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Unplanned obsolescence: consumer's attitudes and perceptions of lifestyle brands in Durban, South Africa

Abstract

Planned obsolescence has become a strategy adopted by large corporations, for products to be produced with surprisingly short useful life spans. These shorter than expected product life spans ensure that consumers make regular repeat purchases of their favorite items. The monopoly of obsolescence of products is no longer the producers' prerogative and this by itself leads to unplanned obsolescence basically led by the consumers choice. This research study looks into consumer's attitudes and perceptions of their favorite lifestyle brands. This is on the basis that less is known on unplanned obsolescence, which arises from the consumers conduct. This work also investigates why consumers replace products, even though these products are most often still seen as fully functional. This social constructivism study has adopted a quantitative approach through the use of self-administered questionnaires. The 300 participants of the study on which this article is based were selected from the Durban of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, and were chosen through stratified random sampling. The study was further cross generational, in order to examine how consumers attitudes change as they become older. It was found that despite knowing the truth relating to the phenomenon consumers were willing to remain loyal.

Keywords: unplanned, obsolescence, lifestyle, brands, attitudes.

JEL Classification: O31.

Introduction

Product life or usefulness has often been determined, to a small or large extent, by producers. This statement is in harmony with understanding planned obsolescence. It is in this understanding that the expression on planned obsolescence once given by Brooks Stevens gains its legitimacy. His famous expression on planned obsolescence was "instilling the desire in a buyer to own something a little newer, a little better, a little sooner than is necessary" (Stevens, 1960, p. 12). This expression does seem to carry weight on consumers, as well as the producers. Steven's expression, however, does indicate the idea that it is always the producer in control of the change of the desire of the consumer's ability to move to a new product, however small the modification of the features of the new item is. This does not refer that the product life is necessary coming to an end as indicated that 'living in the end times', as portrayed by Zizek (2011), but a motive by the producer to move the desire of the consumer. Products are no longer made to last than in the early 1900's (Swan, 1972). Greater fragility and less durability are anticipated deliberately by the manufacturers of products in line with planned obsolescence (Slade, 2006). Everything that is produced and consumed in today's society has a certain expiration date, or stamp of 'planned obsolescence' (Bosteels, 2011, p. 24). As products or services get left out by either the producer or manufacturer, the applicable term is that the goods have becomes obsolete. Literature as recorded below has noted the role of planned obsolescence with much emphasis than unplanned obsolescence which is

backed by, among things, the consumers' attitudes and perceptions. Consumer's perception and attitudes towards a brand may no doubt be responsible for unplanned obsolescence, as customer loyalty sustains the marketability of the product. The social media with networks seems to take away the monopoly of product obsolescence from the manufacturers to consumers. Upon this premise, businesses may realize that, beyond planned obsolescence, there is a need to look into unplanned obsolescence which may be caused, among others, by customers' perceptions and attitudes. This study shall address this subject in its presentation.

In the highly consumerist culture of today's society, it is no surprise that products have become a mere novelty to consumers. People find themselves buying the latest technological advancement, simply because they desire it – and not because they really need it. This, in turn, increases the demand for products, which leads to brands desperately trying to manufacture items faster to supply the growing demand. This is still, however, in response to the mechanisms which brands have created to keep people buying – it is a constant cycle, therefore, as much as it pains people to admit it, the consumers are part of the problem too, or the "secondary effect", as Bosteels (2011, p. 24) calls it. The common ideology portrayed is the more you consume, the higher quality of life you are able to lead (Albinsson, Wolf & Kopf, 2010, p. 412). And that is exactly why people continue to buy, because they wish to improve the quality of their lives through the emotions they experience while shopping. Although as people begin to shop more and more, they realize that consumerism is a fallacy, and, contrary to popular belief, money cannot, in fact, buy happiness in the true sense of the word.

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1. Types and role of obsolescence

Obsolescence is embedded into the durable goods we purchase through product innovations. Consumers are constantly making purchases to replace old products with new ones, due to different planned obsolescence mechanisms. According to Echevarria (2005, p. 5), there are two major factors that influence these mechanisms, namely physical obsolescence and technological obsolescence. The objective of planned obsolescence is to stimulate replacement buying on the part of consumers. Physical mechanisms are the most direct way to speed up the replacement demand, as it shortens the usable life of a product. A decision based on technological mechanisms is voluntary on the part of the consumer, and the consumer decides to upgrade simply, because they become dissatisfied with some aspect of the product (Guiltinan, 2008, p. 20). This is usually because the consumer desires a newer model of that particular product, which is usually advertised by the brand on popular media platforms.

Obsolescence has also been categorized into five areas (planned obsolescence [main initiative]; functional obsolescence, style obsolescence, technical obsolescence and postponement obsolescence) and is a term that originated in the 1900's. Basic, but helpful kitchen improvements led to the planned obsolescence, where, for example, modern appliances replaced older firestone appliances and iron pots were replaced by steel ones. The role of obsolescence in each case was unmistakably clear, as it helped to improve the product in use (Slade, 2006). When the crank handles were replaced in cars with electronic starters, obsolescence's role and appreciation became clear and more welcome, once again. The welcome developments to ease and improve the customers' usage experience have undoubtedly been associated with obsolescence of the previous products. The early obsolescence types have, nevertheless, been considered as technological in nature. During periods of disposable incomes, as in the case with the 1920's, consumers did not simply buy for the sake of need, but for the sake of 'love' of items and this deliberation of obsolescence takes a different role and pattern in consumer spheres. Planned obsolescence is often guided by the producer, however, when referring to the scenario as one above, then, it becomes unplanned obsolescence.

In deliberating on the role of obsolescence in relation to the various types of obsolescence categories, it is notable to refer to the role of functional obsolescence. Functional obsolescence is categorized as either forced or naturalis attributable to either the product manufacturer or consumer attitude. The natural obsolescence occurs, as the product naturally wears out and needs part replacement or an entire replacement by the consumer. The natural obsolescence can, however, be aided by the initiative

of the producer if they decide to stop producing the spare parts making the product obsolete in the process. The forced obsolescence, however, occurs directly when the producer designates a specific lifespan for the product, as in the case of the light bulbs in 1924 (Dannoritzer, 2010). The latter type of obsolescence has not ceased even in the modern times. Apple, for example, is well known for functional obsolescence, as they produce phone batteries that have a limited lifespan. The replacement cost for the battery leads to the customer requiring a new phone, hence, rendering the present phone obsolete in the process.

Technology has had its impact as well on products and services leading to technological obsolescence. Technologically revolutionary products have been considered as a real benefit in the market place, however, when the product is highly revolutionary, it may render its acceptability difficult by consumers since it won't be appreciated during the time of its production. This means that the product has been produced a head of its time. An example of this scenario is when the first PC tablet was designed in 2001 by Microsoft. The market hold became unsustainable for this tablet PC since it was produced 10 years before its time (Littman, 2012). The very rejection of the PC at the time made the product obsolete, this time, however, it was not the planned obsolescence, it was unplanned.

The style obsolescence, on the one hand, is dictated by the trends in consumption styles. As trends change, older products become less attractive and end up being considered obsolete. The power of style is well captured by Neil Maycroft who stated that "consumption decisions are seen to be motivated by aesthetic considerations or for their implications in relation to identity construction" (Maycroft, 2009, p. 5). Some products are made with the style consideration of the user. This may be exemplified by Android which in presenting its innovativity permits the user to be in control of the functionality of the instrument, however, on the one hand, Apple doesn't give customers freedom in tampering with the product (Kovach, 2013). In either case, obsolescence is bound to occur as planned or unplanned. In the instance of customers being given the freedom of control of the functionality, there can be a tendency of customers getting bored with the product features and, hence, the product becomes obsolete through none usage. On the other hand, the limitation of the product being fully in control of the producer causes a planned obsolescence where the producer can simply introduce the next product rendering the present one obsolete. The mobile phone products have enabled obsolescence of their product to become more evident in their operations. Through a contractual agreements, phone companies, have offered to upgrade existing phones of their customers every 12 to 24 months. This essentially

encourages planned obsolescence to continue. Just in the UK alone, 39 984 000 million contract phones are to be replaced once the contract runs out with a later model. The obsolescence period for the phone, therefore, becomes much shorter than a fridge or a table. Moreover, it is also notable that a number of individuals have more than one phone and this opens room for choice of which phone seems to be 'unnecessary'. This renders such phones obsolete. In the UK, most children aged 10, will not own a phone, as well as 80 year olds and, yet, the figure of 81.6 million phone users seems almost to indicate that everyone is using a phone in a country such as UK. The understanding that individuals owning several phones at one time gives a rise in the number of phones being produced, as well as being discarded at the same time. It is also predicted that in 5 years the number of mobile phones will be higher than the global population (Garside, 2012). It is, therefore, evident that obsolescence is sustainably ongoing. What explanation can be afforded for the policy move of a large UK multinational like Vodafone to give a top of the range phone every year to the customer? Incidentally, this organization happens to be the world largest telecommunications company. The older phone, according to the company's policy, is returned to the company (Frapwell, 2012). This, in essence, renders phones that may still be useful obsolete. One of the aims of obsolescence was to get the country out of the Great Depression, and increase economic gain while doing so. Manufacturing companies looked at the planet as a paradise, with an abundant amount of resources that could be used to their hearts' content (The Pyramid of Waste, 2010). This lends itself to an economic argument of increasing productivity in an economy. We live in a society, which is dominated by the growth of the economy necessitating consumer stimulation. Products are no longer produced to supply our *needs*, but rather to supply our *wants*. In order for this growing economy to flourish, consumers need to continue to make purchases. This is why it is not possible to imagine a practical economy without Planned Obsolescence (The Pyramid of Waste, 2010).

If obsolescence had not existed, we would not have the products that we claim not to be able to live without today. Without obsolescence, there would be no need for designers, architects, and engineers. There have been entire industries created around manufacturing and delivering products to consumers to supply the huge demand. Today, engineers are being taught to design with one single goal in mind – frequent repeat purchases (The Pyramid of Waste, 2010). It can be argued the one would think that brands are ethical enough to deliver the quality that they promise in their products, however, this may sadly not be the case. One way to look at the phenomenon is to view planned obsolescence as a problem of the rich. People in

developed countries have adopted a throwaway mentality, based on the idea that they think they can continue to live in this mode of ignorance forever. This limited-use throwaway mentality is expensive, time-consuming, and wasteful (Delen, Dalal & Benjamin, 2005, p. 109). People purchase items at their own discretion; nobody physically forces a consumer to go into a store to buy the latest television – it is at their own free will, and, ultimately, their own choice. People buy into planned obsolescence, because they are promised freedom and happiness through unlimited consumption (The Pyramid of Waste, 2010). As discussed throughout this paper, consumers initially viewed products as 'investments'. In the past, the goods people purchased were reasonably priced, good quality and long lasting. People worked hard to earn a living, and, thus, believed that the goods they could afford to buy should last them a lifetime. Since planned obsolescence was introduced, those 'old school' attitudes have fallen away. The "deliberate curtailment of a products life span" has led to a phenomenon called perceived obsolescence (Cooper, 2004, p. 57). Today, consumers do not get rid of products, because they wear out; they replace products, because they become tired of them (Ibid).

The postponement obsolescence is another type of obsolescence of note. This occurs when a company chooses to add technological features to their best flagship and not all their products. In this case, the consumers choose whether to buy the top of the range products or the low end with no new additions, thereby postponing the obsolescence of the product by continuous usage. Car manufacturers have been known to use this type of technology. The Mercedes Benz Company has been known to install a built in sensor that helps to detect a driver's tiredness or sleepiness on the S Mercedes model cars, as well as their newest technology on the S model cars, as opposed to their other models. After the device studies the behavior of the driver in the next 20-30 minutes, the system adapts to the individual habits of the driver and gives a warning audibly to the driver, as well as a visual coffee cup message to the driver to take up a break (Vanderwerp, 2008).

Whereas the above shows the power of planned obsolescence, it is of note to recognize the power of unplanned obsolescence that needs to capture the attention of business communities. When a similar product is being produced by another company with newer features within the same period of time, the possibility of unplanned obsolescence of the product for the former company becomes inevitable. The loss to the company is something to be reckoned at some stage altogether. The voice of product users through social media can lead to organizations or businesses

discovering unplanned obsolescence of their products. Social networks permit the sharing of images, links, websites and hashtags on products. This may result in certain products getting 'left out', obsolete in the process.

2. Research methodology

Since a research methodology explains the logic behind the research methods and techniques used by the researcher (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005, p. 2), an account will be given here of the several interrelated levels of decisions that went into the process of designing the methodology for the study on which the article is based. The researcher will use a model conceptualized by Crotty to address the three most prominent questions central to the design of research.

3. Research design

The study in which the article is based made use of Constructivism, which is situated around the understanding of multiple participant meanings. It looked at social and historical construction, as well as theory generation (Cresswell, 2003, p. 6). The ideas of socially constructed knowledge claims can be dated back to works from theorists such as Berger and Luckmann in 1967. With this type of knowledge claim, participants are made to seek understanding of the world that they live and work in. The participants develop subjective meanings of their experiences, based on certain objects or products that they have been exposed to. These multiple meanings are quite diverse, which means that the researcher is left with the task of trying to understand and interpret the participants' complex views. Often, these subjective meanings have a social and historical context that has been developed through cultural norms (Cresswell, 2003, p. 8).

Even though the aim of all three of the research methods is to understand the participants' subjective point of view, the researcher believed that a quantitative method would be best for the researchers' study. Stainback and Stainback (as cited in Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005, p. 9) state that quantitative studies focus on the reliability of data, while qualitative studies focus on the validity of the data. Since the reliability of the data is more important for a study of this nature, a quantitative study was chosen (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005, p. 9).

The use of questionnaires was the best way to obtain the needed data. A questionnaire involves collecting information from people who fall into the appropriate sample of the study. However, the participants differing levels of knowledge, attitudes, personalities, beliefs and preferences were kept in mind (Leung, 2001, p. 187).

4. Research process

The population of the study on which this article is based comprised of participants from Durban, South Africa. The questionnaire was personally administered at different shopping malls, companies, universities and also popular gathering locations across Durban targeting a sample of three hundred people.

Probability sampling research design was used. It was the most appropriate sampling technique, as any element or member of the population had an opportunity of being included in the sample. The main advantage of probability sampling is that it is often an easier method to adopt for reasons of convenience and economical factors (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005, pp. 56-57). Stratified random sampling is the method that will be used by the researcher, as it is used when the population is made up of many non-overlapping subpopulations that differ from one another in terms of a specific variable, which are called strata. The division into different groups may be based on a single variable, such as age.

The characteristic or variable used was to differentiate the sample is the different generations people fall into. The sample was split into three different age groups: 20-29 years, 30-39 years and 40-60 years. It is no surprise that older individuals have different purchase behavior to younger individuals, but people are not certain to what extent that behavior may change. It was important to understand how people's behavior and perceptions either differ or remain the same, as they become older. The survey was, therefore, considered a cross generational study.

5. Data analysis and research results

A total of three hundred (300) questionnaires were administered, however, only 172 questionnaires were usable for the study. These 172 questionnaires met the required criteria, allowing the researcher to declare them 'credible' and 'reliable' sources of information.

5.1. Cross generational results of the respondents.

Age affects people's purchase decisions, because, as people grow older, their priorities naturally change. Younger people have the freedom to make purchases solely for themselves, whereas older people have to budget for items for other members of their families. Young people are seen to make more impulsive purchase decisions, as their mood fluctuates and changes, according to the experiences they have had during the day (Gardner & Rook, 1988, p. 130). The youth are far bolder with their purchase decisions, and are willing to take risks without always having done their homework on price comparisons. It may be argued that older people are much wiser in a sense, and shop around before they make a final decision on which brand to choose and where to purchase the product from in order to get the best deal.

Of the people who were surveyed, the majority, 62.9%, was between 20-29 years old. This was followed by 18.8% of the sample being in the age category of 30-39 years old, and 18.3% being in the age category of 40-60 years old. The reason the majority of the sample was in the youngest age category is that it was these people who were the most willing to answer the research questionnaire. It may be argued that younger respondents are usually more open to expressing their opinion when it comes to contributing their ideas for the purpose of research, as they too are going through the same plight with their education.

5.2. Awareness of marketing strategies. We sometimes assume that consumers are the 'victims' of brands marketing strategies, when, in fact, they are fully aware of such practices and strategies. It was

found that many people are often aware of the fact that they are being manipulated into buying products that break far sooner than they are expected to – yet, they still buy these products anyway. Many consumers are aware of planned obsolescence, even though they may not know or understand the term as such. Consumers know that products are being produced to be less durable because of the highly competitive industries with which they exist (Swan, 1972, p. 575). Consumers also understand that it is the natural process for brands to introduce new products into the market at a higher price than older models of the same product (Nahm, 2004, p. 303). This has shown to not be a deterrent, because consumers still remain loyal despite knowing about these irregularities. Table 1 below illustrates consumer's awareness of brands adopting marketing strategies to ensure loyalty.

Table 1. Awareness of brands adopting marketing strategies to ensure loyalty

You are aware of the fact that marketing strategies are adopted by brands to ensure consumer loyalty					
		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Strongly disagree	9	5.2	5.4	5.4
	Disagree	8	4.7	4.8	10.1
	Neutral	19	11.0	11.3	21.4
	Agree	70	40.7	41.6	63.1
	Strongly agree	62	36.0	36.9	100.0
	Total	168	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.3		
Total		172	100.0		

78.5% (41.6% agree and 36.9% strongly agree) of the sample agreed that they were aware of the fact that marketing strategies were, in fact, adopted by brands to ensure consumer loyalty. 11.3% of the sample was neutral when it came to answering this question. Only 10.2% (4.8% disagree and 5.4% strongly disagree) of the respondents disagreed, showing that most people are aware that these strategies are adopted so that consumers will continue to buy the brand's products and services. It was found that consumers show loyalty to the brands they love, and support them by making repeat purchases, irrespective of the fact that they may not always be getting a good quality product.

5.3. Reasons for consumers to upgrade and replace products. Consumers replace working

units before they wear out for a variety of different reasons including changing styles, fashion preferences, new product features, technological advances, decreased price, and sales promotions. Questionnaire results further show that these reasons could also be due to unreliable performance of the existing product, changed family circumstances, and improved financial circumstances (Bayus, 1991, p. 43). The reason one consumer decides to make a replacement could vastly differ from the reason another consumer decides to make a replacement. People have different needs and wants according to the life stage that they are currently in, which guides and influences their purchases. Table 2 below illustrates the reasons given by consumers for upgrading their products.

Table 1. Reasons to upgrade products

	Value-added features	Better design/style	More user-friendly	"Cool"/"Trendy" factor	Product breaks/stops working	Not applicable – missing
Cell phones	18%	17%	11%	16%	35%	3-0%
Clothing	7%	33%	4%	33%	16%	5-2%
Computers and laptops	21%	14%	11%	8%	37%	7-2%
Domestic appliances	13%	14%	7%	2%	54%	8-2%
Furniture	7%	23%	4%	9%	43%	13-1%

Table 1 (cont.). Reasons to upgrade products

	Value-added features	Better design/style	More user-friendly	"Cool"/"Trendy" factor	Product breaks/stops working	Not applicable – missing
General household replacements	10%	16%	8%	7%	46%	11-%
High-tech gadgets	16%	10%	11%	11%	41%	9-2%
Motor vehicles	14%	21%	6%	8%	33%	16-2%
Other electronics	14%	11%	12%	7%	43%	10-3%
Software	22%	10%	22%	9%	25%	11-1%

This question allowed the respondents to choose more than one option from the choices available to them. The reason for this is that people do not upgrade their products for just one individual reason; there could be a number of factors that influence their final decision. Consumers replace their products because of value added features of the new products that are introduced into the market; however, this factor was not the main reason for consumers to upgrade. The main reason consumers upgraded their products is that the items either break or stop working. If this were to happen, consumers would have no other choice, but to replace the product if they see this item as essential. The majority of the respondents upgrade their clothing because of better design or styles with 33% of the sample choosing this option. People also upgrade clothing because of the 'cool/trendy' factor associated with the new clothing in fashion retailers, with 33% also choosing this option. It may be argued that people are seen to have a need and desire to keep up with the latest trends when it comes to shopping for clothes. Consumers do not largely replace any of their products, because the new products are user-friendlier. Consumers rather feel that the other factors are more important when deciding on whether or not to upgrade a specific product. The majority of the respondents upgrade their cell phones, because the product breaks or stops working with 35% of the sample choosing this option. People also upgrade their computers and laptops (37%), domestic appliances (54%), furniture (43%), general household replacements (46%), high tech gadgets (41%), motor vehicles (33%), other electronics (43%), and software (25%), respectively. This is understandable, as products breaking requires an immediate replacement if consumers want to continue using those types of products.

5.4. Reasons for consumers remaining loyal to brands. Expectations are typically defined as "beliefs or predictions about a brand having desired attributes" (Oliver, as cited in Cadotte,

Woodruff & Jenkins, 1987, p. 305). When consumers purchase a product, they would already have a preconceived idea and expectation about the user experience of that product. After using the product, however, consumers show feelings of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, depending on whether they were happy with the product or not. People will only remain loyal to a brand if the brand has lived up to the consumers' initial expectation of the brand.

Only 15% of the sample would make a repurchase of a branded product if the brand had not lived up to initial expectations. The other 85% of the sample believe that a bad experience with the brand is enough to deter them from buying it again. They have the freedom and resources to switch to another brand with the possibility of the other brand satisfying their needs more effectively. There are more than enough brands for a consumer to consider if a particular brand were to disappoint a consumer in some way. Consumers today do not feel as if they do not have other options to resort to. This shows that brand expectations are an extremely strong driver of brand loyalty.

Contrary to what most people think, brand loyalty is quite different from repeat purchase behavior – brand loyalty goes much further than that. Behavioral or purchase loyalty exists when consumers make repeat purchases, while attitudinal brand loyalty includes a degree of commitment in terms of some unique value associated with the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p. 82). A consumer being completely loyal to a brand is something quite what marketers wish. Some consumers would even go so far as to not buy the product at all if their preferred brand is not in stock or temporarily unavailable. There are a number of factors that could affect people's loyalty, some being more important than others. Figure 1 below illustrates a summary of the distribution of the factors that influence consumers' brand loyalty.

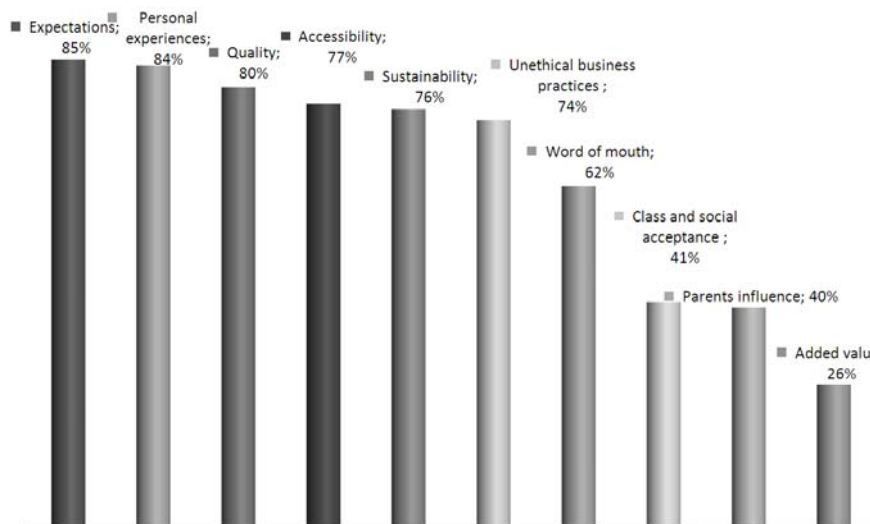


Fig. 1. Factors influencing brand loyalty

According to the data collected and analyzed, consumers' expectations of a brand are the most important factor that affects their brand loyalty with the highest score of 85%. If brands products have not lived up to consumers' initial expectation, they would definitely not purchase the product again. This was closely followed by consumers' personal experiences with a brand affecting their brand loyalty with 84%. Consumers would not continue to buy branded products if they previously had a negative personal experience with the brand. Quality is the next most important factor that affects consumers' brand loyalty with a score of 80%. Consumers make a decision on what brand to purchase based on their perception of the brands' quality offering. Accessibility is the fourth most important factor for consumer brand loyalty with 77%. Consumers need their favorite brands to be easily accessible in order for them to be loyal to these brands. Sustainability is the fifth most important factor that influences brand loyalty with 76%. A brand's commitment to conducting their business sustainably is a reason that consumers would remain loyal to the brand. Knowledge of brands' unethical business practices ranks in sixth place with 74%. Consumers would not purchase brands' products if they were aware of their unethical business practices. The seventh most important factor influencing brand loyalty is word of mouth with 62%. Negative word of

mouth from other fellow consumers is enough to change consumers' loyalty to a brand, and stop them from buying a product from the brand. Class and social acceptance is the eight most important factors when it comes to brand loyalty with 41%. Consumers do not feel that class and social acceptance is a deciding factor for them to purchase a particular brand. The ninth most important factor is parents' influence on brand loyalty with 40%. The majority of consumers do not purchase the same brands as their parents did, but rather are loyal to brands that they prefer. The least most important influence on brand loyalty is the value aspect of a product with 26%. Consumers do not believe that the brands they purchase adds value to their lives. As surprising as this may seem, consumers purchase brands based on their expectations, personal experiences and quality instead. Consumers purchase products, because they are convenient for them, and not because brands add value to their lives.

5.5. Cross comparison of the data. The results were further analyzed to discover the relationship between consumers' race and where their main source of knowledge about brands comes from. Through the generations people from different races have been brought up with different mind-sets, and, thus, have differing levels of knowledge about brands. Figure 2 below illustrates the relationship between race and consumers' main source of knowledge about brands.

Table 2. Descriptive

Your main source of knowledge about a particular brand usually comes from the brand itself through its advertising campaigns, rather than from your peers or other external factors								
	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error	95% confidence Interval for mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
African	23	3.39	1.406	.293	2.78	4.00	1	5
Indian	108	3.82	1.040	.100	3.63	4.02	1	5
White	27	3.59	1.118	.215	3.15	4.03	1	5
Colored	14	2.79	1.424	.381	1.96	3.61	1	5
Total	172	3.65	1.168	.089	3.47	3.82	1	5

Table 3. ANOVA

Your main source of knowledge about a particular brand usually comes from the brand itself through its advertising campaigns, rather than from your peers or other external factors					
	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	15.355	3	5.118	3.944	.009
Within groups	218.011	168	1.298		
Total	233.366	171			

Table 4. Multiple comparisons

Dependent variable: Your main source of knowledge about a particular brand usually comes from the brand itself through its advertising campaigns, rather than from your peers or other external factors						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Race	(J) Race	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
					Lower bound	Upper bound
African	Indian	-.433	.262	.351	-1.11	.25
	White	-.201	.323	.925	-1.04	.64
	Colored	.606	.386	.400	-.40	1.61
Indian	African	.433	.262	.351	-.25	1.11
	White	.231	.245	.781	-.40	.87
	Colored	1.038*	.324	.009	.20	1.88
White	African	.201	.323	.925	-.64	1.04
	Indian	-.231	.245	.781	-.87	.40
	Colored	.807	.375	.142	-.17	1.78
Colored	African	-.606	.386	.400	-1.61	.40
	Indian	-1.038*	.324	.009	-1.88	-.20
	White	-.807	.375	.142	-1.78	.17

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

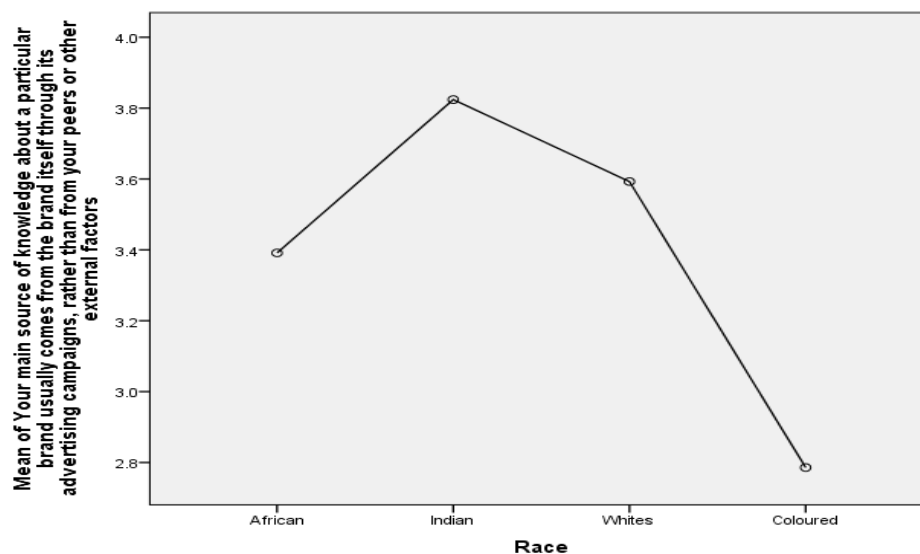


Fig. 2. Relationship between race and main source of knowledge about brands

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of race on the respondents' opinion about the statement "Your main source of knowledge about a particular brand usually comes from the brand itself through its advertising campaigns, rather than from your peers or other external factors". The respondents in the study were divided into 4 separate race categories, namely: African, Indian, White, and Colored. It was also noted that there was a statistically significant difference of means among the four groups, because $F(3, 168) = 3.944$, $p = .009$.

The multiple comparisons Table indicates a significant difference between Indian people ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.040$) and Colored people ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.424$). This was the only significant difference that could be noted for this statement. The graph indicates that Colored people are unsure about where their main source of knowledge about brands comes from, while the respondents from all other races believe that their main source of knowledge comes from the brands itself, rather than their peers or other external factors.

6. Discussion

6.1. How aware are consumers of the marketing strategies used by brands to ensure customer loyalty? All in all, the research concluded that people are largely aware of marketing strategies adopted by brands. Consumers are aware of the fact that brands adopt these marketing strategies in the hope of gaining their loyalty. They do, however, feel that these strategies are not ethical, and should not be permitted. The research also revealed that even though consumers are more informed than previous generations were, they are still likely to buy branded products and services that make use of planned obsolescence. However, when consumers become aware of the fact that a brand is using planned obsolescence techniques, they make an effort to switch over to another brand that may be conducting their business in a more ethical manner.

6.2. What are the reasons for consumers to repeatedly upgrade and replace branded products that are still seen as fully functional? Consumers upgrade and replace branded products that are still in working order for a myriad of different reasons. The most common reason for such an upgrade is because the brand releases an upgrade of that specific product, creating a desire for that product in the mind of the consumer. Even though consumers believe that they are not pressurized to replace their products, they are still swayed to make these purchases. Presumably, the 'old' products are either given to friends or family, to a charity of their choice, or kept indefinitely – depending on the product type.

6.3. Why do consumers choose to remain loyal to certain brands despite being aware of marketing and manufacturing irregularities? There are many factors that influence a consumer's loyalty to a specific brand. The top three most important factors are pre-made expectations, personal experiences, and quality. Though consumers claim to stop purchasing a brand's products once they are made aware of marketing and manufacturing irregularities within the brand. However, this is not completely true. For example, consumers are aware of Apple's involvement in planned obsolescence, yet consumers are still queuing outside the iStore for the release of the new iPhone 6. The truth is that consumers remain loyal to these brand's, because they enjoy using the brands products and services. If they were to stop purchasing the brand's, products, they would feel as if they were doing themselves a disservice, and, so, they continue to purchase these products in the hopes that the brands begin to provide the quality they continuously promise their consumers.

7. Recommendations

Based on the literature and data of Durban, South Africa that have been analyzed and presented, the following recommendations were made to the consumers.

Firstly, consumers should invest in quality items. This means buying products that they know will last them a long time, and sticking to what they know works best. Investing in quality means paying more for products, in some cases, but the means will justify the ends. Making sacrifices now will pay off later, as the products will give consumers many more years of use.

Secondly, consumers should try to be classic, and not current when making purchases. With new trends being released every few months, these trends are bound to have an expiry date. Being classic means spending money on items that will not go out of fashion within the year. This includes buying products in a neutral color (such as black and white), instead of extravagant colors that will require a replacement.

Thirdly, consumers should try their best to only purchase items that they need when they go shopping. Often people are seduced by sales and in-store promotions, which make consumers buy products that are not essential to their lives. These products often break, leaving the consumers unhappy that they made these purchases in the first place.

Lastly, when it is possible, consumers should invest in multi-purpose items. This will mean that the products can be used for more than one purpose in their household. This is most commonly used in the fashion industry, where clothing can be adapted to suit different occasions.

Conclusion

As indicated in the abstract, planned obsolescence is a strategy adopted by large corporations. This research study was undertaken as a result of acknowledging that products were not manufactured the way they were decades ago. Therefore, we can conclude that products today are now being manufactured with planned obsolescence in mind, causing consumers to make frequent upgrades, as their products either breaks or stop working. The aim of this article was twofold: (1) to understand consumers' attitudes towards and perceptions of the lifestyle brands that they choose to buy; and (2) based on the phenomenon, why do consumers remain loyal to such brands. This article included an introduction and a literature review, the research methodology, and recommendations. The findings of this study enabled consumers to make better purchase decisions in future. It is recommended that

brands set a higher standard for themselves when manufacturing and advertising goods to consumers bearing in mind the strategy of planned obsolescence may not always be the best way to ensure loyalty amongst consumers.

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