance, Shell and Ferrari have a long history of working together in their brand linkage sponsorship of Formula 1. This has indeed been attributed to be changing consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour (plays an important role) has changed markedly over recent years (Overton-de Klerk, 2010). Such changes have been driven by two major factors namely, the digital revolution and the economic downturn. The emergence of new media, a phenomenon called “collaboration economy” has resulted (Verwey & Muir, 2012:2). It amplified the consumers’ collaboration and co-creation position in
the marketplace (Verwey & Muir, 2012). However, in such a febrile environment, linked brands have found it hard to build value with a top-down and one-way communication method. There is a great sense of empowerment and entitlement so that commercial messages have to negotiate the interaction and economic trends due to massive pressure exerted on brand linkages. Debate that exists is on whether there is a distinction made between consumer and industrial brand linkages. Kuhn, Alpert and Pope (2008) however, argue that what makes a brand linkage valuable in a business to business context will differ from that in a consumer environment. This has long been an issue correctly or incorrectly that has dogged contemporary businesses. Is the recommendation of value based on the needs of the customer, the incentive offered by the product’s manufacturer or retailer underwriter, or some combination? From the consumer’s perspective, the difference is everything. In particular, although not yet researched, strong linked brands’ high equity may include: Ford and Eddie Bauer which partnered to create the Ford Explorer Eddie Bauer Edition, which translated the lifestyle connection between the two companies into a premium product offering for Ford. NutraSweet used its partnerships with Coke and Pepsi to signal product quality to consumers who were initially concerned with the sweetener’s safety. Therefore, high brand relationship quality coined by Fournier (1998a) can be attained in such a brand linkage plan but it may not last long.

Moreover, exchange of meanings and experiences will result in stakeholders forming brand relationships that are either close or distant (Jevons et al., 2002). Thus, establishing and upholding relationships could be a source of long complex processes. Attention is given to the experience and learning of stakeholders which creates linkage and added value. This framework is adopted from the work of Bitner (1995) and Grönroos (2011) about the way service value is delivered as promises. Importantly, the framework allows the stakeholder (customer), employee and organisational values and impressions of the service brand to depend on each other. In addition, the framework proposes (Brodie, Glynn & Little, 2006) three types of marketing that influence these perceptions: First, external marketing: communication between the organisation and its customers and stakeholders making promises about services offer. Second, interactive marketing: interactions between people working within the organisation or network and end-customers that create the
services offer. Third, internal marketing: the resources and processes enabling and facilitating promises about the service offer involving the organisation and people working in the organisation. The premises framework extends that a network takes into account the perceptions of other stakeholders (for example, the retailers, media and government regulators and value-added brand linkages). This framework suggests a broad context to examine the impact of the brand environment on brand relationship (Brodie, Glynn & Little, 2006). As the additional value that comes from the network of other stakeholders’ relationships, determining the effects of a network of such stakeholder relationships lies in many factors that are then discussed in the following section.

There are many stakeholders, but the study focuses on consumers. As already mentioned, in the stakeholder theory studied by Oestreicher (2009), the stakeholder concept also consists of various groups which have been identified as having different power, legitimacy and urgency. The author proposes that the involvement in organisational processes and activities needs to be differentiated and that communication is group-dependent, since stakeholders’ influence on and interest in organisational outcomes is ultimately different. Furthermore, organisational (linked ones) interests and those of the different stakeholder groups may vary or even be in contradiction needing a moderation process to achieve a mutually beneficial balance (Oestreicher, 2009).

The structure of stakeholder brand relationship and brand equity framework varies in interesting ways as functions of the brand gain contextual meaning across the business to business, business to consumer and consumer to consumer relationships. Competition in today’s linked business environment is becoming increasingly intense. Threats come from a multitude of sources which defy geographical, market sector, and technology. Overnight a turbulent business environment of competitiveness can collapse. Stakeholder theory has been criticised for assuming the environment is static. Hence, the same threatening sources can as well act as opportunities for a linked business’s competitive advantage. These indicate that the linked entity is now trapped between the marketing world and consumer-social world.
2.4.1.2 Demographic shifts redefine participation

There is a growing concern on how best marketing communication practitioners are able to break into a cluttered environment which has been dulled by the ever-growing permissiveness of contemporary societies (Evans & McKee, 2010; Fioroni & Titterton, 2009:9). Factors related to age and gender have profound implications for the future of the linked businesses. Trendwatching (2014, March 17) shows that new nondemographic ways of segmenting markets (that is value, needs, style, convenience, attitude and purpose) are replacing traditional demographic segments. Traditional demographic methods of market segmentation do not usually provide this knowledge. Analyses of market segments by age, sex, geography, and income level are not likely to provide much direction for marketing strategy. These traditional demographic segmentations are becoming less useful as consumers are diverse and unpredictable with growing choice and freedom. For example, as young children are developing their gender identities, they are flooded with advertisements for products promoting gender stereotypes from an early age of 12 (Linn, 2008:175) while most adults are not admitting to grow old at an earlier age (Clow & Baack, 2010). Particularly, it was a very sensitive issue before technology invaded the privacy of sex norms. Interestingly, increased exposure to the Internet has led to changes in the culture. Exposure to sexual appeals at a tender age is now a way of life in this connected “post-Personal Computer” world. Although too many of these appeals can offend or influence customers negatively, preference to them is increasingly gaining momentum as a shock campaign strategy (Clow & Baack, 2010). This implies that children are now contributing towards brand relationships with their fast ability to make decisions. This is the case in Canada where a staggering 63% of people consult peers online before making a purchase (Leger Marketing, 2009), this is not always a good thing for the linked brands especially when user generated content is negative, because it can have harmful implications.

The traditional roles and interests and lifestyles of men and women are becoming blurred. Their past responsibilities were clear and in most cases inflexible (Clow & Baack, 2010). For example, Clow and Baack (2010) claim that women increasingly enter previously male-dominated occupations whereas, men work in occupations
that were once considered only for women. Education has transformed the gender factors as many women attend college, delay marriage and wait to start families in pursuit of their careers (Clow & Baack, 2010; Fioroni & Titterton, 2009:9). Again, men play an active role in parenting and grocery shopping while women are shopping for cars (Clow & Baack, 2010). The stakeholder relationships consist of “interactive, mutually engaged and responsive relationships that establish the very context of doing modern business, and create the groundwork for transparency and accountability” (Andriof, Waddock, Husted & Rahman, 2002:9). A classic example is the case of Foschini’s family brand linkage which recently faced feminist boycott campaigns after displaying sexist T-shirts perceived as comparing women to sex objects.

2.4.1.3 Individualism

Customers play a more active role in co-production of products (O’Hern & Rindfleisch, 2009). However, the process of co-production is that “successful innovation rests on first understanding (individual) customer needs and then developing products to meet those needs” (Hauser, Tellis & Griffin, 2006:3). Within a single country or region not all consumers are the same. The sociopolitical economic factors determine how people respond to a brand linkage. As this adds to complexity of brand linkages, any investigation of brand linkage perceptions and attitudes must take this difference into account including the communications strategy and the channels that are used. An excellent understanding is vital because people’s response varies depending on their values, attitudes, life experience, socioeconomic status and knowledge of the brand linkage in question (Brown, 2010). In other words, some consumers may prefer that the linked companies develop products just for them. For example, to meet this demand, Nike and Apple allow consumers to design their own shoes using the linked companies’ website (NikeID permits a consumer to design and order their own sports shoes online). Similarly, Levi’s Strauss (linked with Opening Ceremony) allows for personalised jeans, custom-made o fit their exact measurements given by consumers over the Internet (Barney & Hesterly, 2008). Many car sites allow users to “build” the car of their choice (Fiat, Mini). Similarly, General Motors and Ford have programs that allow customers to specify the
configuration of their cars of choice (Agrawal, Arjona & Lemmens, 2001).

Given the difficulties, the Internet has introduced the decline of traditional journalism and increasing financial pressures further contribute to the importance of individual opinions and rumours, as fact-checking and investigative journalism become things of the past, and real-time reporting is becoming the norm (Miel & Faris, 2008). “Controversy and airing of emotions make for interesting stories, and collect much attention” (Luoma-aho, 2010:2), for the linked organisations in a contemporary market, this opens up a new threat as search engines dig up stakeholder outbursts even from days past. In particular, Dell, Apple and AT&T apologised, a strategic communication move which was meant to repair their brand linkages. Conversely, once the reputation of the linked organisation does not match its deeds, a negative perception and publicity risk is formed (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003; Grunig & Repper, 1992). Influencing the stakeholder opinions however, has become more difficult as new media enables various voices, publics have fractured and diverged in individual interest and the traditional (linked) business model of brokering attention is breaking down (Miel & Faris, 2008). Thus, digitalised production and the networking of linked organisations and consumers make it possible to create developed personal products. There may be no quick fix, instead the more products are tailored to individual needs, the greater customers’ appreciation and price acceptance will be (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). However, a backlash could happen at any time.

2.4.1.4 Active-busy lifestyles

In addition to the demographic shifts, and individualism, factors relating to active-busy lifestyles also affect the stakeholder brand relationship and brand value (Clow & Baack, 2010; Fournier, 1998b). Technology has increased work pressures, styles, times and preferences are changing so rapidly, that a linked company must be able to meet the needs of its customers (Fioroni & Titterton, 2009:10). Clow and Baack (2010) claim that many consumers now focus less on material possession and more on experience such as vacations, entertainment and events with friends and family. Some people handle the stress caused by a busy lifestyle through the pursuit of pleasure. This is accompanied by occasional indulgences or pressure binges such
as expensive dinners out and smaller luxury purchases. The implications for a marketing expert are to note the indulgence aspect of products. It signifies that time is a scarce resource in a stressed everyday life, which causes customers’ impatience towards commercial messages.

Furthermore, time pressure accounts for increase in sales of convenience items, such as microwave ovens, drive-through, dry cleaning establishments and one-stop shopping outlets, most notably Wal-Marts or Mass-Mart super centers. Moreover, the demand for convenience continues to increase while activism on good health may affect the brand linkages. For example, the McDonalds (with McCafe) brand was once implicated as the cause of heart disease and obesity. The National Secondary Student's Diet and Activity (NaSSDA) survey 2009-10 reveals excessive levels of overweight and obesity among students, inadequate rates of physical activity, insufficient fruit and vegetable intake and a high proportion of students making food choices based on advertising as a chronic disease time-bomb. Consequently, the participation of 12,000 students from year levels 8 to 11 across 237 schools in Australia confirms that more than half of these children had tried a food or drink because they had seen it advertised, while roughly a fifth had bought a food or drink because it was endorsed by a sports star or celebrity. For this reason, linked companies are called to practice good morals (Bowman, Gortmaker, Ebbeling, Pereira & Ludwig, 2004).

2.4.2 Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder-brand relationship

Corporate social responsibility or corporate social performance (CSR/CSP) is one of the growing concerns that inevitably bring success to the contemporary linked brands. It is critical, then that contemporary linked brands communicate with their stakeholders about their commitment to business ethical values, all stakeholders and to the global environment (Pratt, 2009). Mossmann (2010) argues that the question of whether private businesses have a positive or negative impact on society is one that dates back to the period when private businesses were first established in the 16th and 17th century, at the onset of modern capitalism. It was focusing on discovering business opportunities through partnerships. However, the abrupt rise of
different brand linkages brings different changes often witnessed in dealing with stakeholders’ relationships. Surprisingly, the presence of various stakeholders makes it difficult to define CSR (Mossmann, 2010). Also, with the globalisation of the economy, issues such as environmental degradation and violations of human rights are adding new meanings to the concept of CSR or CSP.

In addition, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has only recently risen to prominence causing many linked companies to integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006; Reinhardt & Stavins, 2010). A number of reports perceive the “CSR movement as an increasingly significant dimension of neo-liberal market discipline and the culture of late capitalism and postmodernity” (Aaronson, 2003; Cutler, 2007:208). CSR encourages a vision of business accountability to a wide range of stakeholders, besides shareholders and investors (Pratt, 2009). Key areas of concern are environmental protection and the wellbeing of employees, the community and civil society in general, both now and in the future.

The concept CSR is underpinned by the idea that linked corporations can no act as isolated economic entities operating in detachment from broader society (King & Lessidrenskia, 2009; William et al., 2011). Stakeholder activists, from investors to customers to employees, demand corporate disclosure about their ethics. The South African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA) leading specialists in consumer surveys have shown practitioners giving emphasis to professionalism and humanity in a technological driven economy. Thus, Hollis (2011:12) cautions that “but laudable though these initiatives are their ultimate objective is to grow sales. And unfettered sales growth is tough to reconcile with true sustainability. To be truly sustainable, growth should ‘meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs’”. "If practitioners are to live within their planet’s means, they need to recognise that sustainability is not just about reducing waste in the supply chain - it is also about preventing excessive consumption. And that could prove a much bigger challenge for business unless it changes its focus from sales growth to value growth” (Hollis, 2011:12). The crux is to adapt to rapid changes. Unfortunately, traditional views about competitiveness, survival and profitability are
being eroded as inequitable practices threaten the well-being of a linked organisation (Keller & Lehmann, 2006).

Maignan and Ferrell (2004:4) posit that social responsibility is “an organisation’s obligation to maximize its impact on stakeholders and minimize its negative impact”. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) propose that in the consumer realm, the CSR record of a company has a positive effect on a consumer’s evaluations of the company and their intent to purchase the company’s products. Several studies have supported this proposition (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Waddock & Smith, 2000). Those studies indicate that CSR initiatives are successful in generating returns to the linked company to the extent of fostering strong and enduring relationships with the stakeholders. Likewise, a stakeholder-centric model for understanding CSR was proposed by Bhattacharya, Korschun and Sen (2009). Their framework describes how CSR activity is perceived by individual stakeholders. In their framework, they note that CSR activity produces benefits for individual stakeholders, influences the relationship quality between the stakeholder and the company, and results in behavioral outcomes directed toward the company, the cause, and other stakeholders (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). The model also delineates key contingency factors which moderate these primary associations made by stakeholders.

Four classifications of social responsibility were suggested (compares with Oestreicher, 2009). These classifications are adopted as a strategic focus for fulfilling the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic (discretionary) social responsibilities that their stakeholders expect from organisations (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). For example, when a customer buys a Motorola Red phone, the company donates £10 (US$ 18.58) to the Global Fund, while 5% of every bill is donated by the phone carrier. Similarly, in South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Foundation’s affiliation with Vodacom now makes it possible for customers to make donations through a 46664 starter pack and every time they recharge, Vodacom will contribute a certain amount of money for social responsibility. Meanwhile, it is the participating linked brands that achieve a particular credibility among consumers simply by being in partnership with the former South African president’s funding organisation. This
partnering may help a brand gain a competitive advantage. It is a form of brand linkage that can enhance the for-profit organisation.

In reality, CSR is one area of great complexity on brand relationship. As a consequence, Kostova and Zaheer (1999) admit that questions of corporate social responsibility face higher levels of complexity than in the more homogeneous national context (Waddock, 2004). The case of Shell (linked with Ferrari) illustrates the dangers of grafting western moral values on to countries at a different stage of economic development. The $40m a year that Shell now spends on good causes in Nigeria might possibly have led to greater prosperity if it had been allowed to invest its core business, creating more permanent jobs through long term corporate social investment. Scherer and Palazzo (2007) suggest that CSR provide consumers with insight into a corporate value system. It also provides the knowledge of how and when CSR produce brand awareness of the corporate values. Furthermore, since many linked companies maintain multiple CSP initiatives simultaneously, it would be valuable to understand whether and how numerous initiatives are combined, if at all, into a single assessment of the organisation’s commitment to social responsibility.

Moreover, it is not clear how individuals determine which linked companies are referenced in these CSP initiatives. The question which needs to be asked is whether individual stakeholders only make brand associations within the industry of the focal linked company, or do they identify “peers” that they perceive to be similar in other industries? Ultimately, in order to have meaningful brand relationships through CSR activities, it would be important to understand how the factors on openness and transparency, despite the shrinking role of government, influence CSR.

2.4.2.1 The shrinking role of government: the rise of social entrepreneurship and social innovation

Over the last few decades governments have relied on legislation and regulation to deliver social and environmental objectives in the business sector (Williams & Aguilera, 2008). Shrinking government resources, coupled with a distrust of
regulations, has led to the exploration of voluntary and non-regulatory initiatives instead (Kaul, Conceição, Le Goulven & Mendoza, 2003). In other words, it is transformation and corporate social investment (TCSI). Advertising and communications professionals in South Africa are self-regulated, by the Association of Communication and Advertising (ACA) and the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASASA). The government recognises the authority of these industry self-funded bodies and the rules in its legislation. This implies organisational enlightened self-interest instrumental in empowering and creating opportunities for both its personnel and their dependent communities in order to address their self-defined needs as required by the Government laws. For instance, Woolworths was chosen as a finalist for the International Responsible Retailer of the year award at the 2012 World Retail Awards – an award they have won twice since the inception of the Good Business Journey programme (Woolworths Holdings, 2012). Woolworths spent R438 million in the year 2012 (Woolworths Holdings, 2012:32). At the same time, governments find it difficult to cope with the regulations of global linked business markets and this has caused a rise in ethical self-regulatory laws based on competitive environments. Social entrepreneurship and social innovation have garnered popularity because the state and the market cannot on their own solve major social issues (OECD, 2010:186). It means profit making organisations should have the balance of power and responsibility in implicit economies to gain trust in the market place.

Most linked businesses now penetrate beyond their local markets and for this reason different issues that accrue from multi-markets eventually affect their dealing from one market to another. For instance, the MTN South Africa versus MTN Iran markets. Even though there is a low demand for obeying governmental laws and regulations, the rise of civil law enforces rights and duties of individuals and organisations with criminal law (Walsh, Weber & Margolis, 2003). This, however, shows that the social responsibility due to the complexity and dynamic of conditions, law and the state apparatus are insufficient means for the integration of business activities with societal concerns. Hence, to some extent the ability of the nation-state to regulate business activities is diminishing (Habermas, 2001) and the linked
business organisations are moving into completely new roles or responsibilities (Matten & Crane, 2005).

Corporations have begun to engage in public health, education, social security, and protection of human rights while operating in countries with repressive regimes (Matten & Crane, 2005). For years companies carrying famous cigarette brands denied the harmful effects of tobacco to humans. Admittedly, after protests and debates which took a long time, national cigarette brands now carry the warning that cigarettes are harmful to people’s health. Similarly, major infant formula brands indicate that breast milk is the best milk for babies. In a way, this strategy removed some of the burden of litigation to companies, but similarly signifying that the brand is reflecting social responsibility. Also, they address social ills such as AIDS, malnutrition, homelessness, and illiteracy (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Hence, the linked organisations participate in self-regulation to fill global gaps in legal regulation and moral orientation (Leisinger, 2003; Scherer & Smid, 2000) and support societal peace and stability (Fort & Schipani, 2004). Precisely, companies like Eskom, the South African Petroleum Industry Association, Coca-Cola, Chevron, Standard Chartered Bank and DaimlerChrysler have all made public commitments to join the fight against HIV and AIDS, be it in the form of funding, sponsored events or products or disseminating anti-HIV/AIDS messages, they are all responding to the crippling pandemic in public health (Leisinger, 2003; Scherer & Smid, 2000). These were brand linkages formation showing more than two corporations engaging in activities beyond the passive tradition of CSR. In other words, the linked corporations are now obliged to go beyond stakeholder responsibilities as a result of the changing business environment.

In line with this thinking, social commitment is increasingly expected from linked companies, even in areas which are not directly related to their business (Matten & Crane, 2005). Although CSR has been highly regarded as important, still some scholars challenge that linked organisations cannot be held accountable for all the miseries in the world (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to consider how responsibilities of the linked organisations are spelt which reflect on brand relationships because CSR has become a major influence amongst firms’
struggle in reaching high levels of reputation and attractiveness. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) will remain an important business topic with higher focus on sustainability and fair business practices globally (Arevalo & Fallon, 2008; Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009).

2.4.2.2 More competitive labour markets and activism

In a tight labour market, many employees are increasingly looking beyond paychecks and benefits, and seeking out employers whose philosophies and operating practices align their own principles (Boyett & Boyett, 2001). To hire and retain skilled employees, linked companies are being forced to improve working conditions (Boyett & Boyett, 2001) while the wages are being decided outside the companies by labour unions. The right to engage in various labour union-related activities is frequent because of various uprisings strikes and go-slows (slow down) from different countries around the world. In countries having moved from planned to free-market economies, labour relations systems are in transition. While labour unions help to obtain better working conditions and higher wages for employees, linked companies affect the positive or negative behaviours of the employees in their work environment.

2.5 Dimensions of stakeholder brand relationship

All dimensions cannot be investigated but the study focuses on brand ratings and brand perceptions and how they can affect brand relationship. This study agrees that an organisation’s reputation within the marketplace is derived from how stakeholders perceive its brand linkages, through the linked organisations’ communication and behaviour (on business ethics) (see section 2.4). Brand relationships can be characterised by repellent and negative aspects. On the other hand, brand relationships can also be purposive at their core yet altered by the attitudes of brand partners. Importantly, contemporary brand relationships may be less linked to an image creation view of marketing, but retain consumer relationships (Fournier, 2009). According to Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008) brands are now being built on information from target audiences. This is a new paradigm that is built on
interactive relationships between the organisation and all stakeholders (also between stakeholders in some cases). This implies that there is a power shift in this relationship because companies are no longer the sole creators of brands (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008:xvi). Currently two dilemmas exist in brand relationship characteristics: a tension between consumer participation; and corporate control over messaging (communication). Consumer participation is marked less by purchasing more loyalty and affiliation (Moor, 2007). Brand communication as a tool for dialogue becomes the central feature for creating, sustaining, and building stakeholder relationships.

Using the relationship communication model as a tool in research and communication management, consumers create meaning based on communication campaigns only, while others simultaneously involve other factors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:189). These are “the historical, future, external and/or internal factors, such as earlier experiences, memories, ongoing strong relationships, expectations or visions, importance of the firm in the surrounding society, a personal project in the family, positive or negative attitudes to the firm or the communication message, the sender or the brand or difficulties in understanding a message (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:189).” Moreover, research has shown that people form bonds with brands (here linked brands) (Fournier, 1998b). Similarly, the central premise of the research by Aggarwal (2004) argues that relationships carry with them norms of behaviour that guide the actions of the people in the relationships and that affect their evaluation of the relationship partner. Hence, “If the meaning creation is influenced by many factors, and the findings indicate that shared meaning between the company and the consumer has been created, then the communication is classified as relationship communication” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:189-190).

However, non-rational communication exists “If the findings show that shared meaning was not created, for example because of negative attitudes or difficulties in interpretation or some other reason” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009:190). Finne and Grönroos (2009:190) show that in some cases “the influence of the ad is minor, but the influences of the other factors are stronger. If the findings indicate that shared meaning is created from these factors, for example based on a strong relationship,
the communication is classified as relationship communication. In this special case
the ad itself functions more as a trigger than as anything else”. Therefore, there is a
growing interest in brand-related research in this world of fast changing technology
and rapid product imitations. One of the few sustainable differentiating tools available
to marketers is the brand linkage’s value that they can build.

As prior research has noted, people and objects differ in many ways and different
approaches may be needed to examine how consumers interact with each of them
(Aggarwal, 2004). Nevertheless, the dynamics of stakeholder relationships should
never be undermined. Merz, He and Vargo (2009) suggest that building collaborative
stakeholder relationships should be embedded within all communication strategies.
This enables nurturing of stakeholder relationships, building and leveraging of long-
term investment relationships, which may in turn pave a way to growth opportunities
for an (linked) organisation within the marketplace. Admittedly, not all stakeholders
have the same influence or impact on the organisation, but because of their
interaction in the virtual world, they appear to have somewhat equal influence (Pratt,
2009). It is therefore advantageous for marketing communication practitioners to
explore ways to enhance relationships with various stakeholders.

2.6 Emergence and influence of brand linkages on stakeholder brand ratings
and brand perceptions

Stakeholder expectations toward organisations have changed. Interaction with
stakeholders has become a norm and predicting different scenarios and stakeholder
reactions and emotions will become a precondition for organisations’ survival.
Emotions, however, have become ever more important as the amount of existing
information is overwhelming and even important decisions may be based on
feelings. As indicated earlier, Simon (2010:1) claims that “in 2010, tangible assets
account for only 30 to 40 percent of a company’s value. The rest is intangible value,
and about half of that intangible portion — close to 30 percent of total business value
— is attributed to brand”. Unlike the pyramid suggested in the writing of De
Chernatony (2006), contemporary market indicates strong emotional rewards as
superceding benefits and functional attributes of the (linked) brand. Brand perception
should start on the strategic levels of an entity, because in the new complex environment good relationships are often not possible with all stakeholders and choices have to be made. Prior research on brand relationships-interaction has indirectly touched on the various factors affecting today’s business. On the nature and relative influence of brand linkages, Brown (2010:1) argues that “very few brands were created with the intention of being global, and the challenge of adapting to differing local needs, desires and aspirations is a big one”.

While there may be many new tools and contexts, the fundamentals of building strong positive brand linkages have not changed. Barger, Hemingway, Underwood, Velker and Winters (2002) argue that the general cause behind a failed partnership is a poor attitude towards one or more of the linked brands prior to and during the linkage process. For example, by partnering with successful brands such as IBM and Compaq, Intel established a positive reputation being regarded as a reliable, high technology provider. These initial brand linkages raised the Intel Company's brand equity. However, during the mid-1990's, Intel suffered setbacks in the design of their microprocessors, which diluted their brand quality in the eyes of consumers and partners. For this reason, Gateway and Dell’s quality images were tarnished as a result of Intel’s perceived quality problems which spilled over to these partners. It was only when Intel later corrected the problem and was able to rebuild the quality image that Gateway and Dell began to see a return on their investment in the microprocessor which eliminated the strong negative brand linkages’ effects.

Therefore, engagement with stakeholders through powerful and effective communications remains at the heart of the marketing process (Randall, 2009; Vallaster & De Chernatony, 2006). The stakeholders’ demand is becoming increasingly differentiated. Offerings should therefore be geared to stakeholders’ needs and not the other way round. The focus is shifting from the product to the relationship with the consumers. This relationship determines a company’s relevance and future success. Ultimately, linked brands are only valuable to businesses because they are valuable to those who consume them. The fact that linked brands are valuable to consumers, marks them as significant in stakeholder relationships and branding, their importance is emphasised by different studies and scholars
(Balmer, 2001; Fournier, 1998a; Hatch & Shultz, 2003; Keller, 1998; Leone et al., 2006). Although there are many stakeholders, this study chooses to focus on consumers.

However, for a linked brand not to pretend and give an artificial value of commitment to the needs of consumers it has to gain the support of all other stakeholders (Pratt, 2009). This calls for meeting multiple stakeholders’ needs (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008) to satisfy the consumer. For instance, The Foschini Group (TGF) had to withdraw T-shirts with the words "stud", "single" or "how to get laid" after the Feminists, HIV activists and a Christian group complained that they were sexist and offended some customers (Cape Times, 2011, October 26). As a consequence, this incident harmed Foschini’s brand linkages such as Donna-Claire, Luella, Exact, Totalsports, American Swiss, Markhams, Due South, Sterns, Matrix, @home, @homelivingspace and Sportscene stakeholder-brand relationships. Therefore, it is concluded that there is an effect of brand linkages on brand perceptions and brand ratings.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter attempts to understand problems of brand communication and the need for an existential perspective, by outlining the meaning of brand as more than a product, making touch points more invisible. Defining this construct, brand, is based on conceptualisation and previous empirical and theoretical studies. The next section that followed provided a review of relevant brand relationship characteristics in view of brand ratings and brand perceptions. Also, discussed among other topics, is the strategic communication and stakeholder concept which presents the inevitable complex interactions between brands and customers. The essence of linked brands and stakeholder relationships involves interactions and exchange processes with various networks of internal and external stakeholders. Untrustworthy companies are endangered since more recently, the unquestioned dominance of the market place in its current form has come under attack, with groups not only reconceptualising the exchange process, but also developing alternative methods of exchange and consumption of linked brands. This requires that companies choose their initiatives
carefully in terms of sincerity, demonstrate their commitment, and be cautious in communicating these initiatives to their customers. Important to note is the way they contribute to the community as good corporate citizens through social responsiveness initiatives. Today’s superconsumers are all, however, questioning the supremacy of marketing and business more generally as represented by large linked brands. The last part discussed the relevant literature that pertains to emergence and influence of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions.

Chapter 3 will discuss the interaction of brands in brand linkages and brand relationships.
CHAPTER 3
Brand linkages and brand relationships

“What is needed is a theory of the market, one that perhaps better emulates the dynamics of ‘real-world’ events and processes and can thus provide better normative insights”.
(Stephen L. Vargo & Robert F. Lusch, 2010)

3.1 Introduction

The strategies of brand linkages have become more relevant on the executive-administrative plane because of the direct impact they have on opportunities for creating value. This relevance has resulted in multiple studies which aim to further investigate the factors that can influence the success of this strategy. Among these, literature has initially demonstrated that there is a basic effect caused by brand linkages on brand relationships. The study argues that a product’s (service) brand characteristics can be affected by the associated company or the linked brands. Central to the previous chapter was the task of identifying stakeholders’ complexity in building a strategic brand relationship through spelling out the gaps in the traditional brand building process and highlighting important factors that contribute to the success or failures of each step along the way. Various reviewed materials indicate a lack of agreement among scholars in the interpretation of stakeholders and their impact on the brands that are linked to each other. This needs a discussion on the inevitable unresearched gap within strategic brand assessments and a conclusion of the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and perceptions respectively. Firstly, this chapter will detail brand linkages, classification and their effects on brand relationships.

3.2 How are brand linkages and brand relationships used to develop the more effective brand’s communication agenda?

Every step to develop an effective brand communication agenda is understood by first considering how brand linkages are classified.
3.2.1 Classification of brand linkages

The conventional single-brand company and stand-alone brands are increasingly rare\(^6\) (Gammoh & Voss, 2011:81; Laforet, 2010). There are different levels and types of brand linkages, although the categorisation may sometimes overlap. As a result, various forms of brand linkage strategies exist and are often used interchangeably with a variety of terms such as brand alliances, brand co-optition, joint sales promotions, bundling, dual branding, composite brand extensions, and co-branding (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). Others have also included joint promotions, composite branding, affinity partnering, complementary branding, symbiotic marketing, and co-adverting (Washburn et al., 2004). It is clear that the concept brand linkage is used quite broadly. Avoidance of its complex aspects is impractical. Even though most brands perhaps appear as single brands but they are not that single per se because in one way or the other they engage other brands. Some brands sign short to long term contracts on contribution, performance and rewards that are agreed by the partners. Therefore, these engagements come at the cost of a highly flexible structure.

In marketing research, brand linkages or alliances have not yet been defined consistently, since there are various different types of brand linkages. Complex brand linkages or endorsement strategies with multiple brands are universal because after they are established, consumers’ perceptions of brand relationships and the processing of brand ratings (Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Leuthesser et al., 2003) often change. According to Fill and Jamieson (2006:xiv), “globalisation and the

\(^6\) Even though not many academics/practitioners might admit the rarity of stand-alone brands, in practice this is true. In practice, many well-known brands including some of the examples discussed in this study engage in indirect or direct linkages with other brands in a form of strong or weak or distant or close partnership (Jevons et al., 2002). This is justifiable, because no single brand can satisfy many needs of stakeholders hence some brands exploit multiple brand lines by making formal or informal linkages to leverage their brands. For example, if comparing with the Olympics, smaller, less known brands such as Hyundai, Kia and Emirates often perform better than well-established brands as the exponential is greater. Naming rights, for instance occur exactly when the linkage becomes semi-permanent, such as in case of the South African FNB stadium. All airlines and other rewarding programs have a kind of linkage for example, SAA Voyager or British Airways and American Express. Other views are that although there is growth and evolution in linked branding, this is not to the detriment of single brand or single branding strategy.
development of partnerships, alliances and networks are all testimony to changing markets and expectations”.

The increased use of these strategies is a means to circumvent the growing lack of confidence in the traditional single brand campaigns (Laforet, 2010). Particularly, Bing has deals to assemble leading offers from Microsoft, Groupon, Living Social and Restaurant.com as a form of brand linkage strategy. Bing’s mission was to help customers cut through the clutter of the Website to make decisions more quickly – whether through their own radical innovations or by teaming up with industry experts (Perez, 2011). This similar strategy was recently followed by Nokia when it aligned with Microsoft in order for the brand to compete with leading smart phone competitors. Subsequently, the nature of brand linkages affects the relationships and interaction between customers and the linked brands. According to Gammoh and Voss (2011:82) brand alliance benefits the host brand by signaling unobservable quality when consumers lack accurate information regarding the brand’s true quality. The strategy can enhance quality of the partnering brand regardless of the type of brand linkage (for example, co-promotion, co-branding, or ingredient branding). Consequently, these authors argue that consumers’ existing attitudes toward the constituent brands influences their evaluations of the brand linkage (Gammoh & Voss, 2011).

Consumer’s evaluation of brand linkage is usually affected by how well two or more brands fit together (Laforet, 2010). It has been clearly shown that consumers’ perception of “fit” between participating brands is positively related to their evaluation of the brand alliance (Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2000). Exposure to partnering brands’ evaluation leads to asymmetrical spillover effects. Furthermore, consumers’ perception of brand linkage is likely to be moderated by various personal and contextual factors (Gammoh & Voss, 2011) as discussed in the previous chapter. As the complexity of the linked brand decision making grows in family branding, co-branding and global branding (Bristow, Schneider & Schuler, 2002), brand linkage research needs balancing from consumer research to explore the impact of two or more brands appealing to the same customers (consumers), and the cross influence of these multiple approaches from brand to brand (product or service).
Primary and secondary brands within a linkage

Brand linkage also leads to the general long and short term existing associations made by stakeholders (include the brands involved) such as consumers and businesses of two or more brands. It is a partnership relationship in business and on the other hand, makes both parties work closely together to ensure that everything they do will benefit both brands. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011:114) suggest another form of brand linkage - cooperative advertising. Cooperative advertising are advertising campaigns which consist of shared costs and trade associations of retailers, dealers, or wholesalers or manufacturers, for the purpose of building the manufacturer’s brand image and help its dealers, or retailers make more sales (Arens et al., 2011:114). For instance, Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011:114) point out that Intel alone spent more than $800 million annually to help PC marketers who displayed the “Intel Inside” logo. As a result, there are two levels of brand linkages, one where the partners agree on equal control (Sony and Ericsson) and one where the other brand is dominant (Black Berry BBM and Vodacom). In this study, this forms the existence of both primary and secondary brands. These brand linkage strategies would mean a modification of the original brand. A primary brand is usually the dominant brand that is controlling the distribution, connected to the product category of the brand linkage, owner of the customer base and considered to be the brand modified in the partnership. A secondary brand has credibility and some associations. In particular, Shell is the primary brand while Ferrari is the secondary brand in this linkage. However, the linkages are always unique and often manifest as interrelated.

Implied by brand linkage definition is the underlying value (equity) of a brand which is often based upon specific linkages of a “use context” such as Shell’s association with Ferrari which can provide a reason-to-buy which can attract customers. Such a linkage represents the product’s meaning to customers. Therefore, the brand linkages represent bases for preference, purchase decision, recommend intentions and have long term brand relationships. There are a host of possible linkages that a firm can build in a brand relationship with its stakeholders. Not all linkages need to be built the same way, but rather those that directly or indirectly affect consumers’ buying behaviour become crucial. According to Hadjicharalambous (2006), there
seems to be little agreement on typology and framework in which to analyse brand alliances (brand linkages). The lack of shared typology and a comprehensive framework can be seen as an opportunity for scholars to research without restrictions within the field of brand linkages and its effect on the brand relationships. Thus, a framework of this study will give direction to such a complex analysis.

**3.2.1.1 The intent of brand linkage**

In a period of time defined by the acceleration of change, enabled by a growing technology and a considerable continuity in competitive markets, marketing practitioners have observed how the most innovative businesses and organisations are starting to develop a new collaborative system that goes beyond the single branding strategy. The intent of any brand linkage is crucial. It needs to resolve a business problem or maximise an opportunity. It can be brand awareness, perception, trial, usage, advocacy or retention or consumer lifetime value growth (McCarthy & Von Hoene, 2014:3). Furthermore, it can be about the combination of the skills of businesses belonging to even very different categories or industries with the final goal of producing new products, services and processes, and with them, a new sustainable market.

In particular, Microsoft’s partnership with Nokia is a sign of unique business linkage. Coca-Cola and Heinz collaborated to develop more sustainable containers in Brazil. The relationship led Coca-Cola to manufacture a bottle made of 100% plant-derived materials and plant residues using Heinz bottling factories. This investment of $150 million in PlantBottle was used to develop the next generation of technology for extracting sugar from plant residues such as plant stems, tree bark and fruit peel. Through the brand linkage it was hoped to take a step further towards its own goal of reducing emissions, waste and energy consumption by 20% by 2015. The skin-care company Biotherm (part of the luxury products division of L’Oreal Group) and the automobile manufacturer Renault has devised a new concept in cars: the Spar Car, designed to simultaneously care for the health of its occupants and to protect the environment. To achieve the launch in 2012, experts from each company contributed their skills to develop features that were novel for a vehicle’s interior. The benefit for
the incoming company is the ability to penetrate the new market, with the potential opportunity that the South African market could be used a springboard into other African countries, in search of more growth.

The two companies, Danone-Clover formed the Joint venture, in 1998, to operate within the fresh dairy produce market products such as Yoghurt, Custard and Maas. Danone is a Southern Africa brand of French origin which entered the South African dairy market through a joint venture with Clover South Africa. When Danone bought out Clover in 2010, the two companies were no longer having a joint venture operation and were functioning as separate entities within the South African market. However, in September 2013, Clover decided not to renew a number of the supply and service agreements which were put in place since 2010. The majority of the contracts between Clover and Danone Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd ended in December 2014.

3.2.1.2 Intentional and unintentional brand linkages

Brand linkage is intentional in most cases. It is for distinctiveness and innovation of the new composite brand, a way to increase the scope and the influence of the brands, enter new markets, reduce costs through economies of scale and refresh a linked brand’s image (Laforet, 2010). Under the umbrella of unintentional brand linkages or non-spot-communicating strategy, consumers have witnessed the emergence of new advertising formats such as product-placement, viral marketing, sponsorships, event marketing, social and cause related marketing, celebrity endorsement (internationally, Nike’s association with Michael Jordan is legendary and also logical), and PR-techniques (Andersen, 2006). Due to stereotypes, the single and linked brands try to avoid being direct with their commercial message. Some intended brand linkages happen in cases such as Engen Garage (convenience) with Woolworths (clothing) Food Stop. These are complemented by the Engen Food stops, offering customers the convenience of shopping at a limited Woolworths food offering, 24 hours a day at a convenient location. However, brands are held responsible for behaviours that have less to do with the performance they deliver than in singular form. The appropriateness of their intended linkages and
unintended linkages of brand advertising, pricing, or social responsibility are just a few examples of other aspects that also get evaluated. Brands with no particular brand linkage can cause consumers to make judgments. Often, they might be inconsequential or lead to indifferent rejection of the linked brand.

In contrast, the consumer might see a positive opportunity to strengthen brand loyalty. An example of the unintended linkage may not appear specific since no studies have been carried out, but there are incidents where popular donors such as Oprah Winfrey and Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund’s pulling out from funding an NGO (Kids Haven) resulted in minor donors ‘pulling out’. In particular, linkage becomes unintended because minor donors (SABC, Anglo American) would make decisions of taking steps based on the leading brands (donors) in order to build and protect their reputation. Brands (companies) which are attached to another brand through sponsorship accumulate autobiographical and often vivid memories of many previous interactions transferred to consumers by their indirect association with the brand. They may even see their preference for this particular brand over others as part of being the social responsibility of their joint image with leading brands (for instance, Oprah the global name). This is the way a brand may strategise to pass through clutter and information overload with a strong a consistent message. This study focuses on intentional brand linkages. Particularly, the brand linkage agreement between Shell and Ferrari is intentional. They renegotiated the contract to focus on exploitation and based the newly launched ‘V-Power’ range of fuels and lubricants specifically around their relationship with Ferrari (Jenkins, 2010). The same happened with the pairing of Philips and Unilever in coming up with the Perfective iron in the Netherlands.

3.2.1.3 Types of brand linkages (intentional)

There are several approaches that are used to define different forms of brand linkages. The first is the process of differentiation in brand linkage forms. There are four different forms of brand linkages namely, the ingredient brand linkage, same company linkage (extension), joint venture linkage (co-brand or brand alliance) and
multiple-sponsor brand linkage for brand value endorsement and strengthening of brand perception.

3.2.1.4 Ingredient brand linkage

The collective expertise, knowledge and competencies, is identified by two or more potential brands which pair themselves in order to create market leadership or unique differentiation. Organisations partially unite or share their capacities and resources, without embarking on a merger and acquisition (M&A) process, so as to reach a previously defined objective, based on inter-dependent negotiation (Franco, 2001). For instance, this form of brand linkage was the collaboration between designer Pierre Hardy and Peugeot, which asked the former to come up with a product to help women drive – in high heels. Pierre Hardy created two-in-one high-heeled sandals that can “transform” into ultra-flat driving shoes. The brand linkage effort gave Pierre Hardy access to a technology. For Peugeot, the collaboration helped the company involve more women in its testing teams. Also, another example in the gasoline and chemical area is the linkage between Techron and Microban. Also the ingredients linkage of Lycra, Wool Mark and Intel is another example. Duracell, Oral-B, Braun and Disney: not two, but four brands coming together in this funky battery toothbrush! Each brand brings its own 'core competence': Duracell for battery life, Oral-B for brushing, Braun for electronics and Disney for design and entertainment.

Consequently, forms of ingredient brand linkage are either simultaneously or competitively formed. The main forms of this include, franchising (granting the right to use an established brand and everything associated with this in exchange for financial remuneration such as, Spar), licensing (authorising the production and/or commercialisation of goods or services to third parties, in exchange for financial remuneration), outsourcing (ordering certain services, finished products or product parts from specialised third parties for example, Unilever) and consortium (establishing partnerships between companies in the development of a common large-scale project) (Franco, 2001).
3.2.1.5 Same company (brand extension)

These links are strengthened over time with repeated experiences or exposures. Brands with a high number of positive brand linkages tend to have high levels of brand value. Brand linkages help consumers process or retrieve information, differentiate or position linked brands, give customers a reason-to-buy, create positive attitudes or feelings and provide a basis for extensions by creating a sense of fit between the partner brand name and the new product (Beezy, 2007). One example is Telkom (fixed-line operator) launching its own cellular offering, branded as 8ta (*Heita*). Balachander and Ghose (2003) found that advertising the new brand extension (brand linkage) can have a positive spillover effect on the umbrella of the partnering brand, resulting in less advertising expenditure for each product. Furthermore, celebrity endorsement can be viewed as symbolic brand extension since celebrities themselves are brands (Keller, 2003a). Gillette heavily used celebrity endorsement in launching its new Gillette Fusion razor. Under the tagline “champions” the campaign features Thierry Henry (soccer player), Tiger Woods (golfer) and Roger Federer (tennis player) all of whom are world champions or ranked number one in the world in their respective sports.

Balachander and Ghose (2003) established that exposure to advertising of the brand extension (brand linkage) activates the link to the parent brand because of the strength of the link between the two nodes, creating a positive spillover effect. With this in mind, as competition intensifies in the market place, vertical line extensions (line extension: brand transfer to a product within the same product category, for example Diet Coke) have increasingly been optioned by many firms to gain growth in booming premium or value markets (Lei, De Ruyter & Wetzels, 2008).

Pontes and Jevons (2009) report that the problem with brand extension was based on categorisation theory which suggests that the quality variance across products affiliated with a brand have a direct effect on brand strength. This theory expresses that once a new product is introduced in the line or enters a new category, new information is added, and therefore, consumers will need to reprocess and evaluate again the core-brand. At this rate, brand linkages become more abstract and brand
strength is weakened by the reduced ability of consumers to judge subsequent brand extensions (Pontes & Jevons, 2009). In their conclusion, Pontes and Jevons (2009) state that a vertical extension has a negative impact on the core brand regardless of its direction and regardless of its brand concept (Kim, Lavack & Smith, 2001). Likewise, some arguments on vertical extension admit that no matter in what direction the extension is made it will dilute or harm the equity of the parent or core brand (Dacin & Smith, 1994; Kim & Lavack, 1996). As for Lei, De Ruyter and Wetzels (2008), inconsistent information may not always have a negative impact on the core brand. However, Pontes and Jevons (2009) argue that the effect of a vertical extension introduction on the core brand depends on how far or close the price point of the extension is as compared to the core brand, and especially on how big a step the company takes when introducing a new product in the line.

Companies with a positive image have better chances to succeed with a brand extension strategy than linked companies that start with a poor image (Pina, Martinez, De Chernatony & Drury, 2006). They further argue that from the associative theory the image after an extension is forecast by the original image. Based on their argument, prior expectations have an effect on the brand interpretations by consumers to an extent that the effectiveness of company actions on brand value is moderated by earlier beliefs. Erdem and Sun (2002) also found evidence for the uncertainty in reducing the role of advertising for umbrella partnering brands.

As already indicated, at its most basic, a brand extension is an attempt to link one product with another by use of a brand. The predictive value of brand names is one of the primary reasons that brand extension strategy is so pervasive. The brand name becomes more than a simple associative prompt and becomes a predictive cue (Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000). It is not as simple when a company sells more than one brand compared to the selling a single brand. For instance, Woolworths sells food and clothing. This cross-selling is also affected by the brand value, as the success (or failure) of brand extensions, where the relationship is quite visible (Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister & Srivasta, 2006). Thus, there is an intricate relationship between a firm’s customer equity and the brand equity of the
products it sells. For a single-product firm, it is relatively straightforward to see what
customer equity is (Leone et al., 2006). Unfortunately, for a multiproduct firm,
measuring customer equity is more complicated; so is the measurement of total
corporate equity arising when a firm sells several brands (Leone et al., 2006).

Leone, Rao, Keller, Luo, McAlister and Srivasta (2006) indicate that it would be the
sum total of all customer equities for each of the products or brands the firm sells
after accounting for any duplications, for instance, within-firm or category brand-
switching behaviour. In fact, when these linked brands belong to different product
categories, which is often the case, the level of brand equity of the brands a firm
sells enables the firm to engage in cross-selling (Leone et al., 2006). Scholars point
out that for a manufacturing firm, the extent of cross-selling is influenced by the type
of branding strategy such as house of brands, branded house or mixed adopted by
the manufacturer. One important benchmark for evaluation is using a house of
brands perspective, the marketer can think of linked brands as platforms from which
a manufacturer can launch new products into adjacent spaces (brand extensions into

While there has been a great deal of research into understanding brand extension,
linked brand strategies transfer in the form of brand extension is received with mixed
feelings among scholars. Not all extensions may lead to intended results. While the
decision on brand extension is very complex, chances and risks have to be
evaluated for every single case, especially as failure rates are high (Ernst & Young &
Nielsen, 1999). For example, popular failures include Levi’s suits, Kleenex diapers,
or Xerox computers, showing that even extensions of very successful brands can fail
(Rangaswamy, Burke & Oliva, 1993:61). This shows that there are chances that a
brand extension strategy may provide benefits, whereas the risks are inherent if it
fails as illustrated in Figure 3.1.
The process of brand extension develops from product to ultimately a multi-domain brand which has a number of consequences (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). As its presence in the market increases, its familiarity and perceived reliability is enhanced while (for instance, Coca-Cola is well known around the globe) at the same time the brand’s association network becomes more complex. The association from individual product category to brand and vice-versa usually gets weaker. The meanings entail that the brand develops into a higher abstract level. Often this also happens to the values associated with the brand. As a result, the brand’s association network loses sharpness and gets more diffused (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). Eventually, the brand will merely end up representing the provenance of the products that is, “made by partnership”.

### 3.2.1.6 Joint venture (co-branding/brand alliance)

Joint ventures or co-brand brand linkage identifies a number of different strategies such as affinity programs, cause-related marketing, ingredient branding, cooperative advertising, composite branding, dual branding, and joint sales promotion, which can be used to increase the value of a product or a service (Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2000). The definition of co-branding and brand alliance in marketing literature is not completely consistent and the terms co-branding and brand alliance are often used interchangeably. According to Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri (2003:37) co-branding is a special case of brand extension in which two brands are extended to a new product.
In this study, co-branding is a brand linkage technique that is used in business aiming to transfer positive associations of the linked product or brand of a company to a new joint brand, or create operational synergy with established brands (Beezy, 2007).

On the other hand, brand linkage entails the inclusion of all forms of brand cooperative associations with two or more different or similar brands. In particular, to conquer the iced tea market (despite late entry), Nestle’ and Coca-Cola decided to unite against Unilever’s Lipton range. “Therefore, both co-branding and brand extensions raise the same basic issues, namely, how brand equity transfers to the new product and how the new product subsequently has an impact on brand equity” (Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003:37). One of the most successful and well-known innovators of co-branding is VISA card. More than 170 countries worldwide use Visa. This includes some leading partnerships which emerged with Standard Bank and Absa Bank. The joint venture between Disney and McDonald’s (McDonald’s gives out Disney toys in their children’s meal, Happy Meal) is one example. Other known alliances are Konica and US Air, Goodyear and Audi, Nike and Michael Jordan (Michael Jordan is also a brand name), 3M and Scotchguard, and Bacardi Rum and Coca-Cola. Also, some forms of retail co-branding are dominated by businesses that provide convenience benefits to consumers, for example fast food franchises teaming up with service stations (fuel retail) and grocery stores, as demonstrated by McDonald’s, Steers, and Wimpy with Shell and BP. The McDonald’s and McCafe arrangement is also co-branding.

Perceived benefits of co-branding are the motivations common in all forms of co-brand co-optitions. A study by Wright (2009) suggests some themes that emerged during the collection process which illustrate the reasons why McDonald’s entered into a co-branding arrangement as a way of attracting customers, competitive advantage, reinvigorating brand equity and growth incentives. The merger between HP and Compaq, for instance, has led to the creation of a global brand linkage. Given these potential motivations, there are some drawbacks, brand alliances are not necessarily win - win strategies for the association partners (Washburn et al., 2000). However, the study (Wright, 2009) states three inhibitors or barriers to
franchise systems that need to be overcome for successful co-branding at an organisational level which include systems, culture and legal issues. Considerably greater investment is required to overcome the cultural and system barriers emanating from the inflexibility of franchising systems (Wright, 2009).

Accordingly, McDonald’s had more control over the cultural aspect as a result of integrating McCafe than a co-branded arrangement with a completely separate company. In contrast, a new change by leading South African biscuit brand, Pyott’s, ventures into the emerging rice cracker market through entering into a co-branding alliance with Australia’s leading rice snack brand, Sakata. Unfortunately, as so often happens with private national companies that pose a threat to established global leaders, Frito Lay acquired Sakata, and the co-branding venture came to an abrupt end (Cylkowski, 2007). Similarly, in less refined co-branding arrangements with Shell and BP, significant conflict exists at retail level between franchisees of the separate systems (Wright, 2009). In spite of the drawbacks, Cylkowski (2007) still sees an opportunity that collaboration amongst South Africa’s leading brands is required if they are to stand up over time against global competitors who have the necessary skills, low cost manufacturing base and financial resources to chip away at this contemporary market.

Other examples of this form of brand linkages are seen in carmakers and watchmakers (Aston Martin and Jaeger-LeCoultre, Bentley and Breitling), and more commonly – as in the case with Petit Bateau and Didier Ludot – between clothing brands and designers. Uniqlo has linked with Jil Sander. H&M has linked with Karl Lagerfeld. However, if a partnership between two brands fails for some reason, chances are that both of the linked brands will be hurt by the divorce (Prince & Davies, 2002; Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2004). The brand linkage agreement needs to provide for the possibility of termination in the event that the partner brand or linked brand suffers a serious reputation problem. This disassociation would need to be accomplished as quickly and completely as possible to minimise damage to the original brand(s), because problems related to co-branding linkages have been found to have negative reciprocal effects (Swaminathan, Fox & Reddy, 2001).
3.2.1.7 Sponsorship (promotional)

Sponsorship as a form of brand linkage is indirect (having secondary associations), that is, associations related to entities not directly linked to the judged product. Nadeau, Heslop, O'Reilly, Çakmak and Verwey (2011) argue that sponsors follow the brand, regardless of the country, and benefits that developing countries reap are secondary to what sponsors can get out of the brand linkage. Such entities include companies, countries of origin, channels of distribution, other brands, and spokespeople (Keller, 1998). Consumers may develop a variety of associations with the brand names that are subsequently paired in a brand linkage situation. However, the linked product is new to the consumer, even though the constituent brand names are not (Jevons et al., 2002). Therefore, consumers use the constituent brand names to make judgments about the linked product in the absence of further information (Washburn, Till & Priluck, 2000). One incident is when The Global Fund (Red) and multiple linked brands; arguably one of the largest partnership efforts ever; joined forces with American Express, Apple, Converse, Dell, Emporio Armani, Gap, Hallmark and Starbucks to fight AIDS in Africa. The effort is known as Red and has raised more than $130 million. One danger to brand equity derives from consumers attributing a potentially negative experience with one constituent brand to the other constituent brand (Jevons et al., 2002).

Subsequently, the brand linkage can undermine a brand's positioning when consumers blame the wrong brand for their dissatisfaction (Leuthesser et al., 2003). Thus, any form of brand linkage comes with a variety of risks. Most notable is the risk of pairing with a partner that can damage the existing product's strong brand equity (Washburn et al., 2000). In 2005, BenQ, a Taiwanese based company, merged with Germany’s Siemens and had to provide continuous transition financial support. Unfortunately, BenQ failed to absorb the cost of turning around Siemens unit. Thus, BenQ incurred a loss of NT$36.7 billion from the time it acquired the Siemens handset unit. Hence, the partnership was terminated. Also, American Airlines and America Online, launched a joint consumer-loyalty program for nearly three years, with the conviction that it would set a new standard in brand linkage.
Separately beset by problems and dissatisfied with what the linkage had accomplished, the companies separated in 2002.

As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, one important contribution of brand equity is the concept of brand linkage (associations) (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003b). The brand linkage processes are remembered by customers as emanating from their various experiences of brand relationships. These are intangible brand attributes. Through sponsorship, two or more brands can be linked together. “In case where the sponsor’s brand-concept fits with the other sponsors’ brand-concepts, it is subjected to image transfer from the concomitant sponsors. Stereotypic processing is responsible for image transfer due to the formation of a group impression. The event and the sponsoring brands tend to be perceived as one entity and each element forming that group which become assimilated into a collective identity which leads the brands to lose their uniqueness” (Carrillat, 2005:131).

These brand linkages can enhance or detract from consumers' perceptions of each constituent brand and can act to create a new, unique perception of the linked product. According to Washburn, Till and Priluck (2000), high equity brands are not diminished by their pairing with low equity brands thereby offering protection from poor brand linkages decisions. This positive impact affects both the linked product and the brand equity of each partner. As such, the only brands not enhanced by brand linkage are those with well-entrenched, long-standing positive images (Washburn et al., 2000). Empirical research on brand linkage (co-branding) is limited to relatively few studies that have typically examined product concepts or fictitious products rather than real instances of brand linkage (Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003).

3.2.1.8 Convenient brand linkages classification

What constitutes brand linkage in this study will have to exclude a number of other classifications which are discussed in this section. The criteria include marriage of convenience and cooperative advertising. Cooperative advertising is a type of advertising agreement between the manufacturer and retailer of a product (Arens, Weigold & Arens, 2011). It is an agreement between a manufacturer and a retailer to
split advertising costs (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2011:267). The purpose is to build manufacturers’ brand image and help distributors, dealers or retailers to increase sales (Arens et al., 2011). Manufacturers get increased exposure at a lower cost. Retailers benefit from brand name product associations, while smaller retailers, who might not otherwise be able to afford costs of advertising, can advertise. Agencies and media companies can increase their billings, and media companies fill ad inventory. Therefore, there are numerous beneficiaries in this ecosystem which is mainly meant for convenience. Local examples include, the Shoprite Group and Old Mutual’s top-up insurance product called Pay-when-you-can; Woolworths and Auto & General (car and home insurance); Standard Bank and British Airways points; Pick n Pay and Nedbank’s Go Banking; Tiger Wheel & Tire and Hollard Insurance (tire insurance); and Woolworths and Auto & General (car and home insurance) which were viewed as marriages of convenience.

3.2.1.9 The effect of brand linkage co-ownership versus single brand ownership

Despite potential benefits, brand linkages are complex, not free from risk, and might negatively influence partnering brands (Baker & Saren, 2010). If problems arise, the issues surrounding the negative intangible attributes of linked brands are extremely complex. In sum, the brand’s linkage to a secondary entity causes the occurrence of secondary brand associations (spillovers) (Washburn et al., 2000). As a result, some brands decide to stick with a single brand strategy. Single branding strategy enjoys the ability to simplify brand relationships such as with Red Bull. Brand linkage can also affect the partner brand in a negative manner and if the customers associate any adverse experience with a constituent brand, then it may damage the total brand equity (Jones, 2008; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003). The detriments of a partnership that a single branding strategy avoids are devaluation and dilution of the brand relationships-interaction. These risks include the loss of investment, the diminution of the brand equity, and the value lost by failing to focus on a more rewarding strategy (Baker & Saren, 2010). The brands are also exposed to the risk of devaluation (depreciation of goodwill), sometimes virtually overnight.
Consequently, entering into an alliance (brand linkage) encompasses loss of control, inflexibility, and increase in conflict since planning and operating are shared with the composite partner (Baker & Saren, 2010). Thus, brand alliances (brand linkage) may fail for numerous reasons including prior attitudes toward each brand, unreliable imaging, poor integration of meaning, lack of complement, free-rider notions, and inconsistent contributions (Barger et al., 2002). At times, both companies can be affected, as in the case of a partnership between a discount chain and an upscale housewares company. Some failures have included British Telecom and AT&T, Mahindra-Renault, Braun-Gillette Body Shavers and Fly Hummer Mobile Phones. Therefore, venturing into brand linkage can lead a linked brand to stupendous disasters that may plague the brands (unlinked) involved for a long period of time where the organisation may end up spending millions to revive the brand (unlinked). Nevertheless, many benefits from brand linkage are hard to quantify, including the increase in brand equity created in the consumer’s mind when one brand is associated with another (Baker & Saren, 2010). In particular, The Wall Street Journal and iPad, Ferrari and Marlboro, Blackberry and Starbucks, and Adidas and Star Wars brand linkages. Given this, it is more interesting to find out whether the corporate rationale for linking with different brand linkage on an intentional level increases consumers’ response and/or influences their purchase preference, willingness to recommend, impulse, and variety seeking purchases; which is the focus of this study.

3.2.2 Strengthen linkages; modify linkages or creation of new brand linkages

“Marketing companies spend a huge amount of money in achieving their communication objectives. The ultimate objective of these activities is to ensure that consumers buy more of the communicated brands, and sales, and profits of the marketing companies spiral northwards” (Singh, Sharma, Deepak & Agrawal, 2010:117). However, in citing previous studies these authors (Singh et al., 2010) claim that there are three types of attributes that the consumers consider while making their buying decisions. These are product category and other brands, functional attributes, benefits and attitudes, and purchase and consumption context. This is significant to marketing executives as it demonstrates that brand linkage
exists to other attributes than product category which also have an influence on consumer consideration sets (Singh et al., 2010). The study by the author in Singh, Sharma, Deepak and Agrawal (2010) finds that there is a positive relationship between the number of attributes associated with brand name and brand choice. This coincides with Hoeffler and Keller (2002) in that corporate associations which reside in the mind of the consumer build the exact foundation for the power of a linked brand.

Today’s complex business environment demands effective and decisive action to survive (Singh et al., 2010). As pointed out in chapter 2, the source of distinction is no longer on functional attributes such as price and quality (what the product can do) but on the meanings attached to the product (what the linked brand does) (Brodie, 2009). Increasingly, companies are searching for ways to create brand linkages with appeals to consumers’ emotions. The significance of this is to tap into partnerships that promote building of credibility, engender loyalty, engage new audiences, exploit new market opportunities and enhance desirability for linked brands. This is motivated by the fact that such connections lead to higher levels of consumer loyalty to positive brand ratings and brand perceptions, which increases company financial performance (Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich & Iacobucci, 2010). As such, using clear, accurate and available information, companies can develop a stronger competitive position by effectively adjusting their brand linkage strategies and processes to respond to changing market conditions. It is a necessity that the prevalent entity should find ways to closing the gap between strategy and operations without disturbing the consistency of brand linkages (Singh et al., 2010). In other words, this should come as a process of progression.

From a marketing perspective, literature suggests that it is easier to strengthen brand linkages that already exist (Reichheld, 2001). Adding new linkages or modifying linkages will be more difficult. Consumers are exposed to hundreds of marketing messages daily (Clow & Baack, 2010) whereas only a few are processed into long-term memory. The image about the brand linkage highlights how much positive or negative association they attach to their relationship with these entities. Communication technologies such as the Internet have increased the frequency and
ease of communication both between the linked company and consumers and between consumers (Sawhney, Verona & Prandelli, 2005). Similarly, establishing, developing and maintaining successful linked brand relational exchanges are crucial for customer retention because retention is less costly than acquisition (Reichheld, 2001). One example is that of the Shell-Ferrari partnership. In 2000 when Shell conducted some research into the sponsorship and found that only 15% of their customers were aware of the linkage with Ferrari. The benefits of Shell aligning with Ferrari’s success and passion were so compelling that they adopted new approaches to their internal management. They renegotiated the contract to focus on exploitation and based the newly launched ‘V-Power’ range of fuels and lubricants specifically around their linkage strategy with Ferrari. In 2004, 27% of their customers were aware of the link with Ferrari (Jenkins, 2010) hence, this linkage was strengthened. Also, existing customers tend to purchase more than new customers and it is efficient to deal with existing customers as compared to the new customers (Reichheld, 2001). Thus, the importance of brand linkage has an impact to some extent on brand relationship.

All entrants in consumer to business and business to business relationships are interested in affiliating and sustaining successful relationships. Gummesson (2008) emphasises that reality cannot be analysed based on independent objects (product or service), but as a social construct that includes all interactions and relationships, such as product or service vs. buyer, product or service vs. the supplier, and buyer vs. supplier. Hence, brand value as discussed in the previous chapter is more subjective and has emotional processes that cannot be ignored. It is the intangible assessment of a linked brand, beyond its objectively perceived value. This is grounded on the value the consumer or business linkages support. A brand linkage is generally placed in a given product category to which other brands belong due to their similarity with respect to certain associations or linkages. For instance, most consumers think that the draught beer system for home use recently introduced by Heineken and Krups is a product of Heineken on its own. This implies that a lack of awareness or interest by consumers for one of the parent brands may lead to a reduced importance of the fit between the linked brands.
Moreover, it is not possible for a company to progress, as Dell has, without forming linkages with various other companies. Wanting to stay loyal to Microsoft, Dell was catering for the Enterprise Linux market. Dell was the first major systems provider to join the Microsoft and Novell collaboration. This business collaboration was created by Microsoft and Novell in response to customer demand for greater interoperability and intellectual property assurance (Channel Register, 2007). Dell had an impact on the brand interpretation or meaning on secondary aspects. Consequently, these relationships can be grounded on people (employers and endorsers), on things (events such as sponsorships, causes, and third-party endorsements such as awards or reviews), on places (country of origin, and channels), and on other brands (partnerships, ingredients, company and co-branding). This will then spell out as the linkages that reflect the quality of brand relationships with the consumers.

3.2.3 Communication of the strategy; operations through brand interaction (communication)

Strategic plans of a brand must be communicated very effectively. Failure to do so almost guarantees misalignment down the road. Marketing communication is the voice of a brand and the means of linked companies to establish a dialogue with consumers concerning their product offerings (Keller, 2003b). Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson (1967) already found that it is not what organisations say that builds relationships, but how they say it. The part of the brand (linkage) communication what is the content whereas the how will be the context of brand communication. Brand communication happens when a consumer meets the linked brand. Hence, it is impossible for the linked brands not to communicate. The need for positive impact on content of message is of paramount importance. Concurrently, Reichheld (2003) recommends that linked companies need to move from a transaction orientation and focus on building lifelong loyalty among their customers. Functional product features become increasingly homogenous and emotional features which are embodied by the linked brand and not the product are increasingly important (Salander, 2011). This is usually ascribed to the difficulties of maintaining credible product differentiation in the face of imitation and homogenisation of products and services, and the fragmentation of new market segments that occurs as customers become
more sophisticated and markets more complex (Gummesson, 2008). Differentiation requires the context, not products. It has been mentioned that the stakeholder-brand relationships context is complex. The values and emotions symbolised by the linked organisations become key elements of differentiation strategies, and the corporation partner itself is central. They are summed up as trust, security and peace of mind. Allen, Fournier and Miller (2008) argue that in search of meaning where much information has to undergo the disintegration and reduction of the complex into small, manageable bits, is an interesting paradox. As such, a paradox presents itself firstly, in the search for meaning, context is the source of everything, and secondly, in the search for information, context is noise (Allen et al., 2008).

Brand communication reflects the brand strategy because it is first the strategy and then the creativity that follows. Communication influencers are creatively effective when strategy is in line with credibility on social context, group, or a reference group mediating the communication (Salander, 2011). This will not take a single source for consumers to accept the credibility of the linked brand communication (Allen et al., 2008). The role played by all stakeholders is vital in effective brand communication context and content. Plummer (2006:1) observes that “practitioners acknowledged that effective advertising, which helps build powerful, lasting brand relationships, is a balance of ‘head and heart’. Little investment in research and theory development, however, has been dedicated to measuring the heart response”. The head refers to functional benefits but the heart refers to emotion brand benefits. As a result, the challenges presently faced by brand linkage marketers in designing, implementing, and evaluating marketing communication programs are markedly different from those faced by marketers whose focus is on functional benefits (head). Hence, this study attempts to examine those factors related to the ‘heart’. Specifically, Keller (2003b) mentions some aspects which can affect the heart of consumers. Obviously they vary on a host of different characteristics and individuality. First, demographic (age, gender, race), second, psychographic (attitudes towards self, others, possessions), third, behavioral (brand choices, usage, loyalty) “that often serve as the basis of market segmentation and the development of distinct marketing programs”. Any one of these characteristics from bottom to top may impact consumers’ response to properly aligned marketing communications (Keller, 2003b).
Certainly, Foschini (linked brand communication) was forced to withdraw the selling of certain T-Shirts because of the demographic, psychographic impact on some (stakeholders) customers who felt they had crossed the line between humorous and offensive (*Cape Times*, 2011, October 26).

In fact, common communication issues relate to strategy misalignment. The misalignment include failure to determine relationship as based on brand communication that uses multiple levels and types of communication tools to create personal or one-on-one communication, create positive relationships, and build stakeholder relationships for long term purposes (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999). Therefore, the contemporary linked organisations are faced with the challenge of engaging themselves in a newly evolving form of marketing communication that is truly relational. According to Craig and Douglas (1996), in striving to develop a communication strategy that will make it more prevailing, the entire firm must deal with four main interrelated challenges of global marketing strategy which include change in technology, complexity, competition and conscience. Technological changes make business operations and equipment outdated, and drives up costs and capital investments. This leads to complexity and companies have to contend with varied activities, such as strategic alliances and partnerships with suppliers, customers and competitors within often “divergent environmental contexts” (Craig & Douglas, 1996:5). In addition, confrontation of competition in global markets has become increasingly intense and it reduces the “scale advantages” of large firms and makes competitive advantage more difficult to defend (Craig & Douglas, 1996). Therefore, unpredictable technological advancements and global communication increases new competition which puts communication practitioners at locker-heads.

Grönroos and Lindberg-Repo (1998:5) on the other hand propose that there are four sources of brand messages which include: planned communication messages, product messages, service messages and unplanned messages. The planned messages have low credibility while unplanned messages have high credibility to the stakeholders. This implies that these topics on change complexity, competition, conscience and many others must be addressed initially during strategic plan development and throughout operational planning at a higher level of management.
Also planning should refresh cycles, the communication strategy should always be reviewed and updated as necessary (Grönroos & Lindberg-Repo, 1998). Reviewed strategy should influence associations held in peoples’ minds because it helps to shape their loyalty to the brand relationship. Therefore, it is the relationship with all stakeholders that is the asset, not just the customer (Washburn et al., 2004).

Since this relationship has the potential to give rise to future cash flows which in turn impact the linked brand’s future, the basis of that relationship’s value is the buyers’ and sellers’ knowledge about, experience with, and feelings for one another (Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 2004). This may require a certain level of narrowing connectedness between the two parties to facilitate a continuing dialogue that in turn strengthens their relationship (Grönroos, 2011). Again, meeting this deeper connectedness is likely if there is an appropriate communications system to generate the continuing dialogue through which the goals of both parties can be communicated in a mutual or reciprocal way (Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 2004). All in all, this suggests a need for a greater understanding of the holistic stakeholders demands which is key to the consumer’s value of linked brands.

Equally important, is the Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos (2004) claim on the necessity of creating value for the consumer which benefits the linked brands. As such, it is the marketing practitioners’ responsibility to use all the brand communication tools at their disposal to create positive associations for their linked brand and to remove or downplay the negatives (Keller, 1998). However, employees actions are not to be taken in isolation as there are many things besides marketing activity that affect peoples’ predisposition to buy or use a linked brand (Grönroos & Lindberg-Repo, 1998). The effect of communication and human and physical interactions with the stakeholders are important recycling touch points of every linked brand. This implies that there is no vacuum in which a linked company’s actions or messages cannot be hold accountable.

Furthermore, brand communications sources such as product reviews and opinions that cannot be controlled by the marketer do have an influence on target consumers. They are heart-felt. One communication strategy rarely fits all stakeholders’ needs.
Consequently, it is unlikely that in an increasingly demand-driven economy, super-consumers are redefining companies’ competitive arrangements (Yoon, 2011). Today consumers shop across many channels, with exponentially more information and a far more discerning mind-set towards the value they seek (Firat & Dholakia, 2010). Precisely, these consumers create novel groupings of seemingly-disparate linked brands that deliver a similar benefit for them (Yoon, 2011). In addition, all contribute to influence peoples’ perceptions and behaviour concerning brand choices. This is how far more linked entities are facing complexity in today’s stakeholder relationships. Getting to the reason why people prefer one linked brand from another is the ultimate goal of every linked firm’s marketing practitioners (Schmitt, 2012). Having discussed the linking strategy, the next section is on branding iceberg.

3.2.4 Branding Iceberg communication

The nature of ‘branding iceberg’ is a very important metaphor or tool useful in conceptualising the implications of functional values of a linked brand against its emotional attributes, moral versus profiteering. Like an iceberg, only a small proportion of the linked brand’s mass and power or value is visible, the rest is the intangible and hidden brand attributes. Beyond this, is the significance that effective brand-interaction requires attention to the hidden linked brand elements as much as to the visible ones. This communication “Iceberg Model” has basically two levels: the one visible (above) and the invisible (underneath) (Figure 3.2). Status, issues, means, funds, options and interests, are part of the visible and factual level of the invisible. They can be categorised as the “head” reaching factors. While on the other hand, the invisible and the emotional relationships consist of pleasure, intrapersonal conflicts, former experiences and perceptions, point of view, information, sympathy, needs, antipathy, fear, aggression and values. In the same way, these are “heart” related aspects.

According to Davidson’s (1998) “Brand Iceberg Theory”, the logo and the symbol of a linked brand take up only 15% of the whole with the iceberg part taking up 85% revealing the values, intelligence and culture of the linked brand. Correspondingly,
an iceberg is drawn with 15% visible above the water and the invisible 85% beneath the water (De Chernatony, 2006). Thus, in this study the argument is that a linked brand is not a name or a logo or a colour scheme or a design layout or a tag line or an advertising theme (see chapter 2). A linked brand lives in the stakeholders’ perception. Likewise, such linkages are from the invisible attributes of a linked brand. This may relate to the linked company culture and the customer experience which adds the mass below the surface of an iceberg. The comments are then placed above or below the water level, according to their customer visibility (Davidson, 1998).

**Figure 3.2: Communication iceberg model**

![Communication iceberg model](source: Davidson, 1998:376)

Similarly, the RMS Titanic was built at the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast and sank after hitting an iceberg in the North Atlantic on her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York in 1912 (Lord, 1986). The sinking of the Titanic acts as a potent symbol that has persisted well beyond the particular event in 1912. Titanic can be said to exemplify disaster and catastrophe, serve as a warning to blindly trusting technology, symbolise the active role of nature in the form of the Atlantic
ocean, and necessarily bring up feelings of nostalgia, perhaps as a result of its periodic retelling as a movie. Unwary, linked brand managers sink to the bottom by failing to pay attention to the invisible size of the iceberg, the intangible factors or non-product characteristics. This however enables two interpretations to be illustrated which suggest that managers normally talk about the visible part of the linked brands (the name, logo), rather than the unseen value adding processes inside the partnering organisations that give the linked brands competitive advantage (Lynch & De Chernatony, 2004). The intangible factors or non-product characteristics, which are not included in the linked brand’s organisational marketing strategies, are recognised as important factors influencing brand relationship organisational decisions. Therefore, the linked “agencies need to be more involved in post-sale communications because that is often what makes or breaks brand relationships” (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999:44).

The observation of main tenets by Allen, Fournier and Miller (2008:782) reveals that there are “three meaning makers that need to be considered for a full understanding of [linked] brands. The first two of these—cultures and consumers—are underrepresented in mainstream branding research. The third brand author is the familiar one: corporations that market [linked] brands”. In the past, the brand linkages brands were viewed as information and brand managers were the gatekeepers of knowledge and understanding (Keller, 2003a; Keller & Lehmann, 2006) of some invisible attributes. In contrast, a technologically empowered marketplace has now shifted the power base to consumers, and brands themselves have evolved to a new cultural platform where they serve not just as simplifying heuristics or risk reduction mechanisms for individual decision makers, but as socio-political ideology aspects (O’Guinn & Muñiz, 2004). Culture provides meaning on resources for the consumer to use in definition and orientation, not a blueprint for the same (Holt, 2002). These cultural platforms are the invisible part of linked brands. Most of the theories fail to foster and accommodate cultural supplementing, prevailing conceptions of branding and brand linkages (Allen et al., 2008).

A remarkable difference in today’s dimension of marketing is not successively based on what customers receive, functional, but instead on how customers receive it,
placing more significance on relational values (Homburg, Kuester & Krohmer, 2009). Today, it is widely acknowledged that how an organisation treats customers goes a long way to determine profitability in future (Hill, 2007). It is important for all stakeholders to have one face for a linked organisation in spite of touch points they may choose to use. Hill (2007:1) is in agreement and indicates that “for far too long, emotions have been concealed behind closed doors and ignored in favour of rationality and efficiency. But as businesses are forced to forge emotional connections in this age of commoditization, emotions are now front and centre”. However, the focus of marketing has shifted to promoting emotional and experiential attractions (De Chernatony, 2006; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). This means that what is more important is “not the technical qualities of the (linked) company”, but instead the subjective customer perception (Homburg, Kuester & Krohmer, 2009:117). With this being the case, communication takes on a particular importance for the establishment of external brand “communication which brings the brand to life” linkage (Gregory, 2003:39). Hence, by all counts, the iceberg illustrates that practitioners’ lack of understanding of the brand linkage is a result of incomplete and sometimes even misaligned revealed realities of the linked brand as experienced in today’s consumer, corporate, and cultural worlds.

Ries and Ries (2004) are of the opinion that a brand relationship occurs only in the mind and has no physical reality. Therefore, it can be deduced that the overriding perception of the brand relationship depends on the whole package, both the visible and invisible associative techniques.

3.3 Brand linkage associative techniques and effect

Inevitably, a brand linkage cannot be isolated from exposure to external information about related brands’ perceptions, but it becomes subject to indirect effects especially with the multiple sponsors within brand linkages. The multiple-sponsors form of brand linkage, is where more than two companies unify their efforts to form a strategic alliance and create a specific linkage technologically enhanced product or service. In other cases, event or sports sponsorship brand linkage can lead to positive spillover of brand equity (Simonin & Ruth, 1998). However, creating linkages
between brands may also make them vulnerable to negative spillover, as such, the brand linkages can be categorised by more than just strength of association (Laforet, 2010).

Associations linked to each linked brand are infinite hence, few examples are considered in this study. However, acquisition is one way of gaining market power; creating less formal linkages (alliances) is another. Creating linkages within the value system, comprising suppliers, channels and customers, enables the firm to capture more of the value created in the larger system of value generation (Laforet, 2010). For convenience, BP Petrol Company and Wimpy fast food restaurants merged in spite of their unrelated product or service offerings. Again, exclusive contracts with low cost suppliers, wide-scope distributors and anticipatory buyers are some of the options. Microsoft’s linkage with IBM in its early years was probably the major reason for its success. Also, other examples are portable sports audio devices by Philips and Nike, the draught beer system for home use introduced by Heineken and Krups, the Tide Buzz Ultrasonic Stain Remover by Black & Decker and Tide and the electric toothbrush by Oral B and Braun owned by The Gillette Company and Procter & Gamble since 2005. In such a context, the dimensions of brand relationship characteristics can be further understood by considering the current distinction of brand linkage. How many linked brands are ready for this?

3.3.1 Brand linkage, brand relationship, brand communication and brand management programs

Brand linkages are accentuated in various forms as connected to stakeholder relationships. They are essentially forged by connecting services to the linked brands through creating a service that differentiates itself from the competition. Thus, brand communication succeeds by achieving a high level of recognisability and a positive brand relationship among consumers via a promised level of quality and/or an added emotional benefit. Simultaneously, besides building the supplier’s trust, today’s intermediary represents one of the central marketing issues in both research and everyday practice when it comes to external stakeholders. Bibri (2008) claims that stakeholder concepts assist organisations to develop more effective strategies to
interact and communicate. Brand linkage programs include activities and events in support of specific causes that provide for brand-building opportunities among businesses. Such effective brand communication is accomplished within the positive realm of the linked organisation and its stakeholders.

It is often claimed that a brand will seek co-branding with a place if it adds commercial value to its operations. As such, companies can be interested in co-branding for other reasons that are not directly related to commercial value, such as expressing pride in their locality (there are stories about some firms based in Kista Science City (KSC) who begin every PowerPoint presentation with a few slides about KSC, supposedly due to their pride in belonging to the area) and for CSR reasons (especially larger companies), showing that they support their local city to express good citizenship. During the month of April 2014, in the build up to Freedom Day in Johannesburg, South Africa, Coca-Cola literally created rainbows to mark the 20th anniversary of the country’s democracy and the birth of the ‘Rainbow Nation’, a phrase coined by then-Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

However, there are mixed feelings for an organisation to form new brand linkages, it is no surprise that most stakeholders are impervious to change. Critical stakeholder attention is not restricted to a linked company’s decisions and actions, but also focuses on the decisions and actions of suppliers, consumers and politicians, which may spur criticism towards a linked company. Unlike the past, today CSR or CRI issues have become more unpredictable and changing. This includes, for example, child labour, gene-modified organisms (GMOs), hormones, union assembly rights and sweatshops which in practice are concerns across many if not all industries (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Previous concerns were attributed to society’s negative attention to particular industries which was termed ‘sin stocks’, including companies producing tobacco, alcohol, weapons and pornography (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). For instance, there are hundreds of antismoking organisations that seek sponsors for a wide range of activities, and each differs in markets, events, media profile and reputation.

Remarkably, the necessary brand management synergies for suppliers and brand
partners alike require in-depth understanding of these factors. Hence, the bigger the linked company, the more vulnerable it is to problems regarding its accountability. Its size can accentuate vulnerability, as local problems reflect on an entire brand linkage. It is often impossible to effectively communicate in a complex context of linked companies (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Internet access has changed the way consumers engage with brands to an extent that consumers are unrestrained in their brand relationships. Prosumers often prove to be co-producers and co-authors of services as well (see chapter 4). As businesses consider what brand linkage means to their organisation’s path to change, they must deliberate on these factors and be prepared for the results. A grave threat which all the linked brand owners have to guard against is the dilution of their brand names especially in co-branding, where utilisation of the linked brand name on products excluding those for which the brand name is registered will damage its individual standing (De Chernatony, 2006).

Many global brands fail to build emotional bonds with customers even though the basics such as price, product durability and service reliability are met. For example, the oil company, Shell, has had a disastrous impact on the human rights of the Ogoni people living in the Niger Delta. June 4, 2008 saw the Nigerian government deciding to replace the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) as operator of oil concessions in Ogoni areas. This decision offers an opportunity for ending one of the longest running conflicts between a multinational oil company and a local community in the Niger Delta (Sobrasuaipiri, 2014).

Accusations have also flown about the conduct of the global oil and gas company Shell in Nigeria which negatively impact on Ferrari. However, the negative effect of Shell is likely to be moderated by linking to Philip Morris International (the producer of the Marlboro brand), computer systems and hardware company Acer, anti-virus software developer Kaspersky, and Santander, one of the biggest banks in the world by market capitalisation (Mahalingam, 2011). As such, they created a positive snowball effect for Ferrari which rides on the activities of its sponsors. However, the best way Ferrari communicates its brand (in F1) was through various sponsors, whose names were strategically planted on the Scuderia Ferrari team’s racing cars. Therefore, Ferrari survived without open advertisements while other renowned car
companies, such as Toyota and Honda, were in F1 but eventually pulled out due to financial constraints (Mahalingam, 2011).

In this circumstance, effective communication helps marketing practitioners to maintain an enduring brand linkage with consumers and in turn may enhance value and brand relationship capacity. It is through communication that they try to reinforce their brand name in the mind of the target consumers to increase the intention to buy and recommend to others (Clow & Baack, 2010). In recent times, due to an overcrowded competitive market and media clutter, consumers are slow to recognise and respond to communication through conventional media. To break through the clutter, marketers are trying alternative media platforms to create a string bond with their consumers (Clow & Baack, 2010). Consequently, to forge bonds between a linked brand or linked brands and a consumer is the ultimate goal of marketing practitioners. Brand linkages have become the focal point of many companies’ marketing efforts and are seen as a source of market power, competitive leverage and higher returns. The relationship between consumers and the linked brands is described as a multifaceted construct to capture the richness of fabric from which brand relationships arise (Kapferer, 2009; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). While business practitioners are working to create a consistent message across their brand relationship which is at stake, consequently, they are more vulnerable to deliberate attacks (Bosman, 2010) as identified in Shell Company linkages. The following section discusses the theoretical framework within which brand linkage and relationships can be found.

### 3.3.2 Marketing and communication theories

Brand linkage associative techniques and effect are explained within the marketing and communication theories context. These theories provide some valuable insights for researchers of strategic communication. Importantly, marketing communication is one of the major elements of the outdated four ‘P’s (product, price, place and promotions) of marketing management literature, and is widely termed as ‘Promotion’ (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Egan (2007) argues that marketing communication is a way in which an (linked) organisation presents itself. In other
words, it is “the means by which a supplier of goods, services, values and/or ideas represents themselves to their target audience with the goal of simulating dialogue or other relationships” (Egan, 2007:1-2). With the help of marketing communication, marketing practitioners attempt to inform, persuade, incite and remind consumers directly or indirectly about their linked brand offers (Egan, 2007). In essence, communication strategists aim to inform, differentiate, remind, reassure and/or persuade an organisation’s target audience to take action (Egan, 2007).

Likewise, Kotler and Keller (2009) maintain that marketing communications can contribute to brand equity by establishing the (linked) brand in memory and craft a brand image. An example is the Coca-Cola spots of communication FIFA 2010 World Cup. Stressing celebrations, the marketing communication of the Coca-Cola family brand linkage is its “open happiness” campaign post 2010 FIFA. This section mentions the marketing literature that provides a basic understanding of the fundamentals of brand theory and brand management, before examining the literature that illustrates the applicability and utility of branding from a brand relationship communication standpoint. Also, it provides the underlying theory of brand relationship and the holistic definitions in order to derive a definition for brand relationship and communication.

Marketing and communication approaches develop within the framework of the changing business matrix. This shift is marked by complexity. Communicators of all kinds face new challenges of postmodern consumer behaviour (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). According to Proctor and Kitchen (2002), today’s firms are supposedly dealing with well-educated, streetwise, savvy, sophisticated audiences and stakeholders. There may be those who are uneducated (especially from rural parts of India, Africa or China) but the impact of the educated stakeholders is beyond companies’ control. They argue that almost irrespective of their level of educational attainment, they are informed and well able to judge the merits of products and services produced, the marketing communication that accompanies them, and hold a view about the corporate entity marketing them.

As such, some authors see strategic communication (or “interactive marketing
communication”) as an emerging new paradigm (Glynn & Woodside, 2009; Hallahan et al., 2007; Overton-de Klerk, 2010). Indeed, the approaches and methodologies implemented in both marketing and communication have in fact evolved with social practices and representations (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Therefore, in order to create a lasting relationship, messages should focus on the (linked) brand, customers’ needs and the organisation’s commitment to society (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). They can also interact to provide a theoretical and methodological background capable of reflecting the complexity of today’s social relationships and representations. This is strategic brand communications.

According to Gladden (2003), Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy (2008), strategic brand communications is important for several reasons. First, strategic brand communications considers all customer groups (and potential customer groups) that the brand is attempting to serve (Gladden, 2003; Irwin et al., 2008). It places the consumer first and the entire organisation adapts to focus on supporting the brand communications to reach the consumer (Irwin et al., 2008). With such a focus, the messages are more cohesive, consistent, and strategically driven than they would be otherwise. Also, strategic brand communications is important because it is crucial in maintaining the same voice in advertising messages over time (Gladden, 2003). Significantly, brand relationship communication needs to incorporate the concept of strategic brand communication because any linkage is important. For instance, Absa’s sponsoring of the South African national rugby team Springbok; which sport product sponsorship is attempting to create meaningful associations over time. Advertising about the brand (linkage) should consistently emphasise and attempt to promote and foster those key associations. This consistent communication is often referred to as “one voice communications” (Irwin et al., 2008).

Subsequently, the study on strategic communication deliberately brings together marketing and communication related aspects. As shown by scholars, if the two disciplines are converged in an environment of reduced complexity, messages may be aligned more effectively and efficiently so that corporate communication can be organised better (Oestreicher, 2009; 2010). It is suggested that cross-influential and multidimensional complexity can neither be dealt with by marketing, nor by
communication alone (Oestreicher, 2010). In fact, it also requests a stable coordinating structure and mutual organisation of messages and interventions, which need strategic planning, sophisticated tactical choice and insightful operational interventions. Ultimately, the creation of independence within interdependence is essential (Westphalen, 2004). Oestreicher (2009) concedes with Proctor and Kitchen, (2002) by maintaining that marketing and communication functions act independently by messages addressing specific needs of information, but are interdependent due to the strategic objective of organisational welfare.

3.3.3 Importance of listening and engaging with all the stakeholders via new media

Traditional brand relationship strategies have fallen short of reaching the goal of engaging consumers or stakeholders, due to continued fragmentation of the media landscape and a major shift in their mindset (Brodie, Illic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011:3; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Consumers have become far too skeptical of linked branded messages. Moving from what was still a mechanistic conception of the effects of brand relationship communication (be this political, social, or economic) based on ideas of economic approach and one-way (Aaker, 1997) to different theories about a consumer based approach (relational approach) (Fournier, 1998a; Keller, 2003b), to “interpretive communities” (Gabbot & Jevons, 2009; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009) and to more recent ideas about one-to-one interactive marketing communication approaches (De Chernatony, 2010; Evans & McKee, 2010; Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre, 2009), these approaches have developed contradictory conceptions of the individual in a debate that shows no signs of ending. In addition, perspectives on stakeholders' theory have moved away from an entity centric focus in which stakeholders are viewed as subjects to be managed (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002) toward more of a network based, relational and process-oriented view of company-stakeholder engaging, where at least there is consideration of mutuality, interdependence and power sharing (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009).

Increasingly consumers are at ease with social networks. As consumers are embracing the social space with increased sophistication they will expect like-minded
engagement from their linked brands (Evans & McKee, 2010). Gregory (2007:59) highlights some of the difficulties in this process and states that “stakeholders are usually regarded as targets rather than partners,” in the development of corporate linked brands; and that literature seldom provides guidance on how their involvement can be facilitated. This is perhaps reflective of traditional approaches which focus on the needs of the owner and the effects on their brand linkage. However, if stakeholders’ linked brand analysis is to reflect the emerging schools of brand thought such as the relational, or online community based-approaches, as identified by Brodie Ilic, Juric and Hollebeek (2011:1) and Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), external stakeholders become more crucial (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010). Social conversations have become related to purchase decisions both online or offline (Grönroos, 2011; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). This continues to increase exponentially as information is becoming cheap while attention is getting more expensive; similarly, word of mouth is gaining momentum because of social media influencers. For this reason, in the subsequent chapters, the study would like to present the impact of the Internet on brand relationship from the customers’ (stakeholders) point of view.

Although scholars discussed the customers’ use of new media, they nevertheless failed to articulate the listening and engaging aspect brought about by it. In addressing brand relationship, Macnamara (2010) argues that Chia and Synnott (2009), in their chapter on new media make some basic errors. For example, he picks the error that they define Twitter as a new media “that allows short posts (up to 140 words)”. This demonstrates a lack of up-to-date and detailed discussion on social media within public relations texts (Macnamara, 2010). Research is in most cases isolated as an enhancement rather than integrated into leverage practices and activities (Macnamara, 2010). “Consumer engagement represents a highly context-dependent, motivational state characterized by a specific intensity level at a given point in time” (Brodie et al., 2011:2). This is typical evidence that shows a great need to also contextualise marketing communication practices in a social media matrix for effective brand communication. Similarly, from the approaches to branding, Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), show that there is little knowledge which corresponds to the demands of the new digital market especially from the developing world context
such as South Africa. Needless to say, no theory integrates and provides an explanation for the brand linkage attributable to the digital age in brand relationships. Thus, a new model is needed for the contemporary social media age. The importance of new media prompting listening and engaging of customers, is a threat to existing branding and stakeholder relationship approaches. Thus, the next section discusses these limitations.

3.3.4 Limitations of branding and stakeholder relationship approaches

Branding is constantly on the move, both in theory and in practice (Heding et al., 2009). Brand linkage strategies have become challenging because of the social processes, hence, the more recent era highlights that not only individual customers, but also brand communities and other stakeholders (all stakeholders) constitute crucial resources for a firm (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009). It suggests that the linked brand value co-creation is a continuous, social, and highly dynamic and interactive process between the firm, the other brands and all stakeholders (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Ind & Bjerke, 2007; Jones, 2008; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Muniz & Schau, 2005). Therefore, this study advances through integrating (i) the stakeholder relationship theory (SRT), and (ii) the branding relational theory (BRT of brand relationship) in an attempt to examine brand ratings and brand perceptions as well as the communication perspective. These theories are discussed but not tested in this study.

Since the early days, when it was rooted in the marketing discipline, branding has become a strategic concern for corporations which requires a much more integrative approach which marketing alone cannot provide (Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). Laforet (2010:xxi) claims that “the way marketing evolves from being ‘production’ to ‘sales’ functions, to ‘customer orientation’ and now to ‘competition led’ has great implications for branding, which explains how it became central to the marketing discipline”. On reflection, in today’s knowledge-based economy, this process has led to an increasing number of different resources that are used and a broader circle of participants is involved than in the past (Laforet, 2010). Therefore, as portrayed in this study, a range of different disciplines and organisational functions need to be
engaged and inspired so that the organisation is motivated to deliver its linked brands promise throughout all activities.

3.3.4.1 The brand-relationship-interaction matrix model

Firstly, the brand-relationship-interaction matrix model (Jevons et al., 2002) reflects on the importance of the brand relationship as more than the product. According to Jevons, Gabbot and De Chernatony (2002) brand structures could be described as the associations made by customers between the brands involved by way of classification of a brand-relationship-interaction matrix. Brand linkage is described as either strong or weak while business relationships among those brands are either close or distant. A construct is presented that accommodates one of the four conditions: strong/close, strong/distant, weak/close and weak/distant brand linkages (Jevons et al., 2002).

This classification demands the brand pairing to be assessed into two insightful dimensions (see Figure 3.3). However, such a given structure fails to assess the strategic underpinnings required for managers to make decisions among the linked brands because it is merely based on theoretical presentation. As indicated earlier, the present study discusses this gap to show the plight of the bigger picture but it is not directly operationalised.

On the other hand, most theories of stakeholders are based on the assumptions that the organisation should have some kind of relationship with the stakeholders, and that the nature of that relationship affects organisational legitimacy (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010). Relationships and reputation are all qualitatively understood. Nevertheless, very few scholars go on to relate the branding and stakeholder relationship approaches.

7However, the key terms of the model showing the linkage existing between brands are as follows: Supervisory in cell 1 means that partnership is formal and strong control is exerted, often through ownership of partnering brands. Advisory in cell 2 implies that the brand alliance control is informal and weaker and the business relationship is close. Co-operation linkage in cell 3 refers to interaction between businesses either formal or informal where control is strong but between brands is weak. Transactional linkage in cell 4 refers to control and interaction that depends on market conditions only (Jevons et al., 2002:8-13).
Brand linkages have frequently been characterised using metaphorical concepts. One stream of research has focused in the personality of the brand (Aaker, 1997; Heding et al., 2009; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). Another stream of research has used the interpersonal relationship theory to extend the view of brand personality to the personification of the brand as a relational partner (Fournier, 1998a; Heding et al., 2009). This theory has inspired this study and deserves more clarity. For Fournier, the holistic character of consumer-brand relationships implies that the meaning of a given brand relationship could be a function of other relationships, not only those directly established with the (here linked) brands (consumer-to-consumer or business-to-business). In the same way, the term brand community has been introduced to define the multiple social structures and networks inspired by a brand linkage (Andersen, 2005; Cova & Cova, 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Nevertheless, the emotion-rooted approach remains underdeveloped compared to other transaction-oriented approaches which emphasise the functional aspects rather than the affective processes of brand relationships.

### 3.3.4.2 The brand relationship theory

Secondly, Consumer-Brand Relationship Quality theory has emotion-driven dimensions. The notion of brand relationship quality was introduced by Fournier (1998a) and since then, many researchers have been inspired by this emotion-rooted framework and have made diverse empirical contributions. The brand relationship needs to be of a high quality. She advances the brand relationship theory by putting forward the brand relation quality (BRQ) construct. The BRQ construct focuses on the quality, depth and strength of the consumer–brand
relationship, leveraging ideas from interpersonal relations, including five relationship facets beyond the commitment and affect (love/passion) levels typically qualifying brand relations: intimacy, partner quality perceptions, behavioural interdependence, attachment, and self-connection are identified as influencing the durability and quality of the relationship. The relationship is basically meaning-based, reflecting the reciprocal nature of a relationship (Fournier, 1998a). It is a model that depicts how relationships are volatile process phenomena constantly under the influence of other factors. These are the most important aspects of the establishment of the relationship, but Fournier (1998a) adds the understanding of the frailty of any relationship as she points towards all the actions from both participants in the relationship, which affect the stability and durability of the relationship. Hence, she did not only introduce a whole new way of conceptualising linked brands, she also introduces the management of the brand as an ongoing, complex and indeed unstable process. In particular, brand relationship research, grounded as it is in the conception of consumers as active meaning makers, helped pave the way for the paradigm of co-creation embraced in brand marketing today (Allen et al., 2008).

Brand relationship theory has subsequently been extended by research into the way, respectively, (linked) brand personality and the expected brand relationship norms, influence the brand relationship (Heding et al., 2009). In ‘The effects of brand relationship norms on consumer attitudes and behaviour’ (Aggarwal, 2004) different fundamental perceptions of relationship norms influence the evaluations of marketing actions. In social psychology a distinction is made between two different kinds of relationships with distinctively different relationship norms:

- **Exchange relationships** are based on economic factors. People in this kind of relationship expect money in return for a favour or expect a comparable favour promptly.
- **Communal relationships** are based on social factors. Here, money in return for a favour is not expected. Benefits are not compared.

According to Aggarwal (2004), the line of thinking behind this research is that a brand is evaluated as a potential relationship partner in – more or less – the same manner as a human being is a member of society. The research extends to the idea
that a relationship is a complex and volatile entity. In a brand relationship management focus, it is beneficial to consider both the brand personality and the implied relationship norms and make all marketing actions consistent accordingly (Heding et al., 2009). For this reason, Grönroos (2011) asserts that building a relationship with customers in order to retain them is less expensive. Nonetheless, after realising the gap left by Fournier (1998a), Goh (2004 in Heding et al., 2009) argues that no empirical research has attempted to investigate the underlying nature of brand relationships. It is important to define the underlying nature of these relationships and examine how these relationships are formed. Clearly, a consideration of these dimensions along which brand relationships vary can do much to broaden the scope of these inquiries.

Scholars argue that the big challenge is, however, to transform the above described characteristics of the relational approach into managerial implications that are actually adaptable to real-life situations (Bengtsson, 2003; Heding et al., 2009). Giddens (1991:93) proposes that a "pure relationship cannot exist without substantial elements of reciprocity". Equally, as Fournier, Dobscha and Mick (1998) contend that the notion of reciprocity is of fundamental importance in order to make the relationship discourse trustworthy. Moreover, Balmer (2001) and Bengtsson (2003) argue that there was no reciprocity between the consumer and a human being and a symbol talking. The appropriateness of conceiving the linked brand as a meaning-based construct created in a dynamic and dyadic process between linked brand and consumer is much easier than adapting these thoughts to actual branding strategies. It is without doubt that relationship discourse should be understood in the light of a broader movement where linked companies seek to personify themselves (Bengtsson, 2003). Specifically, Bengtsson (2003) disagree with the use of the term relationship and suggest it is not the best term to describe the interactions between consumers and inanimate objects such as (linked) brands.

While Fournier (1998a) accepts the relationship between people (consumers) and objects (linked brand) as two-way (person-object), Wallendorf and Arnould (1986) suggest relationships that are between objects such as (linked) brands, are three-way (person-object-person). Equally, this is questioned by O’malley and Tynan
(2000) who argue that close relationships cannot develop between consumers and all linked brands simply because close relationships are special, unique and very rare. Underwood, Bond and Baer (2001) note that attaching oneself to an object or linked brand can serve as an expression of connection to others thus a symbol of expression in interpersonal relations, rather than a replacement for interpersonal relationships. In this sense, the brand relationship connection is understood as a form of social relationship. Therefore, the linked brand as an object will contribute to the meaning of the relationship. In disparity to Fournier, this literature suggests that the term “love” has strong interpersonal associations and it is likely that consumers only understand and identify love as a concept that exists between two human beings (Bengtsson, 2003).

Thus, Bengtsson (2003) proposes for the evaluation of brand relationship quality that the word love be replaced with the term fondness, which represents an act of involving. According to Fournier (1998a), commitment which is an important attribute for maintaining strong and stable consumer-brand relationships, is critically reviewed for its lack of reciprocity (Bengtsson, 2003). Bengtsson (2003:155) persists that the lack of any real reciprocity on the part of the (linked) brand has problematic consequences for Fournier’s (1998a) facets of brand relationship quality and, in particular, for love and passion, interdependence, commitment, and intimacy. For instance, Visa, whose sponsorships have helped it to gain worldwide recognition as a brand, most notably with the Olympics, but also with others such as the National Football League and horse racing's Triple Crown is continuing to build its stable of sponsor relationships. Visa also serves as the key ingredient to programs that offer reward points and airline miles tied to purchases, and include partners ranging from hotel chains and airlines to universities and charities. “A (linked) brand cannot respond in an individual manner to a request from a consumer and therefore lacks an important attribute that characterises human relationships” (Bengtsson, 2003:155).

Although the brand relationship quality contrast presented by Fournier (1998a) is heavily debated in literature, the literature behind the relational approach is very accurate and detailed when it comes to methods and scientific background (Heding
et al., 2009). The same literature does not, however, give much advice when it comes to managing the linked brand, nor does it provide insight into best practice case examples: “Relationship marketing is powerful in theory but troubled in practice” (Fournier, Dobscha & Mick, 1998:44). Indeed, in a consumer society, linked brands become part of the nonverbal language of social communication to the extent that their consumption is routinely implicated in and connected with identity and the self (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). This dates back to at least since Gardner and Levy’s (1955) writing stridently indicated that brands have meaning for consumers over and above their physical functional characteristics, and has been accepted in marketing literature.

Interestingly, in spite of criticism on relational theory, Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) claim that there should be no doubt of the importance of the relational approach since it seems almost impossible to find a brand management publication from 1998 and onwards that does not quote Fournier’s (1998a) brand relationship theory. This implies that getting the management of the relations-based brand right should start with the implementation of the assumptions behind this theory. Scholars admit that (linked) brand is perceived as being endowed with a personality, the brand–consumer exchange is assumed to be dyadic, and ‘dialogue’ and ‘friendship’ seem to be appropriate metaphors (Heding et al., 2009). The personality of the linked brands as well as the norms and values of the consumer strongly influence the evaluation of the brand linkage’s actions. These assumptions should serve as guidelines when managing the brand linkages in question. The linked brands acting as a true friend means that the marketer should be open and honest about the motivation for approaching the consumer and in return offer the consumer benefits corresponding to the inconvenience. While being very aware not to exploit the consumer’s confidence and being aware to return any favour in one way or the other (Heding et al., 2009). Moreover, a consumer willing to ‘share secrets’ should receive some benefits and be treated as a friend in order for the brand relationship to develop progressively. ‘Quid pro quo’ is a central principle in the relational approach (Heding et al., 2009). Therefore, the relational approach implies a major paradigmatic shift in brand management and can be identified as the one approach leading brand management into the twenty-first century in which the current study is
centered.

Furthermore, Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) suggest three reasons for identifying the relational approach as an important indicator of a paradigm shift. First, it is the first approach applying solely qualitative methods. Second, the approach is meaning-based. Third, it takes brand linkage research into the domain of the consumer, emphasising a holistic view of the consumer. The interest in consumers’ life worlds is associated with a phenomenological research tradition. For these three reasons, they perceive the relational approach as a trailblazer for the two forthcoming approaches, namely the community approach and the cultural approach. These approaches rely on meaning created through peoples’ experience with linked brands thus: the concept of meaning is often opposed to the concept of information (Allen et al., 2008).

Information is considered external stimuli to the consumer, while meaning stems from the inner reality, life and identity of the consumer: “Phenomenology can conceive consumption not merely as behavioural response to external stimuli but as a meaning-directed behaviour driven by emotions, feelings and fantasies” (Hackley, 2003:112). According to Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), a phenomenological approach adapts a psychological view of the individual. Thus, the relational approach is based on an idiosyncratic view of meaning creation, based on a basic idea that reality construction takes place in the mind (Keller, 2003a; Heding et al., 2009). The notion of meaning is also central to the community approach and the cultural approach, but in these approaches meaning is found in social interaction with others and in the surrounding culture and society, respectively (Allen et al., 2008; Heding et al., 2009). In fact, as depicted by Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) the relational approach is the first meaning-based approach of the three.

The above views imply that the emphasis moves away from the domain of the marketer and into the ‘chaotic’ domain of consumers or stakeholders (Heding et al., 2009). Even though the managerial implications of the relational approach are not very concrete, the approach leads the way towards new horizons where the role of consumers’ social interaction (the community approach) and their cultural context
(the cultural approach) are being conceptualised and translated to managerial implications. These approaches also feature a variety of qualitative methods that have become acceptable by the launch and immense success of the relational approach (Heding et al., 2009). It seems that brand management in a way ‘let go’ of the brand linkage via this approach. The linked brand is suddenly ‘out there’ in a chaotic and ever-changing context (Heding et al., 2009). In the previous approaches, the concrete interaction between linked brand and consumer is being investigated from different angles and there is a focus on defining what a brand linkage is (Jevons et al., 2002). In the relational, the community and the cultural approaches brand management research seems to expand focus to different scenarios (consumers’ individual life worlds, social interaction with other consumers, and cultural context, respectively) where the linked brand is not the ‘main character’ or the starting point of the research, but merely a factor like many others in complex individual, social and cultural networks (Heding et al., 2009; Jevons et al., 2002).

Importantly, the management of a brand relationship is a dynamic process, leaving room for the negotiation of both similar and conflicting views and many different players (Brodie, 2009). It goes without saying that it is difficult to manage in practice. The approach is meaning-based, implying brand linkage value is co-created in an ongoing process between the linked brand and the consumer. This means that the marketer has to let go of total control of the linked brands and incorporate the meaning created by consumers in the management of the brand linkage (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008). Furthermore, such management is considered a very dynamic process where meaning is constantly negotiated under the influence of the many factors influencing both human and brand relationships (Heding et al., 2009). For this reason, this study chose to focus on brand linkage as the main factor influencing brand relationship and communication.

In truly understanding the consumers lies a risk of information overload, while leaving the marketer with too much knowledge to incorporate into the brand communication. The approach, however, also contains the opportunity to go far beyond the notion of brand loyalty and understand how and why the linked brand is being consumed on a continuous basis or if it is being consumed (Heding et al.,
If one wants to reap the benefits of this understanding, as Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) posit, it is pivotal to treat customers as true friends. The real-life brand relationship should reflect the prerequisites of the relational approach in the sense that the linked brand–consumer exchange is seen as a dyadic and dynamic process. The consumer should accordingly be treated as an equal partner and not just a source of information (nor as second class citizens who are victims of marketing) (Heding et al., 2009).

The relational approach has some very profound consequences for the future development of the scientific discipline of brand management (Heding et al., 2009). It opens the way to further development of the discipline embodied in two further approaches: the community approach and the cultural approach (Heding et al., 2009). Recent research continues to build upon basic relationship fundamentals, exploring, for instance, the rules and biases associated with communal versus exchange relationship templates, accommodation and tolerance processes in relationship development, relationship transgressions, relationship dissolution processes, personal relationship styles and their influence in the brand relationship space, sociopolitical brand relationships, ethnic and cultural differences in brand relationship behaviours, methods for relationship strength measurement, and the functions and provisions of relationships with linked brands (Fournier, 1998b; Heding et al., 2009).

3.3.4.3 The community and social approaches

Thirdly, brandfests\(^8\), brand communities and community brands are central. Due to

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\(^8\) Brandfests refer to a ‘proactive’ strategy used by marketers to establish consumers’ interaction with brand(s) that can facilitate the involvement of a brand community (Heding et al., 2009:189). They are based on consumers’ shared experiences and are usually co-created by consumers and marketers. Brand communities are identified on commonality or identification among their members, including non-geographic devotion to or against the brands. The communities are often virtual, boundaryless as they can be based on invisible social context communities that are based on wide ranging commonalities such as kinship ties, occupational connections, religious beliefs or leisure pursuits. It can be a very powerful force affecting brand value, because the meaning found in social engagement makes it central dimension. For example, consumers are able to hijack a brand and endow it with brand meaning very far from that intended by the marketers as in the case of Apple Newton brand.
technological explosions, the traditional forms of community such as village, neighbourhood, family and religion, began to be challenged as they were developed within a restricted geographical area (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011; Cova & Cova, 2002; 2009; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Indeed from the growth of mass media has emerged a brand community without boundaries. Anderson (2006) admits that most modern communities have to be imagined because they will never meet or know most of the other members, but in their minds they will develop a strong sense of communion with each other. Similarly, due to media’s ability of spreading the sense of community, members do not have to be physically close anymore, as media is capable of uniting physically separated individuals (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Thus, it becomes apparent that these communities have become more than a place. They are a ‘mind place’.

Brand communities are able to provide members with positive feelings and entail consumer-consumer interaction (McAlexander et al., 2002). As such, they have strong cultures and often times complex rituals, traditions and behavioural expectations built on communal enthusiasm deriving from shared feelings and passions for a brand linkage (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001). Although linked brand communities may be built by marketers (McAlexander et al., 2002), it appears that brand communities are interestingly also consumer-created (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001) and emerge on consumer initiative (Amine & Sitz, 2004). Individuals seem to have great interest in this new form of community. Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) indicate that the quintessential brand community pivots around an already existing linked brand and is usually established and run by enthusiastic volunteers. In such a scenario, the three markers of community can also be observed at so-called brandfests, where a proactive marketer establishes consumer interaction that can facilitate the evolvement of a brand community (Heding et al., 2009). For example, McAlexander, Shouten and Koenigs’ (2002) study of the intentional building of brand communities offers insight into the possibilities of a proactive marketer. If the marketer understands and respects the dynamics of a brand community it is possible to proactively create a platform that facilitates a brand community to evolve. Andersen (2005) notes that brand communities are not restricted in a business-to-consumer context, but they can also be found in a business-to-business matrix.
(Brodie et al., 2011). In this case, small and medium-sized enterprises could use brand communities for their own benefit allowing individual entrepreneurs to gain competitive advantage over bigger established linked brands.

Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) observe that while the existing communities typically consist of die-hard linked brand enthusiasts, brand linkages become masters and can compete in their business industries through MySpace and YouTube. For example, MySpace and YouTube are also interesting cases which linked brands may consider if they want to gain insight into how the premises of the community approach have changed whole industries by fundamentally changing how consumers interact. Nevertheless, the mere existence of these brand communities simply pinpoints the active influence of ordinary people in achieving a brand community (Amine & Sitz, 2004). Although these brand linkages’ communities display the same characteristics as the brand communities and the brandfests, but they add another dimension to the scope of the approach, since no marketer exists in the traditional sense of the word (Heding et al., 2009). Interestingly, the principles of the community approach still apply in digital space.

A brand community does not define itself in opposition to the surrounding society, as opposed to a subculture of consumption (Heding et al., 2009). Andersen (2005) suggests a conceptual model for involving relationship marketing and web-enhanced brand community activities in business-to-business markets, extending the concept of brand community beyond business-to-consumer marketing where it is better established. He also claims that brand communities offer another communication channel and relationship to faithful users. The bottom line is that irrespective of the nature or size of the linked brand, groups of people with distinct characteristics may emerge, as individual stakeholders are getting stirred up to meet and form relationships with other people who share the same perceptions for certain brand linkages. Hence, Brandão, Muniz, Filho, Rocchiccioli, Souki and Livramento (2011:3) argue that “This broader ‘transcending’ relational perspective, in particular, recognizes that consumer behaviour is centered on customers’ and/or other stakeholders’ interactive experiences taking place in complex, co-creative environments”. The essence of staying competitive in this contemporary market is
determined by how linked brands are willing to highly regard and fulfill their promise.

3.4 Formation of brand linkages’ meaning for brand relationships-interaction

All linked brands express meaning. Compulsively, the brand linkages reinforce their meaning through all of their actions as linked and/or unlinked brand touch points. Academics and practitioners alike investigate how to measure a brand’s value, often referred to as brand equity. Rust, Lemon and Zeithaml (2004:110) argue that the usage of the term brand equity may be “a fundamentally product-centered concept” but it does not capture drivers of customer behavior fully. One of the major challenges in today’s market place is to cope with the pervasiveness of uncontrolled communications. Particularly, linking brand associative techniques and effecting momentum is the main idea behind CSR. Though CSR is chiefly all activities undertaken by a company that affect the way consumers perceive the company (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011), the formal brand linkages which people rely on are also influenced every day by the informal conversations, news stories and publicity, as well as by experiences they have while using or shopping for the linked brands (Brown, 2010). Unfortunately, opinions move faster than the facts due to the presence of fast communication. The result is a unique opportunity for these linked brands to compare the meaning and messages of their brand communication strategy with the brand linkages of a cross section of the market (Vargo & Lusch, 2010).

As curiosity increases, people are constantly exposed to word-of-mouth messages about brand linkages and products from a host of sources (Bosman, 2010). One of the greatest challenges for a linked business is that their stakeholders may seek advice about the linked brands from friends and family, or they may spontaneously offer their own recommendations. Unfortunately, as Brown (2010) indicates, consumers do not expect a linked brand’s advertising to be objective, but they do expect their friends and relatives to provide an unbiased view. A piece of advice from a family member or close friend will have more influence than an anonymous comment on a Website (Brown, 2010). More specifically and more recently, Vargo and Lusch (2010) recognised a need to overcome misconception problems
associated with the notion of a ‘producer,’ as a creator of value, versus a ‘consumer,’
as a destroyer of value, and have reflected this in one of the newer central beliefs of
service-dominant (S-D) logic: all social and economic actors are resource
integrators. The authors believe strongly in the collaboration of producers and
consumers. As their first step, Vargo and Lusch (2010) suggested transcending of
the ‘goods’ verses ‘services’ divide with ‘it is all about service’. They also discovered
that all parties such as businesses, individual customers and households engaged in
economic exchange are similarly resource-integrating, service-providing enterprises
that have the common purpose of value co-creation. The authors conclude that “it is
all business-to-business” (Vargo & Lusch, 2010).

When planning a major purchase, there is a possibility that consumers study articles,
product reviews, and the results of their testing in both print and online sources
(Brown, 2010). Availability of such vast multimedia can also tap them into a wide
network of conversations online, from casual comments in chat rooms to expert
comment in blogs or online publications (Brown, 2010; Igniyte, 2014). While it is
difficult as well as complex for advertising to match the impact of an unsolicited
testimonial, marketers have much to gain from harnessing the power of word-of-
mouth (Bosman, 2010). Therefore, the word-of-mouth has the power both to build
brand linkages and to harm them, and there is great risk in practitioners attempting
to manipulate this form of communication.

Brown (2010) warns that brand owners should definitely listen and learn from what
consumers are saying cautiously, but if they go too far in trying to influence
consumers’ conversations, they risk not only contradicting the benefit of the use of
the word-of-mouth, but turning it against their linked brands. If there is a good
outcome of the brand linkage, the key factor that determines the power of a given
piece of the word-of-mouth is the trust which the receiver (consumer) places in the
source (Brown, 2010). It is therefore clear that trust may be rooted in a valued
relationship or in perceptions of expertise or impartiality from brands (Vargo & Lusch,
2010). Partnering companies that are perceived responsible would be able to use
ethicality as one of the brand benefits, allowing consumers to feel satisfied due to
responsible behaviour in their relationship with society (Kapferer, 2008).
Apart from the word-of-mouth as linked-brand source, experience is foundational to the linked brand’s marketing communication promise. As Brown (2010) posits, no brand (linkage) will be successful for long without a good product that delivers on expectations. For this reason, he adds that great marketing behind a weak product will only heighten the levels of dissatisfaction when it fails to live up to the claims made in any communication. A great product, on the other hand, provides the perfect material for marketing to connect (Brown, 2010). In effect, the experience of using a brand linkage should then contribute to practical refreshing and reinforcing the brand associations every time a user comes into contact with it. Not surprisingly, prior product experience is one of the factors which counts as a primary driver of purchase in many categories (Brown, 2010).

Additionally, Gilmore and Pine II (2009) argues that the new way of assimilating the desired brand (linkage) values into the whole business requires systems, structures and plans based on comprehensive gap analysis, and a mobilisation programme designed to exploit the particular skills of the linked brand experts to engage the hearts and minds of everyone as ‘brand capital generators’. For instance, Microsoft has joined the coupon craze popularised by sites such as Groupon and Living Social with the launch of a new service called Bing Deals. The program is not an in-house creation built from scratch, but is being made available through a brand linkage between Microsoft and The Dealmap, a deal-tracking service that aggregates local deals, coupons and discounts from over 300 different sources and daily deal websites (Perez, 2011). All this is important when companies need to consistently align their brand linkages and indeed focus on the attempt to make desired brand linkage values as practical as possible. Interestingly, it is also consistent with Kotter and Hesket (1992) who, in their findings show that over an 11year period, companies that put the emphasis on customers, employees and shareholders significantly outperformed those that focused on only one or two of these groups. Often, a company’s reputation is derived from all stakeholders relevant to the linked brands, extending beyond merely the end customer to focus on a wide range of stakeholders. As this discussion turns its emphasis toward consistency of the brand linkages; if this distinction on the value between producers or consumers continues,
the indirect nature of exchange will be accelerated as the beneficiaries and direct contributors of an exchange become even more separated.

3.5 Chapter summary

The ability to make right decisions regarding brand linkages in order to affect brand relationships with stakeholders is no longer an easy task. This chapter classifies the various forms of brand linkages, and also highlights that various forms of brand linkage strategies exist which are often used interchangeably. As such, small local markets are being replaced by large markets or rather the world is becoming one large global market village (community) implying the difficulties to escape the vagaries of time. This chapter argued that it is not just the size of the market that is changing, but also the extent and pace of inescapable changes. The challenge of frequency of change makes adaptation to market needs a source of grave concern to both practitioners and academics. This frequency and quality of interactions shapes the consumer’s desire to take the relationship to the next level which may be a purchase or recommendation intent (brand advocacy). Entities are progressively larger and more global in their orientation of brand linkages which comes from everywhere in the company’s internal and external influences. This makes stakeholder relationship communication management difficult to maintain, in an organisation of any size. The chapter also presented a review of the theories to be employed in this study, such as branding iceberg communication. The sections on branding and stakeholder relationship approaches outlined the components of brand relationship theory (the brand-relationship-interaction matrix model, the relational, the community, and the cultural approach). In this global branding, unwary linked companies are caught up at crossroads. Participation of stakeholders is hopefully sustainable whenever there is brand engagement in people’s daily commitments. From the above discussion, brand linkages, brand ratings and brand perceptions are complex issues because what applies to some linked brands (organisations) may not necessarily apply to others in a different brand assessment context.

Chapter 4 will present brand ratings and brand perceptions with an overview of different aspects related to them.
CHAPTER 4
Brand ratings and brand perceptions: the role of brand communication

“The realities of the market and consumer phenomena are very complex”.
(Pepe Martinez, 2012:6)

4.1 Introduction

Earlier chapters have suggested that the dynamics surrounding brand communication, brand linkages and brand relationships suggest the need for more effective brand communication goals, which in turn leads towards the practical part of the present study: brand assessment. The purpose of this chapter is also to review and critique relevant studies on brand ratings and perceptions. First, the concept of brand ratings and brand perception is introduced and its characteristics are discussed in relation to linked brands. Specifically, this entails the influence of an increasingly-fragmented media environment, and the social media, on linked brands.

This chapter discusses the role of brand communication through assessment and interpretation of the literature and practice. It will discuss reasons required for companies to concentrate their efforts on creating strong brand communication linkages which are flexible, as change and its consequences become more and more inevitable. This will be followed by a discussion on the importance of brand perceptions and the influence of social media. Also, the roles of the strategic brand relationship and brand communication in a contemporary business matrix are presented. The different applications of social media in contemporary organisations’ brand linkages and brand relationships are also highlighted in this section. Brand choice overload, the rise of informed citizen consciousness, citizen consumers and the relationship between brand linkage, brand ratings and brand perceptions conclude the chapter.
4.2 Brand ratings in the context of a technology-enabling environment and consumer-centered transparency

Brand perception refers to brand associations that exist in the minds of the consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2009; Schmitt, 2012). The association is based on conceived relationships boosted by brands and relies on objects, symbols and other intangible phenomena with which marketers link people to the brand (Schmitt, 2012). This relationship between consumer and brands depends on perceptions and can be interpreted in reality as relationships (Schmitt, 2012:11). When consumers perceive a brand as good they will rate it positively (Kotler & Keller, 2009). People buy brands not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean (Fournier, 1998a).

As indicated in previous chapters, technological advances have redefined and changed the roles of brands and consumers (Martinez, 2012). Existing literature on these advances discusses the importance of assessing the brand as critical, but little is known about brand linkages’ impact on brand ratings and brand perceptions from the developing world’s point of view. Generally, there are two types of measurable outcomes of brand communication: first the effect on sales or business; second consumer responses (Schmitt, 2012). Brand ratings may entail the measurement of the strength, risk and future potential of a brand relative to its competitors by means of scale (Chrzan & Rein, 2011:1). Compared to previous studies, it is important for the brand professionals to measure the sustainability of brand strategy (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004:18; Arvidsson, 2006). Specifically, in this study, to assess what the consumer’s responses are towards the brand linkage strategy. Hence, brand rating is not only a prerequisite for an organisation but it is also a practical approach to determine whether the goal of brand linkage strategy is achieved or not. According to Chrzan and Rein (2011:1), there are different ratings for example, for a brand and some number of its competitors, measures such as:

- Brand awareness and familiarity
- Brand choice or share, and
- Brands’ ratings on a set of attributes (hard or functional and soft or emotional attributes, price).
A recent study evaluated 1,200 of all joint-marketing activities in which two or more brands are simultaneously presented to the consumer. It was indicated that coherence between brand personality profiles is a strong predictor of brand alliance evaluations (Van der Lans, Van den Bergh & Dieleman, 2014:26). It further emphasises that previous studies’ oversimplifications of a complex reality provides misleading knowledge about the effect of brand linkages. In 2013, access to the Internet exceeded two billion four hundred thousand people, 34% of the world’s population (World Stats, 2013). As such companies are no longer the sole source of brand communication because social media platforms offer an opportunity to search for information and communicate in multidimensional, two-way, peer-to-peer communication (Aaker, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Moerdyk, 2012; Weber, 2009). For instance, the Millward Brown study in South Africa shows that 20% of advertising (brand communication) did not work because it impacted negatively on the brands it meant to promote (Moerdyk, 2012). Rather, such advertising strategies’ failures provide evidence that there are more complex facts about brand communications which have direct or indirect spillover effects. This is a sign that communication distractions are in huge supply while the marketing message is in low demand. This is an issue that literature has not fully investigated (Macnamara, 2010).

4.3 A new influencer of linked brand perception: The rise of the social media

Everything a linked brand does is communication to its stakeholders. Thus, mass and personal communication threatens linked brands’ assessments. It is challenging the way linked brands communicate and could also be threatening due to conflict of interest that may arise between linked brands and their customers. Purchase behavior and brand choice is a result of brand attitude or perception (Solomon, 2009). As the structure, composition and many offerings in some markets proliferate with me-too brands, it is difficult to distinguish between products or services (Fill & Jameison, 2006:12). The most potent way to cut through the clutter is to use the parent brand as “an umbrella, to provide greater support and leadership in the promotion of any offerings … emerging strength of corporate marketing” (Fill & Jameison, 2006:12). In studying how brand perception influences the linked brand,
there is a need to look at what the rise of social media entails. Certainly, the collaborative technologies now define contemporary marketplaces (Hudson, Roth & Madden, 2012). Technologies commonly called social media, offer a viable approach to driving changes in deeper business processes across its wide range of applications (Evans & McKee, 2010). Complexity and change are the two defining characteristics of the communication revolution. Cell phones and social networks now allow people to connect and organise like never before. “People with access to relevant information, are today questioning every form of communicative authority” (Andersen, 2006:21). Hence, this extends beyond marketing communication for most linked organisations.

In fact, brand communication history is replete with examples of changed environments that were recognised too late for brand linkage to successfully adapt. Today’s linked brands cannot hide anything from consumers. The control of brand communication is increasingly being shared or passed on to individuals, local organisations and communities (Aaker, 2011; Schmitt, 2012; Verwey, 2001). In the light of this, a comparison between traditional and web 2.0 affects the viability of traditional brand strategies (Sonnega & Moon, 2011:4) and clarifies the prevalence of brand strategy shifts in Table 4.1 (Verwey & Muir, 2012).

Table 4.1: Shifts in brand strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Web 2.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-planned</td>
<td>Serendipity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand loyalty</td>
<td>Brand reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand promotion</td>
<td>Brand defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term asset</td>
<td>Short term socio-cultural entity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand differentiation</td>
<td>Brand relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand strategies are devised</td>
<td>Brand strategies are discovered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Verwey & Muir, 2012:16)

In such a communication revolution, it is no longer a question of monologue and
reach, but of dialogue and recognition (Anderson, 2006, Fill & Jameison, 2006:10). In essence, it is the social ongoing feedback that influences any marketing of the linked brand. “Contemporary businesses, cause-based organisations, and governing authorities are increasingly meeting the challenge of “opening up” and operating with their customers and stakeholders—often through a similarly empowered and connected workforce—to deliver self-evident value that gets talked about” (Evans & McKee, 2010:xviii). The erosion of being loud and aggressive is a mass-media phase-out model. Evans and McKee (2010) argue that the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies (the ‘Collaboration Web’) have the set of tools that make it easy for people to create and publish content, to share ideas, to vote on them, and to recommend things to others. “Web 3.0 (the ‘Semantic Web’) is based on the attempt to capture the meaning (semantics) of information and to cross-link knowledge by using so called meta-data (context-data) making it possible for the Web to ‘understand’ and satisfy the requests of people and machines to use its content” (Hafkesbrink & Evers, 2011:4).

Consequently, the proposed Web 4.0 is inevitably the latest cross-link intelligent application with products, services, locations, “of the real world in transforming the Internet to … a ‘Ubiquitous Outernet’” (Hafkesbrink & Evers, 2011:5). Hence, the well-established norms of business marketing are undergoing a forced transition. Consumers’ attention span is forever declining (Jackson & McKibben, 2008). They can easily disengage within many channels available. This means that brands are now faced with a consumer who is difficult to define, understand and please. It is practically the consumers themselves who decide what is relevant to them rather than the marketers. Anything irrelevant is blanked out. Therefore, “co-creation, collaboration, complexity, ambiguity, dynamism, loss of control, multivocality: such are the tenets of the new marketing world to which our brand theories must be held responsible” (Allen, Fournier & Miller, 2008:814; Hafkesbrink & Evers, 2011:13; Schmitt, 2012; Verwey & Muir, 2012).

4.3.1 Product is interaction

Today consumers want to be on the inside, co-creating the brand through dialogue.
In accomplishing this, brand communication must be continuous, it must be personalised and it must come from multiple sources (Gowdy, Hildebrand, Piana & Campos, 2009). A new level of stakeholder engagement has been cited in stakeholder theory, as Sloan (2009) posits how an organisation’s relationships have shifted from an inactive to an interactive focus to produce ongoing relationships of mutual respect, openness and trust. This can pose a cultural challenge for many for-profit brand professionals, who have long been taught that an organisation must speak with one voice and that it should seek to control the message (Clapperton, 2009). In contrast, individual communication with customers requires a linked corporate interaction design (Holt, 2005; Hofmeyr & Parton, 2006). This interaction is designed to be simple, solution-oriented and entertaining for the customer whilst simultaneously speaking the linked brand’s language (Holtz, Havens & Johnson, 2008). If this is to happen, it means that brands will keep up with the evolving demands of consumers.

In this new era, more than ever, brand control is an illusion (Jackson & McKibben, 2008). Consequently, an increasing number of linked businesses have begun to shift their focus from discrete transactions toward shaping long-term, mutually beneficial exchange relationships (Claycomb & Martin, 2001). They perceive that the wealth embedded in relationships is now more important than the capital contained in land, factories, buildings, goods and even bank accounts (Galbreath, 2002). This kind of brand relationship is marked by tailoring products and services to customers’ personal wishes and needs. The brand relationship demands interaction between a consumer and business as well as business and business situations. According to the research results, by sponsoring Tiger Woods for 10 years, they found that the Nike golf ball division reaped additional profits of $60 million through the acquisition of 4.5 million customers who switched as a result of Tiger Wood’s endorsement. In fact, as a result of Tiger Woods switching away from Titleist to Nike in 2000, they estimated that the Titleist golf ball division experienced a decline of revenue of 7.48% (-8.11% in profit). They also found that the November 2009 scandal regarding Tiger Wood’s infidelity had a negative impact, resulting in Nike losing approximately $1.3 million in profit with a loss of 105,000 customers. The study discovered that it cost the rest of the golf industry a loss of $6.2 million in profit (Xenophon Strategies,
Consequently, Nike’s decision to stand by Tiger Woods was the right decision because even in the midst of the scandal, their overall profit was greater by $1.6 million for Nike with Tiger Woods than without him (Chung, Derdenger & Srinivasan, 2011:1). Therefore, a higher construct for successful brand relationships is determined by the quality of linkages (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). For example, equipped with new insights, the McDonald’s Corporation’s creation of McCafe emerged from consumers.

According to Cheng (2006), longevity, frequency of contact, efficient and satisfactory services as well as the functional skills and personalities (emotional processes) of linked company representatives are ingredients to the success of brand relationships. However, Bagdoniene and Zilione (2009) argue that in spite of the fact that a lot of research in business relationships has already been conducted, several questions are still unaddressed. For instance, research is unclear on which variable leading to successful business relationships, is universal and equally meaningful for buyers-sellers, manufacturer-dealer, distributor-supplier, and provider-consumer brand relationships. There is also little knowledge on which of the variables has an impact on economic results that influence more emotional processes of relationships. Therefore, although it will remain a methodological challenge to discover what customers are thinking or feeling when they engage with the linked brands, it is thought—provoking that, increasingly, without stakeholders’ physical and hence visible participation in the process of brand communication, there will be neither a brand communication message nor reception in the first place. Because the nature of the linked brand is surely changing, just as surely will effective communication interaction remain central to the analysis of the new brand communication environment. Once more, in developed countries services contributes 80% to the country’s GDP (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999). This increases the need to evaluate the state of underdeveloped as well as the status of developing countries especially in the South African context.
4.4 The role of the strategic brand relationship and brand communication

Contemporary strategic communication in the light of brand relationship is clarified by Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič and Sriramesh (2007:17): “Strategic communication is about informational, persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication used in a context for the achievement of an organisation’s mission”. In this study, the role of the strategic brand relationship and brand communication function is to address social media, brand choice-overload and the rising of informed citizen consciousness.

4.4.1 Applications of social media to the contemporary brand linkages and brand relationships

Given the state of the contemporary market, the dynamics in brand linkages happens at any time. Application of social media impacts the shifts in strategic communication. Trendbüro (2008) suggests the following shifts: from branding to reframing, PR replaced by listening, and advertising to interaction. Branding: identity instead of experience; PR: listening instead of dictating, and Advertising: recognition instead of attention. The brand My Starbucks Idea’s website solicits consumer ideas and suggestions, both large and small, and facilitates the community to discuss them, vote on their favourites, and see the ideas put into action. Starbucks has created a platform for posting opinions and uniting like-minded coffee fans. Similarly to Starbucks, Dell’s IdeaStorm website is built on serving a community of brand advocates. Consumers can post their ideas for Dell products (linked to Intel processors), improvements, and feedback on new products. The community votes to promote or demote the ideas and, just like the Starbucks platform, Dell responds to the ideas that generate the most interest from the community.

However, it is a risky landscape for the contemporary linked brands. The rules can radically change overnight, and even those with the most confident strategies are feeling the pressures of this new market place. Customers’ access to more information means that it is easy for them to detach from brand relationships (Aaker, 2011; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). This is true for Nokia, the handset maker had to
move by brand linkage to Microsoft after its competitors Apple and BlackBerry, moved into smart phones. Its loyal customers were affected by the easy access to information. The same also happened with Gillette. For products as ordinary as a razor blade and shaving cream, Gillette (linked The Art of Shaving) has introduced new technologies in this market more than any other competitor. Nevertheless, many of these innovations are easily copied, such as gel shaving cream and multiple razor blade technologies. In recent years, Gillette has taken to user-generated content and other online media to further grow its brand among younger users. While Gillette might be best known for its campaigns featuring celebrities (sport legends such as Tiger Woods, Thierry Henry and Roger Federer), its linkage with Woods and Henry has led to negative publicity spillovers after they were both embroiled in scandal and controversy in 2009 (Chung et al., 2011), similar to the incident which affected Nike.

4.4.2 Brand choice-overload

Consumers are more empowered than ever before with infinite products and media channels, which make it burdensome for brands to manage such abundant choice. As consumers are provided with ever-increasing amounts of information from more products sold through more channels and promoted in many ways, the idea of misperception is becoming increasingly important. With this consumers suffer from brand-choice overload (Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). “Unlimited choice can produce genuine suffering” (Schwartz, 2005:3) and having unlimited options, then, can lead people to be more dissatisfied with the choices they make (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000).

While choice gives people more control over their lives, too much choice can provide the mere illusion of control. According to Schwartz (2005), as choice increases, so does the effort required to decide and many consumers decide not to decide. The reason is that too much choice can, in fact, have adverse consequences (Schwartz, 2005). Abundant choice creates what Schwartz (2005:4) calls “a seemingly intractable information problem”, in which the “cost of thinking” is simply too high. In such circumstances, he argues, “rather than even try, people may disengage, choosing almost arbitrarily to get the process over with”. Interestingly, “As a culture, we are enamoured of freedom, self-determination, and variety... But clinging
tenaciously to all choices available to us contributes to bad decisions, to anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction—even to clinical depression" (Schwartz, 2005:3). In this sense, decision making is seen as a choice among two or three actions, “a process of purposeful problem solving” (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009:359). Nevertheless, choice can also help people to be more positive about the decisions they have made (Botti & Iyengar, 2006).

Further, Ries and Ries (2004:115) express that “consumers have a cornucopia of choice”. It is important that simplicity of a brand linkage helps people to prefer a linked brand. Therefore, the question that remains is: do South African brands fit into this profile? The answer is ‘Yes’, according to Gordon Hooper of Bateleur Research (cited in Gordon, 2006:1). “South African consumers are crying out for simplicity. Brands are increasingly built on convenience rather than just price or product quality—and simplicity are a key element of convenience”. Thus, this argument implies that communicating is not just about convenience; rather it is also about honesty (Gordon, 2006). Moreover, as the worldwide trend towards transparency is growing, “armed with new tools (like the Internet) to find information about matters that affect their interests, stakeholders now scrutinise the (linked) firm as never before, inform others, and organize collective responses. The corporation is becoming naked" (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003:2). Linked businesses must for the first time make themselves clearly visible to shareholders, customers, employees, partners, and society (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). This means that even if linked brands find some credible way to communicate with consumers on social media sites, they will be trusted the least, a result of the inevitable force of transparency.

Considering the problem that if communication is not clear, readers or audiences may suspect that the linked company is not being transparent and a high price will be paid. To demonstrate this, Gordon (2006) claims that McDonald’s (linked to McCafe) and other fast food companies face lawsuits, consumer abandonment, and brand degradation for failing to clearly explain health risks, like obesity, in their advertising campaigns. With the rise of transparency and accountability, customers evaluate the worth of products and services at levels never before possible (Gordon, 2006). The cost of getting information about the linked brands is now easier and
cheaper than before. Consequently, employees share formerly secret information about corporate strategy, management behaviour, and challenges whenever they want (Igniyte, 2014). It is high time that the contemporary global supply chain, linked companies and their business partners by necessity share competitive and operational secrets (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003).

In such an environment, Tapscott and Ticoll (2003) claim that some opacity remains necessary, and transparency is not always easy. Trade secrets and personal data, for instance, should be confidential. Implementing government and activists’ rules of disclosure can also be very expensive (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). When naked secrets are exposed through transparency, many linked companies’ fitness is required for their survival. For instance, former CEO Steve Jobs was forced to make a formal apology for failure in iPhone 4 after having received hundreds of emails from customers, who were upset about Apple and AT&T. Typically, some current iPhone users who wanted to upgrade would not get the subsidies that new customers enjoyed. Incensed iPhone fanatics (stakeholders) vented their fury on Twitter. Instead, AT&T had to intervene showing its integrity and abiding by its commitments to stakeholders (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). Even though the #attfail tag was loud on Twitter, AT&T enhanced its network upgrades. As a consequence, it spent nearly $37 billion on new equipment and capacity since the iPhone launch and expected to invest around $13.5 billion in 2010 (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). While these efforts have boosted performance, with at least some independent studies showing that the carrier’s network has improved, AT&T’s reputation remains deeply damaged, and the negative faultfinders keep coming, including insults from mischievous blogger Fake Steve Jobs, The Daily Show’s Jon Stewart, and Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg (Vogelstein, 2010).

Thus, while it is important to build transparency into their business strategies, products and services, linked brand and marketing activities, technology plans, and corporate character; strong companies can undress for success (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). The mistake is that “All too often, companies pay little or no attention to how their (linked) brand is expressed in ongoing customer communications” (Gordon, 2006:5). This is becoming a thing of the past because it depicts that communication
is an interactive dialogue between the linked brand and its stakeholders. Communication takes place during the pre-selling, selling, consuming as well as post-consuming stages (Gordon, 2006:5).

Regarding interactive dialogue, the associate network model proposes (linked) brands as associative networks of meanings (Keller, 2003b). All linked brand experiences are congested in the value added to products, services, and organisations by touch points which affect peoples’ hearts and minds (Keller, 1998). Mainly a linked brand remembered at one point in time may be forgotten in a different situation or even in a similar situation, but at a different point in time (Gordon, 2006). Depending on the person’s evaluation and the relative importance of several product attributes, he will have to choose one of the linked brands, thus, eventually leading to decision-making.

Current networks are replacing fixed social structures (Butler, 2004). Social networks provide social connectivity. There are social systems that share the important characteristics of small groups, voluntary associations and organisations (Butler, 2004). As discussed in the previous chapter, in a hyper-individual world, social relations are vital since setting oneself apart from the crowd becomes less important (Tapscott & Ticoll, 2003). As an alternative, consumers are increasingly finding common ground with others, the focus is shifting to individual connectivity (Kraut, Wang, Butler, Joyce & Burke, 2008). Affiliation is becoming freely selected and calls for commitment are derived from an individual perception. There are therefore many personal contacts that decide on their individual access possibilities (Kraut et al., 2008). The active consumers can communicate via their network and the linked brand’s recognition is not universal. It is the varied context that gains the linked brand’s recognition. In this case, a new linkage between Yahoo and Frontier Communications may give rural American consumers better access to online content (Knight, 2011). These companies should take note of their actions as that may be affected by different contexts. A positive consumer experience around their brands, during the entire length of their relationship with consumers will lead the brands to success. Ultimately, this has forced the linked companies’ marketing and
communication practitioners to establish and cultivate personal networks due to the contemporary rise of informed citizen consciousness.

### 4.4.3 The rise of informed citizen consciousness

Consumer citizenship is a term that has been gaining ground since the late 1990s in the discussion on sustainable consumption (McGregor, 2002). Also, it gained further relevance with the establishment of The Consumer Citizenship Network (CCN) in 2003. The CCN is an EU-funded thematic network of researchers and civil-society organisations from 30 European countries, which also includes United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Consumers International. Hence, with the diffusion of the Internet, consumer communities have started to be considered as a way to facilitate stronger relationships between (linked) firms and these new consumers because they become much more active online (McAlexander et al., 2002). Bosman (2011) recently highlighted that such a rise of the informed, all-knowing consumer is because of pervasive technology. Meanwhile, the digital revolution has a great influence on how linked brands compete, how consumers evaluate them, and the access consumers have to linked brands (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

As informed citizens there is a conscious effort arising to undermine the idea that today stakeholders are to be regarded as mere customers of the linked brands (Scammell, 2003). Scammell (2003) argues that warning about a capitalist threat is more likely to come from businessmen and women than politicians. She concurs with Financier George, Soros' (1997) famous writing of the threat of neo-liberalism, 'the belief in the magic of the marketplace', to democratic society. In the midst of the controversy of their criticism against globalisation, business leaders get into discussions on corporate citizenship, not just as prudent public relations, but as an imperative of the market place for multinational enterprises (Scammell, 2003). Scammell (2003) also notes that at the 2001 World Economic Forum in New York, the heads of 36 global corporate giants signed up to a ‘framework of action’, covering issues such as environmental quality, labour standards, human rights,
equal opportunity and access. The global giants were convinced that this was to make the case of social responsibility profitable. In fact, it is ironic that linked business thrives best in democratic societies and corporate leaders have a direct interest in extending wealth and human rights to more people around the world. Seeing that it is imperative, these global giants want to gain credibility by entering the frame of reference of their target audience.

Furthermore, Scammell (2003) claims this is a self-interest stance of the linked business leaders because in modern affluent society, most people have what they need and much of what they want. The reason implies that people are not machines with an infinite capacity to consume, and because of this the old marketing standards of price and volume will not be enough for sustainable profits in the 21st century. Hence, the linked companies can no longer rely on increasing volumes and cutting prices (Scammell, 2003). More is demanded. Again, as proliferation of choices is experienced, “… consumers will be drawn to the ‘beautiful companies’, those that seek an alliance of aesthetics with social responsibility, who realise that the pursuit of profit may destroy as much as it creates, and that integrity cannot be manufactured in any enduring way through cool advertising and public relations gimmicks” (Scammell, 2003:118). It suggests that the single-minded pursuit of profit, at any cost, may be increasingly unsustainable as a business practice and goes against the grain of modern consumerism. There is increasingly a need for brand ‘social currency’ through consumer citizenship. In essence, marketing is more commonly portrayed as a problem rather than a solution for citizen disengagement (Scammell, 2003). Probably, as an optimistic scenario, markets will need to correct themselves from their own ugly reality so that beauty, inside and out, will become the essence of competitive advantage (Scammell, 2003). Their white coated advertisements and gimmicks are now open to scrutiny. However, this is not a plea for more of the same spin and manufactured imagery that is so characteristic of contemporary marketing communications. Rather the reverse.

Important to note is the result of power on consumers. In today’s socio-political economy, empowerment differs. On the one hand, communication is highly regarded as the leading force for consumer empowerment (Bosman, 2010). As Overton-de
Klerk (2010:3) points out “the following staggering statistics (which are changing as we speak…” (see Figure 4:1 below).

**Figure: 4.1: Global usage of social platform**

![Global usage of social platform](image)

(source: We social, 2014:11)

The social media hat (2014) reported that Facebook now has 1.35 billion active monthly users, which grew from 1.184 million in January monthly active users worldwide alone. Twitter is at 284 million registered users, and new users are signing up at the rate of more than a million per day. LinkedIn has 100 million members, and YouTube got 1 billion active monthly users. Google+ grew from 300 million active monthly users to 540 million. Instagram counts for 300 million active monthly users. LinkedIn has 187 million active monthly users. Pinterest counts for 70 million registered users. Vine has 40 million registered users and Flickr has 92 million users (The social media hat, 2014).

On the other hand, as Scammell (2003) argues, people who spend constantly up to and beyond their means may not recognise themselves quite as empowered. Money has been the most valuable tenant of empowerment in the past years. It was the answer to all things regarding consumer empowerment. Hence, marketing power
from the producer to consumers is the basic idea underlying the predominant marketing paradigm of the last 40 years and beyond (Scammell, 2003). This marketing concept used to be seen as an approach that puts the consumer first (Scammell, 2003).

Scammell (2003) further indicates that the beautiful corporations critique in large part depends on the premise of empowered consumers who are investing citizenship considerations into their everyday purchase decisions. This claim acknowledges that consumers are empowered in relation to producers. Thus, their shopping habits are citizen-like to the extent that the goal of satisfaction of personal wants is tempered with wider social awareness (Scammell, 2003). In particular, Apple has defended its Foxconn partner’s ethical standards after a newspaper reported factories in China rely on child labour, 24 hour days and unsafe conditions to manufacture iPhones, iPads and computers (Moore, 2012). Social awareness is a concern for the impact on the public caused by the linked brand producers and this has heightened to become a global issue (Neff, 2011). Both parts of this claim need to be confirmed. In various contexts, questions of empowerment are not generally correlated. Hence, already Overton-de Klerk (2010) and Scammell (2003) insist on questioning whether this is artificial empowerment or not. “Are consumers empowered? If so, how, and in what ways? Is the new claim of powerful consumers any more believable than the old ‘customer is king’ mantra, offering the illusion of markets organised in the consumer interest while always serving the end of profit? Even if consumers are empowered, to what extent is citizenship an appropriate category?” (Scammell, 2003:119). Besides, to what extent can the linked brand owners still control what consumers (and competitors and employees) do with their brand linkages? (Bosman, 2011). In fact, Scammell (2003) also concedes with Bosman (2010) by stating that the new marketing theory now contends that the digital, global and deregulated economy massively expands competition and choice. Without any doubt, this substantially further shifts the power balance in favour of consumers (Scammell, 2003).

Similarly, Kotler, Jain and Maesincee (2002) conclude that the main problem for business now is overcapacity. “Customers are scarce, not products. Supply is the
problem not, demand. Overcapacity leads to hyper competition, with too many goods chasing too few customers. And most goods and services lack differentiation. The result: dog-eat-dog pricing and mounting business failures” (Kotler, Jain & Maesincee, 2002:ix). There is heavy supply and low demand. For instance, Gillette’s razor was easily copied by the Wilkinson Sword Company which introduced a four blade razor produced at a low cost. Indeed, it is now several years since digital technology has begun rewriting the rules of the market place. It is democratising the information environment, transforming what Kotler, Jain and Maesincee (2002) call the ‘asymmetry’ between sellers and customers. The market place will not be able to avoid the inevitable digital revolution (Bosman, 2011; Israel, 2009).

Previously, sellers typically had greater access to and control of market information and could effectively set the terms, while customers mostly relied on shortcuts such as linked brand recognition, reputation and consumer advice media (Scammell, 2003). While the wheels have continued to turn, step-by-step the Internet now allows buyers to compare prices and product attributes in minutes, facilitated by consumer information websites (Blossom, 2009). Also, some sites encourage consumers to name their price and see whether suppliers respond (Scammell, 2003). In particular, possibilities for exchange of information with other customers, about anything of mutual concern from corporate social performance to human rights issues, open up on the Website. Driven by the explosion of portable equipment such as mobile phones, game terminals, MP3-players, and also the increased level of functionalities such as video and online multi-services, the Internet permits access to new worlds of users and expert information about virtually anything, and drastically lowers the costs of retrieval, in time, money and prior knowledge (Israel, 2009).

As an example of the complexity attained by mobile equipment, combining all modes and functions, the consumer is offered considerably expanded choices (Bosman, 2010; Israel, 2009). In addition, Scammell (2003) expresses that digital deregulated markets lower the costs of entry for new producers and substantially reduce, or make irrelevant, barriers of time and space. Taking into consideration that the Internet consumer can shop any time and from any online country, increasingly consumers can demand more precisely what they want as conscious citizens
(Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman & Raman, 2005; Letaifa & Perrien, 2007). These possibilities of information and choice are effectively transforming the market such that it is now the consumer, not the linked brand’s producer, who is the hunter. Simultaneously, in the new market place, increasingly these producers will have to find products for customers; pre-designed products are highly unpopular. In this case, Procter and Gamble’s Reflect.com site allows customers to design their own beauty products. Accordingly, they will have to shift their focus from product portfolios to the creation of ‘customer portfolios’ (Mikkelsen, 2010). For example, when a young Norwegian recently established a group on Facebook to demand that Coca-Cola’s soft drink Urge be made available in 1½-liter bottles, the support it received and the media coverage it attracted forced the brand to introduce that product onto the market (Mikkelsen, 2010).

Presently, the challenge is that the linked brand’s producers will have to focus on individual customer requirements, and develop strategies for keeping existing buyers (customer lifetime value) because in the new environment the cost of attracting new consumers is much greater than the cost of building loyalty (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2006; Kotler & Keller, 2009). The same happened with the Coca-Cola red hard back case for BlackBerry with a transparent side design. This was meant to satisfy increasingly individual customer requirements. Of course, digital media technologies have opened many new channels of communication and information which are a challenge, but at the same time it is giving companies the opportunity to develop much closer relationships between their brands and their consumers (Aaker, 2011). Therefore, the linked brand owners have no choice except to adjust to the new rules of the digital marketplace and the ever growing sophistication engagement of their customers.

Promise and reputation of the linked brands are presale conditions for consumers. It is however unfortunate that this fact is not reflected in the linked brand’s behaviour of most companies (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). Often there is a bigger focus on being efficient at attracting and mobilizing customers using every means possible, but hardly ever are there linked companies at the door trying to retain customers when they leave. The truth is that the more competitive and mature the market, the greater
the imperative to retain customers and extract lifetime brand linkage value. “For most service companies the majority of face-to-face contacts are not handled by salespersons; they are handled by those who produce and deliver the service or part of it – for example the contact between a waiter and a guest” (Gummesson, 1991:67). All employees who have contact with customers are effectively ‘part-time marketers’ (Igniyte, 2014). Actually, they have a direct influence on customer perception of the product in markets almost entirely reliant on reputation (Igniyte, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hence, in these circumstances, the marketing function cannot be satisfied by a specialised marketing department alone, it extends to all employees whose activities affect customer perception (Gummesson, 1991; Igniyte, 2014). Employees, therefore, form a vital audience – an ‘internal market’ in Gummesson’s (1991) phrase - who must be persuaded by the linked company’s mission and product quality, since their performance crucially influences external customer perception and continued loyalty.

With this in mind, the rise of informed citizen consciousness is strongly attributed and applied to the contemporary marketplace like never before. It centres on the philosophy of the free market: competition among relatively unfettered businesses would ensure quality goods at cheap prices to customer consumers. For instance, women’s groups orchestrated boycotts and protests against ‘unfair pricing’ and other forms of market exploitation (Scammell, 2003). Also, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Massmart Holdings Limited’s failure to adequately consider the public interest (on job loss) impeded the brand linkage efforts. Another incident was when African Americans mobilised consumer power for political rights: from the ‘Don’t Shop Where You Can’t Work’ campaigns to support for alternative black-owned cooperatives, “blacks looked to the double-duty dollar to advance the race while they purchased” (Cohen, 2001:208).

The linked brands operating in this free mature market need to have complete and perfect information of the demand side (activist groups) and of the consumers’ preferences in its profit maximisation otherwise: there is room for any uprising of these citizen consumers. The objective is to put enough pressure on the target linked brand (firm) to make it change its behaviour. Therefore, to comply with these
challenges linked brands have to carry attributes of being a ‘good corporate citizen’ while the product or service is interpreted as a citizen brand.

4.4.4 Corporate citizenship

Corporate citizenship entails “the extent to which companies are socially responsible in meeting legal, ethical and economic responsibilities placed on them by shareholders. It is about the company’s sense of responsibility towards the community and environment in which it operates” (Bibri, 2008: viii). This implies that citizenship is not only about legally defined rights and duties, including judiciary responsibility, but also, crucially, has a political element that concerns active commitment (Mossmann, 2010). A megatrend in today’s society is that consumers generally expect the linked companies to become more involved and accept greater responsibility for themselves, their products or services, their customers and their environment (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). As a result, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly important and activity in this area will continue to grow going forward (Mossmann, 2010). More prosaic, but roughly similar views of modern consumer behaviour underlie the emerging business case for corporate citizenship (Mossmann, 2010). There is no doubt that the non-governmental organisation (NGO) phenomenon of recent years is driving business interest into corporate citizenship. Although social and environmental concerns were largely addressed by sponsorships, the demand for authenticity will see the linked companies becoming more wholeheartedly committed to additional activities and playing a more active role (Mossmann, 2010). Of course, the explosion in numbers of these groups is impressive.

The Union of International Associations (UIA) estimates that there were some 23,000 international NGOs in operation in 1997, about four times the number of a decade before (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). “Scholars have been slow to recognise either the rationality of the significance of activist networks” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998:2), but they are clearly now a major influence on global corporate behaviour. They have driven the issues which have forced the question of corporate responsibility from the ‘campaigner’s den into the boardroom’. Most importantly, they have threatened the
expensively-built reputations and ultimately the bottom lines of brand after brand.

Similar trends are evident in the sale of fair trade goods, organic and free range produce and non-animal tested cosmetics. In a global stakeholder society, “where companies are expected to be accountable not only to shareholders for financial performance, but also to stakeholders for their wider economic, environmental and societal impacts” (Wade, 2006:227), they are significant because it takes only small changes in consumer behaviour to make a substantial impact on the linked company profits; if only 10% of consumers switch products, it is enough to make a huge difference in the marketplace (McIntosh, Leipziger, Jones & Coleman, 1998). For instance, Tiger Wood’s scandal and Nike’s decision to stand by him negatively affected some of their consumers. Although Nike’s continued sponsorship proves to be profitable, the results show that in the six months following Wood’s highly publicized personal scandal, it lost approximately 105,000 customers. However, these losses were not gained by other brands as the negative publicity resulted in a net loss to the golfing industry, overall, of $7.5 million in profit (Chung et al., 2011). Roberts, Keeble and Brown (2002), argue that as evidence of changing consumer attitudes, and the increased salience of corporate responsibility: The most comprehensive survey of consumer attitudes towards corporate citizenship, involving 25,000 individuals in 26 countries, found that more consumers form their impression of a company on the basis of its corporate citizenship practices than do so on brand reputation or financial factors. Almost 60% of those interviewed revealed labour practices, business ethics, responsibility to society at large, or environmental impact as factors that influence their view of companies (Roberts et al., 2002).

Furthermore, with this level of public interest, it has tended to be the (linked) companies with the most direct relationships with consumers that have acted fastest (Scammell, 2003). Given this state, it is not a surprise that linked companies in the value-added brands are working hard to ensure that their suppliers demonstrate high standards of corporate citizenship. If more linked brands’ owners commit themselves to environmental and social standards, indeed their ingredient brand linkage partners face enormous pressure to comply with similar attributes. Above all, this may be the most lasting achievement which has restored to consumption the idea of citizenship
similar to politics. Marketers are obliged to treat consumers as citizens. Therefore, business marketing management and brand communication should see corporate citizenship as a good, sufficient benefit that can result in a linked company’s moral responsibility. They should recognise and accept the responsibility for improving the quality of life among their local stakeholders (Crane & Matten, 2004).

4.4.5 Citizen brand linkage or citizen brandship

Brand linkage citizenship entails the ability of a linked organisation to use the power of its brand to make a difference in society (Edwards & Day, 2005; Arvidsson, 2006). Some examples illustrating the power of citizen brandship are: Apple’s corporate citizen profile with the RED Global Fund, Nike and “Children in Sweatshops”, and Nescafe has stayed competitive when it comes to its corporate citizenship program, creating sustainable packaging and manufacturing. Ethical values are measured by the perception of consumers which develop as they are exposed to the brand linkages (Gobé, 2002; Du Plessis, 2005; Chung et al., 2011). In other words, the value placed on the linked brand, which in itself is determined by a number of personal, cognitive and other factors, influence values which could validate or potentially destroy a company’s brand (Du Plessis, 2005; Edwards & Day, 2005). A comprehensive view on “brand citizenship is the result of a process whereby a company develops its brand identity by backcasting key business decisions throughout the value chain and business processes to reflect ethical implications at every decision-making point” (Tustin & De Jongh, 2008:32). Brand linkages’ ethical implications become an underlying driver of all linked business processes and are systemic to sustainable business. In this scenario, a citizen brand is a socially responsible brand linkage. Therefore, a successful brand linkage needs to be seen as a good citizen.

Hilmes (2004) argues that unlike the citizen, the consumer’s means of expression is limited: while citizens can address every aspect of cultural, social, political and economic life (operating in what Habermas (1989) called ‘the public sphere’), consumers find expression only in the marketplace. As Habermas (1989) posits, both the market and the state work together to define and delimit the public sphere;
citizen and consumer are not opposite and contradictory identities, but always and inevitably entwined in a capitalist society. Notably, Thompson (1995) adds that the development is treated as an integral part in the formation of modern society. Habermas called this process of the manipulated public sphere “refeudalization.” The “flooding” of the public sphere with advertising arose as economic concentration increased in order to assure market stability and share (Habermas, 1989:189). The concept of citizen implies a nation whose public exists in a relationship of legal rights and status and whose appropriate activities are defined in terms of their relationship with the state (Cohen, 2001; Freeman, 2001; Hilmes, 2004).

According to Lewis (2003), consumption begins to be conceived as opposed to citizenship: “Unlike the citizen, the consumer’s means of expression is limited: while citizens can address every aspect of cultural, social and economic life (operating in what Habermas (1989) called ‘the public sphere’), consumers find expression only in the marketplace”. The consumer, on the other hand, is a stateless, rootless subject whose activities consist of acts of selection and purchase in a market where products of all nations jostle for shelf space (Hilmes, 2004). Citizenship is increasingly being redefined in relation to the consumer’s right to participate in the marketplace (Glickman, 1999). Further, by precepts of liberal democratic thinking, Hilmes (2004) considers that all citizens are equal; citizenship is a homogeneous, unified status that ideally makes no distinctions between citizens, who remain undifferentiated and equal under the law. Thus, in a demand driven capitalistic free market system, the roles of good citizen and responsible consumer became closely intertwined (Tsai, 2010).

Pratt (2009:855) establishes a measure for the corporate citizen suggesting that it is composed of three elements: (1) the use of rigorous ethical standards in business dealings (2) commitment to all stakeholders-community, consumers, employees, investors, suppliers; and (3) commitment to the environment, that is, through programs such as recycling, waste and emission abatement, and impact assessment through environmental audits. These measures highlight the importance of incorporating stakeholders’ perceptions about a linked corporation as a citizen brand. Thus, Gobé (2002) refers to a renewed status of brand linkage that strives to acquire
and maintain a long term emotional relationship with people, the surrounding community and society as essential in contemporary business. In line with Gobé (2002:xv), this study’s “...focus here is not necessarily to provide any cut and dry answers or draw a dramatic conclusion, but to challenge the present in order to better understand the future”.

In general, though the way marketers try to attract consumers is through good packaging the choice of a consumer is an expression of preference, based on what fits their values. The resultant choice is an underlying expression of needs, preference or abilities within a framework and system of provision that is presented before them. In their analysis, Lee, Motion and Conroy (2009) discuss increasing brand avoidance as a pattern that demonstrates potential consumer influence. Similar to the effect of boycotts that have been highlighted earlier, such discriminatory aspects, if done against unsustainable packaging, would affect the bottom line, and subsequently the operations, of the linked brand owner (Trudel & Cotte, 2009).

4.4.6 Citizen consumers and the strategic brand communication

“A consumer citizen is an individual who makes choices based on ethical, social, economic and ecological considerations. The consumer citizen actively contributes to the maintenance of just and sustainable development by caring and acting responsibly on family, national and global levels” (CCN, 2005:7). Evidently, there are parallels in the progress of consumer and political markets (Scammell, 2003). The consumer is empowered through increased choice and vastly expanded resources of information (Kucuk, 2009). Often, commercial interest options and resources await enterprises’ convenience in astonishing abundance on the Internet. The digital economy makes customisation increasingly possible for consumer goods, allowing practitioners to tailor their marketing interest environment more closely to individual taste (Clow & Baack, 2010). As noted earlier, the citizen consumer is increasingly the hunter rather than just the hunted. There is a shift in the balance of market power from the producers to the consumers. Kucuk and Krishnamurthy (2007) indicate that the Internet influenced power between firms and consumers in four dimensions:
technologic, economic, social and legal. Among these the social aspect as a source of their empowerment is important for the present study.

This new commercial market helps explain one of the more striking features of the much-discussed current ‘crisis’ of citizen engagement: that citizens are not turning off commerce per se, they are turning away from the older established formal institutions of free market. The new commercial market of empowered consumers is provoking rethinking of linked corporate strategy towards relationship marketing, towards investment in the idea of corporations and customers as citizens, and towards a partnership alliance of design and social responsibility (Gummesson, 2006). There may be appropriate lessons here for commerce also. According to Scammell (2003), three in particular suggest themselves: First, marketing theory indicates the increased importance of retention of existing customers, and especially in service industries, the crucial ‘part-time marketing’ role of employees; second, it suggests that a ‘customer consumer’ orientation is no longer sufficient. Self-expressive citizen consumers are interested in more than price, results and delivery. Third, that aesthetics and style are substantial matters, and cannot be sustained by advertising and public relations alone. Postmodern brings a new conceptualisation on citizen consumers rather than ‘customer or consumers’ (Kucuk, 2009). Thus, at a time when free markets are increasingly forced to consider customers as citizens, it can easily be seen that such an approach is problematic and possibly self-defeating (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2010).

A study by Ottela and Russo (2011) from McKinsey proposes that there is a pervasive increase in the complexity of consumers in Africa. In this case, consumers have a mobile phone in every pocket. One of the great business successes of the Information Age – and, not coincidentally, one of the great drivers of social change – has been the mobile phone revolution in developing countries. Deprived of cheap and easy communications by the difficulty of building an analogy telecom infrastructure, Africans have enthusiastically taken to mobile phones. The study indicates that by 2015, there will likely be more than one cell phone for every African – that is already the case in Gabon and nearly so in South Africa. Ottela and Russo (2011) also claim that the phone is far more than a means of conversation, it is a
way to deliver services and data. Mobile web use and social networking are growing fast, and all systems go for more. Facebook, for example, has introduced a zero-cost initiative across 10 sub-Saharan African countries (Cote d’Ivoire, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Benin, Congo, Madagascar, and Swaziland), allowing free access to mobile subscribers. Intriguingly, too, Africans appear willing to listen through their phones; 85% said they did not mind getting advertising over their mobiles. These commercial opportunities are only starting to be tapped (Ottela & Russo, 2011).

From a South African perspective, corporate citizenship (CC) is also called corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate social investment (CSI) (Tustin & De Jongh, 2008). While various names are associated with different approaches and practices, in South Africa, CC, CSR and CSI are often used interchangeably. The authors point out that contemporary businesses have a challenge to show their ability to clearly demonstrate the value they attach to being a good corporate citizen. “Increasingly, stakeholders in South Africa are demanding more accountability from local businesses” (Tustin & De Jongh, 2008:5). There is pressure mounting to better understand society’s attitudes, perceptions and expectations regarding the role of business in the broader society, including the natural environment. Due to a largely ‘voiceless society’ South Africa, because of apartheid and an era of exclusion, has been transformed into a society currently showing increased ethical purchasing intentions (Tustin & De Jongh, 2008). As such, the linked brands cover issues such as governance, ethics and an approach to social material issues. Thus, the ethical behaviour of brand linkages is the basis of consumers’ choices.

As predicted, Tustin and De Jongh (2008:31), propose that in future the linked brand will “... represent an idea (ethical conduct) far more prominently than the lowest common denominator, being competitive differentiation”. This makes it hard for business leaders in South Africa to simply cope with the relevant ethical consumer behaviour factors such as globalisation of markets, shifts in market power towards consumers, the effectiveness of marketing campaigning and a wider corporate social responsibility movement (Harrison, Newholm & Shaw, 2005). There are clear business implications, including opportunities and threats, for marketers adopting
ethical practices to keep abreast of changing market dynamics resulting from increased ethical consumer behaviour (Tustin & De Jongh, 2008). In their conclusion, Tustin and De Jongh (2008) argue that the sustainable (linked) brands will therefore have to be responsive to societal demands by reflecting true citizenship colours and only then will their intent be viewed as responsible by remaining relevant to the society. It is a deceptive ideal of the linked firms when they are considering that not all consumers will accept and act as responsible citizens. Little do they know that it is a misleading factor because as diffusion studies (Rogers, 1995) have shown, it takes not all, but rather a few innovative consumers, for industry to change markets and to start self-enforcing processes. Hence, to bring about these changes, citizens are now frequently using the social media.

In particular, the study conducted by the Bureau of Market Research (BMR at the University of South Africa) on South African metropolitan consumers’ perceptions of corporate citizenship and ethical consumer behaviour, indicates that more than half of South Africa’s metropolitan consumers take into account a company’s corporate reputation when they make a purchasing decision, while 47.4% prefer products or services from good corporate citizens – even when they are more expensive (Tustin, 2008). Subsequently, this study showed that Pick n Pay (partnered with Discovery Healthcare), Telkom (Heita linked), Coca-Cola (the longest-standing corporate partners of FIFA), Shoprite Checkers (the family brand linkages such as Shoprite, Shoprite Hyper, Checkers, Checkers Hyper, and Usave stores, OK Foods, OK Grocer, OK Minimark, OK Value, Sentra, and Megasave retail and wholesale outlets, OK Furniture, OK Power Express, and House and Home outlets) and Vodacom (linked to Vodafone Opera Mini) were perceived as the country’s best corporate citizens. Accordingly, it also revealed that metropolitan consumers’ top ten preferences for socially responsible corporate activities ranked skills development first, followed by workplace/employment equity, education and training, health, HIV/AIDS, recycling, disaster relief, environment, sports development and poverty alleviation in declining order of preference (Tustin, 2008).

With the mounting pressure on business clutter and consumer perceptions of corporate citizenship, companies’ performance on corporate citizenship criteria can
represent a vital intangible asset. This is clearly demonstrated when given the fact that Tustin (2008) results had 55% of the respondents who indicated to have bought a product or service from a linked company as a result of its charitable causes. Furthermore, 69% of those surveyed believed irresponsible companies should be exposed in the media, while 63% said that they should be punished (Tustin, 2008). Three quarters indicated that government should play a more proactive role in encouraging greater corporate citizenship (Tustin, 2008). The above results indicate that contemporary business’ bedrock is increasingly encouraging greater corporate citizenship. Hence, failure to comply with this demand may lead to business linkages’ liquidation. Despite this pressure, the scholars still debate on the feasibility of a linked company’s involvement in being a good citizen (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). The limitations identified relate to a backdrop of an ever-more interconnected world, a process of globalisation that has served to financially connect previously disparate and isolated lands (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009). After all, every linked organisation is interested in finding out how it is doing. Therefore, performance measurement should be the first step in any continuous control cycle leading on to evaluation, planning and then improvement.

4.4.7 Party crashers

Fournier and Avery (2010:2) argue that marketers were not invited to be part of the social networks but rather they “…are uninvited crashers in the Web 2.0 party”. In exploring the “… branding challenges associated with the shift in power from marketers to consumers on the people’s web”, Fournier and Avery (2010:4) point out that brand marketers suffered the consequences of clutter and that the brand messages were being ignored by consumers. “An erosion of trust over the past decade has been documented by many research studies” (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008:6). Consumers use social media to target brands and companies. Thus, four shifts in context have emerged, “The Age of the Social Collective, The Age of Transparency, The Age of Criticism, and The Age of Parody” (Fournier & Avery, 2010:5). They have turned their backs on established media channels and through social media, blogs, brand communities, brandfests and other online forums, they share their views, preferences, likes and dislikes with whoever cares to listen or
read. It is clear that more personal information about consumers is shared but for brands to discover exactly what they want is still unclear. Hence, the more the information is shared the more complex and invaluable effective marketing becomes (Fournier & Avery, 2010).

4.5 Relationship between brand linkage, brand ratings and brand perceptions

Brand linkages experience is important in business to consumers’ relationships (Randall, 2009). Consumers’ experiences with the brand during the consumer-brand relationship affects brand evaluations. The perception towards brand linkages is created inside the mind of the prospect and the sum total of each customer’s experience with the companies (Jevons et al., 2002; Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumers’ perception towards brands and buying behaviour are influenced by the way brands are associated (Buil, De Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013). There are many associations that consumers can develop about brands. Some awareness is activated following exposure to the brand and its use. This means that some associations emerge in a specific context while others remain hidden in another. These associations are a result of brand exposure and linked to brand communication messages such as seeing, advertisement, street posters, TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, promotional events, sponsorships, social media platforms and consumption of the brand. The perception of a brand is the outcome of a complex process of gathering and evaluating of information through direct exposure to the brand (leads to awareness) or indirect (leads to unawareness). The brands that are accessible or advertised are remembered most (Buil et al, 2013). Each time a consumer remembers a brand they reflect on their fruitful experience and past bad memories (Martínez, 2012). There is no doubt that some brands are perceived as good and others as bad. This judgment affects the brand linkages in a very complex way. Kotler and Keller (2009) posit that the value of a brand is directly related to the perception and mindset of prospects and customers. It reflects the direct and indirect brand experience of what they have seen, heard, learned, thought and felt over time. Previous studies have shown that brand quality can harm or promote the partnering brands (Buil et al, 2013).
Results from a study by Lindberg-Repo and Brookes (2004) show that it is the consumer who actively construes and constructs the nature and extent of a relationship they wish to have with a particular service of a linked brand. First, Lindberg-Repo and Brookes (2004:8) name this the “external framework”, and it is characterised by the level of connectedness, commitment, and affiliation. The second dimension involves the level of connectedness, commitment, and affiliation. The second dimension involves the individual’s self-concept, and it is characterised by consumer-perceived benefits, meaning and value. Again, they term this the “internal framework” (Lindberg-Repo & Brookes, 2004:8). In particular, their conceptual framework proposes a new way of understanding and managing the contemporary brand relationship from the consumer’s perspective. They suggest that the relationship can form the basis for stronger ongoing consumer relationships that offer value to both parties (Lindberg-Repo & Brookes, 2004).

Meanwhile, business linkages to consumer relationships caused Shoe City and YOU magazine trouble after mixed feelings about its advert. The advertisement, which was conceptualised and executed by Lowe Bull, appeared in YOU magazine, Huisgenoot and Drum magazines on 26 May 2011 with the tag line “Whatever happens, there’s always Shoe City” (Bizcommunity.com, 2011a;b). This advert in Figure 4.1 was suggesting that a consumer buys a pair of boots for running over a cat, another pair for the neighbour’s cat and another pair for a pedigree cat. This is a typically striking debate which pervaded business linkages to consumer relationships by new channels of the feedback cycle which implies that the apologies (from Lowe Bull, Shoe City and YOU magazine) were not perceived as sincere enough to reverse the negative feeling towards the brand relationship from stakeholders’ perspective. In this brand linkage and brand relationships, consumers believe that when advertisements’ revenue exceeds moral standards, the editors take no full responsibility for running the advertisement. This example reveals the essence of how uncontrolled communication may be destructive to a brand linkage. Even though YOU magazine is not the producer of the advertisement, but due to brand linkage (as a media business channel), there is exposure in their partnership with Shoe City and Lowe Bull (Figure 4.2).
Considering “there is 30 years of evidence, that the majority of acquisitions do not create value for acquiring shareholders” (McGrady, 2005:18), estimated failure rates are set between 60%-80% (Homburg & Bucerious, 2005). Hence, Gregory’s (2006) discussion of Mckinsey & Co. indicates that nearly 80% of brand linkages do not earn back the costs of the deals themselves. Moreover, Ettebson and Knowles (2007) claim that brand linkage deals end up destroying value instead of creating value for the partnering companies involved. Rosson and Brooks (2004) admit that there are positive gains for acquirers, but for sellers over a three to five year period 50%-80% of brand linkages and acquisitions underperformed against comparable companies or destroyed value.

Bruner (2005) dismisses the common view of a 20% success rate of the brand linkages and acquisition. He believes that brand linkages and acquisitions reward shareholders and on average the view is mainly supported by academic research. In his discussion, success and its measure for two primary parties namely the buyer and seller (such as the R16.5-billion Walmart/Massmart deal) of the target company were involved. “Target firms enjoy returns that are materially positive” (Bruner, 2005:6) whereas buyers “on aggregate are essentially zero” implying that “these acquisitions tend to offer zero net present values, or equivalently, that investors earn...
their required return" (Bruner, 2005:7).

Furthermore, different kinds of brand linkage contexts can be considered significant of the work relating business to consumer brand relationships. As business to consumers brands imitate the consumer versus professional dichotomy, their existence has been acknowledged by several authors (Malaval, 2001) because brand linkages are aimed at the end-user (Pfoertsch, Linder, Beuk, Bartikowski & Luczak, 2007).

The marketplace has radically shifted for example, ingredient brand linkages appeal to the individual in the role of the consumer even though they are primarily sold to other businesses and also take the individual as professional into account (Rao, Ciu & Ruekert, 1999; Shocker, Srivastava & Ruekert, 1994). For instance, the Aspire E100 is being developed in conjunction with European Schoolnet, Google, Android, Microsoft Windows and Acer (Acer, 2010). Schramm-Klein, Morschett and Swoboda’s (2008:294) “study reinforces the commonly agreed upon assumption that for manufacturers a careful selection of distribution channels is of key importance to generate product brand loyalty. …Thus, if the manufacturer has a strong product brand, verticalization is not necessarily required to be successful, whereas, on the other hand, weaker brands can benefit from the support of a favourable retail channel environment and this can be achieved more effectively in vertically integrated channels. In channel design, manufacturers also should care for consumers’ involvement. [Their] study shows that with an increase in consumers’ involvement, in vertical channels the impact of service aspects becomes more important, while, however, with higher involvement the impact of the store atmosphere is alleviated”. In fact, characteristics of the retail channel are important determinants of building linked product brand loyalty and the influence of the retail store perception to linked product brand loyalty is considerably higher in vertically integrated channels (Schramm-Klein, Morschett & Swoboda, 2008). Nonetheless, ingredient brand linkages are mediated by the role of the consumer (Desai & Keller, 2002).

Pfoertsch, Linder, Beuk, Bartikowski and Luczak (2007) conclude that the relevance
of a classification beyond the business to business and business to consumer dichotomy is that it better describes the complexity in the world of brand linkages, as well as that it helps in understanding the interdependencies of different types of brand linkages. The companies that operate brand linkages need the insight and understanding of potential role conflicts to help them manage these linked brands better (Pfoertsch et al., 2007). Therefore, due to the complexity of the market and buying situations, it is difficult to measure the precise contribution of a linked company’s brand to the buying decision in times where customers suffer from ‘over choice’ (Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs, 2006). Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011) emphasise the significance of monitoring external elements to ensure that the desired brand linkage’s identity corresponds to the perceived brand image among customers. Unfortunately as communication noise pervasively hits the commercial markets, new behaviour is generated. Duncan (2002) claims that consumers have come to condition themselves to psychologically ignore traditional advertising messages and Belch and Belch (2004) concede that consumers apply increasingly aggressive selective exposure and selective attention measures. Evidence of such communication clutter results in the creation of selective exposure and attention barriers. This is a sign that not all communication put out by marketers may get attention. Hence, a point of planned brand linkages which achieves exposure and receives attention also diminishes as the level of communication noise increases.

Hill (2007) adds that there is misuse of advertising money because consumers having cluttered information may fail to recognise the commercials. Similarly, Duncan (2002:144) argues that as soon as consumers “recognise something as a commercial message, [they] try to block it out, they turn the page, throw it in the waste basket, or change to another station”. Correspondingly, the more consumers realise this clutter, they increasingly erect more intensive selective exposure and attention measures (Duncan, 2002). Baulk (2003) suggests that more and more advertising is, therefore, ignored in a world characterised by too much commercial noise and clutter. Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2001), established that brand communications that go unnoticed cannot achieve the intended goal (inform or persuade). It is just a waste of money to the brand linkage’s marketing.
Today, brand communications need to rise above the flood because brand linkages that merely deliver more of the same in repackaged form are bound to fail (Herber, 2001). As Ries and Ries (2004:85) more blatantly argue that advertisers are in search of alternative contact solutions because “traditional advertising isn’t working that well”. One strategy suggested by authors is that the linked brand “…must move from using inside-out thinking (focusing internally on sales, shares and quarterly reports) to outside-in thinking (focusing on customers’ needs and wants)” (Duncan, 2002:14). De Chernatony and McDonald (2003) postulate that it is important to understand consumer needs and how brand linkages are perceived in the fulfillment of these needs, through studying consumer behaviour because the consumer is the ultimate focus of brand communication. Equally, Schultz (in Belch & Belch, 2004) specifies that by starting with the consumer and then building backwards to the brand linkages can be an alternative for breaking through the clutter. Also, according to Shaffie (2008 in Van Jaarsveld, 2010) brand communication involving multiple senses can influence consumer perceptions. This implies that “a successful brand (linkage) is one that unites the ‘right’ feelings with the ‘correct’ perception” (Deming, 2010:1). In addition, Lindstrom (2005) posits that the more senses a brand linkage appeals to, the stronger the perception of a linked brand.

While branding today is a strategic tool that helps the supplier cut through the chaos of the market, get noticed, and connect with the customer on many levels and in ways that matter, effective brand communications solutions beyond the tried and trusted is not easy to achieve (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007). Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) affirm that the brand linkages communicates values to customers and is symbolic shorthand for making good choices in a complex, risky, and confusing marketplace. Undoubtedly, globalisation and hyper competition has brought about the explosion of choices in every area. In fact, people are “…subject to a great deal of information across a range of social strata, embedded in multitudinous emotional contexts” (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007:58). Hansen (2005:1435) argues that “the advertiser may wish to generate strong concentrated central information processing. However competition from other communication, other advertising, low involvement on behalf of the receivers, etc. set limits to the extent to which this is feasible”. The linked companies are mistaken if they imagine that mere accumulation is the route to
consumer satisfaction because most of the people do not seek happiness purely in the acquisition of more and more material possessions (Conley, 2008).

Consumers are not machines with an infinite capacity to consume. As such, linked companies should envision a society in which more and more people are able to realise the affluent society where most people have what they need and much of what they want (Conley, 2008). Today’s informed shoppers are no longer mechanised drones, programmed to buy whatever shiny thing comes into their range of perception (Conley, 2008). They have the relational abilities to make wise purchasing decisions. “With an expanding army of hundreds of thousands of potentially covert marketers among us, we inevitably grow wary that things are not what they seem. And largely, they are not” (Conley, 2008:3).

Furthermore, Traynor and Traynor (2004) note that as competition and globalisation increases, the need for differentiation and unique positioning intensifies. It is more difficulty to copy a linked brand’s emotional value added (De Chernatony, 2006). The longing for youthfulness is becoming the central driver for the linked entity’s self-responsibility (Trendbüro, 2008). Consumers need to be delighted through entertaining brand relationships-interaction. Similarly, today is the era of attention and recognition economy, the economy is determined by oversupply and time poverty (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007). Every linked organisation wants to be visible; the brand linkage that delights most and attracts attention is the winner. Also, each and every touch-point with the consumer has to inform, entertain and sell simultaneously because that is what youthfulness means (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007).

Moreover, Hill (2007) comments that customers are the ‘who’ of brand strategy. A solid, self-sustaining strategy mirrors customers’ preferences. Having such a strategy entails speaking to them on their level: who they are and associate with, what they do and value. An adept ‘mirror’ brand linkage drives an emotional connection so deep that consumers no longer think about what to buy (Hill, 2007). Unfortunately, all, too often, linked companies choose the what (their products and services) over the who (their customers). In turn, too often the goal of getting ahead of rivals ends up having only a tangential relationship with getting closer to
customers (Hill, 2007). As Hill (2007) postulates, the solution is to remember that customers buy from the linked brand that makes them feel comfortable, happy, proud and successful. Therefore, competitive differentiation means nothing to consumers unless it is focused on what is in it for them (Hill, 2007). Hill’s (2007:4) argument posits that “not only do actions speak louder than words, emotions and the motivations linked to them drive those actions”. Consequently, a brand linkage makes headway to the extent that it ties into beliefs and avoids what is not credible or relevant (Hansen, Christensen, Lundsteen & Percy, 2007). How can a linked company know that its approach is on track? By gauging consumers’ core emotional responses (Hansen et al., 2007). The underlying key, however remains emotions (Hill, 2007).

Ultimately, clear definitions of brand linkage strategy are a basis for successful management (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2007). Not only is it crucial that success would mean the offer’s closeness to the linked sponsor, convincing consumers of the credibility of such a promise is needed. Plummer, Cook, Diforio, Schachter, Sokolyanskaya and Korde (2007) propose respectfulness, engagement and reassurance as keys to effective emotional drivers that contemporary linked businesses need to implement. The authors further argue that support alone does not eliminate the need for help from customer service representatives who are able to provide real assistance (Plummer et al. 2007).

Though consumers usually try to apply rational analysis to purchase decisions, it is rarely the sole or even primary factor in their determination. Cutting through the clutter substantially entails the linked firm’s meeting of customer needs that are not limited to physical sustenance. In reality, customers want to feel that their lives have a purpose and a place in the fabric of the world in which they live; they desire to be appreciated, respected, wanted, part of something important, and loved. As responsible citizens, consumers want to be part of something good. They will associate with the brand linkages and be committed to those which respect them and deeply understand that through their desperate search for products, what they really seek are the things that will make their lives better, bring them contentment, and entice their senses (Fournier, 1998b).
Relationships with stakeholders play a key role in brand linkages. Hill (2007) observes that confronted with new, disruptive information, consumers favour the familiar. In practice, brand linkage becomes a matter of trying to leverage the power of a psychological phenomenon known as top-down versus bottom-up processing (Compton, 2003; Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2003). In essence, the top-down wins most often. Nevertheless, if there are any negative strings attached to a brand linkage the bottom-up is always secondary to top-down communication processing. This means that brand linkage strategists often negate the importance of interaction among linked brand stakeholders as crucial for brand relationship building and brand evaluation.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter is based on the notion that the research indicated that brand relationship is an attitudinal state which reflects value, trust and commitment within brand-customer interaction. However, this is a threat to past mass media marketing which is on daily basis transformed to a one-on-one and mass-to-mass marketing communication of brand linkage messages. The contemporary market highlights the need for brand linkage concepts to accommodate the concept of social media factors between the intentions of practitioners and the desires of consumers to meet their needs based on certain criteria. Various reviewed materials indicate a lack of agreement among scholars in the interpretation of stakeholders and their impact to the linked brands assessments. Despite nexus searches, there is no evidence that any empirical research on brand linkages and how they affect brand ratings and brand perceptions in a contemporary business environment, has ever been conducted in South Africa. Therefore, what is needed is empirical evidence that can test the conceptual factors offered here. Because of the fact that Western market contexts differ from African contexts, relying on their evidence may be a hindrance to brand linkage success on the South African business matrix.

Based on market orientation and open communication concepts discussed, Chapter 5 deals with the conceptual model, in which social media is regarded as a significant driver of the contemporary market.
CHAPTER 5
Brand linkage – strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions model

“Right now … radical changes for marketing communications. Markets are pulled and pushed in different directions”.
(Paul Smith & Ze Zook, 2011:246)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the conceptual framework of the thesis, based on the literature discussed in the previous chapters. The principal argument prompts a shift across the communication landscape that provides the required brand linkage’s effect to be examined on brand ratings and brand perceptions framework. It is a recent trend that is gaining ground. Despite the fact that academics and practitioners have increasingly acknowledged the importance of brand linkage construct, a common understanding and agreement on the definition has yet to be reached. There are a range of contexts in which the definitions of brand linkages have been explored. Several of these have been explored in chapter 3.

However, despite the different perspectives on brand linkage, a general definition will be the deliberate attempt to influence the consumer’s perceptions of a brand relationship between businesses of two or more brands in which the participants’ names are retained through strategic brand communication. The main features of brand linkages are that: two or more businesses simultaneously take part in the process, it has a long term perspective, it is a sum of actions and it should lead to a shared campaign message base. This construct is posited as a key construct that predicts brand ratings and brand perceptions and indirectly influences brand relationships and brand communication. Brand relationships are the bonds that bring the buyer (stakeholder/customer) and the seller (marketer/communicator) of linked branded products or services together on a continuous basis. The present study, however, proposes that the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings may not always be “direct”, but that brand linkages may influence brand perceptions through their effect on brand linkage communication. Hence, the operational definition of brand
linkage refers to two or more separately owned brands which voluntarily partner for the purpose of enhancing their perceived brand value.

5.2 The purpose of the study

This study attempts to evaluate the impact of brand linkages on stakeholder’s assessments of brands, in particular how these linkages affect their ratings and perceptions of the brands in a contemporary business environment. As already highlighted, in most cases, the nature of brand linkages affects the relationships between customers and brands (see chapter 3.3). The goal of this chapter is to integrate and summarise pertinent issues known previously about brand linkage literature and show the relevance of these to the current study (see chapter 3.3.1). In brief, the aim is to specify the major contributions about brand linkage effectiveness and outline any gap in literature using other well-established brand linkages constructs. Contemporary studies have focused on linking successful brands and forging strong consumer assessments of brand linkages. Nevertheless, fictitious or unreal-linked brands are most commonly used to collect empirical data. Thus, the study targets the linked brands in the real world instead.

Moreover, this study is based on communication, a fundamental aspect in business, because business is a collaborative activity (Andersen, 2001). As such, goods and services are created and exchanged through the close coordination of many persons, sometimes within a single community, and sometimes across global distances. Coordination of this kind requires intense communication. Complex product specifications and production schedules must be mutually understood while intricate deals between linking brand partners are negotiated with strategic intent. Besides, communication styles vary enormously around the world, and these contribute to a staggering variety of business styles (Hooker, 2008). Therefore, the levels of brand linkages’ appearance are neither uniform nor predictable.

In summary, brand linkages offer a unique way to create value for the linked brands since it increases the switching of costs for the consumer and is hard for competitors to duplicate (see chapter 3.2). In some of the literature brand linkage is instrumental
in many brand assessments. Bolman and Deal (2003:510) state that “Because the world of human experience is so complex and ambiguous, frames of reference shape how situations are defined and determine what actions are taken”. The conventional single-brand company and stand-alone brands are increasingly rare (Laforet, 2010). Brands are linked to other brands exposing them to a continual, ongoing process of discourse among and between the contexts of the stakeholders’ interaction with brands. However, in no study the holistic perspective on brand linkages’ effect on brand ratings and brand perceptions has been examined; that is, a model combining all the suggested factors was lacking in a contemporary business environment, particularly, in South Africa. Therefore, this study proposes to combine all five discrete factors into the marketing communication framework, the strategic brand assessment model (SBA). This model is presented in the next section.

5.3 Conceptual framework

As many stakeholders are taking part in brand creation, the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions should be viewed as a more complex process of social interaction, potentially resulting in a more complex and contradictory system of meaning (see chapter 2). Reviewed literature has shown that although stakeholders are viewed in groups their consumption of linked brands is personal (Oestreicher, 2009:8). As such they also stress that, to create a strong connection between a linked brand and stakeholders, experiences must be presented to stakeholders as vivid, unique, emotional, and rich in memory associations (Du Plessis, 2005; Keller, 2008). Unfortunately, stakeholder-generated messages do not always fulfill marketer’s desires. Stakeholders with ties to a linked brand sometimes contest the very meanings that marketers seek to establish (Igniyte, 2014). Based on the relevant literature and the supporting theoretical framework, the following model is proposed (see Figure 5.1). The model shows the relationships between the five key constructs to be examined in this study: 1) brand linkages, 2) brand communication, 3) brand ratings, 4) brand perceptions, 5) redefinition of brand relationships. Therefore, this study suggests that all of these factors may influence the stakeholders’ rating of the linked brands’ (the ‘host brand’ as well as the ‘invited brand’) marketing communication messages or campaign.
The Model: Key components and processes

Figure 5.1 summarises the study framework of the factors of brand in brand linkages’ assessment. The conceptual framework represents two linked brands, A and B, that partner in a brand linkage. Following previous research in strategic communication on brand linkages (Jevons et al., 2002), the dependent variable is the assessment of brand linkage A and B by consumers. Both brand perceptions of A and B are described by ratings (score) on each of the five key dimensions (some of these additional factors are not operationalised). Using brand linkages ratings, the study was able to assess the conceptual model by incooperating brand relationship and brand communication factors, which is redefined as the indirect influencer of brand A and brand B. A more favourable brand linkage impact represents good brand perception and good brand relationships.
Figure 5.1: Brand assessment model

(Graphical illustration of the proposed SBA model Figure 5.1)
5.3.1 Brand linkages

A brand linkage allows companies to leverage their own brands by linking them to other companies’ brands (Jevons et al., 2002). Brand linkages strategy carries an important message to stakeholders, it promises a high quality assessment to potential customers (see chapter 3). Previous studies on brand linkages have significantly increased marketers and academics’ understanding of how consumers react to different types of brand linkages and identified complex variables that influence customer-brand evaluations (Balachander & Ghose, 2003; Beezy, 2007; Franco, 2001; Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Keller, 2003a; Kim, Lavack & Smith, 2001; Lei, De Ruyter & Wetzel, Pontes & Jevons, 2009) but still lack strong empirical research findings. The main message is that two brands are better than one single brand because they are a joint venture. In this study, brand A (host) and brand B (invited) are constituent of brand linkage strategy (Engen is the main parent or host brand, and Woolworths is the invited brand; this invited brand provides the main brand with the quality attribute). Therefore, effective brand linkage would provide the two partnering brands with both high brand ratings and positive perceptions. The customer evaluation of the brand linkage is the major dependent variable in this study.

The increased use of brand linkage strategies is a means to circumvent the growing lack of confidence in the traditional single brand campaigns (Laforet, 2010). An impactful interactive strategy is the touch point that linked organisations can leverage to make an emotional connection. In the information age, consumers make choices because of how linked brands make them feel (Fournier, 1998b). This entails positions filled by the brands and expectations they provoke within these positions. Brand linkage processes are the guiding principles that organisations implement to steer their stakeholders through every day business activities (Laforet, 2010). Various examples used in this study have indicated the evidence of the linkages in determining how consumers perceive the brand (see chapter 2, 3 and 4). Brand linkage is therefore a process that has both the direct and indirect touch points of a partnering brand. For example, direct processes of brand linkages include product design/quality, pricing, distribution and employees; while indirect include, brand
citizen ethics, advertising, public relations, sponsorship, brand extension, co-branding, and word of mouth. When consumers go to the store to look at a product, when they buy it, and when they use it, they have a direct experience that affects their perception of the brand linkage. Since people attribute emotions directly to their experience, this has a greater effect on brand perception than indirect experience.

A brand linkage is experienced indirectly when consumers tell each other about the linked brand’s product or service. “Loyal customers repeatedly purchase products or services. They recommend a (linked) company to others. And they stick with a business over time” (Prus & Brandt, 1995:10). Usually this is a marketing message delivered through advertising, public relations, and other promotions, but it can also be a message delivered by friends, experts, or competitors who have something to say about the product. Digital technology has promoted more indirect experiences of brand linkages. This eventually leads to a weak or strong linkages being formed between brands. However, a negative brand linkage can be seen between Nike and the Tiger Woods brand (Chung et al., 2011). Similarly, the Shell and Ferrari brand linkage was likely to be weakened by oil-spills which caused environmental damage in Nigeria, while Apple and Nike’s brand linkage is likely to be strong in smart phones because of their good and close brand relationships to consumers.

All linked brands express meaning. Complex brand linkages or endorsements strategies with multiple brands are universal because after they are established, consumers’ perceptions of brand relationship and the processing of brand equity (Leuthesser et al., 2003) often change. For instance, with all the fighting and hyper that is generated between Apple versus Nike versus HP, Samsung versus Adidas, High Tech Computer (HTC), Google’s Android and BlackBerry over their smart phones, Nokia and Microsoft Windows have also teamed up with Monster who have co-designed and co-developed the on-or-in-ear purity earpieces accompanying the smart phones (To, 2011). The brand linkages reinforce their meaning through all of their actions as linked and/or unlinked brand touch points (Vargo & Lusch, 2010). Again, the meaning derived from Apple and Nike’s brand linkage is strong enough to shape the stakeholder relationship.
Brand linkage also leads to the general long and short term existing associations made by stakeholders (include the brands involved) such as consumers and businesses of two or more brands. It is a partnership relationship in business, on the other hand it makes both parties work closely together to ensure that everything they do will benefit both the linked brands.

**Table 5.1: Contribution of brand linkages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connection between suppliers and final consumers</th>
<th>Laforet, 2010 (see chapter 3.2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship is personified by a brand linkage. For instance, MasterCard and Virgin</td>
<td>Andersen, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value for individuals - both rational and emotional are considered</td>
<td>Thorson and Duffy, 2011; Vitale, 2006 (see chapter 2.2.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional fulfillment of significance, confidence, safety and satisfaction then it can represent a lifestyle, a status and empowerment</td>
<td>Bester, 1999; Pham, 2007; Van der Walt, 2011 (see chapter 2.2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand linkage expresses itself in the companies’ mission, core values, beliefs, communication, culture and overall design</td>
<td>Vriens and Hofstede, 2000; Wansink, 2003; Pratt, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic at society level but consumed at individual affection level</td>
<td>Bester, 1999; Schmitt, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear guideline for employees and green image principles</td>
<td>Bengtsson and Servais, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand linkage objectives, consistent brand (linkage) name and identity systems, target audiences, positioning(s), key communication messages (both intentional or unintentional) and prioritisation of brand linkage touch points</td>
<td>Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony, 2002 (see chapter 2.3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning, sophisticated tactical choice and incisive operational interventions counts for linked brands</td>
<td>Jacobsen, 1999 in Bengtsson &amp; Servais, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As highlighted in earlier chapters, the brand linkages represent bases for preference purchase decision, recommend intentions and for long term brand relationships (see also Table 5.1). There are a host of possible linkages that a firm can build in a brand relationship with its stakeholders. The example of McDonald M&M's Mcflurry ice-cream in which McDonald capitalized on M&M's strong brand awareness to reach in for greater market penetration. McDonald ice cream with M&M's candies and also Kraft Oreo cookies resulted in the creation of M&M's Mcflurry and Oreo Mcflurry ice cream products. Not all linkages need to be built, but rather those that directly or indirectly affect consumers’ buying behaviour become crucial. Hence, brand linkages may positively or negatively affect brand assessment. Although there are various intentional brand linkages types discussed as shown in the conceptual framework, joint venture (co-branding/brand alliance) of two separately owned brands targeting the same consumers is being operationalised in this study. This implies that Ingredient brand linkage, Same company (brand extension), Sponsorship (promotional) and Convenient brand linkages classification are omitted in this study.

In chapters 2, 3 and 4, several studies that were reviewed for this thesis point to the benefits of brand linkage strategy as part of the bigger picture. However, this is largely omitted in this study as the literature will be generic. This is important because according to Hall (2007) consumers are getting wise, and companies waste their energy if they cannot provide robust evidence to back up every claim they made.

5.3.2 Brand communication

Brand communications need to accurately capture, reflect and respond to stakeholder experience (see chapters 3.2.2 and 4.3). Kotler and Keller (2007) suggest communicating a brand promise, establishing a dialogue and building relationships with consumers. This is a means of maintaining and transmitting values and culture to different parts of society or systems (Fill & Jamieson, 2006:2). The marketing and communication practitioners come as co-participants of the system not as imposters or managers (see chapter 4.4). As such, the brand linkage exists by virtue of a continuous process, the values and expectations infused in the brand
linkage are set and enacted by the companies. Stakeholders interpret and then redefine or filter their values. According to Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) brands which a customer interact with tend to create a stronger attitude or brand perception, either a negative or positive perception. Negative effects on brand linkages are dealt with by strategic communication for them to be transformed into positive assessment of brand linkages as indicated by the impact flow in Figure 5.1. As argued earlier, not everything that comes from the linked organisations is credible. Stakeholders may be suspicious but accept uncontrolled sources as reliable and true facts about the brand linkages. Therefore, to keep pace with their target market, the linked brands need to reinvent themselves through understanding their facilitative roles.

5.3.2.1 Role of brand communication

Brand communication entails the deliberate infusing of communication efforts with an agenda and a master plan to promote the brand linkage strategies of an organisation(s), urging human resources to specific actions, as well as advocacy of particular marketing and communication assignments (Fill & Jamieson, 2006:1). Brand linkages are carefully developed in an attempt to achieve the desired brand ratings and brand perceptions. Such strategy development should reflect and adapt to a postmodern context. The term brand communication is often used in a very broad sense encompassing every advertisement, branding materials, editorial mentions, sponsorships, events, charity support, blogs, videos and social media, such as using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Flickr. For the sake of this study brand communication is the use of Engen and Woolworths’ brand linkage campaign to test customers’ ratings and perceptions of Engen and Woolworths. This means that the campaign was an advertisement (see Appendix D). The other brand communication methods are discussed but not operationalised in this study.

Every communication may lead to different assessments of the brand. As shown in chapter 2.2.3, brand linkage is intangible and perceived in the mind of the consumers (Fournier, 1998a; Keller, 2008). Hence, it is important to consider how the process of intuition and emotions help in consumers’ decision making. Brand linkages are seen as a system of meaning rather than organisations’ property
(Bester, 1999; Leitch & Davenport, 2007). As a result, it is difficult to examine the effect that each particular strategy has on the total outcome of the brand linkage since it is a form of cooperative strategy. This study argues that consumers are to a large extent aware of the marketing behind linked branded products and they are no longer only acting rationally and considering the functional benefits of a given product (Heding et al., 2009). Making use of nonverbal brand rating proves to be the most appropriate way of measuring the effectiveness of brand linkages.

### 5.3.3 Brand ratings

Brand ratings are the main nonverbal method to assess brand linkage in this study, although not the only method. It is deemed appropriate to apply this method in this study because stakeholders are not limited to think and act in accordance with predetermined rules (see chapter 2.2.2.4). According to Keller (2008) the essence of meaning and symbolic value, is vested in the minds of individuals (consumers). Consumer decisions and actions are influenced more by intuition and emotional responses than it was previously thought (Markič, 2009). In a state of dissonance, customers may feel surprise, dread, guilt, anger, or embarrassment (Lantos, 2011). This negative salience is not neutral disliking or not using linked brands but indeed, to some it is to destroy linked brands purposively (Bester, 1999; Thomson, 2009). “It may seem paradoxical, but often the people who have the greatest motivation to harm a company [linked] are those who were once its most loyal customers” (Thomson, 2009:1). Furthermore, although a linked brand can be introduced with communications (through mass media or other channels), it is given life and value through experience (in the form of linkages with other brands). Introduction is not all that a linked brand is about. Daily transactions, person to person communication, the promise of a linked brand and its actual delivery against that promise become a legacy that makes it more or less valuable over time (Sternthal & Lee, 2005). Great linked brands are determined by how excellent the consumers perceive them to be. Importantly, some type of the linked brands’ reputation, whether positive or negative, is created for every brand linkage by autonomous (independent) experiences beyond a company’s control (Oestreicher, 2010).
Table 5.2 sums up the influences for the way in which consumers interpret brand linkages which is not tested but forms part of the generic and complex framework.

**Table 5.2: Consumer brand linkage interpretation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behave ‘ritualistically’ with habits</td>
<td>Hatch and Schultz, 2003 (see chapter 4.2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and culture imperatives</td>
<td>Cornlissen, 2011 (see chapter 2.2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The phenomena of deregulation (a competitive society free from government-imposed restrictions, directives or orders)</td>
<td>Bjerre, Heding and Knudtzen, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging markets</td>
<td>Luoma-aho and Vos, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer sovereignty</td>
<td>Bosman, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing consumers’ tastes and choices</td>
<td>Bosman, 2010; Lawer and Knox, 2006 (see chapter 2.3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through their manic interaction with each other to create the linked brand value</td>
<td>Juan, Nuria, David and Elena, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With credibility in social context, group, or reference group mediating the communication</td>
<td>Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Weber, 2009 (see chapter 4.3.2, 4.3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasting brand relationships is a balance of ‘head’ (functional) and ‘heart’ (emotions)</td>
<td>Hill, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned messages have low credibility while unplanned messages have high credibility with the stakeholders</td>
<td>Andersen, 2006 (see chapter 4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers are slow to recognise and respond to communication through conventional media</td>
<td>Verwey, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward more of a network based, relational and process-oriented view of company-stakeholder engaging, where at least there is consideration of mutuality, interdependence and power sharing</td>
<td>De Chernatony, 2006; Grönroos, 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000 (see chapter 2.3.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3.4 Brand perceptions

The consumer’s perception of the quality of the brand is the primary element for brand perception (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumers’ existing attitudes toward the constituent brands influences their evaluations of the brand linkage (Gammoh & Voss, 2011:82). At a higher level, consumers reveal close-strong response tendencies such as loyal patronage, resistance to competing alternatives, and forgiveness of mishaps (Andersen, 2001; Duncan & Moriarty, 1999). Behaviours at this level reflect consumers' commitment to the object (Solomon, 2009) the linked brands. Brand linkage is a prerequisite as it consists of value-added, strength and product promise for the end user, but is not the only upholder of the relationship (see chapter 3.3.2). Here, human beings are primarily responsible for a relationship while they share products and services. Whether they are salespeople, distributors or buyers, they create the trust necessary for business transactions in business-to-business. Trust leads to sympathy and competence (Andersen, 2001). Park, MacInnis and Priester (2006:4) point out that “A still higher level is characterised by such behaviours (purchase intention and recommendation intention) as price insensitivity, involvement in brand communities, and (linked) brand advocacy, reflecting investment of resources (such as, money, time, and one’s own credibility) in the (linked) brand”. Brand linkage attachment creates high individuals’ willingness to make sacrifices and personal investments in support of the relationship (Park & MacInnis, 2006).

Accordingly, the intensity of a brand relationship anticipates that consumers would make sacrifices of their personal resources in the form of money, time, and energy to continue their relationship with the linked brand (Park et al., 2006). When their attitudes are favourable and strong, consumers are closely associated to behaviour (Cohen & Reed, 2006) as willingness to delay a purchase when the linked brand is unavailable, the engagement in an extended search for the linked brand, involvement in brand communities, writing letters and participating in blogs related to the linked brand (Park et al., 2006). Park, MacInnis and Priester (2006:26) suggest that “attachment” is a more appropriate construct than attitude for explaining higher order, relationship based behaviours, relevant to marketing exchange. Hence, they
argue that potential superiority factors in predicting an exchange relationship based on “brand attachment” reflect “a consumers’ psychological state of mind [strong self-brand linkages and automatic retrieval of thoughts and feelings about the linked brand] while brand commitment reflects intention to engage in behaviour which maintain brand relationship” (Park et al., 2006:26-27).

In this perspective, Barnes (2001:132) proposes that “the closeness concept captures many of the emotional aspects of relationships” and that high intensity and strong emotions lead to close and enduring relationships that are more likely to continue into the future. Research on interpersonal relationships has attempted to identify key determinants of the stability of close relationships as well as the processes underlying them (Ries & Ries, 2004). One conclusion from literature is that a relationship, once developed, tends to stabilise at a particular level of intimacy or closeness (Ries & Ries, 2004) but, if failed there is a distance. Therefore, the intensity of brand relationships might directly influence the preference and recommended intent.

Recommended intentions are common in the era of globalisation and social media. Customer spends retention and their willingness to recommend the linked brand to others might all have been influenced by the strength of the brand relationship. In contrast, information may be vulnerable to messages spread by unhappy customers, disgruntled employees or even agents from competing operations, negative publicity can hinder businesses of all kinds (Igniyte, 2014; Letaifa & Perrien, 2007). Unfortunately, linked companies without websites can lose business because of unfavourable ratings and reviews. Indeed, these businesses are the most vulnerable of all, as they have no online material to counter any bad publicity when the need arises (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009). It is no longer the fact of being online or not because other people while offline can cause harm or benefit any business as they want based on their attitude toward a linked brand (see Table 5.3). Thus, attitude attachment (personality) is one factor that resembles the effectiveness of the brand relationship and this will then lead to recommended intention. For instance, the feminists in South Africa decided to put up an online page with a campaign (Tasteless T-shirts – All from Foschini Group) for consumers to boycott Foschini
brand linkages until Foschini stops printing women-hating, reckless and, tasteless t-shirts. Therefore, participation in a brand community is important because of more visibility through brand linkage engagements (see chapter 3.3.4.3).

Table 5.3: Strong negative effects on brand linkage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postponement of purchase</td>
<td>Finne &amp; Grönroos, 2009 (see chapter 2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity intensified</td>
<td>Brown, 2010 (see chapter 2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffers a serious reputation problem</td>
<td>Washburn et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derives from consumers attributing a potentially negative experience</td>
<td>Franzen and Moriarty, 2009 (see chapter 3.2.1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypic processing</td>
<td>Gwinner and Bennett, 2008 (see chapter 2.4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devaluation (depreciation of goodwill) virtually overnight</td>
<td>Overton-de Klerk, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexibility</td>
<td>Baker and Saren, 2010 (see chapter 3.2.1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in conflict since planning is shared</td>
<td>Prince and Davies, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The diminution of the brand equity</td>
<td>Jones, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May fail for numerous causes including prior attitudes toward each brand</td>
<td>Barger et al., 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreliable imaging</td>
<td>Barger et al., 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor integration of meaning</td>
<td>Leuthesser et al., 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of complement, free-rider notions</td>
<td>Barger et al., 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent contributions</td>
<td>Barger et al, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy misalignment</td>
<td>Barger et al., 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One marketing communication strategy rarely fits all stakeholders’ needs</td>
<td>Friedman and Miles, 2006 (chapter 2.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other effects
Brand perception can affect brand linkage both positively and negatively. There are other factors influencing brand perception such as the strong negative effects of brand linkages (Table 5.3). Therefore, these factors are based on what stakeholders have seen, felt, learned, and heard about the brand as a result of their experiences over time (Buil, De Chernatony, & Martínez, 2013). The other effects of brand perceptions are discussed next but not operationalised because of their complexity. However, there are more merits than demerits of brand linkages’ strategy and the negative effects can be avoided if practitioners are aware of them.

5.3.5 Brand relationships
Brand linkages capture a distinct position in the minds of consumers. This differentiated positioning is the most valuable asset that linked brands utilise in building lasting relationships with consumers (Romaniuk et al., 2007; see chapter 2.2.2; 2.4.1 and 4.5). Relationships arise when a consumer perceives that the linked brand repeatedly fulfills its brand promise through the available touch points (see chapter 2.2.3.1). It is clear that brand relationship, similar to brand perception resides in the interaction between the brand linkages and its stakeholders. Hence, through meeting stakeholders’ expectations either in the form of functional, symbolic or hedonic exchanges, the relationship is created (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998a). Employees and management’s actions in relation to brand linkage affect a stakeholder’s perception of the brand linkage. However, the overall perception of brand linkage is also affected by the actions and verbal or non-verbal expressions of other stakeholders. Drawing on the previous arguments (see chapter 2.5); the brands are part of stakeholders’ social existence to initiate relationships (see chapter 2.3.1). Although relationships with brands are not the same as relationships between people, the metaphor is useful (Aggarwal, 2004; Fournier, 1998a). The brands that people (stakeholders) use reinforce their self-image and how others see them (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Bester, 1999). As a result, brand character is based on the values, standards, style, and brand promise of a given organisation. If the linked organisations can create good alignment with employees, healthy culture will mean a strong brand relationship character. Therefore, this is the starting point.
As indicated in this study, an organisation’s reputation within the marketplace is derived from how stakeholders perceive its associations, through the linked organisations’ communication and behavior (on business ethics). Bad brand relationships-interaction can be characterised by repellent and negative aspects (see chapter 2.5). On the other hand, brand relationships can also be purposive at their core yet altered by the attitudes of partners. Importantly, contemporary brand relationships’ may be less linked to an image creation view of marketing, than to the consumers’ relationships they retain (Fournier, 2009). Currently two dilemmas now exist in brand relationship characteristics: a tension between consumer participation, and corporate control over messaging (communication). In particular, McDonalds and Coke, McDonalds and Disney, Shoprite and Computicket, KFC and Cadburys, House of Coffees and Russell Hobbs, may encounter such a dilemma. Also, this includes partnership such as Taligent, a one-time technological alliance of Apple, IBM and Motorola. Consumer participation is marked less by purchasing more loyalty and affiliation (Moor, 2007). Cell C was in trouble in all the newspapers, radio stations and TVs on Friday, June 1, 2012 yet they remain silent. The Solidarity Union accused Cell C of acting hastily in starting to consult with employees over planned retrenchments. Cell C in this case did not consider communication while its reputation was damaged in minutes. It is a lesson for Cell C that communication as a tool for dialogue becomes the central feature for creating, sustaining, and building stakeholder relationships’ characteristics.

However, the dynamics of stakeholder relationships should never be underestimated. Merz, He and Vargo (2009) suggest that building collaborative stakeholder relationships should be embedded within all communication strategies. This entails the importance of strategic communication as a base to balance the linked brand’s essence, as was the case of the Boutique Publishing House, Contact Media and Communications which launched On Route free Magazine in April 2012 after securing brand linkage agreements with toll concessionaires Bakwena, N3TC, TRAC and emergency medical care company ER24 (Bizcommunity.com, 2012). Airasia, the low budget airline of Malaysia has done very well in the online booking for air travelling after forming an alliance with Citibank. Both brands introduced their unique Airasia Citibank credit card in 2007. Hence, as a strategic move, it enables
nurturing of stakeholder relationships, building and leveraging of long-term investment relationships, which may in turn pave the way to growth opportunities for an (linked) organisation within the marketplace.

As has been argued in chapter 3, a host of factors indicated that a brand linkage can be an effective strategy to influence consumers’ perception of the main brand. Brand relationships are the bonds that bring the buyer (customer) and the seller of linked branded products or services together on a continuing basis (Park, MacInnis & Priester, 2006). Linked brands’ relationships can be complex and multifaceted (see chapter 2.2.2). The relationships with many constituencies include customers and end users, influencers, suppliers, financial markets, employees, external organisations, government units and shareholders which is summed up as all stakeholders (Pratt, 2009). At the same time, brand relationships are communication motivated, both verbal and non-verbal (Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 2004; Brodie, 2009). Overton-de Klerk and Oelofse (2010:391) advocate that although various disciplines such as management communication, marketing communication, public relations and political communication are necessary, they are no longer sufficient conditions for strategic communication’s meeting of the organisation’s goals. Instead, the authors argue that strategic communication seeks “collaboration participation at all levels, including identified stakeholders”. Similarly, the community and social approaches (McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001; O’Guinn and Muniz, 2010, discussed in the previous chapters) have changed whole industries by fundamentally changing how consumers interact. For this reason, brand relationship quality (Fournier, 1998a) is not sufficiently applicable to today’s consumers as it focuses on linear communication. That is, the business-to-consumer relationship communication. However, not enough attention was paid to building brand linkages, brand ratings and maintaining good brand perception through brand communication of the linked brands’ value. Many important aspects of brand relationships such as preferences, beliefs, experiences and opinions were discussed but not operationalised. This study mainly focuses on the stakeholder’s perception variable.

In light of the previous discussion it seems there is a need for a framework capturing the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in this
contemporary business environment. Therefore, the empirical testing of the proposed assumption hinges on the following two suggestions:
If the stakeholders after seeing the brand communication campaign of linked brands (Engen-Woolworths) accept it without any other negative influence, it is effective brand linkage – on strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions (BL-SBRBP). This means the campaign enhances the effective host or main brand because of the linkage to the invited brand. Also, if stakeholders after seeing the brand communication campaign of partnering brands (Engen-Woolworths) reject it based on the influence of other factors, it is ineffective brand linkage – on strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions. Hence, in this study, the term success or effectiveness or impact of brand linkage means the favourability of the host brand (Engen) as a linked brand.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter is based on the notion that from the literature review there are numerous theoretical variables that may be used for brand assessments. Several assessments of brands were carried out with fictitious partnering of brands. The study attempts to fill the gap by providing an empirical brand linkage assessment based on real world brands. Furthermore, this study contributes to the literature by capturing the five indiscrete factors of the strategic brand assessment model (SBA).

Chapter 6 deals with the research methodology of this research, showing every step of the research process, including how the data was collected and justification of the methods employed.
CHAPTER 6
Methodology

“We are drowning in information and starved for knowledge”.
(Tom Peters, 1987)

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the case companies and explain the different research methods, design, instruments and procedures used to generate knowledge for the current thesis. The literature review in previous chapters provides the input for this methodology chapter. In addition, the research process and the evaluation of the validity and reliability of data are presented. As stated previously, the main research purpose is to evaluate the impact of brand linkage on stakeholder (consumers) ratings and perceptions of the brands. The instrument used for the study attempts to establish whether the shift occurs if participants are exposed to the brand linkage campaign as compared to when they are not exposed to any intervention. In view of the nature of the study, this chapter describes the research methodology used in the quantitative approach, based on the Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. The chapter also specifically presents the research objective, choice of brand linkage, research design (measuring instrument, experimental design, respondents), and procedure of pretest posttest control group results.

6.2 Research objective

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of brand linkages on stakeholder ratings and perceptions of brands in a contemporary business environment.

6.3 Choice of brand linkage
6.3.1 Brand linkage type

For the sake of the study, experiment is defined as a context in which a researcher
objectively observes phenomena which are made to occur in a strictly controlled situation where one or more variables are varied and others are kept constant. According to Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002:12) it is “a study in which an intervention is deliberately introduced to observe its effects”. Prior to deciding the actual experimental design, a context or stimulus campaign\(^9\) depicting the brands that are linked needed to be established for data collection. Two real-world brands as opposed to fictitious brands were chosen as the stimulus for this experimental research. This approach departs from prior conceptual research on this subject (for example, Anslinger & Jenk, 2004; Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000; Jevons et al., 2002; Leone et al., 2006). Although fictitious brands are criticised for not carrying well-formed associations and feelings that are requisite for assessments of brand linkages, various academics and professionals still rely on them (Gammoh & Voss, 2011; Van der Lans, Van den Bergh & Dieleman, 2014:10). Among the various brand linkage types, the joint venture of two brands which are separately owned while targeting the same market was chosen. Therefore, it was deemed necessary for this study to choose real brands (Global Convenience Store Focus, 2010). After all types of brand linkages were considered, ultimately the choice fell upon a “two way” brand enhancement group because it was deemed the appropriate method to compare pretest results versus posttest results.

6.3.2 The context: brand linkage in South Africa and brand selection

As indicated earlier, a number of linked brands were considered; ultimately the choice fell upon the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage. The selection of the actual brand linkages from the real world involved decision on three key aspects used in this study. Firstly, a decision on a relevant main brand category was made. Convenient fuel services providers were chosen as the main or host brand category because this industry is one where consumers and garages have frequent

\(^9\) Context means that the observations are specifically made in an environment in which all conditions other than the ones the researcher presents are kept constant or controlled. Stimulus campaign refers to the conditions which the researcher presents that are systematically varied to see if a respondent's responses change with the variation in these conditions (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, 1966). In this study, Engen-Woolworths campaign intervention was used as the stimulus.
interactions. As such this provided a high brand familiarity, for most people would have a fresh memory or experience with the service stations nationwide. Thus, when probed to mention another brand that could be associated with this category, consumers’ perceptions could easily be drowned by the respondents who had negative experience with the brand. Furthermore, fuel service stations have high geographic coverage in South Africa, which also supports their use in this research. Similarly, the food stores category chosen has expanded from clothing and food stores to separate convenient food stores found in fuel service stations with a national coverage. Hence for this study, Engen was the main or host brand with Woolworths being the invited or secondary brand.

Secondly, a decision was made on the number of specific brands which pair as main and invited brands to be included in the experiment. The brand selection process featured all the well-known brands in the global market which were used as examples. The list of linked brands were classified into sponsorship via sporting authority, retail or convenience or availability, consumer led, two way brand value enhancement, one way brand enhancement, same company linkage, joint venture (co-branding or brand alliance) and sponsorship (promotional). A “two way” brand enhancement group was chosen. For the two linked brands to qualify in this group the criteria were that both brands should be brands that consumers can buy and have two way value benefits. Ideally the brands should be linked but separately owned and appeal to the same target market. A further screening was that one of the brands should be at least local (South African brand). Hence, petrol brands Shell and Ferrari, brandy brands Klipdrift and Coca-Cola (anticipated linkage which was later dropped because the brands are not linked), brands of computers or laptops Dell and Intel, and, brands of soft drinks Diet Coke and NutraSweet, were short listed for the pre-pilot interview study. Finally, Klipdrift and Coca-Cola were selected but later dropped after a discovery was made of lack of formal linkages. Omo (washing powder) and LG (washing machine), Engen and Woolworths, and, Woolworths and Discovery brands were further short listed.

Three additional aspects influenced the selection procedure. The first was that spontaneous brand linkage awareness is more in these categories as compared to
the other linked brands. The second was that the brand linkage is prominent in terms of having been seen or respondents being aware of any campaign or promotional material in which they are associated. The third was that there is a clear formal relationship confirmed by the companies (Global Convenience Store Focus, 2010). Engen and Woolworths brand linkages was finally selected because of their continuous partnership and mostly the availability of recent advertising material depicting the two brands. Sustainability initiatives have often been a natural extension of the longstanding partnerships between Engen and Woolworths and “that allowed it to formulate unique, and often farm-specific, responses to biodiversity, transformation and other objectives” (Woolworths Holdings, 2012:19).

Thirdly, a decision regarding the choice of a specific brand linkage category was made. A combination of 24 hour convenient fuel and food stores brand linkage category was chosen and this choice was derived from the viable market based on the pre-pilot study carried out. In South Africa, these two categories of convenient fuel and food stores, that is, Engen and Woolworths have forged a strategic joint venture to leverage their services to their customers. Woolworths wanted to offer 24 hour service food stores with a giant nationwide fuel service partner (Woolworths Holdings, 2012).

Finally, the most important criterion selecting the brand linkage in the real world was to ensure that this partnership is not too complicated, so that respondents are interested and are familiar with the two brands. Some brand linkages can be very complex when one brand is partnering with many other brands. Multiple brand linkages such as in the case of Discovery with various food stores or supermarkets, cell phone manufactures and cell phone network services providers, banks and insurance service providers, are examples of such complex linkages.

6.4 Choice of research method

The research design was quantitative, and an experiment was followed by a questionnaire. However, as perceptions were also tested, aspects of an integrated mixed method approach will be detected in the discussion of results, which will also
be based on qualitative interpretations (Creswell, 2014). Since the objective of the current study was to investigate the practical application and the effect of brand assessment in a contemporary business context, a quantitative approach has been deemed as the suitable research methodology. Furthermore, this study aims to determine the effect of the brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions, which is best accommodated by a quantitative research approach (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002).

6.5 Research design

The study could be contextualized within a positivist philosophy which believes in the possibility to observe and describe reality from an objective scientific viewpoint. It was deemed necessary to observe the world in some neutral and objective way, discover “general” relationships and “universal” laws, derive theories, test them and repeat (Sounders & Lewis, 2011). Positivist perspective observes reality from logic and reason. Logic and reasoning are based from the theoretical framework on peer reviewed, globally accepted sources of information (such as peer-reviewed social scientific articles and books written by academics). Hence, the framework of the study should be strongly accurate and serve as a base of truth to build the objective arguments.

This is an explanatory experimental study to establish causal relationships between variables. The focus of this research is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain relationships (Saunders & Lewis, 2011). A deductive approach is deemed necessary. This approach typically moves from broader generalization to specific observations (Saunders & Lewis, 2011). The researcher answered questions and confirmed hypotheses through quantitative instruments.

6.5.1 Experimental research design

A Pretest – Posttest Control Group Experiment Design was used to investigate the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions. In this design, both groups are observed or measured twice. The first measurement is conducted as the
pretest, then the treatment occurs and finally the posttest is undertaken. Although convenient sampling, the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the four groups (Kirk, 2013:25). Following Campbell and Stanley (1966:25; Rutterford, 2012:128), the formula can be represented as follows;

**Figure 6.1: Four groups pretest and posttest**

**Aware**

RO1  X  O2
RO3  O4

**Unaware**

RO1  X  O2
RO3  O4

Key: O1 and O2 = Experimental group
O3 and O4 = Control group
RO1 and RO3 = Pretest
O2 and O4 = Posttest
R= Random allocation
X = Treatment (Engen-Woolworths campaign)

### 6.5.2 Respondents

In order to obtain at least 30 respondents per group or more (rule of thumb minimum number for statistical analysis\(^\text{10}\) see Figure 6.2), 250 respondents from Gauteng cities such as Johannesburg and Benoni were conveniently sampled (Kirk, 1995:6). Babbie and Mouton (2010) argue that intervention research with a group that is small and geographically bound provides the possibility to obtain more reliable results regarding the effectiveness of an intervention. The sample frame that closely resembles the population of interest for users and non-users of Engen-Woolworths

\(^{10}\) However, power estimates for various statistics may differ with power and its relationship to Type I and Type II errors. “Rules-of-thumb” refers to numbers of respondents needed for common statistical procedures (Van Voorhis & Morgan, 2007:43). The current study’s population was sufficient for statistical rules of thumb guiding the selection of sample sizes large enough for sufficient power to detecting differences, associations, chi-square, and factor analyses. The elusive .5 significance level was met (see 6.6.4.8). Given a medium to large effect size, 30 participants per cell should lead to about 80% power (the minimum suggested power for an ordinary study).
linkages were "conveniently" selected including several worksites/businesses, homes, and university of Johannesburg campuses that are located near the researcher and agreed to participate.

**Figure 6.2: Sample size rules of thumb overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Reasonable sample size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measuring group differences</td>
<td>Cell size of 30 for 80% power, if decreased, no lower than 7 per cell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>~50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>At least 20 overall, no cell smaller than 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Analysis</td>
<td>~300 is “good”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(source: Van Voorhis & Morgan, 2007:48)

Selection criteria included street intercept, shopping malls, house, company as well as University of Johannesburg staff and students. All of the respondents were selected based upon their voluntary willingness to participate in the study. This method of sampling is common among many academic studies (Rutterford, 2012; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002). The study considered the randomisation into four groups and the adequacy of the sample size for statistical analyses. Representation of the general population was not necessary for this study (Kirk, 2013; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002) as the purpose was to assess the difference between comparison groups following the exposure to a linked campaign intervention. Internal validity was regarded as more important than external validity\(^\text{11}\). The latter can be compromised with intervention as well as when other extraneous variables are being strictly controlled for example through pre-testing itself (Campbell & Stanley, 1966:16-17). In this instance the purpose of the experiment was to ascertain the impact of the intervention itself and to eliminate other influences on groups that were spontaneously aware of the linkage and on groups that were spontaneously not aware of the linkage. It must be noted that while groups were allocated according to

\(^{11}\) According to Shadish, Cook and Campbell (2002:18) “each experiment nearly always uses a convenient sample of people rather than one that reflects as well-described population".
spontaneous awareness (or salience of association), this does not necessarily preclude knowledge of the linkage (if prompted). This was not tested for in the study, nor did it try to establish at this stage how respondents became aware of the linkage.

6.5.3 Research design procedure

The researcher administered the research instrument/s personally to users and non-users of Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. The experiment was conducted on a one-on-one basis, with a form to record respondents’ votes (see Appendix B) and a questionnaire for each respondent to self-complete. Data was collected at the convenience of the respondents at their chosen location. The experiment was conducted during the months of September 18, 2013 and January 28, 2014 (see page 191, 193).

Using a pretest-posttest control group experiment design, all respondents were randomly assigned to four groups, in either experimental or control conditions. Experimental and control groups were run simultaneously. A further assessment through use of a short anonymous questionnaire concerning dependent variables was conducted at the end of the experiment on brand perceptions.

6.5.4 Instrumentation: Methods of data collection

There were two integrated instruments that were employed during the main data collection phase of this study. Thus, the self-administered blinding card scoring method (part A) and questionnaire survey (part B) were used to gather primary data. These instruments were designed to measure different but complementary aspects of the impact of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions. A structured form was used to record the cards scored during the pretest posttest experiment (see Appendix B). Similarly, a structured questionnaire consisting of self-developed items was also self-administered. The sampling frame was drawn from the Gauteng Province of South Africa and consumers were the only targeted respondents.
6.5.4.1 Experimental design/strategy

The experimental design utilised the card scoring method. Card scoring method refers to the nonverbal assessment of the ‘main parent brand’ to establish whether customers’ ratings are influenced by the ‘invited brand’. This method was deemed appropriate because of its simplicity and enabled respondents to rate brands autonomously in a similar way as to when they are choosing favourable brands (as opposed to questionnaire or mixed method). This method minimised the interference of the researcher and bias towards certain brands. Although card scoring was used as one of the first attempts in an academic study, it is an effective practical way of measuring the brand rating scores before and after the intervention.

Consequently, this method is based on hard data, is accurate and differentiates brands clearly in terms of consumers’ card allocation. Therefore, this approach best examines a brand linkage’s impact on the other (invited brand), and allows market or academic professionals to make an important analysis of one brand’s impact versus its competitors. It is a method supported in literature. According to Martinez (2012:6), due to psycho-sociological phenomena in play, a lot of variables may need to be captured which are interacting at the same time (Watt & Van den Berg, 2002). Furthermore, “the communication is the message itself, and the metacommunication might be described as all the nonverbal paraphernalia that accompanies the message” (Heath, Brandt & Nairn, 2006: 413; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002). Similarly on Heath, Brandt and Nairn’s (2006:413) semantic scale, card scoring was an appropriate measure that quantifies communication and metacommunication and that makes it possible to see what, if any correlations exist among the three constructs. These three constructs are brand linkage, brand ratings and brand perceptions. This implies that a simple measure of relationship is the favourability that a consumer has for a brand (Heath, Brandt & Nairn, 2006:413). The favourability is said to apply both to users, aware and nonusers, unaware. This method was appropriate to capture a large part of the consumers’ thoughts and emotions about the brands in a nonverbal way as discussed in chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Given this kind of study, this short questionnaire was used as a follow-up on the
experiment measurement, a triangulation of methods to cast more light on the findings and enhance the independent variables (Hall & Howard, 2008:250). Using such a method in this study, made it possible to measure the change brought about by the campaign through comparing the mean change in the experimental groups’ card scores (on the pretest and posttest questionnaires) with the mean change in the control group’s card scores (Christensen, 2007:308; Kirk, 2013:26).

In true experimental research it can be demonstrated that by changing the independent variable, a change is possible on the dependent variable (brand ratings and perceptions) (Creswell, 2014:157). The results are commended for providing better evidence for causal claims than the non-experimental methods (Rutterford, 2012:127; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002). Bordens and Abbott (2014:110) argue that the second characteristic of experimental research is control over extraneous variables. In this study, random allocation to the four groups is important to control extraneous variables since the respondents are assigned to their treatment not according to some behaviour or characteristics of the respondents. For instance, if some of the respondents who are aware of the brand linkage would end up in one group rather than the other or vice versa, their degree of awareness of brand linkage before undertaking the experiment becomes an extraneous variable which would be problematic.

Furthermore, uncontrollable variables may make it impossible or difficult to detect the effects of brand linkage (independent variable) (Bordens & Abbott, 2014:110). Therefore, the respondents were randomly assigned to a group and the extraneous variables were equally distributed among the groups (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). This process distributes the effects of these differences across treatments in such a way that they may not be mistaken for effects of brand linkage campaign exposure. Consequently, this approach eliminated many of the biasing issues that are inherent

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12 Random assignment of respondents to groups is the best way to control extraneous variables in experimental research. It provides control for subject characteristics, maturation, and statistical regression (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, 1966). These factors of internal validity “have been factors which directly affected 0 scores. They have been factors which by themselves could produce changes which might be mistaken for the results of X” (Campbell & Stanley, 1963:16).
in the non-experimental designs and maximise systematic variance (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Watt & Van den Berg, 2002). Using standardised testing and revision of testing instruments helped to minimise the error variance (Bordens & Abbott, 2014).

In the first phase of the study, blinding or masking\textsuperscript{13} was applied as a way of restricting the knowledge about the intervention before the respondents were allocated to trial arm\textsuperscript{14} or group. Blinding refers to keeping trial respondents and/or researchers unaware of an assigned intervention, so that they are not influenced by that knowledge (Kirk, 1995). This was necessary because respondents’ knowledge of intervention procedures may introduce bias into the experiment (Kirk, 1995:22-25, 2013:1; Rutterford, 2012:129). Single-blinding means that the respondents remain unaware of the interventions throughout the ‘trial’. Hence a single-blind procedure was administered by the researcher in a way that the intervention given was not disclosed. Also, the researcher had no full knowledge of which treatment to supply to any particular respondents (Kick, 2013:22) as it was determined only after the pretest. This was employed to protect against the possibility that the knowledge of the assigned intervention groups by the respondent or the researcher biases those respondents toward desirable estimates of experimental outcomes (Rutterford, 2012). It was also meant to ensure that the respondents and the researcher who measures the outcome did not know who was in which group in case this may influence the allocation of cards to the favourable or non-favourable brands (Christensen, 2007:373).

\textsuperscript{13} Blinding or masking in this study is a way of restricting the knowledge about the intervention before the respondents are allocated to trial arm or group. A single-blinding was used because knowledge of intervention procedures may introduce bias into the experiment (Kirk, 1995:22-25, 2013:1; Rutterford, 2012:129). The goal is to exert the maximum amount of data with the least expenditure of resources (Kirk, 2013:1). This is called single-blind procedure since the person administering the intervention will have full knowledge which treatment to supply (Kick, 2013:22). It was necessary in the study to ensure that the respondents and the researcher who measures the outcome also will not know who is in which group in case this could influence the allocation of cards.

\textsuperscript{14} The terms ‘treatment’, ‘trial’, and ‘independent variable’ are used interchangeably in this study. An independent variable is “any suspected causal event that is under investigation” and dependent is “the measurement that is used to assess the effects, if any, of manipulating independent variable” (Kirk, 1995:3).
The card scoring method was aimed to excerpt the maximum amount of data with the least expenditure of resources (Kirk, 2013:1). As such, a baseline was applied in this study as “the target behaviours in their freely occurring state” (Christensen, 2007:373) to prevent the effect of the stimulus and functions as the standard measure to compare the change or shift induced by experimental treatment. The use of five other brands (BP, Sasol, Shell, Caltex and Total) alongside the Engen brand was important as it prevented the effect of the stimulus and respondents toward case brands.

6.5.4.2 Card scoring methodology

Respondents were given envelopes that were labelled with the names of the six major fuel service station brands and a set of 99 cards. They were asked to allocate these cards to each brand in accordance with their general assessment of the brands, by placing cards in each envelope. This score, for each respondent, represented a baseline measure of brand salience, for each brand. These envelopes were then set aside for later tabulation and analysis (see Appendix B). The results for six fuel station brands were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>4211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGEN</td>
<td>7068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALTEx</td>
<td>3103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SASOL</td>
<td>4863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHELL</td>
<td>3089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of votes allocated was 24,750. If these votes had been randomly distributed (that is, no differentiation between brands) each brand would have received 4,125 votes. Engen’s score at 7,068 was therefore 71% higher than a random score. The average score for Engen, per respondent, was 28.2 votes (7068/250) compared to an average random score, per respondent, of 16.5 votes.
Respondents were then asked whether they were aware of these brands being associated, in any way, with any other brand or brands. Responses were recorded on the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

There were 101 respondents who were spontaneously aware of the Engen/Woolworths brand linkage. These ‘aware’ respondents allocated 6 637 votes to Engen which on average rated Engen 65.7 votes compared to a random allocation score of 16.5 votes and the Engen average of 28.2 votes. This indicated that those respondents who were spontaneously aware of this linkage were more likely to rate Engen’s salience much higher than average that is 65.7 versus 28.2. Therefore, the clinical results already gave a clear indication that the brand linkage itself (before exposure to the linked brand campaign) resulted in significantly higher ratings of Engen as a linked brand by those who were aware of the linkage.

6.5.4.3 Questionnaire

The second phase of the study aimed to add depth and cast further light on the experimental findings, by asking questions that dealt with respondents’ perceptions and opinions about the individual brands Woolworths and Engen as well as the brand cooperation between Woolworths and Engen. Some of the questions were measured by a five-point Likert scale; others were Yes or No (see Appendix C). The last part of the questionnaire included demographic information.

The questionnaire was appropriately useful for exploration as well as confirmation of experimental results (Creswell, 2014; Martinez, 2012). The results based on statistical analyses confirmed that all measures were reliable. As a result, the values of the constructs were computed as the mean of the ratings of the items associated with each construct is generated. This questionnaire measures several controlling factors for describing respondents of this study. Gender, age, education, employment status and ethnicity or race variables were requested, whereas frequency of preference of linked brands was measured.
6.5.5 Validity

Validity and reliability are two fundamental elements in the evaluation of a measuring instrument. Threats to internal validity were addressed. Kirk (1995:25) specifies that “Internal validity is concerned with correctly concluding that an independent variable is, in fact, responsible for variation in the dependent variable”. For this study, internal validity would refer to experimental procedures, treatments, or experiences of the respondents that threaten the ability of drawing correct inferences from data about the population in an experiment (Creswell, 2014:162-164). As advised by Bordens and Abbott (2014:326), Campbell and Stanley (1963:7-9), the study used two groups.

Seven internal validity threats that were dealt with are history, maturation, instrumentation, selection of subjects, testing, statistical regression and experimental mortality. Randomisation ensured control of extraneous variables by equally distributing them among the groups (Campbell & Stanley, 1963:16), whereas parallel grouping provided and minimised control over relevant stimulus factors, because all four groups were exposed to a similar experimental process (Kirk, 2013). For example, separation of the aware group and unaware group for experimental and control groups was necessary to prevent the spillover effects of manipulations and thus ensured precise attribution of set stimuli (the campaign intervention) (Bordens & Abbott, 2014:326; Olsen & Pedersen, 2008:157). However, since internal validity was the main objective and not external validity, this widely used design was considered suitable for the research purpose (Campbell & Stanley, 1963:18-21). The “standardized and uniform delivery of interventions to all participants” (Gorard, Roberts & Taylor, 2004:584) is viewed as one of the requirements for strong validity in an experiment. Hence, the study used two groups as shown in Table 6.1.
Table 6.1: Internal validity threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>How it was dealt with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Specific events occurring between the first and second measurement in addition to the experimental variable</td>
<td>All groups experienced the same activities except for the treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturation</td>
<td>Processes within the respondents as a result of the passage of time</td>
<td>Manifested equally in experimental and control groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>Changes in observers or instrument calibration which produce changes in the obtained measurement</td>
<td>The use of a fixed measuring instrument (card sorting followed by questionnaire) ensured that this was not a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Differential selection of respondents for the comparison groups</td>
<td>Randomisation has assured group equality. Aware and unaware groups were assigned at random to experimental and control groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>The effects of the pretest upon the scores of the posttest</td>
<td>Manifested equally in experimental and control groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical regression</td>
<td>Where respondents selected on the basis of their extreme scores tend to move closer to the mean on retesting</td>
<td>If this was a problem it would have manifested equally in experimental and control groups due to randomisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental mortality</td>
<td>Differential loss of respondents from the comparison groups</td>
<td>All respondents participated throughout the research; therefore there was no effect on the research data collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Bordens & Abbott, 2014:326; Campbell & Stanley, 1963:7-9)
Secondly, the thesis enhances the scientific validity by ensuring that there is a strict coherence between method, analysis and conclusions. It is regarded as reality under the conditions established by the proposed paradigm within the theory of science, and the specific conclusions are only based on the questions this study set forth in the introduction. Bordens and Abbott (2014:326) agree that a pilot study could determine avoidance of confounding threats to validity through testing how the experiment is executed. As such, the study paid careful attention to various threats to validity during the pilot study. Thus, it ensures that this thesis is built on a logical progression and that the conclusions are drawn on logical reasoning.

6.5.5.1 External validity

Whilst the pretest posttest control group design is widely regarded as one of the experimental designs with the highest validity (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Bordens & Abbott, 2014; Babbie & Mouton, 2014), the same can not be necessarily said for its external validity. In other words, generalization to the population from which the samples were drawn is not always possible. This is largely due to the high degree of control over variables that can jeopardise internal validity, which in turn, can compromise external validity. External validity, or representativeness, is threatened due the reactive or interaction effects of testing, in which a pretest might ‘increase or decrease the respondent’s sensitivity or responsiveness to the experimental variable and thus makes the results obtained for a pretested population unrepresentative of the effects of the experimental variable from the unpretested universe from which the experimental respondents were selected” (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, 1966:6). The pretest (card scoring) was non-verbal, and could not alert the respondents in any way to what was tested by the experimental variable itself (such as for instance a

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15 The internal coherence of the concept illuminated (Olsen & Pedersen, 2008:157), is ensured by several components. Firstly, the application of widely recognised theories in literature review ensures that this conclusion is based on a theoretical foundation, which has the ability to produce constructive knowledge in a scientifically sound method. Academic publications and books written by academics and practitioners in the subject have been considered on purpose to guarantee a high degree of validity in the study’s findings. Further, the theoretical body that is applied in the theoretical framework and subsequently in the analysis has all been published in recognised publications, which implies that it has undergone a large reviewing process, thereby increasing validity of this material.
questionnaire that can sensitise respondents to the very thing that are being tested). However respondents could, to a certain extent, have been sensitized by the interaction between testing and the experimental variable, which could have made their responses less representative of the unpretested universe, and could have had an effect on responses to the subsequent questionnaire. Mindful of Hume’s truism that generalization can never be fully justified logically (Campbell & Stanley 1963, 1966:17), it was therefore decided that, for the purposes of this research, it was more important to prove a causal linkage between brand ratings and brand perceptions exposure to the linked brand (campaign), which required an experimental design with high internal validity, even if this may compromise external validity.

6.5.6 Reliability

Reliability in this quantitative research is essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency, and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents (Creswell, 2014:170). It means that that the measure must be stable and consistently produce the same measurements or answers over a period of time, and from one researcher to the next. “In the abstract, reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result over time” (Babbie & Mouton (2009:119).

The authors however further argue (Babbie & Mouton, 2009:120) that reliability, logically, does not ensure accuracy any more than precision does. A measuring instrument may (reliably) produce the same results over time, however if the measuring instrument is calibrated in the wrong way, or researchers or observers are (consistently) biased, this will mean that an inaccurate result may be consistently produced.

A number of techniques have been developed to deal with the problem of reliability, which includes the usage of established measures, verifying the findings of research workers through replication and training, statistical split-half methods for items in
questionnaires, as well as the test-retest method (making the same measurement more than once).

6.5.6.1 Intrarater reliability

Intrarater reliability indicates the consistency with which an individual takes measurements (Creswell, 2014:170). For this study, does the research using card scoring method measure the cause and effect of Engen-Woolworths campaign intervention in the same way each and every time? The researcher consistently followed an established procedure from pilot study to the main study and used a fixed measuring instrument (card sorting followed by questionnaire).

6.5.6.2 Test-Retest reliability

Test-retest reliability refers to the consistency to which the test scores are similar when respondents are given the same test more than once. Whilst the main measuring instrument for the experimental design (the card sorting method) has established itself as a successful method in several market research projects (Bester, 2012) and has been tested in the pilot study, this has been one of the first attempts to implement this method in academic research for the purposes of testing the impact of a brand linkage in an experimental research design. As such, the reliability of this measuring instrument can only be tested should this research design for the purposes of testing the effect of brand linkages is repeated – either by another researcher or over time.

6.5.6.3 Statistical reliability

Cronbach alpha coefficients were also used to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the ratings received (Pallant, 2010:97). The statistical reliability of certain relevant items in the questionnaire itself, which were only tested to add value to the main research design and shed further light on the main findings, have been tested. These items refer to questions A3 (words describing Engen fuel stations), B6 (words describing Woolworths food store) and C9 (words describing Engen-
Woolworths service outlets) scale, and proved to have a good internal consistency as will be discussed later (see 6.6.4.8). Statistic reliability testing as such was not conducted on the card scoring method because it was a non-verbal measuring instrument.

6.5.7 Generalisability

As discussed under external validity on page 201, the pretest posttest control group experimental design incorporates a less generalisable survey outside of the experimental stimuli (the campaign intervention). This is a field research and variance in the independent variable is deliberately introduced by the researcher as the experimental manipulation. The survey contained one measure of exposure to one source that could then be correlated with brand ratings and brand perceptions variables. The selection of a sample that is representative was limited. Although generalisability for this study was limited, certain meaningful results may be constructed from the findings, which can direct continuing research in this complex arena.

6.6 Research procedure

This section covers the chronology of events from the pretest (experiment) stage to posttest stage (see Table 6.2). The research development is a multi-staged qualitative and quantitative methodology. This started with qualitative research that allowed the researcher to form objectives which were applied and validated through quantitative research. The main aims were to identify which of the potential creative routes were most likely to emerge with target respondents. A decision to conduct an experiment with all respondents in one venue was deemed unrealistic. The costs and the possibility of finding more than 250 people in one place at the same time influenced the decision to have a one-on-one experiment. The one-on-one method was suitable because for respondents who may be shy or unwilling to participate in group situations discomfort was avoided. Also, if respondents were to interact with one another prior to pretest bias this was unlikely to be avoided as they might share the experimental conditions.
6.6.1 Preparation of card scoring method and materials

Firstly, a strategic creative development stage to test a range of potential brand linkages’ awareness from literature examples. This research involved 15 individual structured interviews with a range of students from the University of Johannesburg, employees and other individuals.

Secondly, a creative refinement stage occurred to test types of preferred brand linkages that emerged most strongly from stage one alongside potential categories and linked brand campaign availability. This stage involved face to face and telephone interviews with potential brand linkage personnel in order to secure permission to use the linked brands’ materials and background information on the linked brands’ partnership history (shown in Table 6.2). In order to use the campaigns for the study, it was necessary to adjust the sizes of the Engen and Woolworths pictures to an A4 size. Also, cutting out excess text on the information about East London and dates enabled it to be generally appealing to everyone (see Appendix D).

Table 6.2: Data collection schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19/10/2012-25/10/2012</td>
<td>09:00-17:00</td>
<td>Johannesburg Auckland Park Kingsway (APK), the Bunting Road campus (APB) and Doornforntein campus (DFC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pre-pilot study)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/09/2013-27/09/2013</td>
<td>09:00-17:00</td>
<td>Benoni and Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pilot study)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/11/2013-10/12/2013</td>
<td>09:00-17:00</td>
<td>Benoni and University of Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/11/2013-20/01/2014</td>
<td>08:30-19:00</td>
<td>Benoni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/01/2014-28/01/2014</td>
<td>09:00am-17:00</td>
<td>Johannesburg Auckland Park Kingsway campus (APK)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.6.2 Administering the pre-pilot study

The pre-pilot self-administered interviews findings focused on the awareness of prospective brand linkages before the first delivery of the pilot in this study. This study started with "qualitative data collection and analysis on a relatively unexplored topic, using the results to design a subsequent quantitative phase of the study" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998:47; 2009). It was one of the first steps of empirical testing of research into the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in a contemporary business environment. The interviews were based on determining the respondents’ awareness of four South African brand categories (petrol or diesel, brandy, computers or laptops, and soft drinks).

Given the wide range of consumers interviewed, the responses reported here are mixed. After the establishment of a brand category, interviews essentially focused on the awareness of certain brand linkages. Respondents were asked if they were aware of any campaign or promotional material in which these linked brands associated. Also, in what way the brands were associated?

A total of 15 respondents participated in the study. A sample of convenience, by quotas in terms of age, gender and race of the face-to-face interview method was selected. The age of the respondents at the time of the interview ranged from 25 to 50 years. Of 15 respondents in the sample 8 were Black, 6 White and 1 was Asian or Indian. Of 15 respondents, 7 were male and 8 were female. Findings from these interviews highlighted an important step of determining the appropriate linked brands.

The appropriate candidates for interviews were selected based on the criteria that they were either owning a car or driving a car. Hence, the convenient non probability sampling method was used. Two university of Johannesburg campuses, the Auckland Park Kingsway and Doornforntein were the major location of subjects.

A pre-pilot test was conducted with respondents who have similar interests as those who were to participate in the implemented study. This pre-pilot study provided some
information on shared information about brands in South Africa. These interviews were semi-structured and each lasted for at least half an hour. First, it should be noted that respondents were queried regarding whether they possess a car or not. Hence, the population sample frame was for only those who owned or drive a car.

In an attempt to broaden the understanding of other linked brands, respondents were asked to suggest any brand which came to mind that is linked to another brand. The respondents suggested the following brand linkages; Woolworths and Engen, Brand House and Castle, Nokia and Microsoft, Kulula and Discovery, Pick n Pay and Discovery, Coca-Cola and Collect-a-Can, Engen and FNB, and Engen and Sasol.

6.6.3 Pilot study

During this process, which was intended to be the implementation of research, the first part was a card scoring pretest posttest experimental design. The design was testing whether the brand linkage adds or detracts value from another and to measure whether Engen gains from the Woolworths linkage (see section 6.4). The second part tested 13 closed questions on the effect of brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions. It helps with reasons why the stakeholders chose to favour certain brands more than others and established whether the linked brands gain or does not gain from its linked partnership.

In order to keep this part of the intervention as ethical as possible and therefore prevent negative and emotionally damaging experiences to the stakeholders and brands, the researcher acquired permission to use the brand linkage campaigns of Engen and Woolworths.

Interview and follow-up telephonic conversation with stakeholders

The researcher sought information about the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage from relevant brand managers. Moreover, the challenge of the advertising agency’s asking for payment to obtain the brand linkage advertisements was negotiated. The researcher received information about personnel who would assist in the acquisition of Engen and Woolworths campaigns through referrals. During a face-to-face
interview, the permission and the results of the study and its meaning were discussed with the Woolworths Food Store manager. The researcher had telephonic and email conversations with the representative management personnel. The first part of 2013 was spent on finding an appropriate example of independently owned but linked brands (the research field) to research - it was a time-consuming and sensitive process that required the researcher to approach several brand leaders in the country, and wait several months for their responses (at least 3 months). Eventually, the researcher obtained permission from Woolworths and Engen to use campaign material as the experimental variable in this research.

**Expert validated experiment design**

A pilot study helped to identify the need for improvements of the initially proposed posttest only experimental design into a pretest-posttest control group design. This was important because it enabled the comparison of results and testing of the study objectives.

**Challenges encountered through pilot research observation**

People were likely to participate at work or in the comfort of their homes, not to participate after work because they need social and family time, not when at a fuel service station, and not when waiting for their transport to work or home.

**6.6.4 Main research study**

The field of study is a complex one, and therefore the choice of linked brands studied was critical. It was recommended that one set of linked brands be selected and that the linkages were examined in depth. Ideally the brands were linked but separately owned and would appeal to the same target market (stakeholders). As indicated earlier, an experimental and control group were conveniently selected from this market, based on voluntary participation and then randomly assigned to a group whether they were aware, or not, of the brand linkage. (Spontaneous linkage methods are utilised to test brand ratings and brand perceptions amongst these stakeholders).
This measuring instrument was utilised in a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design to evaluate whether there were differences in terms of brand ratings and brand perceptions between the (experimental) group that is aware or unaware of the linkage and the (control) group that is aware or unaware of the linkage. Respondents were allocated into four groups and each respondent received 99 cards as described earlier. Of all the 250 respondents, 20% (50) were in the aware group (those who mentioned Engen being linked to Woolworths) and received an intervention by being shown the campaign, 20.4% (51) of respondents were in the aware group but did not receive any intervention (campaign). Also, 29.6% of respondents (74) were in the unaware group (those who did not mention Engen being linked to Woolworths) and received intervention, 30% (75) of the unaware group received no intervention.

This section presents detailed procedures of this empirical research: permission, security and precautions, pretest administration, treatment or intervention instruction, posttest administration, and questionnaire administration procedure.

Permission and ethical issues
Informed participant consent for this research was also obtained. The researcher observed basic ethical principles for example, voluntary participation, confidentiality, respect for respondent rights to withdraw at any stage or choose not to disclose or discuss anything that they would prefer not to (Roos, Visser, Pistorius & Nefale, 2007; Wassenaar, 2008). Respondents provided permission for data generated in this study to be documented as anonymous. Permission was obtained from Woolworths and Engen to use campaign material as the experimental variable in this research (see section 6.3.2). Permission for participation in the study was requested and obtained as voluntary. No one was considered a respondent and no data for or about any individual was utilised in this research without prior agreement to participate (Wassenaar, 2008). All respondents were made aware that they had the option to opt out of the research at any time.

Security and precautions
All respondents were immediately given a distinctive random number by the researcher to preserve confidentiality and the identity of respondents. All data
obtained from 250 respondents in this study will be kept for three years and will be destroyed after that time.

6.6.4.1 Operationalising the constructs

As mentioned in chapter 5, some of the main concepts could not be directly measured. Hence, operationalisation of these constructs focused on the design and use of questions as well as scale measurements to gather the required data. The items for each of the constructs are derived from literature and expert approved scales. For each of the constructs of the proposed model (Figure 5.1), operational definitions are given. These definitions are presented alongside the conceptual definitions in Table 6.3.

While empirical research on brand linkage has usually been narrow and not integrative, some academics and professionals (Jevons et al, 2002) have been waiting for a comprehensive model of brand assessments that would provide the necessary depth and breadth of understanding of brand ratings and brand perceptions. However, due to the complexity of the field, not all discussed factors could be conceptualised. For example, it was deemed appropriate to exclude the types of intentional brand linkages such as ingredient brand linkage, same company (brand extension), sponsorship (promotional), and convenient brand linkages. Also, brand communication forms such as brand materials, editorial mentions, sponsorships, events, charity support, blogs, videos and social media were discussed but not tested. The effects of brand communication such as brand communication, social media, recommendation intent and positive or negative interaction were discussed but not operationalised. Instead, these concepts are discussed – as part of the broader contextual framework of the study.
### Table 6.3: Conceptual and operational definitions of the key concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Operational definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand linkage</td>
<td>The deliberate partnership of two or more brands as separately or co-owned while targeting same consumers to influence their brand perceptions.</td>
<td>Independently owned but linked brands and well known, selling products while targeting same consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand communication</td>
<td>All forms of messages portraying the brand internally or externally into customers’ minds.</td>
<td>The message given by both the host and invited brands regarding their brand linkage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand ratings</td>
<td>The evaluation on the strength, risk and future potential of brand relative to its competitors by a means of scale. In this case, a non-verbal measuring instrument that circumvented issues or intervening variables associated with verbal scales and actually tested respondents (voting) behaviour. So conclusions regarding the strengths/risks/future potential could only be implicitly made.</td>
<td>Consumers’ assessment by allocation of cards or voting for their favourite brands. In this case, the host or the main brand, Engen was rated against its six main competitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand perception</td>
<td>Overall stakeholders’ preferences, attitudes, opinions, beliefs and purchase intention towards a brand across the categories that exist in the company or those that are easily available in the market and to the stakeholders.</td>
<td>Consumers’ appreciation or lack of appreciation and favourableness towards brand linkage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand relationship</td>
<td>Overall interaction between a brand and the consumers.</td>
<td>Consumers’ experience with brands that are linked but separately owned (host and invited brands).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.6.4.2 Blinding procedure

There were three steps as follows:

Step 1
Pretest administration
Prior to treatment, the respondents of both the treatment and control groups administered the same expert-approved pretest, which covered the cards scoring or voting on six South African leading fuel service station brands (BP, Engen, Caltex, Sasol, Shell and Total). To ensure consistency in the pretest results, the researcher recorded the response on a standard form (see Appendix B). Respondents were presented with named brown envelopes of six brands and 99 (undisclosed prime number to respondent) cards that they were to allocate according to their degree of favourableness or unfavourableness. In order to add more clarity, respondents were told to assume that the cards represented their money. As such, they were asked to allocate the amount of money they were willing to spend to purchase from the named six brands (see Appendix A). This is a form of nominal scale. This measurement scale classifies brands into categories (in this case envelope) where no order is implied (Rutterford, 2012). Indeed it is often referred to as a categorical scale. It is a system of classification and does not place the entity along a continuum. Specifically, it involves a simple count of the number of the cards assigned to the various brands, and if desired numbers can be nominally assigned to label each brand.

Step 2
Treatment/intervention instructions
Both the treatment groups and the control groups received the same instructions. There was no disclosure on the in-depth research purpose before carrying out the first part of the study (see Appendix A). Instructions defining the task, directing attention, developing a set of dialogues for the study, and motivating the respondents, were carried out (Christensen, 2007:392). Using the anonymity of the questionnaire format helped prevent apprehension by the respondents and may have encouraged honesty.
The respondents from both groups were asked if they associate all the fuel service station brands with any other brands or food store brands that come to mind. Only if the respondents were aware or had mentioned Engen and Woolworths, were they asked to describe the way these brands were associated. While groups were allocated at random to experiment and control groups based on spontaneous awareness of brand linkage or brand linkage recall, it is acknowledged that linkage recall does not necessarily preclude knowledge of the linkage which was not tested. It was rather the salience that was tested. Neither were they asked how they become aware of the linkage at this stage. Groups were allocated based on spontaneous association salience or spontaneous recall awareness. Further, the respondents were exposed to the campaigns for ‘Engen and Woolworths’ except for control groups of both those who were aware and also those who were not aware of the brand linkage. Exposure to the Engen and Woolworths’ campaign was done with both ‘aware’ and ‘unaware’ experimental groups.

Step 3
Posttest administration
There were approximately two minutes between step 2 and step 3. The time was used to distract the respondents from any stimulus that might have been caused in the first step of the experiment. The researcher would ask general questions in order to take respondents away from the pretest experiences. Again, the respondents were provided with another set of an undisclosed number of cards (99) and six named white envelopes of six brands of fuel service stations such as BP, Engen, Caltex, Sasol, Shell and Total. Only the experiment group would have been shown the campaign (“Having seen the campaigns of these brands how do you now feel about these brands?”). The control group would not have seen the campaign (“How do you now feel?”). Having seen or not seen the campaigns of these brands, respondents allocated the 99 cards to each brand again according to their favourable feeling towards them.

All the envelopes were opened and cards were counted to determine the shift of brand linkage. The counting was done in the absence of respondents to avoid bias and their interference with the results. Great care was taken by the researcher to
make certain that respondents knew this was a research project specifically relating to academic use and that their participation and responses were not detrimental to them in any way. Also, in order to reduce possible bias, the respondents did not have access to the answers of other respondents.

6.6.4.3 The experimental variable: exposure to communication campaign depicting the linkage

Brand communication is the voice of the linked brands. It is the primary influencer to what consumers receive as brand awareness which can be transmitted through different vehicles (Sternthal & Lee, 2005). Brand awareness refers to consumers’ recognition of brand attributes in a given context (Romaniuk et al, 2007). This is a judgement based on previous encounters with the brands that consumers tend to have a good or bad perception towards the brands (Romaniuk et al, 2007). Brand linkage represents a unique form of strategic brand communication because in contrast to the general placements of communication in other purchased forms of media, the partnering brand is incorporated as part of the communication, in essence making brand linkage itself the brand message (Singh et al., 2010; Swaminathan, Fox & Reddy, 2001; Smith & Zook, 2011; Sweeney, 2003). In this study, Engen and Woolworths’ brand linkage provides a distinct combination based on the campaign where they appear together. The opportunity was to provide brand communication content that is meant to benefit both the host and the invited brand as a form of effectively leveraging the brands.

Furthermore, brand communication treatment was necessary because it impacted on consumers’ need for indolent, positive experience and can affect behaviour as well as brand choice (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In essence, the campaign was primarily used to inform, persuade, reinforce and differentiate the partnering brands from other brands. As indicated earlier, the perception towards brand linkages is created inside the mind of the prospect and the sum total of each customer’s experience with the companies (see chapter 4.4). Exposure to brand communication was deemed appropriate because each time a consumer remembers a brand they reflect on their fruitful experience or past bad memories (Martínez, 2012). Showing a brand
campaign is a useful way to enhance the perception to a brand linkage. Therefore, this brand communication was used as a treatment to remind respondents about their past experience with Engen and Woolworths in spite of them being aware or not aware of the brand linkage. It was an important tool that separated the experimental groups from the control groups and was best suitable for comparison purposes.

6.6.4.4 Administering Pretest-Posttest

The pretest was conducted to investigate the respondents’ initial favourableness to the Engen brand. The 99 cards were given alongside the six labelled envelopes to both experimental and control groups. Afterwards, to investigate the effectiveness of the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage campaign, at the end of the experiment a posttest was administered to both groups. In this case another 99 cards were allocated alongside the six envelopes to investigate the favourableness of Engen. A separate control group which constituted 124 respondents was not exposed to the brand linkage manipulations, the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage campaign. In contrast, the experimental group which constituted 126 respondents received a treatment (discussed in section 6.2.1). However, the value of one brand (Engen) often comes from consumers’ favourable evaluation of that brand (Leone et al., 2006). Therefore, the study claims that a favourable evaluation of one of the partnering brands not only affects the value of that brand, but also influences the magnitude of that brand’s (company) contribution to the linkage and, subsequently, affects the effectiveness of a brand linkage.

6.6.4.5 Administering the posttest questionnaire

A self-administered\textsuperscript{16} questionnaire was used in this study, as it met the requirements of this experimental research to a larger extent. In order to answer the

\textsuperscript{16} Self-administered questionnaires were spontaneously completed by respondents on their own without the researcher’s assistance. These self-administered questionnaires were completed by hand (“paper and pen”). And as soon as the questionnaire is completed, the researcher collected it immediately. It is best designed for measuring variables with numerous values or response categories for example, investigating attitudes and opinions not usually observable. Also, this merits the studying of ‘private’ or ‘difficult’ behaviours (Creswell, 2014).
research questions, the study required data on consumers’ perceptions about the brands, separately and jointly. The self-administered questionnaire format ensured that there was absolutely no interference from the researcher while respondents completed the questionnaire (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, the variations observed in responses were entirely due to the respondents’ own perceptions. This short questionnaire evaluated aspects of brand relationships, brand perceptions and brand communication with reference to the Engen and Woolworths brands separately and jointly and was administered to both groups after the posttest instruction. The short questionnaire format was deemed appropriate to ensure the collection of maximum data in a relatively limited time. This questionnaire was anonymous, but the respondents’ code was written on the top of the page before or after it was delivered to them. All of the self-completed questionnaires were collected immediately at the end of the experiment.

6.6.4.6 Debriefing

As the research design required some type of blinding to get around this problem by withholding some information before the experiment began, debriefing at the end of the posttest was necessary for ethical reasons. Debriefing refers to disclosure to respondents of the purposes, methods and respondents’ personal reactions to the experiment (Schutt, 2012:78). The researcher explained what happened to the respondents in the experiment and why, and then responded to their questions. To avoid contamination of other respondents, the debriefing was only done with those who had questions and in most cases delayed until the end of the data collection period (Schutt, 2012:78).

6.6.4.7 Data analysis

In this study, SPSS from Statistical Consultation Service (Statcon) of the University of Johannesburg was utilised to determine Pretest-posttest data analysis using non-parametric statistic tests (Mann-Whitney, Kruskal-Wallis and Wilcoxon Signed Ranks) for pretest posttest experimental data and questionnaire data was analysed using parametric tests (One-way ANOVA, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Homogeneity of
Any research involving human subjects need data collection on demographic variables. In this study, the number of people or cases in the sample, the number and percentages of gender (males and females) in the sample, the range and mean of ages, educational level, ethnicity, ownership or driving of a car and employment status (Pallant, 2013:53). These were relevant background information for the current study.

In order to achieve the research objectives, the results were analysed and presented as explained in the procedures as they appear in the questionnaire (see chapter 6) except for section D on the demographics. The descriptive phase was undertaken as a first step of data analysis, after having made sure there were no errors in the data file (Pallant, 2013:53). Frequencies of distribution for each variable to establish the total numerical value which present the total number of responses were carried out. The frequency distribution was undertaken throughout the experimental findings. This was used to describe the distribution of and relationship among variable in the study.

Further, this research was not only limited to confirmation of data but also envisaged to search for variables and correlations of data from the four groups. According to Pallant (2013:53), descriptions, relationships, comparison and predictions are important for describing sample characteristic, checking variables in order for not to violate any of the underlying statistical assumptions that are used to answer the research question.

6.6.4.8 Theoretical reliability

The reliability of each scale was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha technique together with the assessment of correlated item-total correlations. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients can be calculated to determine the internal consistency reliability of a scale measuring a particular construct. (Pallant, 2010:6). According to Pallant (2013), the closer the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the higher the internal consistency reliability of a scale. A value of at least > 0.7 or higher is appropriate.
The questions A3 (words describing Engen fuel stations), B6 (words describing Woolworths food store) and C9 (words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets) scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient reported of > 0.7 (Pallant, 2010:97). The reliability statistics for this study are reflected in Table 6.4, which indicates that all the measurement sets were in fact reliable, as they all are above the minimum level of 0.7.

Table 6.4: Reliability statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words describing Engen fuel station</td>
<td>.927*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words describing Woolworths food store</td>
<td>.939*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets</td>
<td>.957*</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High reliability = α > 0.7

As shown in Table 6.4, a high degree of internal consistency was observed for total scale. A Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.927, 0.939 and 0.957 were achieved for the 15 items extracted from the factor analysis. If Cronbach’s Alpha was 1.0 it would imply that the scale is perfectly reliable (Pallant, 2013). Therefore, on the aggregate level the scales developed demonstrated a high level of reliability measure of the factor words describing Engen fuel station, Woolworths food store and Engen-Woolworths service outlets.

The Corrected-item-total correlations before deleting variables were observed (Pallant, 2013). If cronbach’s alpha has already a value of 0.7 or higher and the Correct-item-Total Correlation values for the variable are higher than 0.3, no removal are necessary.

Firstly, the 15-item ‘words describing Engen’ Scale results indicated that all items of the scale had corrected item-total correlations of above .30, was significant (Pallant,
2013). Table 6.5 below contains the item-total correlations with second item (A3.2: “Sophisticated”; .392) being minimum. When item A3.2 are deleted, the reliability of the entire scales could generate a higher Cronbach’s Alpha to $\alpha = .931$ (above the .927 benchmark cited in Table 6.4) therefore, this item is not increasing some of the reliability of the scale.

Table 6.5: Item-total statistics for words describing Engen fuel station

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3.1</td>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>51.23</td>
<td>75.330</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.2</td>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
<td>51.74</td>
<td>77.010</td>
<td>.392</td>
<td>.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.3</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>51.47</td>
<td>74.096</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td>.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.4</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>51.23</td>
<td>73.985</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.5</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>51.50</td>
<td>73.597</td>
<td>.638</td>
<td>.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.6</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>51.07</td>
<td>74.300</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.7</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>51.55</td>
<td>72.948</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.8</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>51.24</td>
<td>73.019</td>
<td>.708</td>
<td>.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.9</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>51.26</td>
<td>71.947</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.10</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>51.42</td>
<td>72.827</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.11</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>51.36</td>
<td>73.977</td>
<td>.671</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.12</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>51.63</td>
<td>72.770</td>
<td>.674</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.13</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>51.37</td>
<td>73.834</td>
<td>.665</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.14</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>51.31</td>
<td>73.596</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>.922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.15</td>
<td>High Tech</td>
<td>51.57</td>
<td>72.555</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>.924</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, the 15-item ‘words describing Woolworths food store’ Scale results indicated that all items of the scale had corrected item-total correlations of above .30, was significant (Pallant, 2013). Table 6.6 below contains the item-total correlations with second item (B3.2: “Sophisticated”; .553) being minimum. When item B6.2 is deleted, the reliability of the entire scales could generate a lower Cronbach’s Alpha to $\alpha = .938$ (below the .939 benchmark cited in Table 6.6) therefore, this item is contributing factor value of the reliability of the scale. Additionally, all items positively contribute to the internal consistency of the ‘words describing food store’, since the overall reliability does not improve if any item of the scale is deleted.
Table 6.6: Item-total statistics for words describing Woolworths food store

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B6.1</td>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>56.71</td>
<td>76.639</td>
<td>.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.2</td>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
<td>56.81</td>
<td>77.050</td>
<td>.553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.3</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>56.98</td>
<td>74.970</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.4</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>56.71</td>
<td>76.460</td>
<td>.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.5</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>56.82</td>
<td>76.104</td>
<td>.701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.6</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>56.45</td>
<td>76.978</td>
<td>.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.7</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>56.78</td>
<td>74.661</td>
<td>.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.8</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>56.85</td>
<td>75.398</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.9</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>56.58</td>
<td>76.727</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.10</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>56.78</td>
<td>76.341</td>
<td>.671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.11</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>56.95</td>
<td>75.942</td>
<td>.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.12</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>56.82</td>
<td>75.579</td>
<td>.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.13</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>56.80</td>
<td>76.272</td>
<td>.694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.14</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>56.76</td>
<td>76.980</td>
<td>.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6.15</td>
<td>High Tech</td>
<td>56.94</td>
<td>75.573</td>
<td>.650</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7: Item-total statistics for words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C9.1</td>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>53.67</td>
<td>96.080</td>
<td>.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.2</td>
<td>Sophisticated</td>
<td>53.81</td>
<td>96.785</td>
<td>.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.3</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>53.75</td>
<td>95.117</td>
<td>.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.4</td>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>53.59</td>
<td>96.085</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.5</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>53.73</td>
<td>95.710</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.6</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>53.42</td>
<td>94.742</td>
<td>.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.7</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>53.71</td>
<td>94.872</td>
<td>.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.8</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>53.63</td>
<td>95.993</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.9</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>53.57</td>
<td>95.333</td>
<td>.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.10</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>53.60</td>
<td>95.552</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.11</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>53.66</td>
<td>95.836</td>
<td>.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.12</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>53.68</td>
<td>95.712</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.13</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>53.56</td>
<td>95.666</td>
<td>.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.14</td>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>53.61</td>
<td>95.733</td>
<td>.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9.15</td>
<td>High Tech</td>
<td>53.78</td>
<td>95.485</td>
<td>.703</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thirdly, the 15-item ‘words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets’ Scale results indicated that all items of the scale had corrected item-total correlations of above .30, was significant (Pallant, 2013). Table 6.7 above contains the item-total correlations with last item (C9.15: “High Tech”; .703) being minimum. When item C9.15 is deleted, the reliability of the entire scales could generate a lower Cronbach’s Alpha to $\alpha = .955$ (below the .957 benchmark cited in Table 6.7) therefore, this item is contributing factor value of the reliability of the scale. Additionally, all items positively contribute to the internal consistency of the ‘words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets’, since the overall reliability does not improve if any item of the scale is deleted.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter focused exclusively on the methodology that was used in the research process. It gave an explanation of experimental design and the questionnaire as a method to gather and analyse data within the research process. The card scoring method can be categorised as suitable as opposed to the use of only a questionnaire or other traditional mixed methods, since the collection of data and its interpretation focus was nonverbal to minimise stimulus on respondents or threats to validity. A step-by-step approach of data collection and data analysis was also provided. Finally, this chapter covered respondents of pretest and posttest group procedures. The results and discussion of results are presented in chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7
Results

“The challenges facing global businesses and the people who lead them are now, more than ever, intertwined in the direct empowerment and involvement of customers and stakeholders”.

(Dave Evans and James McKee, 2010: xvii)

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research methodology. The measuring instrument and procedures were discussed. As mentioned the research was conducted in two phases. Firstly, the pretest posttest control group experimental design was implemented to test for the impact of the experimental variable (exposure to linked brand campaign) on respondent ratings of the tested brand. This was conducted via a card scoring measuring instrument where the number of cards allocated to a particular brand pre- and post-exposure was an indication of respondent rating of the brand following exposure. The card sorting method was deliberately chosen as it was a non-verbal method – providing the most direct measure of ‘rating’ (for example, as in where a stakeholder would put his ‘money’ or his ‘vote’) without developing, via a questionnaire, a conceptual measuring instrument to measure perceptions or preferences of the brand.

The second part of the research dealt with analyses of a questionnaire which was completed by respondents immediately following the experiment, which was designed to shed more light on the findings of the experiment, and to provide an indication of respondents’ perceptions of (and by implication relationships with) the brands (separately and jointly) being tested. In this case the brands under consideration were Engen, Woolworths and the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage.

The current chapter will therefore be divided into a discussion on the findings of 1. experimental design analysis (clinical and statistical results) as well as 2. questionnaire analysis.
Prior to that, a brief overview of the demographic profile of the respondents will be provided.

### 7.2 Demographic profile

In this study, 250 respondents self-completed the pretest and posttest only experiment and questionnaire. This sample of 250 cases was put into SPSS. The analysis of data was undertaken in two stages. Firstly, the profiles of the respondents who were aware and compared to those who were not aware of the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. This was important for testing if there was a shift in stakeholders’ perceptions towards Engen fuel service stations as a result of the brand linkage campaign. This study aimed to assess respondents’ favourableness of Engen and perceptions before and after the intervention of the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage.

Figures 7.1 - 7.6 below show the demographic profiles of respondents.
Note: Academic level category refers to the highest level of education attended, whether or not that level was completed.
7.3 Experimental design analysis

7.3.1 Clinical results

The experiment was based on an underlying hypothesis that, after a period of time, the group that was shown the campaign depicting a brand linkage with Woolworths would have a different assessment of Engen (the brand) than the group that was not exposed to the brand linkage of Engen with Woolworths. This section provides the key results of the study. Results from Sasol, BP, Total, Castle and Shell are not reported since they were applied as single-blinding or masking of real world sets to
test the favourableness of Engen. The use of these fuel brands was deemed appropriate in the process of concealing allocation of assignments. That is, because differences between intervention groups and control groups should behave like differences between two random samples from the population, they can be compared to what would be expected in the population by chance. This portrays what would happen in the real world. Therefore, there were three reasons to include the other five fuel brands as part of the set: firstly, to exclude them upfront introduces an unreal or artificial situation – respondents who are aware of the excluded brands are forced to answer only the a-priori set. Secondly, by including all, the respondent is not primed. It serves as a blind on the actual intent of the research which is to ultimately examine the brand linkage between Engen and Woolworths. Thirdly, shifts measured pre and post are spread across brands, and this allows for more robust analysis of the results in total and of the test set (Engen and Woolworths).

The following illustrations represent the clinical results based on the card scoring method. The results indicated that of the 250 respondents, 20% (50) were in the aware group (those who mentioned Engen being linked to Woolworths) and received an intervention by being shown the campaign, 20.4% (51) of respondents were in the aware group but did not receive any intervention (campaign). Also, 29.6% of respondents (74) were in the unaware group (those who did not mention Engen being linked to Woolworths) and received intervention, 30% (75) were in the unaware group with no intervention, as shown in Table 7.1.

Figure 7.1 depicts how the respondents were allocated into four pretest and posttest/exposure groups.
Figure 7.7: Pretest and posttest groups’ frequency and values of all items

Table 7.1: Clinical results of card-scoring of pre-exposure and post-exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-10</th>
<th>11-20</th>
<th>21-30</th>
<th>31-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-60</th>
<th>61-70</th>
<th>71-80</th>
<th>81-90</th>
<th>91-99</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>1032</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>419</td>
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<td>7068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. people</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cards</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>1276</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>1547</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>8338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. people</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cards</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People change</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+11</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+/-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes change</td>
<td>-210</td>
<td>-51</td>
<td>+244</td>
<td>+435</td>
<td>+397</td>
<td>-72</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>-71</td>
<td>+94</td>
<td>+495</td>
<td>+1674</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7.3.2. Awareness of the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage results

Before the initial campaign was assessed, it was essential to determine what portions of the respondents were aware of the brand linkage. To know if they were aware, it was important to find out how many of them could mention Engen with Woolworths. Collectively, only 40.4% of the respondents reported that they were aware of the brand linkage and they scored 43.8% of the 49 500 cards.

The terms voting, scoring or card ratings are used interchangeably as they refer to how respondents allocated 99 cards for six named envelopes used for this experiment. In Table 7.1, firstly, Engen scored a total of 7.068 votes prior to exposure. If respondents had allocated their votes on a totally random basis, each brand would have achieved 4.125 total votes. Therefore, Engen was favourably assessed by a significant margin (+58%), prior to exposure.

Second, Engen scored 8.338 votes post exposure, a 21% improvement. Third, it can be seen from the distribution of raw data votes allocated, by deciles pre and post exposure that a significant shift occurred at 91-99 deciles (+595). Also of significance is the fact that the average scores in this decile is 99, both pre and post. This means that 4 respondents (pre) and 10 respondents (post) allocated all their votes to Engen. This result could be deemed a statistical outlier. If this decile is excluded from the analysis then Engen pre/post improvement drops to +705. This represents a positive shift of +12%. However, statistical analysis discussions will later explain how the possible outliers were dealt within this study.

The pretest or exposure aware group scored 3 096 and the pretest or exposure unaware group 3 972 cards. The posttest or exposure aware group scored 3 541 and posttest or exposure unaware group 4 797 cards as shown in Table 7.2.
Table 7.2: Distribution of the respondents and cards allocated into four pre- and post experiment groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aware</th>
<th>Unaware</th>
<th>Votes difference</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>3096</td>
<td>3972</td>
<td>+876</td>
<td>7068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average per person</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>3541</td>
<td>4797</td>
<td>+1256</td>
<td>8338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average per person</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes Difference</td>
<td>+445</td>
<td>+825</td>
<td>+1270/2132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Votes</td>
<td>6637</td>
<td>8769</td>
<td></td>
<td>15406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post exposure only groups are illustrated in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Effect – Post exposure/test only group difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unaware-exposed</th>
<th>Unaware-not exposed</th>
<th>Aware-exposed</th>
<th>Aware-not exposed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of votes</td>
<td>2711</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>8338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>36.64</td>
<td>27.81</td>
<td>37.34</td>
<td>32.82</td>
<td>134.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaware-exposed</td>
<td>Number of votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2711-2086=625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware-not exposed</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.64-27.81=8.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware-exposed</td>
<td>Number of votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1867-1674=193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware-not exposed</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.34-32.82=4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Generally from a total of 99 cards, both the highest mean for pre-intervention and post-intervention came from Engen. The highest mean is 31.51 from the pre-intervention, post-aware intervention’s highest mean is 37.34 of the sample in the current research, with 0 cards scored being the minimum value and 99 cards scored being the maximum value. The lowest mean is 9.28% from before intervention (pre-exposure) and 9.57% after the intervention (post-exposure) (shown in Table 7.3).

The standard deviation was highest for Post-Engen (23.530%) and indicates that most respondents scored between 10.134% and 23.53% on two standard deviations of either side of the mean. The lowest average results shows that at least seven cards were allocated for pre-intervention Total and a highest average post-intervention, 27 cards were allocated for Engen. This implies that Engen had the highest card scoring at post-intervention (Total Posttest experiment got the lowest cards scoring). As indicated by the results there were not a significant difference between those in the aware group and unaware group.

Summary
From a clinical analysis of the scores obtained during the card scoring method it is clear that there was a remarkable improvement in the ratings of Engen in total, particularly in the upper decile, post exposure to the linked brand campaign. To determine whether these results were statistically significant, the results were subjected to statistical analyses, which will be discussed in the following section.

7.4 Experimental design analysis: Statistical analyses (Part 1)
7.4.1 Statistical results on tests of normality

Test of normality for two groups’ results separately before and after the intervention

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the experimental score distribution was normally distributed (Pallant, 2010:63). For the normality tests the hypotheses were as follows:
H0 = Normally distributed and H1 = Not normally distributed.
A p-value of \( \geq .05 \) indicates that the ratings are normally distributed and a p-value of \( < .05 \) indicates that the ratings are not normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used because there were 50 people or more in each group. A Non-parametric Kolmogorov-Smirnoff Test results for normality are illustrated in Tables 7.4, and 7.5.

Table 7.4 shows test of normality results difference between groups before the intervention.

**Table 7.4: Test of normality results- difference between groups, Pretest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov( ^a )</th>
<th>Normal or not normal distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Normal distribution: \( p \geq .05 \); Not Normal: \( p < .05 \)

**Test of normality on four groups before and after the intervention**

Table 7.5 demonstrates test of normality results- difference between groups, Pre-Posttests.
### Table 7.5: Test of normality- difference between groups, Pre-Posttests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov*</th>
<th>Normal or not normal distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre_Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.173</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post_Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Normal distribution: p >= .05; Not Normal: p < .05

In this context, it was appropriate and required to apply non parametric tests to test for significant difference between two groups. Next are Mann Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis Test and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to test if there is a difference between the groups, the aware and unaware groups before and after the intervention.

### 7.4.2 Statistical results on difference between groups

**Difference between the aware and unaware groups before the intervention (Inter Group Comparisons)**
The purpose of the inter group comparisons was to determine whether there were significant differences between the groups who were aware and unaware of the linkage before the intervention, and whether significant differences could be observed between them after the intervention.

Table 7.6: Descriptive statistics of differences between two groups Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen Aware</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>30.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>26.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5% Trimmed Mean</td>
<td>28.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>528.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>22.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interquartile Range</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Unaware  | Mean   | 25.97      | 1.797      |
|          | 95% Confidence Interval for Mean | 22.42 | 29.52 |
|          | 5% Trimmed Mean    | 24.26      |
|          | Median             | 20.00      |
|          | Variance           | 481.175    |
|          | Std. Deviation     | 21.936     |
|          | Minimum            | 0          |
|          | Maximum            | 99         |
|          | Range              | 99         |
|          | Interquartile Range| 28         |
|          | Skewness           | 1.166      | .199      |
|          | Kurtosis           | .889       | .395      |
As shown in Table 7.6, the Mann Whitney U Test revealed no significant difference in the respondents’ favourableness rating for Engen of aware group (Md = 28, n = 101) and unaware group (Md = 20, n = 149), $U = 6536.5$, $z = -1.76$, $p = .078$, $r = .11$ before the intervention.

### Difference between the four groups (Inter Group) before intervention

**Table 7.7: Descriptive statistics of differences between four groups on Pretest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>129.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>141.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>116.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>121.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td>4.006</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.261*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Kruskal Wallis Test  
 b. Grouping Variable: Groups

**Significance: (p <.05); *Not significant: (p >.05)
As highlighted in Table 7.7, a Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no statistically significant difference in the four groups (aware intervention, \( n = 50 \): aware no intervention, \( n = 50 \): unaware intervention, \( n = 74 \): unaware no intervention, \( n = 75 \) ), \( x^2 (4, n = 250) = 4.01, p = .261 \) before the intervention. The aware no intervention group recorded a higher median score (\( Md = 31 \)) than the other three groups, which all recorded average median values of 21.

**Difference between the four groups (Inter Group) after intervention**

**Table 7.8: Descriptive statistics of differences across four groups Posttest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37.34</td>
<td>22.451</td>
<td>3.175</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>23.033</td>
<td>3.225</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>35.07</td>
<td>25.133</td>
<td>2.962</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>22.934</td>
<td>2.614</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>33.70</td>
<td>23.530</td>
<td>1.488</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-Square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post_BP</td>
<td>.548</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen</td>
<td>5.411</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Caltex</td>
<td>1.375</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Sasol</td>
<td>6.950</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Shell</td>
<td>5.401</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Total</td>
<td>1.953</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Groups

Significance: \( p < .05 \); Not significant: \( p > .05 \)

As shown in Table 7.8, a Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no statistically significant difference across four groups and how respondents perceive Engen (aware
intervention, \( n = 50 \): aware no intervention, \( n = 50 \): unaware intervention, \( n = 74 \): unaware no intervention, \( n = 75 \), \( \chi^2 (4, n = 250) = 54.11, p = .144 \) after the intervention. The aware intervention group recorded a higher mean score (\( M = 37.34 \)) than the other three groups, which all recorded mean values of 33.71, 35.07 and 30.06).

Differences between the four groups over time (Intra Group Comparisons)

Although the inter groups comparisons revealed no significant differences between the four groups before and after the intervention, it was necessary to take each group separately and compare for significant differences between the pre-intervention and post-intervention rating for each group on Engen (intra group comparisons).

Table 7.9: Descriptive statistics difference between the Pre-intervention rating and the Post-intervention rating for each group on Engen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24.625</td>
<td>3.483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen</td>
<td>37.34</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.451</td>
<td>3.175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td>31.51</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21.495</td>
<td>3.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23.033</td>
<td>3.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td>25.03</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20.879</td>
<td>2.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen</td>
<td>35.07</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25.133</td>
<td>2.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre_Engen</td>
<td>26.86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22.981</td>
<td>2.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22.934</td>
<td>2.614</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.10: Significance of differences for the four groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean of Ranks</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign) Post_Engen</td>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>17d</td>
<td>17.88</td>
<td>304.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign) Pre_Engen</td>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>30e</td>
<td>27.47</td>
<td>824.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>3f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign) Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>15d</td>
<td>22.03</td>
<td>330.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>26e</td>
<td>20.40</td>
<td>530.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>10f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign) Post_Engen</td>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>20d</td>
<td>29.83</td>
<td>596.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign) Pre_Engen</td>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>49e</td>
<td>37.11</td>
<td>1818.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>3f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign) Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention Post_Engen</td>
<td>Negative Ranks</td>
<td>31d</td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td>1103.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention Pre_Engen</td>
<td>Positive Ranks</td>
<td>40e</td>
<td>36.33</td>
<td>1453.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>Ties</td>
<td>4f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d. Post_Engen < Pre_Engen

e. Post_Engen > Pre_Engen

f. Post_Engen = Pre_Engen

As shown in Table 7.9, a paired Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on respondents' scores on Engen. There was a statistically significant increase for aware group from pretest ($M = 29.74$, $SD = 24.625$) to posttest ($M = 37.34$, $SD = 22.451$), $t (3) = 36.58$, $p < .006$ (two-tailed) and for unaware intervention group from pretest ($M = 25.03$, $SD = 20.879$) to posttest ($M = 35.07$, $SD = 25.133$), $t (3) = 33.32$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The mean score increase in Engen scores was 7.6 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 30.96 to 43.72 and 27.23 to 40.18 respectively. The median scores on the four groups increased
from the pretest \((Md = 21)\) to the posttest \((Md = 27)\). Similarly, the mean scores on the four groups increased from the pretest \((M = 27.86)\) to the posttest \((M = 33.70)\). Conversely, the results of the Wilcoxon test did not show any significant differences in the Post-Engen – Pre-Engen on both aware and unaware with no intervention. This implies that the experimental groups showed significant difference as a result of the treatment, whereas the control groups showed no significant difference as they did not receive any intervention. Therefore, the Engen’s brand linkage strategy with Woolworths appears to be effective.

In addition, as shown in Tables 7.9, 7.10 and 7.11, a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test revealed a statistical significant favourableness in Engen following the Engen-Woolworths campaign intervention on both aware \((n = 101, z = -2.753, p = .006, r = .28)\) and unaware \((n = 149, z = -3.655, p < .001, r = .31)\) groups, with a small and medium effect size.

**Table 7.11: Differences between the pre- and post ratings for the four groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Statistics(^a)</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Aware, No Intervention</th>
<th>Unaware, Intervention</th>
<th>Unaware, No Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aware, (campaign)</td>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>Aware, (campaign)</td>
<td>No Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Z Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Z Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Z Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>Z Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Engen - Pre_Engen</td>
<td>-2.753</td>
<td>.006**</td>
<td>-1.297c</td>
<td>.195*</td>
<td>-3.655c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a.\) Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test  
(b. Based on positive ranks.  
(c. Based on negative ranks.

**Significance: \((p < .05)\); *Not significant: \((p > .05)\)**

**7.4.3 Comparison between the four groups on mean and median scores**

Table 7.12 shows descriptive results on how groups’ means or medians increased as a result of the intervention. Means compared between groups.
As demonstrated in Table 7.12, the median scores on Engen favourableness increased for aware intervention group from pretest (Md = 21, SD = 24.625) to posttest (Md = 36.50, SD = 22.451) and for unaware intervention groups from pretest (Md = 17.50, SD = 20.879) to posttest (Md = 28, SD = 25.133). The median scores decreased for aware no intervention from the pretest (Md = 31, SD = 21.495) to the posttest (Md = 30, SD = 23.033) and for unaware no intervention groups from pretest (Md = 21, SD = 22.981) to posttest (Md = 22, SD = 22.934) there was insignificant change (see Table 7.13).

---

**Table 7.12: Comparison between the four groups on mean and median scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean 5% Trimmed Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Std.D</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Interquartile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>29.74</td>
<td>27.97</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>606.400</td>
<td>24.625</td>
<td>0-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>31.41</td>
<td>30.17</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>462.015</td>
<td>21.495</td>
<td>1-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>25.03</td>
<td>23.67</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>435.943</td>
<td>20.879</td>
<td>0-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>26.86</td>
<td>24.83</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>528.124</td>
<td>22.981</td>
<td>0-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>37.34</td>
<td>36.58</td>
<td>36.50</td>
<td>504.066</td>
<td>22.451</td>
<td>0-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>31.96</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>530.532</td>
<td>23.033</td>
<td>0-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>35.07</td>
<td>33.32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>631.671</td>
<td>25.133</td>
<td>0-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>30.06</td>
<td>27.85</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>525.956</td>
<td>22.934</td>
<td>1-99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Overall findings: Inter and Intra-group comparisons**

Regarding the inter group comparisons, no statistically significant differences were found between the four groups after the intervention (possibly due to small sample sizes). However, from the intra-group comparisons it is clear that there were statistically significant differences between the pre- and post intervention ratings of Engen for the two groups that were exposed to a campaign depicting the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. It can thus be deduced that the experiment worked\(^\text{17}\), and that the Engen brand was perceived in a significantly more positive light as a result of the linkage with Woolworths. The results were based on what was depicted in the campaign.

**7.5 Questionnaire analyses (Part 2)**

In order to shed further light on the findings of the experimental design, the purpose of the questionnaire analyses was to determine whether there were significant differences between the four groups (inter group comparisons) in terms of how respondents rated Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths.

**Test of normality for questionnaire results after the intervention**

Firstly, an exploratory data analysis was conducted to determine if the experimental score distribution was normally distributed (Pallant, 2010:63). For the normality tests the hypotheses are as follows:

\[ \text{H}_0 = \text{Normally distributed and } \text{H}_1 = \text{Not normally distributed.} \]

\(^{17}\) According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), the experimental design controls for most threats to internal validity. It is considered the most rigorous design. This study was a true experimental design characterised by manipulation, control and randomisation. Clearly “in this taxonomy, internal validity is the appropriate truthfulness or correctness of an inference or conclusion regarding whether a relationship between two variables is, in fact, causal” (Coryn & Hobson, 2011:32). These scholars have further argued that in cause-probing investigations, internal validity typically is the primary priority, even if such knowledge claims are only localized in their generality. Logic is required to determine conditions necessary for causal inference: (1) temporal precedence—that cause precedes effect, (2) covariation—that cause and effect vary together, and (3) absence of alternative causes—that no other plausible explanations can account for an observed treatment–outcome covariation (Shadish et al., 2002).
A p-value of \( > = .05 \) indicates that the ratings are normally distributed and a p-value of \( < .05 \) indicates that the ratings are not normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used because there were 50 people or more in each group. A parametric (One-way ANOVA) Kolmogorov-Smirnoff Test results for normality is illustrated in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13 shows test of normality results- Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Kolmogorov-Smirnov(^{a})</th>
<th>Normal or not normal distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanA3_Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.151</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanB6_Woolworths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanC9_EngenWworths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.180</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Normal distribution: \( p > = .05 \); Not Normal: \( p < .05 \)
7.5.1 Mean score comparisons between four groups

Table 7.14 shows descriptive results on how respondents’ means compared between groups.

Table 7.14: Comparison between mean scores of Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>5% Trimmed Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Std.D</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Interquartile Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engen A3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.729</td>
<td>3.533</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.780</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>0.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.791</td>
<td>3.700</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.531</td>
<td>2.667-5</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.716</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>2-5</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.584</td>
<td>3.533</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>1.467-5</td>
<td>0.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolworths B6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.243*</td>
<td>4.133</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.553</td>
<td>3.067-5</td>
<td>1.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.140*</td>
<td>4.143</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.530</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>2.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.124*</td>
<td>4.133</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>2.533-5</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.862</td>
<td>3.867</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engen-Woolworths C9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.995</td>
<td>3.967</td>
<td>0.448</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>0.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.974</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>2.467-5</td>
<td>0.733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.867</td>
<td>3.867</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>2.067-5</td>
<td>0.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.729</td>
<td>3.700</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>0.917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*High ratings
As illustrated in Table 7.14, the mean scores on Engen (A3), Woolworths (B6) and Engen-Woolworths (C9) are presented for each of the four groups. Generally, the aware intervention group rated Engen (question A3) at 3.68 on average and the aware no intervention group rated Engen at 3.79 on average. The unaware intervention group rated Engen at 3.72 on average and the unaware no intervention group rated Engen at 3.57 on average. The scale ranges from 1-5 (Strongly disagree to Strongly Agree), therefore an average of 3.57 means that the respondents of that group rated Engen between neutral and agree regarding to the attributes mentioned, that is they felt somewhat positive about Engen. This is a mixed reaction as other respondents were in favour of the brand linkage whilst other respondents would not be positively influenced by one of the brand linkage partners (Andersen, 2001; Barger et al., 2002; Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Jones, 2008; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003; Park & MacInnis, 2006).

### 7.5.2 Differences between the four groups on how respondents perceived Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths

Table 7.15: Differences between the four groups’ ratings of Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanA3_Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1.675</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>1.407</td>
<td>.241*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>95.230</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>.397</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.905</td>
<td>243</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanB6_Woolworths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>6.396</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.132</td>
<td>5.847</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>89.703</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96.099</td>
<td>249</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanC9_EngenWoolworths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>3.202</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.067</td>
<td>2.255</td>
<td>.083*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>115.968</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>119.170</td>
<td>248</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Significance: (p < .05); *Not significant: (p > .05)**
A one-way analysis of variance between the groups was conducted to explore the impact of the brand linkage on brand perceptions of Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths, as measured by the scores of questions A3 (Engen), B6 (Woolworths) and C9 (Engen-Woolworths). Respondents were divided into four groups according to their brand linkage awareness (Group 1: aware intervention group; Group 2: unaware experimental group; Group 3: aware control group; Group 4: unaware control group). As shown in Tables 7.15 and 7.16, there was a statistically significant difference between the four groups in how respondents felt about or rated Woolworths: $F(3.246) = 5.9, p = .001$. Conversely, there was no statistically significant difference at the $p > .05$ in how the four groups perceived or rated Engen $F(3.240) = 1.5, p = .24$ and Engen-Woolworths: $F(3.245) = 2.3, p = .08$. The actual difference in mean scores between groups was quite small. Post Hoc comparisons using the Scheffe Test indicated that the mean score for Engen Aware no intervention group ($M = 3.57, SD = .78$) was significantly different from Woolworths Aware intervention group ($M = 4.23, SD = .55$). Engen-Woolworths ($M = 3.84, SD = .69$) did not differ significantly from either Engen or Woolworths (see Appendix F).

Table 7.16: The equality of variances for the spread of the scores for each of the four groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3_Engen</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6_Woolworths</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9_EngenWoolworths</td>
<td>1.454</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>.228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.3 Statistical results testing for significance of effect between groups

A one-way ANOVA, Post-Hoc Test was performed to test where the differences are for this specific variable (Woolworths) prior to the intervention and after the intervention. As illustrated by Table 7:17, one-way Post-Hoc Test results revealed a statistically significant effect over time across four groups on how respondents rated Woolworths (question B6). The only p-value that is $< .05$, was between the aware intervention and unaware no intervention groups (p-value = .003). Mean difference scores were the same for the aware intervention group and for the unaware
intervention group (-4.14). Therefore, the aware intervention group rated Woolworths higher and felt more positive than the unaware no intervention group.

### Table 7.17: Significance of differences between four groups on how respondents rated Woolworths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Groups</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.880*</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.739*</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.003**</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aware, No Intervention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.880*</td>
<td>-.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.996*</td>
<td>-.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.316</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>.041*</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.739*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>.289</td>
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<td>.038*</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>-.414**</td>
<td>.110</td>
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<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention (campaign)</td>
<td>-.289</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.038*</td>
<td>-.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
**Significance: \( p < .05 \); *Not significant: \( p > .05 \)

### Summary

In summary, questionnaire analyses of respondents’ ratings revealed that there were significant differences between the four groups' perceptions of Engen, Woolworths and Engen-Woolworths. Further tests conducted revealed, in particular, that the group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention.
7.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of quantitative experimental methodology as a suitable research methodology for this study. The overall findings indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between the groups before the intervention and also no significant differences between the four groups after the intervention. Although there were differences in certain groups over time, there were no significant differences between the groups on the post intervention scores as the differences might be small and therefore not significant between the groups when their perception/rating afterwards was measured. The intra-group findings over time, however, revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the pre- and post intervention ratings of Engen for the two groups who received the interventions. Therefore, it is clear that the intervention worked and made the respondents feel more positive about Engen as a result of exposure to the brand linkage intervention. The statistical analyses of the questionnaire itself were complementary to assess the impact of brand linkage on perceptions of Engen, Woolworths, and the linked brands Engen-Woolworths. Although at the time when the questionnaire was completed, all four groups became aware of this linkage, but they remained different in how they were treated prior to answering the questionnaire. It was shown that the group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention.

The next chapter will deal with the implications of these findings.
CHAPTER 8
Discussion

“Exactly how all these complex systems come together to make brands work their magic remains obscure”.
(Thomas Zoëga Ramsøy & Martin Skov, 2013:2)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on discussing the results of the study into the effect of brand linkages as a strategy to influence brand ratings and consumers’ brand perceptions in the contemporary business environment through leveraging of two separately but joint brands targeting the same market. The study aimed to evaluate whether the brand linkage campaign could be used as a strategy of leveraging or distract from the favourable brand ratings and brand perceptions of the two partnering brands. In this study, Engen-Woolworths was the examined brand linkage strategy, Engen was the main parent brand or host brand, whilst Woolworths was the invited brand. The study was an analysis of whether the brand linkage partnership between Engen and Woolworths had an influence on the consumers’ ratings and perceptions towards Engen in Benoni and Johannesburg.

The results of the study regarding the discussion of primary research questions are next.

8.2 Pretest posttest experiment discussion

The current thesis is one of the first attempts with insights on the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in the contemporary business environment (postmodern). Traditionally, brand linkage value creating has been conceptualised without any empirical study on real brands (Bristow, Schneider & Schuler, 2002; Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2002; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003). With advances in the need for practical study, the strategies of brand linkages have become more relevant to managers because of the direct impact they have on
opportunities for creating brand value. This significance has resulted in the complexity of this study which aims to further investigate the factors that can influence the success of this strategy.

The main conclusions that can be drawn from the present study are: The respondents who were exposed to an Engen-Woolworths campaign or a brand linkage treatment changed their ratings in the allocation of 99 cards into Engen envelopes after they received the treatment. The impact of exposure was related to changes in Engen scoring more cards at posttest than at pretest and the high preference of the brand linkage. These results are discussed below in more detail.

The experimental results provide primary evidence to answer the current study’s three research questions, indicating that there were differences in the pre-posttests outcome among the four groups (see chapter 1.6). In both the control and experimental measure, differences were found between groups. The magnitude of these differences is further synthesized and discussed by examining the extent of favourability of Engen at each pretest versus posttest design group. This section includes discussions on why there was a shift or lack of impact of brand linkage measured through a short questionnaire. It reports on the reasons that Engen’s linkage to Woolworths benefits or distracts respondents’ perception or attitude.

8.2.1. Stakeholders’ brand ratings and brand perceptions of the linked brands

What are the stakeholders’ ratings and perceptions of the linked brands?

Brand salience and brand experience were contributory factors to high scoring for the Engen brand especially for the aware groups. Salience entails how visible or prominent the brand is upon possessing one or more of three attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency (Cornelissen, 2011). However, Engen had more respondents who used the brand as compared to Woolworths. The lack of the Woolworths brand usage was expected and has been experienced by other studies that would only rely on a fictitious brand linkage partner in order to test the effect. As in the present study, the small number of people in the aware group caused problems in the
evaluation of brand linkage effectiveness in previous investigations (Jevons et al., 2002; Leuthesser, Kohli & Suri, 2003; Washburn et al., 2000).

Clinical results also indicated that stakeholders had changed in favour of the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. As such, pretest Engen fuel service stations had four (1.6%) respondents who were highly in favour of the brand, followed by Sasol with three (1.2%) respondents who scored between 90-99 cards, this is because Engen is viewed as the most common South African fuel station brand nationwide (Global Convenience store focus, 2010:2), which means that this sample had experienced high levels of brand salience as compared to the other five fuel station brands (Gwinner & Bennett, 2008). The reasons why Engen stood out may be attributed as a justification on the impact the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage campaign had on respondents. The effectiveness of brand linkage is related to the shift in preference, a specific type of preference and perceptions exchanged between the allying brands (Laforet, 2010).

The card scoring pretest posttest differences are best indicators of the brand linkage efficacy and stakeholders’ perceptions. One of most important reasons that respondents indicated in favour of the brand linkage from the questionnaire was “Convenience”. Convenience was highly regarded as crucial for the Engen fuel service station. Similarly, convenience and great or excellent value were descriptive words for Engen. This result confirms Laforet’s (2010) suggests that brand linkage is a way to increase the scope and the influence of the brands, enter new markets, reduce costs through economies of scale and refresh a linked brand’s image. Hence this may explain the reasons why there was the highest change in unaware experiment group (n = 74).

Great or excellent value or exceptionally good was associated with Woolworths while Engen is seen as lagging behind. Conversely, high pricing of Woolworths food stores makes it an unfavourable partner for Engen. In line with Luoma-aho and Vos (2010), even though brand linkage partners are seen as exceptionally good, communication is a complex endeavour and may unpredictability affect brand linkage.
Results indicated that the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage was regarded as an appropriate marketing strategy by the majority of respondents (see Appendix J). Hence, the finding indicates that perhaps that majority of respondents believed in recommending the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage as a result of their personal experience with each brand (see Appendix K). The results were compared with those in the literature, and an effort was made to explain the agreement between studies, or lack thereof. A confirmation is noted by Leuthesser, Kohli and Suri (2003) who point out that consumers’ perceptions of brand relationship change as a result of brand linkage strategies. In this case, stakeholders are in favour of the brand linkage campaign intervention.

The statistical results clearly indicate that there was a shift of preference towards Engen by respondents from treatment groups. These results indicated that respondents had felt differently and that Engen benefited from its linkage with Woolworths (as also confirmed by the significantly higher rating Woolworths obtained in the questionnaire analysis). This notion appears to confirm Balachander and Ghose’s (2003) findings that partnering brands can have a positive spillover effect on the umbrella of the partnering brand.

Of 249 sampled respondents who answered, 95 (38%) have used Woolworths food store at an Engen fuel service station in the past 6 months and 154 (62%) the majority of respondents have not used Woolworths food store (see Appendix H & I). This indicates that the majority of respondents were not familiar with the Woolworths food store at an Engen fuel service station as they have not used it in the past 6 months. Consequently, results indicate that most of the respondents had passed or drove past and saw the Engen and Woolworths in one place as compared to those who actually experienced the in-store point of sale (see Appendix H & I). This may perhaps be a result of the majority (60%) of respondents not having been aware of the brand linkage as demonstrated in the pretest posttest experiment card scoring findings among the sampled population. The findings show that the majority were not aware of the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage. This further implies that increased exposure to the linkage may have a positive spillover effect for Engen.
8.2.2 The brand linkage adds or distracts value from either brand

To what extent does the brand linkage adds or distracts value from either brand?

The results clearly indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the pre- and post intervention ratings of Engen for the two groups that were exposed to a campaign depicting the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage. It can thus be deduced that the experiment worked, and that the Engen brand was perceived in a significantly more positive light as a result of the linkage of Woolworths.

Further analysis of the clinical results showed that the unaware-intervention group versus unaware-no intervention group had significant change (625 votes). Similarly, the aware-intervention group versus aware-no intervention group shows some positive differences (193 votes). The highest change was for unaware post +6.5, secondly aware post +4.9, in turn marginally higher than the aware-unaware +4.7 and lastly aware, pre-post +3.1. Therefore, it appears that the biggest change occurred for those who were unaware of the brand linkage, after the intervention or exposure and the least amongst those who were aware, after exposure.

8.2.3 The effect of brand linkages on stakeholder relationships with the brands

What is the effect of brand linkages on stakeholder relationships with the brands?

The results on stakeholder’s perceptions strongly indicate that the majority of respondents would describe Engen fuel service stations as successful and sophisticated. On the other hand, the results strongly indicate that an overwhelming majority of respondents would describe Woolworths food stores as successful, competent, sophisticated, reliable, innovative, intelligent, organised, consistent, creative, effective, and efficient (see Appendix M). The results clearly show that respondents felt that Woolworths could be described as meeting a number of attributes important in brand value in comparison to Engen which only has a few attributes of brand value. This also appears to agree with Jacobsen (1999 in Bengtsson & Servais, 2004) who argues that due to a poly-contextual business
environment, a certain brand may carry numerous and different meanings in the
eyes of various consumers in diverse contexts and periods of time. Therefore, Engen
and Woolworths are perceived differently by stakeholders.

In terms of good customer retention strategy, brand linkages were seen as having
better and healthier fast food as compared to other competitors. Engen stations are
perceived as clean and fresh, convenient and open 24 hours. Results also indicated
that the level of quality of service received from Engen fuel service stations varied
considerably. Predominantly the majority of respondents who responded were
satisfied with Engen fuel service stations and Woolworths food stores (see Appendix
G). This implies that an overwhelming majority of respondents are satisfied with the
quality of services received. In comparison to Engen with a median of 4.00, here the
median of 5.00 is a clear indication that Woolworths is more highly preferred than
Engen (see Appendix G). Woolworths’ quality is attributed by respondents after the
experience, customers’ ‘expectation’ and the brand’s ‘expression’ becomes
consistent (Bester, 1999). Moreover, this agrees with literature in that factors such as
reputation and image outweigh the tangible product attributes when purchasing
decisions are taken (Bengtsson & Servais, 2004). This could be one of the reasons
that Engen and Woolworths were not perceived as equal brand linkage partners by
respondents.

Of the nine items, “offer quality products” received the highest (4.33) mean, followed
by provide a safe environment (4.12). On the other hand, “Are close to where I live”
scored lowest (3.35) mean (see Appendix H). The results clearly indicate that the
majority of respondents felt that Engen and Woolworths provide a safe environment,
friendly services and quality services. Organic food products from the Woolworths
food outlets may have contributed to these responses.

Accessibility, high price and racism (discriminative policy) were perceived to be
some of the factors that made Engen an unfavourable brand linkage partner in this
study. Also, preference of other brands was prevalent among respondents. This
indicates that the respondents clearly showed that they are not brand loyal to Engen.
The results also showed that the respondents are ready to use other Engen brand
competitors if the brand is not accessible. Similar to Engen, there is a moderate amount of variability in the distribution, because half of the respondents who are not able to use a Woolworths food store are spread across the categories of accessibility, preference of other brands, and others. This indicates that the respondents clearly showed that the high prices in Woolworths food stores could not be afforded (see Appendix G). The results also demonstrate that the respondents are not using Woolworths because the stores are not accessible and some Engen fuel stations do not have Woolworths but rather the competitors. Such results may indicate that there exist the twin phenomena of the ethical consumer and the ethical investor among respondents (Creamer, 2007; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Tustin & De Jongh, 2008; Van Jaarsveld, 2010; Yoon, 2011). These results affected negatively on brand linkage.

Bad service is one of the negative perceptions that respondents felt about the brand linkages. Pallant (2010:56) confirms that people are complex and often perceive and behave in unpredictable ways. Barger, Hemingway, Underwood, Velker and Winters (2002) claim that brand linkage may fail for numerous reasons including prior attitudes toward each brand, unreliable imaging, poor integration of meaning, lack of complement, free-rider notions, and inconsistent contributions (Ambler, Barwise & Higson, 2001; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009). There was a clear indication that the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage is not exceptional as the results confirm, the key assertion being that contemporary organisations operate in a context where social, political, economic, environmental, legal and regulatory factors can directly or indirectly impact how they do business (Pratt, 2009).

Furthermore, some respondents point out that Woolworths food stores at an Engen service station “do not necessarily have a wide variety of food products”. This agrees with Wipperfürth (2005) who suggests that brand relationship is a multifarious construct affecting the sum of the relationship (Jones, 2008). The prosumers will always have a different opinion about the brands (Paltrinieri & Esposti, 2013).

Regarding brand communication, on average, many respondents did feel that they learnt about Engen fuel services as they passed or drove by and saw the service
station and also the majority of respondents were not using Engen (see Appendix I & J). This implies that they were not using Engen often. The results clearly indicate that many respondents learnt about Woolworths from TV, in-store point of sale and by passing or driving past and seeing the store. The results demonstrate that on average TV and the use of Woolworths’ services were dominant in informing respondents about Woolworths’ food store. This is clear evidence of Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) who say that there is little knowledge which corresponds to the demands of the new digital market especially from the developing world (context such as South Africa). This also implies that the respondents had used the Woolworths food stores services at some point in time because of their quality food products.

In comparison, Engen fuel services had a high score on respondents who only learnt when they passed and saw the store, while Woolworths’ food stores scored high in point of sale experiences. This may imply that Woolworths was the most favourable brand in terms of usage among the sampled respondents. The more aware the consumer is the better the consumer is likely to perceive the brand positively. It also confirms that marketers use the media to try to break away from the clutter of brands (Clow & Baack, 2010). Of the 236 respondents, 4% (22) social media, 2% (9) via cell-phone, and 1% (4) marked other on Engen-Woolworths (Appendix I & J). Contrary to literature the findings indicate that the majority of stakeholders have not used social media (Glynn & Woodside, 2009; Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Macnamara, 2010:16; McDonald, 2011). Many successful firms no longer use traditional marketing techniques because they are no longer enough to keep up with the ever changing competitive market (De Chernatony, 2000; Grönroos, 2011; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2010). In this case, this may imply that Engen and Woolworths are lagging behind because they are not viewed as effectively using the available digital platforms.

8.2.4 The parent brand gains from the linkage with the invited brand

Will the parent or host brand gain from the linkage with the invited brand?
The findings show that the main parent brand indeed benefited from the invited brand (see chapter 7.3; 7.4 and 7.5). In comparison with previous research, the pairing of two complementary brands into partnership might contribute value and complementary benefits to the brand linkage campaign beyond those that a single brand strategy could achieve (Barger et al., 2002; Park et al., 2010). Leuthesser, Kohli and Suri (2003:45) support the fact that successful brand linkage occurs when both brands add value to a partnership. This clearly shows that the parent brand Engen established successful linkages which helped to create differentiation through brand associations that go beyond the limits of the features and attributes of mere products (Leuthesser et al., 2003:35). Similarly to Washburn, Till and Prilucket (2000; 2004), the findings confirm that brand linkage products or services can bring a win-win potential to two partner brands, which leads to greater spill-over effects. The study results suggest that the participating parent brand and host brand both benefit from the relationship, as does the stakeholders. The parent brand’s ratings were higher and the perceptions were also more positive with the brand linkage than without it. Therefore, the invited brand (Woolworth’s quality) provided the parent brand (Engen) with added value and synergy which enabled the parent brand to capitalise on the unique strengths of brand.

8.3 Summary of discussions of findings

This thesis used a convenient sample of 250 respondents to empirically examine the impact of brand linkage on brand relationship and brand communication. The sample consisted of 46.2% male and 53.8% female respondents. The majority of respondents were Blacks, followed by Whites. The fact that there were more females in the sample than males is not by design, and the gender imbalances indicate that women were more willing to volunteer to participate in the study than men. The reason was because part of the sample had the majority of respondents from the university and worksites/businesses, a convenient sample for the research. Therefore, it is not surprising that the sampled majority were educated or iterate as this research was conducted with many of the respondents being staff and few students of the University of Johannesburg. A diverse set of interests was found in this sample.
The main aim of the card scoring method and questionnaire was to evaluate the respondents' favourableness and perceptions towards Engen. Generally, the results indicate that the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage did indeed improve the favourableness of the experimental groups towards Engen. No statistically significant differences were found between the control and experimental groups for any of the overall four groups at pretest. The fact that no significant differences existed indicated that the study did not have any pre-existing bias between the groups. This similarity provided a stronger foundation for testing the research hypothesis. The results of the posttest revealed that the experimental group (the one that received an intervention after the pre-test) and the control group (the one that received nothing) had significantly different opinions for three factors: brand linkage, brand relationship and brand perception.

The study objectives were achieved. The study showed that the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage campaign intervention had a significantly positive impact on Engen, as confirmed by intra group comparisons between pre- and post intervention ratings for groups that were exposed to the intervention. The brand linkage paid off for both groups following communication that depicted the linkage. The use of brand communication provides evidence for unique strength of advertising in presenting information about brand linkage. The important contribution of marketing communication demonstrates that the medium can affect the scoring of the parent brand. This is consistent with the fact that a communication campaign can trigger new perceptions if the respondent is motivated.

Although inter-group comparisons' statistical significance between the four groups was not reached, probably as a result of the sample size of the study, the participating respondents shared information that indicated a positive impact on the 'parent brand' Engen after intervention, including a high rating in the questionnaire following the pretest-posttest card scoring experimental method. The group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated the 'invited brand' Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention. This positive perception of Woolworths by those aware of the linkage, to a large extent, confirms the notion that Engen benefits from
its association with Woolworths, and that exposure to a campaign depicting the linkage will affect ratings of Engen significantly, as proven by the experimental findings.

8.4 Chapter summary

To examine the relationship between the four groups (aware intervention, aware no intervention, unaware intervention and unaware no intervention) after the intervention, this discussion focused on respondents’ card allocation ratings pre-posttest. While other measures of respondents’ perception, preferences and opinions were assessed as a complementary part of the pre-posttest experiment, the twenty-item questionnaire was only administered after the posttest, and as such was the only assessment that could provide measures of why respondents allocated more for Engen after learning or exposure to the treatment (Engen-Woolworths campaign). For the sake of this study not all results from the questionnaire were included in the discussion as they were an additional assessment following the experiment.

First, tests were conducted to determine whether or not there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups (aware and unaware) before the intervention and also any significant differences between the four groups after the intervention. The non parametric tests indicated, as expected given the different group sizes, a significant mean difference between the pre- and post intervention ratings for the two groups which received interventions (treatments) at the beginning of the study. The aware intervention groups mean changed from 29.74 to 37.34, $p = .006$ ($p < .05$) and the unaware intervention groups mean changed from 25.03 to 35.07, $p < .001$). Although there were differences in certain groups over time, there were no significant differences between the groups on the post intervention scores as the differences were small and therefore not significant between the groups when their perception or rating afterwards was measured. The positive scoring of card results after the treatment indicate that the intervention had an effect on respondents’ perceptions, preferences and opinions about Engen being linked to
Woolworths but this difference or shift in how they felt afterwards was so small that it does not show as a statistically significant result between the four groups afterwards.

These results have demonstrated that brand linkage affects the brand ratings and brand perceptions in the new business environment. The experience of stakeholders on one brand can affect the ratings and perceptions of the partnering brand (Beezy, 2007; Erdem & Sun, 2002; Laforet, 2010; Leone et al., 2006; Leuthesser et al., 2003:37; Prince & Davies, 2002; Washburn et al., 2000). As such, the intervention of the Engen-Woolworths campaign in this study, have positively improved Engen’s card scores. However, there were no differences between four intra-groups pre-exposure and four intra-post-exposure groups. As the concluding chapter highlights (section chapters 7.6 and 8.2) exploring a bigger sample to have statistically significant results could be considered an opportunity for future research.

The next chapter 9 is a summary of the empirical findings and conclusions of the entire study.
CHAPTER 9
Conclusion and recommendations for future research

“By all counts we are living in a different branding world”.
(Chris T. Allen., Susan Fournier and Felicia Miller, 2008)

9.1 Introduction

This thesis was initially described as emergent, largely due to the lack of prior research at the nexus of the three constructs of brand linkage, brand ratings and brand perceptions and the observed limitation of existing theory to directly inform the two central research questions. The current chapter is the final part of this thesis, in which the objective is to achieve a synthesis of the empirical findings and the theoretical section.

9.2 Discussion of main findings

This section will address the research objective, in seeking whether brand linkages affect brand ratings and brand perceptions. Several findings of this research support the existing literature on the effect of brand linkage. This objective is discussed under the following four sub-headings:

- To measure the impact of linked brands on brand ratings and brand perceptions
- To establish the impact of brand linkage on stakeholder relationships with brands
- To determine whether the brand linkage adds or detracts value from either brands
- To measure if the main parent or host brand gains from the linkage with the invited brand
9.2.1 Impact of linked brands on brand ratings and brand perceptions

Firstly, across all of the empirical research that has investigated the subject, brand linkages are consistently associated with fictitious brands which could be misleading. At the same time, what is striking about the previous studies is how they are limited to the developed world markets. The primary findings demonstrate that the main or parent brand with good brand characteristics tends to act as enhancing signals in the perception of the invited brand. Thus there can be no doubt that brand linkages of two brands that are perceived as offering high quality services are favourable and this was emphasised by the empirical findings in section 7.3.1, for Engen fuel service stations. Similarly, for Woolworths food stores the evidence is shown (see section 7.3.2).

All groups’ scores increased at posttest. Analysis of scores for the Pre-Engen – Post-Engen aware intervention group mean, aware no intervention group mean, unaware intervention group mean, and unaware no intervention group mean. These findings support other research, which confirms that brand linkage complexity is inevitable (Aaker, 1997; De Chernatony, 2006; Fournier, 1998b; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Kapferer, 2009; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). If stakeholders are few, results are likely to be statistically insignificant. This implies that consumers’ familiarity with the partnering brand is related to brand rating toward the main brand. However, familiarity with the invited brand increases favourability towards the host or main brand and the brand linkage. In addition, the results confirm the literature that prior experience with the linked brand or specific marketing communication may bring the norms of different relationships to the forefront of people’s minds so that they interpret the brand communication and the actions of the linked brand through the lens of the relationship norms (Aggarwal, 2004).

9.2.2 The impact of brand linkage on stakeholder relationships with brands

Secondly, the impact of brand linkage on stakeholder relationships with brands is important as it address the perceptions, preferences and reasons why stakeholders use or do not use the Engen or Woolworths brands’ linkage. The results indicate that
the respondents had a positive perception and preference towards brand linkage campaign intervention because per group, two of the four groups’ pre-intervention and post-intervention ratings separately were statistically significantly higher for the treatment groups (see chapter 7.4.3 and 7.5.3). Also, the group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention. From the literature review and empirical findings, it is also clear that the respondents who received an intervention ‘scored’ or allocated more cards for Engen while others scored less (Cykowski, 2007; Desai & Keller, 2002). In spite of them having received the same treatment, some respondents showed negative perceptions towards Engen. This is an important sign that superconsumers on a personal basis are not willing to fulfill marketers’ desires for brand linkages (Barger et al, 2002; Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Oestreicher, 2009). The literature does not investigate explicitly both the positive and negative impact of brand relationship and brand perception. Instead, most studies focus on artificial cases as they argue the problem of complexity (Hampf & Lindberg-Repo, 2011; Jevons et al., 2002; Pratt, 2009).

The findings of this study support other research studies which confirm that brand linkage increases the partnering brand’s favourableness (Laforet, 2010; Simon, 2010; Simonin & Ruth, 1998). This proved a crucial point of a strategic alliance in which the brand value of both is greater than the part. Engen gained more cards compared to its competitors after the intervention (see chapter 7.3.2). However, oversimplifying of a complex reality provides misleading knowledge about the effect of brand linkages.

**9.2.3 Brand linkage effectiveness (brand linkage adds value)**

The third objective of this empirical study was to determine if there was a difference in the respondent’s card scoring after the intervention took place, and to assess whether the intervention was effective, by comparing the scores of the pre- and posttests of the experimental group, and comparing them to the results of the control group. The effectiveness of the intervention was supported by a highly significant difference between the pretest and posttest (aware group 1 and unaware group 2) of
the experimental group. Analysis of card scores for the groups pretest and posttest for the experimental and control groups indicated that an improvement was achieved. The effect of brand linkage brings about change to stakeholders’ interpretation of the partnering brand. As such, the means rating results showed an increase from Pretest to Posttest for this group after receiving the intervention as discussed in sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3. Literature shows that brand linkage objectives, consistent brand (linkage) name and identity systems, target audiences, positioning, key communication messages (both intentional or unintentional) and prioritisation of brand linkage touch points (Hill, 2007; Oestreicher, 2010; Vriens & Hofstede, 2000; Wansink, 2003) play an important role in brand perception. Similar to the results of this study (see chapter 7.4.3); stakeholders may create complex responses such as attacks on brand linkages (Bosman, 2010). This is in agreement with Schmitt (2012:11) who argues that consumers may have ambiguous feelings about brands as they may feel positive and negative effects at the same time.

There was no significant difference between the Pretest and the Posttest (aware and unaware groups) of the control groups and the control groups’ scores for the means, further indicating that no significant improvements had taken place. As expected, these groups did not receive any intervention.

In other words, the intervention was shown to be effective for the treatment groups, as there was a highly significant difference between the Pretest and Posttest (aware and unaware groups) of the experimental group. This was not found in the control groups. Overall, there was a vast improvement in the experimental groups’ card scoring towards the ‘host brand’ Engen (see chapter 7.2.2 and 7.3).

9.2.4 The main or host brand gains from the intervention

Finally, the results indicated that Engen the ‘host’ or ‘parent’ brand gained because of the Engen-Woolworths intervention campaign. In this case, the Woolworths quality benefits Engen’s convenience service stations brand. The results indicate clearly the suggestion of Neale, Baazeem and Bougoure (2009) that perceptions of brand linkages significantly influence parent-brand relationship quality and it is therefore an
important dimension of brand relationship. This is confirmed in literature by an indication that the effectiveness of a brand linkage can be measured by the strength and nature of these partnerships (Franzen & Moriarty, 2009; Vogelstein, 2010) at a risk (Post & Post, 2008). A sceptical attitude towards the expectations for a brand linkage has affected 90% of brand linkages ventures which have failed (Lindstrom, 2002:26). In spite of having 250 respondents for this study there was no statistically significant difference among the four groups which may mean that brand linkage can create independent brand perceptions within interdependence (Park et al., 2010).

The gaining of the ‘host’ brand may mean that the campaign enhances the effective brand linkage – strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions. The positive scoring of the cards after the treatment indicates that the intervention had an effect on respondents’ perceptions, preferences and opinions about Engen being linked to Woolworths. This also confirms the fact that brand linkage successfully creates brand leverage because of the nature of brand relationship strength (Leuthesser et al., 2003; Lindberg-Repo & Brookes, 2004). However, these findings are qualified by questionnaire responses which indicate that among the 250 respondents, the majority were not aware of the brand linkage and some had bad experiences with the brands. Therefore, everything is filtered through stakeholders’ emotional responses for interpretation by their rational capabilities (Bester, 1999; Du Plessis, 2005; Leitch & Davenport, 2007). As a result, it is difficult to examine the effect that this particular strategy has on the total dynamics of the brand relationships (Davis, 2005; Jones, 2008; Keller, 2003a; Heding et al., 2009). Hence, applying qualitative methods can form a part of future studies to strengthen the results.

This study further advances knowledge on the notion of using experimental methodology which in measuring the benefits of brand linkages’ on brand relationship and brand communication aspects. Insights from the Engen-Woolworths market were found in this research study. Engen was able to build up a high perceived quality of the new brand linkage service, to reach the untapped market segments. Similarly, Woolworths diversified and benefited in its establishment of convenience 24 hours fast food shops. Prior to this study, experimental evidence has
not been provided that brand linkage can influence brand ratings and brand perceptions among respondents in the social sciences context.

However, this study was only experimental in nature. This research creates a starting point for further areas of investigation involving exploration with a bigger sample size to examine the effect of brand linkage on brand relationship, and brand communication.

**9.3 Implications of the study**

This section presents the implications of the study in terms of the conceptualisation or theoretical, methodology and management.

**9.3.1 Conceptual implications**

1. **In this context, it is one of the first investigations into the effect of brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions in a contemporary business environment**

There is no question that brand linkages, brand ratings and brand perceptions are related. For the first time in marketing literature, this study takes into perspective brand linkages’ effect on brand ratings and brand perceptions within South African context. The study offered perspectives of these three constructs from different points of view. In theory, both approaches can be expanded to incorporate the other point of view, and they are clearly inextricably related. The study provided theoretical support for the idea that brand linkage of the host brand with the invited brand are superior to those ‘single’ or ‘solo’ brands. This is an important primary contribution, as it represents the reality in most brand linkage strategies, and despite a nexus search, this has not been explicitly demonstrated before. Stakeholders drive the success of brand linkages, but brands are the necessary touch point that businesses have to connect with their customers.
2. A redefining of brand linkage and operationalisation in the context of South Africa
Furthermore, one of the major contributions of this study concerns the operationalisation of brand linkages. It contributes to brand linkage literature by redefining the concept brand linkage, extending the term linkage to include co-branding, brand alliance and brand extension. Clearly, the literature discussion on brand linkages uses many terms and offers no succinct definition. Similar to the results of Ueltschy and Laroche (2011:97), Jevons, Gabbott and De Chernatony (2002), this study confirms that there is success of brand linkage which lies in the customer’s awareness and association with the partnering brand. Consequently, as one of the first attempts, this research shows that existing customers who are cognisant of the offered brand linkages partner’s services, trusted the brand linkage, while those who were not aware of brand linkage showed less favourableness and were reserved on the brand linkage. This study indicates that respondents who were aware and those who were unaware but received the intervention of the Engen and Woolworths brand linkage campaign, both scored in favour of the ‘host’ brand, Engen. As such, the Engen-Woolworths brand linkage benefits the partnering brands as it is a way to increase the brand scope of influence such as, entering new markets, reducing costs through economies of scale and refreshing a linked brand’s image (Leuthesser et al., 2003). Engen as a partner enabled Woolworths to enter the new market of fast and convenience or 24 hours service food outlets which may positively affect new buying behaviour. The study proposes that from the perspective of the citizen-consumers, local brand linkages may actually serve to boost their bond with brands (see chapter 4.3.6).

3. One of the first attempts in comprehensive investigation of the effect of brand linkages using real world scenario brands
Moreover, much of the brand linkage studies compare results between a real brand and a fictitious brand but this study uniquely examines a pair of real brands. An examination of these previous studies reveals that this basic justification for a non-fictitious brand linkage scenario has never been substantiated. Indeed, although the comparison is based on fictitious brands that were referred to by previous studies
this study brings the aspect of brand linkage strategy to real life stakeholders’ situations.

4. A comprehensive model on the impact of brand assessments
Brand linkage is an often used marketing strategy to leverage brands against postmodern markets cluttered with me-too non-differentiated competing brands and it has been referred to by various scholars in one form or another for seven decades. The theoretical framework developed in this study makes a further contribution by incorporating the five components of the conceptually tested effectiveness of strategic brand linkages on brand ratings and brand perceptions (BL-BRBP). The importance of brand linkage is well documented, but the conceptualisation presented in chapter 5 is not (see chapter 3). Hence, this model will help businesses to contextualise brand linkage in developing and maintaining strategic brand linkage strategy.

5. The indirect impact of brand relationship and brand communication on brand assessments
The theoretical model also adds to the understanding of how brand linkages indirectly affect brand relationship and brand communication in the new business environment. Also, the stakeholder brand relationship, brand communication factors, understanding brand linkages and marketing communications sources though not tested, were proposed. These indicate that the linked entity is now trapped between the marketing world and the consumer-social world. It represents one of an initial foray attempt into the field of brand linkage strategies.

6. Use of real world brands departs from previous use of fictitious scenarios
Certainly, some of the contributions of this study may confirm the need on conclusion in literature about fictitious scenarios of brand linkages studies. Therefore, if this empirical testing contradicts literature Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg (2007:43) argue that since “science progresses not through consensus and the accumulation of conventional wisdom, but through competitive inquiry, questioning and testing”,

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this may be a significant competitive inquiry worthy of its original findings. The study shows how real world scenarios\textsuperscript{18} can indicate brand assessment.

7. The role of brand communication as a treatment
The study confirms that visual elements of brand communication transmit information which affects consumer's emotions. The ease of recognition also emerged as a very important aspect in brand linkage ratings. In essence, the consumers who were aware of the brand linkage and were shown the brand communication scored high on the partnering brand. This clearly demonstrates that brand communication triggers positive perceptions towards the main brand and in this case Engen. As highlighted in literature, communication is a very important process used by brands to exchange information and it is skill and judgment of management that affect, in someway, brand success or failure (Fill & Jamieson 2006:1). The use of brand communication provided a platform to inform, persuade, reinforce and build images to delineate a product or service (Fill & Jamieson, 2006:4). Furthermore, since consumers' perception about a brand linkage together with brand communication is motivated by their own culture (Bester, 1999; Schmitt, 2012), inclusion of a qualitative research framework will strengthen any future research. Moreover, other results of this study have methodological implications which are presented in the next section.

9.3.2 Methodological implications

1. A card scoring scale of measuring the brand linkage attributed by stakeholders’ assessments to a shift between pretest to posttest awareness
The main methodological implication of this study concerns the creation of one of the first attempts at empirical and largely experimental research in the field of the South African marketing communication environment. Following the suggestion by Heding,\textsuperscript{18} There may be other opinions about this field of study, for example, Yi-Chin, L. 2013; D’Astous, A. Colbert, F. and Fournier, M. 2007, and others that are significant, however, they were all tested in a different context (such as art and entertainment industry). It is evident that the concept of brand linkages or alliances is used quite broadly. Nevertheless, it can also be used in a narrower sense and to the knowledge of the researcher. This study clearly defined the empirical method that utilised two well defined practical brands as described in chapter 6.3.2. A "two way" brand enhancement group was chosen.
Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009), identifying the relational approach is an important indicator of a paradigm shift moving away from the domain of the marketer and into the ‘chaotic’ domain of consumers or stakeholders. This justifies that the instrument developed can be used in future research. Instead of using traditional mixed methods, the study coins a new measuring instrument for a study of this magnitude (see chapter 6.5.4.1 and 6.6.4.4). However, future studies may investigate brand perceptions using the value of further qualitative research to probe the complexities which this study could not do in this research.

2. **A satisfactory context of convenient data collection**

The need to test the effect of brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions has been satisfied by collecting data from 250 respondents who were selected on a convenient basis. Although respondents were randomly allocated to the four groups, due to time restrictions and limited financial cost, data has been collected in Benoni and Johannesburg. More female respondents were willing to be involved in the study while some of the male population refused to participate. Therefore, analysing the effect of card scoring across a broader population of the other provinces of South Africa and a different brand linkage pair may provide a more diverse context.

3. **Stakeholders are now difficult to classify using traditional methods**

It appears that the use of demographic variables in classifying stakeholders or respondents has changed (see chapter 2.4.1). Life styles and perceptions are the greatest measure of stakeholders who share similar needs that a brand linkage would target. In spite of age, race, gender and qualifications technology has created a “boundary-less” to allow blurring of purpose for using a brand. Due to technological explosions, the traditional forms of community such as village, neighbourhood, family and religion, began to be challenged as they were developed within a restricted geographical area (Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2011; Cova & Cova, 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001).
4. The pretest-posttest experiment method is difficult without a qualitative method at the beginning
The card scoring pretest-posttest experiment was not based on prior research that validates the design concerning the effect of brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions. The use of the same design would validate this unique data collection tool’s usage. This study proves that in practice, with real brands, this methodology can be supported by more qualitative techniques as input.

5. The brand communication confirms the already existing brand perception
Showing a brand communication campaign is a useful way to enhance the perception to a brand linkage. This study investigated the impact of brand linkage on brand ratings and brand perceptions and can confirm that the partnership between Engen and Woolworths was enhanced by the treatment shown to the experiment groups. Hence, this confirms Batra, Ahuvia and Bagozzi (2012) who indicate that brands with which a customer interacts with tend to create a stronger attitude or brand perception, either a negative or positive perception. This means the brand communication campaign made a significant difference that enables comparison between four groups. The result could have been significant if the sample had been bigger. Future research should consider increasing the sample size to get statistically significant results.

6. Strong internal validity
This direct manipulative control improved the internal validity of this study, as it allows the experimenter to predetermine the time sequence of events, and to ensure that the independent variable takes on a wide enough range of values (that is, has enough variance). Most of the factors that could produce a spurious relationship between brand ratings and brand perceptions are controlled by the experiment. This is field research, because it occurs under natural conditions and is often more informative than “pure or laboratory experimental” research (Watt & Van den Berg, 2002:188). The experimental content is constant in four groups, the groups are equivalent because of random assignment, and the level of distraction from the environment is constant for all groups (see chapters 6.5.5; 6.6.4.3 and 7.3.1). This is an experiment that is strong on internal validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). It is
therefore very tempting to generalise its results to all brand assessments for brand linkages, and to prescribe the brand ratings of stakeholders to enhance brand perceptions. However, this experiment is to some extent limited in external validity and such a recommendation may not be appropriate. The conditions under which the consumers actually perceive brand linkage is very different from the experimental conditions. The experimental design imposes control over the outside variables which obscure the realistic operation of the system of variables in the real world (Watt & Van den Berg, 2002:190). For example, customers may pay less attention to brand linkage in the natural environment. In the experimental; setting, the attention to the brand linkage could have been much higher, due to the experimental instructions given.

The experiment also uses the brand communication of a single brand linkage campaign. According to Watt and Van den Berg (2002:202) “participants in communication research are often exposed to communications in an artificial setting which enhances their attention to messages, their motivation to process and/or act on the contents of the messages, etc. The effects of these deviations from “real world” conditions limit the Generalisability of the results”. While the conclusions about the use of brand linkage on fuel service stations and convenient food stores may be correct for this presentation (because of the high internal validity of the experimental design), the results may not be representative of other types of brand linkages, or other topics. In addition, the control that is exerted over experimental material and process by making sure it is identical in all experimental conditions carries some threats of limiting the external validity conclusions. Due to the complexity of the contemporary business environment, there is still no assurance that the researcher had adequately reproduced all the conditions that a large sample size was likely to encounter in the ‘real world’. To generalise the results of the experiment to all kinds of brand linkage’s assessments of experiments, with all kinds and sizes of population, is limited in this study and this is recommended for future studies.

Other results of this study have managerial implications which are presented in the next section.
9.3.3 Managerial implications

Brand linkages have to reflect the following:

1. **Strategic branding strategy**
   Strategic branding strategy contributes value in that it addresses key related brand assessment factors. These factors represent a complex approach which shapes and influences the overall brand linkage process. Hence this provides a pointer relative to brand linkage and could guide managers and marketing professionals in more effective brand linkage strategies and help them make decisions that could ultimately influence the business' overall sustainable competitive advantage. Brand linkage strategy is an important tool for differentiation or making distinctions, it serves as a way to identify the partnering brands and enhance brand ratings and brand perceptions. Therefore, brand linkage strategy elements, brand ratings, brand perceptions, brand relationships, and brand communication are essential factors to positive brand assessments. Thus, to managers the conclusions of this study seem to advance further support for the move away from “fictitious” simple empirical investigation in brand linkages to “real world complex” empirical research.

2. **New perspective of main brand and host brand linkages**
   The effective brand linkage strategy is the one which upholds its values for a long term, the importance of sharing knowledge and to meet new business challenges. The effective brand linkage works as a facilitator in a social community group and is proactive in that the constituent brands adapt and reflect their unique brand values. There is no brand linkage that will be successful for the long term without a good product that delivers on expectations. For this reason, great marketing behind a weak product will only heighten the levels of dissatisfaction when it fails to live up to the claims made in any communication. As indicated in an earlier chapter, brand communication represents the important voice of the brand linkages and is a way to establish relationships (or remind) with stakeholders which could affect brand ratings and perceptions.

3. **Considering real brand linkages for real brand assessments**
   The focus of this study is on a specific brand linkages category, rather than fictitious
and broad business in general and has important implication for practitioners. Due to the complexity of the market and buying situations, it is difficult to measure the precise contribution of a company’s brand to the buying decision, recommendation intent and preferences for brand linkage. It is imperative for the brand managers to effectively create and manage brand communication initiatives by observing all-round brand linkages touch points to find a strategic fit in the new business environment. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) propose that in the consumer realm, the CSR record of a company has a positive effect on a consumer’s evaluations of the company and their intent to purchase the company’s products. Several studies have supported this hypothesis (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Waddock & Smith, 2000). For example, Woolworths was favourable to some respondents for its contributions to a charity such as Kids Haven.

4. Customers’ previous experiences influence or strengthen the impact of advertisement positively and negatively
These results confirm Finne & Grönroos, (2009:190) who claim that the influence of the advertisement is minor; the findings indicate that shared meaning is created from other Engen-Woolworths factors. Consumers’ past experience with the brand is likely to influence their strong positive or strong negative perception (attitude) towards a brand (Solomon, 2009; Schmitt, 2012). Based on a strong relationship, the communication is classified as relationship communication. Therefore, the Engen-Woolworths campaign intervention functions more as a trigger than anything else. It motivates stakeholders towards the Engen brand, as results demonstrate that the group that was aware of the linkage and exposed to the intervention rated Woolworths significantly higher than the group that was unaware of the linkage and not exposed to the intervention. However, it is important to bear in mind those new experiences or reflections after receiving a campaign which can affect the brand perception and ratings in both a positive or negative way (Fill & Jameison, 2006; Schmitt, 2012).

5. Customers may value emotional benefits from brands more than functional value
The nature of ‘branding iceberg’ is a very important metaphor or tool useful in
conceptualising the implications of functional values of a linked brand against the emotional attributes, and moral versus profiteering (see chapter 3.2.4). Similar to an iceberg, only a small proportion of the linked brand’s mass and power or value is visible, the rest is the intangible and hidden brand attributes. Therefore, this study is of great value to marketing practitioners by pointing out the importance of understanding complexity in brand linkages’ impact on stakeholder relationships and brand perceptions. This study lends further support to the move away from ‘functional’ or ‘tangible’ attributes of brands to symbols and other intangible phenomena of brands such as ‘emotional attributes’ (Firat & Dholakia, 2010).

6. A holistic management approach to develop, promoting brand linkages is successful in cutting across the market clutter
Moreover the brand linkage strategy has consequences for the stakeholder relationships. Engen-Woolworths’ results show the dominance of ethical stakeholders among the respondents. In this case, Luoma-aho and Vos (2010) confirm that such stakeholders have subjective judgment of reality that may prefer to go against verbal or nonverbal communicated messages associated to any organisation at any given time. The results successfully confirm that the aware group increased after receiving the Engen-Woolworths campaign intervention. Reichheld (2001) argues that existing customers tend to purchase more than new customers and it is efficient to deal with existing customers as compared to new customers. Within this purchasing context, consumers suffer from brand-choice overload (Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008). “Unlimited choice can produce genuine suffering” (Schwartz, 2005:3) and having unlimited options, then, can lead people to be more dissatisfied with the choices they make (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). In this case the aware group scored more cards on Engen unlike the unaware group which scored fewer cards.

7. Application to other brand linkage category
The case company used in this study was a 24 hours fuel service station as the main brand and convenient food stores as the invited brand, specifically in terms of convenient as the brand linkage. To some extent the findings and discussion can be inferred to similar industries because the key concepts of brand linkages, brand
ratings and brand communication are universal concepts. Similar industries might include other retailing categories such as fashion or consumer goods selling companies. However, further research is needed to demonstrate the applicability to other industries and other brand linkage types.

Therefore, due to several limits and subjectivity, the generalisation of the results on the managerial action is restricted to a similar sample population. The next section acknowledges these limitations.

9.4 Limitations

The main limitation stems from the methodological choices. Due to the employment of convenient sampling, subjects were not randomly selected. Hence, the first limitation concerns the sample. Indeed, the 250 respondents of the experiment and questionnaires were collected in Gauteng Province (Johannesburg and Benoni). The sample is therefore not representative of the South African population and this limits the Generalisability of the findings. However, the University of Johannesburg situated in Johannesburg with Auckland Park and Doornfontein campuses attracts people from all over the country for study, lecturing or non academic work. Thus, the presence of the university made it possible to collect data from a sample deemed heterogeneous enough for the purpose of the study. In addition, the collection of data while commuting to the university provided a greater diversity of the sample.

Besides, the sample is rather young (20-30 years) and highly educated. These unequal distributions may distort the findings and could be misleading when the results are universally applied to a greater target population. Apart from this, the experimental setting per se is a limitation. In the marketplace, people learn through other external sources about the company as well and therefore, also sources which are beyond the company's control can influence the effectiveness of the brand linkages campaign. Other than that, only three major dimensions of social issues (race, gender, age and driving or ownership of a car) have been tested in this experiment, however other domains remain which could make a contribution to extend and refine the consumer-centric brand linkages conceptualisation.
Another limitation is that there is a difference between what people tell and what people do. Hence, the evaluations of consumers are only a suitable surrogate for their perceptions and favourableness ratings towards the brand. It is obvious that these theoretical surrogates cannot fully represent consumers’ real life choices. Within a research context, it is difficult to control all extraneous variables which could influence the outcome. Even though some statistical measures were applied to filter out the pure effects of the brand linkage intervention, other aspects, such as brand category (convenience versus fast food outlet), price, and in-store promotional campaigns are important determinants in the marketplace. So far, these aspects are difficult to simplify and include in such a relatively small experimental setting. These research results clearly show that brand linkage is an apparently complex phenomenon and the two experimental groups from the aware intervention and unaware intervention, capture a fair but not a large amount of the statistical variance. It is open to researchers in this field to reduce extraneous influences and increase the power of future analyses.

Further analyses of the data collected through a short questionnaire were not prioritised which implies that although these were conducted to investigate whether dependent variables such as males and females differed in terms of the four groups, yet, none of these results in the current research contains an explicit measure of statistically significant differences. Hence, the absence of such an analysis could be regarded as a limitation of the current research’s results.

Other than that, the findings relate to a brand from the convenient fuel service station industry. Many people use fuel garages based on their closeness to where they live and it is treated as the next corner shop. This means that other factors to express their quality of service and price may not be perceived as equally important among respondents. Hence, these highly involved stakeholders could react differently to brand linkage campaigns of brands which belong to the low involvement category such as durable services or products (brands). Therefore, caution should be taken when applying and generalising these findings to other product categories and industries.
9.5 Conclusions

The study randomized the respondents into four groups. Both the aware group 1 and the unaware group 2 received the treatment. Conversely, both the aware group 3 and the unaware group 4 did not receive the treatment (see Figure 6.1). Awareness of the brand linkage within the experimental group increased significantly. At the same time, the brand linkage unaware level, within the control groups had slightly changed by statistically insignificant mean. The respondents felt the same before and after the intervention, as they did not receive any intervention. Similarly, the respondents felt the same before and after the intervention, as they did not receive any intervention for aware no intervention group 3 and unaware no intervention group 4. Thus, the effects of the test campaign would seem to have been:

The effect of brand linkage experimental variable
The card scoring proved the point that the brand linkage experimental variable was effective for the two groups who got interventions; there were significant differences between pre- and post intervention ratings over time of the ‘host’ or ‘parent’ brand Engen. In comparison, the other two groups who received no interventions, showed no change before and after, as they were not exposed to the intervention. In other words, the brand linkage intervention had a positive spin-off for the ‘main’ or ‘parent’ brand Engen, and proved the entire objective of the experiment.

After the card scoring exercise and as a follow-up test (for brand perceptions), the study also tested whether there were significant differences between the four groups in how they rated Engen (host brand), Woolworths (invited brand) and Engen-Woolworths (QA3, B6 and C9). At the time of the questionnaire being answered, all respondents became aware of the linkage, but they were still different in how they were treated prior to the questionnaire and their overall ratings could shed further light on their brand perceptions, preferences and opinions. The aware intervention group rated Woolworths significantly higher than the unaware no intervention group. Possibly, if there were more respondents in each group, significant differences would have also shown up for Engen and Engen-Woolworths.
This thesis has identified and described a cutting edge concept of brand linkages. Within the last years, there was a growing body of literature discussing the role of brand linkage as a marketing tool to cut beyond the clutter (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004; Andersen, 2005; 2006; Anderson and Narus, 1990 Arvidsson, 2006; Bagdoniene & Zilione, 2009; Balachander & Ghose, 2003; Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs, 2006; Barger et al., 2002; Beezy, 2007; Brown, 2010; Gummesson, 2008; Oestreinsher, 2009; Singh et al., 2010; Smith & Zook, 2011).

Even though there is consensus that a brand’s linkage results exert a positive effect on the linked brands, such as consumers’ preferences and brand perceptions there is no empirical evidence about its effects on real world experiences, that has tested this strategy. Most of the previous results were limiting in the sense that they focus on artificial or hypothetical brand linkage tests because of identified complexity (Fioroni & Titterton, 2009; Jevons, Gabbot & De Chernatony, 2002; Ueltschy & Laroche, 2011). Therefore, the study integrates existing constructs and findings and intends to stimulate more systematic future research.

The findings from this study support the recommendation of Jevons, Gabbot and De Chernatony (2002) discussed in section 3.3.4.1. However, the structure fails to assess the strategic underpinnings required for managers to make decisions among the linked brands because it is merely based on theoretical presentation. As evidence for this, there is repeatedly recent appreciation that the stakeholder relationships are becoming more complex than before (Houy, Fettke & Loos, 2010; Wipperfürth, 2005).

These findings also support the conclusions of Allen, Fournier and Miller (2008) that cultures and consumers were underrepresented in mainstream branding research as most research dominantly focused on the brand linkage practitioners. This points to the fact that the linked brand value co-creation is a continuous, social, highly dynamic and interactive process between the firm, the other brands and all stakeholders (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Ind & Bjerke, 2007; Jones 2008; McAlexander, Schouten & Koenig, 2002; Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001; Muniz & Schau, 2005).
In conclusion, this thesis has investigated important findings referring to stakeholders’ reaction or perception of brand linkages, has constructed and substantiated and advanced the theory of stakeholder centric brand linkage – strategic brand ratings and brand perceptions conceptualisation, has provided insights into which brand linkage issues are relevant to stakeholders and how they reward these, and has equipped strategic communication professionals with further knowledge on how to supply a suitable amount of information in order to obtain favourable stakeholder responses.

9.6 Suggestions for future study

Although the current study has attempted to address the question of the impact of brand linkage on brand ratings, brand perception, and brand relationship as in the case of the Engen and Woolworths brand linkages, some issues could not be looked into. It is therefore felt that future research can take them into consideration as follows:

- Firstly, findings indicate that there were no statistical differences in card scores outcomes among the four groups pretest-posttest designs implemented. These differences suggest that if the study was applied to a much bigger sample it could have potentially provided statistically significant results as statistically significant evidence for the brand linkage effectiveness and increased validity to a large population.

- Secondly, although this study has chosen to test these effects under conditions that attempt to control potential threats to internal validity on “real company” the limit to a convenient sample is an opportunity for future research. Future research could test real companies to enhance the external validity and enable generalisation of findings to a larger population of interest.

- Thirdly, the categories used for this study were limited to convenient food stores and fuel service stations, but several types of brands would also afford researchers a greater understanding of other existing brand linkages.
Similarly, this study investigates the commercial brand linkages. Future research may attempt to test the validity of the effect of brand linkage on non-profit brand linkages. Likewise, it would also be interesting to measure the effect of brand linkage on brand relationship and brand communication with different types of brand categories being paired.

- Fourthly, the study briefly tested some aspects such as stakeholders’ perceptions, preferences and opinions with the use of a short questionnaire. Future research may attempt to test the reasons why brand linkage adds or distracts each other through interviews. The use of mixed methods could be of interest to researchers that may report on various reasons for respondents’ choice of brand linkages.

- Fifthly, examining brand linkages with other marketing and communication tools such as social media and in-store brand linkage promotions would be useful in deepening the understanding. Although the use of a brand linkage campaign in the form of promotional posters yielded positive card scores for Engen’s experimental groups perhaps the use of a video campaign in future may add sound and visuals which may lead to different findings. According to Schmitt (2012:10), “consumers can use sound symbolism to infer product attributes and evaluate brands”.

- Sixth, although card scoring method is practiced in advertising research, there is no evidence that similar assessment has been undertaken. Since this study is one of the first experiment in social sciences to test Engen-Woolworths brand linkage campaign reliability is limited. As such, the reliability of this measuring instrument can only be tested should this research design for the purposes of testing the effect of brand linkages is repeated – either by another researcher or over time.

- Finally, this study focused mainly on Black and White ethnic groups. Even if this choice is justified by the sampling technique applied in this study and also
the history of South Africa, these population groups are not homogenous. The majority ethnicity was Black followed by White population hence it is possible that the Coloured and Asian ethnicity might have different reactions to the Engen and Woolworths brand linkages. On the other hand, South Africa as a “rainbow nation” provides a boundless and rich setting for conducting cross-cultural marketing communication research, and testing this literature within this context made a valuable contribution to the study of brand linkages. Because of the diversity of South African ethnics, and owing to financial and time constraints, the scope of the study was limited to 250 respondents from Gauteng particularly the Johannesburg and Benoni areas. Further research should focus on the other areas that have been excluded from this study. Therefore, it can be expected that a difference in ethnicity, gender, age, academic and income levels would affect the effect of brand linkage.
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Appendixes
Appendix A: Experiment questions

Introduction
I am currently completing my doctoral degree at UJ and would appreciate your assistance by affording me your time. I would like to ask you to do an exercise regarding brands in South Africa. Your participation is entirely voluntary. There is no right or wrong answer...it is your opinion that I seek. It will take about 15-20 minutes.

I would like you to think about brands of fuel service stations that are available. In front of you are six envelopes each with a brand name on it. In terms how you perceive, think about or value these brands, I want you to ‘vote’ for them by allocating cards into each envelope. You have undisclosed number of cards; just count out how many votes you would give each brand, place the cards in the envelopes. Or let’s say this was the money you have, how much were you willing to spend on these six brands. Please allocate more on your favourite brands and less on the ones that are not your favourite brands.

Step 1: Pre

Present a respondent with named envelopes of 6 brands of fuel service stations BP, Caltex, Engen, Sasol, Shell and Total and 99 (undisclosed to respondent) cards that they should allocate according to their degree of favourableness or unfavourableness brands.

Step 2

Ask a respondent the awareness question.

Thinking about these brands individually, do you associate any one of them with any other brand?

Yes/No

If yes, which brand comes immediately to mind?

If Engen and Woolworths, in what way is Engen and Woolworths associated? (Only if the respondent is aware or has mentioned Engen and Woolworths)

Show the respondent the campaigns for “Engen and Woolworths” except for control group.

Step 3: Post

Provide another set of undisclosed number of cards and six named envelopes of 6 brands of fuel service stations BP, Caltex, Engen, Sasol, Shell and Total. Only the experiment group will be shown the campaign. (Having seen the campaigns of these brands how do you now feel about these brands?) The control group will not be shown the campaign or have any mention of Engen and Woolworths. (How do you now feel?) Allocate the cards to these brands again...

Thank the respondent for the time afforded...
Appendix B: Experiment results form

Step 1: Pre-awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caltex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2: The awareness question
Thinking about these brands individually, do you associate any one of them with any other brand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caltex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasol</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Yes, which brand comes immediately to mind?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caltex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Woolworths and Engen, in what way is Engen and Woolworths associated?

Step 3: Post-awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caltex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sasol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Questionnaire

In the following questionnaire you will be asked to provide your opinions and feelings about selected brands. Please answer the questions as spontaneously and as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.
Your responses will remain entirely anonymous and confidential and any demographic data will be used only for research purposes.
Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A

This section explores your perceptions, preferences and opinions Engen Service Stations.
Please answer the following questions by marking with an ‘X’.

1A. Have you used an Engen fuel services station in the past 6 months?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1B. If NO why have you not used an Engen fuel service station? (Mark applicable reason(s))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1B1</th>
<th>Because of my past experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1B2</td>
<td>I prefer other brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B3</td>
<td>Too expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B4</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B5</td>
<td>Other, specify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If NO to question 1(A) skip to page 2 question 3

If YES to Question 1, please answer the following question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very Satisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. In thinking about the quality of service you have received from Engen fuel service station recently, how did it score?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PLEASE TURN OVER 323
3. Thinking about an Engen fuel service station, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following words describing Engen? Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Engen Fuel Service Station is…</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Competent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Sophisticated</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3 Caring</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Reliable</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.5 Innovative</td>
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<td>3.6 Successful</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.7 Intelligent</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.8 Helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.9 Organised</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10 Consistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.11 Practical</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.12 Creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.13 Effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.14 Efficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.15 High Tech</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SECTION B

This section explores your perceptions, preferences and opinions of Woolworths Food Stores.

4A. Have you used a Woolworths Food Store in the past 6 months?
- Yes
- No

4B. If NO to question 4(A) why have you not used a Woolworths Food Store? (Mark applicable reasons)
- 4B1 Because of my past experiences
- 4B2 I prefer other brands
- 4B3 Too expensive
- 4B4 Accessibility
- 4B5 Other, specify
If you answered NO to question 4(A) skip to question 6

If YES to Question 4, please answer the following question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Very unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Very satisfactory</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. In thinking about the quality of service you have received from the Woolworths recently, how did it score?

6. Thinking about Woolworth's Food Store, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following words describing Woolworths? Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:
   1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woolworths is…</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Competent</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 Sophisticated</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.3 Caring</td>
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<td>6.4 Reliable</td>
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<td>6.5 Innovative</td>
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<td>6.6 Successful</td>
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<td>6.7 Intelligent</td>
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<td>6.8 Helpful</td>
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<td>6.9 Organised</td>
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<td>6.10 Consistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.11 Practical</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.12 Creative</td>
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<td>6.13 Effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.14 Efficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.15 High Tech</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

PLEASE TURN OVER
**SECTION C**

Engen and Woolworths co-operate by offering Woolworths Food stores at Engen outlets.

This section explores your perceptions, preferences and opinions *Woolworths Food Stores at Engen fuel Service stations*.

7. Have you used a Woolworths Food store at an Engen fuel service station in the past 6 months?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you answered **NO** to question 7 skip to question 9.

If **Yes** to Question 7.

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woolworths Food stores at Engen Service Stations…</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Provide a safe environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.2 Offer a wide range of products</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3 Offer competitive prices</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.4 Provide friendly service</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.5 Provide sufficient parking</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.6 Provide special Offers</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.7 Offer quality products</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8 Are convenient in that I can do my shopping while I fill up</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.9 Are close to where I live</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10 Other, specify</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9. Thinking about an Engen-Woolworths service outlets, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following words describing Engen-Woolworths. Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4= Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engen-Woolworths are…</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Competent</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.2 Sophisticated</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Caring</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4 Reliable</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.5 Innovative</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.6 Successful</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.7 Intelligent</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.8 Helpful</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.9 Organised</td>
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<td>9.10 Consistent</td>
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<td>9.11 Practical</td>
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<td>9.12 Creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.13 Effective</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.14 Efficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.15 High Tech</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. To what extent do you believe that Engen and Woolworths share the following attributes? Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:
1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4= Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engen and Woolworths…</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Are recognized as the best brands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Have real quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Are worth what they cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4 Have an unforgettable service</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.5 Are involved with the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.6 Appeal to the youth</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Where did you learn about the Engen, Woolworths and the Engen brand co-operation?… (Mark all applicable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outdoor (e.g., billboard, transit advertising on buses and taxicabs, bus shelters, taxi ranks etc.)</th>
<th>Engen</th>
<th>Woolworths</th>
<th>Engen &amp; Woolworths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>In-store point of sale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>Social Media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>Cell phone SMS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>Personal Recommendation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>Newspaper/Magazine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>Passed/drove by and saw the store</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>I have heard it for the first time today</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>Others specify</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What value does the Engen-Woolworths co-operation add that Engen or Woolworths on their own do not provide?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

13. In your opinion, is the fact that Engen and Woolworths co-operate an appropriate marketing strategy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. To what extent are you likely to recommend Engen-Woolworths to your friends or relatives?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very likely</th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Quite likely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SECTION D:**

**Demographics**

Please answer the following demographical questions by marking with an ‘X’.

1. **Gender**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **How old are you?**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older than 50 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Academic Level**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 or lower (std. 9 or lower)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 (Matric, std 10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma or Certificate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post- Graduate Degree(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Ethnicity**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian or Asian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Do you own or drive a car?**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Employment status**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed (Self-employed or working for a company)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THANK YOU** for your time and co-operation. I hope this experience was a pleasant one.
Appendix D: Engen and Woolworths campaign
### Appendix E: Scale reliability and validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>KMO value</th>
<th>Bartlett’s test value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section A3 Words describing Engen fuel service station</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td><em>p = .000</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B6 Words describing Woolworths food stores</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td><em>p = .000</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section C8 Statements Engen-Woolworths share</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td><em>p = .000</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section C9 Words describing Engen-Woolworths service outlets</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td><em>p = .000</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Appendix F: Descriptive results of the mean rating of scores on Engen, Woolworths, and Engen-Woolworths for each of the four groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MeanA3_Engen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.531</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MeanB6_Woolworths</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.28</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.24</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.98</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MeanC9_EngenWworths</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, Intervention</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.669</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware, No Intervention</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, Intervention</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(campaign)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware, No Intervention</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Appendix G: Descriptive results on other specified statements describing Woolworths food stores at Engen service stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better and healthier than fast food but it is quick and on-the-go</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and fresh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't necessarily have a wide variety to choose from</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open 24hrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prices are expensive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>97.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops are always clean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>98.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix H: Descriptive results on shared attributes of Engen-Woolworths brand linkage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes shared..</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are recognized as the best brands</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have real quality</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are worth what they cost</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have an unforgettable service</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are involved with the community</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to the youth</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Learning about Engen and Woolworths

Appendix J: Comparison of brand learning results
Appendix K: Appropriateness of marketing strategy results

Appendix L: Likelihood of recommendation to friends or relatives results
Appendix M: Words describing Engen fuel service stations, Woolworths food services and Engen-Woolworths service outlets results

![Words describing Engen](chart1)

![Words describing Woolworths](chart2)