“Passenger vehicle brand meaning among Generations X and Y in South Africa”

AUTHORS	Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo Roger B Mason https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7927-1767 https://publons.com/researcher/2752201/roger-b-mason/

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Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo (South Africa), **Roger B Mason** (South Africa)

PASSENGER VEHICLE BRAND MEANING AMONG GENERATIONS X AND Y IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract

This study investigated the meaning of passenger motor vehicle brands among Generations X and Y in South Africa, a developing country. The study was conducted in the form of a quantitative survey at four universities in KwaZulu-Natal to access a spread of Generations X and Y respondents. It aimed to generate insights into consumer perceptions and choices regarding these two generations' preferred motor vehicle brands who account for the bulk of car buyers. The study investigated specific brand dimensions, namely, factors related to quality, value, personal and group identity, status, and family traditions. The main finding was that the personal or individualistic factors, namely quality, value, and personal identity, were more important than the group-oriented factors, namely status, group identity, and family tradition. The implication is that marketers should focus on the buyer's individualistic perceptions, wants, and needs, rather than those that are influenced by others through group processes or perceptions. This research has added to current knowledge on consumer behavior regarding motor vehicle brands by investigating the factors that influence the Generations X and Y buyer decision-making process in a developing country.

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Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo, BTech: Marketing, Lecturer, Mangosuthu University of Technology and Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

Roger B Mason, Ph.D., Retired Research Professor, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

Competition for passenger motor vehicle sales is extreme (Fagnant & Kockelman, 2015), and customers must make many comparisons and evaluations before deciding on a vehicle to buy. Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976) spends about 15% more than Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1994) on buying passenger vehicles (Forrester, 2012; Kotler, Armstrong, & Tait, 2014), making them the second-largest consumer group (Lissitsa & Kol, 2015). These generation groups account for 41.8% of the South African population, constituting the prime working age (IndexMundi, 2019). Since Generation Y represents the future customers for motor vehicles (Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, & Laukkanen, 2015), motor manufacturers need to understand these potential customers' generational differences and the vehicles that satisfy their respective needs.

Globalization has led to this increasingly competitive motor vehicle marketing environment with increasing cost pressures that require outsourcing for low-cost manufacturing, while at the same time requiring an increasing emphasis on quality and productivity (Engineering News, 2011). According to Martin-Pena, Diaz-Garrido, and Sanchez-Lopez (2014), the damage done to the environment by industrial activity is a major concern for consumers, especially considering the large quantities of resources consumed and the environmental risks. This increasing green attitude influences firms' environments, forcing businesses, including the motor industry, to change their production and business practices.

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Carrington et al. (2014) state that, unlike Generation Y, Generation X consumers are aware of green technology and eco-friendly motor vehicles. They suggest that for motor companies to market to Generation Y effectively, they need to invest in consumer education because few Generation Y consumers truly understand the benefits of eco-friendly motor vehicles. In contrast, Allender and Richards (2012) maintain that Generation Y is worried about the environment, and so it makes sense for manufacturers to stress the environmental benefits of their vehicles, even though economic benefits mainly influence generation Y. From a social perspective, Generation Y cares about how others view them, so emphasizing a brand's green credentials is also important. These differing attitudes of the two generations, and the uncertainty regarding their perceptions about motor vehicles, indicate the importance of understanding their knowledge and beliefs about motor brands.

Therefore, the aim of this study was to identify the meaning of motor car brands and whether they differ between Generation X and Generation Y. To achieve this aim, two research objectives were set:

- To identify the perceived meaning of motor car brands by Generation X and Generation Y.
- To identify if the perceived meanings of the motor car brand constructs differ between Generation X and Generation Y.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Branding factors

Brand commitment explains how customers perceive brands and includes factors such as brand purchase, usage, attitudes, satisfaction, and image (Keller, 2014). Different brand communications can address different target customers according to their level of brand commitment (Kim et al., 2014). Brand positioning refers to creating, in the minds of the target market; a positive image of the company's offering to maximize the benefit to the company (Urder & Koch, 2014). Brand positioning guides marketing strategy by specifying the brand's purpose and the benefits unique to the brand (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009). According to Kemp, Childers, and Williams (2012), branding strategy acts as the foundation of marketing communications. It determines how the branding objectives will be achieved and directs the actions of staff responsible for branding and marketing communications. Such a branding strategy must also meet the needs of the consumer. They further state that building a strong brand perception is critical for success.

1.2. Characteristics of Generations X and Y

'Generation' refers to a group of people who were born during a relatively close period. Thus, whose thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors are affected by various factors they all experienced due to being of a similar age and having similar experiences (Guillot-Soulez & Soulez, 2014). Kotler et al. (2014) describe Generation X as those born between 1965 and 1976. Generation Y are born between 1977 and 1994, also called Millennials, and known for their lack of brand loyalty. With this generation soon surpassing the number of baby boomers and Generation X in the workforce, marketers cannot afford to ignore this lucrative market.

According to Gurau (2012), Generation X is result-oriented and does not worry about achieving it. Communication preferences also differ between generations. Generation X uses the most efficient communication, whereas the younger Millennials or Generation Y prefer instant messaging, text messages, and e-mails. They are the first generation who grew up with these technologies and are often early adopters. Unlike the older generations, they are not afraid of new technologies, and are usually the first to buy and use new technology, and then use word of mouth, often electronically, to tell their contemporaries about it. Generation Y grew up in a materialistic society and, through technology, have extensive social networks. They use status-seeking consumption to show off their wealth and purchasing power to their social networks (Eastman & Liu, 2012). This obviously could have a significant effect on motor vehicle brand choice. These differences between Generation X and Generation Y result in different

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perceptions of brands and different attitudes towards the companies that market them. As mentioned above, they also have different ideas about how information about brands should be communicated. Relevant research is limited, but Le Breton-Miller and Miller (2016) found differences between Generations X and Y concerning their brand preferences and buyer behavior.

1.3. Brand meaning

According to Lee, James, and Kim (2014), products have personality images that communicate their messages. These product images, stored as personal and social meanings in memory, enable a product or service to be differentiated from its competition. Consumers use the meanings associated with brands to understand intangible aspects of the product (e.g., quality) and to communicate aspects of their identity.

Strizhakova et al. (2008) found that brand meanings were mostly related to six key factors: quality, social status, self-identity, group identity, values, and family traditions. This research developed a reliable and valid scale of branded product meanings, which has been used in the current study. Wijaya (2013) also studied these identified branded product meanings, confirming the six dominant meanings of quality, social status signals, individual personality, group identity, and associations with personal values linked to family and traditions.

1.4. Moderating role of generations

Consumers' values, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by the experiences of their generation (Gardiner et al., 2013), which are similar within a generation, but different between generations. Attitudes and purchase patterns are different between Generation X who are more economic value-oriented, and Generation Y who are more affective value-oriented (Parment, 2013). Furthermore, attitudes towards public transport are changing due to socioeconomic and geographic trends, especially in developed countries (Shearmur, 2016). The result is the decrease of travel and personal car use and increasing public transport use, especially Millennials or Generation X (Rive, Thomas, Jones, Frith, & Chang, 2015; Grimsrud & El-Geneidy, 2013). However, the situation in developing countries is different. For example, in South Africa, only 2 out of 10 black households (which account for about 80% of the population) have a working motor vehicle (StatsSA, 2019; Wheels24, 2017), but the intention to own a car amongst 'students' is "extremely high", due mainly to the poor quality of public transport in South Africa and the increased travel options that car ownership provides (Luke, 2018). This highlights the potential of Generation Y in South Africa as the car buying market of the future. Generation Y's consumption preferences in South Africa are characterized by brand consciousness and willingness to pay a premium for desired brands, not only for the brand name but also for the high quality promised by such desired brands.

Since so little research in this field has been done in South Africa, a gap in knowledge exists about generational perceptions of brands' meanings relative to the constructs of quality, values, etc. Therefore, this research into Generations X and Y's perceptions about the meaning of motor car brands is appropriate.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional method was used to determine the overall perceptions of what passenger motor vehicle brands mean to Generations X and Y.

2.1. Respondents

The target population of this study is anyone classified as Generation X or Generation Y. To facilitate data collection, the authors delimited the population to staff and students at all four public universities in KwaZulu-Natal province (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Mangosuthu University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, and University of Zululand). University staff and students were recruited mostly via in-class interviews for students (predominantly Generation Y) and e-mailed questionnaires for staff (predominantly Generation X). Where necessary to fill the final quotas, on-campus intercepts were used. The selection criteria of Generation X and Generation Y and the different demographic characteristics were set, as shown in Table 1.

2.2. Sampling

A two-stage non-probability sampling method was adopted. First quota sampling was used with quotas set, as shown in Table 1, to ensure the sample provided an adequate spread across the universities and the relevant demographic characteristics. Although not attempting to be proportionally representative or generalizable, the authors did wish to make sure that the sample reflected opinions across the demographic categories. Therefore, they needed at least 100 respondents for each major breakdown and 50 respondents for each minor breakdown, as suggested by Diamantopolous and Schlegelmilch (1997). A total sample of 400, 100 from each university campus, and split equally between Generation X and Generation Y, was drawn, as shown in Table 1. With a 95% level of significance, an allowed error of 0,1 (on a 7-point Likert type scale), and assuming a variance of 1, the t-distribution requires a sample size of 384 (excluding a correction factor) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Thus, a total sample of 400 was sought to allow for any unusable or rejected responses. Step 2 of the sampling method used convenience sampling to fulfill the various quotas.

Table 1. Sample quota criteria

Categories		Quota	Total
University campus	Mangosuthu University of Technology	100	400
	Durban University of Technology	100	
	University of KwaZulu-Natal	100	
	University of South Africa	100	
Generation	X	200	400
	Y	200	
Gender	Male	200	400
	Female	200	
Ethnicity	African	300	400
	Indian	50	
	White	50	

2.3. Data collection

2.3.1. *Data collection instrument*

A structured questionnaire was developed based on the literature review, adapted from a questionnaire on the meaning of branded products, developed, and validated by Strizhakova et al. (2008). Seven-point Likert scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree), as recommended by Bearden, Netemeyer, and Haws (2011), were used.

A pilot study was conducted at one of the target universities to test the questionnaire and assess its quality and efficiency. Using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability, although low for two constructs, was acceptable and would probably improve with a larger sample (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability as per pilot study

Question groupings	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Quality	.688	5
Value	.450	3
Personal identity	.739	5
Group identity	.895	5
Status	.873	5
Family/tradition	.768	5

Face validity of the questionnaire was assessed by a subject matter expert and a statistician. Then, an exploratory factor analysis, using principal component analysis with varimax rotation, was conducted on the pilot sample to assess the questionnaire's construct validity. The findings were satisfactory and confirmed that the questionnaire would measure what it is intended to measure.

2.3.2. *Collection method*

Four lecturers from different universities were recruited to assist with data collection. The four lecturers were trained on how to collect the data from other staff members and students. The use of e-mails and in-class collection methods were used as they were the most efficient and effective. Besides, some responses were sought through on-campus intercepts to fulfill the quotas. After obtaining gatekeepers' permission from the four universities and ethical clearance from Durban University of Technology (as this was the organization conducting the research), data were collected over three months.

2.4. Data analysis

The data collected from questionnaires were edited and checked for errors and analyzed using SPSS version 23 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive analysis with tables and figures, including univariate and bivariate analyses,

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was used to present the results, and where necessary inferential statistics will be used to test the significance of findings.

3. FINDINGS

In this subsection, the sample profile is presented, followed by the descriptive statistics for each question, and finally, the analysis and discussion of the four research questions.

3.1. Demographic profile of respondents

The total sample of 409 respondents is presented in Table 3.

The composition of the sample differs significantly by age and race ($p < 0.001$). Within each variable (age and race separately), there is also a skewed spread of data ($p < 0.001$). There were significantly more Black respondents in both the age groups compared to the other categories. There were significantly fewer White respondents in both Generation X and Generation Y. Indian respondents constituted 23.1% of Generation X and 20.8% of Generation Y respondents. Although the sample does not have the same distribution as the South African population, it does represent a reasonable representation of the ethnicity of the KwaZulu-Natal province where the research was conducted. This reasonable spread, and the count of at least a hundred in each age category (Diamantopolous & Schlegelmilch, 1997), gives us confidence in drawing reasonable conclusions from these data.

3.2. Factor analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was run to establish whether the various questions measure the constructs as identified from the literature, the results of which are shown in Table 4. The statements that constituted each section loaded perfectly with their respective components, thereby indicating that these statements perfectly measured what they were supposed to measure. These six constructs were consistent with the constructs identified and validated by Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price (2008, p. 82), namely "…quality as associated with risk reduction…, as well as brands as signals of social status…, as reflective of personality…as a mechanism for group identity and association with other brand users…, as associated with personal values… as linked to both family traditions…and national/ethnic heritage." Since the study did not involve cross-national comparisons, the national/ethnic heritage variable was not relevant, so it was omitted, leaving six constructs. Although Stizhakova et al. (2008) went on to simplify their model down to four factors (merging self-identity, group identity, and status into one dimension they called 'personal identity'), the authors chose to remain with the six-factor model as they felt that these three components were independently important and worthy of independent measurement in the unusual South African economy, which although a developing economy, is technologically advanced (SANSA, 2013) and have sectors that are considered developed (Malgas, Khatle, & Mason, 2017). This assumption was supported by Strizhakova et al.'s (2008) statement that brands in developing countries are important symbols of quality and status

Table 3. Profile of sample

Categories			Generation – born		Total
			Gen X – 1965–1976	Gen Y – 1977–1994	
Ethnicity	Coloured	Count	48	19	67
		% within age	33.6%	8.8%	18.7%
	Black	Count	57	127	184
		% within age	39.9%	58.8%	51.3%
	Indian	Count	33	45	78
		% within age	23.1%	20.8%	21.7%
	White	Count	4	21	25
		% within age	2.8%	9.7%	7.0%
	Other	Count	1	4	5
		% within age	0.7%	1.9%	1.4%
Total		Count	143	216	359
		% within age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.99.

Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis

Question/Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand name is an important source of information about the durability and reliability of the motor car	0.070	–0.050	0.716	0.016	–0.034	0.115
I can tell a lot about the motor car from it brand name	0.067	0.090	0.672	0.002	–0.068	0.064
I use brand name as a sign of quality for buying motor car	0.045	–0.028	0.818	0.038	0.015	0.083
I choose motor car brand because of quality it represents	0.043	0.058	0.748	–0.084	–0.014	0.094
A motor car brand name tells me a great deal about the quality it possesses	0.100	0.017	0.693	0.057	0.043	0.073
I choose car brand because I support values, they stand for	0.047	0.101	0.165	0.022	0.079	0.745
I buy car brands that are consistent with my values	0.101	0.087	0.343	0.017	0.016	0.593
My choice of motor car is based on company's values	0.151	–0.010	0.045	0.134	0.042	0.766
I choose car brand that expresses my identity to others	0.642	0.229	–0.008	0.015	0.044	0.337
The car brands I use communicate important information about the type of person I am	0.742	0.158	0.098	0.253	0.013	0.123
I use different motor car brands to express different aspects of my personality	0.753	0.103	0.079	–0.030	0.104	0.115
I choose motor car that brings out my personality	0.801	0.159	0.094	0.140	0.051	–0.009
My choice of car says something about me as a person	0.678	0.168	0.250	0.197	–0.030	–0.071
Using my choice of car brand helps me connect with other people and social groups	0.274	–0.027	0.096	0.766	0.025	0.084
I buy car brand to associate with specific people and groups	0.123	0.084	–0.043	0.791	0.156	0.023
I feel a bond with people who use same car brand as I do	0.018	0.138	0.075	0.769	0.101	0.104
By choosing a certain motor car brand, I choose who I want to associate with	0.018	0.253	–0.146	0.518	0.411	0.055
My choice of motor car brand says something about the people I like to associate with	0.082	0.208	–0.151	0.737	0.216	0.020
I avoid car brands that do not reflect my social status	0.184	0.652	0.095	0.141	0.073	0.070
I use motor car brands to communicate my social status	0.172	0.737	–0.008	0.028	0.150	0.158
I choose car brands associated with my social class	0.040	0.716	–0.047	0.233	0.067	0.093
The motor car brands I use reflect my social status	0.126	0.759	0.060	0.081	0.108	–0.048
I communicate my achievements through the motor car brands I use and own	0.214	0.707	–0.014	–0.051	0.077	0.006
I buy car brand because it is a tradition to my family	0.180	0.134	0.045	0.032	0.744	0.148
I use car brands that my family uses or have used	0.080	0.040	–0.038	0.181	0.777	–0.084
I buy motor car brands that reminds me of my family	–0.113	0.121	0.013	0.025	0.751	0.077
The motor car brands I use reflect my social status	0.094	0.192	0.163	0.379	0.575	–0.122
I buy a motor car brand that my parents buy or bought	0.031	0.128	–0.057	0.274	0.726	0.023

Note: Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

and are often subject to intergenerational influence within families. Since their research was done on developing European nations, they felt that it would be inappropriate to just accept their findings as also relevant in an African country, so they chose to retail the six-factor model.

3.3. Reliability

Reliability was assessed via Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, with a coefficient of 0.7 or higher being considered reliable (Katranci, 2014). As shown in Table 5, coefficients above 0.7 were obtained for all the dimensions, except for "value factors" (0.674). Since Denscombe (2010) suggests that coefficients above 0.60 are significant, especially for a newly designed instrument, the "value factors" dimension was left in the analysis model.

Table 5. Brand meaning constructs

Brand constructs	Items	Cronbach's	Mean
Quality factors	5	0.833	5.6038
Value factors	3	0.674	4.8720
Personal identity factors	5	0.828	4.6654
Group identity factors	5	0.801	3.803
Status factors	5	0.803	4.048
Tradition factors (family tradition)	5	0.794	3.282
Total		4.3439	

3.4. Descriptive statistics

Means and standard deviations (SD) for each question, grouped into the six dimensions are presented

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Table 6. Item means/standard deviations

Constructs/Questions*	Mean	SD
Quality factors and items	**5.60**	
Brand name is an important source of info about durability and reliability of motor vehicle	5.45	1.75
I can tell a lot about the motor vehicle from its brand name	5.42	1.64
I use brand name as a sign of quality for purchasing motor vehicle	5.64	1.55
I choose motor vehicle brand because of the quality it represents	5.84	1.43
A motor vehicle brand name tells me a great deal about the quality it possesses	5.67	1.31
Value factors and items	**4.87**	
I choose vehicle brands because I support the values they stand for	4.61	1.89
I buy vehicle brands that are consistent with my values	5.25	1.68
My choice of motor vehicle is based on the company's values	4.76	1.86
Personal identity factors and items	**4.67**	
I choose vehicle brands that help to express my identity to others	4.45	2.04
Vehicle brands I use communicate important information about the type of person I am	4.76	1.88
I use different motor vehicle brands to express different aspects of my personality	4.28	1.87
I choose motor vehicle that brings out my personality	4.79	1.90
My choice of motor vehicle says something about me as a person	5.04	1.84
Group identity factors and items	**3.80**	
Using my choice of vehicle brand helps me connect with other people and social groups	4.26	1.91
I buy motor vehicle brand to be able to associate with specific people and groups	3.64	1.85
I feel a bond with people who use the same motor vehicle brand as I do	4.23	1.93
By choosing a certain motor vehicle brand, I choose whom I want to associate with	3.37	2.02
My choice of motor vehicle brand says something about the people I like to associate with	3.52	2.02
Status factors and items	**4.05**	
I avoid choosing vehicle brands that do not reflect my social status	4.04	1.95
I use motor vehicle brands to communicate my social status	3.66	1.91
I choose motor vehicle brands that are associated with the social class I belong to	3.98	1.99
The motor vehicle brands I use reflect my social status	4.16	2.03
I communicate my achievements through the motor vehicle brands I use and own	4.39	2.08
Tradition factors (family tradition)	**3.28**	
I buy motor vehicle brand because it is an important tradition to my family	3.11	2.09
I use vehicle brands that my family uses or have used	3.15	2.00
I buy motor vehicle brands that remind me of my family	3.22	1.93
The motor vehicle brands I use reflect my social status	3.92	2.03
I buy motor vehicle brand that my parent buy or have bought	3.01	2.08

Note: * N = 211. ** Significance based on Chi-square.

in Table 6. Based on the 7-point Likert scale, it can be seen from Table 6 that the most important dimensions (considerably above the Likert midpoint of 4) are "quality factors" (5.6), "value factors" (4.87), and "personal identity factors" (4.67), with the other dimensions having means considerably lower.

These findings from the descriptive statistics can be visualized through Figure 1, namely that both age cohorts view quality, values, and personal identity factors as more important than the group identity, status, and tradition factors.

Figure 1. Visualization of constructs

3.5. Analysis by construct

The authors next set out to identify if there were any significant differences between the two age cohorts. Therefore, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the mean differences between the respective age groups. These findings are presented in Table 7.

Although the Generation X means are mostly higher than the Generation Y means, these differences are mostly not statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. No questions for value, personal identity and group identity, and only one each for Status and Tradition, reflected a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Regarding quality, however, three of the five questions showed a statistically significant difference. Therefore, it can be concluded that Generation *X* tend to use the brand name as an indicator of quality more than Generation *Y* do. Other than the quality construct, it can therefore be concluded that there is no real difference between the two generational cohorts in their understanding of brand meaning for motor vehicles. This finding was supported by a logistic regression analysis conducted to identify causal relationships amongst the constructs. As seen in Table 8, it is apparent that quality and status factors contribute significantly to the regression model, confirming that they are the most important factors that influence brand perceptions of motor vehicles.

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Table 7. Analysis of Variance between the two generations

Constructs	Question	Gen X	Gen Y	ANOVA *p*-value
Quality	Brand name is an important source of information about the durability and reliability of the motor vehicle	5.80	5.38	0.019
	I can tell a lot about the motor vehicle from its brand name	5.67	5.20	0.007
	I use brand name as a sign of quality for purchasing motor vehicle	5.98	5.48	0.002
	I choose motor vehicle brand because of the quality it represents	5.99	5.79	0.198
	A motor vehicle brand name tells me a great deal about the quality it possesses	5.56	5.52	0.818
Value	I choose vehicle brands because I support the values, they stand for	4.80	4.67	0.508
	I buy vehicle brands that are consistent with my values	5.21	5.40	0.285
	My choice of motor vehicle is based on the company's values	4.71	4.61	0.623
Personal identity	I choose vehicle brands that helps to express my identity to others	4.49	4.49	0.988
	The vehicle brands I use communicate important information about the type of person I am	4.29	4.50	0.336
	I use different motor vehicle brands to express different aspects of my personality	4.44	4.34	0.644
	I choose motor vehicle that brings out my personality	4.58	4.71	0.545
	My choice of motor vehicle says something about me as a person	4.92	4.74	0.412
Group identity	Using my choice of vehicle brand helps me connect with other people and social groups	3.52	3.48	0.856
	I buy motor vehicle brand to be able to associate with specific people and groups	3.20	3.14	0.760
	I feel a bond with people who use the same motor vehicle brand as I do	3.59	3.60	0.990
	By choosing a certain motor vehicle brand, I choose whom I want to associate with	3.78	3.60	0.418
	My choice of motor vehicle brand says something about the people I like to associate with	2.98	2.87	0.597
Status	I avoid choosing vehicle brands that do not reflect my social status	4.22	3.85	0.079
	I use motor vehicle brands to communicate my social status	3.95	3.85	0.652
	I choose motor vehicle brands that are associated with the social class I belong to	4.01	3.82	0.376
	The motor vehicle brands I use reflect my social status	4.46	4.19	0.220
	I communicate my achievements through the motor vehicle brands I use and own	5.11	4.52	0.006
Traditional	I buy motor vehicle brand because it is an important tradition for my family	3.71	3.17	0.017
	I use vehicle brands that my family uses or have used	3.07	3.19	0.587
	I buy motor vehicle brands that remind me of my family	3.60	3.38	0.304
	The motor vehicle brands I use reflect my social status	3.61	3.51	0.674
	I buy a motor vehicle brand that my parents buy, or have bought	2.82	3.06	0.276

Table 8. Logistic regression

Variables in the equation	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)
Quality factors	−0.314	0.111	7.966	1	0.005	0.731
Value factors	0.080	0.087	0.842	1	0.359	1.083
Personal identity factors	0.121	0.086	1.987	1	0.159	1.129
Group identity factors	-0.036	0.091	0.157	1	0.692	0.965
Status factors	-0.182	0.087	4.324	1	0.038	0.834
Tradition factors	0.010	0.088	0.013	1	0.910	1.010
Constant	2.102	0.701	8.998	1	0.003	8.186

Note: Variables entered on step 1: quality, value, personal identity, group identity, status, tradition.

4. DISCUSSION

The statistical data presented above show that Generation X tend to hold stronger opinions about the meaning of car brands, but only as indicators of quality, and to a lesser extent, as an indicator of status. Their opinions on these two constructs are significantly different to Generation Y. Generation Y slightly (but not statistically significantly) see brands as extensions of personal identity and are slightly influenced by traditional factors such as family. This makes sense considering Generation Y's individuality, youth, and lesser experience. Overall, the respondents' perceptions of

car brands are more linked to personal/individualistic factors rather than group factors like group identity or tradition factors.

Data from both the literature and the empirical study suggest that race does not play much role when it comes to motor vehicles brand choices between Generation X and Y. The results further show that both generations perceive the brand to be important when judging vehicle quality (above the Likert scale midpoint of 4), but Generation X clearly has a stronger perception of the relationship between brand and quality than Generation Y does.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the first objective, namely the perceived meaning of motor car brands, the findings show that brand names are strongly linked to perceptions of the quality of the motor vehicle, and to a lesser extent, are linked to the consumers' own values and their individual personalities. Issues related to group identity, status and tradition are less important when considering a car brand.

When considering Objective 2, namely whether there is a difference in the car brand construct between Generations X and Y, Generation X tends to hold strong opinions about the meaning of car brands, especially regarding brands as indicators of quality and status, which are significantly stronger than the perceptions held by Generation Y. Generation Y hold slightly stronger (but not statistically significant) perceptions of brands as extensions of their personal identity, and are also slightly more influenced by traditional factors such as family. This makes sense considering Generation Y tend to be younger and thus less experienced in these matters than Generation X, and so may rely more on older family members or friends and colleagues for advice. However, it must also be remembered that one of the main characteristics of Generation Y is their individualism, which explains the relationship between their brand perceptions and personal identity.

Overall, for both generational cohorts, car brands are more linked to personal/individualistic factors rather than to group factors. In other words, perceptions of motor car brands are more influenced by how consumers see them from their own personal point of view, rather than how friends, colleagues, etc. see them.

Theoretical and practical implications

The motor industry contributes 7% to South Africa's gross domestic product, and exported vehicles to 87 destinations in 2012 (Barnes & Black, 2013). Following South African President Ramaphosa's Investment Summit, motor companies (BMW, Nissan, Ford, Toyota, Volkswagen, and Mercedes-Benz) have pledged to invest R 2.7 billion into the South African motor industry (Johnson et al., 2018). These facts clearly show the importance of this industry to the South African economy. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the industry's future customers is essential. This means an understanding of Generation Y who will provide a large proportion of the industry's future customers, is essential.

Following an extensive Google Scholar search, only two articles on branding in the motor industry in South Africa were identified. Although the one investigates Generation Y, neither of them addresses the specific question regarding brand meaning for Generation Y. Therefore, this study is important for the future of the South African motor industry and will contribute new academic and practical knowledge about this issue in South Africa.

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Recommendations

For motor car marketers

For Generation X, marketers should focus on creating a relationship between the brand name and the perception of product quality, because of the importance of quality to Generation X. At the same time, communications and promotions should tie the brand values to the typical values held by Generation X who rate brand values considerably above the mean score of 4. Promotions should also stress how the brand typifies the personal identity factors typical of Generation X, as these were also rated considerably above the mean. Communication methods for Generation X would need to be the more traditional methods of mass media but can also include media such as social media.

For Generation Y, marketers should focus on how the brand can express the potential buyer's individual personality, reflecting 'me as an individual'. The brand should be presented as unique and meeting the individual's specific needs. This obviously is in addition to linking the brand to the quality concept, as this is also very important to Generation Y. In presenting 'quality' marketers should stress the 'value for money' that good quality provides, Of course, communications can be mainly via technological methods such as social media and should be structured so as to encourage word of mouth.

For further research

This study suffers from the usual limitations experienced by small surveys, namely a small non-probability sample in a limited area, with a relatively limited focus. Therefore, it is suggested that future research be conducted over a wider geographic area and with a bigger demographic sample. Further research could also differentiate between the perceptions of car owners and non-owners, which were not done in this study. It might also be helpful to know if the type of car owned, or most frequently used, influences the perceived brand meaning.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo, Roger B Mason.
Data curation: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Formal analysis: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Funding acquisition: Roger B Mason.
Investigation: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Methodology: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo. Roger B Mason.
Project administration: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Resources: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Supervision: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo, Roger B Mason.
Validation: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo.
Visualization: Roger B Mason.
Writing – original draft: Roger B Mason.
Writing – review & editing: Bongumusa Bright Mhlongo, Roger B Mason.

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