

*An Exploration of The Effects of Brand Choice Factors On
Gift Giving Amongst Irish Consumers*

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Abstract

The concept of gift giving and how brand choice factors affect gift giving amongst the Irish consumer market is one that remains relatively understudied to date. Previous scholars have delved into gift giving research in a variety of instances (Belk, 1982; Parsons, 2002; Clarke 2006) and explored a vast spectrum of research topics to date. Similarly, the literature pertaining to brand choice is one that is continually evolving and has been extensively investigated (Parsons 2002; Low and Lamb 2000; Parsons, Ballantine and Kennedy, 2011). Whilst some research has touched on the two topics as a whole, the lack of research into the affects that brand choice factors have on gift amongst Irish consumers calls for further investigation.

This paper aims to add to the presently available data on the research topic with relevance to the Irish consumer base. Specific attention has been paid to the previous literature and underpinning study to identify relevant brand choice factors. These factors are then applied to the qualitative research method explained within this work in order to extrapolate data from a representative sample of the population.

Five semi structured interviews were conducted amongst a mixed sample of Irish consumers with the data being thematically analysed. The results are thoroughly discussed and recommendations from the findings are given.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to The Study:

1.1.1 Gift Giving:

The act of gift giving is prevalent across society on a global scale, as far back as hunter gatherer societies, there has been evidence of this activity being present. Some of the more notable work in the gift giving sphere discussed in this paper comes from the likes of Belk (1982), who noted that purchase intent in gift giving situations could be influenced by the nature of the situation itself, Clarke (2006) who proposed that the occasion of the gift being given dictated the choice of gift and Parsons (2002) who postulated that gifts could be used as form of communication regarding relationships.

According to Unity Marketing (2015), the United States consumer base alone, individually spends up to an average of \$1,851 a year on gifts or gift related accessories (gift wrapping or gift vouchers etc) for their friends and family members. This proves that this industry contributes a substantial amount to the annual expenditure amongst American consumers.

1.1.2 Brand choice:

A crucial element related to gift giving pertains to the selection of a product, and furthermore the particular brand that this product falls under. Previous work by scholars have found that gifts with symbolic meaning hold more importance in a gift giving scenario to recipients and that they can send a message in regard to the relationship (Parsons, 2002; Parsons, Ballantine and Kennedy, 2011).

Therefore, the choice of brand used by a giver is an important consideration to make. The work of Low and Lamb (2000), has highlighted that the associations consumers make regarding brands is one of many influential factors which can alter givers purchasing decision. Other factors include brand perceptions, ethical considerations and brand loyalty which are further discussed in chapter 2.

The present study aims to investigate the links between brand choices and gift giving amongst the Irish consumer base, primarily to understand what influence factors of brand choice can have over gift giving decisions.

1.2 Gaps In The Literature & Research Justification:

The major gap that presents itself in the research is the distinct lack of clarity related to a giver's reasoning for choosing particular brands as gifts and how brand choice factors affect these decisions. While the work of Sarkar and Sarkar Bose (2019) postulate that the nature of the relationship will affect the attitude of the giver (i.e. giver-centric or recipient-centric, Sherry 1983), they do not investigate why the giver is driven toward purchasing a particular brand as a gift.

Similarly the work of other scholars covers a wide spectrum of reasons as to the intentions behind giving a gift such as satisfaction (Hwang and Chu, 2019; Faldetta 2011), relationship solidification (Aknin and Human, 2015) and even expression of feelings (Flynn and Adams, 2009). However none of these previous works delve into whether brand choice factors have any impact on the purchasing decisions of gift givers. The work of Parsons (2002) does highlight the link between brand choices and gift giving but does not directly contribute to how brand choice factors may influence gifting decisions.

Furthermore, across the body of literature investigated in chapter 2 of the present research there is a common theme of the location of study being outside of the Republic of Ireland, not to mention a great deal of the works being outside of the European Union. The researcher therefore felt it important to give a representative outlook on the topic of study from a cohort of the Irish consumer base.

This research paper hopes to add to the body of literature relating to brand choice factors and gift giving using previous research as the underpinning theory to this work. Using brand choice factors identified by Narteh, Odoom, Braimah and Buame, (2012) in their quantitative exploration of automobile brand choice in Ghana, the researcher hopes that by contributing to the evidence base surrounding the research topic, future academic investigation on the subject will be enhanced. Additionally, it is hoped that by using in-depth qualitative insights, this body of work will provide a rational starting point from which future research may be based upon.

1.3 Research Aims:

This study aims to provide some clarity as to the influence that factors of brand choice can have on the gift giving decisions of consumers. A primary goal is to address the gaps in the literature as previously discussed and use the brand choice factors identified by Narteh et al., (2012) to guide the interview process in order to extrapolate relevant data. This will facilitate a more comprehensive assimilation of the Irish consumer base' views as to what extent (if any) brand choice factors can influence their gift purchasing decisions. These perceptions have been sparsely investigated in the previous literature, in particular with little regard to the Irish market, and so this paper aims to add to this conversation. Ultimately the aim of this paper is to provide a solid foundation for future academic explorations into the subject area and to offer guidance to those undertaking similar studies.

1.4 Research Questions:

In order to satisfy the aforementioned research aims and furthermore address the identified gaps in the literature, the following research questions have been formulated. These questions were influenced by the brand choice factors identified in the underpinning work for this study (Narteh et al., 2012):

- 1. How aware of brand choices are consumers in gift giving situations?**
- 2. Do product attributes and accessibility influence a consumer's brand choice in gift giving instances?**
- 3. What affects (if any) does brand image have on a consumer's brand choice in gift giving scenarios?**
- 4. Does the price of a brand impact a consumer's brand choice when giving a gift?**
- 5. How does a consumer's emotional connections to brands affect their choice of brand when giving a gift?**

Furthermore, the research objectives of this study have been formulated from the above questions and are further discussed in the methodology section of this study in chapter 3.

1.5 Research Scope & Methods Used:

Throughout the course of this study, the researcher has delved into the previous literature surrounding both gift giving and brand choice in order to gain a greater understanding of the field and present it in a logical manner pertaining to the study. Through the use of qualitative primary data collection, the researcher has also attempted to understand the first hand opinions and feelings of consumers in relation to how factors of brand choice affect their gift giving decisions.

In terms of the research methodologies used in this paper, the researcher was faced with a choice between mono methods and mixed methods of research. Saunders (2019) explains that mixed methods of research entails using two methods (i.e. qualitative and quantitative); whereas mono methods of research is the use of only a single method. Due to the fact that the nature of the aforementioned research questions seek to understand the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ study participants have particular feelings or perceptions toward brand choice in gift giving circumstances, previous scholars suggest using qualitative research methods in order to better extract the relevant data (Brand, 2009). The present study follows the suggestions of previous works and undertakes a qualitative approach to the collection of relevant. The qualitative method used was that of semi structured interviews guided by the research objectives and literature examined further in this paper.

1.5.1 Primary Research Sample:

The current study conducts five qualitative interviews of a semi structured nature with five separate participants. These individuals were chosen using two non-probability sampling techniques, purposive and convenience sampling, which is discussed further in chapter 3. The individual participants were considered by the researcher to potentially hold important information related to the research topic and therefore were suitable for this study. A breakdown of study participants can be seen below in the Appendix.

1.6 Structure & Overview of The Research:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The introductory chapter of this study gives a concise background to the topic of the research and identifies the gaps in the literature pertaining to brand choice factors and their effects on gift giving decisions. The scope and methods of the research are briefly introduced, and the structure of the paper is outlined.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Chapter two is a comprehensive review of the past academic literature relating to gift giving and brand choice which pertains to the research topic. Underpinning literature on brand choice factors are duly considered in this chapter and expanded upon.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter sees the formulation and discussion of the research objectives as well as the primary data collection methods employed in this study. The philosophies and approaches are discussed, the population sample is clarified, and the data collection process is also explained in this section.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings & Discussion

The results of the primary data collection of this study are critically analysed and discussed using a thematic narrative in this chapter. The underpinning work selected to guide and support this study is utilised to assist in the analysis.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions & Recommendations

The final chapter of this study consists of a reflective review of the findings from the primary data collected in the research process. The success of the study in accomplishing the research objectives is assessed and recommendations for future research is offered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review:

2.0 Introduction:

This chapter aims to express some of the various schools of thought that has been previously put forward by scholars in the gift giving arena. The research highlighted in the following literature review explains how factors of brand choice can contribute to various effects on consumers preferences when choosing a gift. Literature on the topic of gift giving is vast and multifaceted with researchers presenting a variety of concepts that influence the decisions related to choosing a gift. The author will first analyse the topic of gift giving and the activities involved with this process. The author will then examine brand choice and the various themes within this topic before moving onto the specific concepts that affect gift giving decisions.

This study examines a select amount of these concepts in relation to the Irish consumer market. In order to limit ambiguity in relation to other research, the present research follows the definition of a gift as expressed by Belk and Coon (1993), as a product or service willingly and formally given to another party without an expectation of this act being reciprocated.

2.1 Gift Giving:

Gift giving has been explored in a variety of different settings and from a multitude of academic and societal viewpoints. From relational to situational and even communicative motivations for giving a person a gift, there is a vast spectrum of reasons put forward as to why society carries out this activity on a daily basis. For example Belk (1982), explains that whilst a variation of factors may affect the choice of a gift, the situation that a gifter finds themselves in and who they are buying a gift for, will have a direct effect on the level of involvement expended by that party when making their gift decisions.

In terms of communication between two parties, there has been research to suggest that gift giving can be used as a method to express value between givers and recipients (Steffel, M. and Le Boeuf, 2014; Lowrey, Otnes and Ruth, 2004), a simple example of which can be seen in the giving of flowers or jewellery to a significant other.

Additionally the occasion that a gift is being purchased for has been extensively researched. Whilst investigating the relevance of Christmas and how the occasion affected the parents' level of involvement in buying gifts for their children, Clarke (2006) found that whilst Christmas was an important time for parents to give gifts to their children, the occasion may not be as prominent as it once was due to year round every-day consumption. Thus reducing the involvement by parents in choosing a gift.

According to Kim and Kim (2019) and the U.S Bureau of Labor and Statistics (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), the gift industry in the United States in 2014 was worth 135 million dollars and projected to grow in the coming years. This evidence showcases the lucriveness of this market not only in the U.S but on a potentially global scale. This additionally verifies the need for organisations to understand the various influences brand choice has on gift giving decisions amongst consumers. In order to understand these concepts, the processes involved in gift giving must first be acknowledged.

2.1.1 The Motivations That Drive Giving:

The giving of a gift from one person to another is an act that can carry a variety of meanings. Understanding the various motivations that drive people to give in the first place is crucial when interpreting how brand choices influence decisions in the gift giving process.

According to Hwang and Chu (2019) a study carried out by Sherry (1983) segments the motivations for gift giving into two separate categories, one being self-orientation and the second being other-orientation. Self-orientation dictates that the gifts selected by the giver are intended to improve their own satisfaction, whilst in contrast other-orientation implies that the gifts selected by the giver are focused more on the recipient's satisfaction (Hwang and Chu, 2019).

Self-orientated gift giving practices have been seen to bring both advantages and disadvantages to both givers and recipients (Faldetta, 2011). Other-orientated gift giving however, can be seen to develop wide networks of relationships (Zollo et al., 2017).

Another perspective of motivations that drive gift giving is the building and solidification of relationships (Belk, 1979). Aknin and Human (2015), explain that gifts pertaining to the

giver's personality or personal traits can potentially enhance a feeling of closeness between the giver and recipient, thus creating a stronger bond between the two parties.

Additionally, building on previous research (Sherry 1983), Sarkar and Sarkar Bose (2019) put forward that givers can be of two varying attitudes “giver-centric”, which pertains to the giver purchasing a gift that appeals to their own interests, or “recipient-centric” which dictates that the giver is more concerned with addressing the recipient’s likes than their own. Furthermore, in the same research conducted by Aknin and Human (2015), they explain that at the time of receiving a present, recipients may experience a heightened feeling of closeness to the giver when a giver-centric gift has been offered. Fostering this “closeness” between themselves and the recipient may be the objective of the giver when choosing a particular gift.

2.1.2 Interpreting A Gift:

As mentioned previously, reasons for giving a gift can be varied. Parsons (2002) expresses that gifts intended as communication efforts, can be used for a variety of reasons from expressing the strength of a relationship, to a simple ‘thank you’. How a recipient interprets this message is an important consideration that should not be overlooked.

In a study conducted by Flynn and Adams (2009), the researchers found that whilst gift givers assumed that gifts of a larger stature (expressing a higher price) would draw more favourable reactions from recipients than gifts of a smaller stature (expressing a lower price); the results prove otherwise. The findings of this study showed that whilst givers believed more expensive gifts expressed a greater level of thoughtfulness; recipients were less likely to process an expensive gift in the same nature of the giver and therefore would have contrasting feelings towards it (Flynn and Adams, 2009).

Parsons (2002) explains that recipients may read into gifts via brand associations, for example a strong brand given as a gift may lead the recipient to believe that the giver sees their relationship as strong. In contrast, a brand not known for its quality or longevity may lead the recipient to assume that the giver does not see the relationship lasting.

Furthermore, building on the work of Parsons (2002), a study conducted by Parsons, Ballantine and Kennedy (2011) postulates that consumers find more appreciation from gifts

of a symbolic nature from close friends or loved ones, for example a husband giving a wife a piece of jewellery that holds relevance to their relationship.

2.2 Brand Choice:

Brand choice is a vital factor to consider in the gift giving decision making process. The choice of brand when intended as a gift can be influenced by a variety of factors each with varying consequences on the choice of brand. One of the more prominent factors is brand associations. According to Wear and Heere (2020), brand associations are any thoughts or perceptions that portray a brand in the consumer's mind. Grace and O'Cass (2002) found that positive associations to brands relate to positive brand equity.

Furthermore according to Low and Lamb (2000), the associations held in favour of one brand can project a sense of superiority over other brands in a market and therefore sway more consumers to a particular product. Parsons (2002) explains that these different brand associations grant the giver more control over the message being expressed with the gift in order to enhance a relationship. This in turn could potentially affect a consumer's choice of brand when selecting a gift, as the product will have to allow the giver to convey their desired message to the intended recipient.

2.2.1 Brand Perceptions:

Brand perceptions are related to brand associations, mentioned above, as they concern a consumer's beliefs or opinions of a brand based on a firm's actions. Keller (1993) puts forward that brand perceptions are linked to the meanings that a brand holds in a consumer's mind, whether that be through a brand's personality or associations etc.

Additionally, Romaniuk and Nenycz-Thiel (2013) have discovered that there is a beneficial correlation between brand perception and brand loyalty. Therefore, from a consumer gift giving perspective, a more positive perception of a brand could potentially mean the increased purchase of a product not only for personal use but intended as a gift to another consumer, furthering a brands market penetration.

2.2.1.2 Ethical Effects on Brand Perception:

There are however important considerations to make when discussing brand perception, one of which is ethical concerns. Garanti (2019) suggests that companies today are under the

constant scrutiny of consumers with regards to whether their activities fall under what a general consensus would consider to be “right and good”. In the same paper the author also explains that consumers are becoming more conscious of environmental and social ethical concerns (Strong, 1996; Garanti 2019). The danger of brands acting unethically can lead to loss of equity through product boycotts, a loss of brand reputation and compromised profits in the future (Farah and Newman, 2010; Koku, Akhigbe and Springer 1997).

With this increase in ethical awareness it is crucial that brands understand the potential fallout of acting in an unethical manner. For example Trump and Newman (2017) discuss the Volkswagen Dieselgate scandal whereby it came to light that the car giant had cheated on emissions tests in 2015. In this paper, through the use of various sources (Autolist, 2016; Shultz, 2015), Trump and Newman (2017) explain not only how 27-28% of consumers in a survey were more unwilling to buy Volkswagen products after the scandal, but also that public disdain for the brand increased on social media with a steep incline in negative posts on Twitter relating to Volkswagen with 766 posts 4 days before the scandal in contrast to 16,070 negative posts 4 days after the scandal.

Furthermore Brunk (2010) suggests that companies must be self-aware of how their actions are perceived in the market and ensure to implement responsible, ethical activities and show a proactive attitude towards these procedures in order to build a positive brand reputation amongst consumers.

2.2.1.3 Brand Loyalty:

Brand loyalty is an essential concept to consider when investigating consumer behaviour relating to brand choice. Oliver (1999) has offered a definition of brand loyalty to be a commitment by a consumer to repatronize their preferred product (or brand) ongoingly, causing same-brand purchasing and avoiding marketing efforts from alternative brands. Additionally, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) suggest that brand, or purchase loyalty, is a strong indicator of future buying intentions. This would most likely have an effect on the consumer's choice of brand in a gift purchasing scenario.

Research carried out by Yeh, Wang and Yieh (2016) explains that brand loyalty is comprised of two frames of behaviour, attitudinal and behavioural. They postulate that attitudinal loyalty is correlated with purchase intentions and a consumer's resistance to “counter-persuasion”

(i.e. from competing brands); whilst behavioural loyalty correlates to improved market share (Yeh, Wang and Yieh, 2016).

Furthermore, Xiao, Wang, Ji and Cai (2021) explain that brand loyalty can in fact be affected by a consumer's cognitive processes; for example consumers may judge a brand as less desirable than competitors if the brands activities are unethical in nature. This correlates with the previous section regarding ethical perceptions of brands.

2.3 Key Factors of Brand Choice / Conceptual Framework:

Many studies offer various broad explanations of brand choice yet fail to delve into specific factors that influence this decision making process. This is essential to understand how consumers settle on a particular brand in purchasing situations. In order to better understand these choices the present study will be underpinned by the work of Narteh, Odoom, Braimah and Buame (2012). Their study into the key drivers of automobile brand choice in Sub Saharan Africa offers an in depth examination of factors of brand choice via a framework developed for their research. (See figure 1 for framework)

The framework consists of seven different factors; (1) Awareness (2) Image/Identity (3) Accessibility (4)Emotional Connection (5)Price (6)Product Attributes (7)External Influences, as seen in the diagram in Figure 1.

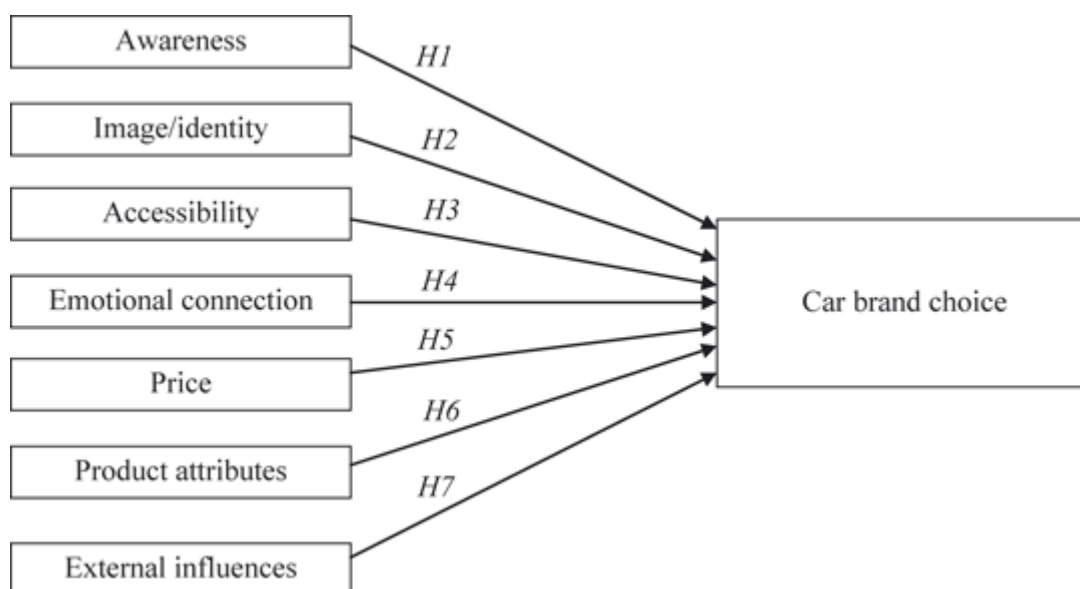


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for car brand choice factors in Sub Saharan Africa. (Narteh, Odoom, Braimah and Buame 2012)

Throughout their study, Narteh et al (2012) found varying evidence confirming that a number of the proposed factors in their framework contributed to the consumers choice of brand in the automobile market in Ghana. By examining the previous literature in relation to six of these specific concepts and their effect on brand choice, it is intended to formulate a number of hypotheses to be examined in relation to the male segment of the Irish consumer base and their choices in gift giving.

2.4 Awareness:

Brand awareness is a key concept in the academic branding sphere. Assael and Day (1968) put forward that brand awareness relates to the level of awareness that consumers have in relation to a brand being involved in a product segment. Past research conducted by Jiang (2004) highlights the importance that brand awareness holds with regard to brand choice in purchase decisions, showing that the more aware a consumer is of a brand the more likely they are to buy it.

Other previous research has postulated that brand awareness can also have positive effects on a product's perceived quality in the mind of the consumer (Severi and Ling, 2013; Azzari and Pelissari, 2020). Furthermore, Azzari and Pelissari (2020) explain that a consumer's awareness and familiarity of a brand will enhance this perception of quality, driving these consumers to purchase the products related to the brand and ultimately foster improved market penetration and consumer loyalty.

2.4.1 Purchasing Influence:

In a study related to eco-efficient products and purchase intention, Lopes and Veiga (2019) explain that a brand (along with its advertising strategies) has the ability to alter a consumer's attitudes and ultimately their choice of purchase. This relates to the aforementioned concept of brand awareness, dictating that consumers with more awareness of a brand's offerings are more likely to purchase these products in contrast to consumers with lower levels of awareness of a brand.

However, it is important to understand that simply having a presence in a market will not necessarily grant a brand higher levels of influence over consumers' purchasing decisions.

Esch, Langner, Schmitt and Geus (2006) explain that customer based brand equity grows when consumers hold strong associations of the brand in their memory. Furthermore, Keller (2009) explains that for a brand to gain and hold customer based brand equity, consumers must not only be aware of the product offerings but also have favourable associations of the brand in contrast to their competitors in the market.

2.5 Image:

Brand Image is another crucial concept that has been investigated by Narteh et al (2012) in their conceptual framework for key factors of brand choice. Kotler and Keller (2008) suggest that brand image is the beliefs and associations that consumers hold in their minds in relation to a particular brand. Bian and Moutinho (2011) explain that a strong brand image should foster market position, protect the brand against direct market competition, improve performance and nurture the building of brand equity overall.

Chi Le (2021), postulates that brand image is an ever evolving construct and that the interactions and experiences between a brand and possible consumers in the marketplace can affect how a potential customer forms an impression of a brand, which can affect brand perception. Additionally, Toop (2014) explains that different consumers can have completely subjective perceptions of a brand, meaning it is possible for a brand to hold more than one brand image in the minds of various consumers in the marketplace. However it is important to recognise the difference between a brand's image and its identity.

2.5.1 Identity:

Whilst brand image relates to the beliefs and associations the consumer holds in relation to a brand; brand identity is a slightly different aspect that has been aligned with brand image by researchers in the past. In the paper by Bian and Moutinho (2011), the authors use Aaker's (1996) explanation that brand image is the consumers perception of a brand, whereas brand identity "is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain". They go on to explain that the identity to which a strategist attempts to align their brand with, is intended to be used as a promise or guarantee to consumers and to represent what the brand stands for as a whole (Bian and Moutinho ,2011).

Nandan (2005) explains that the congruence between brand image and brand identity is imperative to building strong brand loyalty and thus securing greater market penetration. Any wavering between the two concepts can cause the brand to lose favour with consumers and see them shift their purchase intentions to other competitors in the market. For example, as discussed by Taylor (2017), Pepsi's 'Live Now' campaign featured an advertisement starring supermodel Kendall Jenner, showing her join what appears to be a crowd of protestors marching toward a line of police officers. The model emerges from the crowd and offers a Pepsi to one officer who accepts, which suddenly solves whatever issue the protest was initially about. This advertisement received a resoundingly negative amount of backlash in relation to the sensitive nature of events at the time (such as the Black Lives Matter movement).

As Taylor (2017) explains, Pepsi is a brand with a youthful and exciting image, however in this case the identity of what this advertisement promised, and the brand's image did not appear to be in sync and therefore damaged the brand perception in consumer's mind.

2.6 Price:

An important factor that any consumer takes into consideration when purchasing a product (especially as a gift) is the price of the item. The importance of price when it comes to a consumer's brand choice has been thoroughly highlighted in past research (Foster and Cadogan, 2000). Herrmann, Xia, Monroe and Huber (2007) explain that a consumer's perception of a product can influence their willingness to spend the relative amount of money in price, specifically if a customer perceives a product or brand to be of high quality they will be less adverse to paying a higher price for it.

Additionally research conducted by Iglesias and DelVecchio (2012) points out that while prices of a lower nature typically evoke a lower sense of perceived brand quality; when these prices are offered in the form of a discount there are notable changes in consumers' perceptions toward this brand. The authors go on to explain that the overuse of lowering prices as a discount may lead consumers to expect this lowered price as a standard and thus affect future price expectation and subsequently brand choice decisions (Iglesias and DelVecchio, 2012).

2.6.1 Price Fairness:

A contributing factor to price as a concept of brand choice is price fairness. Xia, Monroe, and Cox (2004) suggest that price fairness is related to a consumer's own perception as to whether the difference (or lack thereof) of one brand's price compared with another is justified.

Research carried out by Bolton, Warlop and Alba (2003) states that consumers use three “reference points” in an attempt to determine price fairness, which include competitors’ prices, previous prices and the perceived costs of a seller / provider. In examining the Bolton et al., (2003) study; Rondan and Martin (2011) explain that once consumers use this reference point technique, they consider the gap between these prices and the actual price of the product in order to determine the profit made by the seller. Ultimately this perception of price fairness will affect the overall price perception of the brand and contribute to brand choice decisions by consumers.

2.7 Product Attributes & Accessibility:

2.7.1 Product Attributes:

The product attribute concept of brand choice pertains to a brands attempt at differentiating itself from competitors in the market by adding new additions to existing products or products categories. Nowlis and Simonson (1996) put forward that adding innovative or unique product features is a commonplace strategy to bolster favour within a marketplace and they offer the example of Minolta being the pioneer of automatic focusing camera lens’, adding greatly to their market position. Uggla (2004) explains that product quality is an example of a product attribute that consumers hold to be an important factor in brand choice decisions.

In contrast Ballantyne, Warren, and Nobbs (2006) suggest that brands should shift their focus beyond adding product attributes in order to augment brand favour with consumers and should instead focus on creating clear brand images to gain positive brand perception.

2.7.1.1 Design Effects:

An additional consideration to the product attributes argument is the design of the product itself. Kuksov (2004) postulates that consumers are more aware of product attributes, such as style or design, than of changes to price for example, and can therefore identify a product through these means in future purchasing decisions. Furthermore Khan and Rohi (2013) discuss that (in relation to mobile phones) design innovations have become more of a priority

in brand choice among younger demographics of consumers, with more concern placed on the look and feel of their purchases than before.

2.7.2 Accessibility:

The access consumers have to brands in a purchase situation (especially one such as gift giving) has also been a point of discussion amongst brand choice scholars (Narteh et al., 2012). Accessibility has been described both as the ability to recall an information source from memory and the convenience a consumer has when obtaining their brand choices (Meyvisand Janiszewski, 2004; Narteh et al., 2012). In a paper by Chandon, Morwitz and Reinartz (2004), they discuss the findings of Morwitz and Fitzsimons (2004) which states that brands with a higher level of accessibility resulted in a greater likelihood of being chosen by consumers.

Furthermore, research carried out by Biehal and Chakravarti (1983) has found that a consumer's access to information on the product or brand can in fact be seen to be a tool when it comes to brand choice. In the same paper the authors offer the example of purchasing a television, where the consumer has researched the brands that interest them, but when attempting to purchase the item they are offered additional information from a salesperson. The accessibility of choice is now broadened for the consumer upon gaining this new information and thus makes the choice of brand more complex (Biehal and Chakravarti, 1983).

2.7.2.1 Convenience:

As previously mentioned, the convenience of acquiring a brand for a consumer is an important factor of accessibility. Lin and Chang (2003) put forward that the convenience associated with a brand has a direct influence on a consumer's habitual purchasing behaviour, specifically relating to what they call “channel convenience” whereby the stores' physical stores are conveniently accessed.

However, Swoboda, Berg, Schramm-Klein and Foscht (2013) found that while their research confirms that the convenience of brands / stores is an important driver of brand loyalty (and ultimately brand choice), they also contrastingly find that the strength of brand image is more important in driving brand loyalty amongst consumers.

2.7 Emotional Connection:

Another vital concept related to the brand choice literature is the emotional connections that consumers hold in favour of their preferred brands. As illustrated in the work of Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006) consumers do feel that they genuinely have a connection between themselves and their preferred brands (in this case local coffee shops compared with the national chain brand of Starbucks).

Research conducted by Cova and Cova (2002) states that consumers want to connect emotionally with brands and wish to not simply feel as though they are just moving through the motions of a purchase interaction. Furthermore, there has been research suggesting that brand meaning, and the sense of brand community are not controlled by the strategists and marketing managers of a firm but instead by interactions between consumers (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). These interactions have been discussed by Thompson et al., (2006) stating that consumers can be seen as "enthusiastic partners", which help to develop a brand's image and meaning. These consumers are driven by their emotional connections to their preferred brands.

2.7.1 Emotional Value:

The emotional value that a consumer places on a brand is explained by Supphellen (2000) to be a person's response and viewpoint to a "brand-related experience". According to Keller (2001) the feelings evoked by these experiences can be felt in a gliding spectrum between mildness and intensity, and ranging from positive to negative.

Furthermore, Morris, Woo, Geason and Kim (2002) suggest that a consumer's emotional value and their emotional reactions to a brand can be used as accurate indicators of purchase intent. Supporting this point, Supphellen (2000) states that, "*emotional brand associations are often the dominating determinants of choice.*"

2.9 Conclusion:

In conclusion to the above literature review, it is clear that there are a variation of factors to consider in relation to the scope of the proposed research. The motivations that fuel the act of gift giving have been discussed along with how a recipient may perceive and interpret a gift.

Brand choice has been thoroughly researched in relation to brand perceptions, the effects of ethical issues on these perceptions, as well as brand loyalty.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Narteh, Odoom, Braimah and Buame (2012) has been examined and utilised to underpin the present research. Six of the seven concepts of brand choice factors identified in the Narteh et al., (2012) study have been further expanded on in the above literature review with two being linked into one factor. These factors include (1) Awareness (2) Image / Identity (3) Accessibility / Product Attributes (4) Emotional Connection (5) Price.

Additionally, the studies listed above all took place outside of Ireland. Thus the need for further study into how factors of brand choice can affect the gift giving decisions amongst Irish consumers is needed.

Chapter 3: Methodology & Research Design

3.0 Introduction:

It is suggested that the purpose of undertaking any piece of research is to strengthen our understanding of topics that are already known, to improve our knowledge of topics less well founded and to afford us an understanding of the world around us (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2011), research pertains to the systematic and cautious gathering of information through the use of objective observations. Furthermore Adams et al (2014) has suggested that not only is research methodology the scientific groundings behind all research, but also that the critical analysis of research is vital to continually improve upon its societal value.

3.1 Research Aims & Objectives:

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that research objectives should be clear and concise statements that outline the aims and purpose of a study, thus giving meaning to the work. In order to support the research carried out in this study, the researcher has used the work of Narteh et al., (2012) on brand choice factors to underpin the present study's objectives, as expanded upon in chapter two. The overall aim of the current research is to investigate brand choice factors in relation to gift giving scenarios amongst Irish consumers. In order to guide the research methods chosen in this chapter the following five objectives have been developed:

Research Objective 1	To assess awareness levels of consumers in relation to brand choice in gift giving scenarios
Research Objective 2	To investigate whether product attributes and accessibility influence brand choice in gift giving scenarios
Research Objective 3	To explore the effects that brand image has on brand choice in gift giving scenarios
Research Objective 4	To examine the extent to which price impacts brand choice in gift giving scenarios
Research objective 5	To consider the effect that emotional connections to brands can have on brand choice in gift giving scenarios

Table 1: Research Objectives

3.2 Proposed Research Methodology:

The present study was intended to delve into the consumer behaviour arena in relation to gift giving choices amongst Irish consumers. Understanding the reasons behind a consumer's choice of gift could be of vital importance to brand managers across a wide variety of industries and have a number of implications on the actions of organisations in the future. The researcher opted to take an exploratory angle on the study using qualitative methods to investigate a variety of concepts identified within the previously examined literature in chapter two.

The current research has been grounded using the Saunders Research Onion in order to guide the qualitative research methodologies in this chapter. The Saunders Research Onion was developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill. (2009), to guide business students conducting research of their own. The onion consists of three layers, an outer, inner, and central layer, each depicting the various choices that are necessary when designing and conducting research. The outer layer pertains to the research philosophies which contribute to theory development; the inner layer relates to strategies and approaches to the research and the central layer primarily looks at data collection and analysis (Saunders et al., 2009)

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) suggest that the process should begin from the outer layer and as decisions on the research methodologies are made, each layer peels away as you move through the onion until reaching the data collection and analysis stage. This sequential method is used throughout the following chapter to examine the research philosophy, approaches, strategies, and designs, as well as data collection. Additionally, the ethical considerations of the research, along with any limitations are to be outlined.

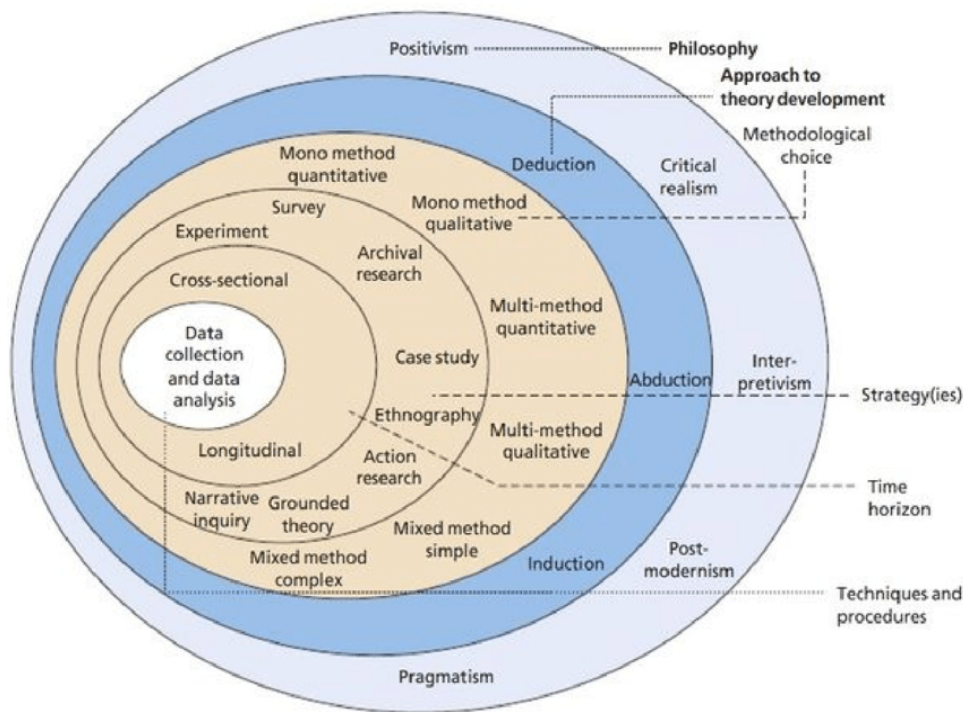


Figure 2: Saunders Research Onion; (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009)

3.3 Research Philosophy:

Following the process of the Saunders Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2009), there is an inherent need to align the research with a prevailing philosophy. It has been suggested that research philosophies are greatly influenced by a researcher's own personal values or beliefs (Saunders et al., 2019). Burrell and Morgan (2016) put forward that as a researcher progresses through their study, assumptions (whether consciously or unconsciously) will be made that will mould and elucidate how you conduct and interpret your research. As these assumptions may be made initially unbeknownst to the researcher, it is important to critically analyse the various philosophical assumptions in order to construct an accurate study.

3.3.1 Axiology, Ontology & Epistemology:

With regard to philosophical assumptions, Saunders et al., (2019) suggests that there are three separate categories in which these assumptions fall under.

- 1) ***Axiology*** relates to the effect that a researcher's own ethical beliefs and values have on the research itself. Saunders et al., (2019) explains that the researcher's values and beliefs will have some form of influence during the research process, and that axiological choices dictate that it is vital to consider these influences when conducting a study. Thereby using their own fundamental beliefs to guide their research.
- 2) ***Ontology***, according to Quinlan (2011), refers to the nature of being in the world or nature of reality. Quinlan (2011) also puts forward that due there being a variety of polarised opinions on the nature of reality, ontological issues are highly relevant in research. Saunders et al., (2019) suggests that these types of assumptions affect a researcher's view of the research process and evoke their own world views within the research.
- 3) ***Epistemology*** pertains to what Saunders et al., (2019) explains as “assumptions about knowledge” and also what is considered adequate knowledge for the purpose of the research. Epistemological assumptions tend to be far more accessible in contrast with ontological assumptions and offer a more varied selection in terms of research methods. Whilst there is more selection, it is crucial that the perceived benefits and, more importantly, the possible pitfalls of these methods are clearly understood by the researcher before undertaking them (Saunders et al., 2019).

Due to the fact that the present study is exploratory in nature, the author has opted to align the present research with this philosophical assumption. In doing so, both axiology and ontology have been rejected in order to not only make use of the varied spectrum of methods that epistemological choices offer, but also to utilise research that accounts for the subject's values and opinions.

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Saunders et al., (2009; 2019), explains via the proposed Research Onion that there are a variety of philosophical positions relating to the aforementioned assumptions of axiology, ontology and epistemology. These positions include positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and realism.

Quinlan (2011) explains that of the four positions listed previously, two relate to epistemological assumptions; positivism and interpretivism. Interpretivism was developed as a more subjective criticism of the positivist position (Quinlan, 2011). Whilst positivism deals with observing social situations through the construction of more rigid “law-like” rules, interpretivism holds that there can be a variety of perceptions of reality depending on the study participants points of view. Therefore it is believed by interpretivists that to study human beings under the same guise of positivist methods used to study phenomena, would be to sacrifice the depth of the insights potentially gained from taking each subject's views and experiences into account (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Saunders et al., (2019) explain that the purpose of interpretivism is to better understand social situations and enhance richer understandings of these situations. In the same literature Saunders et al., (2019) suggests that at different levels of a retail organisation for example, the various positions of the company from CEO to cleaners all have a very diverse experience of the workplace and can even be considered to have completely contrasting realities in that social situation. From the interpretivist perspective, ignoring these contrasting experiences and studying only what is common to all means losing vital information related to the social situation being studied (Saunders et al., 2019).

The qualitative nature of interpretivism makes this philosophical position a good match for the present study. The rejected positions included positivism which is conducted using quantitative methods and (as previously mentioned) instead of accounting for diverse interpretations of subject experiences, focuses on numbers, “law -like generalisations” and facts (Saunders et al., 2019). Pragmatism is explained by Wilson (2014) as the theory followed by researchers opposed to both interpretivist and positivist views. Saunders et al., (2019) explains that Pragmatists believe that theories only become relevant when they incite action. The final rejected approach was realism, which has been declined as Saunders et al.,

(2019) explains that this position is the foundation of positivism which has been previously rejected.

3.4 Research Approach:

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) postulate that the next layer of the Research Onion relates to the approach that the researcher will take towards their study. It is suggested that there are two differing approaches which can be undertaken; inductive research and deductive research (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4.1 Deductive & Inductive Research:

As seen in figure 3 below; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) have stated a variety of contrasting differences between the aforementioned research approaches. With regard to the deductive concept of research, it is suggested that this approach is based on the logic between concepts and predictions and sees the researcher construct their study to either verify or deny hypotheses created from these theories. Saunders et al., (2019) explain that deductive research theory is highly structured and is often criticised by advocates of the inductive methods of research, due to rigidity of results. Saunders et al., (2009) also suggest that concepts investigated via deductive research methods are required to be utilised in a way that enables them to be examined quantitatively, as deductive methods are often aligned with a positivist research philosophy.

Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scientific principles • moving from theory to data • the need to explain causal relationships between variables • the collection of quantitative data • the application of controls to ensure validity of data • the operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition • a highly structured approach • researcher independence of what is being researched • the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events • a close understanding of the research context • the collection of qualitative data • a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses • a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process • less concern with the need to generalise

Figure 3: Differences between Deductive and Inductive research approaches; (Saunders Lewis and Thornhill, 2009)

With regard to the inductive research approach, this method relies on the analysis of empirical data gained from discussions with study participants. Adams et al., (2014) explains that empirical evidence in research is “that which is verifiable by experience or observation”. This falls in line with a qualitative form of research (under an interpretivist research philosophy), which can be exploratory in nature and allow for experiences of participants to be taken into account. Saunders et al., (2019) suggests that a more “flexible structure” to the research can allow for additional findings to come to light.

3.4.2 Design of Research:

Furthermore, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) propose that further to inductive and deductive approaches, there is a variety of research designs that methodologies fall into. Here two of these are discussed, exploratory and descriptive research.

Saunders et al., (2019) explain that due to the open ended nature of exploratory research, it positions itself well within qualitative analysis. Exploratory research often takes the form of interviews or semi-structured interviews, amongst other methods, in order to allow for a free flowing structure, enabling the researcher to change the direction of the research in response to participant engagement (Saunders et al., 2019). Having the option to follow up on a participant's comments affords the author a wider spectrum of potentially important data to access. Therefore, it is believed that this method of research would be the most appropriate for the present study.

In contrast to exploratory research is descriptive research. Descriptive research is concerned with persons or situations and capturing profiles of these phenomena. Saunders et al., (2019) explains that descriptive research deals with the “who, what, when, where or how” but fails to extrapolate the “why” of these research scenarios. It is for this reason that the descriptive method of research has been rejected for this study, as it is believed that a more exploratory analysis of brand choices of gifts amongst Irish consumers will yield more data.

Finally, to recap, the present study is to be grounded using an inductive research approach in order to extrapolate insights from study participants' own experiences regarding their brand choices in gift giving scenarios. This falls under an interpretivist research philosophy which fosters individual interpretations and subjectivity (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.5 Research Strategy:

As mentioned in previous sections the research philosophy and approach are that of interpretivist and inductive respectively. This lends the design of the research towards a more exploratory format through the use of qualitative methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). However it would be to fail at considering and understanding quantitative research methods would be remiss.

3.5.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Research:

Quantitative research methodologies rely on compounded facts that have been obtained through the analysis of more numerical data. Data collection usually takes places through the use of surveys or questionnaires that contain more closed ended questions (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2011) participants of quantitative research methods are given scores based on their responses to these questions and the results are then analytically interpreted by the researcher. However, the limitations of quantitative research means that the participants' perspective of a research topic can not accurately be obtained through this methodology, which can limit the potential knowledge gained from a subject.

Qualitative research on the other hand, is the study of research participants meaning, expressions and experiences and how they relate to one another (Saunders et al., 2019). The analysis of qualitative data is typically quite narrative and is achieved through the observation and interactions between participants and researchers (Gravetter and Forzano, 2011). Saunders et al., (2019) suggest that while quantitative research subjects are considered just as “respondents” to a survey or questionnaire; qualitative research subjects are instead seen as “participants” in the actual collection of data that contributes to theory conceptualisation and development.

The current study takes the lead of Narteh et al., (2012) which was in fact a quantitative study of brand choice factors in automobiles in Ghana in order to establish a variety of brand choice factors that could be applied to gift giving scenarios. The literature pertaining to brand choice in gifts, as previously mentioned, is lacking with respect to Irish consumers and an understanding of the motivations that drive their choices. Furthermore, gift giving research contains a broad mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The author's motivation for this research is to better understand why Irish consumers feel they choose particular

brands when giving a gift to someone (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore the author has chosen the mono method qualitative approach of semi structured interviews in order to extrapolate participant feelings and interpretations towards their choice of brand in gift giving scenarios (Saunders et al., 2019). This method of research is further supported by the interpretivism research philosophy and inductive research approach pathways that have been aligned with in prior sections.

3.6 Data Collection:

As previously mentioned the present study's movement through the layers of the Saunders et al., (2009) research onion has followed a qualitative pathway; starting from an interpretivist research philosophy, progressing through to an inductive research approach and then moving to an exploratory, qualitative research strategy in the form of semi structured interviews. Additionally, Bryman (2004) postulates that an interpretive research philosophy tends to lead to a qualitative form of research method. Saunders et al., (2019) explain that qualitative methods often yield rich insights into the participants feelings on a research topic. In this section the method of data collection will be explained, the population sample will be clarified, and the method of data analysis will be set out.

3.6.1 Qualitative Data Primary Collection:

With regards to qualitative research data, Quinlan (2011) explains that this pertains to information relating to the participants feelings, ideas and understanding toward the research topic. These data sources are often more difficult to analyse through quantitative methods as they require a more in depth examination to derive the rich, subjective interpretations of participants. Seale (1998) observed that the interview method of qualitative research is more likely to yield truthful accounts of participants' experiences than other forms of research.

As briefly mentioned in section 3.5.1, the selected method of data collection in this study is semi structured interviews. Saunders et al., (2019) put forward that the use of semi structured interviews sees the researcher loosely follow a predetermined set of topics or questions to be covered, but to use these more as guidelines for the questioning. This gives the researcher the opportunity to "probe" at responses made by participants that may be of some interest to the topic at hand. Further encouraging the participant to build on the input they made to this subject (Saunders et al., 2019).

As recommended by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), a list of predetermined guiding questions based on the research were used during the interviews. This allowed the researcher to engage in follow up questions on unexpected topics arising during the process and then subsequently revisit the prepared issues. These questions can be seen in the appendix. In line with the interpretivist philosophy followed by this study, these guidelines were loosely followed in order to allow participants to discuss their feelings and experiences freely and comfortably on brand choices in gift giving scenarios.

Before beginning the interview itself, participants were fully briefed on a number of topics. A short background on the interviewer was offered in order to build a rapport and create a trustworthy image towards the researcher's intentions, thus attempting to mitigate any sense of interviewer bias. The participants' anonymity and ethical rights were then highlighted to ensure they felt safe and secure enough to participate and respond genuinely during the interview. This was also done in an attempt to reduce response bias (Saunders et al., 2019).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in line with HSE (2021) guidelines, interviews were conducted via video call using the Zoom platform. Each interview was scheduled in accordance with the participants availability in order to ensure an environment as free from disturbances as possible. The interview for each participant varied in time from between 20 to 40 minutes due to the semi structured nature of the interview. The interviews were recorded both with audio and video to enable the researcher to attempt to analyse facial expression and tone to the best of their ability. Notes were not rigorously taken to encourage a more conversational discussion between the researcher and participant; and instead a transcription application called Otter was utilised to automatically transcribe the interview from the recordings.

3.6.2 Population:

Saunders et al., (2019) suggests that conducting research on an overwhelming population of participants to be unrealistic and time consuming. It is instead recommended to take a representative sample of the overall population of a study in order to gain a more accurate set of data (Saunders et al., 2019). Sampling can be divided into two relevant techniques, each with various methods of division; probability and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling is concerned with statistical inferences that can be confirmed or denied about the target population from different cases having an equal chance of being selected from this population. This technique is often associated with quantitative research methods such as surveys or questionnaires (Saunders et al., 2019). Whereas non-probability sampling refers to situations where generalisations may be formed about the target population but can not be confirmed statistically as each element or case does not have an equal chance of selection (Saunders et al., 2019).

In terms of the population sample for the present research, the author conducted 5 interviews where 5 participants were selected using two non-probability sampling techniques in the form of convenience sampling and purposive (or judgemental) sampling. Convenience sampling occurs when a researcher enlists participants for study based on the accessibility to those participants; for example a member of the public in a shopping center (Quinlan, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). Purposive sampling consists of the researcher deciding who should be included in the study based on their judgements of the participants ability to add value to the research topic (Quinlan 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). The use of convenience sampling enabled the researcher to gather participants quickly given the time sensitive nature of the study. Whilst purposive sampling meant the researcher could select participants from this convenience group they felt would contribute rich information to the data. Of these five participants two were male and three were female with ages ranging from 24 to 31 as the researcher felt this age group would hold information that would contribute toward completing the aforementioned research objectives. Information on the participants of the study can be found in the appendix.

3.6.3 Analysing Qualitative Data:

According to Quinlan (2011), qualitative data can not be analysed through statistical means as it does not conventionally relate to numeric data. Instead, qualitative data is manipulated in a variety of different ways, one being thematic data analysis. Thematic analysis is explained to be the action of the researcher studying the data collected through their relevant methods (in this case semi structured interviews) and extrapolating themes they deem relevant to the research question of the study (Quinlan, 2011; Saunders et al., 2019). As previously mentioned the interviews conducted for this study were recorded both with audio and video and were then transcribed using the Otter platform. The transcripts of these recordings were diligently studied by the researcher in an attempt to identify themes, patterns and

commonalities between the participants' responses. The identified themes were then linked with the relative observations and objectives of the research at hand as well as the previous literature. The results of this analysis are further discussed in chapter 4.

3.7 Ethical Considerations:

Quinlan (2011) explains that ethics in research is the reasoning behind what is constituted as “the right thing to do”, and maintains that ethics comes into play at all stages of the research process. Under the requirements to carry out the present study set forth by the National College of Ireland a full ethical review of the current research was carried out by the author and submitted for review and acceptance before any research was carried out. As highlighted by Saunders et al., (2019), making the participant aware of all activities relating to their involvement in the research is a critical ethical practice. As such, the researcher made sure that each participant was informed of the purpose of the research, the reason for their requested involvement in the research, their rights to withdraw from the study at any time and their right to access any recordings or transcripts related to their participation. The fact that their involvement in the study was voluntary was also clearly stated.

The steps in place to protect the participants' anonymity were fully disclosed. Names, phone numbers, email addresses or any other personal information that could potentially identify the participant was not included in the research and was removed from the transcripts. Instead each participant was referred to as an assigned number from the researcher through the findings and discussions of the results (e.g. participant 1, 2 etc.). Participants were informed that all recordings, both video and audio, as well as transcripts of the interviews were to be stored no longer than was necessary in a password protected folder on the researcher's laptop which is again password secured. These files are to be permanently deleted once the results of the present study are released.

3.8 Limitations To The Research:

Saunders et al., (2019) explains that all research can be expected to have some form of limitations arise throughout the process. With regard to the current study there were a number of limitations experienced that may have challenged the researcher throughout the process.

The sample size of the current study was relatively small, with 5 interviews being conducted throughout the research. This was due to the time constraints in place on the study being 3 months in duration. Given a longer period of time, recruiting more participants would have been plausible, allowing for a larger data set to be gained. Furthermore, due to the smaller sample size it is difficult to generalise the findings of the present study and some amount of bias (however small) is to be expected. Follow up interviews have been suggested as a reliable method of confirming the results of research data, however due to the aforementioned time constraints this was not an option for the researcher (Saunders et al., 2019).

The most prevailing limitation to the process of conducting this study was the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst this research was conducted during a time of somewhat eased restrictions, the guidelines set out by the HSE (2021) were clear and advised against any unnecessary face to face interactions. This led to the researcher conducting interviews via the internet in order to create a comfortable and safe environment for the participant, as mentioned in section 3.6.1. Whilst this was advantageous for the recording and transcribing of the interviews, it did pose limitations for the researcher in reading facial expressions, hearing voice cues through tone and assessing body language of participants which can be contributing factors to a richer extraction of information during interviews (Saunders et al., 2019). Additionally, the internet based method of interaction between the author and the participants made the accessibility of these volunteers an issue; as they would have to have strong internet connection and a free period of uninterrupted time simultaneously.

Chapter 4: Research Findings & Discussions:

4.1 Introduction:

The following chapter aims to present the findings gained from five different semi structured interviews carried out in July 2021. The research methodology outlined in chapter 3 of this paper was followed in order to derive the relevant information from the participant interviews and correlate them to the research objectives of this study. Quotes from the participants and relevant literature have been used to further affirm the findings in this chapter.

4.2 Objective 1: To assess awareness levels of consumers in relation to brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

The first objective of the research carried out in this study was to identify to what level, if any consumers felt they were aware of brands on a daily basis and whether this affected their brand choices in a gift giving situation.

4.2.1: Brand Exposure Awareness:

With regard to their perceived level of exposure to brands, four of the five participants of the study seemed to believe that they would notice brands they were particularly interested in on a day to day basis, with the single contrasting opinion that they only find themselves becoming more aware of brands at times of high purchase occasions (i.e. Christmas or Birthdays).

Participant 2 explained that she would tend to pick up on brands particularly in her working environment, and further admits that if she liked what she saw, she would be encouraged to follow up on the brands website after the work day is finished, *“And I'd say like, because I work with the public a lot. And I definitely like notice the clothes people are wearing when they come into the shop. And I probably recognize a lot of styles and stuff from things that I would see on social media or going on to brands, websites and stuff. So I'd say quite often I would see people wearing things. And I think I think that it looks like it's from Zara, and then I'd go on and like have a look.”*
(Participant 2, Female)

4.2.2: Knowledge Of Brands:

Knowledge or familiarity of a brand is in itself a form of brand awareness, and is therefore an important consideration for this section of the present research. When questioned on this topic between choosing a product they knew of or shopping for alternative options when buying a gift there was a unanimous consensus across all interviews. Every participant explained that they would always prefer to give a gift as an item they were familiar with.

Participant four suggested that if he was not totally familiar with a brand or product he would have to have some knowledge of it before buying it, *“But I definitely kind of make myself knowledgeable about this new kind of brand, if I’m gonna change from things I know about I’m gonna go through that knowledge about a different product if I am going to go out and buy whatever”*. (Participant 4, Male).

This supports the arguments postulated by the work of Lopes and Veiga (2019), which indicates that consumers with a knowledge of a brand and its offerings are more inclined to purchase that brand in contrast to a competitor to which they have little to no knowledge of. Furthermore, from the data extrapolated in this study, it appears that in the gift giving scenarios consumers tend to shy away from *“... taking a risk on a product...”* (Participant 5), when giving a gift, which drives them toward familiar brands and would instead try alternative options when buying for themselves. This could be a potential area to delve further into in future research.

4.2.3 Brand Awareness & Choice:

The final aim of this section was to interpret how the participants' awareness of brands when buying a gift affected their choices. Whilst the data on this issue varied across the different participants (some being influenced by price and other by convenience), two themes stood out which related to the previous literature.

Firstly, is the concept of a gift giver being “recipient centric” as highlighted by the work of Sarkar and Sarkar Bose (2019). In interview three of the study the participant noted that when faced with choosing one brand as a gift over another, he chose what he believed the recipient of the gift would prefer, *“I chose the Nike football boot. Oh, yeah. And because I just knew he had a preference for Nike, he tends to wear more*

clothes. So just kind of factoring in that person's preferences right into the gift giving or gift buying scenario.” (Participant 3, Male). This shows a clear and conscious effort by the participant to be aware of and factor the recipient’s (in this case his brothers) brand preferences into his gift purchasing decision.

The second stand out instance is related to brand associations. In interview two of the study the participant describes the choice she went through when choosing a child’s basketball net for her younger cousin. The interviewee explains that whilst shopping online for the gift she found herself seeing a variation of options that she had not been aware of previously until she came across a product by the toy brand Fisher Price.

“And then I saw one by Fisher Price. And I just know that name. Like, just from like, when I was a kid or like it's just like a very big kids toy brand, I guess. ... So when I saw that, I was like, Okay, I know that's going to be good. There's a picture of like a ball with it. I know the ball is going to be included. Like, it just makes a lot easier.”

(Participant 2, Female). This shows a correlation between the work of Low and Lamb (2000) and the participants' responses, showing that the interviewees' awareness of the Fisher Price brand coupled with an association of quality towards the brand influenced the choice made when purchasing the gift.

4.3 Objective 2: To investigate whether Product Attributes and Accessibility influence brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

The second objective of the study was to assess whether product attributes and accessibility of brands would have any effect on the participants choice of brand when buying a gift. Interviewees were asked questions related to their feelings towards product styles, their access to information on products and the ease of acquiring said products.

4.3.1: Style / Design Affects:

In terms of a product's style or design, all five participants of the study felt as though they would be influenced by these product attributes and stated that if these aspects of a product were not meeting their expectations they would consider choosing another product. For example participant one stated that *“Yeah, absolutely. If, like, the more elegant and the more kind of pristine the packaging is, the more it's going to go into my eyeline. If it's bright and pink and sparkly. Yeah, I'm not going to pick it up.”*

(Participant 1, Female), thus adding to the work of Kuksov (2004) stating that consumers are cognisant toward design elements.

As stated in Chapter 2 of this study, Uggla (2004) postulates that the perceived quality of a brand can be vitally important in brand choice scenarios of gift giving. The data collected in this instance would support this theory. Participant three suggests that when giving a gift, it is explicitly important that quality is involved in the gift choice, *“Yeah, absolutely. I feel like the quality if you're giving a gift, you want people to have this perceived quality of the gift as well. to derive their full sense of satisfaction from it.”* (Participant 3, Male). In this case, the participant suggests that the sense of satisfaction he gets from the quality of the gift is intended to be passed to the recipient as well.

Additionally, Participant five explains that when giving a gift the quality in terms of look and feel of a product is an important consideration for her, *“If it looks like it's good materials. If it just has a nice feel to it. That would be me. Yeah. Yeah. And especially when I'm giving a gift because I wanted to look nice, and I wanted to feel nice when you're giving it to somebody else.”* (Participant 5, Female).

However, as previously mentioned in chapter 2, the work of Flynn and Adams (2009) would suggest otherwise as their work found that recipients do not process expensive gifts in the same nature as givers. Therefore it could be the case that recipients process the quality of gifts in alternative ways to givers, which could be a potentially interesting area for future consideration.

4.3.2: Convenience:

With regard to accessibility and whether the convenience of a product affected their choices, participants had a varied mix of responses. Participant four suggested that in a scenario where acquiring a gift lacked a certain amount of convenience, it *“wouldn't be a total roadblock”*, (Participant 4, Male) and that if the gift was special he would be willing to put more effort into acquiring it.

However, Participant two explained that due to her personal situation with not driving, she relies heavily on online purchases and the availability that comes with that activity,

“So I can't like, go drive and pick things up. Like especially for bigger things. So a lot of stuff has to be accessible for me online. And the shipping has to be like a reasonable price. And like relatively fast.” (Participant 2, Female). This response from the participant draws similarities to the work of Lin and Chang (2003) and their proposed “channel convenience” theory, however instead of the physical stores being conveniently accessed, the online stores must now meet the participants requirements.

4.3.3: Access To Information:

Another important factor related to accessibility (and grounded in the literature) is the access to information on a product and how it may affect brand choices when choosing a gift. As mentioned in the literature review, Biehal and Chakravarti (1983) explain that when more information on a product is offered to a consumer, the choice of brand becomes more complex.

The data extrapolated in interview two of this study would suggest the opposite of this. According to participant two, *“It has to be right in front of me. Otherwise, I will just choose something else because there are so many options, right? And there are so many that do have that information right there for you. So I'm always going to pick one that has the information available.”* (Participant 2, Female). This clearly shows that when a lack of information is offered on a product, the choice for participant two becomes easier as it eliminates options.

4.4 Objective 3: To explore the effects that Brand Image has on brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

The third objective of the research was to discover the effects (if any) that brand image could potentially have on the participants' brand choices when giving a gift. The questions of this section pertained to the participants' own opinions and feelings towards brands and whether the actions of that brand would affect their gift buying decisions.

4.4.1: Brand Image:

As Kotler and Keller (2008) suggest, brand image is subjective to each individual's own perceptions of a brand. When asked if they had any strong feelings towards any

brands, each participant gave a variety of reasons why they felt either positively or negatively towards their example.

Participant one explains in her example of the Bobby Brown makeup brand, that the inclusivity of the brand when it was first introduced to the Irish market is what drew her towards it, *“And they were kind of one of the first big ones in Brown Thomas wants to have a huge selection of foundations for people with any colored skin from this end of the scale to this end of the scale. And I immediately loved that idea. Because I can never get Foundation, or powders that are pale enough to suit me. Yeah. And I loved the idea that they were going to include everybody.”* (Participant 1, Female). This positive perception of the brand is what drives the participants affinity toward the products, thus affecting her purchase decisions when buying a gift as stated in previous studies (Bian and Moutinho, 2011; Chi Le, 2021).

Additionally, the work of Toop (2014), as shown in chapter two, suggests that the subjectivity of consumers' brand perceptions should also be considered. In interview five of the present research the participant explains that *“I have some very brand oriented family members. And they like higher quality options. And so like for them in particular, knowing that they have a relationship with the brand will be a big factor for me and knowing what their perception of a brand is.”* (Participant 5, Female). It is evident that in this case the giver considers the perceptions that the recipient has of some brands before purchasing a gift.

4.4.2: The Effects Of Brand Identity:

In terms of the associations that brands make intentionally between their products and celebrities, influencers or even other brands, the data in the current study shows a conscious sensitivity toward these actions taken by a brand.

Participant two explains that she would be highly sensitive toward brands that align themselves with celebrities that she holds in low regard, such as in this case the Kardashian family, *“I don't think that they're very good people. And a lot of I don't, I just don't stand for a lot of what they stand for. So a lot of brands that would work with them, I would automatically be turned off them”...* *“But I definitely think that the celebrities that brands align themselves with says a lot about their values as a brand. If*

I agree or disagree with that, then it's definitely going to impact my decision.”

(Participant 2, Female).

This clearly shows a lack of congruence between the participants perception of the brand and the identity the brand is attempting to create for itself via these associations, which Nandan (2005) suggests is vitally important for building brand equity and ultimately influencing consumer purchase decisions.

4.5 Objective 4: To examine the extent to which price impacts brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

The fourth objective of this research was to explore to what level participants felt that price influenced their choice of brand when purchasing a gift. The participants were assessed on whether price was something they considered at all when buying a gift, their tendency to spend or not spend more on a gift and their own feelings on the price of gifts they receive.

4.5.1: Price Consideration:

The consideration towards price shown in the data has a variation of reasons behind it, however, there appears to be no overarching theme to connect them to the previous literature. Where Herrmann et al., (2007) explain that a consumer's perception of products can affect their willingness to spend more on that item, this study finds that the situation of the consumer dictates their willingness to spend particular amounts on gifts, *“Yeah, for me it is because just being somebody who's coming out of college. Not exactly, not a lot of money at this moment. Right. So having to purchase something within my own budget is probably paramount. I don't want to overspend on the people, which means I can't purchase things for myself either.”* (Participant 3, Male).

4.5.2: Gift Expenditure:

In all interviews of this research, participants stated that they would all be more inclined to spend more on a brand if it was intended to be given as a gift. The work of Bolton, Warlop and Alba (2003) and Rondan and Martin (2011), regarding consumers' use of reference points in price to compare against competitors, appears not to come into play within the present sample. Instead the consideration moves toward the recipient's feelings and reactions as stated firstly by participant two, *“like you don't*

want to be seen as giving someone something that's like cheap, yeah. Whereas I don't care if people see me as being cheap with the stuff I buy myself." (Participant 2, Female). This shows a clear consideration for how the recipient will perceive the price of the brand.

Additionally, in interview three, the participant stated that, *"I believe you just don't want people to be disappointed with the gift that they receive."* (Participant 3, Male). These statements again highlight the theme of a "recipient-centric" nature amongst gift givers (Sarkar, Sarkar Bose; 2019).

4.5.3: Price Evaluations:

This section of the interview pertained to gathering data on the participants from a more recipient standpoint rather than a giver in order to understand their feelings toward price when they themselves receive a gift. In the previous literature, Flynn and Adams (2009) postulate that recipients do not process expensive gifts in the same way that givers do. Instead Flynn and Adams (2009) found that recipients could have adverse feelings toward an expensive gift.

The data extrapolated in the present study appears to support this theory as four of the five participants all stated that when receiving a gift that they considered substantial or expensive, they would immediately feel a sense of guilt. One participant went as far as to state, *"You feel like a terrible person"* (Participant 1, Female).

However, relating more to the work of Parsons (2002), participant 4 explains that if he perceives the gift as quite valuable he would be more appreciative of it. It could then be assumed he would be more appreciative towards the relationship with the giver.

4.6 Objective 5: To consider the effect that emotional connections to brands can have on brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

The final objective of the current study was to evaluate whether the participants firstly felt they had any emotional connections to brands, if there was brand behaviour to alter this relationship and if they felt this connection influenced their choice of brand when buying a gift.

4.6.1: Emotional connection:

Relating to emotional connections to brands, the majority of the participants of the study described a nostalgic connection between themselves and their chosen example. Participant four described his relationship with the videogame brand Nintendo which was his first console growing up. Participant one felt attached to the Bobby Brown makeup brand as she had memories of interactions with this brand and her sister when they were younger.

Participant three explained how he felt, “...*kind of like a relationship develop with this brand*” (Participant 3, Male), when talking about his use of Nike products all throughout his childhood, thus showing a clear emotional connection between himself and the brand. Additionally when discussing her relationship with the Fisher Price toy brand, Participant two suggests that nostalgia still drives her relationship with this brand today, “*And so now like, there's more like babies in my family now. And you definitely want to kind of almost emulate your childhood experience, too.*” (Participant 2, Female). This statement illustrates a desire of the participant to give the recipient of the gift a similar experience that she felt with this brand.

4.6.2: Brand Interactions:

In terms of the participants' interactions with brands that have influenced their relationship with said brand, the data shows similarities to that of Keller's (2002) research in which the feelings created by such experiences range from positive to negative and change from mild to intense. For instance, in interview three the participant describes how he has had an increasing number of bad experiences with Amazon and how he feels it affects his perception of a number of brands that actually utilise the Amazon site, “*Yeah, having an immediately negative perspective of ordering off Amazon damages hundreds of 1000s of other different brands in the world*”, (Participant 3, Male). This shows an intensely negative experience that has altered the participants' connection with the Amazon platform and potentially even more brands.

In contrast however, Participant four explained how when he allowed his free Spotify account to lapse for four months and ended up paying fifty euro, he contacted the company to cancel the account not expecting to get his money back. Not only did the company cancel his account but gave him the refund in full, which took the participant

by surprise, *“So it just made me like, why would I not? I was like going around telling people like these guys are great.”* (Participant 4, Male). This example shows that the research by Thompson et al., (2006) into consumers acting as “enthusiastic partners” that develop a brand's image to be true as in this instance the participant felt compelled to share his experience and by extension promote the brand.

4.6.3: Emotional Connections When Choosing a Gift:

Finally, with regard to how these emotional connections with brands affect the participants' gift choices, there appears to be two split opinions on this matter. It appears the majority of the participants (3 out of 5) consider an emotional connection between themselves and the brand of the gift they are giving not to be an important factor when giving a gift and instead would consider the recipients emotional connections to the brand of the potential gift, *“particularly not for myself, not the connection, but if I can observe the connection between the person who will be receiving the gifts that a particular brand? Yeah, that is important.”* (Participant 3, Male).

However, two of the participants stated that they would consider an emotional connection between themselves and the gift they are giving important. Discussing her nostalgic connection to kids toy brands and considering the younger members of her family; participant two explains how giving these brands as gifts feels like passing on the same experiences she had to her younger family members, *“I think that it's like, it feels like a nice experience of like, passing on the baton kind of thing. Like. Someone gave this to me growing up and it made me feel really nice. Now I'm going to give it to someone else. And yeah, it's quite like a nice experience when it is a brand that you care about a lot.”* (Participant 2, Female).

These mixed findings could potentially call the work of Morris, Woo, Geason and Kim (2002) into question, who stated that emotional connections to brands can potentially be accurate indications of intent to purchase said brand. However to quantify this claim, further in depth research would be needed.

4.7 Study Limitations:

Whilst the data from the interviews discussed in this section is comparable to some of the previous literature and expresses homogenous views between the participants of this study, there are some limitations to be considered. The findings discussed in this section were extrapolated using qualitative research methods, meaning that the results may not be entirely conclusive. The time constraints in which the study was carried out meant that the researcher could not conduct a more thorough investigation using quantitative methods to further explore the findings of this research. There was a heavy reliance on the interaction of the participants of the study and their opinions and feelings toward brand choice decisions in gift giving scenarios. However, the researcher felt as though the data extrapolated was a sufficient representation of the sample size and that it allowed them to contribute to the conversation on the effects of brand choice factors on gift giving amongst Irish consumers.

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations:

5.1 Conclusions:

The primary concern of the present research was to better understand the potential effects that factors of brand choice could have on the decisions of Irish consumers in gift giving situations. The research objectives, which have been previously discussed in chapter 3, were employed in an attempt to guide the primary data collection of this paper and gather first hand perceptions from the sample group on how they feel various brand choice factors affect their gift purchasing decisions. Through the extensive review of previous literature and the qualitative primary data collection conducted throughout this study, it is believed that this body of work has contributed to the conversation and offered a better understanding of the research topic.

From the interviews conducted during the research phase of the study, it has been postulated by the researcher that the awareness that consumers have of brands in their everyday interactions can in fact have an influential effect when they are buying a gift. Two outstanding themes related to awareness and choice came to the fore during data collection, the first being brand associations. Participants of the study exhibited how their awareness of the quality of particular brands drove their decision to purchase it as a gift. A second driving theme related to awareness was that of the giver being “recipient centric”, a concept identified in previous literature where the gifter is aware of the intended recipients brand perceptions and so uses this to inform their gift choice (Sarkar and Sarkar Bose, 2019). Elements of these themes were identified across various points in the participant interviews, thus confirming that their perceived awareness of brands has a predominant effect on their choice of gift.

With regard to product attributes, the present work has found there to be a unanimous consensus that the relevance of the style, design and perceived quality of a product is critically a deciding factor for consumers when faced with a gift purchasing decision. It appears that the perceived quality that style and design effects of items convey, is of great concern to consumers as they believe their perceptions of this product will be replicated by the recipient when they are given the gift. However there is cause for

reflection on this finding as previous work has postulated alternative views and may be cause for future research, which will be highlighted in the next section.

Furthermore, the effect of accessibility to brands intended as gifts were also investigated and has drawn a mix of opinions from the population sample. While some participants state that physical access (or lack thereof) is not a definitive deterrent to them acquiring a particular gift, others have stated that their personal situation (i.e. no driving license or limited budget) could influence their purchasing behaviour when the item is not readily available. Additionally, the access to information that consumers have has been found to have an effect on their perceptions of choice. By having more information available on one option over another, alternatives are eliminated and thus the choice becomes easier for the consumer. However the mixed opinions on this topic across the sample make it difficult to definitively state whether accessibility influences gift purchasing decisions.

On the topic of brand image, the data analysed in this study has found this factor to have a definite influence on consumers' gift purchasing decisions. Whilst brand image has been found to be a subjective matter where each individual has a unique opinion (Kotler and Keller, 2008), all five participants in the present research were able to offer specific examples of how and why they viewed a brand, either positively or negatively, and explain if this influenced their purchasing behaviour. Additionally, the effects of a brand's created identity has been found to be capable of shifting the perceptions of consumers and further verifies that brand image is an influential factor in gift giving decisions.

In terms of price and how it affects consumers and their gift purchasing decisions, this study has shown firstly that the entire sample population would be more inclined to spend more on a brand if it is intended to be given as a gift. Previous literature regarding the use of reference points in prices by consumers for comparative reasons have not been confirmed in this body of work. While previous research (Herrmann et al., 2007) puts forward that perceptions of brands can influence a consumer's willingness to spend more on products, this study has instead deemed that the situation, whether it be financial or otherwise, of the gift giver holds more of an effect than their brand perceptions. Additionally, the theme of the giver (in this case the participants)

being “recipient centric” (Sarkar and Sarkar Bose, 2019) again occurs in this instance with participants stating they tend to consider the perceptions and feelings of the intended recipient of the gift toward the price of the brand. Therefore confirming that price does in fact have the potential to influence brand choice in gift giving situations.

Emotional connections between consumers and brands have been investigated and the relevance it holds in the consumers purchase decisions have been analysed. Participants of the study have illustrated how interactions they have experienced with brands have both positively and negatively impacted their emotional connections with those brands. Additionally, the majority of the sample have expressed how nostalgia is an overarching emotional feeling that connects participants to certain brands. However when it comes to the action of choosing a gift, the data indicates that emotional connections between giver and gift are not influential in the decision. Instead it has been found that, again, the majority of the sample would tend to take the emotional connections of the recipient into account above their own connections to the brand of a gift.

Finally, in comparison to the underpinning research (Narteh et al., 2012), the present study has found similarly that awareness, product attributes and price all can potentially influence brand choice factors in gift giving situations. However, in contrast to the underpinning literature, this research has postulated that the sample's mixed opinions on accessibility does not confirm whether this is a pervasive factor in relation to the research topic. Furthermore, in this case regarding gift giving amongst Irish consumers, brand image has been found to be a critical consideration for consumers when choosing a gift; it is important to note however that the researcher understands the cultural differences between the guiding literature and the sample study used in this instance. Across the findings presented in this study an overarching theme has emerged relating to the nature of participants being “recipient centric” (Sarkar and Sarkar Bose, 2019), with their feelings toward factors such as emotional connections, awareness and price all considering the opinions of the intended recipient.

5.2 Recommendations:

The current research paper has touched on a variety of points while processing through the extrapolated data. It is the belief of the researcher that some of these points could potentially benefit from further academic investigation and are therefore worth highlighting. When examining the primary data related to style and design effects of products attributes, it was noted that the work of Flynn and Adams (2009) suggests that recipients analyse expensive gifts differently than givers do. The question was then asked whether or not this too applies to perceptions of quality and if recipients view the quality of a gift alternatively to givers. For industry based individuals this may be a vital aspect to highlight to future customers in order to gain favour with recipients. This marks the first recommendation for future research.

With regard to a consumer's emotional connections to a brand and how they affect gift giving choices, the split opinion of the sample relating to whether they felt an emotional connection between themselves, and the intended gift was important, led the researcher to call previous work into question. As previously mentioned the majority of the research sample deemed this factor not to be necessary whilst 2 of the 5 participants felt it added to the gift giving experience. The varied results would lead the researcher to question the work of Morris, Woo, Geason and Kim (2002) who suggested that emotional connections to brands can be accurate indicators of purchase intention. However whilst the methods of this study are qualitative and given the time constraints of the current research, it is recommended that this area be considered for further academic investigation.

Finally, the prevalent theme emerging in this research pertains to the “recipient centric” (Sarkar and Sarkar Bose, 2019) attitudes of the sample population across a range of the factors examined. This demonstrates a unanimous behaviour across the sample population at varying points of the study regarding three separate factors, awareness, price and emotional connections. In terms of practitioners in the gift giving industry, these factors could prove to be important considerations when attempting to target gift givers with marketing communications. The relevance of this concept could potentially be crucial to the advancement of knowledge pertaining to the research topic and should therefore be considered for more in depth and extensive academic exploration.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Participant Information:

Participant	Age	Gender	Sector
1	31	Female	Finance
2	24	Female	Hospitality
3	24	Male	Finance
4	31	Male	Technology
5	29	Female	Hospitality

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions:

Objective 1: To assess awareness levels of consumers in relation to brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

1.1: If you think of a particular brand you are familiar with, how often do you feel you would notice this brand day to day?

1.2: In a situation where you are buying a gift for someone. would you go for a product you already know of, or would you prefer to shop around for alternative options?

1.3 Can you recall a time where you chose one brand over another to give as a gift? (If yes) - Could you elaborate on why you chose this brand?

Objective 2: To investigate whether Product Attributes and Accessibility influence brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

2.1: Is the style or design of a product something that could influence your choice of brand when giving a gift?

2.2: Does the product have to be convenient or accessible for you to consider giving it as a gift?

2.3: Does your access (or lack of access) to information about a product make you consider other options when buying a gift?

Objective 3: To explore the effects that Brand Image has on brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

3.1: Do you find yourself having any strong opinions, positive or negative, about particular brands? If so could you expand on why?

3.2: Does a brands activities with celebrities/influencers/other brands etc, come into consideration when you are buying a gift?

Objective 4: To examine the extent to which price impacts brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

4.1: Is price an important consideration for you when buying a gift?

4.2: Do you feel that would be more inclined to spend more on a brand if you intend to use it as a gift?

4.3: When receiving a gift, do you ever think about the potential price of that gift? If so, how does that make you feel?

Objective 5: To consider the effect that emotional connections to brands can have on brand choice in gift giving scenarios.

5.1: Is there a brand/s that you feel emotionally attached to? If so, could you explain why?

5.2: Can you recall any interactions with a brand that you feel influenced your connection to this brand?

5.3: When giving a gift, do you feel that an emotional connection between you and the brand of the gift is important? If so could you explain why?