

**AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING  
CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF COFFEE  
CONSUMERS IN IRELAND – WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS  
ON THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF BRAND EQUITY.**



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Submitted to the National College of Ireland  
*May 2020*

## ABSTRACT

Consumers these days give importance to brands and views brands from different perspectives in terms of better quality that replicates their reputation. Brands are imperative instruments for the sustainability of the retail coffee shops in Ireland as it helps in differentiating several coffee brands. This suggests the need for the coffee manufacturer or retail coffee shops to develop a high calibre of products that could bring about consumer's purchase decision and loyalty to the brand when consumers are satisfied.

For this dissertation, an intuitive model that merges the variation of this study by the perceived quality, awareness of the brand, brand loyalty, brand association what fuels the consumer's buying decision. A self-administered electronic questionnaire was adopted for the data collection to solicit responses from one hundred and eight (108) Irish coffee consumers. The responses were analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), inferential statistics (correlation and regression) were utilized in testing the proposed hypotheses.

The result of Pearson's correlation indicates that all dimensions of brand equity like the perceived quality, awareness of the brand, brand loyalty, brand association what fuels the consumer's buying decision are statistically significant to the buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland. However, the evaluation on the effect of these dimensions reveals that only brand awareness has a significant influence on buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland; whereas others (perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty) have no significant impact.

The study concluded that brand awareness influences the buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland. The study recommended that for the coffee retail stores in Ireland to enhance the purchase intention of the coffee consumers, there is a need to increase product and brand variety, improve product quality, as well as offer consumers good value for their money.

This dissertation has contributed to the body of knowledge as it has given new insight into the mediating effects that the brand equity has in the consumers buying habits of coffee consumers in Ireland.

**Keywords:** *Brand Equity, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Brand Association, Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality, Brand Awareness, Coffee Consumers in Ireland.*

**National College of Ireland  
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**Title of Thesis:** AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF COFFEE CONSUMERS IN IRELAND – WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF BRAND EQUITY.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Firstly, I thank and give God glory for successfully seeing me through this journey.

Secondly, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Dr Yanyi Wang, for her words of encouragement, support, patience, and time throughout this study. I am entirely grateful for her prompt and detailed feedbacks, highlighting even the slightest mistake. This dissertation is a success as a result of her constant support.

Thirdly, my sincere appreciation goes to all the participants that took out time to partake in this study.

Finally, I want to thank my family and friends for their prayers, words of encouragement, and support, especially in this period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, I am profoundly grateful.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

CBB:	Consumer Buying Behaviour
BLTY:	Brand Loyalty
BAW:	Brand Awareness
BAS:	Brand Association
PQU:	Perceived Quality
BE:	Brand Equity
JIT:	Just-in-time
RCT:	Rationale Choice Theory
SMBE:	Structural Model of Brand Equity
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
RCT:	Rational Choice Theory

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

In an attempt to understand what is happening in the black box of the consumer, numerous studies have been done on consumer buying behaviour in a bid to understand the drivers that propel an individual consumer to make a purchase decision to buy or not. The main drivers reported by previous studies to influence consumer buying behaviour includes brand image, consumer awareness, consumer perception, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, as well as a brand association (Riaz, 2015; Moses, Goriparthi and Kumar, 2016; Raghavendran, 2018; Thangamani, 2019). Similarly, research studies conducted on brand equity observed brand equity as the focal point of product differentiation that impacts consumer buying behaviour (Goriparthi et al., 2016; Thangamani, 2019). However, within the context of coffee consumption, it is still not clear on the role of brand equity on consumer purchase decision (Poerwadi, Suyanto, Hidayat, Purwadi and Mustafa, 2019), considering other factors such as product price, product quality, product packaging, and physical evidence are also significant in impacting consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, seeking to find out the impact of brand equity dimensions on consumer buying behaviour amid the coffee consumers in Ireland demands urgent attention.

Brands are imperative instruments for the organization's sustainability as it helps recognize one item from different items. These days, an individual's choice of merchandise depends on their brands. In order to attract purchasers, an organization needs to develop a high calibre of products that could bring about brand loyal when the quality is accepted and worth the value. Having an enormous number of customers will reinforce the brand's reputation in the business, and will, in the end, put the brand on the map. Among all areas of the brand of an organization, brand equity is the fundamental part. Brand equity (BE) is characterized as the additional worth enriched on items and services which might be reflected in the manner shoppers think, feel,

and act towards the brand, just as in the costs, market share, and the gainfulness the brand offers (Kotler and Keller, 2013). In other words, BE is the worth included in something that organizations get from brands. Through BE, buyers may be eager to spend more money just to purchase items from that organization. Considering that a lot of comparable items or services are offered in the market, organizations must have the option to develop reliable brands that can drive the buyers towards favouring the firm's brands over other competing brands.

Since the success of the retail coffee shops is solely on consumers in terms of their patronage, which in turn leads to higher sales volume, an understanding of buyer/consumer behaviour cannot be underestimated. Consumers often display different behaviour when making a purchase decision; their behaviour can be understood through the study of consumer behaviour. Consumer buying behaviour simply means the behaviour consumers show when searching for a product(s), making a purchase, using and the disposal of such product which consumers believe it will satisfy their needs. To support this statement, scholars of consumer behaviour defines consumer buying behaviour as the buying behaviour of final consumers, and families who acquire products and services for personal purpose (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

As addressed above, given the fact that there are a vast number of brands in the market offering similar items, it could be hard for a customer to decide whether or not to buy. According to studies in the extant literature, brand equity is a device that could impact the purchasing choice of the buyer and its examination assists with checking the effect of brand value on buying decision (Gunawardane, 2015). To improve customer loyalty and understand customer buying choice, many organizations invest substantial amounts of money and time, to study the conducts of shoppers toward a brand. This demonstrates that brand (e.g. brand equity) is a crucial resource for organizations through which they can impact the buying choice of its customers (Rindell, 2008). As reported, purchasers buying decision can be encouraged by a

few factors relating to brand equity dimensions, e.g. perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty, all of which are identified for further investigation in the present study.

Prior researchers have been divergent in studying the different components of brand equity. Still, majority of them found out that brand equity is a significant factor for an organization to separate its items or services from its rivals, with an essential impact on the client's choice towards a brand (Akhtar, Qurat-ul-ain., Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif, 2016). Despite the full recognition that organizations need to hold their clients, most organizations find it hard to retain its clients; and hard to use its brand to satisfy consumer's desire. The purpose of the current study is to examine the influence of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland.

## **1.2 Research Rationale**

The reason behind the examination of the factors that influence consumer buying behaviour amid the coffee consumers in Ireland is attributed to the dearth of empirical validation as to whether brand equity creates broad brand recognition in a bid to bring about loyalty to a brand to make repeated purchases. Numerous research has been done on the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour both in the developed and developing countries using variables like brand image, brand trust, brand extension strategies, branding, as well as other factors relating to social, personal, psychological. However, little attention has been given to brand equity (Riaz, 2015; Moses et al., 2016; Raghavendran, 2018; Thangamani, 2019; Poerwadi et al., 2019).

Albeit one study in Pakistan attempted to examine the impact of brand equity on consumer purchase decision within the cosmetic industry (Naeem et al., 2016), using variables of brand association, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand loyalty to measure brand equity. The

study depicted that of all the study variables, only brand loyalty was significant. This, therefore, raises a question of what dimension of brand equity influences consumer's buying behaviour? Another study in Indonesia examined how brand equity affects consumer buying behaviour within the coffee industry (Koapaha et al., 2016), by adopting four dimensions of brand equity, i.e. brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association. The study found that out of the four dimensions, only three variables (i.e. brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty) had a direct association with consumer buying behaviour. Given these different findings, the current study seeks to fill the knowledge gap by empirically examining the mediating effect of the brand equity dimensions on consumer buying behavior, particularly within the Irish industry, since previous studies have been conducted in different countries and sectors.

### **1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives**

Based on above research rationale and the identification of research gaps, this research aims to explore the factors that influencing consumer buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland, with particular focus on exploring the mediating effect of brand equity factors (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty) on the coffee consumers purchase decision. This current study is of high relevance because considering that brands are imperative instruments for coffee retail stores sustainability, there is a need to examine how brand equity dimensions will bring about consumer buying behaviour. Thus, to achieve this broad aim, the researcher identifies below specific objectives for further investigation in the present study:

1. To ascertain whether a consumer's decision to buy coffee is impacted by perceived quality
2. To examine how consumer's decision to buy coffee is impacted by brand awareness

3. To find out the relationship existing between consumer's buying decision of coffee and brand association
4. To investigate the relationship existing between consumer's buying decision of coffee and brand loyalty

#### **1.4 Background of Coffee Retail in Ireland**

Coffee drinking culture is a day-to-day consumption amidst the Irish population. Official data shows that 6 out of 10 Irish consume coffee daily, and ready-to-drink coffee is the most consumed type of coffee (Fátharta, 2014). To support this statement, a correspondent study conducted by the Irish Coffee Council and Amárach Research involving 1,000 Irish consumers reveals that three-quarter of Irish adults drink coffee, ranking cappuccino as the most preferred which accounts for 30 per cent, followed by Americano which accounts for 27 per cent, café latte accounting for 22 per cent, and espresso accounting for 10 per cent (Fátharta, 2014). Recent statistics reveal an increase in coffee demand among Irish consumers. The 2017 survey of coffee consumption reveals that Dubliners consume the most coffee out of home once a day accounting for 40 per cent, while consumers in the South West accounted for 38 per cent (Quann, 2019). Based on the increasing growth of coffee consumed in Ireland, there is a need to examine coffee consumer's buying behaviours in Ireland, for instance, to further determine whether or why Irish coffee consumers would frequently consume specific coffee brands.

#### **1.5 Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. Chapter one, covers the introduction of the present study, including clearly outlining the research aims of the study, as addressed above. Chapter two is the literature review of prior literature on brand equity and consumers purchase decision. The literature review further highlights the impact and importance of perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty on consumers to purchase decision of coffee

brands. Chapter 3 offers a brief outline of the research questions and hypotheses formulation based on the literature review. Chapter 4 is the methodology chapter, which explains the research methodology and the instruments of data collection, as well as the justification of why the method was considered appropriate for the current study, and ethical considerations. Chapter 5 covers data analyses where the hypotheses were tested using the descriptive statistics, correlation and linear regression on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSSv25). Chapter 6 presents the result and the discussion of findings. Chapter 7 focuses on the conclusion, recommendation, and suggestion for further study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

To examine the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland, this part reviews previous pertinent studies on brand equity dimensions and consumer buying behaviour. In specific, this section clarifies the concepts of the study, including consumer buying behaviour, branding, and brand equity. This section is divided into the theoretical framework and conceptual clarification which was linked to the empirical review of the previous literature on brand equity and consumer buying behaviour. The theoretical review framework reviews two theories or models vis a vis The Structural Model of Brand Equity and the Rational Choice Theory. While the conceptual framework reviewed the constructs of the study.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

#### Model Relating to Consumer Buying Behaviour and Brand Equity

##### **2.2.1 The Structural Model of Brand Equity**

The structural model of brand equity (SMBE) is a blend of marketing strategies, the elements of brand equity and brand equity as a whole. In other words, the combination of the 4ps marketing (product, size, location and promotional activities); the indicators of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand equity); and the overall quality of the brand. (Yoo, Donthu and Lee, 2002).

As shown in the model, marketing activities can be divided into two: 1) building brand activity and 2) weakening brand activity. Yoo and Donthu (2001) expand Aaker's (1991) model by defining brand equity as a different concept between the components of brand equity and the value of both the client and the firm. In fact, the writers have developed and accepted constant multi-cultural and multi-dimensional purchaser-based brand equity. In other words, the writers have sought to expand the concept of brand equity; for example, their analysis relates to brand

loyalty as a tendency to be faithful to a specific brand, which is demonstrated by the intention of purchasing a brand as a necessary choice. In contrast, other studies were depended on behavioural parts of brand dependability.

Also, they consolidated brand awareness and brand association as a single group and concentrated on three brand assets, namely, brand awareness or brand associations, brand perceived quality, as well as brand loyalty. By underlining the advantages of brand value, it is conceivable to decide whether a few parts of brand value seen to be a higher priority than others for the purchaser, or if a brand is lingering behind in one or numerous measurements. All together for a brand to keep up high brand esteem and be the supported choice of buyers, it must be in agreement with how the brand is seen by the organization's customer base.

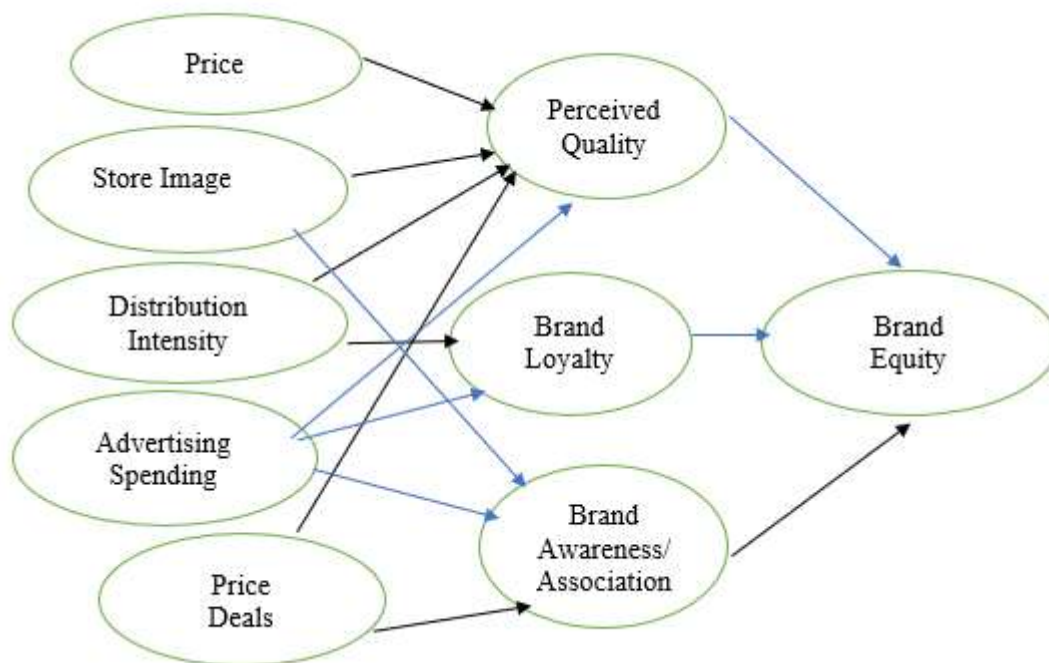


Figure 2.1: Source: The Structural brand equity model (Yoo and Donthu, 2002)

### 2.2.2 Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

Rational choice theory (RCT) is a structure for understanding shopper behaviour (Lawrence, Blume and Easley, 2014). The theory of rational choice involves the attitudinal parts which underline the basis of shaping a preference. The RCT assists with examining how buyers'



preferences are framed, and to comprehend the buyers' choice, it is vital to determine their requests and wants in regards to the purchase usefulness, their emotional outcomes, and the subjective models the purchasers utilise in recognising the propensity for an item or a service as against the others (Lawrence, Blume and Easley, 2014).

The underlying explanation for the RCT is that the collective social behaviour is the product of the actions of a particular person, each of whom affects specific decisions. The RCT revolves on the determinants of the individual choices. The theory assumes that an individual has preferences between accessible decision choices that allow them to state which option they like. Both expectations are considered to be finished (individuals will usually state which of the two alternatives they find to be desirable or which are not preferred to others) and transitive (Lawrence et al., 2014). It is assumed that the RCT will analyze available data, probability of possibilities, and possible costs and advantages in evaluating priorities, and will always participate in choosing the best alternative.

The fundamental presumption of the RCT is that every individual settles on their decision dependent on their preference and the hindrances they encounter. At the individual level, RCT stipulates that the agent picks the result they most like. As a rule, rational decision making involves picking among every single accessible option the alternative that the individual most likes. The application of the RCT suggests that the choice of coffee brand amid the Irish consumers is based on an individual's preference. Although the RCT is relevant to the current study in the sense that it helps to understand how consumer's behaviour is formed based on their preferences and dissatisfaction they encounter after making a purchase, but the question is how is consumer's preference for one brand is formed when they are not aware of the brand equity factors (i.e. perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand equity) of a firm? Since the theory of rational choice does not completely answer the quest of this dissertation therefore it cannot be used.

Having succinctly reviewed both theories or model in terms of their relevance and drawbacks the structural model of brand equity is more suitable for this dissertation because it does not only cover the brand equity factors that impact consumer buying behaviour, but it also gives due attention to the marketing mixes as other influencing factors which increases the propensity of coffee consumers in Ireland to make a purchase decision and be faithful to their favourite coffee brand. Therefore, the author of this dissertation anchors this study on the Structural Model of Brand Equity

## **2.3 Consumer Buying Behaviour**

### **2.3.1 Defining Consumer Buying Behaviour**

Customer behaviour is the attitude buyers display towards the product or services. Additionally, a country's economy is influenced by shopper behaviour, and to address customer's issues, marketing procedures need to be implemented (Engel, 2006). Blackwell (2001) describes purchaser behaviour as a blend of buying and using items or services. In characterizing shopper conduct, one may describe purchaser behaviour to encompass the planning, purchasing and using brands. Solomon and Behavior (1994) again explain further by specifying that buyer behaviour is the method included when customers select, buy, and use product or services and thoughts to satisfy their essentials. Consumers access brand features, execution, costs, quality, client comfort and cordiality before making a purchase decision (Khan, 2012).

Therefore, consumer buying behaviour can be defined as the conduct consumers exhibit when searching for a product(s), making a purchase, using and the disposal of such product which consumers believe it will satisfy their needs. Marketing scholars suggests that consumers exhibit five broad steps when making a purchase decision 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) an evaluation of alternative, 4) purchase decision, 5) post-purchase-

behaviour. Problem recognition is a state of felt deprivation which emanate from a person's state of mind. A person may become aware of specific needs when they feel a state of deprivation. Thereafter, such a person could search for relevant information either through the internal or external sources on how to satisfy such needs. The internal search could be sourced from family, friends, or neighbours. While external search can be sourced from the internet, consulting firms and among others. Evaluation of alternative helps to filter pieces of information to arrive and choose the best of the best. A person then decides to make a purchase trial based on the information acquired.

A consumer could either experience satisfaction or dissatisfaction after consuming such a product. Consumers become loyal customers by repurchasing such product when they are pleased with the product (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). On the other hand, consumers could switch to other competing brands when they experience dissatisfaction which leads to cognitive dissonance. For this reason, it is significant for a firm to understand consumer's need and ensure continuous improvement of such product to bring about an ultimate customer's satisfaction. Having looked into the meaning of consumer buying behaviour, the next discussion is on the factors influencing consumers buying behaviour.

### **2.3.2 Factors Influencing Consumers Buying Behaviour**

Buyer behaviour explores individuals and groups of people as they pick, buy, use and dispose of products, concepts, services and experiences. There is a vast number of customers even children telling their parents to buy these different goods or services are considered as customers too. Buyers are searching for items that meet their basic demands. Buyer behaviour is considerably more than contemplating what consumers are purchasing. Marketing experts research the shopping habits of consumers and address questions about where they are buying when they are buying and why they are buying. Be it as it may, the explanation why customers

purchase a specific product is quite difficult to understand, as the correct answer is profoundly bolted inside the mind of the consumer (Kardes, Cline and Cronley, 2011).

Consumers will, for the most part, be divided into individual and institutional clients. Individual buyers are trying to meet their own needs and want to buy for themselves or meet the needs of others by buying for them. These individual shoppers will come from various backgrounds, ages and stages of life (Kardes et al., 2011). Institutional consumers, on the other hand, purchase for organisational needs and functions. These two types of customers (individual and institutional) can be affected by various factors, such as cultural, social, personal, and psychological (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Buyer behaviour is a component of human nature, and by analyzing previous purchasing behaviour, advertisers can determine how consumers will behave in future, while making buying decisions (Kotler et al., 2010). Below are the discussions about how cultural, social, personal and psychological factors and forces could affect consumer buying behaviour.

### **Cultural Factors:**

Considering that our culture profoundly impacts our purchasing behaviour, there is a need for marketing experts to concentrate on dividing the market that suits different culture to meet the needs of the shoppers. Culture encompasses the combination of norms and values developed and shared among the members of the culture (called "sub-culture") and which exceptionally influences their buying and consumption behaviour (Radulescu, Cetina and Orzan, 2012). The idea of culture has two essential ramifications: first, it decides the most fundamental qualities that impact the pattern of consumer buying behaviour, and it very well may be utilized to recognize subcultures that account for significant market portions and opportunities (Andersone and Gaile-Sarkane, 2008).

Additionally, a person's consumption attitude might be seen and imitated or dismissed by others. And they can become part of the group's shared behaviour and be recognized as a feature of the way of life of a given populace (Luna and Gupta, 2001). The way toward retaining a culture is called socialization, which continues over an individual's lifetime and produces numerous preferences for merchandise or services, shopping habits, cooperation with others.

### **Social factors:**

Social factors have a major impact on the actions of the consumer. Everybody has someone else who affects their buying decisions. As Perreau (2014) has suggested; families, employment and status are core social components. It underlines that every customer is a person, but at the same time has a position within a group. The group of which a shopper has a place is recognized as a participating group. Individuals play a wide variety of roles in their lives. Each role consists of activities and viewpoints that are depended upon by a person to act as suggested by the people around him (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Social standing represents the position that individuals are placed in a social grouping which relies on income, educational achievement and occupation. Status is significant in several societies, and individuals need the profound respect of others. Social status can be attained by being successful or born into a wealthy family. Choice of brand regularly represents social roles and status (Wright, 2000).

### **Personal factors:**

A person's choices are affected by personal factors, for example, a purchaser's age and life cycle state, occupation, financial circumstance, way of life, and character and self-idea. Buyers adapt during their lifetime, and the buying of products changes due to age and life cycle. Age-related components are sampled in food, clothes, entertainment and furniture. One's environment, beliefs, way of life, and shopping habits continue changing over one's lifespan.

Stages in family life changes buying behaviour and brand choice. Generally, the family life cycle involves both married and unmarried. These days, advertisers are focused on alternatives and non-conventional phases, for example, unmarried individual, couples with no child, couples of the same gender, single parents and proposed married couples (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). It would be safe to say that the taste of customers will change over a lifetime, and this can affect their preference of coffee brand in different phases of their lives.

A purchaser's occupation and monetary circumstance (buying power) impact buying choices and purchasing behaviour—the pay level influences what buyers can cater for and its point of view towards available cash. Individuals who have comparable professions should typically have a similar preference for goods and services. Usually, they interact with each other and share common values and feelings. Salary rate has a significant effect on what the client can expect and their opinion of money (Solomon, 2004). Individuals from lower-income classes are more likely to be more interested in purchasing products that are important for durability rather than focusing on extravagant brands.

Additionally, self-idea is a multi-dimensional concept that Kardes et al. (2011) describes as the entirety of a person's contemplations and thoughts about him/her as an object. In other words, the perception that people carry of themselves is formed by experiences and convictions. Numerous marketers have developed an image and a character that corresponds to the characteristics and strengths of the shopper. It helps purchasers to communicate through brand decisions (Kardes et al. 2011).

### **Psychological factors:**

The decision of a buyer is influenced by four intellectual factors, such as inspiration, discernment, learning, beliefs and perceptions. The consumer is a human who has a range of needs. These needs may be common as hunger or emotional needs resulting from the need for

appreciation. A need can be stirred to an adequate degree of power when it modifies a thought process. A thought process is ultimately a desire that drives a person to seek fulfilment. Abraham Maslow is perhaps the most well-known researcher who has studied such human needs. He sought to explain why people are motivated by different criteria on different occasions. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

Maslow's pecking order of necessities from the most squeezing at the base and minimal squeezing at the top. Maslow's order of necessities is the most squeezing at the bottom and minimal squeezing at the top. The fundamental requirement is, first of all, to satisfy the critical needs before continuing with the least critically needs. At a point where the need has been met, it ceases to be a motivator, and then a person can consider the other crucial needs. Maslow's needs are 1) Physiological, for example, the essential need (sleeping, having something to feed on, sexual intercourse, etc.); 2) Safety needs such shelter; Belongingness, for example, the need to feel cherished and be acknowledged by others; 3) Ego needs which are to achieve something and have status among others; while 4) Self-realization is to have improving encounters and feel self-satisfaction (Solomon, 2004).

Every individual gets a lot of sensory stimuli like light, sound, smell, taste every day. Perception is the process by which these stimuli are selected, processed and interpreted to form a meaningful impression of the universe. Individuals are likely to create specific perceptions of related stimuli due to three perceptual processes: selective perception, selective interpretation and selective retention. An individual spotlight just on a couple of stimuli that they are exposed to under the selective attention process. Customers may neglect multiple stimuli and focus only on those associated with their current needs. For example, a customer who wishes to get another vehicle may pay more attention to specific vehicle promotions while avoiding house advertising.

A study conducted by Lautiainen (2015) on the factors affecting consumer's buying decision in the selection of a coffee brand in Saimaa, Finland. The objectives of the study were to ascertain how the social, personal and psychological factors influence their choice of coffee brands. Through a descriptive survey approach, the study discovered that the independent variables (social, personal, and psychological factors) have a direct effect on the process of decision-making when settling for a coffee brand. The study concluded that factors like social, personal, and psychological have a significant influence on consumer's buying decision of a coffee brand in Saimaa, Finland. Having discussed above factors that have been reported to influence consumer buying behaviour in literature, the next discussion is centred on branding and brand equity, which have also been reported as having a substantial impact on consumer buying behaviour.

## **2.4 Branding and Brand Equity**

### **2.4.1 Defining Branding**

The word 'Branding' rose out of the Old Norse word 'brand' which signifies 'To Burn' (Keller, 2008, as cited in Riza, 2015). Several researchers conceptualized what branding involves, Kotler and Armstrong (2004) opine that a brand is a name, term, sign, image, design or a mix of these helps to recognise the products or services of one dealer or a group of dealers to separate them from contenders. Meaning that it provides a method for simplicity for buyer's products or services choice. The idea of branding underlines that a brand is an intricate image that conveys a significant meaning in respect to the properties, benefits, worth, culture and character (Ajagbe, Long and Solomon, 2013). Expounding this attestation, Ogundele (2007) cited in Ajagbe et al. (2013), is of the view that building and managing of various brands is the entrepreneur's most significant marketing task.

Additionally, Dolatabadi, Kazemi and Rad (2012) propose that the idea of branding is a mix of "symbolic, functional and experimental benefits" (p. 295). Branding has become so reliable



today such that nothing goes into the market unbranded; branding is critical from numerous ways as it assists shoppers to distinguish merchandise that will be of great benefit, it also helps convey something about product quality and consistency of its features each time consumers make a purchase decision. Branding is also what a person or a firm is; meaning that it encompasses the way of separating a firm's items from competing brands available to be purchased. A well-known brand name can help disperse product and services benefits and prompts higher recall. This can be achieved by combining the six components of branding; "brand domain, brand value, brand heritage, brand assets, brand reflection, brand personality" and other brand elements like logos, symbols, packaging, and as well as a slogan (Yeboah, 2016, p.113).

An effective brand helps a firm to communicate with the environment in which it operates (Munywoki, Maore and Murithi, 2017). It also helps to attract investors by having a feeling of business growth and development. A brand is likewise connected with a single organization, product, and services; thereby triggering a passionate association with buyers that will last all through the entire existence of the products or services. Branding of product or services provides a unique picture, identity, and positioning. Yeboah (2016) supported the statement by saying that product branding is significant in segmenting the market, a client's diversifying and encouraging products patronage. The next discussion is on the importance of branding to the retail sector.

#### **2.4.2 Importance of Branding in the Retail Sector**

The significance of branding to shoppers and corporate organisations is well documented in academic literature. Ozer, Aydin and Arasil (2005), as cited in Yeboah, Junior and Adonteng-Sakyi (2017) suggested that a great corporate brand prompts better corporate picture in the psyches of investors, employee's, as well as clients or buyers. Also, brands are said to be multidisciplinary, which targets both the stakeholders within and outside a firm business

environment. Most corporate brands have some qualities that characterize each brand offered by the firm; these qualities are the intrinsic values and the firm's ideology.

Yeboah et al. (2017) citing Ozer et al. (2005), and Kotler and Keller (2009) all recommended that branding as a promotional instrument is cost-saving and has financial feasibility for some organizations. Likewise, the coordination of corporate brands become simpler when compared with the country's portfolio or explicit district brands, because each is having its specific trademark. In this way, brands serve as extremely valuable marketing apparatuses.

Weiwei (2007) cited in Yeboah et al. (2017) asserted that most shoppers settle on their buy choices due to their favourite brands and that branding empowers purchasers to recognize items effectively. In this manner, making items effectively recognizable by reinforcing shopper's constant purchasing behaviour. Deliberately brands assist firms to distinguish their offerings or services from that of their rivals. This subsequently creates the identity of the service provider of the product brand.

Branding also functions as a sign that permits purchasers to quickly recognize an item and helps the recovery of pertinent data from memory. In other words, branding is a depiction of a bundle of significant worth, which purchasers saw to be predictable over some time. It is the way of putting a seal on items with a distinguished name and imprint.

Having discussed the importance of branding in the retail sector, there is a need to look into the issue of brand equity.

### **2.4.3 Brand Equity: Definition and the Measurements**

Kotler and Keller (2013) have defined brand equity as the additional value found in products and services. It could be reflected in the way the purchasers think, feel and act towards the brand, as well as the cost, part of the industry as a whole, and the efficiency of the brand replicate. Aaker (1991) described brand equity as several brand properties and liabilities

attributable to a brand, its identity and reputation that add to or detract from the value of an item or service to a company, as well as to its clients. The two definitions supplement one another, be that as it may, the fundamental thought of them is underlining brand value as the worth-incorporated of something that organizations get from its brands.

By reviewing previous studies, it is found that brand equity was often examined in four dimensions, i.e. brand association, brand awareness, brand loyalty and perceived quality.

**Brand Association:** Ashraf, Naeem and Shahzadi (2017) referring to (Aaker, 1991) underlines that brand association is everything related in buyer's psyche with regards to a specific brand. The brand association enables separation midst the set of items, along these lines giving an upper hand to a firm. Brand association includes merchandise attributes and client benefits derived from a given product. The brand association was initially talked about by Anderson. As indicated by Keller, brand affiliation is categorised into three significant classes 1) benefits, 2) attributes, and 3) attitudes (Keller, 2011). Brand equity and brand association are unequivocally connected. A brand association can be utilized as a data-gathering instrument (Van Osselaer and Janiszewski, 2001).

Profoundly successful brand association go about as influence to support the brand equity (James, 2005). Yoo (2000) and Atilgan (2005) examined that powerful and reliable brand association prompts brand loyalty. Brand association entails the entire brand-related sentiments, perception, recognitions, encounters, pictures, perspectives, convictions. As indicated by Keller (2011), it is any single thing that is available in purchaser's memory regarding the brand. Brand association is of two kinds; this is merchandise association and the firm's association (Keller and Lehmann, 2006). The product attributes entail both the functional and non-functional properties.

Based on the above, the brand association is represented as everything linked in the knowledge of a brand and the importance of the brand to the customer. In other words, it comprises of all brand-related musings, emotions, recognitions, pictures, encounters, convictions, mentalities, etc. that become connected to the brand hub. Which impacts shopper purchasing behaviour. For example, consumers with a high social class would like to buy items that can give them the renown sentiments

**Brand Awareness:** Brand awareness is defined by Aaker (1991) as a prospective purchaser's willingness to interpret and evaluate the fact that a brand is a part of a particular item group. There is a need for shoppers to know about an item in a bid to trigger them to do the buying action. If a brand lack recognition to the general populace, shoppers might not buy a firm's merchandise. Brand recognition, acknowledgement, review, top of the psyche, brand strength, and brand knowledge are the phases of examining the significance of brand awareness in buyer mind (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness is the initial step to make brand equity. If the customers do not know about the products, it would be challenging to establish the rest of brand equity components. (eg. brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty).

**Brand Loyalty:** Buyers only acquire a similar brand while paying little attention to the exhibited benefits (e.g. quality, cost, and usability) when brand loyalty come into play (Aaker, 1991). Buyer's commitment implies that a brand has a stable situation in the market and the odds of clients to switch to another brand become minimal and that when clients are happy to buy a similar brand, they put time and cash in that brand. In contrast as indicated by Keller (2003), the reality that clients buy a similar brand consistently can't be attributed to loyalty; customers do what needs to be done on account of their normal purchase propensities, which is constant. However, consumers are being pulled in by promotional activities.

As indicated by the Brand Loyalty Pyramid (BLP), which underlines the five significant brand loyalty stages. The main stage emphasises that clients do not question brand loyalty, meaning they are switchers that buy the brand that is available for sale; paying little attention to the brand name, the best marketing procedure to use in this scenario is to build strong brand awareness. The Habitual purchasers are clients that buy the brand constantly, meaning they do not want their need to be changed regarding that particular brand. In this pyramid, the most significant level of the clients is satisfied, yet some consumers just switched to another brand because of more separation cost, extra expense, and time wastage.

Customers choose the brand that suits their needs. Many of the unwavering customers are regarded as dedicated consumers. The brand holds a vital role in their lives, so there is no problem of swapping brands. Committed purchasers buy the brand because of the strong relationship between the brand and its quality. The best advertising strategy is then to retain this market group with a loyalty plan. That would be done successfully when implementing loyalty-focused services.

Every company needs to have a faithful client base and guard it. Brand loyalty is considered to be the most valuable and critical tool for the company. Brand loyalty can help an organization reduce promotional costs, as loyal customers make repeated purchases of the same brand and cost less to the organization than to gather new customers to buy a similar brand.

**Perceived quality:** Aaker and Jacobson (1994) defined perceived quality as an assessment by the consumer of the general grandeur or prevalence of a brand with deference to its intended intent, opposed to alternatives. There are several components to be addressed to break down and calculate perceived quality: reliability, serviceability, functionality, efficiency and longevity (Parasuraman et al, 1985). This is why the perceived quality can be described as the aggregate value customers derived from the purchase of a firm's goods and services.

Having discussed the concept and the dimensions of brand equity, the next discussion is on the relationship between brand equity and consumer buying behaviour.

#### **2.4.4 Brand Equity and Consumer Buying Behaviour**

##### ***Relationship between Consumer Buying Behaviour and Perceived Quality***

In this study, perceived quality (PQ) entails making product available just-in-time (JIT), total quality management (TQM), handling customer's complaints, listening to customer's request and suggestions, as well as providing support to customers. Supporting the definition of perceived quality was propounded by (Kirmani and Zeithaml 1993), who opines PQ as the "customer's overall evaluation of the utility of a product combining perception what is received (e.g. satisfaction, etc.) and what is given (e.g. costs, price, etc.) (p. 4). Gronros (2000) categories perceived quality as 1) functional quality, 2) technical quality, as well as reputational quality. A holistic five measurement of the level of customer satisfaction includes 1) staff-to-customer interaction, physical support of the service-producing system, the internal organization as well as a corporate image (Brady and Cronin, 2001).

Prior studies conclusively agreed on a positive association between perceived quality and consumer buying behaviour. A previous study was done by Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) to find out the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado Town Square. The study reveals that perceived quality has a significant effect on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado Town Square.

Another study conducted by Fouladivanda, Pashandi, Hooman and Khanmohammadi (2013) on the effect of brand equity on buyer's purchasing conduct of FMCG in Iran. The study specifically examined the impact of brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, as well as a brand association on buyer's purchasing conduct. Through a quantitative approach, the result of the inferential statistics depicted that brand loyalty has a more substantial effect on

the buyer's purchasing behaviour. Be that as it may, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand association have a positive and significant impact on consumer's buying behaviour, while brand awareness is positively insignificant.

The above literature led to the first hypothesis of this study, stated as:

**H1: there is a substantial relationship between the buying behaviour and perceived quality of coffee consumers in Ireland.**

### *Relationship between Consumer Buying Behaviour and Brand Awareness*

Brand awareness can be described as the recognition/visibility of a brand by prospective customers. Brands visibility could help consumers recall certain brands when confronted with competing brands. Brand awareness has also been defined as the capability of a potential customer to be able to recognise the brand and categorise the brand to a certain class (Aaker 1991). A coffee brand that has no recognition could be attributed to a lack of brand equity. Coffee consumers who are much aware of a brand can invariably stick to the brand.

Researchers have found a positive linkage between brand awareness and consumer buying behaviour. The survey study of Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) who examined the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado town square, the result of the study found a positive association between brand awareness and consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado Town Square. Yaseen (2011) examined the impact of brand awareness, perceived quality, as well as customer loyalty on consumers purchase intention. Using a sample of 200 resellers, the study reveals a positive association between brand equity and purchase decision. However, the result of FranzRudolfEsch et al. (2006) indicates an indirect effect amid customer purchase behaviour and brand awareness.

The above literature led to the second hypothesis of this study, stated as:

**H2: there is a considerable relationship between the buying behaviour and brand awareness of coffee consumers in Ireland.**

***Relationship between Consumer Buying Behaviour and Brand Association***

Given the consumer's recognition of a brand, they can build specific brand knowledge about the brand. Ability to create a positive brand association could bring about a loyal customer while a negative association of a brand is strong enough to turn customers off. According to Romaniuk and Neyncz-Thiel (2013), the knowledge and experience a consumer exhibit towards a particular brand determines the total amount of association such a consumer is linked to that brand. The cognitive understanding of a brand becomes richer when consumers have sufficient brand association. Thereby making it possible for consumers to retrieve relevant knowledge about the brand in once memory. Given the preceding, it will be safe to say that a positive association linked to a coffee brand could help create the right brand image in the memory of consumers which in turn may bring about a positive purchase behaviour.

Previous studies have found a positive relationship between the brand association and consumer buying behaviour. The empirical study of Nyange and Mokaya (2019) who examined the effect of brand image on consumer buying behaviour among soft drinks processing firms in Tanzania. The study reveals that brand association has a positive influence on consumer buying behaviour. A study was done by Fouladivanda, Pashandi, Hooman and Khanmohammadi (2013) on the effect of brand equity on buyer's purchasing conduct of FMCG in Iran discovered that brand association have a positive and significant effect on consumers' buying behaviour. Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) who examined the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado town square, found out that brand association has a positive but insignificant influence on the buyer purchasing conduct. The above literature led to the formulation of the third hypothesis of this study, stated as:



### **H3: there is a substantial relationship between the buying behaviour and brand association of coffee consumers in Ireland**

#### ***Relationship between Consumer Buying Behaviour and Brand Loyalty***

As mentioned earlier, satisfied consumers become loyal customers. Consumers can also become loyal to a brand when they exhibit a positive attitude towards a product or services over a long period. Albeit this statement may not be true as suggested by Keller (2003) that “repeated purchase does not necessarily signalize brand loyalty itself” (p. 4). Meanwhile, Aaker (1991) believes that regardless of the benefits other competing brands may offer in terms of better features at a relative lower price and convenience, a consumer may stick and continue to make a repeated purchase of that brand.

Several empirical studies have found a positive association between brand loyalty and consumer buying behaviour. A previous study of Roozy (2014) titled: the impact of brand equity determinants on consumer’s purchase intention. Through a descriptive survey with a sample of 320 consumers in the foodstuff retail store, the study found out that brand loyalty is a major factor influencing consumer’s purchase intention, while other determinants are insignificant on consumer’s purchase intention.

A study was done by Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) which examined the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado town square. The study sought to investigate the combined effect of the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) on buyer’s purchasing conduct. The authors adopted the quantitative method among 100 participants in Starbucks Manado Town square. Through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), the result of the multiple regression analysis reveals that brand loyalty has a positive and significant influence on the buyer purchasing conduct in Starbucks Manado Town Square.

A study was done by Hossain and Ahmed (2018) on the impact of brand equity on the purchasing behaviour of Millennials towards smartphones in Bangladesh. The broad objectives of the study were to examine the dimensions of brand equity on the buying conduct of millennials consumers. Through a descriptive statistic among 154 participants, the outcome of the factor and correlation analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) indicated that brand loyalty is significant to buyers buying conduct.

Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif (2016) examined the impact of brand equity on buyer buying intention of L'oreal skin care products among the students in the University of Lahore. The study employed a quantitative approach and using a questionnaire as the research instrument amid 100 participants. Adopting the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), the result of the regression and correlation analysis reveals that only the brand image influences student purchase decision.

The above review of extant literature led to the fourth hypothesis of the present study, stated as:

**H4: there is a significant relationship between the buying behaviour and brand loyalty of coffee consumers in Ireland.**

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter explained and discussed the dependent variable, in which the discussion centred on the consumer buying behaviour and factors influencing consumer's buying behaviour were brought into the light. Afterwards, the independent variables were discussed which was centred on the brand equity dimensions (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty). This section also reviewed related theories with supporting evidence of the empirical review of related studies on brand equity and consumer's buying behaviour.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The goal of this section is to provide insight into the research questions proposed for the thesis based on previous studies, as well as the supporting hypotheses from existing literature on the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour. Research questions would help determine how perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty affect consumer's decision to buy coffee.

### **3.2 Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1:**

Whether the buying decision of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by perceived quality? If so, in what way is the consumer's buying decision impacted by perceived quality? This research question sought to examine whether the perceived quality will impact the consumer's decision to purchase coffee or not. Through collecting responses from selected coffee consumers in Ireland and answering this research question, it will enable this study to ascertain the impact of perceived quality, which was identified as one of the indices of brand equity as having an impact on consumer's buying behaviour.

#### **Research Question 2:**

How does brand awareness impact coffee consumer's buying decision in Ireland? The quest of this research question is to examine the impact of brand awareness on the purchase decision of coffee consumers in Ireland. Responses from the coffee consumers during the field study will help answer this research question.

#### **Research Question 3:**

The third research question of this study is: What is the impact of brand association on coffee consumer's buying decision? Data collected from the selected participants will help ascertain

the type of relationship (either a negative or positive) that exists between the brand association and consumer's decision to buy coffee.

#### **Research Question 4:**

The fourth research question of this study is: What is the impact of brand loyalty on consumer's buying decision of coffee. This question will help to ascertain whether a positive or negative relationship exists between consumer's buying decision of coffee and brand loyalty.

### **3.3 Research Hypothesis**

Given the prior literature review on consumer buying behaviour and brand equity, the following hypotheses are proposed for this study. The results of the hypotheses would either be a null ( $H_0$ ) which opposes the previous literature, or alternative ( $H_1$ ) which holds a conclusive agreement with the earlier studies on the subject matter.

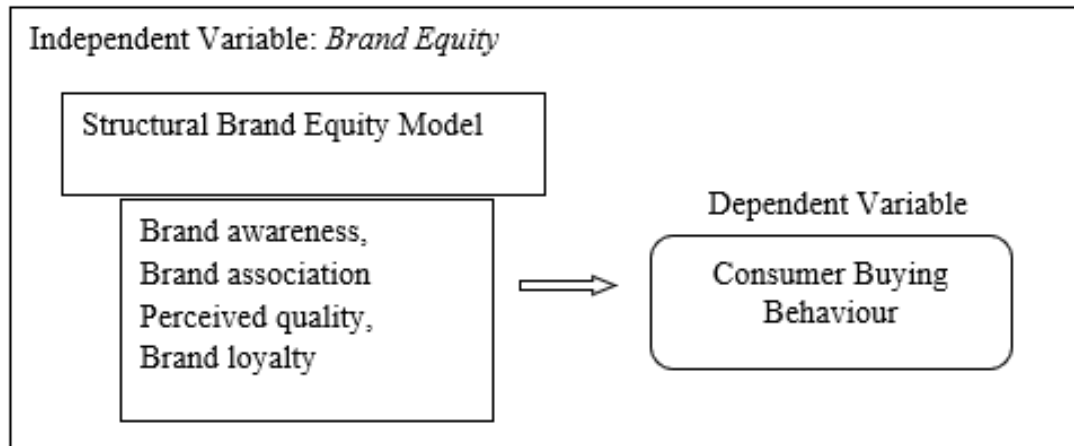
**H1:** Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by perceived quality

**H2:** Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand awareness

**H3:** Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand association

**H4:** Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand loyalty

### 3.4 The Research Conceptual Model



*Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework for the study*

Figure 3.1 is a dissertation conceptual model from Author's model (2020) that captures the study constructs. Brand equity represents the independent variable which was measured using the four dimensions in brand equity (like brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty). While consumer behaviour on the other hand is the dependent variable.

# CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the dissertation is centered on the methodology adopted in solving the issues the study sought to examine. This chapter will follow the systematic model of Research Onion by (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) as presented in Figure 4.1.

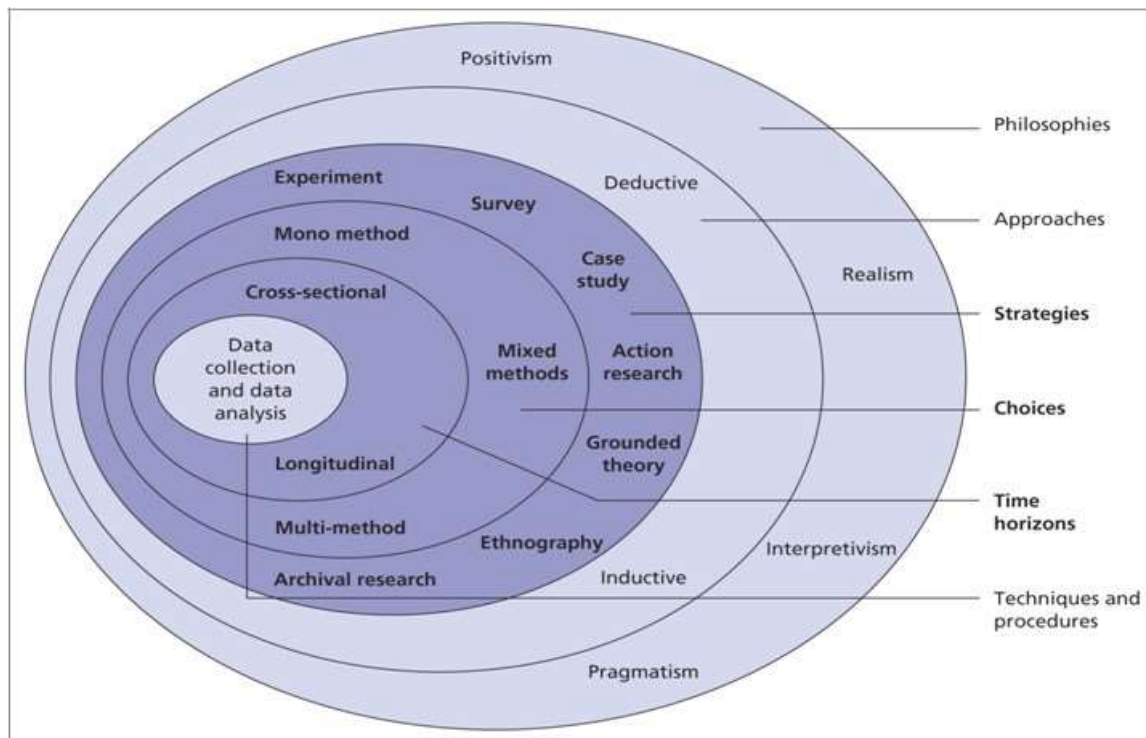


Figure 4.1: Research Onion model (Saunders et al., 2009)

## 4.2 Research Philosophy

This is the first element of the outer layer of the Research Onion. According to Saunders et al.,(2009), it is the concept of knowledge gathered during the research study. Lack of understanding of the research philosophy is detrimental to the research study (Johnson and Clark, 2006). The research philosophy has two approaches to conducting a research vis a vis ontological and epistemological. Ontological is concerned with the researcher's opinion about the real world, while the epistemological on the other hand describes the acceptable knowledge and what ought to be in research (Saunders et al., 2009). The author of this dissertation adopts

the epistemological perspective, as well as the positivism, is adopted as a philosophy because it only recognizes logical proofs that can be verified (Remenyi et al., 1998). To reflect the positivism position, verified data will be gathered from the participants to objectively test the impact of the brand equity dimensions on consumer buying behaviour,

### **4.3 Research Approach**

It is imperative to concisely describe the research approach to be employed in any research before commencing with the research. Saunders et al., (2009) outlined the two fundamental research approach as the *Deductive Approach* and *Inductive Approach*. The deductive approach formulates a list of hypotheses to be tested from existing theories, while the inductive approach deals with data gathering and formulating theories based on the outcome or result.

This dissertation will adopt the deductive approach in a bid to understand the existing theories, propose a list of hypotheses to be tested and embark on data gathering and analysis of data to be linked to the existing theories. This approach requires an appropriate sample size to enable the researcher to gain control over the data gathered and reach a conclusion

The study will follow the five stages outlined by (Robson, 2002) in deductive approach namely; deducting hypothesis, expressing relationship amid the study variables and their measurement scale, hypothesis testing, analyzing the result, and adjusting the existing literature only when necessary.

### **4.4 Research Design**

Research design deals with the type of research, research strategy, choice of the research method, as well as the time horizon (Saunders et al., 2009).



#### **4.4.1 Research Type**

There are three broad research type as outlined by (Saunders et al., 2009) namely descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. An exploratory type of research is aimed at understanding the happenings and surveying the natural phenomenon (Robson, 2002). The descriptive research attempts in describing the exact picture of events, while the explanatory research investigates issue or problems in the quest of ascertaining the causal effect between variables under investigation. Both the exploratory and explanatory research design will be adopted for this study because the author plans to achieve vital information by investigating the causal effect among the variables under investigation.

#### **4.4.2 Research Strategy**

Research strategy encompasses seven techniques that can be adopted to conducting a research namely: Survey, Experiment, Action Research, Case Study, Grounded Theory, Archival Research Ethnography, (Saunders et al., 2009). Yin (2003) noted that every one of these seven strategies can be employed for both the exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory design. It is worth to reiterate that very few of these strategies can be utilized for a deductive and inductive technique (Saunders et al., 2009). This means that both the deductive and inductive research have appropriate research strategies that can be utilized.

The author of this study adopts a survey research strategy. Survey research is appropriate in addressing explanatory and descriptive investigation (Saunders et al., 2009) and it is an effectual approach for data gathering using questionnaire as the instrument of the study. It is also suitable for research studies having a large sample size to be conducted within a short time. Since this study is expected to be accomplished within a limited time frame, a structured online questionnaire is been utilized for the research instrument.

### **4.4.3 Method Choice**

The choice of method to research method available to researchers could either be multiple methods or mono method (Saunders et al., 2009). Using the multiple methods has to do with the adoption of more than one approach for data gathering and analysis. While a mono method adopts only a single approach of data gathering and analysis. The author of this dissertation adopts a mono method through a survey of data gathering and analysis.

It is worth to reiterate that the mono method can be utilized for both the quantitative and qualitative method. While Creswell (2013) diagrams quantitative research as an examination that depicts a phenomenon by gathering measurable information that explored precisely on strategy. The quantitative research approach tries to assess the association that exists between the study variables through a statistical tool. A qualitative approach, on the other hand, deals with non-numerical data gathered through interviews and focus group discussion

Based on the literature that was reviewed on brand equity and consumer buying behaviour, the quantitative approach was employed by (Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif, 2016; Hossain and Ahmed, 2018; Koapaha and Tumiwa, 2016; Roozy, 2014; Nyange and Mokaya, 2019, Romaniuk and Neyncz-Thiel, 2013; Fouladivanda, Pashandi, Hooman and Khanmohammadi, 2013). Meanwhile, the quantitative method enables the data gathering of unbiased information through the help of a scientific approach (Wright, 2006). While the qualitative method is relatively time-consuming and requires smaller research participants (Mcleod, 2014). Based on the foregoing, the qualitative method was rejected due to its shortcomings, While a quantitative method is utilized for this study due to its appropriateness.

### **4.4.4 Time Horizon**

There are two types of time horizon in research studies namely cross-sectional and longitudinal research time horizon. While cross-sectional research is conducted within a specific time to

investigate certain issues, Longitudinal research method is conducted over a long period in investigating the events (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the current study is aimed at investigating the impact of brand equity dimension on Irish coffee consumers' buying behaviour within a specific time horizon, a cross-sectional approach is adopted for this study.

#### **4.5 Instrument Design**

The design of the instrument for data collection is discussed in this section. The dissertation is based on a survey which is often employed for cross-sectional research studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Data was gathered using a self-designed electronic questionnaire which covers two sections. Part (A) was designed to gather demographic questions of the coffee consumers in Ireland, while part (B) was designed to provide answers to the study variables (Brand awareness, Brand association, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty and Consumer buying behaviour) using a four-point Likert-scale rating on a scale of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The questions were personally formulated by using the definitions and meanings of each variable. The questionnaire also included an open-ended question in the last section, which allowed participants to give any suggestions or feedback relevant to the study.

#### **4.6 Pilot Testing.**

##### **4.6.1 Introduction.**

The pilot testing aims to guarantee the reliability of the instrument for data collection. In other words, it is to check if the instrument measures what it intends to measure. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2011) pilot study is a plot of pre-information on how a specific aim or procedure functions and restrains shortage to improve the study consistency. This means that it decreases the likelihood of getting a non-dependable result and simultaneously to lessen the separation that may happen because of doubt while raising the estimation of the data. In this research, a pilot study was conducted amid 10 participants who are not among the target respondents. An online questionnaire was piloted among ten respondents for about ten days.

#### **4.6.2 Method of Pilot Testing.**

Pilot testing was established among ten online participants of whom six were male, while the remaining four were female. The items of the questionnaire were 21 items designed to answer the variables of the study (Consumer buying behaviour, perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association, and brand loyalty)

#### **4.7 Population and Sample Size**

The population of the study comprises of the coffee consumers in Ireland. Since it was not possible to get the accurate numbers of those that consume coffee in Ireland, the population was projected as 150. Concerning the sample size determination, the author of the study utilised a census to select the entire population. Census is described as the selection of every element in a population.

#### **4.8 Sampling**

The choice of a sampling technique should not only be attributed to the question and objectives a study seeks to provide answers too, but it should also be based on how data will be acquired (Saunders et al., 2009)

Convenient sampling was utilized for this study, which is a non-probability sampling approach in which the author of this dissertation selects the sample from the group of coffee consumers in Ireland with easy access. Due to the global situation of lockdown, the participants were sampled through the electronic platforms (Social media platforms). The participants were surveyed for three weeks.

#### **4.9 Primary Data Collection and Storage**

Primary data was collected through the online questionnaire and stored using Google Drive; Primary data for the pilot study were collected from 10 online participants. Also, for the main study, primary data of 108 were retrieved from online participants.

**Information Storage:** Data gathered for the study was stored using “Google-Drive.”

#### **4.10 Data Analysis**

Data from the electronic questionnaire were coded using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The study adopted an inferential statistic (Multiple linear regression and correlation) for testing the impact of the brand equity dimensions on consumer buying behaviour.

#### **4.11 Reliability and Validity**

To ascertain that the research instrument (questionnaire) is free from any errors that will inhibit the purpose of the instrument, the author of this dissertation presented it to the supervisor for relevant suggestions. Afterwards, a pilot study was conducted to ensure content validity before proceeding to the main field study.

Also, to verify the reliability of the questionnaire about the internal consistency of items, the test of internal consistency was done using the Cronbach's alpha that relates response of each item of a variable with one another (Saunders et al., 2009). The result of Cronbach's alpha is presented in the next chapter.

#### **4.12 Limitations**

The main limitation of the study in terms of questionnaire administration and retrieval. The global pandemic virus of COVID-19 was a big challenge in sampling the coffee consumers in Ireland at the point of coffee purchase and seek their opinion. As a result of this, only 108 participants took part in the survey as opposed to the initial projected 150 participants. However, every attempt was undertaken to ensure successful questionnaire administration and retrieval.

### **4.13 Ethical Consideration**

Ethics refers to the appropriateness of one's behaviour concerning the rights of those who become the subject of the researcher's work. This research has followed all the ethical guidelines stated by the National College of Ireland. The respondents of this research will not subdue to any form of stress or compulsion by asking discriminatory questions, and there will not be a need for their names to ensure their anonymity. Instead, the collected data will be used only for statistical analysis, and all statistical analysis will be conducted by the researcher. It will also ensure that respondents' raw data will not be given to a third party but only for this study.

### **4.14 Conclusion**

This chapter of the dissertation discussed and investigated the while research methodology that exists to successfully attain the purpose of the study. The author of this dissertation discusses the advantages and the disadvantages of each of the methodology and decides on the most suitable approach, This ethical implication of this study was also discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data retrieved from the field study. 108 copies of online questionnaire were retrieved from the Google form and were analysed for the study. This chapter firstly presents the scale reliability results, followed by the descriptive statistics of items from the questionnaire. Finally, it presents the results of the inferential statistics of correlation and regression analysis.

### 5.2 Scale Reliability Result

The reliability outcomes of the construct of the study are presented here. The five scales in this investigation include Consumer Buying Behaviour (CBB); Perceived Quality (PQU); Brand Awareness (BAW); Brand Association (BAS); and Brand Loyalty (BLTY). In this dissertation, the internal consistency (e.g. reliability) was measured by using the Cronbach's Alpha via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The results of all analysis done about reliability are presented in the below tables, Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4.

As suggested in the literature Cronbach and researchers, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is above 0.7, this indicates that the results are reliable (Cronbach, 1951). From below table 3 which shows the item-total statistics, it reveals that none of the items is below 0.7. The overall reliability of the variables of this study, as shown in Table1, is0.720. This indicates that the results of all variables (CBB; PQU; BAW; BAS; BLTY) of this study are reliable and stable.

**Table 5. 1: Reliability Statistics**

<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		<b>N of Items</b>
.720		21
<b>Case Processing Summary</b>		<b>N</b>
Cases	Valid	108
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0
	Total	108

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Table 5. 2: Item Statistics**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N</b>
<b><i>Consumer Buying Behaviour (CBB)</i></b>			
You frequently purchase your coffee brand based on the perceived quality.	2.08	.908	108
You do not buy coffee that you are not knowledgeable of its brand	2.14	.922	108
Brand loyalty has nothing to do with your coffee buying behaviour.	2.52	.881	108
You repeatedly buy coffee brands that you are loyal to	2.23	.860	108
<b><i>Perceived Quality (PQU)</i></b>			
You are very satisfied with your coffee brand based on its reliability	1.88	.637	108
In terms of serviceability, you wait too long before your coffee is served.	2.89	.660	108
You buy your coffee brand due to its attractive appearance	2.56	.890	108
You could still buy your coffee brand regardless of its good overall quality	2.49	.791	108
<b><i>Brand Awareness (BAW)</i></b>			
You will not purchase a product if you don't recognize its brand	2.42	.799	108
You can recognize your coffee brand	1.93	.693	108
Your coffee brand is at the top of your mind	2.15	.759	108
You have adequate knowledge about your favourite coffee brand	2.14	.755	108
<b><i>Brand Association (BAS)</i></b>			
You have a pictorial idea of your coffee brand in your memory	2.08	.685	108
You prefer to purchase products that can give you prestige feelings.	2.31	.803	108
Your perception and experience does not determine your choice for a coffee brand	2.53	.837	108
An image of a brand is not relevant to me when purchasing coffee	2.50	.803	108
My feelings towards a brand could turn me off from anything relating to the brand.	2.19	.767	108
<b><i>Brand Loyalty (BLTY)</i></b>			
Brand loyalty is not important regarding my attitude of buying coffee	2.54	.766	108
I am very loyal to my favourite coffee brand	2.20	.720	108
There is a relationship between brand loyalty and my choice of coffee brand	2.23	.692	108
I buy a coffee brand that is available just-in-time	2.38	.707	108

Source: SPSS Version 25



**Table 5. 3:** Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
<b><i>Consumer Buying Behaviour (CBB)</i></b>				
You frequently purchase your coffee brand based on the perceived quality.	46.30	35.463	.422	.696
You do not buy coffee that you are not knowledgeable of its brand	46.24	36.577	.307	.707
Brand loyalty has nothing to do with your coffee buying behaviour.	45.86	44.569	-.382	.768
You repeatedly buy coffee brands that you are loyal to	46.15	33.959	.614	.677
<b><i>Perceived Quality (PQU)</i></b>				
You are very satisfied with your coffee brand based on its reliability	46.50	36.776	.475	.697
In terms of serviceability, you wait too long before your coffee is served.	45.49	38.477	.237	.713
You buy your coffee brand due to its attractive appearance	45.82	36.202	.361	.702
You could still buy your coffee brand regardless of its good overall quality	45.89	38.361	.190	.717
<b><i>Brand Awareness (BAW)</i></b>				
You will not purchase a product if you don't recognize its brand	45.96	36.634	.371	.702
You can recognize your coffee brand	46.45	35.260	.621	.684
Your coffee brand is at the top of your mind	46.23	34.254	.678	.676
You have adequate knowledge about your favourite coffee brand	46.24	34.801	.616	.681
<b><i>Brand Association (BAS)</i></b>				
You have a pictorial idea of your coffee brand in your memory	46.30	35.575	.588	.686
You prefer to purchase products that can give you prestige feelings.	46.07	35.677	.473	.693
Your perception and experience does not determine your choice for a coffee brand	45.85	41.025	-.081	.741
An image of a brand is not relevant to me when purchasing coffee	45.88	41.210	-.097	.741
My feelings towards a brand could turn me off from anything relating to the brand.	46.19	38.208	.217	.715

### ***Brand Loyalty (BLTY)***

Brand loyalty is not important regarding my attitude of buying coffee	45.84	42.227	-.197	.747
I am very loyal to my favourite coffee brand	46.18	35.174	.604	.684
There is a relationship between brand loyalty and my choice of coffee brand	46.15	35.922	.537	.690
I buy a coffee brand that is available just-in-time	46.00	42.729	-.257	.749

Source: SPSS Version 25

**Table 5. 4: Scale Statistics**

<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
48.38	40.855	6.392	21

Source: SPSS Version 25

## **5.3 Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Items**

### **Demographic Statistics**

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5. It reveals that 51.9% of the coffee consumers in Ireland who participated in the study are female, and 44.4% are male, while the remaining 3.7% prefer not to disclose their gender identity. This denoted that both genders were sampled. With respect to the ages of the participants of this study, it reveals that 83.3% of the participants are within the age of 18-35 years old, while the remaining 16.6% are between the ages of 36-60 years. This implies that more of the coffee consumers are young.

**Table 5. 5: Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Information**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Female	56	51.9	51.9
Male	48	44.4	96.3
Prefer not to say	4	3.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Age</b>			
18- 25	43	39.8	39.8
26 - 35	47	43.5	83.3
36 - 45	13	12.0	95.4
46 - 60	5	4.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Descriptive Statistics of Consumer Buying Behaviour**

Table 6 depicts the descriptive statistics of consumer buying behaviour. Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they frequently make a purchase of the coffee brands as a result of perceived quality, 45.4% of the majority of the participants agree, 27.8% strongly agree, while the remaining 17.6% and 9.3% disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It can be deduced that coffee consumers frequently purchase coffee brands based on perceived quality.

coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they buy coffee brands they are not knowledgeable off, reveals that 36.1% of highest value agreed they don't purchase unknown coffee brands, 28.7% strongly agree, while the remaining 27.8% and 7.4% disagree and strongly disagree respectively. This is an indication that having adequate knowledge of a brand can bring about a purchase decision.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether brand loyalty has nothing to do with their buying behaviour indicates that 44.4% of the highest value disagreed that brand loyalty does not influence their buying behaviour, 29.4% agreed, while the remaining 14.8% and

11.1% strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that brand loyalty does not have anything to do with coffee buying behaviour.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they repeatedly purchase coffee brands they are loyal to reveals that highest percentage of 43.5 per cent agreed they repeatedly purchase coffee brands they are loyal to, followed by 28.7% who disagreed, 20,4% strongly agreed, while the remaining 7.4% strongly disagreed. In implication, coffee consumers repeatedly buy the coffee brands they are loyal to.

**Table 5. 6: Descriptive Statistics of Consumer Buying Behaviour**

<b>You frequently purchase your coffee brand based on the perceived quality</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	30	27.8	27.8
Agree	49	45.4	73.1
Disagree	19	17.6	90.7
Strongly disagree	10	9.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>You do not buy coffee that you are not knowledgeable of its brand</b>			
Strongly agree	31	28.7	28.7
Agree	39	36.1	64.8
Disagree	30	27.8	92.6
Strongly disagree	8	7.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Brand loyalty has nothing to do with your coffee buying behaviour.</b>			
Strongly agree	16	14.8	14.8
Agree	32	29.6	44.4
Disagree	48	44.4	88.9
Strongly disagree	12	11.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>You repeatedly buy coffee brands that you are loyal to</b>			
Strongly agree	22	20.4	20.4
Agree	47	43.5	63.9
Disagree	31	28.7	92.6
Strongly disagree	8	7.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: SPSS Version 25

### **Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Quality**

Table 5.7 reveals the descriptive statistics of perceived quality. Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they are very satisfied with their coffee brands based on its reliability, the highest value of 69.4% agreed, and 23.1% strongly agreed, while the remaining lesser values of 3.7% both disagree and strongly disagreed. This implies that coffee consumers are very satisfied with their coffee brands based on its reliability.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they have to wait so long before they are served a coffee disagreed with the value of 61.1%, 22.2% agree, while the remaining lesser value of 14.8% and 1.9% strongly disagree and strongly agreed respectively. It can be deduced that when it comes to serviceability, coffee consumers don't have to wait for a very long time before they are served a coffee they paid for.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they buy a coffee brand because of its attractive appearance depicted that higher value of 38% agreed to the statement, 35.2% also disagreed, while the remaining lesser value of 15.7% and 11.1% strongly disagreed and strongly agreed respectively. In implication, coffee consumers purchase coffee brands based on an attractive appearance.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they would still buy their favourite coffee brands despite its overall quality agreed they would, with a higher value of 41.7%, followed by 39.8% who disagreed, while the remaining 9.3% both strongly agreed and strongly disagreed. This implies that coffee consumers in Ireland would still purchase coffee brand regardless of its overall quality.

**Table 5.7: Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Quality**

<b>You are very satisfied with your coffee brand based on its reliability</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	25	23.1	23.1
Agree	75	69.4	92.6
Disagree	4	3.7	96.3
Strongly disagree	4	3.7	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>In terms of serviceability, you wait too long before your coffee is served.</b>			
Strongly agree	2	1.9	1.9
Agree	24	22.2	24.1
Disagree	66	61.1	85.2
Strongly disagree	16	14.8	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>You buy your coffee brand due to its attractive appearance</b>			
Strongly agree	12	11.1	11.1
Agree	41	38.0	49.1
Disagree	38	35.2	84.3
Strongly disagree	17	15.7	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>You could still buy your coffee brand regardless of its good overall quality</b>			
Strongly agree	10	9.3	9.3
Agree	45	41.7	50.9
Disagree	43	39.8	90.7
Strongly disagree	10	9.3	100.0
Total	108	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 25

### **Descriptive Statistics of Brand Awareness**

Table 5.8 reveals the descriptive statistic of brand awareness. Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they will not buy a coffee brand they don't recognize shows that higher value of 41.7% agreed they will not make a purchase, 38.9% also disagreed, while the remaining lesser values of 12% and 7.4% strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that coffee consumers in Ireland will not purchase unrecognized coffee brands.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they can recognize their coffee brand indicates that 57.4% of the majority of the participants agreed they can recognize their coffee brands, while the remaining lesser value of 25.9%, 14.8% and 1.9% strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. In implication, coffee consumers in Ireland can recognize their coffee brands.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether their coffee brand is at the top of their mind reveals that higher value of 49.1% agreed, while the remaining lesser values of 28.7%, 19.4% and 2.8% disagreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. It can be deduced that coffee consumers in Ireland have their coffee brand on the top of their mind.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they have adequate knowledge of their favourite coffee brand indicates that higher value of 50% agreed they have adequate knowledge of their favourite coffee brand, while the remaining lesser values of 27.8%, 19.4% and 2.8% disagreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

**Table 5. 8: Descriptive Statistics of Brand Awareness**

<b>You will not purchase a product if you don't recognize its brand</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	13	12.0	12.0
Agree	45	41.7	53.7
Disagree	42	38.9	92.6
Strongly disagree	8	7.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>You can recognize your coffee brand.</b>			
Strongly agree	28	25.9	25.9
Agree	62	57.4	83.3
Disagree	16	14.8	98.1
Strongly disagree	2	1.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Your coffee brand is at the top of your mind</b>			
Strongly agree	21	19.4	19.4
Agree	53	49.1	68.5
Disagree	31	28.7	97.2
Strongly disagree	3	2.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>You have adequate knowledge about your favourite coffee brand</b>			
Strongly agree	21	19.4	19.4
Agree	54	50.0	69.4
Disagree	30	27.8	97.2
Strongly disagree	3	2.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: SPSS Version 25



### **Descriptive Statistics of Brand Association**

Table 5.9 shows the descriptive statistics of brand association. Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they have a pictorial idea of their coffee brand in memory indicates that higher value of 58.3% agreed that a pictorial idea of their coffee brand in memory, while the remaining lesser values of 22.2%, 17.6% and 1.9% disagreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This is an indication that coffee consumers in Ireland have a pictorial idea of their coffee brand in memory.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they prefer to buy a coffee brand that replicates their prestige feelings depicted that higher value of 51.9% agreed they prefer to only purchase those products that give them prestige, while the remaining lesser values of 26.9%, 13% and 8.3% disagreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. It can be deduced that coffee consumers in Ireland prefer to purchase only those products that give them prestige.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether their perception and experience does not influence the choice of a coffee brand reveals that higher value of 41.7% agreed, and 36.1% disagreed, while the remaining lesser values of 13% and 9.3% strongly disagree, and strongly agreed respectively. This implies that perception and experience determine the choice of coffee brands amid consumers in Ireland.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked as to whether a brand image is not relevant when making a purchase decision of coffee indicates that higher value of 41.7% agreed that a brand image is not relevant when making a purchase decision of coffee, while the remaining lesser values of 38.9%, 10.2% and 9.3% disagree, strongly disagree and strongly agreed respectively. The implication suggests that an image of a brand has nothing to do with the choice of coffee brands amid coffee consumers in Ireland.

Coffee consumers who were asked whether their feelings about a brand could discourage them from everything associated to the brand show that a higher value of 49.1% agreed, while the remaining 29.6%, 17.6% and 3.7% disagreed, strongly agreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This implies that negative feelings about a brand could discourage coffee consumers in Ireland from everything associated with that particular brand.

**Table 5. 9: Descriptive Statistics of Brand Association**

<b>You have a pictorial idea of your coffee brand in your memory</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	19	17.6	17.6
Agree	63	58.3	75.9
Disagree	24	22.2	98.1
Strongly disagree	2	1.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>You prefer to purchase products that can give you prestige feelings.</b>			
Strongly agree	14	13.0	13.0
Agree	56	51.9	64.8
Disagree	29	26.9	91.7
Strongly disagree	9	8.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Your perception and experience does not determine your choice for a coffee brand</b>			
Strongly agree	10	9.3	9.3
Agree	45	41.7	50.9
Disagree	39	36.1	87.0
Strongly disagree	14	13.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>An image of a brand is not relevant to me when purchasing coffee</b>			
Strongly agree	10	9.3	9.3
Agree	45	41.7	50.9
Disagree	42	38.9	89.8
Strongly disagree	11	10.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>My feelings towards a brand could turn me off from anything relating to the brand</b>			
Strongly agree	19	17.6	17.6
Agree	53	49.1	66.7
Disagree	32	29.6	96.3
Strongly disagree	4	3.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: SPSS Version 25

### **Descriptive Statistics of Brand Loyalty**

Table 5.10 is a descriptive statistics of brand loyalty. Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether brand loyalty is relevant regarding their attitude to purchasing coffee brand indicates that a higher value of 46.3% agree that brand loyalty is not important regarding their attitude to make a purchase decision of coffee, the lesser values of 37%, 11.1% and 5.6% disagree, strongly disagreed and strongly agreed, respectively. This implies that brand loyalty is not important regarding the consumer's attitude to making a purchase decision of coffee

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked whether they are very loyal to their favourite coffee brand shows that a higher value of 50% agrees to be loyal to their favourite coffee brand, while the remaining lesser values of 32.4%, 15.7% and 1.9% disagree, strongly agree and strongly disagree respectively. It can be deduced that coffee consumers in Ireland are loyal to their favourite brands.

When asked if there is a relationship between brand loyalty and the choice of coffee brand, 52.8% of the majority of the coffee consumers agreed there is a relationship, while the remaining lesser values of 32.4%, 13% and 1.9% disagree, strongly agree and strongly disagree that a relationship exists between brand loyalty and the choice of coffee brand. In implication, there is a relationship between brand loyalty and the choice of a coffee brand among coffee consumers in Ireland.

Coffee consumers in Ireland who were asked about buying coffee that is available just in time, or remain loyal to their coffee brand shows what majority of the participants agree, while the remaining lesser values of 28.7%, 7.4% and 5.6% disagree, strongly disagree and strongly agree respectively. This implies that coffee consumers in Ireland buy a coffee brand that is available just in time regardless of their loyalty to the brand.

**Table 5. 10: Descriptive Statistics of Brand Loyalty**

<b>Brand loyalty is not important regarding my attitude of buying coffee</b>	Frequency	Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	6	5.6	5.6
Agree	50	46.3	51.9
Disagree	40	37.0	88.9
Strongly disagree	12	11.1	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>I am very loyal to my favourite coffee brand.</b>			
Strongly agree	17	15.7	15.7
Agree	54	50.0	65.7
Disagree	35	32.4	98.1
Strongly disagree	2	1.9	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>There is a relationship between brand loyalty and my choice of coffee brand</b>			
Strongly agree	14	13.0	13.0
Agree	57	52.8	65.7
Disagree	35	32.4	98.1
Strongly disagree	2	1.9	100.0
Total	108	100.0	
<b>I buy a coffee brand that is available just-in-time</b>			
Strongly agree	6	5.6	5.6
Agree	63	58.3	63.9
Disagree	31	28.7	92.6
Strongly disagree	8	7.4	100.0
Total	108	100.0	

Source: SPSS Version 25

## **5.4 Results on the Hypotheses**

### **5.4.1 Restatement of Hypothesis**

**1H1:** Consumer’s decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by perceived quality

**2H2:** Consumer’s decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand awareness

**3H3:** Consumer’s decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand association

**4H4:** Consumer’s decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand loyalty

To test the above four hypotheses as used in the current study, a standardised multiple linear regression is utilized. The choice of selecting the standardised multiple linear regression helps to evaluate each of the independent variables (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand

association, and brand loyalty) that contributed the most to the outcome (Consumer buying behaviour). Additionally, it also incorporates correlation analysis which enables the present author to test the relationship that exists between the study variables (Author, 2020).

It is worth to reiterate the key assumptions of multiple linear regression (National Center for Research Methods).

**Linear Relationship:** Linear relationship must exist between the dependent and independent variables. This relation is best explained in scatter-plots which indicate as to whether linear/curvilinear relationships exist between the predictive (independent) and outcome (dependent) variables.

**Multivariate Normality:** the residuals are expected to be normally distributed.

**There should be no Multicollinearity:** it is expected that the independent variables are not exceptionally correlated with one another. That is, the relationship should not be up to 8. This assumption is best explained in the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values; being the inverse of the tolerance value and expect the value to be lower than 10.

**Homoscedasticity:** the variance of error terms is comparable over the estimations of independent variables. The Standardized Residuals (SR) versus THE Predicted Values (PV) explains whether the points are similar cross the independent variables.

**Minimum of 2 independent variables and 20 cases per independent variables:** Multiple linear regression requires that there must be at least 2 independent variables when predicting their impact on the dependent variable. About the sample size, there should be minimum of 20 cases for each independent variable.

The dataset fully met all these assumptions. Based on the fact that these assumptions have been satisfied the outcome of this study can be trusted.

**Table 5. 11: Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer_Buying_Behaviour (CBB)	9.6574	1.81459	108
Perceived_Quality (PQUY)	9.0370	1.54633	108
Brand_awareness (BAWR)	8.7963	1.71175	108
Brand_Association (BASS)	12.1667	2.16385	108
Brand_Loyalty (BLYT)	9.2778	1.45867	108

Source: SPSS Version 25

**Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

Table 5.11 shows the descriptive statistics of the study variables. One hundred and eight Irish coffee consumers were surveyed about the impact of brand equity dimensions on the consumer buying behaviour, the result reveals that consumer buying behaviour as shown by mean of 9.6574 and standard deviation of 1.81459. With a mean of 9.0370 and a standard deviation of 1.54633 the participants rated perceived quality is high. Also, participants rated brand awareness high with a mean of 8.7963 and a standard deviation of 1.71175. Further, the respondents rated brand association as high with a mean of 12.1667 and a standard deviation of 2.16385. Lastly, the participants also indicated a high rating for brand loyalty with a mean value of 9.2778 and a standard deviation of 1.45867.

**Table 5. 12: Correlations Test of the Relationship between the Study Variables**

(1)		CBB	PQUY	BAWR	BASS	BLYT
Pearson	Consumer_Buying_Behaviour (CBB)	1.000	.281	.516	.448	.439
Correlation	Perceived_Quality (PQUY)	.281	1.000	.208	.336	.397
	Brand_awareness (BAWR)	.516	.208	1.000	.405	.513
	Brand_Association (BASS)	.448	.336	.405	1.000	.480
	Brand_Loyalty (BLYT)	.439	.397	.513	.480	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Consumer_Buying_Behaviour (CBB)	.	.002	.000	.000	.000
	Perceived_Quality (PQUY)	.002	.	.016	.000	.000
	Brand_awareness (BAWR)	.000	.016	.	.000	.000
	Brand_Association (BASS)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	Brand_Loyalty (BLYT)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Consumer_Buying_Behaviour (CBB)	108	108	108	108	108
	Perceived_Quality (PQUY)	108	108	108	108	108
	Brand_awareness (BAWR)	108	108	108	108	108
	Brand_Association (BASS)	108	108	108	108	108
	Brand_Loyalty (BLYT)	108	108	108	108	108

**Test of Correlation and multiple linear regression.**

Correlation shows the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The correlation Table 5.12 explains the relationships between consumer buying behaviour (CBB), perceive quality (PQUY), brand awareness (BAWR), brand association (BASS) and brand loyalty (BLYT). Results show that all the independent variables are statistically significant as highlighted in the blue ink. In other words, they are less than 0.05 level. The Pearson correction value (P-value) show that only the perceived quality has a weak but positive relationship with consumer buying behaviour (.218), while brand awareness (.516), brand association (.448) and brand loyalty (.439) have a moderate relationship with the consumer. Thus, brand equity dimensions have a statistically significant relationship with consumer buying behaviour.

**Table 5. 13: Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a</sup> (2)**

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Brand_Loyalty, Perceived_Quality, Brand_Association, Brand_awareness <sup>b</sup>	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer\_Buying\_Behaviour

b. All requested variables entered.

The Table 5.13 shows variables entered when computing the multiple linear regression. As indicated in the table, all the four independent (Perceived Quality (PQUY), Brand awareness (BAWR), Brand association (BASS), Brand loyalty (BLYT)) variables are entered.

**Table 5. 14: Model Summary<sup>b</sup> (3)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.596 <sup>a</sup>	.355	.330	1.48551

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand\_Loyalty, Perceived\_Quality, Brand\_Association, Brand\_awareness

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer\_Buying\_Behaviour

The multiple linear regression in Table 13 shows the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The  $R^2$  is the measure of the amount of variance in the dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour) that the predictors/independent (Perceived Quality (PQUY), Brand awareness (BAWR), Brand association (BASS), Brand loyalty (BLYT)) variables accounted for. The result of the study account for a moderate 35% of the variation in consumer buying behaviour is explained by (Perceived Quality (PQUY), Brand awareness (BAWR), Brand association (BASS), and Brand loyalty (BLYT)). In implication, consumer behaviour accounts for 35% of the variation in brand equity factors.



**Table 5. 15: ANOVA<sup>a</sup> (4)**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	125.029	4	31.257	14.164	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	227.295	103	2.207		
	Total	352.324	107			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer\_Buying\_Behaviour

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand\_Loyalty, Perceived\_Quality, Brand\_Association, Brand\_awareness

The ANOVA measurements exhibited in Table 4 incorporated in table 11 was utilized to show the model centrality. An F-importance estimation of  $p=0.000$  was set up demonstrating that the model fit. The overall regression model statistically was significant F (df=4, 103= 14.164,  $P<000$ ,  $R^2=35\%$ ).

**Table 5. 16: Coefficients<sup>a</sup> (5)**

Model	B	Std. Error	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		Collinearity Statistics		
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.862	1.138		1.636	.105	-.395	4.119					
Perceive_Quality	.102	.103	.087	.992	.323	-.102	.306	.28	.097	.079	.814	1.229
Brand_Awareness	.367	.100	.347	3.672	.000	.169	.566	.51	.340	.291	.703	1.423
Brand_Association	.185	.079	.220	2.345	.021	.029	.341	.44	.225	.186	.711	1.407
Brand_Loyalty	.150	.127	.121	1.180	.241	-.102	.402	.43	.116	.093	.599	1.670

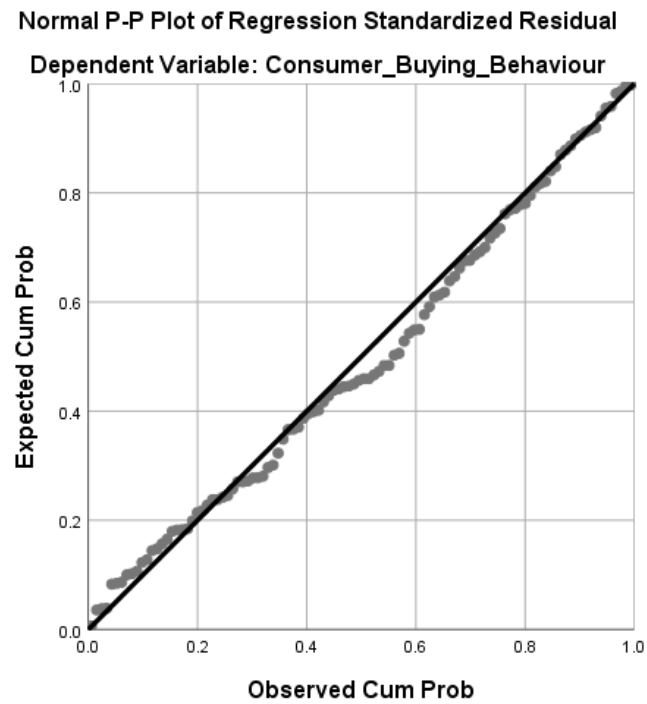
a. Dependent Variable: Consumer\_Buying\_Behaviour

The coefficient test in table 5.16 is the tests the predictive variables “Perceived Quality (PQUY), Brand awareness (BAWR), Brand association (BASS), and Brand loyalty (BLYT)”

at alpha level .05. The result of the regression coefficient shows that only brand awareness (BAWR) reported with a statistical impact on consumer buying behaviour. The results are reported below:

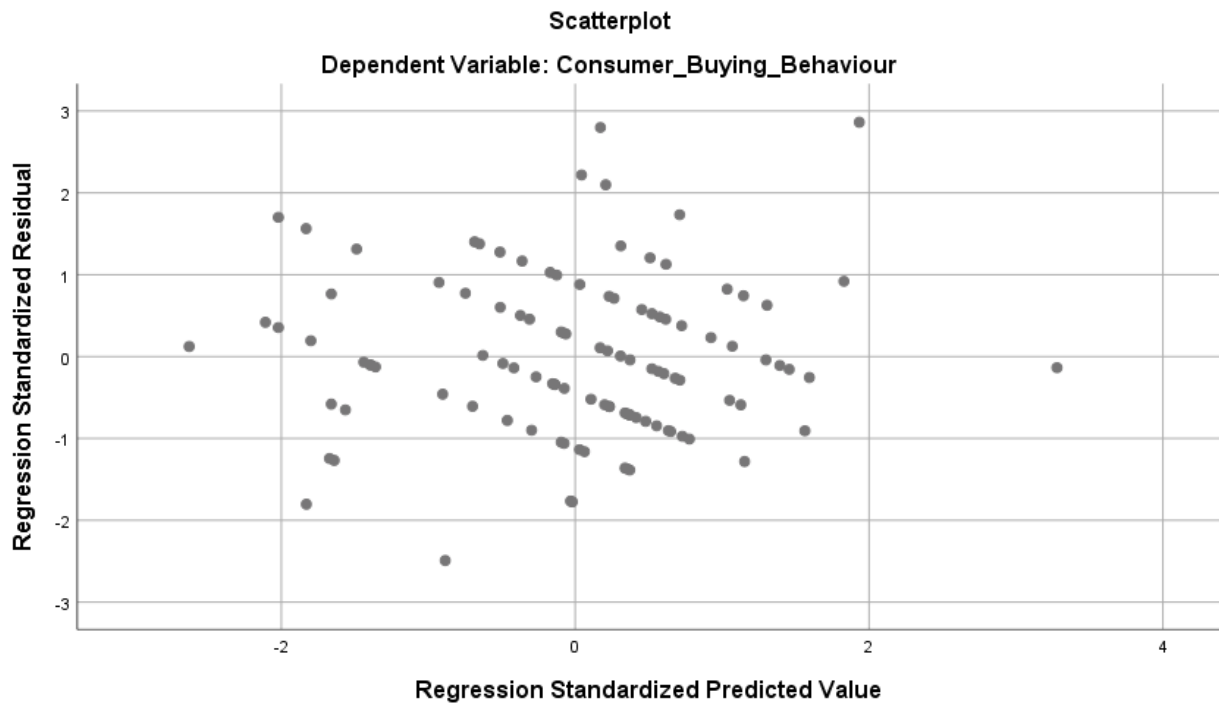
- i. Perceived Quality (PQUY) = the regression coefficient of (.992) with a significant level of (.323) which is beyond 0.05. Hence the alternative hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance and the acceptance of the null hypothesis. It is therefore concluded that  
**1H1: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by perceived quality.**
- ii. Brand awareness (BAWR) = the regression coefficient of (3.672) with a significant level of (.000) which is below 0.05. Hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance and the rejection of the null hypothesis. It is therefore concluded that  
**2H2: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand awareness.**
- iii. Brand association (BASS) = the regression coefficient of (2.345) with a significant level of (.021) which is beyond 0.05. Hence the alternative hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance and the acceptance of the null hypothesis. It is therefore concluded that  
**3H3: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by brand association.**
- iv. Brand loyalty (BLYT) = the regression coefficient of (1.180) with a significant level of (.241) which is beyond 0.05. Hence the alternative hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance and the acceptance of the null hypothesis. It is therefore concluded that  
**4H4: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by brand loyalty.**

**Figure 5. 1: PP Plot**



The normal PP Plot are the points that are reasonably close to the line of best fits. It can be observed that from the point, there is no major deviation from the line. Therefore, it appears that there is a good fit from the PP Plot.

**Figure 5. 1: Scatter plot**



## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to test the list of four hypotheses formulated in this dissertation. The statistical package was utilised in computing the data retrieved from the field study. This chapter first presented the result of the reliability, which shows the questionnaire is okay. The descriptive statistic was employed in describing the respondent's responses. In contrast, inferential statistics vis correlation and regression was employed to test the hypotheses of the study, and the result reveals that **1H1**: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by perceived quality; **2H2**: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is impacted by brand awareness; **3H3**: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by brand association.; and **4H4**: Consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee is not impacted by brand loyalty.

## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This section is aimed at discussing the empirical findings generated from the data collected in this study. It also discusses the results of the hypotheses in light with the previous studies conducted on brand equity dimensions and consumer buying behaviour. As addressed in the previous chapter, the four hypotheses were statistically tested with a view of solving the problem of the study, and the results led to accepting one hypothesis and the rejection of the other three hypotheses.

### **6.2 Discussion on Research Objective One**

The first research objective of this study sought to ascertain whether the buying decision of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by perceived quality. Based on the result obtained from the analysis of the study, perceived quality has a relationship with consumer's decision in Ireland to buy coffee as reported by in the Pearson correlation analysis ( $R=.281$ ;  $P\text{Value}=.002$ ). However, the impact of perceived quality on consumer buying behaviour is negative as revealed in the multiple linear regression coefficients of  $(.992)$  with a significant level of  $(.323)$  which is beyond  $0.05$ . The result of this study suggests that the consumer's buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland is not impacted by perceived quality.

These findings hold a conclusive agreement with the previous empirical work of (Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif, 2016) who examined the impact of brand equity on buyer buying intention of L'oreal skincare products among the students in the University of Lahore. The study employed a quantitative approach and using a questionnaire as the research instrument amid 100 participants. By adopting the same statistical tool with the current study, the authors reveal that perceived quality does not impact consumer buying behaviour. Other studies reported an opposite result to the current study, for example, Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who adopted the same methodology, found out that perceived quality is significant to

buyers buying conduct. Also, Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) who adopted the quantitative method among 100 participants in Starbucks Manado Town square found out that perceived quality has a positive and significant influence on the buyer purchasing conduct in Starbucks Manado Town Square.

### **6.3 Discussion on Research Objective Two**

The second research objective of this study is aimed at ascertaining whether the buying decision of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by brand awareness. Based on the result obtained from the analysis of the study, brand awareness has a significant relationship with Irish consumer's decision to buy coffee as reported by in the Pearson correlation analysis ( $R=.516$ ;  $PValue= .000$ ). It also reported having a positive impact on consumer buying behaviour, as reported in the regression coefficient of (3.672) with a significant level of (.000) which is below 0.05. The result of this study suggests that buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by brand awareness.

This result of this study contradicts the study done by (Fouladivanda, Pashandi, Hooman and Khanmohammadi, 2013) on the effect of brand equity on buyer's purchasing conduct of FMCG in Iran. The authors found that brand awareness has an impact on consumers buying behaviour. Also, Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif (2016) found out that brand awareness is insignificant on consumer buying behaviour.

Meanwhile, some studies corroborate the current study, for example, Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who examined the impact of brand equity on the purchasing behaviour of Millennials towards smartphones in Bangladesh. The authors found out that brand awareness has a weak, but positive relationship with buyers buying behaviour. Another study was done by Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) which examined the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour

in Starbucks Manado town square, it was reported that brand awareness has a positive and significant impact on the buyer purchasing conduct in Starbucks Manado Town Square.

#### **6.4 Discussion on Research Objective Three**

The third research objective of this study sought to ascertain whether the buying decision of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by brand association. From the result obtained in the analysis of the study, the brand association has a relationship with Irish consumer's decision to buy coffee as reported by in the Pearson correlation analysis ( $R=.448$ ;  $P\text{Value}=.000$ ), but the impact of brand association on consumer buying behaviour is negative; as reported in the regression coefficient of (2.345) with a significant level of (.021) which is beyond 0.05. The result of this study suggests that the buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland is not impacted by brand association.

This result is related to the empirical studies done on brand association and consumer buying behaviour. A study was done by Koapaha and Tumiwa (2016) on the effect of brand equity on consumer buying behaviour in Starbucks Manado town square, discovered that brand association does not affect the buyer purchasing behaviour. Another study was done by Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif (2016) on the impact of brand equity on buyer buying intention of L'oreal skincare products among the students in the University of Lahore. Found out that brand association is insignificant on consumer buying behaviour.

On the other hand, an earlier study was done by Fouladivanda, Pashandi, Hooman and Khanmohammadi (2013) on the effect of brand equity on buyer's purchasing conduct of FMCG in Iran found out that brand association has a positive and significant effect on consumers' buying behaviour. Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who examined the impact of brand equity on the purchasing behaviour of Millennials towards smartphones in Bangladesh. Discovered that brand association is significant and has a positive impact on buyers buying conduct.

## 6.5 Discussion on Research Objective Four

The fourth research objective sought to ascertain whether the buying decision of coffee consumers in Ireland is impacted by brand loyalty. Based on the result obtained in the analysis of the study, brand loyalty has a significant relationship with Irish consumer's decision to buy coffee as reported by in the Pearson correlation analysis ( $R=.439$ ;  $P\text{Value}= .000$ ). But the impact of brand loyalty on consumer buying behaviour is negative as reported in the regression coefficient of (1.180) with a significant level of (.241) which is beyond 0.05.

The result of this study contradicts the result of Akhtar, UL-AIN, Siddiqi, Ashraf and Latif (2016) reveals that brand loyalty has a significant impact on student's purchase decision. A similar study conducted by Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who examined the dimensions of brand equity on the buying conduct of millennials consumers; found out that brand loyalty is significant to buyers buying conduct.

The differences and similarities of these previous literature to the current study can be attributed to the methodology adopted in solving the problems of the study. It is also worth to note that these studies have been conducted in other countries and industries. Majority of the previous studies was done in developing countries where consumer's choice for a brand can be greatly influenced by other factors like prices, quantity, package size, sales promotion, etc. while in the developed countries like Ireland, consumer buying behaviour could be influenced by different factors. All these considerations can lead to differences in the research outcome.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Having succinctly examined and discussed the identified factors influencing consumer buying behaviour of coffee consumers in Ireland, with particular focus on the mediating effect of brand equity, this chapter presents the conclusion drawn from the findings of the study. Also, it identifies the contributions and implications of this study, as well as outlining some suggestions for further studies.

### **7.2 Conclusion**

The results of this study empirically verified the hypotheses on ‘Perceived quality’, ‘Brand awareness’, ‘Brand association’, ‘Brand loyalty’ in their influence to the consumer buying behaviour of coffee among coffee consumers in Ireland. The results of this study suggest that only brand awareness is a strong predictor of consumer buying behaviour among coffee consumers in Ireland. It is therefore concluded that for coffee manufacturers or the retail outlets to influence the buying behaviour of the Irish coffee consumers, there is a need for them to give adequate attention towards promoting their brands. This is because an excellent product that lacks adequate exposure is likely to fail when it comes to the patronage of such items. It is therefore imperative to give proper attention to promoting the brand and leveraging social media and other forms of media publicity.

### **7.3 Contribution and Implications**

Based on the findings from this study, the need to adequately integrate the advertising mix in ways to help increase brand equity, and brand’s overall long-term sustainability is apparent. Coffee retail store in Ireland can enhance the purchase intention of the coffee consumers by increasing product and brand variety; improving product quality, offering excellent value for money, all these improvements can help stimulate the buying behaviour of coffee consumers.

This study also implies the critical importance for coffee manufacturers or coffee retail stores to create and improve brand awareness which will help improve consumer's perception about a firm's brand. This can be achieved by designing advertising commercials tailored to reinforcing firms brand image. There could also be an inclusion of various promotional activities, for example, providing free samples, coffee tasting during the point of sales and giving an avenue for suggestion and feedback. This will create a long-term benefit that positively affecting coffee consumers buying intention.

When a coffee brand manufacturer or retail store can successfully showcase their brand, this can help enhance the brand's perceived quality, brand association, as well as bringing the benefit of sticking to that same brand (i.e. brand loyalty). Thus, firms should do more to showcase their brand(s).

#### **7.4 Limitations and Suggestion for Further studies**

One limitation of this study relates to the methodology adopted. Due to the recent global COVID - 19 pandemic which forced all the retail outlets as well as the consumers to be quarantined, this, as a result, deprived the author of this study to meet and recruit a larger sample of Irish coffee consumers in the retail outlets and at the point of purchase. This led to adopting the online electronic survey, which resulted in some biased responses which affected the result of the findings. Thus, future authors should employ a mixed methodology that recruiting a larger sample of participants and to collect qualitative data by visiting the retail outlets where consumers can be surveyed at the point of purchase to enhance result generalization.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey Questionnaire

#### APPENDIX

#### Questionnaire

#### SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### SECTION A: Personal Data: (Please Indicate Appropriately)

1. Gender: (please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Marital status: (please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity (please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

#### SECTION B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Please read the following statements carefully and tick appropriately to show the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement.' SD = Strongly Disagree'; 'D=Disagree' 'A=Agree'; and 'SA=Strongly Agree

S/N	A. CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR	1 SA	2 A	3 D	4 SD
1.	You frequently purchase your coffee brand based on the perceived quality				
2.	You do not really buy coffee that you are not knowledgeable of its brand				
3	You repeatedly buy coffee brands you are loyal to the brand				
4	Brand loyalty has nothing to do with your buying behaviour of coffee				
S/N	B. PERCEIVED QUALITY	1 SA	2 A	3 D	4 SD
5	You are very satisfied with your coffee brand based on its reliability				
6	In terms of serviceability, you wait too long before your coffee is served.				
7	You buy your coffee brand due to its attractive appearance				
8	You could still buy your coffee brand regardless of its good overall quality				
S/N	C. BRAND AWARENESS	1 SA	2 A	3 D	4 SD
9	You will not purchase a product if you don't recognise its brand				
10	You can recognise your coffee brand				

RR

11	Your coffee brand is top of your mind				
12	You have adequate knowledge about our favourite coffee brand				

S/N	D. BRAND ASSOCIATION	1 SA	2 A	3 D	4 SD
13	You have a pictorial idea of your coffee brand in your memory				
14	You prefer to purchase products that can give you prestige feelings.				
15	Your perception and experience does not determine your choice for a coffee brand				
16	An image of a brand is not relevant to me when purchasing coffee				
17	My feelings towards a brand could turn me off from anything relating to the brand.				
S/N	E. BRAND LOYALTY	1 SA	2 A	3 D	4 SD
18	Brand loyalty is not important regarding my attitude of buying coffee				
19	I am very loyal to my favourite coffee brand				
20	There is a relationship between brand loyalty and my choice of coffee brand				
21	I buy a coffee brand that is available just-in-time				

Thank you for your co-operation.

Any additional suggestion? Please indicate

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