

**“I’d like to place an order for some brand love. Hold the service quality!”**

### **Consumer brand relationships within the QSRs context**



Consumers often make trips to quick service restaurants (QSRs) regularly. Some consumers can make these trips more than once a day. In March 2020, this habit came to a forced and abrupt halt, as the South African government declared a national disaster due to the Covid-19 outbreak. This was a major restrictive response strategy to contain the virus. These restrictions included non-essential businesses such as QSRs halting their operations. This impacted both businesses and consumers tremendously. Over time, restrictions eased and QSRs resumed operations. However, things were not the same. The interactions between the consumers and brands had changed.

A research study was conducted by Francois Engelbrecht, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to investigate consumer brand relationships within the context of QSRs during the Covid-19 pandemic. To establish this, the study examined the effect of consumer brand engagement (CBE), service quality (SQ), brand trust (BT) on brand love (BL). The study offers important insights to QSRs managers on consumer brand relationships during Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings of the study showed that brand trust and two of the CBE sub-dimensions, identification and affection had a positive relationship with brand love. Service quality did not have a positive relationship with brand love within the context of QSRs, contrary to some previous studies done on this relationship. This highlights that during Covid-19 pandemic consumers of QSRs would love a brand that they can trust and are able to engage with it through identification and affection, more than service quality. Therefore,

managers in the QSR industry ought to aim for value co-creation, create trust and more brand engagement with customers. Strategies such as responsive social media posts and an adaptive mobile application can achieve this goal. More so, QSRs must ensure consistent delivery of quality products and services. Consumers trust brands that live up to their brand promise. Limited contact between staff and customers as a Covid-19 response measure was still imperative during the time of the study. Self-service functions were needed in QSRs. This empirical study shows that consumer brand engagement and brand trust are important ingredients for brand love in the QSR industry during the Covid-19 pandemic.

*This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2021 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Francois Engelbrecht under the supervision of [Dr Thinkwell Ndhlovu](#).*