

Many say, “Why brick-and-mortar?” I say long live brick-and-mortar supermarket retailers!



The surge of digital platforms has resulted in unprecedented change within the marketplace. Brick-and-mortar supermarkets are under immense pressure to remain competitive and relevant to their consumers in a highly competitive environment characterised by the increased growth in online retailing and the recent Covid-19 lockdowns. In recent times there has been growing views about brick-and-mortar supermarket retailers becoming obsolete because of the meteoric rise of online retailing. By taking into consideration the prevailing environment of the digital age and Covid-19 lockdowns, do these views about brick-and-mortar supermarket retailers hold any substance or they are just misconceptions?

To address this question, a research study was conducted by Mahlatse Laka, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to explore how consumer-brand relationships affect store brand loyalty of consumers towards brick-and-mortar supermarket retailers. To achieve this, Mahlatse examined the impact of consumer engagement, consumer satisfaction, and perceived value on store brand loyalty for major supermarkets in South Africa. Furthermore, since the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted society, this study sought to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions on consumer-brand relationships and future shopping intentions. This study contributes in-depth insights on how marketing practitioners can

manage consumer-brand relationships within the brick-and-mortar context during the digital age and the pandemic.

The findings of the study showed that consumer engagement affection and perceived value satisfaction positively predict store brand loyalty. Consumers of supermarket retailers are therefore more likely to be loyal to the store if they are engaged emotionally and are satisfied with the perceived value offered by the supermarket retailer. Therefore, marketers need to develop brand strategies that appeal to the consumers' emotions which may result in increasing their willingness to continue interacting and buying from the store brand. It is imperative for marketers to ensure that their brand value proposition is seen as valuable and satisfying to the consumers. The findings further show that the impact of Covid-19 resulted in the change in shopping behaviour for some of the consumers, yet they still preferred to shop in-store instead of using digital platforms. Based on the empirical evidence of this study, consumers still value physical stores and the benefit of physically experiencing the supermarket retailer.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2020 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Mahlatse Laka under the supervision of [Mr Thinkwell Ndhlovu](#) and [Prof Tania Maree](#).