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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

MASTERS OF SCIENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

**AN ASSESSMENT OF PRODUCT BRANDING ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE. THE
CASE OF MANUFACTURING SMES IN MAGABA, MBARE.**

BY

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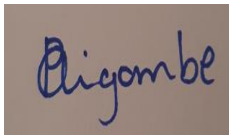
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DECLARATION

I, Prisca Chingombe do hereby declare that this dissertation is a result of my investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgments, bibliography, references, and comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Prisca Chingombe".

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my family, thank you so much for your patience and financial support may the good Almighty bless you.

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I wish to acknowledge assistance received from the following people who made it possible for this document to be put together. I want to express my sincere gratitude to my family especially my husband who is my pillar of strength. I also wish to acknowledge my supervisor, Professor Martin Dandira for tirelessly and willingly sharing her scholarly experience and for making this dissertation a successful undertaking. Last but not least I would like to thank the Almighty for His protection and guidance.

ABSTRACT

The study sought to understand the impact of product branding on business performances for manufacturing SMEs operating at the Magaba Home industrial area, in Mbare, Harare. Literature was reviewed to get a deeper understanding of other research that has been done in the past and identify existing gaps to fill using the current study. From the review of the literature, it emerged that branding is largely associated with large corporations. The study was executed using a qualitative research approach and it employed a case study research design. A semi-structured interview guide was developed and used to guide the face-to-face interview processes. Responses from the interviews were audio recorded using a tape recorder before being transcribed into MS word for analysis. The study was underpinned by the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) theory. Participants were purposively sampled. The sample consists of 15 manufacturing SMEs from Magaba in Mbare. The estimated population of SMEs in Magaba is plus or minus 1000. Descriptive statistical analysis was done using excel, to give a descriptive picture of the social-demographic characteristics of the participants. The interview transcripts were analyzed for content using Atlas/ti. Ethical considerations were observed, through but not limited to seeking participants' consent prior to conducting the interviews, explaining the study purposes as well as the use of private space for conducting interviews. Findings indicated that branding of products is not being done by the manufacturing SMEs in Magaba. Lack of financing and knowledge on how to brand came out as key prohibitors to brand establishment. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that financial institutions should avail financial options for SMEs to access the finances needed. There must be workshops and seminars where manufacturing SMEs are taught about the importance of branding their products and related issues.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMEDCO	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation
KPI	Key Performers Indicators
ROI	Return on Investment
BPM	Business Performance Measurement
AMA	American Marketing Association
CBBE	Customer-Based Brand Equity
QADAS	Qualitative Data Analysis Software

1. CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

The study sought to assess the impact of product branding on business performance for manufacturing SMEs. The chapter looked at the background of the study, the statement of the problem, major research questions, specific research objectives and questions. It also looked at assumptions, justification of the research, purpose of the study, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations of the study. Key terms were also defined as they are used in the study and lastly the chapter summary.

Branding is a major issue in product strategy. It is concerned with giving a specified name to a product of one seller as a way of differentiating the product from other competitors. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), branding plays a significant part in the enhancement of the consumer's life and also that it increases an organization's economic worth. It is the art and cornerstone of marketing. It has nothing to do with the design of a product.

Branding is one of the marketer's most vital tools for selling. Branding performs some important functions such as the brand name providing legal protection for improving product features that will otherwise be copied by competitors. Many products have a distinct image in the consumers' minds through their product branding, thus creating awareness meaning the product will be well communicated to the target market hence high sales results as well as enhanced customer loyalty.

Baumgarth 2010; Spence & Essoussi 2010; Urde 1994, generally believe that branding plays an important role in today's business environment. Urde (1994) added that the future of companies depends on brands. Small, medium-sized, and large businesses are now competing in a wealthy, worldwide market because of recent technological advancements based on knowledge and facts (Abimbola & Vallaster, 2007:341). This displays several SMEs face both opportunities and risks, particularly that they not just successfully compete with other SMEs, but established, significant companies. Pencak (2012) states that a crucial idea in marketing is branding and that every firm should value it, irrespective of size. Brands create emotional connections for customers with products and services.

Kotler and Keller (2005) state that ultimately a brand is something that resides in the mind of customers. Strong brands communicate familiarity and trust, decrease risk and provide the foundation for, and interaction between people and businesses (Pencak, 2012). The success of any business or consumer product depends in part on the target market's ability to distinguish one product from another. Branding is the principal instrument used by marketers and companies to distinguish their products from that of competitors.

1.2 Background of the study

The process of giving a product a distinctive name or appearance is known as branding. This helps the product stand out in the marketplace, makes a strong impact on customers, and draws in prospective new clients. Although many people connect branding with relatively recent ideas, its roots go back thousands of years. In its earlier forms, branding was only used to denote ownership and dates back to roughly 2000BC. To distinguish their cattle from other livestock, the Egyptians would brand their cattle, and artisans would emblazon emblems on their creations to indicate where they came from (Khan and Mufti, 2007). But as time has gone on, branding has developed into a strategy used by businesses to promote themselves and build rapport with potential clients.

According to (Cant, Wiid and Hung 2013; Van Scheers 2011) identified the reasons for failure of South African SMEs on branding include the lack of education and training as well as lack of finance. Hashim, Tajuddin and Zainol are of the view that SMEs in Malaysia are unaware towards the role of branding as a strategic tool to improve the market performance of their businesses.

In an increasingly dynamic business environment, every company needs to identify and satisfy its customers to maximize profits and have a competitive advantage. Branding is mainly limited to large corporations such as Coca-Cola and Nike. Lack of knowledge of product branding among manufacturers of SMEs and their products. Gundala and Khawaja (2014) are of the view that lack of branding knowledge is one of the reasons why SME owners do not implement branding strategy. Today hardly anything goes unbranded, for example, oranges are stamped with growers' names. Any organization needs to consider branding. For instance, if one buys a product from Magaba and it experiences a problem one may not get a refund. It will be difficult to link it to the manufacturer because it will not be branded. It's challenging for a business to operate profitably

without properly branding its products. Manufacturers emphasize marketing more as consumers become more intelligent investing significant amounts in marketing their brands directly to customers highlighting the superiority of their goods and resulting profitability.

Consumers have higher expectations than ever in today's increasingly monopolistic and competitive corporate climate because they have access to more items, more knowledge about those products, and more product alternatives. Product branding, therefore, helps to differentiate goods or services from those of competitors. Mitchell (2001) postulates that firms and marketers have increased their branding of products so that they stand out from those of competitors and that they will be able to meet the growing demand.

Lamprey (2016) is of the view that present-day marketing practices such as branding have become an active weapon marketers use to strengthen their competitive advantage and thus improve the accomplishment of their prearranged objectives.

It is frequently noted as being something that small and medium businesses cannot afford. This is due to the presumption that branding is only relevant to large firms. There is a lack of association between a manufacturer and their products. As a result of this, the product is not well communicated to the target market hence low sales results. Though the quality of the product might be to the taste of the intended customer, one may patronize the product thereby neglecting what may be good for him. It is also clear from the studies conducted that the focus has traditionally been on corporate branding and not so much on SMEs.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Product branding is a major challenge among manufacturing SMEs, manufacturers do not take much time to make good branding decisions. As a result, the product is not well communicated to the target market hence low sales results. It is however clear that branding plays an important role in the success of many businesses but that little research has been conducted, particularly in developing countries such as Zimbabwe, regarding the importance and role of product branding among SMEs. According to Hirvonen, Laukkanen, and Salo (2016), research on branding in SMEs is still in the infant stage.

Luo and Donthu (2006) assert that branding can increase organizational turnover while also establishing a strong brand image in consumers' minds. Research among SMEs has been so far confined to large corporations, the reason for that has probably been the fact that SMEs because of their financial resource limits usually do not run a formalized process that deals with branding. As a result, the study sought to assess the role of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs in Magaba, Mbare.

1.4 Research objectives

1.4.1 Main Research objective

To assess the importance of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs in Magaba, Mbare.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1.4.2.1 To examine the extent to which manufacturing SMEs consider product branding.

1.4.2.2 To assess the effects of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs.

1.4.2.3 To investigate what may be done to improve the performance of manufacturing SMEs through product branding.

1.4.3 Main research question

What is the importance of product branding and business performance of manufacturing SMEs?

1.4.4 Research questions

1.4.4.1 Do manufacturing SMEs have plans to brand their products?

1.4.4.2 Does product branding affect the business performance of manufacturing SMEs?

1.4.4.3 What can be done to promote product branding of manufacturing SMEs by product branding?

1.5 Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this study, the researcher made assumptions that the instrument that was going to be used would produce accurate results and that the questions that were to be asked will be clear to the respondents.

1.6 Justification of the research

Research among SMEs on product branding has been so far confined to large corporations (Merrilees, 2007). The rationale of the study was to assess the impact of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs. The study wanted to generate information that will add to the current information so that more can be known about the role of product branding among SMEs. It will help evidence-informed decisions on how to improve branding among SMEs and consequently boost their businesses as they play a crucial role in the economy.

1.7 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain a better understanding of the role of product branding on the performance of a business. Doing this exploratory research enabled the researcher to conduct more in-depth research and to make recommendations that may help the performance of the manufacturing businesses and to make SMEs know that product branding is not only for big corporations.

1.8 Significance of the study

Beneficiaries from the current study include, but not limited to the following groups of people.

1.8.1 Manufacturers

The study will be useful to manufacturers in knowing that branding may lead to both high sales volume and creating good corporate images and identifies through repeated buys by consumers. Branding also helps manufacturers that branding has an added value to the physical product beyond the core product. These may be aesthetic, emotional, psychological, and philosophical values that are embedded in the minds and hearts of consumers.

Branding acts as a competitive differentiator by attempting to differentiate products from rivals who might try to offer products that look the same thereby giving a source of competitive advantage to the business. It gives consumers the assurance they want when making purchases. And if customers consistently have a great brand experience, that assurance can lead to brand loyalty and repeat purchases, in the long run, this means more sales hence the survival of the business. Additionally, it will assist with referral marketing because customers are more likely to recall a well-known brand, and familiarity might lead to a recommendation for your business.

1.8.2 Consumers

Product branding provides security, reduces risks, and lowers the possibility of disappointment this is because consumers will have the knowledge of the branded product and are assured of buying quality products. Consumers develop a perception of a business as trustworthy if they consistently have a favorable encounter with it, which gives them confidence when they buy. If there are any issues concerning the product it will be easier for the consumer to associate the product with the owner of the product and get a refund.

1.8.3 Government

This study offers insights into the importance of product branding and its effects on the business performance of SMEs. The government should use the findings as a reference for policy formulation by looking at the gaps highlighted by the researcher and crafting policies that benefit SMEs.

1.8.4 Researcher

The study helped to provide valid information for future researchers on the topic and will also contribute to the existing wealth of knowledge in the areas of product branding.

1.9 Delimitations

The study was carried out at Magaba Home industrial area in Mbare, Harare because it is where the target population for the study is found. The entire study took four months to complete; however, data collection period was one week.

1.10 Limitations

The sample size was small and was only from Magaba in Mbare thus, the study findings may not be generalized to other manufacturing SMEs.

1.11 Definition of keywords

The terms have been defined in the context in which they appear in the research work.

Brand

A brand is described as a distinctive name, or symbols such as a logo, trademark, or packaging design designed to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors (Aaker, 1991)

Branding

Branding is the exercise of giving a specified name to a product of one seller as a way of differentiating the product from other competitors (Aaker, 1991).

Product

Products are the items and services that a business offers. Therefore, the product can be described in a few words as a package of benefits that a marketer offers to the customer in exchange for a fee (Singh, 2012)

Product branding

Product branding is an effective marketing strategy for differentiating a certain product. It is an activity that defines the way the product's image is communicated to its customers (Jobber 2007).

Business performance

Business performance refers to the company's accomplishments as well as the percentage of value it generated that exceeded the value anticipated by the owners (Herath and Mahmood 2013).

1.12 Dissertation Lay Out

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one outlines the introduction and background to the study highlighting what probed the researcher to carry out the study on product branding as a strategy for business performance focusing specifically on manufacturing SMEs in Magaba. It further articulated the research questions as well as the objectives that the study wished to fulfill. The importance of the study to various levels of people has been mentioned. Limitations and delimitations have been discussed. Concluding the chapter was the definition of key terms in the study to give the reader a clear understanding of the study. The second chapter, the researcher presents the details of works done by other sources related to the study. The task involves reviewing the literature about the study. It also reviewed the theoretical framework and conceptual framework of the study. Chapter three describes the methodology of the research, the chapter details how the literature and underlying concepts for the selection of the study population, sampling techniques, research methods, and research instruments will be discussed. The chapter presents the philosophies and paradigm to be followed in the research. The chapter also outlines the measures used to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. The chapter concludes by examining the way the research data was analyzed and presented. Chapter four provided a detailed qualitative analysis and discussion of the research findings. Tools to be used in this chapter include pie charts, graphs and tables. The chapter also presents a summary of findings on each of the emerging themes, together with their associated Atlati-generated network diagrams showing some of the main quotations in support or contrast with each theme. The chapter closes with a discussion of the key findings aligned with the study objectives. Chapter five is the final chapter whereby the researcher will be giving concluding and putting recommendations to the financial institutions, the government and the industry under study.

1.13 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the background to the study highlighting what probed the researcher to carry out the study on product branding as a strategy for business performance focusing specifically on manufacturing SMEs in Magaba. It further articulated the research questions as well as the objectives that the study wished to fulfill. The importance of the study to various levels of people

has been mentioned. Limitations and delimitations have been discussed. Concluding the chapter was the definition of key terms in the study to give the reader a clear understanding of the study.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature that was reviewed. This chapter consists of a review of arguments, opinions, views, comments, and contributions from various journals, articles, books, and publications by previous researchers in the fields related to product branding by SMEs. The theoretical framework and conceptual framework within which the study was viewed were discussed. The chapter provided an account of the literature review on the concept of branding, product branding, branding by SMEs, the importance of product branding, and challenges facing SMEs with product branding. Finally, a summary of the chapter will be provided.

2.2 Concept of Branding

The word “brand” comes from the Old Norse brand, meaning to burn. As a result, these roots were incorporated into Anglo-Saxon. Early man imprinted ownership on his herd by using the burning technique. Additionally, trade purchasers would employ labels to distinguish between the cattle of other farmers (Khan and Mufti 2007). According to Kotler (1994), a brand is any name, word, sign, symbol, design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of their competitors. Branding is a phrase that has been used since the emergence of modern man. Craftsmen, artisans, and merchants used to brand their products so that the source of the product could be identified, and a measure of quality assurance could be provided. After that, branding continued to change. After the Industrial Revolution, branding became crucial for businesses to ensure that their products obtain public acceptance and confidence. Branding was straightforward at the time. The history of branding truly dates back hundreds of years. Over time, this discipline and art form has developed into a crucial component of creating any prosperous company.

Branding began in the 1500s, but major shifts took place in the 19th and 20th centuries. Through decades of experimentation and technological advancements, brands have learned how to break through the clutter and capture the attention of their customers, turning indifferent consumers into brand enthusiasts.

2.3 Product branding

Kotler and Armstrong (2013) define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for sale, acquisition, usage, or consumption and could satisfy a need or want. They go on to say that a consumer product is anything that the final customer purchases for their use. Consumers often purchase goods, carefully consider their options, and compare prices. The most important asset for businesses is their brand (Bakkour, Fort, and Mione, 2015).

Branding is the principal instrument used by marketers and companies to distinguish their products from that of competitors. Brands have become a tool for consumers to identify products and to get familiar with the product for further purchase of goods and services (Weilbacher, 1995). To customers and individuals, a brand is defined as the combined experience processed to identify products at its regular contact (Kapferer, 2004). It is regarded perhaps that, the most distinctive skills of professional marketers are their ability to create, maintain, protect and enhance brands. Making a difference in a product's identity to increase sales is what branding is all about. (Kay, 2006)

Branding allows businesses to enter a brand-new international market, expanding their potential for consistent brand growth among competing products. (Loken & Roedder 1993 and Milberg & Sinn 2008). To reflect the company's short- and long-term goals, several marketing concepts, tactics, and product branding processes must be implemented. In marketing strategy, branding is an effective tool in marketing strategy to promote goods and services for optimum turnover and profitability of industrial and household products.

Branding of goods and services hence asks for product distinction in the market whose originality is traceable with a trademark to their respective producers. Branding also determines the survival of organization products in the competitive business environment. The choice of a brand is a crucial one for every company since it has an impact on how people perceive and feel about the company and its goods.

As long as a brand is offered in the market, the customer's brand loyalty to that product will remain constant (Rizwan, Akbar, Muqtadir, Shafique, Zia, H., Naseer, and Amin, 2013). As a result, it influences whether something succeeds or fails in a highly competitive market. This implies that

firms should take a variety of elements into account when choosing a brand name, which is one of the trickiest tasks in marketing operations.

One of the most crucial elements of corporate strategy nowadays is branding. One of the key elements of marketing is branding (Heaton, 2011). It's also one of the most misinterpreted, too. The branding strategy's purpose is to make brands that stand out from the competition to cut down on the number of alternatives available in the market. According to Heaton (2011), branding describes who you are. It involves the process of distinguishing a firm's product from competing products offered for sale. Branding is the foundation of marketing, and it is inseparable from the business. Therefore, it involves more than merely adding a label to a high-end item. According to Venkatesh and Goyal (2010), branding, however, is firmly rooted in psycho-sociology and considers both concrete and intangible features, such as functional and emotional benefits.

A brand is a unique, emotional, and cultural image that you connect with a business or a product. The word "safety" comes to mind when you think of Volvo. Your ability to choose a product is made simpler and the value and enjoyment you receive from the product are increased since you can recall the brand name and have favorable associations with that brand.

A brand is a crucial component of an organization's identity. Branding is used to boost demand (Abimbola, 2001) and gain a competitive advantage (Kapferer, 2004). The most valuable intangible asset, according to Keller (2000), is the brand, which is essential to all facets of the business. According to the Oxford Dictionary (1998), a brand is a tradename, trademark, or distinctive name that signifies the product or manufacturer (Keller, 2000). Often brands serve as identifiers of products or manufacturers. The growth of one's company might be facilitated through branding. When used effectively, branding can give a competitive advantage and eventually lead to increased profit. This is made possible by the influx of new clients and the steadfast loyalty of current ones. Branding helps one to stand out from the competition, increase brand loyalty and value, and draw in new customers. All of them are essential elements in ensuring the ongoing prosperity of your business (Pencak, 2012).

Brands have the power to affect consumer behavior. Aaker (1996) asserted that branding affects consumers' purchasing decisions. Customers can determine the things they like or dislike by

looking at the brand. It makes shopping easier and more efficient by facilitating choice while reducing costs and time. Because buyers can recognize the goods, brands make recurring purchases simpler for vendors. Additionally, it aids in the introduction of new products because association with well-known brands will increase consumer trust in the new product (Aaker, 1996). It assures the that the product will meet their expectations.

Branding a product as a means of increasing its appeal and audience reach is known as product branding. You must look at your customers and truly comprehend what they think the product is and what the benefits of the items are if you want to build a successful product-based business. If your company sells nutritious products, for example, you'll need the brand to appear healthy. Utilizing color schemes that create that impression and examining your color psychology are two ways to do this. A logo's ability to stick in the minds of your target market can be greatly influenced by colour, for instance, Coca-Cola's colour of red in their respective logos. Changing such colors that customers are used to, would negatively affect brand recognition, and ultimately the product sales.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), a brand is a complex symbol that can communicate up to six levels of meaning, including characteristics, benefits, values, culture, and personalities. Successful brands are those that foster this image or personality by getting customers to link the qualities they desire with the brand strongly. The rational qualities of a brand determine its personality, but this personality must be enhanced and conveyed to consumers through advertising, design, packaging, and efficient distribution and display. The strength and worth of different brands vary throughout the marketplace. While other brands exhibit great levels of popularity, some brands are typically not noticed by consumers in the marketplace. Customers are very loyal to brands that are highly regarded and love the performance of these products, so they continue to buy them. Due to the equity, they have built certain brands enjoy high levels of brand loyalty (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

These results suggest that branding is used to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers as a way to differentiate them from those of their competitors which when used effectively can give a competitive advantage and eventually lead to increased profit.

2.4 Business Performance

Herath and Mahmood (2013) referred business performance as the accomplishments of the company as well as the proportion of value the company created over the value predicted by the owners. The performance of a company can be assessed in a variety of ways and at various levels. The task of measuring business performance is difficult since it is multidimensional (Gerba and Viswanadham 2016). It can be measured from a financial perspective, such as profitability through sales growth, asset growth, or employee growth, or through returns on sales, returns on assets, or returns on equity (David, 2011). Another way of measuring non-financial measures of performance includes things like customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, a decline in rejects, or a decrease in complaints (Dess, Lumpkin & Eisner, 2008). For the objectives of this study, performance is measured from both financial and non-financial perspectives.

Laura, Shawnee, and Cornelia (1996) state that profit return on investment (ROI), turnover or number of customers, design quality, and product improvement are the most common measurements used to assess business performance. However, Franco-Santos, Lucianetti, and Bourne (2012) and Mann and Kehoe (1994) advise using the business performance measurement (BPM) system to measure business performance. They assert that the BPM system is a crucial instrument for numerous study fields, especially business and social science studies.

Business performance, according to Herath and Mahmood (2013) is focused on accomplishing the company's goals, which are frequently both financial and non-financial in character (Dirisu, Iyiola and, Ibidunn 2013). Financial and non-financial indicators of business performance are used, with the latter emphasizing the accomplishment of operational goals, such as but not limited to elevating client satisfaction and loyalty (Dirisu et al. 2013; Girod and Whittington 2015).

Due to the constantly shifting market conditions, it is crucial to monitor and evaluate your company's goals and performance to stay competitive. Key performance indicators (KPIs), which have a measurable value and demonstrate the advancement of the company objectives, are necessary to monitor while evaluating the success of a corporation. Monitoring the expansion and development of any business requires regular performance evaluation. It involves comparing a company's actual performance to its planned objectives. Regularly checking your business

performance protects the business against any financial or organizational problems. It helps businesses in lowering process costs and improving productivity and mission effectiveness.

Scholars such as (Urde 1994; Odoom 2016; Gromark and Melin 2011; Baumgarth 2010) have connected numerous brand or branding-related characteristics to performance. Wong and Merrilees (2008) discovered a substantial link between brand orientation and performance. Brand strategies were employed by Spence and Essoussi (2010) as the independent variable of performance. According to Agostini, Fillippi, and Nosella (2014), trademarks have a favorable link with performance. This shows that there is a relationship between branding and the performance of a business. (Odoom, 2016; Gromark and Melin, 2011; Baumgarth, 2010) claimed that there is a favorable correlation between branding and firm performance in general and SME performance (Asamoah, 2014).

2.5 Product Branding in Small and Medium Enterprises

Both developed and developing countries view SMEs as the foundation of their economies as they constitute the majority of the business structure (Berthon, Ewing, and Napoli, 2008) and contribute to the progress of the nation in terms of employment, wealth generation, and poverty reduction (Erenkol & Oztas, 2015; Forsman, 2008). Despite the advantages SMEs have for the economy, competition and a volatile market put pressure on them (Birnik, Birnik, and Sheth 2010). However, to ensure sustainable growth for SMEs, marketing and, consequently, branding is an essential corporate activity (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009).

Branding is typically linked to large corporations (Merrilees, 2007). Due to the arrogance of the biggest business players in the market, small enterprises become intimidated. Contrary to popular belief, even small and medium-sized businesses can make efforts for branding their goods and services. Musari and Ayo (2019) are of the view that branding is a major issue, especially in developing countries. As a result, SME owners tend to emphasize financial, production, and resource management more than brand management. Many people identify a brand with significant advertising spending, which Merrilees (2007) claims reinforces the belief that brands can only be created by large companies and not by small ones. Nordin, however (2009), stated that branding is important for the survival and development of every business, regardless of size and for SMEs,

branding is even more crucial and vital (Abimbola, 2001; Nordin, 2009). Various benefits can be achieved with the help of branding for SMEs.

Bresciani and Eppler (2010) assert that the interest in branding among SMEs is still at an early stage. This is due to a lack of understanding of the real meaning of branding. According to Bresciani and Eppler (2010), branding has been underrepresented in the literature on SMEs and entrepreneurship. SMEs usually ignore the importance of branding because they are mostly too overwhelmed by the idea of creating a unique brand, as well as the costs involved in generating the brand.

Despite the critical role that branding plays in a startup's ability to survive (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010), many startup owners give brand management either very little or no consideration in their day-to-day activities (Krake, 2005). This can be attributed to a lack of time (Wong & Merrilees, 2005), ignorance of the idea of brand management (Krake, 2005), a limited comprehension of the advantages of branding (Hirvonen and Laukkanen, 2013), or simply not have thought about becoming a brand in the first place (Merrilees, 2007). Although many SMEs recognize the value of branding, Wong and Merrilees (2005) add that once the business grows and they have more time, they would be interested in brand-building efforts. Some SMEs operate in "survival mode," allocating their limited resources to what the company or managers view as crucial areas for the business to survive (Berthon et al., 2008). As a result, prior studies have mentioned constraints related to investing in or allocating resources to branding operations, such as time, money, human capital, and expertise. These obstacles make it difficult for small enterprises to carry out appealing brand initiatives, which hinders brand orientation and its advantages.

Hassan & Mohamed (2015) are of the view that most owners of SMEs in developing countries lack support and expertise and as a result, they rely on trusted relationships for business information. Most owners of SMEs hire members of the family, their friends, or part-time workers, and they offer low wages and often experience shortages of skilled labor (Lampadarios, 2017).

Vidic and Vadnjaj (2013) researched the role of branding among Slovenian SMEs and the attitude of entrepreneurs to branding strategy. Data was collected using questionnaires. The results revealed that branding is not only for large companies but that SMEs could benefit as well.

The degree to which major brand management practices are applied varies between large enterprises and SMEs (Berthon et al., 2008). For instance, SMEs conduct fewer marketing activities to develop equity, and their brand managers have a lower level of awareness of what the brand means to consumers (Berthon et al., 2008). Small business managers frequently struggle with image-building tasks (Berthon et al., 2008; Goldberg, Cohen, & Fiegenbaum, 2003).

2.6 Importance of product branding to manufacturing SMEs

Given the overall effect it has on organizations, branding is vitally essential. Branding has the power to alter how consumers view a company, bring in new business, and raise brand awareness. According to Aaker (1991) brand awareness is the capacity of a potential customer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a specific product category. In addition to being what leaves a lasting impression on consumers, branding is crucial since it lets customers and clients know what to anticipate from one's business.

2.6.1 Boost the business's profitability

One of the most obvious positive effects of having a brand behind your business is that one can increase his or her profits by simply charging more for goods or services. Customers are willing to pay much more for a brand they know and trust, especially if it is a well-known brand that they can showcase. It is all a result of their confidence and trust in these businesses. By setting high pricing for their items, branding enables businesses to increase their profit margin. Parkitna and Sadowska (2011) assert that every company wants to be successful over the long term, but achieving sustained profitability is difficult, and only a small number of enterprises with an emphasis on product branding succeed in doing so. Branding, therefore, assists the company in making profits. Businesses gain a strong market position through branding, and they can easily make a profit on their sales of goods. Customers are prepared to spend lots of money on products from reputable businesses.

Studies conducted by Renton, Daellenbach, Davenport, and Richard (2016) and Ahmad and Iqbal (2013), for instance, revealed the beneficial effects of brand orientation on brands and, as a result, firm performance in the food and beverage industry.

Many empirical studies have confirmed the assertion that product branding increase product sales. One of these studies is by Griffiths et al (2005) who conducted a study in Australia using cross-sectional data from 300 firms from 1989 to 2002. Their study concluded that product branding through trademarks is a significant determinant of company profits. Branding helps to sketch the image of the business in the minds of customers.

2.6.2 Recognition

With the help of branding, SMEs can increase their recognition. Brands that are easy to recognize often attract more customers. Branding has a favorable impact on textile sales in Ghana, according to a study by Bansah, Dabi, Anita, and Dzorvakpor (2015) titled "Effect of Branding on Consumer Buying Behavior of Ghana Textile Fabric Users in Ho Municipality of Ghana." They found that customers tend to advocate their preferred textile brand to their families, friends, and acquaintances, which will ultimately boost sales of their preferred brand. The study also showed that consumers are devoted to their preferred brands and would keep purchasing them even if their prices slightly increased.

Branding helps companies in the customer acquisition process, and it is fundamental to building a favorable reputation (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Both SMEs and large corporations can build brands, but they go about it in different ways (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010). Branding plays an important role in creating loyal customers. Customers who are happy with their purchases can do so again without taking a significant risk. Loyalty to a brand could make consumers willing to pay even higher prices (Kotler and Armstrong, 2015). Customer evaluations of product performance are influenced by a variety of variables, most notably the degree of brand loyalty that the customer possesses. Consumers frequently have more favorable opinions of a product when it comes from a brand they already trust (Kotler and Keller,2012)

2.6.3 Customer retention

Customer retention is the process through which businesses or organizations can keep their current clientele by building positive relationships with everyone who purchases their goods (Kotler, 2008). Customers frequently incorporate a brand into their daily lives once they develop a connection with it and trust it. They avoid competitors merely because they preferred this brand initially or because those brands lacked strong brands that they could identify with. Some clients

even build their personas around the brand, becoming personally identified with it. A well-developed brand will attract more customers, bringing a positive image for the business among consumers.

Branding aids in customer retention for businesses. They will be more inclined to become a follower and supporter of the company. Good service can bring free publicity from customers by word of mouth, growing even faster. Pleasure is genuinely obtained when a company has a solid understanding of and satisfies the demands and wishes of its customers, leading to huge increase in the desire to repurchase the product they previously used. Conversely, there won't be much future repurchasing if a brand fails to maintain customers' goodwill and sense of contentment. identifies customers who are loyal to a company by making repeated purchases from them and recommending their goods to others. The number of devoted clients might increase automatically when sales performance is improved. Thus, the company's performance in several areas, including customer base, market share, sales, revenue, and profitability, will be impacted by the sales performance in one way or another (Ajagbe, Long and Oluyinka 2014; Adegbuyi, Akinyele, and Samuel 2015). The only way a business can retain customers is through brand loyalty, which is a function of how satisfied customers are with the company's products.

2.6.4 Build customer loyalty

According to the American Marketing Association AMA (2018), a brand is any name, word, design, symbol, or another attribute that distinguishes one seller's good from that of other sellers. The definition given by the AMA (2018) states that brands help people recognize products, services, and companies while also setting them apart from rivals. Thus, brands shield both the consumer and the producer from rivals by enhancing customer recognition of the business, especially if the brand has a strong visual identity. For businesses, brands foster consumer loyalty, which guarantees future sales to the company (Horváth & Birgelen, 2015).

Consequently, branding fosters customer loyalty. Branding acts as a reliable indicator of high-quality goods. This is true since low-quality items are easily identifiable and have little possibility of long-term success on the market. It is believed that branding is a powerful tool for business expansion that may provide an organization with a competitive advantage, attract and keep new clients, and encourage customer loyalty that can result in higher sales (Pencak, 2012). Brand

loyalty is attained through customer experience and brand perception, but it is also SMEs that benefit from the brand experience and brand perception (Altayyar, 2020). As a result, businesses are urged to invest in developing branding strategies to achieve their full potential.

Loyalty can be categorized into five levels. Each level denotes a unique marketing issue, even though a given product class may not have all five levels represented. These groups include non-loyal customers who are called switchers who have no attachment to any one brand and believe that all brands are equally good. Customers who are satisfied with the product, or who are at the very least not disappointed, are frequent purchasers. They have no motivation to change. The group also includes happy customers, who are individuals who, in addition to being content with the product, have switching costs in terms of time, money, or performance risk (Aaker, 1996). Additionally, there are customers that "enjoy the brand buyers." These customers view the brand as a friend. Based on a variety of user experiences or high perceived quality, perhaps. But it is impossible to pinpoint what the liking is for. On the other side, loyal consumers are those that take delight in discovering a brand and or using it. This customer values the brand highly either functionally or as an expression of who they are (Aaker, 1996).

Only a brand with a large base of devoted clients can be considered strong. This ensures the brand's future sales stability. Customers who are devoted to a brand are more inclined to recommend it to others. Loyalty is a sign of a strong bond between a brand and its patrons (Kotler, 2008). When consumers are certain they will receive the same features, advantages, and level of quality every time they purchase the brand, brand loyalty develops. This is meant to imply that customers will only get devoted to a specific brand if it consistently provides them with the same experience. Chuang (2021) concurs that consumers begin to trust a brand when it consistently delivers on expectations and the corporation becomes trustworthy when it conducts itself by the image it intends to project. In several product categories, such as cigarettes, coffee, toothpaste, detergent, and medicines, more than half of users frequently show brand loyalty (Peter and Olson, 2019).

Employing a branding strategy enables businesses to increase consumer brand loyalty. For most marketers, achieving brand loyalty is a highly desirable goal. Customers might routinely choose one brand over another, especially in a certain product category. But when credibility increases, brand failures cost more money. Brand loyalty is a gift from customers to businesses that earn their trust over time, but it may also be revoked at any time. (Frischmann. 2020). In addition to

generating loyal customers, a brand also boosts a company's revenue. Customers can stand behind a brand when they have something to believe in. It assists them in comprehending the organization's or company's goals. People like to conduct business with familiar brands, which is why branding encourages awareness.

According to Nwaizugbo (2004), branding ensures ongoing satisfaction. Instead of taking a chance on a new product, many buyers prefer product brands that they are confident about. The significance of branding was also highlighted by Kotler and Armstrong (2008). They claimed that shoppers would consider a bottle of white linen perfume to be a pricey item. However, even if the aroma was the same, the perfume in an unmarked bottle would probably be thought to be of poorer quality. Scholars such as (Matsatsinis and Samaras, 2000; Murthi and Rao, 2012; Venkatraman, Clithero, Fitzsimons, and Huettel, 2012; Diels, Wiebach, and Hildebrandt, 2013; Romani, Grappi, and Dalli, 2012) have proven that branding has a significant role in consumers' preferences for and acceptance of a particular brand of product, lending validity to the claim.

2.6.5 Competitive differentiator

Branding is the process of differentiating a name or a symbol such as a logo, trademark, or package design intended to identify the goods or services of one seller, or group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from rivals who would try to offer products that appear to be identical (Aaker and Kotler, 2008). According to Arens (2002) branding is the primary method of product differentiation. It entails the use of names, words, symbols, or graphics that identify the product and its maker and make it stand apart from similar products. The above definitions show that branding acts as a competitive differentiator as it tries to set apart products from competitors who might try to provide products that look the same as rivals. Bassi (2017) asserts that the use of branding will assist SMEs in differentiating themselves from their rivals. However, Fauziah, Ahmad, Omar, Zaleha, Rasid, and Amin (2012) claim that a brand is more than just a distinguishing name, logo term, sign, or symbol intended to identify goods or services but rather a complex combination of tangible and intangible attributes and associations that promotes awareness, reputation, and prominence in the market for an intended relationship.

Kalu, Anyanwu, Maduenyoghasi & Udo (2014) are of the view that branding is about making your prospects believe that you are the only one who can solve their problem, not about convincing

your target market to choose you over your rivals. This will make it easier for customers to relate to their goods and services, luring them to become brand-new clients. The process of providing services might be explained with the aid of signs, symbols, and artifacts, which would also cut down on the time spent by clients and give them a sense of effectiveness.

A strong brand is crucial for businesses in today's environment of intense competition. Businesses generate distinctive identities through branding, which aids in forming devoted clientele. These clients stick with a specific brand for an extended period. Additionally, a strong brand acts as a deterrent to new competitors entering the market. Good brands have a substantial market share that is difficult to change. Branding is a tool for achieving quality differentiation as it enables customers to select the brand that makes them happy each time, they make a purchase. For example, consumers associate the satisfaction derived from a certain product with a brand name. This has been confirmed by Llonch- Casanovas (2012) that product branding enables businesses to distinguish their products to make them stand out to consumers. Product branding encourages companies to invest heavily in product quality, which increases profits (Ong'era, George, Karanja, and Wagoki, 2019).

2.6.6 Ensures a Good Reputation

Businesses that have a positive reputation in the marketplace gain an advantage over rivals in several ways. They can effortlessly draw in new clients thanks to their goodwill. This is how companies set themselves apart from competitors. It gives the company a distinctive identity. Companies ought to create a brand that is both appealing and easily memorable. Slottje, Hoti, and McAleer (2018) are of the notion that trademarks and brand names have very strong economic power and reputation. A company whose products haven't changed much in recent years can nonetheless benefit from branding. In this regard, the company's reputation makes up for its lack of innovation.

2.7 Challenges facing manufacturing SMEs in product branding

2.7.1 Financial constraint

Despite the advantages mentioned above, branding nevertheless faces several difficulties. Budget constraints have been cited as a significant barrier to branding in several studies (Horan, O'Dwyer,

and Tiernan, 2011; Khalique, Shaari, Isa, and Ageel 2011; Khan and Khalique,2014; Wong and Merrilees 2005). The business must spend a significant amount of money developing its brand and spending a lot of money on publicity and advertising campaigns to keep its brand image strong. All of these expenses have an impact on the cost of the brand's goods and services.

The fact that SMEs have limited time, money, structures, and processes to carry out branding operations is another major problem they deal with (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). SME businesses, in particular, may find it difficult to conduct business due to branding obstacles. Smaller companies have fewer resources available for branding. Due to a lack of resources, these tiny businesses are unable to devote enough money to branding. Zaimah and Zairani (2013) concur that the lack of finances for the investment of SMEs in Malaysia has caused constraints in economic growth. This has made it difficult for these businesses to compete with larger companies inside and outside the country. They are not known because they are not branding their products. According to Zaimah and Zairani (2013), this gives larger companies a competitive advantage.

Many SMEs lack the branding departments or financial resources necessary to employ an advertising agency. Most SMEs tend to overlook the value of creating a brand image because they are so focused on their real product or service. However, SMEs may undoubtedly acquire the branding strategies they require to advertise their goods and services by relying on their ingenuity and originality. Using branding, SMEs may create the identities they want. Better relationships with their target customers result from this. No matter the size of the firm, branding has many advantages that can aid in business growth.

Cant, Wiid and Hung (2013) researched the importance of branding for South African SMEs. Data was collected using the quantitative method. The study was conducted using 43 SMEs. The findings revealed that SMEs are aware of the importance of branding. The results further indicated that some SMEs do not have the necessary resources available for it as they are too busy with their daily operations. This perception may be caused by the fact that SMEs must cope with other significant problems that negatively influence their survival. For instance, SMEs feel that short-term selling is more important than branding because they have too many inventory problems or not enough cash flow. This implies that SMEs need to improve their skills and capabilities to ensure effective branding, which ultimately influences their success in business performance as they play a pivotal role in nation-building.

Due to SMEs' limited resources, branding in large corporations differs from that in SMEs. Because of this, not all SMEs utilize brand orientation (Hodge, McMullen, and Kleinschafer, 2018). SMEs must put forth greater effort and deal with ongoing resource and financial constraints to carry out their branding efforts (Agostini, Filippini, and Nosella, 2014). Because they lack resources, internal structures, and processes, new ventures have different needs from existing businesses (Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007; Bresciani and Eppler, 2010). According to Abimbola, 2001; Krake, 2005; Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Bresciani, and Eppler, 2010, these needs necessitate branding strategies that are vastly different from those employed by well-established, huge corporations. Many SMEs have turned to brand-building tactics to increase recognition for their goods and operations resulting from fierce industry competition and sophisticated consumers (Eggers, O'dwyer, Kraus, and Vallaster, 2013). According to prior studies, SMEs that invest in their brands perform better than those that don't (Baumgarth, Merrilees, and Urde, 2013).

2.7.2 Lack of managerial competence

Effective management of a profitable business requires both management and entrepreneurial talents. According to Hlathswako (2012), SMEs frequently offer exceptional goods or services but lack the marketing and sales abilities to sustainably produce income. Mngadi (2016) goes on to say that for SMEs to prosper, their managers must be capable, able to recognize when change is required and comprehend the change management procedures. According to Mngadi (2016), managerial competencies are sets of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors that support individual effectiveness. Managerial skills are crucial to the development and survival of SMEs. The growth of small to medium-sized businesses is severely hampered by a lack of managerial skills as they find it difficult to compete with larger companies because they do not know how to brand their products. Due to the major variables affecting them, such as financial limitations, procrastination, a desire for achievement, and the influence of business management, SMEs do not give branding enough attention (Bassi, 2017).

Few studies have also highlighted the significance of owner-managers in affecting the course life of branding. According to Horan et al. (2011), managers-owners have a significant influence over branding. According to Reijonen, Párdány, Tuominen, Laukkanen, and Komppula, (2014), managers are crucial to understanding their perspectives on market orientation. While Spenser and

Essoussi (2010) emphasized that brands are expressing their owners' managers' ideas and values, Roll (2013) and Birnik et al (2010) claimed that the majority of SME owners had a short-term trader mentality. This shows that SME owners mainly focus on day to day running of the business without considering the branding of their products.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The research is anchored on Keller's theory, the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE). Positive brand equity results when there is a strong connection between a brand and its consumers (Keller 1993). This theory is relevant to this study as it aids in understanding that performance increases when customers recognize, understand, and connect with a brand.



Keller's Brand Equity Model – CBBE Model

Source: medium.com

Brand identity

Creating a brand identity in the minds of the consumer is essential at this point. The goal of this stage is to develop "salience," which means that the client has to know which product category the brand belongs to and have a good understanding of the needs it can meet. According to Keller (1993) brand salience relates to brand awareness. The primary branding objective would be to create a deep and wide awareness of the brand to establish this. When consumers make decisions,

the brand must be able to generate brand awareness and brand recall. This stage involves the creation of brand associations in consumers' minds. These include developing a brand name, logo, color scheme, and brand symbol. When the customer is deciding to purchase a product, these associations serve as memory cues. When a product requirement develops, only brands that the buyer remembers are considered. As a result, building brand awareness and associations is the most important phase in developing brand awareness, which then results in brand identity (Keller, 1993).

Brand meaning

This phase tries to provide the consumer with a sense of what the brand means. Consumers must be able to comprehend the meaning and values of your brand. Performance and imagery serve as the major building components at this stage. Brand performance relates to the satisfaction of customers' functional needs (Keller, 1993). Brand imagery relates to the satisfaction of customers' psychological needs. The goal of branding is to establish points of parity and difference to accomplish this. To develop a resonance with the customer, the brand must fulfill its promise in addition to using compelling visuals.

Brand Response

This stage reflects how people feel about the brand. Its key constituents are judgements and feelings. It explains what customers' attitudes are toward the brand. Judgement focus on customers' opinions based on performance and imagery. Feelings are the customers' emotional responses and reactions to the brand. At this point, the major goals of branding are to produce pleasant, approachable reactions (Keller, 1993). These responses come from the customers and represent their opinions, which come from either their "brain" or "heart." In other words, the two steps above that came before it led to this one. The views and opinions of the target audience as a whole matter the most once a brand has established its identity and meaning in terms of visuals and performance. This stage mostly records the consumers' reactions.

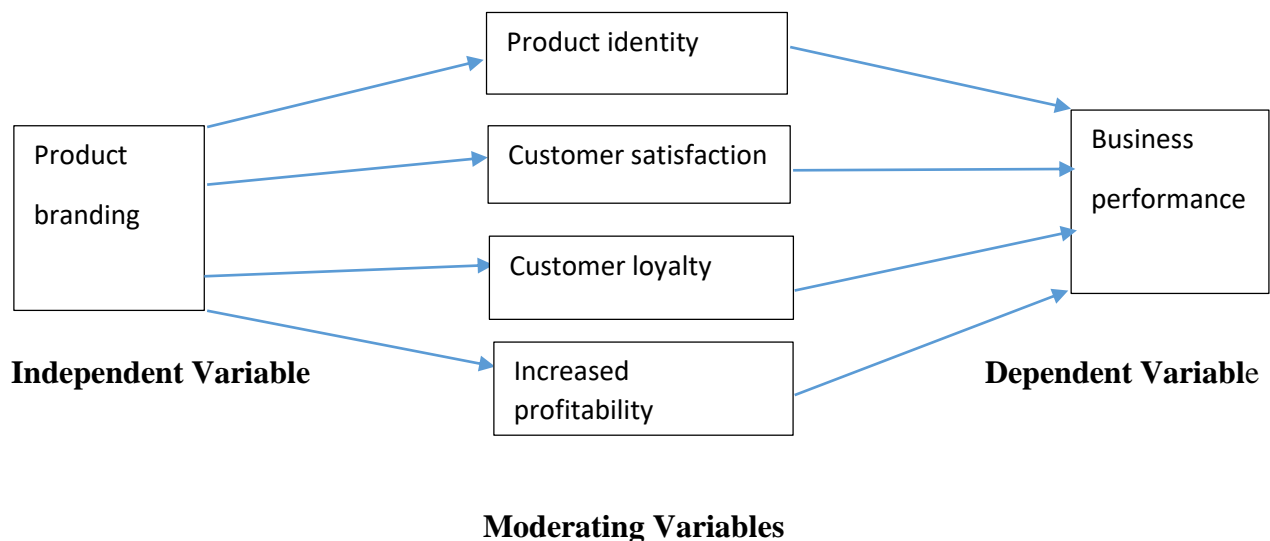
Resonance

The ultimate relationship between the customer and the brand is discussed in the model's last stage. This assesses the strength of the relationship between the brand and its consumers and is an accurate indicator of consumers' loyalty to the brand and its related items. The term "resonance"

describes the type of relationship a consumer has with a brand and whether that brand is meeting its demands. According to Keller (1993) brand resonance is the relationship and level of identification of the customer with a brand. The degree of a customer's loyalty to a brand impacts its resonance. At this point, building strong, long-lasting consumer loyalty is the major branding goal.

As the name suggests, the model is customer based. Keller (1993) thinks that giving customers the proper experience can help one build brand equity. The brand must alter how consumers perceive the goods. The ideas, feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and opinions that consumers have about a particular brand need to be managed by marketing and branding experts. The brand equity will increase the more favorable encounters that are produced. Brand loyalty and increased sales are the results of strong brand equity. The approach is predicated on the idea that what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about a brand on account of their experiences through time is what gives a brand its strength. Keller (1993) clarified CBBE, which appears in two sources which are brand awareness and brand image and is defined as the differential effect that brand awareness has on customer response to the marketing of that brand.

2.9 Conceptual Framework



When and if a business has portrayed the right image to its consumers, there will be customer satisfaction. Brands with high popularity have a high level of patronage and customers do not

relent to buy such products as they enjoy the brand's performance. Increased customer satisfaction results in loyalty and acquisition of new customers, which has numerous advantages for businesses. A study by Yussoff and Nayan (2020) showed that customers are loyal to a particular brand because they received good products and services from the company. If there is an increase in profitability because of the sales from satisfied customers and also from new customers, there will be an increase in business performance. One may argue that if customers are not satisfied with a brand they disapprove which will result in reduced profitability and then leads to reduced business performance hence the closure of a business.

It is a strategy for standing out from the competition and emphasizing what it is about what one has to offer that makes one a better option. A brand is created to be an accurate reflection of one's company's identity and desired public perception. A brand which is a unique feature namely, name, symbol, and design that differentiates an organization's products or services from competitors' make a significant contribution to enhancing the value of the offerings (Aaker, 1997). Although product branding offers several advantages for a company, its primary goal is to maximize profit. Branding for products pushes businesses to invest heavily in product quality, which increases profits.

2.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the study reviewed the theoretical framework and conceptual framework. From the reviewed literature, it has been noted that SMEs still have a belief that branding is typically linked to large corporations that are financially stable compared to them. The next chapter will dwell on research methodology.

3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology that was employed to conduct the study. A method is a way of accomplishing a result, therefore research methodology according to McNabb (2010) is a systematic plan of researching to solve the research problem. This chapter focused on the research design that the researcher used to carry out the research. It will also give the details of the population, sampling procedures and why they were chosen, the merits and demerits of the instrument used, data collection procedures, validity and reliability of the study, data presentation, and how the data was going to be analyzed and ethical considerations taken by the researcher. The main objective was to assess the importance of product branding on business performance.

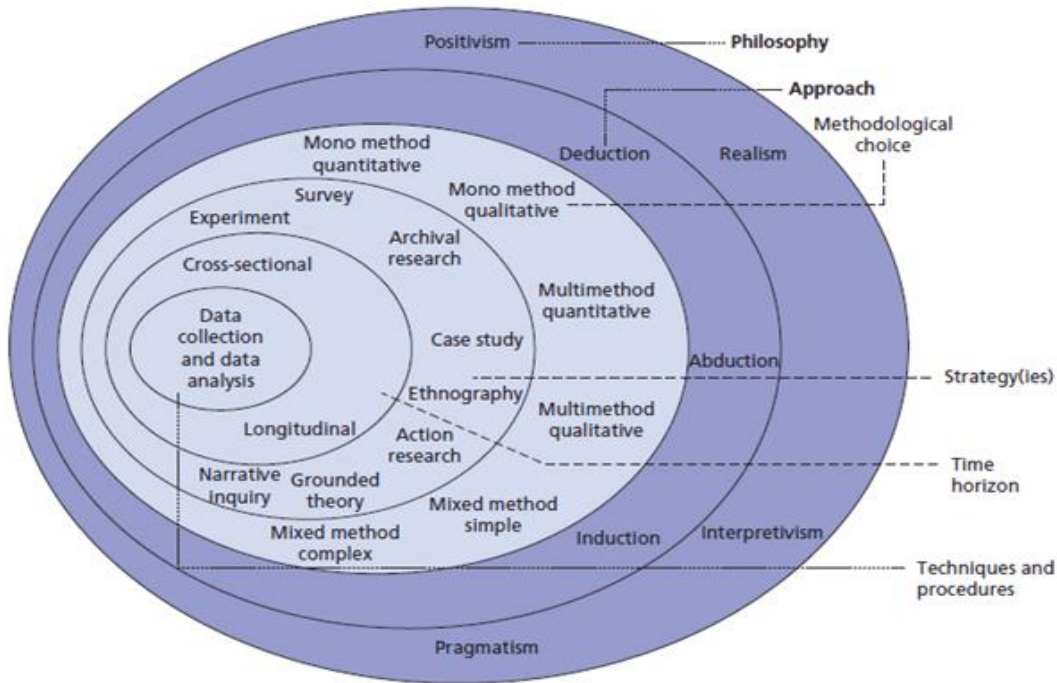


Figure 3-1. Research onion

Source: Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016)

Saunders et al. (2016) created the research onion to illustrate the steps a researcher must take to develop an effective methodology. Each layer of the onion, when seen from the outside, describes a more thorough stage of the study procedure.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is about the beliefs and assumptions of how one views the world (Khotari 2004). Assumptions regarding the sources and the nature of knowledge are used at every level of the research process. The author's key assumptions will be reflected in the research philosophy, which will also act as the foundation for the research plan. Research philosophy has numerous subfields relating to numerous academic fields. Some of the philosophies include pragmatism, positivism, realism, and interpretivism.

3.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is an approach to social science that asserts that it is crucial to understand people's beliefs, motives, and ways of thinking to interpret the information that may be collected about a phenomenon (Saunders et al 2016).

The philosophical paradigm guiding this study was interpretivism. Interpretivism is based on asking researchers to interpret certain aspects of a study. As a result, interpretivism incorporates human interest into a research project. Accordingly, interpretive scholars argue that access to reality given or socially constructed is solely through social creations like language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments (Myers, 2008). The interpretive method is based on naturalistic methods for gathering data, such as interviews and observations (Myers 2008) in which the researcher is immersed in the research by interviewing the participants in their natural settings of the workplace, in this case, Magaba in Mbare. The questions are frequently open-ended for participants to express their views and opinions.

Adopting interpretivism has made it possible to study qualitative research topics like cross-cultural variations in organizations, ethical dilemmas, leadership, and analysis of factors influencing leadership in detail. Given that the data used in interpretivism studies tend to be reliable and honest, primary data obtained through these studies may have a high level of validity.

However, the primary drawbacks of interpretivism are related to its subjectivity and the potential it leaves for the researcher's opinion and the values greatly influence data. The primary data produced in interpretive studies cannot be generalized. As a result, the validity and representativeness of the data are also somewhat compromised.

3.4 Research Approach

The research approach whether it be inductive, deductive, or mixed is the overall strategy to be employed in research. It is crucial to clearly define the research approach because it guides the choices one makes regarding the data collection and analysis of the study.

Inductive Approach



Figure 3-2. Inductive Approach

Source: research methodology.net

Instead of using an established theory as in the deductive method, the inductive method lets one develop a theory. This explains the differences between the two strategies plainly. Moving from the specific to the general is how the inductive approach is defined (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This method does not use a framework to guide the data collection, therefore the research question can be determined after the data have been gathered (Flick, 2011). It is true that once the data is analyzed, it may be discovered to fit into an existing theory, even though this may be considered the point at which new ideas are produced (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For qualitative research, this approach is frequently utilized. Interviews are conducted regarding various occurrences, and the data may then be looked at for patterns between respondents (Flick, 2011). This method is a

"bottom-up," "called" strategy in which research is conducted by moving from specific to general knowledge.

One of the features of the qualitative approach is the employment of inductive research methods. An inductive approach to data analysis was used in this study. According to Creswell (2007), the researcher creates concepts, insights, and knowledge from the patterns in the data they have collected. In broad terms, qualitative research is an approach that allows one to examine peoples' experiences in detail by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies (Hennink, Bailey and Hutter, 2010).

This study used qualitative research which is ideal for a small sample size. The qualitative approach was mainly selected in consideration of the exploratory nature of the research. The main objective was to assess the importance of product branding on business performance and this approach assisted in providing answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how relevant to a particular research problem. Qualitative research makes discoveries, supports or disproves beliefs, manipulates events, and creates theories about the occurrences in people's lives (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbon 2016). It entails gathering and analyzing non-numerical data to comprehend ideas, opinions, or experiences.

3.5 Research design

The process steps and the final product outcome are primarily the focus of the study design (Yin, 2014). The research design includes a comprehensive plan for how the study will be carried out. Linking the research methodologies and procedures is one of the key purposes of the research design to obtain data validity during the analysis of the findings. A framework for the research is provided by the research design (Yin, 2014).

3.5.1 Case study

This approach is focused on a single person or group of people. It can provide insight into the particulars of any example and demonstrate the significance of culture and context in the variations between cases (Silverman, 2013). The research adopted a case study search design. Silverman (2013) mentions that the primary advantage of a case study is that it supplies abundant information

due to the focus on just one case. In a case study, a single case produces detailed and thorough knowledge of a case and participants' perspectives and consequently enlarges the understanding of the phenomenon. In this research, a case study provided an in-depth look at the main elements of the case and implementation of a thorough analysis of all the aspects of the case.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2010) postulate that a case study has the benefit of having an emergent nature, which allows researchers to change the focus of the case, use new techniques for gathering data, and formulate new research questions as they gather more information and gain insight into a particular phenomenon. However, a case study does not allow generalization as results are limited, since the research is only focusing on one small group, thus the research was done only at Magaba targeting only 15 SME owners who are into manufacturing. The design adopted enabled the researcher to gather information.

3.6 Data collection methods

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), researchers use multiple data collection instruments to help them to find information. This section outlines the data sources used in this research study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that data can be classified into primary and secondary data. Both primary and secondary data sources were used as they were complimentary and also met the objectives of the study.

3.6.1 Primary data

As the name implies, primary data are those that are first gathered by the researcher. Primary data is a very involving process. The sources include surveys, observation, questionnaires interviews, experiments, and so on (Mesly, 2015). Primary data was utilized because it provided direct replies from participants that addressed the research purpose. For the primary data, the study employed interviews in the collection of data.

3.6.2 Secondary data

Secondary data are those that have already been gathered or created by others. The collection process is easy and rapid because the data has already been created by others. The sources are government publications, websites, books, journal articles, and so on (Mesly, 2015). The empirical

studies identified in chapter two were sourced from journal articles and helped further knowledge as well as verify the results to validate them.

3.6.3 Interviews

Interviews are the verbal equivalent of questionnaires. According to Patton (1990), the most significant contribution of qualitative research to understanding human behavior is "recording what individuals say in their own words." According to Patton (2010), interviews can produce a wealth of information and frequently give questionnaire results more substance. Driscoll (2010) asserts that they enable probing for additional information and make it simpler to notice nonverbal indicators, making them a fantastic approach to eliciting detailed information from someone.

The tone, volume, and expression of each interviewee also contributed to the information they gave. The face-to-face interview allowed the researcher to build trust with the respondents. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), a face-to-face interview has the additional benefit of being able to be done anywhere, including the respondent's home, place of employment, public spaces like malls, or even the street. For this study, interviews were conducted during working hours at the place of employment of manufacturing SMEs in Magaba, Mbare. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. The study employed semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews where respondents must answer open-ended questions that have been prepared beforehand (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The semi-structured interview is described as an exploratory interview (Bryman, 2004). They go on to say that the semi-structured interview is normally based on a guide and that it is usually concentrated on the major issue that offers a broad pattern. Bryman (2004) asserts that the semi-structured interview allows a researcher to dig deep for a discovery despite the topical paths offered beforehand. Interviews provide in-depth information about participants' experiences and opinions on a certain subject (Yin, 2014). Thus, it is very suitable for this study to get rich and detailed information about product branding and business performance from manufacturing SME owners' viewpoints. The interviewer will administer the guide interview face-to-face. Interview data will be recorded using an audio recorder, with permission from the interviewees. Additionally, interview notes will

be recorded by the interviewer in a notebook. Audio recordings will be summarized for content picking out emerging themes and relevant quotes for use in the study. However, interviews are prone to subjectivity and potential bias. They call for thorough preparation and considerable practice.

3.7 Study Population

According to McNabb (2010), the population is the total number of species in a particular area. Additionally, it is a collection of things or topics that the researchers find interesting. The population is estimated plus or minus 10000 manufacturing SMEs operating in Magaba, Mbare, (Mushayavanhu and Chitumba, 2022)

3.8 Sample

Mclain (2010) defines a sample as a small proportion of a population selected for the observations or research from a much larger group which will represent the total group. For this research, the sample consisted of 15 SME owners who are into manufacturing at Magaba in Mbare. The sample size issue in qualitative research is not set a priori but is based on when information saturation is reached. This is the point at which further discussions do not yield any new information.

3.9 Sampling procedure

Making decisions about individuals, environments, occasions, behaviors, and or social processes is known as sampling (Yin, 2014). Additionally, the term sampling refers to procedures that choose a subset of the primary population of interest and then produce results that are then fed back to the population (Yin, 2014). In research, either probability sampling or non-probability sampling is used, depending on the researcher's goals (Setia, 2016).

The researcher used a non-probability sampling technique to select the participants. This study used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling technique. It is a sampling technique where the elements of the sample are gathered in a way that does not give each element an equal chance of being chosen. This method chooses samples based on the researcher's opinion (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). Purposive sampling assumes that examples such as events, organizations, or people should be chosen because they are likely to be information-rich to the

study's objectives (Saunders et al 2009). The key justification for using purposive sampling in this study is that Magaba is the right location since it includes business owners who were chosen with the expectation that they would likely supply sufficient data for analysis. The participants were SME business owners who were into manufacturing and are more knowledgeable hence be able to give more data.

3.10 Participant eligibility criteria

Table 1. Inclusion criteria

Method	Inclusion criteria
Semi-structured interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The owners of SME manufacturing businesses, 2. Should be aged 18 years and above 3. Able to provide verbal informed consent 4. Willingness to participate freely 5. Is in the right state of mind

3.11 Data Validity

Validity describes how well a method measures what it is supposed to measure. This is to find out whether the results are significant and accurate to the study questions (Drost, 2011). The integrity of the study was dependent on the relevant instrument, which was the semi-structured interview and the interview participants were mainly those that contributed well to the study. Therefore, the selection was purposeful rather than random. This ensures the collection of the opinion of manufacturing SMEs who were expected to be knowledgeable on the research theme.

3.12 Data Reliability

Reliability describes the level of consistency that must be mirrored by the research method to provide results that can be relied upon. In essence, reliability can be established, according to Cooper and Schindler (2011), when two independent parties researching a related study area within

similar environments produce matching outcomes. In essence, it is the ability to repeat or replicate study findings. When a study is carried out by a researcher under specific circumstances, and then the same study is carried out again and produces the same results, the data is dependable (Drost, (2011). In this study, to ensure reliability the interview procedure and the data analysis process was discussed clearly. The in-depth interview questions used to collect the data from interviewees were prepared. During the data collection process, efforts were made to reduce errors and bias.

3.13 Location of the study

The study site is Harare and evidence will be drawn from SME manufacturers in Magaba.

Figure 3-3. Google map of Magaba Home Industry



Source:googlemap.com (2022)

Mbare Magaba as it is the largest informal industrial cluster in Zimbabwe. Magaba is situated in Mbare, a high-density southern suburb in Harare. Magaba is loosely translated to tins, a name that is related to high metal activity, and the area is full of metal fabricators, wood works, hardware vendors, and other ancillary activities. The area attracts customers from all over Zimbabwe as it is strategically located near the main and largest bus terminus in the country which links buses to all major destinations in the country.

3.14 Research Ethics

The researcher was aware of the need to seek informed consent from all respondents. Participation was voluntary, hence participants will not be paid for participating in the process. Interviews were conducted with those who agreed and the researcher made it clear that it was for academic purposes. Privacy and confidentiality were upheld to keep respondents anonymous. Each participant was given labels such as Participant 1 up to Participant 15. To help minimize the risk of disclosure, the researcher will not collect any personal identifying information as part of the data collection process. Participants can refuse to answer any questions and may discontinue participation at any time. Interviews were scheduled to last for a period of 25-30 minutes for each respondent. Lastly, all data will be protected as described above.

3.15 Data Presentation

When data is fully collected it will be represented in such a way that it can be easily analyzed. Analysis was done using Atlas/ti, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (QADAS) primarily used for supporting qualitative data analysis. Results from Atlas/ti will be presented in form of network diagrams showing emerging themes and their supporting quotations.

3.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research design used in the study and the justification for choosing the latter. The literature and underlying concepts for the selection of the study population, sampling techniques, research methods, and research instruments are also discussed. The chapter also outlines the measures used to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. The chapter concludes by examining the way the research data was analyzed and presented.

4. CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

To answer the study questions and in pursuit of the study objectives listed in chapter one, in this chapter data that was collected using semi-structured interviews were presented and analyzed. The study sought to assess the impact of product branding on manufacturing SMEs in Magaba in Mbare. The study also investigated the effects of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs as well as ways to promote the branding of their products. The findings from the study were presented under each of the objectives and the study questions. Discussions of the findings were done subsequently for data analysis and presentation. Data was analyzed for content using Atlas/ti pre-defined codes to identify emerging themes from the feedback received from participants. Results are presented below in narratives and figures.

4.2 Research Participants

Gender of Participants

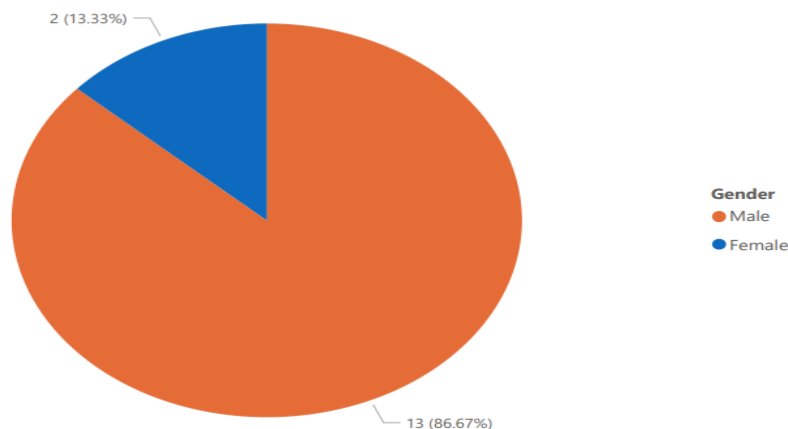


Figure 4-1. Gender of Participants

Figure 4, above shows the distribution of the research participants, by gender. The males were (87%), with the remaining 13 percent being females, indicating a high dominance of males in the manufacturing industry, over females.

4.3 Age of Participants

Table 2. Age of Participants Summary Statistics

Statistic	
count	15
mean	45
std	9.8
median	48
min	23
max	63

Table 2 above indicates that the 15 participants who took part in the study were aged between 23-63 years. The standard deviation was 10 years. The average mean was 45 years and the median age was 48 years.

Level of education

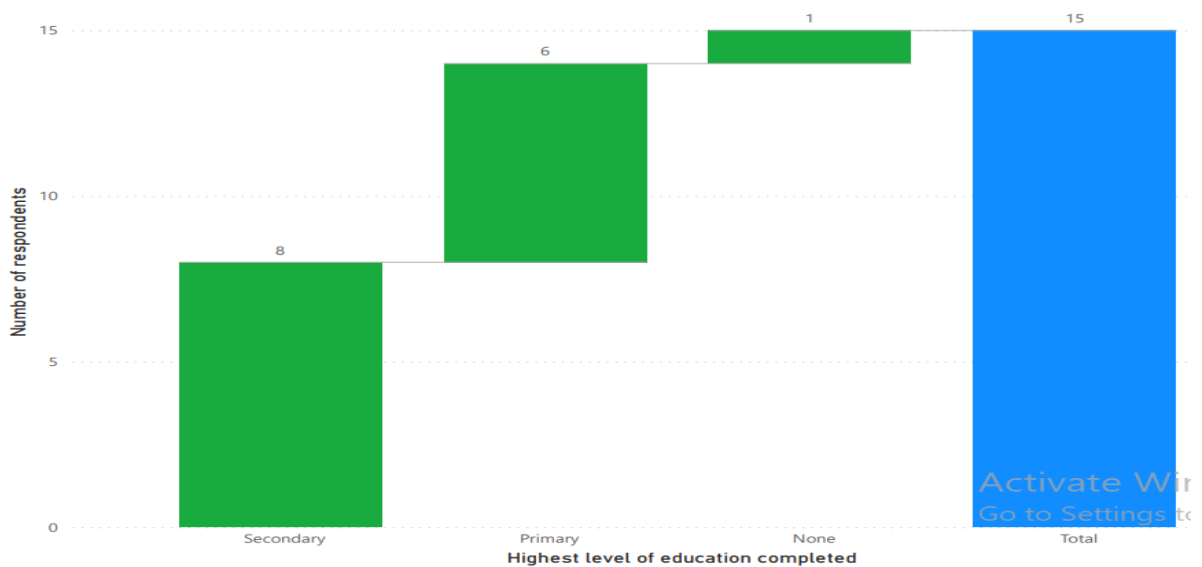


Figure 4-2. Level of education completed

As shown in Figure 5 above the majority of respondents (53%) completed secondary level education, followed by primary (40%), and lastly those with no level of education completed (10%). This showed that all of the respondents were not highly educated hence the majority of them showed a lack of knowledge of product branding.

Religion of participants

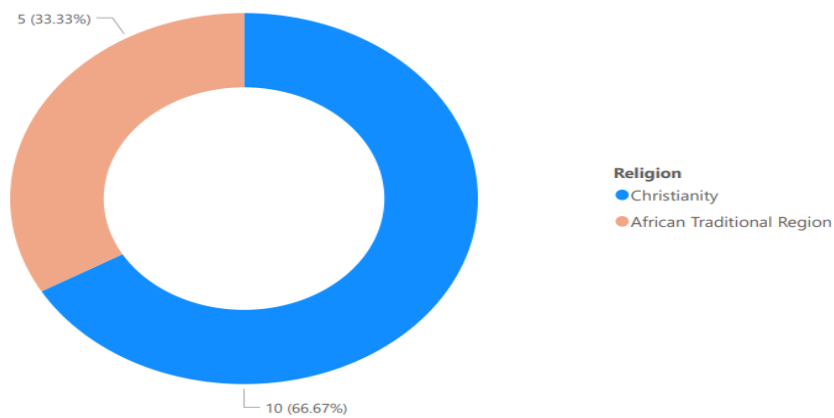


Figure 4-3. Religion of participants

In terms of religion, the study was dominated by Christians who constituted 66.67% with the remaining 33.33% reporting belonging to the African Traditional Religion, as shown in Figure 6, above.

Monthly income

The average income reported for the last 3 months ranged from 100USD to 500USD. It is also important to note that several of the participants did not keep records of the amount they earned per month as they reported that it was only from hand to mouth. The lack of record-keeping could also be linked to their low levels of education.

Duration in the business

Table 3. Duration in business at Magaba Summary Statistics

Statistic	
Count	15
Mean	6.3
Std	2.8
median	6
Min	3
Max	12

Table 3 showed that the duration of operation in business for participants ranged from 3- 12 years. The mean, as well as median, were 6 years, with the standard deviation being 2.8 years.

Business Category

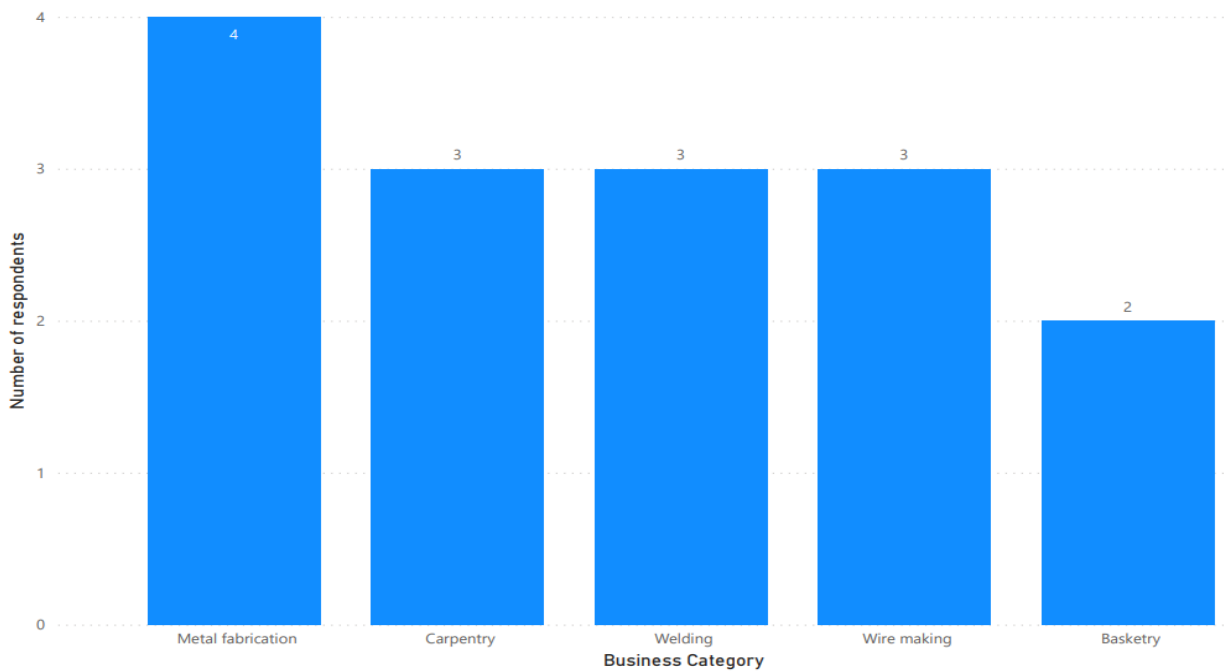


Figure 4-4. Business Category

As shown in figure 7 above, five groups of business operations took part in the study, an indication of the diversity of operations available in Magaba. They included basketry, carpentry, metal fabrication, welding, and wire-making business categories. The majority of the respondents belonged to metal fabrication (26%), followed by carpentry, welding, and wire making with each category comprising 20 percent of the participants, and lastly the basketry category with 13 percent.

Business category main products reported

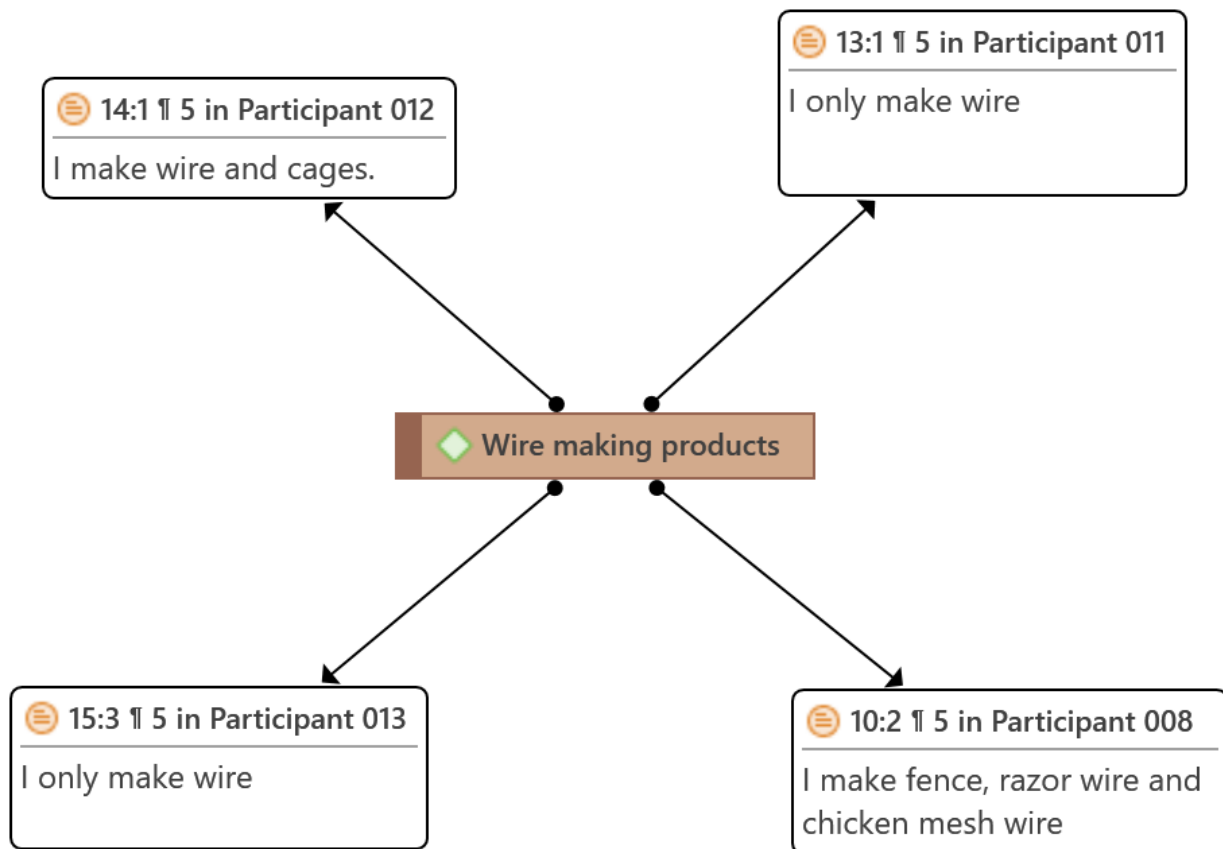


Figure 4-5. Wire-making business category main products reported

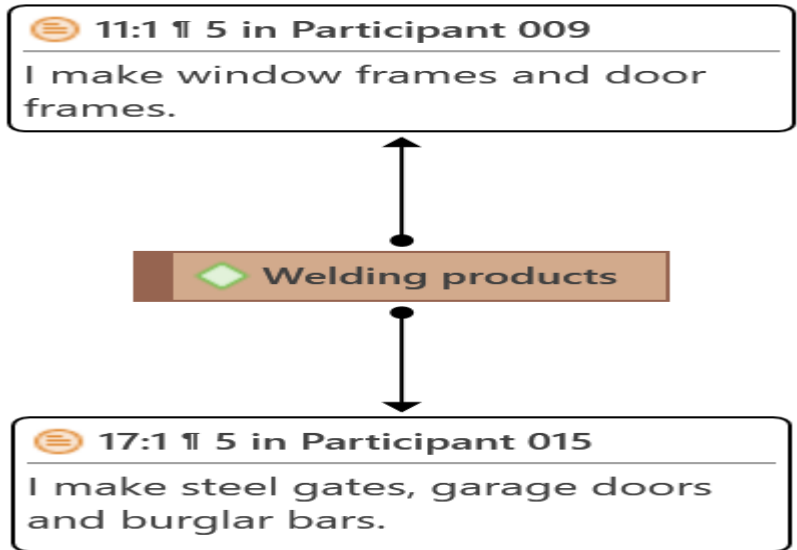


Figure 4-6. Welding business category main products reported

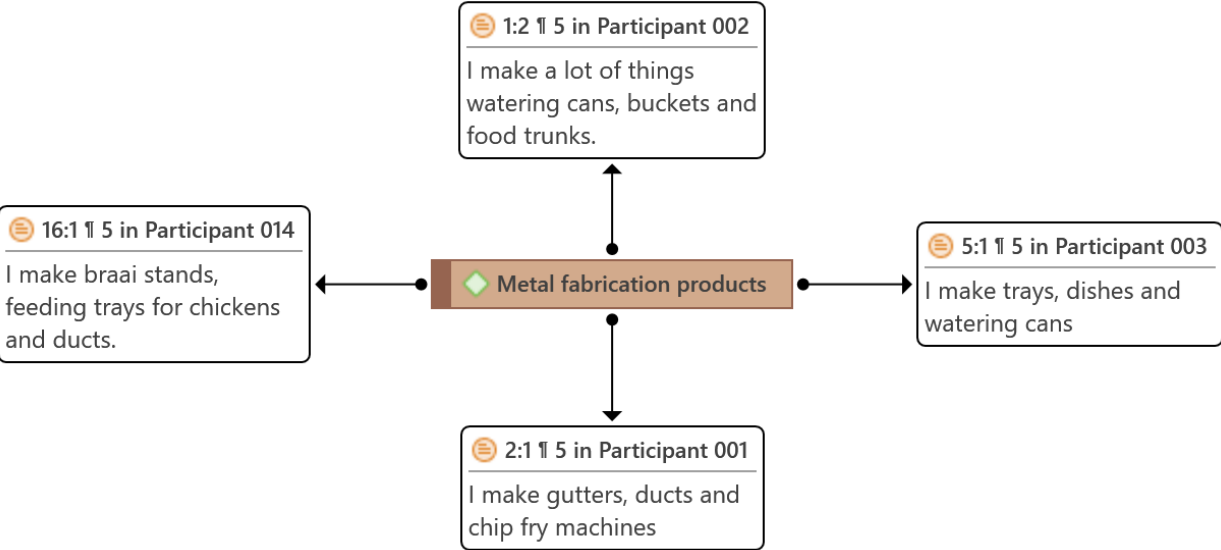


Figure 4-7. Metal fabrication business category main products reported

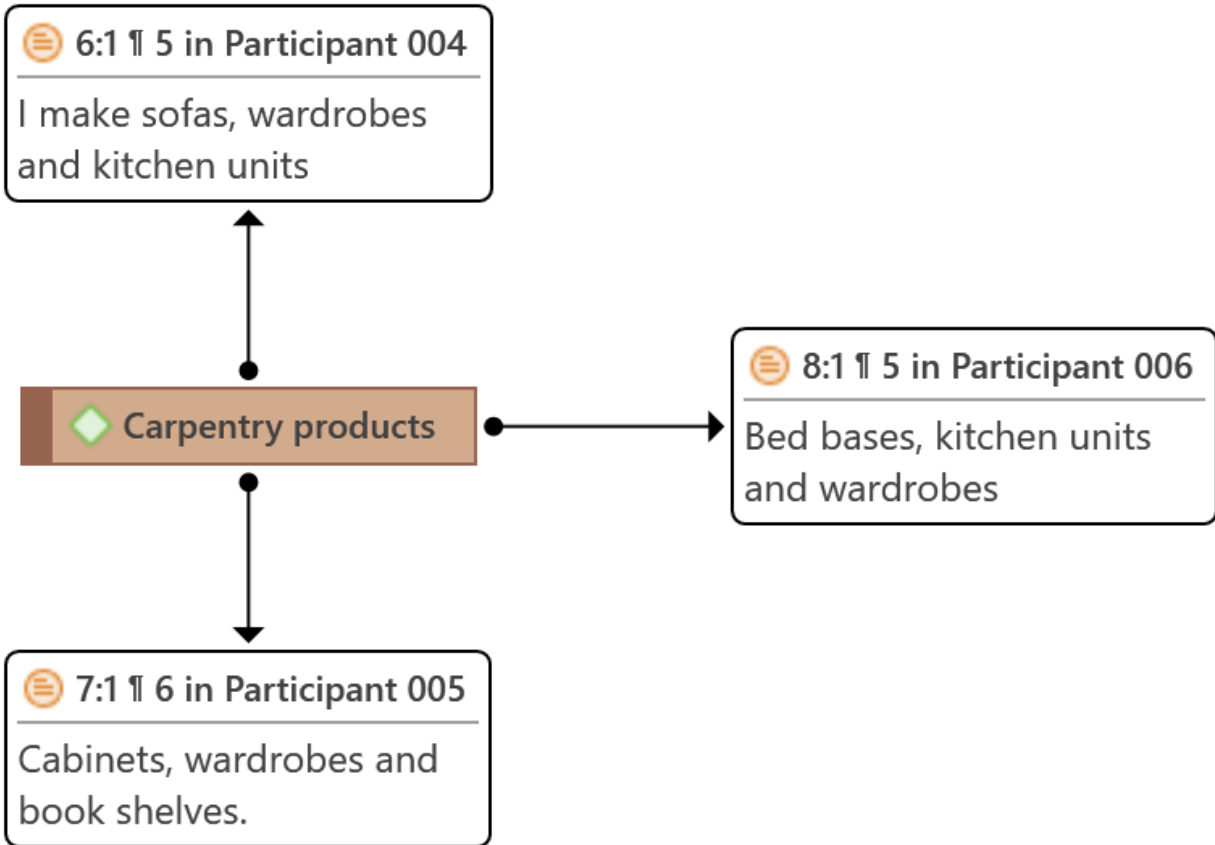


Figure 4-8. The carpentry business category’s main products reported

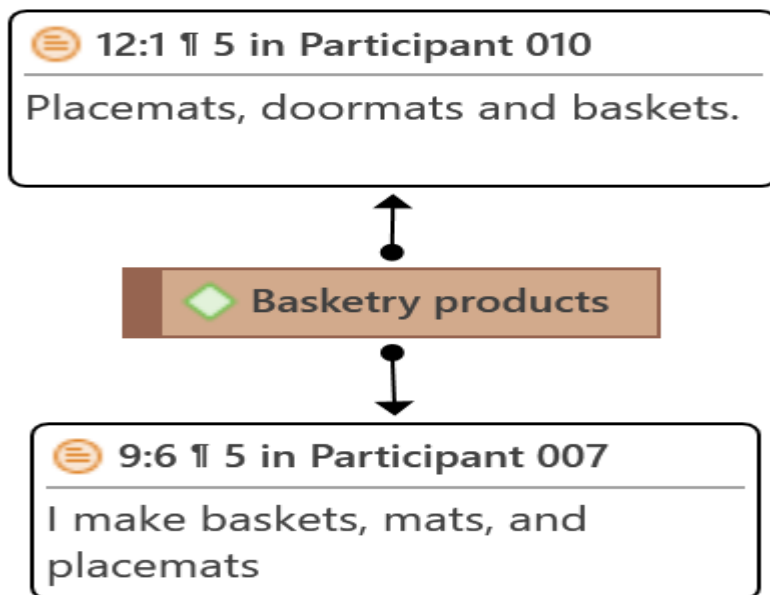


Figure 4-9. The basketry business category main products reported

Specific products for each of the business categories that took part in the study are presented in the Atlas/ti generated network diagrams above (Figures 8-12).

The first research question sought to examine the extent to which manufacturing SMEs consider branding their products.

4.4 Desire to brand among manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

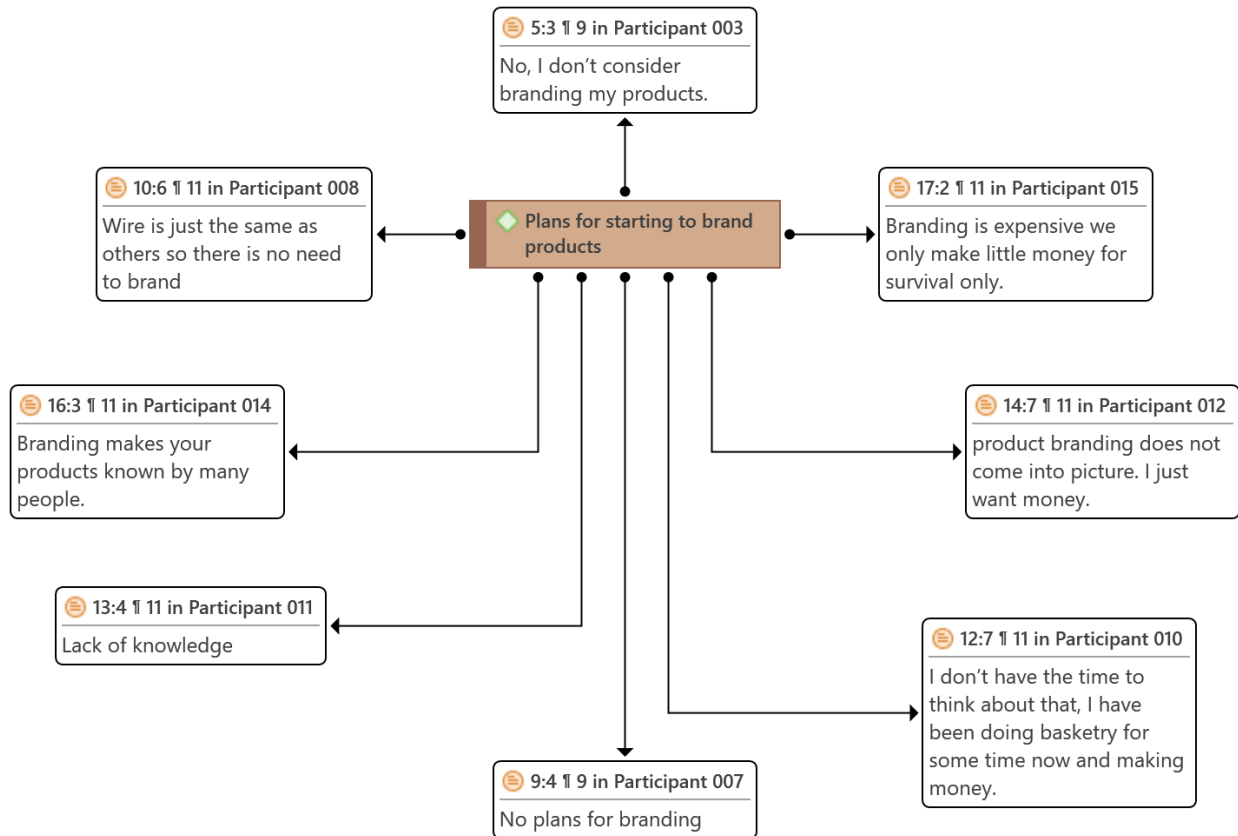


Figure 4-10. Quotations on desire to brand

Some of the notable quotes in support of whether manufacturing SMEs have a desire to brand their products are presented in Figure 13 in the network diagram above. Most of the responses showed that the manufacturing SME owners have no plans of branding their products as they reported it as an expense.

4.5 Reasons for the lack of branding among manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

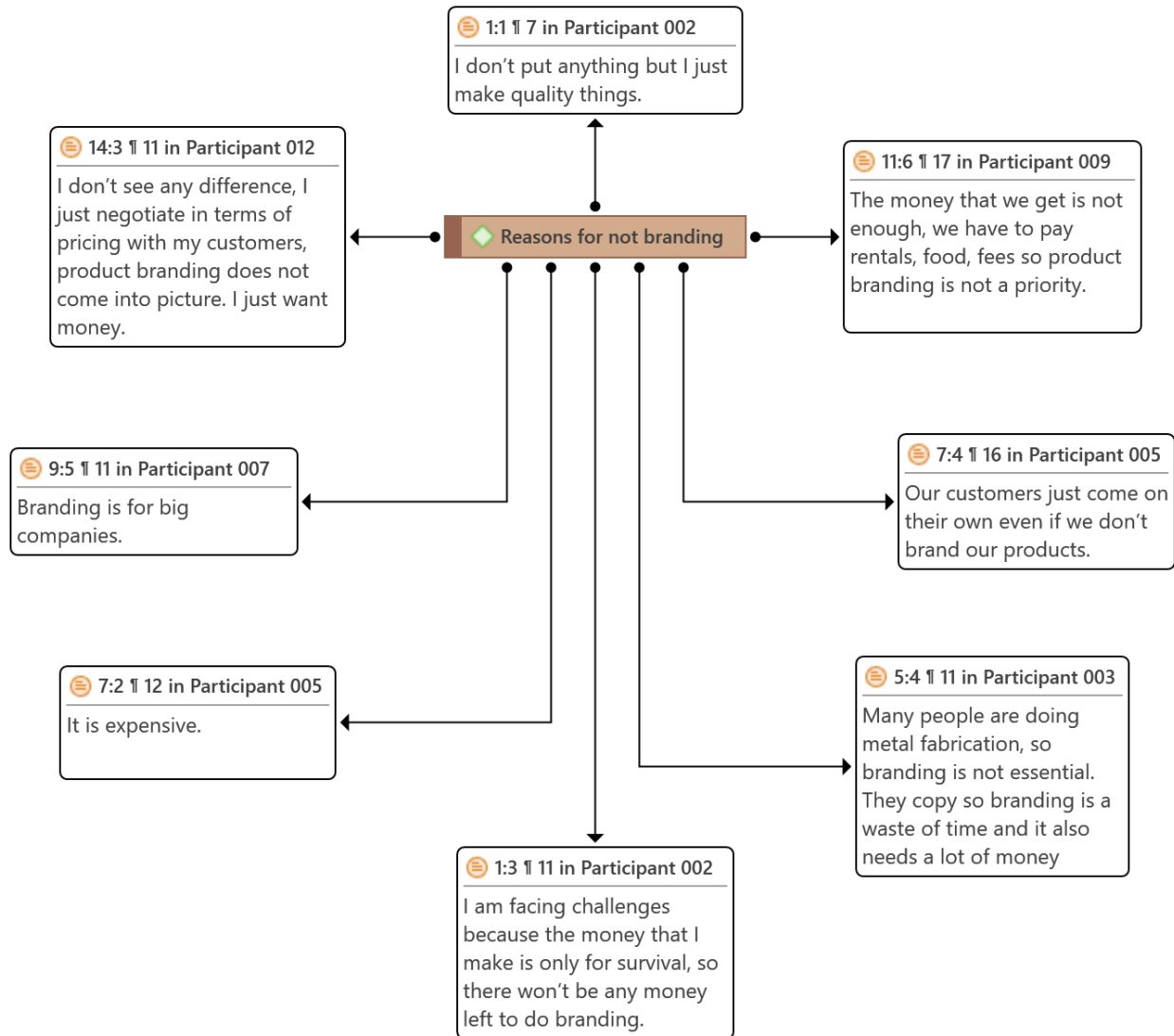


Figure 4-11. Quotations for reasons of not branding products

Figure 14 above is a network diagram showing some quotations with responses to the question on reasons why the participants are not branding their products. Some of the manufacturing SMEs do not view product branding as important as they said customers just come on their own, others said that they make the same products so they don't see any reason why they should brand because it's a waste of money and time. This showed that the manufacturing SMEs lacks knowledge about product branding. Others viewed product branding as expensive.

4.6 Branding methods used by manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

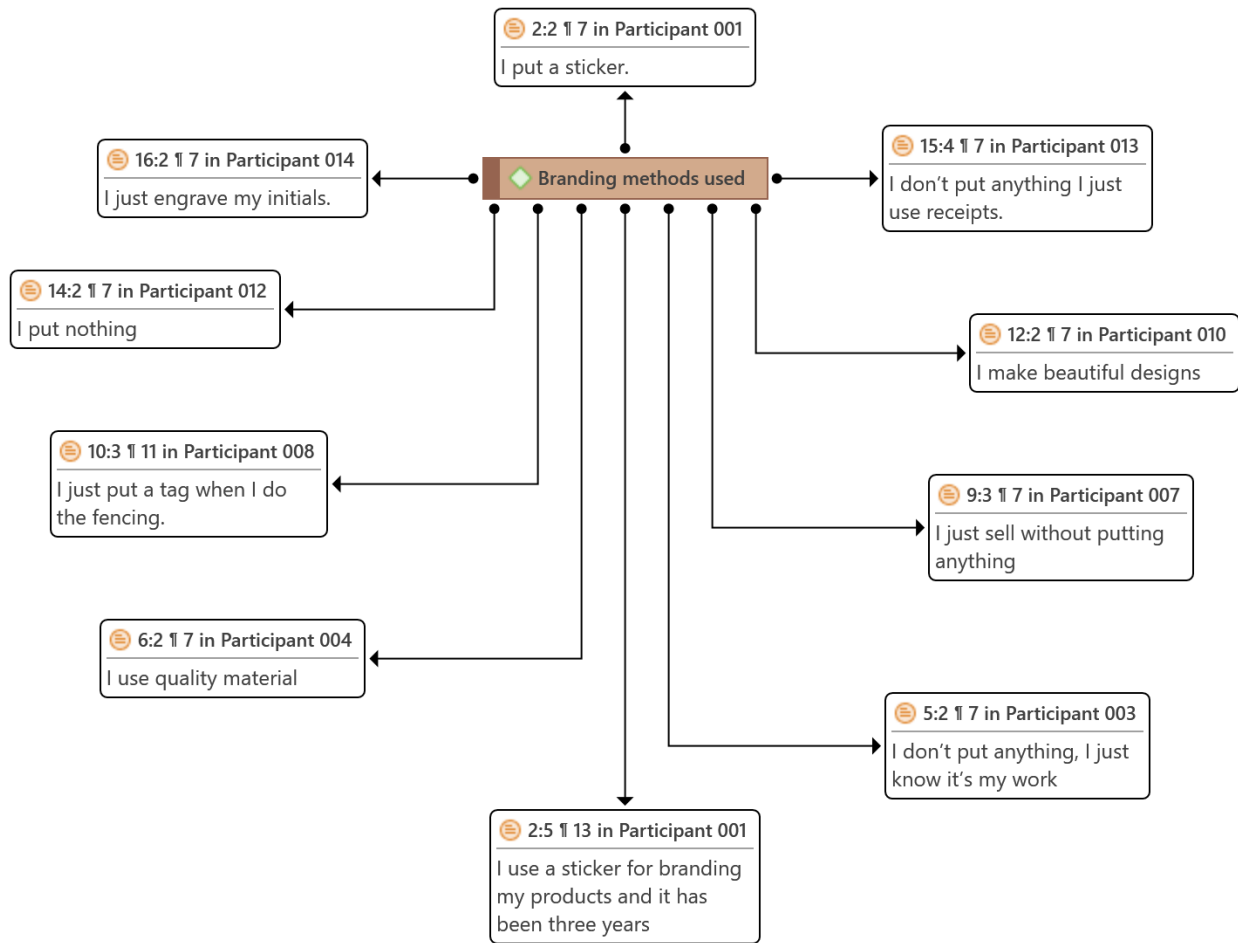


Figure 4-12. Quotations on branding method used by manufacturing SMEs

Responses seen on the network diagram above showed that the majority of the participants were not branding their products. It is only a few reported that they brand however the branding techniques that they were using included stickers, tags, and engraving their initials on their products as shown in Figure 15 above.

The second research question sought to assess the effects of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs. Findings from the study were presented in quotations below.

4.7 Perceived benefits of product branding among manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

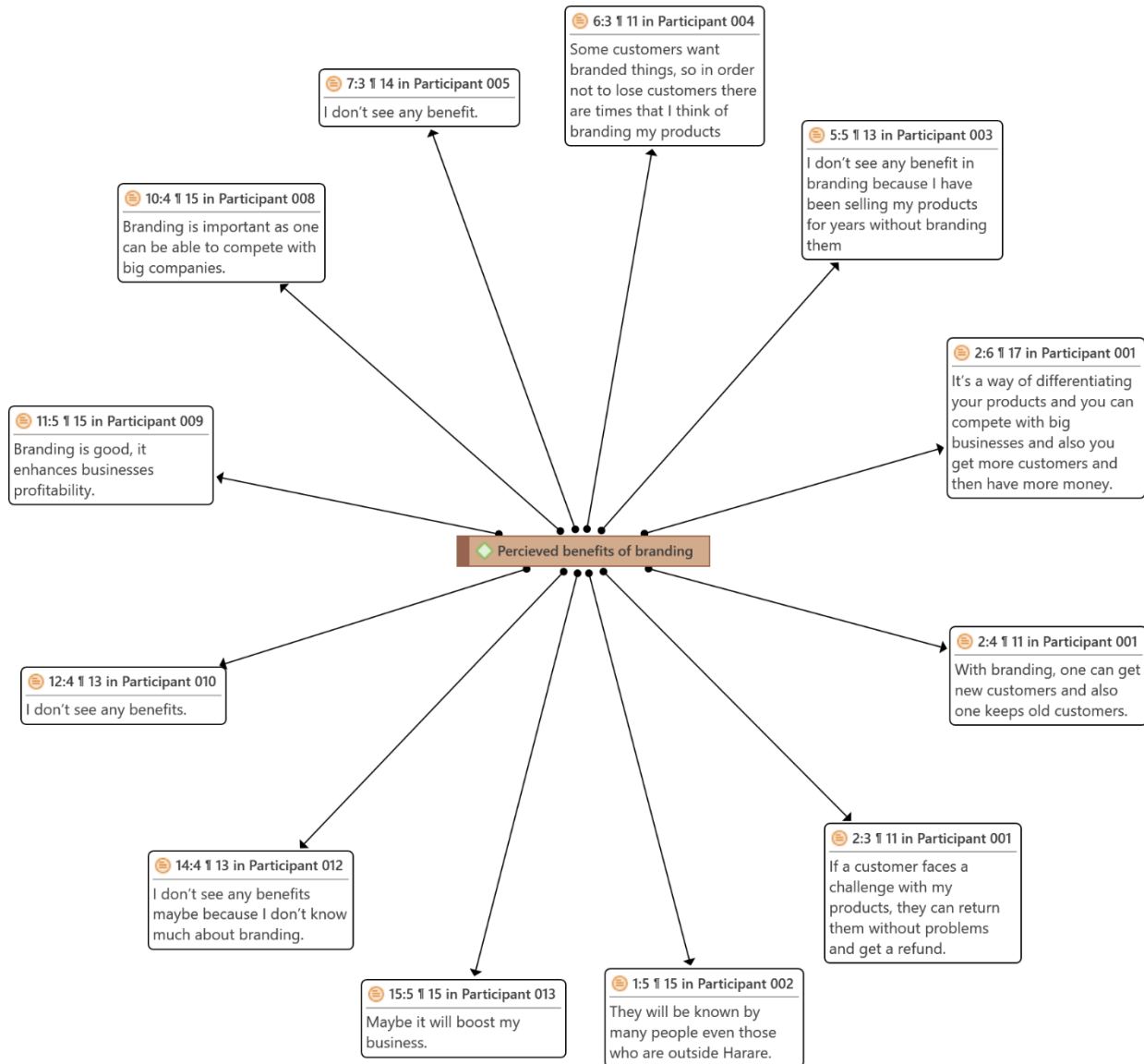


Figure 4-13. Quotations on perceived benefits of product branding

As can be seen from the quotations on the network diagram in Figure 16 above, some manufacturing SME owners reported that branding is beneficial as one can get many customers thereby getting more money for the survival of the business, and then one can consider branding their products as they will have enough money. Another participant reported that if a customer

faces any challenges with a product it's easier to get a refund. Others expressed ignorance about product branding as they stated that they don't see any benefits of branding their products.

4.8 Challenges affecting product branding among manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

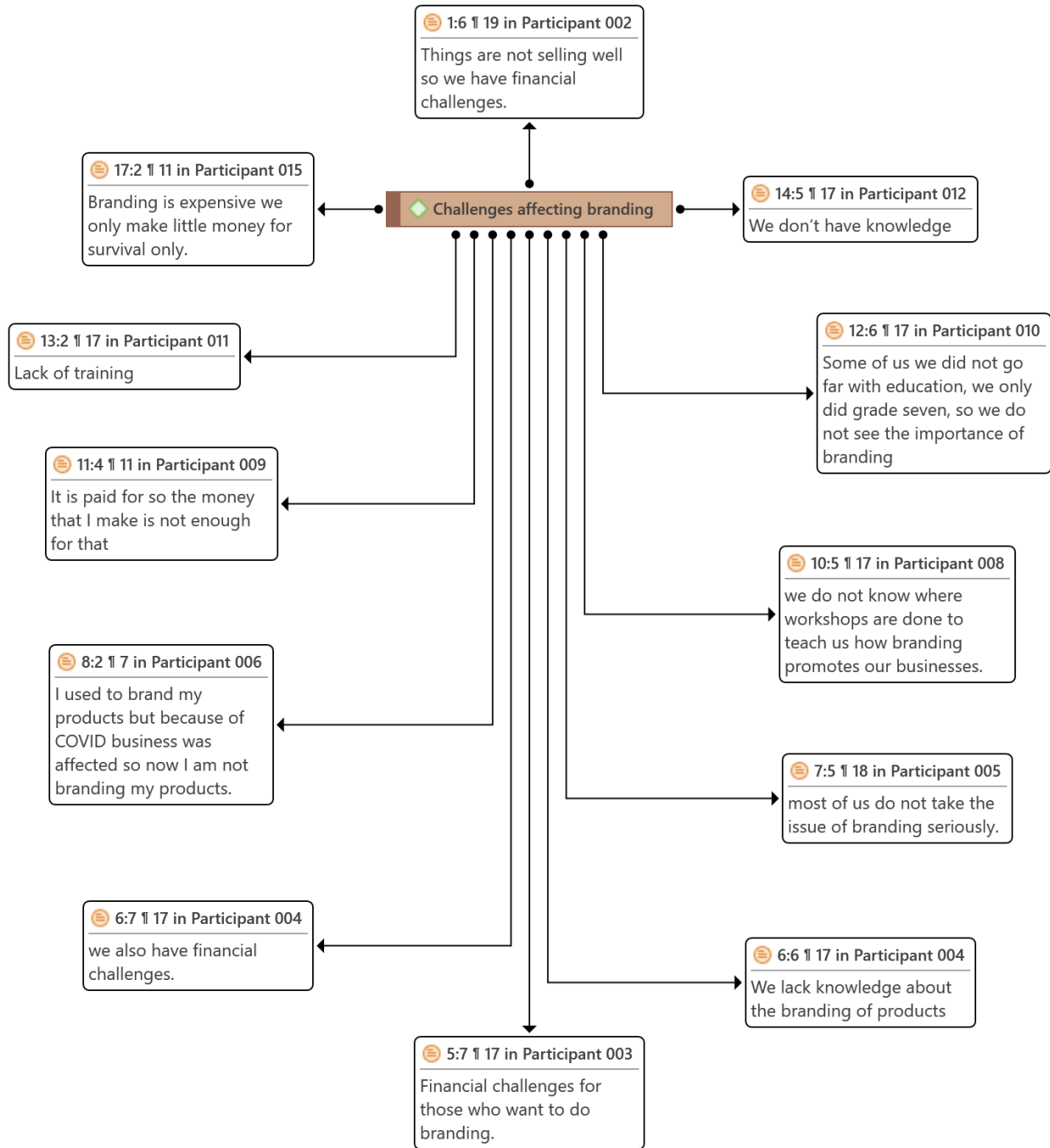


Figure 4-14. Quotations on challenges faced about product branding

The network diagram in Figure 17 above, contains quotations from various manufacturing SMEs supporting the fact that there is a lack of finance for them to even think of branding their products. Others were also of the sentiment that there is a lack of training and education on how to brand their products. Covid was also mentioned as it has greatly affected their business as some of their customers died during the pandemic and the customers’ purchasing power has decreased due to inflation.

4.9 Perceived impact of branding on business performance

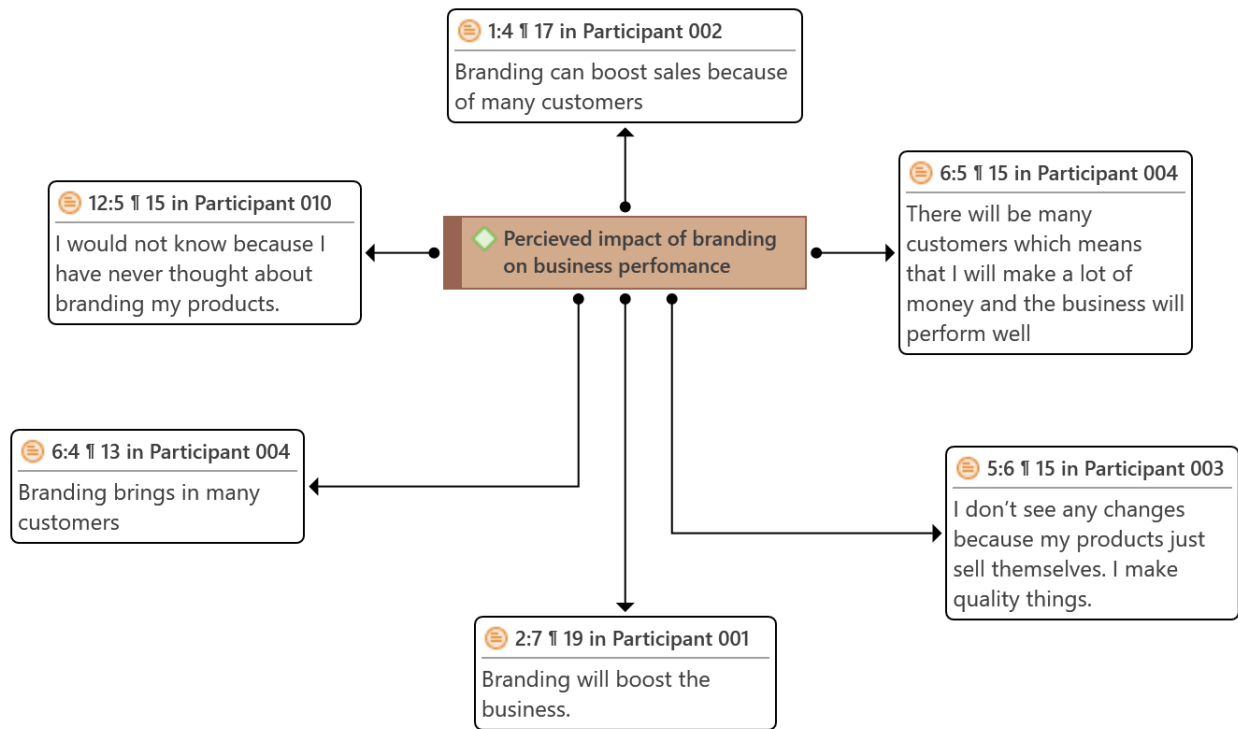


Figure 4-15. Perceived impact of product branding on business performance

It emerges that most of the participants appreciated the fact that branding has the potential to improve their business performance. However other participants did not know the role or the relationship between product branding and business performance, as shown in Figure 18 above.

The third research question sought to investigate what can be done to improve the performance of manufacturing SMEs through product branding.

4.10 Ways to promote product branding among manufacturing SMEs in Magaba

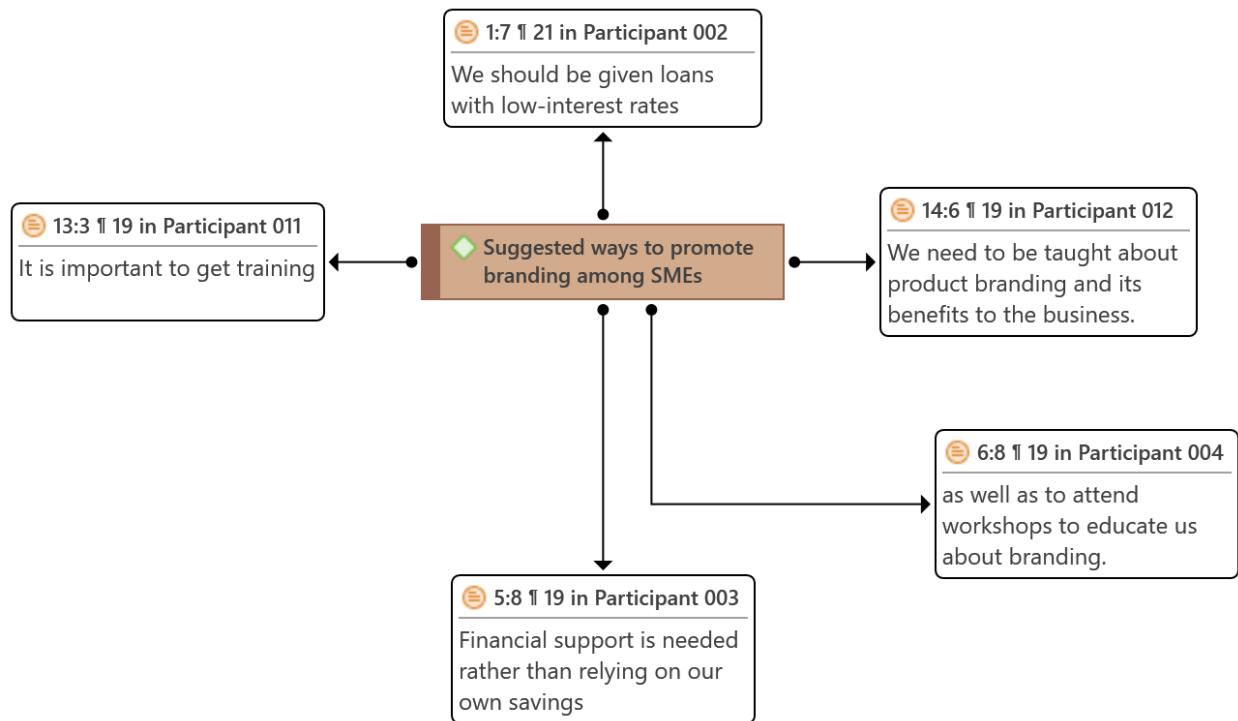


Figure 4-16. Quotations on ways to promote product branding

Some of the notable quotes in support of ways of promoting product branding amongst manufacturing SMEs are presented in the network diagram above in Figure 19. The majority of the participants reported that funds are needed for any business to be successful as well as to be educated regarding the importance of product branding.

4.11 Discussion of findings

This section presents a discussion of major findings relating to each objective set out in the study. The objectives of the study were to:

4.11.1 To examine the extent to which manufacturing SMEs consider branding their products.

The findings showed that the manufacturing SME owners have no plans or are reluctant to engage in branding their products as they reported it as an expense. Due to a lack of resources, these small-to-medium-scale businesses are unable to devote enough money to branding. The lack of interest

in branding among the SMEs could also be explained by their limited levels of education as all of the respondents had only attained o-level or below, which also meant a limitation in the application of professional approaches to the ways they do business. According to Zaimah and Zairani (2013), this gives larger companies a competitive advantage as the manufacturing SMEs are not known internationally because they do not brand their products.

4.11.2 To assess the effects of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs.

Benefits of product branding among manufacturing SMEs

The findings revealed that branding is beneficial as one can get many customers thereby getting more money for the survival of the business and then one can consider branding their products as they will have enough money. In line with the literature, (Pencak 2012) concurs that branding is seen as an effective way to facilitate the growth of the business which can organization a competitive advantage, attract and keep new customers and generate loyalty from existing customers which can lead to increased profits. It is worth noting that despite respondents acknowledging the potential beneficial effects of branding on the performance of their businesses, a majority of them were neither branding nor having considerations to brand, as discussed above.

Challenges faced by manufacturing SMEs regarding product branding

Lack of access to finance

Findings from the study showed that SMEs lack the funds to operate well. This is in line with (Odoom 2016) who concurs that the scarcity of finance is a significant obstacle, which prevents SMEs from aggressively competing in the fast-changing and competitive. Unlike larger firms, SMEs cannot obtain enough financial support from banks. The respondents are of a similar view that is important to have access to finance. There are also problems attaining funding from banks because these businesses are regarded as high-risk businesses. SME owners rely on their funding, which is frequently insufficient, due to a lack of government backing. Poor financial access causes the activities to be unproductive and unprofitable. According to Agwa-Ejon and Mbhohwa (2015), SMEs must have access to funding so that they will be able to develop and expand, yet these businesses typically struggle to do so. Due to the high failure rate of these initiatives, banks are reluctant to provide funding individual contributions are their sources of funding.

Lack of training and education

The lack of training in the business field is evident in the respondents' comments. Lack of training has caused operations and business activities to be poorly executed. There is a lack of personnel training. Training is needed in the business environment. Most of the business manufacturing SME owners only went as far as form four for their highest education. Education and training are greatly impacted by the owners' and managers' lack of management abilities in SMEs (Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen, 2009). The lack of education among respondents could also have been the possible cause of poor recording-keeping practices that were noted as some respondents could not account for their earnings in the past three months.

Lack of knowledge about branding

Results from the findings reviewed that SMEs do not know about product branding. Respondents expressed a lack of knowledge about where and when training workshops on issues that include branding and other business management courses are held. The SME sector's biggest hurdle to entrepreneurship is a lack of knowledge. The findings concur with Gundala and Khawaja (2014) who are of the view that lack of branding knowledge is one of the reasons why SME owners do not implement branding strategies.

4.11.3 To explore ways on how to promote product branding amongst manufacturing SMEs

Most of the participants reported that they needed funding and training on branding so that they will be able to practice branding their products in their businesses if they have enough money and knowledge. They appealed for loans with low interest, which they will be able to repay considering their current low earnings, under the current harsh economic conditions. Funds are needed for any business to be successful, including SMEs. The findings seem to concur with Abbasi, Alsakarneh, and Wang (2018) who stated that financial resources play a significant role in any business.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed qualitative analysis and discussion of the research findings. It starts by presenting a descriptive picture of the study participants, focusing on their ages, gender, levels of education, religions, and businesses in which they operate. It also presents a summary of findings on each of the emerging themes, together with their associated Atlati-generated

network diagrams showing some of the main quotations in support or contrast with each theme. The chapter closes with a discussion of the key findings aligned with the study objectives. The study is finalized and recommendations are made in the subsequent chapter, which is the last chapter.

5. CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE STUDY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings as summarized after data was collected. The general purpose of this study was to assess the impact of product branding on business performance. A summary and discussion of the research were made. Conclusions based on research findings were also made, Finally, recommendations based on study questions and objectives were also given.

5.2 Summary of the study

The main aim of the study was to assess the impact of product branding on business performance. The purpose and significance of the study were to shed light on the benefits of product branding. The rationale of the study was to get a better understanding of the role of product branding and make recommendations that may help the performance of manufacturing SMEs.

In chapter one, the major research question was to assess the importance of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs in Magaba in Mbare. The research questions and objectives were stated. The importance of the study to the various stakeholders was mentioned. Limitations and delimitations have been discussed. Concluding the chapter was the definition of the key terms in the study to give the reader a clear understanding of the study.

In chapter two, the study reviewed the theoretical framework of the study and also from the reviewed literature, it has been noted that SMEs view product branding as mainly limited to large corporations.

Chapter three focused on the research methodology being guided by the research onion. The qualitative approach was used in the form of a case study. Semi-structured interviews with 15 manufacturing SMEs in Magaba, Mbare were used as participants. The study discussed why certain research philosophies, research approaches, research designs, sampling techniques, and research instruments such as interviews were used to collect data. Ethical considerations and data presentations were also clearly discussed in this chapter.

In chapter four, the major findings were that manufacturing SMEs were faced with a host of challenges ranging from lack of finances to education and knowledge regarding the branding of products. Therefore, it can be concluded that a lot needs to be done by the government and SMEs Associations such as SMEDCO and other stakeholders to improve the standards of SMEs.

5.3 Conclusions

Conclusions based on the findings above were that manufacturing SMEs were exposed to several challenges that affect the operation of their business. Key challenges were a lack of finance, education, and knowledge of the importance of product branding.

The study concluded that access to financing has the biggest influence on how SMEs operate. The results of the study demonstrate that SMEs need access to financing to succeed. Therefore, it is essential to offer financial facilities to SMEs so that they can manage their business operations profitably and successfully.

5.4 Recommendations

It is against this research background that the following recommendations can be made;

Recommendation

- The study recommends that financial institutions avail financial options for SMEs so that they access the finances needed for their business with low-interest charges.
- The study suggests that for SMEs to be eligible for government-securitized loans, the government should serve as a loan guarantee or collateral security for them.
- There is a need for the SMEs Associations to create a platform where they discuss the plight of manufacturing SMEs regularly to get first-hand information.
- Furthermore, there must be workshops and seminars where manufacturing SMEs are taught about the importance of branding their products and related issues.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

It may not have been possible through this research to exhaust all the factors on the relationship between product branding and business performance. It is therefore recommended that:

- Similar research can be carried out using other sampling techniques other than the convenience sampling method that was used by the researcher.
- Quantitative research can also be conducted on a much larger sample group and learn more about the relationship between product branding and business performance.
- Similar research will need to be conducted at other home industries in Zimbabwe to ascertain the generalizability of the current findings beyond the current study context.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. SMES BUSINESS OWNERS INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date	_ _ / _ _ / _ _ (dd/mm/yyyy)
Venue	Magaba, Mbare
Start Time	_ _ : _ _ (hour/min)
End Time	_ _ : _ _ (hour/min)

Good morning/ Good afternoon. My name is Mrs. Chingombe, I am a student, studying Master in Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Bindura University of Science Education. As part of my studies, I am carrying out research on the assessment of product branding on the business performance of manufacturing SMEs. You have been selected to participate in this discussion because you are a business owner who is into goods manufacturing. I will ask you questions concerning the branding of products, business performance, and any challenges that you may be facing or think other SMEs who are into the manufacturing business face about product branding. I would also want to learn from you some of the ways that can be put to address product branding issues and the challenges that you and other SMEs are or may be facing.

Your participation is voluntary. No names will be recorded.

There is no benefit personally to you in participating, however, the information gained from this research may lead to increased knowledge about the branding of products and its impact on the business performance not only for SMEs in Magaba but also for other SMEs in Zimbabwe and beyond. This knowledge may also result in the introduction of policies or the development of other support mechanisms that seek to address branding issues and the challenges identified.

Do you have any questions before we start?

This discussion will take about 25-30 minutes to complete. I will now move to the questions.

Socio-demographic information

I will start by asking you a few background questions about yourself and your business

1. Gender M/F
2. What is your age as of last birthday?
3. What is the highest level of education that you completed?
4. What is your religion
5. What was your average monthly income from this business in the last 3 months?
6. How long have you been in this business?

Product branding and business performance

I will now ask you questions that are related to product branding and linking it to the performance of your business.

7. What type of business group/class does your business belong to?
8. What are the three main products that you make?
9. How do customers distinguish the products that you make from those of your competitors?
10. Do you consider branding your products?
 - a. If yes, probe for;
 - i. Why?
 - ii. Period since starting to brand
 - iii. Steps followed to start branding
 - iv. Period has taken to complete the brand process
 - b. If No, probe for;
 - i. Why, including challenges faced in the process
 - ii. Any support needed
11. What do you think are the benefits of branding your products?
12. How do you think branding your products can affect the performance of your business?

13. What do you think are the challenges affecting the branding of products for manufacturing SMEs?

14. What do you think can be done to overcome these challenges that you have identified in Question 13?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME, WE HAVE COME TO THE END OF OUR INTERVIEW.