

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING



DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROJECT

**INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY, EMOTIONAL
BRANDING, AND BRAND EXPERIENCE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR
(BRAND TRUST AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY) IN THE ICT INDUSTRY IN
ZIMBABWE. (FIRST PACK CASE STUDY)**

BY

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF COMMERCE HONOURS DEGREE IN
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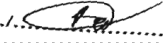
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DEDICATION

I would like to thank Almighty God for His infinite grace, strength, wisdom, and protection throughout my studies. Their guidance gave me the courage and determination to complete this research successfully. I dedicate this research to my mother and brother, whose constant encouragement, sacrifices, prayers, and support inspired me to keep going even in difficult times.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on consumer buying behaviour within Zimbabwe's ICT sector, with brand trust as the mediating variable and customer loyalty as the outcome variable. The research was motivated by the increasing competition in the ICT industry and the challenge businesses face in retaining loyal customers. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The data were collected through questionnaires distributed in physical and online formats to consumers in Harare who had used First Pack products and services. The researcher used purposive sampling and convenience sampling techniques to select participants. Of the 384 questionnaires distributed, 360 valid responses were obtained and analysed using SPSS and AMOS. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the four research hypotheses, and the structural model demonstrated an excellent fit. The findings revealed that brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience each had a statistically significant positive effect on brand trust. The results further established that brand trust fosters customer loyalty through repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, with all hypotheses supported at $p < 0.001$. The study concluded that ICT companies should prioritise authentic brands, create emotional connections with customers, and maintain consistent brand experiences to build brand trust, which in turn drives customer loyalty. The research recommends that ICT companies improve service quality, customer engagement, and communication to maintain long-term customer relationships.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines the fundamental framework of the research through the research context, problem statement, objectives, research hypothesis, assumptions, limitations, and key definitions. It provides the reason for investigating the roles of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience in consumers' buying behaviour in the Zimbabwean ICT industry. Lastly, the thesis outline is presented, and then a summary of the chapter.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Branding has become a key strategic weapon in highly competitive markets that affects customers' attitudes, feelings, and buying decisions. A strong brand, according to Keller (2016), builds trust and loyalty and differentiates products. Attracting and retaining clients is a constant struggle for companies in the 2w competitive business landscape today, especially in Zimbabwe's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry. Morhart et al. (2015) explain that a successful brand is not just about creating a distinction for goods and services, but about shaping customer views, building trust, and creating a lasting loyalty. Some argue that authenticity and a consistent brand experience foster greater and lasting trust, whereas Thomson et al. (2005) believe that emotional branding creates emotional attachment, which leads to loyalty (Morhart et al., 2015).

Competition in Zimbabwe is intensified by volatility in the economy and constant technological advancements, which enable customers to easily move to other brands when they do not meet their expectations. The lack of sustainable trust and loyalty among many brands in ICT is because they are perceived as not consistent or inauthentic. Customers are emotionally detached from products and services because of the lack of reliable service, low customer engagement, and a lack of real customer experience. This means that despite their hard marketing campaigns, ICT firms such as First Pack have problems keeping customers. By grasping the importance of emotional branding, understanding how it affects trust and loyalty, and leveraging customer experience, IT companies can enhance their brand strategies and foster stronger customer relationships.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sustainable loyalty and trust have been hard to come by for ICT companies in Zimbabwe. Companies spend a lot on advertising and promotions, and not many people can retain themselves as customers even after that, hence a makeover. The issue is that there is no enough focus on brand authenticity, ineffective emotional tactics, and a lack of brand consistency in their experience with the brand, which can lead to a lack of consumer trust and emotional engagement with the brand. However, with these challenges, it is essential to research the role of authenticity, emotions, and experience in the context of brand trust and brand loyalty, as it is vital to consumer behaviour and business sustainability in the ICT industry.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on brand trust and customer loyalty within the Zimbabwean ICT industry.

The secondary objectives are the following:

Examine the effect of brand authenticity on brand trust.

Evaluate the impact of emotional branding on brand trust.

To determine how brand experience influences trust in the brand.

Investigate the influence of brand trust on customer loyalty.

1.4 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H1: Brand authenticity has a statistically significant positive effect on brand trust.

H2: Emotional branding has a statistically significant positive impact on brand trust.

H3: Brand experience has a statistically significant positive influence on brand trust.

H4: Brand trust has a statistically significant positive influence on customer loyalty.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Respondents will provide honest answers. ICT customers know the brands they interact with and can assess their authenticity, emotional appeal, and experience. ICT consumers aged 18 and over in Harare adequately represent the target population. The selected ICT company (First Pack Marketing) represents the wider ICT industry in Zimbabwe. Measurement scales adapted from previous literature are valid and reliable in Zimbabwe. Constructs such as brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience are reliably measured using validated scales.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research is limited to examining the impact of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on consumer trust and loyalty. The study targets First Pack's ICT consumers in Harare, aged 18 and above. These findings are not necessarily applicable to ICT consumers in other locations. Since all variables were measured using self-reports, there may be social desirability bias regarding past brand experience. This research did not explore sectors other than Information and Communication Technologies. The investigation period will run from 2025 to 2026.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Branding: Branding is based on the power of the brand and the way that goods and services are communicated by the brand (Kotler and Keller, 2020).

Brand authenticity: as a brand's message is perceived as authentic, loyal to its principles, and consistent (Morhart et al., 2015).

Emotional branding is an intentional attempt to establish long-lasting bonds between a company and its customers through the manipulation of emotions (Hudson et al., 2016).

Brand trust: Customers' trust in a brand is influenced by their high expectations for its reliability and honesty (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Customer loyalty: consumer engagement to consistently repurchase or recommend a brand over time (Oliver, 2015)

1.8 LAYOUT OF STUDY

This study is organized into five chapters:

There was an explanation of the background of the study, problem statement, goals, assumptions and hypotheses, delimitations, and definitions of words in **Chapter 1**.

Chapter 2 reviews literature covering theoretical background, empirical studies, and conceptual frameworks of brand authenticity, emotional branding, brand experience, trust, and brand loyalty.

The research design, demographic, sampling strategies, data gathering tools, validity and reliability, and analytic procedures are explained in **Chapter 3**.

The results of the data collected are presented, analysed, and interpreted in **Chapter 4**.

Chapter 5 summarises the key findings, helpful recommendations, and future research needs.

1.9 SUMMARY

The research was presented in this chapter by giving background information and outlining the difficulties Zimbabwean ICT firms have in gaining the confidence and loyalty of their customers. It stated the objectives, explained the problem in a clear way, and formulated hypotheses. There was also an important word definition, an assumption, and a delimitation. The study setting was used as the ending of the chapter. In the next chapter, the pertinent literature on the subject is reviewed.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature on the effects of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on consumer purchasing behaviour in Zimbabwe's ICT sector. It explains the theories that underlie the research, the conceptual approach, and the findings of previous studies. The chapter will also include a gap analysis that will justify the study and a summary of the chapter.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 BRANDING

The act of giving a product or business a distinctive identity and image to set it apart from the competition and foster enduring consumer connections is known as branding. Keller (2016) defines branding as a strategic process that improves customer perception and builds strong associations between products and their names. Kotler and Keller (2020) emphasize that an effective brand influences customer choices and loyalty by fostering trust and emotional attachment. The brand provides more value to consumers than functional value by giving symbolic and emotional value to the brand (Aaker, 2016). Within the hectic ICT market, where businesses are consistently seeking to stand out, a powerful brand can make all the difference. Strategies of branding can help companies to set themselves apart from the competition and provide value that is hard to emulate. This, in turn, can create a competitive advantage that can lead to long-term success.

2.2.2 BRAND AUTHENTICITY

Brand authenticity is when a brand is real and honest. It is when a company is true to itself and its values, and shows this in everything it does. Morhart et al. (2015) found that a company is authentic when its identity, messaging, and actions all align. Napoli et al. (2016) emphasize that being authentic helps build trust and credibility with customers, both of which are essential for long-

lasting customer relationships. Schallehn, Burmann, and Riley (2019) argue that brands that come across as genuine and committed to their values tend to attract customers. Trust and loyalty are essential with customers, especially in a changing market like the ICT industry, and being authentic is of key importance. If it's a legitimate and honest brand, it stands out from the rest and will let customers know that it is worth their while to remain loyal to it.

2.2.3 EMOTIONAL BRANDING

Emotional branding is the process of associating a perception that involves emotions with a brand instead of reasoning. As Thomson, MacInnis, and Park (2005) explain, emotional branding is the way to create emotional bonds that lead to deeper brand loyalty and attachment. Roberts (2019) states that emotional branding creates a strong and deep emotional attachment to the brand, and the customer comes to consider the brand as part of them. According to Iglesias et al. (2019), emotional branding has more to do with customers' emotions and desires, which result in more engagement and satisfaction. For ICT companies, emotional branding is crucial to create a sense of emotion in technology and build users' emotional trust.

2.2.4 BRAND EXPERIENCE

The emotions, sensations, and mental reactions that customers have when interacting with a brand are all included in brand experience. Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) define brand experience as the internal reactions that consumers have to the brand stimuli in sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioural aspects. Consumer pleasure and loyalty are influenced by brand experience, enriching brand equity, according to Iglesias, Marković, and Rialp (2019). Additionally, a positive brand experience builds trust, engagement, and repeat purchase intentions (Nysveen, Pedersen, and Skard 2018). For the ICT industry, perception from the experiential image via digital interfaces, after-sales support, and service quality is of high importance.

2.2.5 BRAND TRUST

Brand trust is how much trust customers have in a brand. Brand trust comes from the disposition of trust that is built on the basis of perceived honesty and previous experiences, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found. Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2015) point out that trust is a psychological mechanism that helps to ease uncertainty during the purchasing process. Furthermore, Ball, Coelho, and Machás (2004) argue that trust enhances the durability and commitment to brands. In the ICT industry, trust is the key to any relationship that needs to last long-term, as customers may worry about product quality and data protection.

2.2.6 CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Customer loyalty is the commitment of a customer to continually rebuy or refer a specific brand. Oliver (2015) has blended the concepts of emotional attachment and repeat purchases and has defined loyalty as both behavioural and attitudinal. The most common factors in building loyalty are brand trust, satisfaction, and positive experiences, as mentioned by Dick and Basu (1994). Likewise, Kim et al. (2020) say that customers are more inclined to be loyal when they feel appreciated, emotionally connected, and trust the brand. In Zimbabwe's ICT sector, building loyalty is essential to maintaining company performance in a crowded market.

2.3 THEORIES AND MODELS IN BRANDING

2.3.1 Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994)

As a central part of relationship marketing, commitment and trust are key mediators that foster cooperation, reduce uncertainty, and promote productive relationships. Morgan and Hunt argue that the degree of one's trust in a particular brand or company leads him or her to stick around and maintain the relationship. The key variables of the theory are trust and commitment. The theory provides the background for developing the connection between brand trust and customer loyalty, examined in this study.

2.3.2 Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969)

This theory holds that people tend to form relationships based on the level of security and comfort they experience in the process. In this context, if a brand is perceived as authentic and emotional, consumers can easily perceive it as trustworthy. In other words, the main factors constituting this study are positively correlated, that is, brand authenticity and emotional branding are essential to ensure brand reliability and thus secure attachment. Positive brand experiences will further cement this relationship through positive interaction. At the end of the day, a secure attachment gives rise to trust in the brand, which consists of trusting the reliability and benevolence of the brand, leading to authentic consumer loyalty.

2.3.3 Brand Experience Model (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009)

The model offers an explanation for how stimuli associated with brands (such as packaging, communication, environment) provoke internal subjective experiences on the part of consumers. This model suggests that there are four main dimensions: Sensory (aesthetic), Affective (emotions), Intellectual (problem solving), and Behavioural (actions and lifestyle). According to this model, consumer satisfaction and loyalty are affected by these experiences. The variables within this model are very important for this research because they offer insights into various aspects of ICT consumer experiences in the development of trust.

2.4 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.4.1 Relationship between brand authenticity and brand trust

This relationship has been evidenced by numerous empirical studies, which reveal that a positive and significant relationship exists between brand authenticity and brand trust, which explains how this relationship influences the customers' behaviour. In one of these studies, Moulard et al. (2021) surveyed 414 Human Marks in the United States. Authenticity (especially sincerity and consistency) resulted in greater brand trust in a company's perceived authenticity. A similar impact was shown in another study of 355 airline brand consumers in South Africa.

Based on the above argument, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Brand authenticity has a statistically significant positive effect on brand trust.

2.4.2 Relationship between Emotional Branding and Brand Trust

According to research, establishing an emotional connection is another key factor in building trust. Kaufmann, Petermann, and Volckner (2016) conducted a survey of 271 consumers in the German retail sector. The researchers established that the brand's emotional connection was strongly linked to trust, making people feel safe and identify with the brand. Panda, Pandey, and Bennett (2017) analysed 320 smartphone users in India and found that the effective use of emotional branding techniques, such as instilling a sense of belonging, contributed to greater consumer trust towards brands. Another example from Spain by Iglesias and Ind (2016), who surveyed 280 participants on how emotional branding creates relationships with customers.

Taking into account the previous review, it can be hypothesized that

H2: Emotional branding has a statistically significant positive impact on brand trust.

2.4.3 Relationship between Brand Experience and Brand Trust

Evidence from empirical studies indicates that brand experiences contribute to brand trust. According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experiences were studied in the United States among a sample of 397 people through the brand experience scale. Sensory, affective, and behavioural experiences significantly increased trust and loyalty. In addition, Iglesias et al. (2019) studied the relationship between brand experiences and their influence on brand experiences in Spain. A sample of 312 individuals was included. Customer experiences lay the foundation for authenticity, which fosters trust in the brand.

Following the above findings, it can be hypothesized that:

H3: Positive brand experience has a statistically significant positive influence on brand trust.

2.4.4 Relationship between Brand Trust and Customer Loyalty

Numerous studies have demonstrated how crucial brand trust is as a precondition for consumer loyalty. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) found that one of the factors that could predict both loyalty and consumers' repurchase behaviour in their study on the sequence of effects from brand trust to brand performance among 300 customers in the U.S. was trust. A different study, conducted by Rudzewicz and Strychalska-Rudzewicz (2021), polled 428 Polish consumers who purchase athletic brands online to see how brand trust impacts consumer purchase decisions. They discovered that brand trust has a great impact on consumers' loyalty and buying habits. Kim, Holland, and Han (2020) surveyed 380 South Korean ICT users and found that the attitudes and behaviours of customers can be improved through the factor of trust.

According to the argument, it can be hypothesized that:

H4: Brand trust has a statistically significant positive impact on customer loyalty.

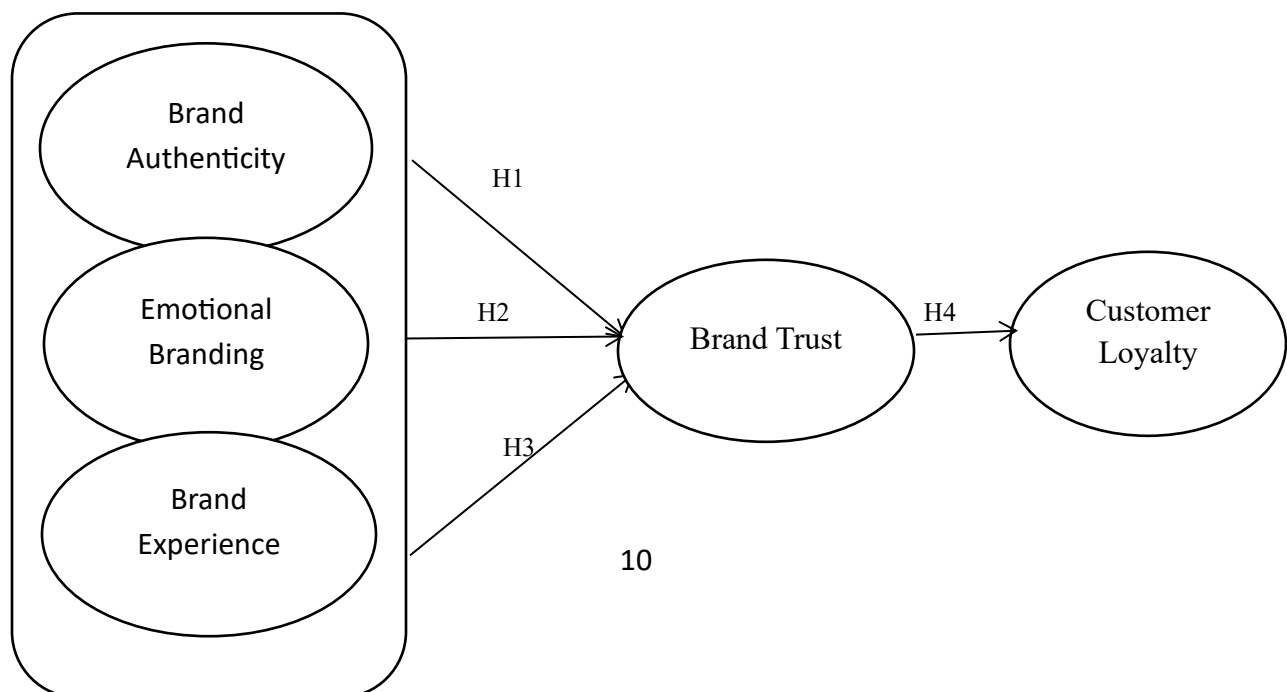
2.4.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is a logical summary of the relationships between the components or ideas studied. It is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Branding



2.5 GAP ANALYSIS

Even though there is adequate literature on the subject, what makes this research stand out among the rest? Well, first of all, almost all studies in the existing literature focus on developed Western economies, especially the United States. Very few studies focused on the African context, specifically Zimbabwe, where factors such as hyperinflation, the use of digital technology, and consumer attitudes towards brands affect the relationships among constructs in question. Secondly, very few researchers have considered incorporating brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience together to measure their joint effect on brand trust and brand loyalty. Finally, the ICT industry in Zimbabwe is rapidly growing but not yet extensively studied from a marketing perspective.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the key concepts of brand authenticity, emotional branding, brand experience, brand trust, and customer loyalty, drawing on foundational authors. He established a theoretical foundation using Commitment-Trust Theory, Brand Experience Model, and Attachment Theory. A review of empirical evidence from several countries and industries confirmed the hypothesized positive relationships between the variables. Finally, the gap analysis justified the need for this specific research by highlighting the lack of studies in the context of ICT in Zimbabwe. Chapter 3 will detail the methodology used in this research.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the method of studying the impact of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on purchasing behaviour in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry was explained. It provided a detailed picture of the population studied, the sampling methods employed to select respondents for the study, the research design, and the research philosophy. The research tool, validity and reliability protocols, pilot testing, data collection, data analysis, and ethical issues are all covered in this chapter. The aim was to justify the decisions made to ensure that the study produced reliable, valid, and credible results on how brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience influence the behaviour of buying consumers, especially customer trust and loyalty in the ICT industry

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

It is the frame of mind, presuppositions, and beliefs that underlie a researcher's methodology. In this investigation, the researcher used positivist philosophy. The positivist perspective believes that reality is "real, measurable, and observable" (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019, p 11). The positivist approach was the most appropriate since this study aimed to explore the quantitative relationship between brand authenticity, emotional branding, brand experience, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Positivist philosophy, which focuses on objectivity, measurement, and hypothesis testing, encouraged the use of surveys and statistical analysis.

3.2.1 Saunders et al. (2019) Research Onion, Philosophical Choices

The research choices made in this study are summarised in Table 1 below using the Research Onion framework of Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019):

Table 1: Research Onion, Philosophical Layers and Choices for this Study

Table 1 Research Onion, Philosophical Layers and Choices for this Study

Layer	Available Options	Decision taken	Justification
Philosophy	Positivism / Interpretivism / Pragmatism / Realism	Positivism	Quantitative relationships proven by observable and measurable data
Approach	Deductive / Inductive / Abductive	Deductive	Hypotheses derived from existing theories and tested with collected data
Strategy	Survey / Experiment / Case Study / Ethnography / Grounded Theory / Action Research	Survey	A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a large sample
Methodological choice	Mono method / mixed method / multimethod	Mono (quantitative) method	Exclusively quantitative data collected and analyzed using SPSS and AMOS
Time horizon	Cross Section / Longitudinal	Cross section	Data collected at a single point in time (2025–2026)
Data collection and analysis	Questionnaire / Interview / Observation / Experiment	Self-administered questionnaire	Enables structured and standardized data collection from 384 respondents

Source: Adapted from Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019)

Table 1 above demonstrates that the philosophical and the study's methodological choices were coherent and consistently aligned. Positivist philosophy supports a deductive approach, which in turn justifies the use of a survey strategy, a single-method quantitative choice, and a cross-cutting time horizon. All of these decisions were consistent with the study's goal of testing hypotheses about the relationships between quantifiable brand constructs.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

It refers to the framework that guides the researcher in collecting, measuring, and analysing data to answer a specific research question. The study employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive research (Saunders et al., 2019) provides an exact description of people, events, or conditions. The design was descriptive because it allowed information to be collected on the characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes of the respondents at a single time (Creswell, 2014). This design allowed the study to efficiently capture the perceptions and behaviours of ICT consumers and analyse the relationships between variables.

3.4 TARGET POPULATION

According to Willie (2024), the specific group from which the researcher wants to collect data for the study is called the target population. The study targeted adults aged 18 years and above in Harare who had used or purchased ICT products, services, or systems from First Pack Marketing Zimbabwe in the past 12 months and had access to ICT products and services in Harare. The researcher selected this group of customers as they had gained first-hand experience with the company and were able to provide relevant information on brand loyalty and perception.

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The author used purposive and convenience sampling. For purposive sampling, the individuals who responded were selected as they met certain criteria, living in Harare, being a member of the First Pack, and having reached the age of 18 years. This technique involved the selection of a sample with certain characteristics that were relevant to the study (Etikan et al., 2016). It was appropriate because only people with experience of using their ICT products and services could contribute meaningful data on the constructs studied. Convenience sampling was then used to reach easily accessible individuals who were suitable for the study and could complete the questionnaire, administered through both online (Google Forms) and physical means. Although non-probability sampling limited generalizability, it was a practical and justifiable option to reach a specific population within the limitations of the study.

3.5.1 SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION

The sample size is the total number of participants involved in the study. A reliable and significant result can only be obtained by a large enough sample size. The sample size calculation and selection of a target sample of 384 respondents were done using the Cochran method by ensuring that the results were reliable and appropriate for the planned statistical analysis.

The researcher used Cochran's formula for a large unknown population (Cochrane, 1977)

Where:

n = required sample size

Z = Z value (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)

P = estimated proportion of the population (0.5 used for maximum variability)

E = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = (1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2$$

$$(1.96)^2 = 3.8416$$

$$p \cdot (1 - p) = 0.5 \cdot 0.5 = 0.25$$

$$e^2 = (0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

$$n = 3.8416 \cdot 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$

$$= 384.16$$

$$= 384$$

3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Research instruments are the methods or devices used to collect information for a study. The study used a structured, self-administered questionnaire because it enabled the collection of standardised quantitative data from a large number of respondents in a consistent manner. A questionnaire is a structured set of questions that are designed in a systematic way to collect information from the respondents (Hassan, 2023). The questionnaire consisted of three sections covering demographic, emotional branding, brand experience, brand trust and customer loyalty, in line with the study objectives.

3.6.1 MEASUREMENT SCALES FOR CONSTRUCTS

The scale of brand authenticity was adapted from Morhart et al. (2015). Additionally, the Emotional Brand Scale was modified based on Singla and Gupta (2019). Furthermore, the Brand Experience scale was adapted from the scale developed by Brakus et al. (2009) and further refined by Gao and Lan (2020), which captures four aspects of brand experience: sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual. The Brand Trust scale was taken from Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2015). Lastly, a modified version of the Customer Loyalty scale (Grace, 2020) was utilized in order to assess buyback intentions, resistance to change, and advocacy.

3.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Hair et al., 2019, define validity as the degree to which a study measures what it is supposed to measure, thus ensuring that the results of the research are credible and meaningful. The AMOS Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent Validity assesses how much the parts of a given construct converge or share in their variation. It was evaluated by checking the items' standardized factor loading greater than 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity examines the degree of separation of what are supposed to be non-correlated constructs. It was evaluated by the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), which prescribes that the square root of the AVE should be larger than the highest inter-construct correlation. This

guaranteed that the substance of a measure for one construct was different from that of a measure for another (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Consistency of the instrument in the measurement of a construct is called reliability (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Composite Reliability was used, where values above 0.7 were considered acceptable. Reliability tests were performed after the pilot study to ensure that all adapted scales consistently measured the predicted constructs.

3.8 PILOT STUDY

Before conducting the whole study, a pilot study was carried out to test the feasibility, validity, and reliability of the research instruments and techniques (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). The pilot research had ten First Pack consumers who were not included in the main study. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were guaranteed, and their participation was voluntary. The survey was given out in person as well as online via email and WhatsApp, and it was filled out online with Google Forms or in hard copy. In addition to pointing out any parts that were challenging to understand, participants were asked to evaluate the questions' organization, clarity, and relevance. Completed questionnaires were checked before the main data collection to ensure they were complete, and input from the pilot study was used to make minor amendments and complete the questionnaire.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The survey questionnaire was administered both physically and virtually to the customers in Harare. The Google Forms link was sent to participants by email and WhatsApp to distribute online. Google Forms was chosen because it ensured safe storage of the responses and allowed for a response at any time of opportunity for the user. Printed surveys were handed to First Pack Marketing clients by the researcher on the business's premises. Before the intervention, participants were asked to be involved voluntarily and informed about the objective and confidentiality issues. Printed questionnaires were completed and returned within the designated

time period. The responses that were obtained in either format were combined and verified for completeness before being coded and analysed

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019) defined data analysis as 'a data-analytical and logical process, which involves the examination of every aspect of data. The analysis was done with AMOS. To test the hypotheses, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used, while to measure the validity of constructs, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in AMOS was used.

3.11 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical guidelines were followed. The objectives of the study and the respondents' right to refuse to participate at any time were clearly explained to participants. It was entirely voluntary to take part. No personally identifying information was gathered thanks to the replies' secrecy and anonymity. The data collected was for educational purposes and was securely guarded against unauthorized access. All results were honestly and truthfully reported.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter provides a description of the research approach used in this study. It contained the target population, correlational descriptive design, positivist research philosophy, non-probability sampling methods, sample size calculation, research instruments, data collection procedure, data presentation, and analysis. The steps that have been taken to ensure authenticity and reliability were explained. The data analysis techniques, ethical issues, and the pilot project were explained. This gave a solid basis to make perceptive decisions based on consumer buying patterns in the ICT industry. The next chapter will discuss data analysis, data presentation, and data interpretation.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data analysis, conclusions, and discussion on the findings. A structured, self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information, which was subsequently analysed with AMOS. The questionnaire's response rate and the profile of the respondents are given at the beginning of the chapter. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) are used to assess construct validity and reliability using AMOS software with standardized factor loadings. Convergent and discriminant validities are then checked before the measurement and structural model fit indices. The chapter ends with a discussion of results in line with the four research objectives: to assess how brand authenticity affects brand trust; to assess how emotional branding influences brand trust; to ascertain how brand experience affects brand trust; and to explore the impact of brand trust on customer loyalty.

4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE RATE

Questionnaires were administered to a total of 384 ICT users in Harare aged 18 and above, who had used the services or products of First Pack Marketing within the last 12 months. The questionnaires were administered in two formats: an online version via Google Forms shared via WhatsApp and email, and a printed version distributed directly at the company's premises. Of the 384 questionnaires distributed, 360 were fully completed and usable for analysis. 24 questionnaires were not returned or incomplete and were therefore excluded from the analysis.

This study's response rate was 93.75%. Fincham (2008) states that for a quantitative study, 70% or more is adequate. The response rates are provided below in Table 2.

Table 2: Questionnaire response rate

Table 2 Questionnaire response rate

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Distributed questionnaires	384	100.0
Returned and usable questionnaires	360	93.75
Unreturned/Incomplete Questionnaires	24	6.25

Source: Survey Data

4.1.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The respondents' (n=360) demographic information is shown below. A survey questionnaire was used to gather eight demographic variables.

These include gender, age group, educational level, occupation, monthly income, type of ICT product/services used, preferred ICT brand, and frequency of using the preferred brand of ICT.

Table 3: Demographic profile of respondents

Table 3 Demographic profile of respondents

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	184	51.1
	Male	176	48.9
	Total	360	100.0
Age	18–25 years	101	28.1
	26–35 years	155	43.1
	36–45 years	65	18.1
	46–55 years	34	9.4
	55 years or older	5	1.4

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
	Total	360	100.0
Education	Primary Education	7	1.9
	Secondary Education	66	18.3
	Higher Education (Bachelor's/Diploma)	199	55.3
	Master's Degree	72	20.0
	PhD	16	4.4
	Total	360	100.0
Occupation	Student	77	21.4
	Full-time employee	192	53.3
	Unemployed	28	7.8
	Self-employed	50	13.9
	Part-time employment	13	3.6
	Total	360	100.0
Income	US\$50 – US\$100	59	16.4
	US\$101 – US\$300	112	31.1
	US\$301 – US\$500	116	32.2
	US\$501 and above	73	20.3
	Total	360	100.0
Product used	Computer and laptop	100	27.8
	Printer	34	9.4
	Mobile phone	162	45.0
	Mobile Money Services	40	11.1

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
	Device or Software Solutions	16	4.4
	Networking Solutions	5	1.4
	Others	3	0.8
	Total	360	100.0
Brand Used	HP	78	21.7
	Lenovo	82	22.8
	Epson	14	3.9
	Pantum	12	3.3
	Samsung	127	35.3
	Apple	37	10.3
	Others	10	2.8
	Total	360	100.0
Duration	Less than 1 year	42	11.7
	1–3 years	129	35.8
	4–6 years	125	34.7
	More than 6 years	64	17.8
	Total	360	100.0

Source: Survey Data

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents were female (51.1%), while male respondents were 48.9%. The results revealed that there was a fairly even gender balance among the respondents, with a balance of both men and women as major consumers of goods and services in ICT in urban Zimbabwe.

The majority of respondents were aged 26 to 35 (43.1%), followed by those aged 18–25 (28.1%), indicating that the sample population consisted mainly of young adult users of the ICT services and products. Of those who responded, the majority had a diploma or degree (55.3%), and 20.0% had a master's degree, indicating that the subjects were very educated and therefore able to give informed answers.

Of those working, the majority were in full-time employment (53.3%), with students coming in second (21.4%), indicating a relatively active economically active population. The monthly income of most respondents was between US\$101 and US\$500, a common income range for many urban consumers in Harare.

The most widely used ICT product was the mobile phone (45.0%), and this demonstrates the relevance of mobile technology in daily life. Samsung was the most popular ICT brand (35.3%), with Lenovo and HP trailing. Moreover, most of the respondents had been using their preferred brand for more than a year, which means that they had a long history of brand relationship and offers a reliable platform to assess brand trust and customer loyalty.

4.3 MEASUREMENT MODEL

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) technique was employed to assess the measurement model using the maximum likelihood estimation procedure, and the AMOS software was used. According to Hair et al. (2019), CFA is a method based on theoretical assumptions to ascertain if the indicators utilized accurately reflect the related constructs. Brand Authenticity (BA), Emotional Branding (EB), Brand Experience (BE), Brand Trust (BT), and Customer Loyalty (CL) make up the five-factor measurement model. Each construct has five indicators, and thus there are 25 observed items. The testing of the measurement model consisted of three phases. The fit indices test, the AMOS measurement model trajectory diagram test, and the individual construct CFA results were the tests used for these.

4.3.1 Goodness of fit results for the measurement model

The measurement model fit was assessed using a series of fit indices developed by Hu and Bentler (1999), Kline (2016), and Browne and Cudeck (1993). A range of indices employing absolute,

incremental, and parsimony were used, thus giving a rounded picture. Using $n = 360$, the measurement model was calculated using the maximum likelihood technique. Adjustment bonus results are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: Goodness of fit results for the Measurement Model

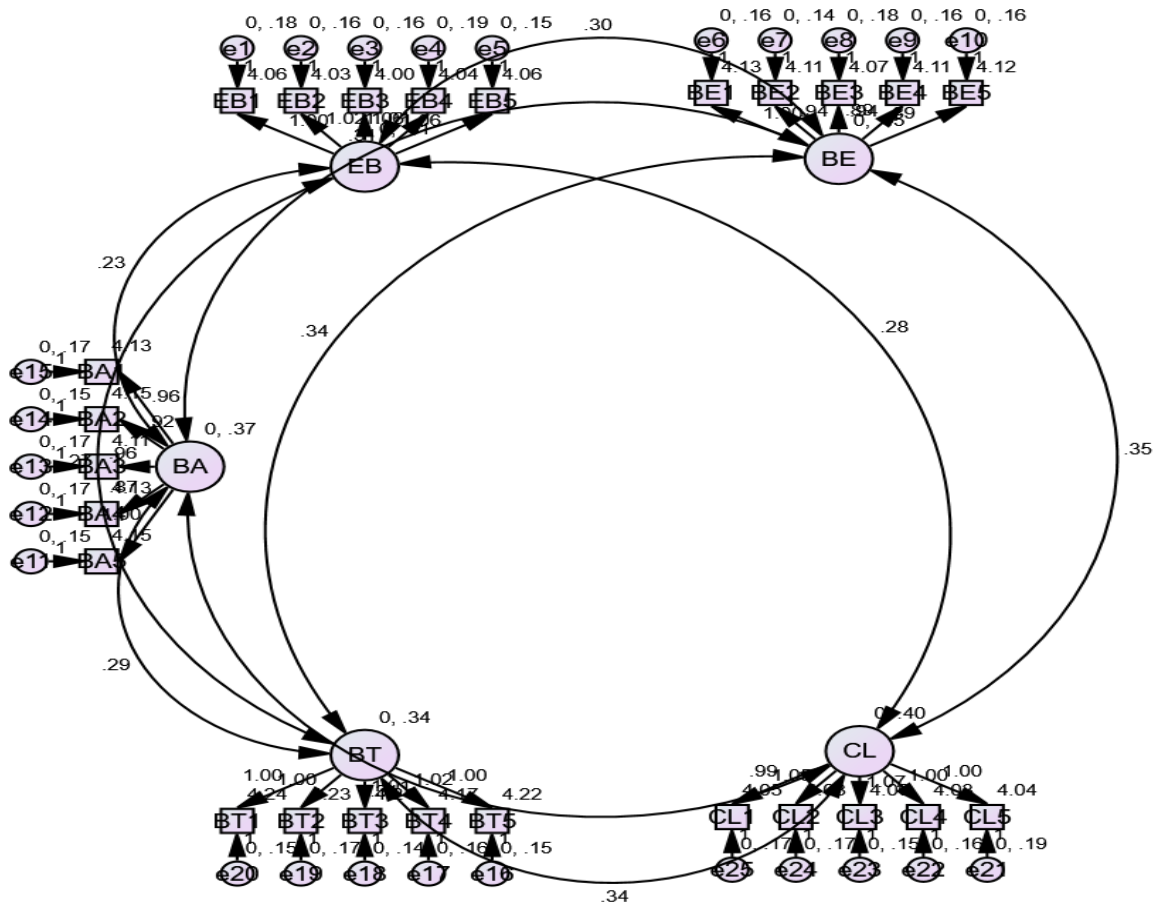
Table 4 Goodness of fit results for the Measurement Model

Adjustment Index	Threshold	Value of the study
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	<3.00	1.233
CFI (Comparative Adjustment Index)	≥ 0.95	.992
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	≥ 0.95	.991
RMSEA	<0.06	.025
RMSEA IC 90%	< 0.08	(.017, .036)
PCLOSE	≥ 0.05	1.000
AIC	Lower = better	496.675

Source: AMOS Output

Figure 2: Measurement Model

Figure 2 Measurement Model



Source: AMOS

The relationships and the observed indicators of the latent constructs, brand awareness (BA), emotional branding (EB), brand experience (BE), brand trust (BT), and Customer Loyalty (CL), are shown in Figure 2. Indicators are loaded onto the constructs they are supposed to measure. The model illustrates that there are multiple measurement items that represent each construct, which contributes to the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument used in the current study.

Table 5: CFA results for factor loadings

Table 5 CFA results for factor loadings

Item	Std. Loading	S. E	C.R	P
BA1	.819	.051	18.780	***
BA2	.820	.049	18.840	***
BA3	.819	.051	18.775	***
BA4	.785	.050	17.623	***
BA5	.842	—	—	Fixed
EB1	.793	—	—	Fixed
EB2	.818	.059	17.184	***
EB3	.817	.059	17.156	***
EB4	.809	.063	16.939	***
EB5	.832	.060	17.593	***
BE1	.858	—	—	Fixed
BE2	.857	.044	21.276	***
BE3	.816	.045	19.533	***
BE4	.846	.045	20.811	***
BE5	.833	.044	20.233	***
BT1	.833	.052	19.391	***
BT2	.819	.053	18.876	***
BT3	.842	.051	19.746	***
BT4	.826	.053	19.162	***
BT5	.832	—	—	Fixed
CL1	.839	.051	19.392	***
CL2	.852	.053	19.863	***
CL3	.868	.052	20.466	***

Item	Std. Loading	S. E	C.R	P
CL4	.848	.051	19.715	***
CL5	.826	—	—	Fixed

Source: AMOS

Table 5 presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model. The standardized factor loadings of all 25 items observed ranged from .785 to .868, significantly higher than the .70 cut-off and the target level of .50 as recommended by Hair et al., 2019. They were all significant at $p < 0.001$ with C.R values over 16.9. This indicates that none of the items need to be dropped because they all measure their respective underlying latent constructs: brand authenticity, emotional branding, brand experience, brand trust, and consumer loyalty. The results confirm the validity of the five-factor measurement model for structural analysis and convergent validity.

4.4 RELIABILITY TEST

A summary of convergent validity and consolidated reliability was created after the individual construct CFA tests. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Composite Reliability and Average Variances Extracted

Table 6 Composite Reliability and Average Variances Extracted

Construct	Number of items	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Authenticity (BA)	5	0.904	0.668
Emotional Branding (EB)	5	0.907	0.662
Brand Experience (BE)	5	0.924	0.709

Construct	Number of items	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Trust (BT)	5	0.917	0.690
Customer Loyalty (CL)	5	0.927	0.717
Threshold		≥ 0.70	≥ 0.50

Source: AMOS

All constructs have strong reliability and convergent validity, as indicated in Table 6. High internal consistency was shown by Composite Reliability ratings, which were above the .70 threshold and ranged from .904 to .927. Each latent construct explains more than half of the variation in its items, as shown by the average variance extracted values, from .662 to .717, and all were over the .50 limit. While emotional branding had the lowest but still good AVE = .662, customer loyalty had the highest reliability and validity with CR = .927 and AVE = .717. The findings have shown that the measurement model has good convergent validity and is appropriate for structural analysis.

4.4.1 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is established if the items of a construct have high common variance, high standardized factor loadings, an AVE > 0.50, and a CR > 0.70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). The results of convergent validity are provided for all five constructs in Tables 5 and 6. All standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.785 (BA4) to 0.868 (CL3) and were statistically significant at $p < .001$ and greater than 0.70. Customer Loyalty gained the highest AVE (over 0.70), suggesting good convergent validity, as the indicators showed greatest convergence. On the other end, emotional branding, the AVE value was below the minimum (0.662) but still passed the cutoff. This is further strengthened by the high CR values for each construct throughout.

4.4.2 Discriminant Validity

If each concept in the proposed model is demonstrated to have a significantly different correlation with each of the other constructs, discriminant validity has been achieved. In other words, each construct will have more indices than the other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The Fornell-Larcker index was used to test the discriminant validity. The Average Variance Extracted, inter-construct correlations, composite Reliability, and square roots of AVE are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Discriminant Validity Matrix- Fornell- Larcker Criterion

Table 7 Discriminant Validity Matrix- Fornell- Larcker Criterion

	AVE	CR	BA	EB	BE	BT	CL
Brand Authenticity	0.668	0.904	0.817				
Emotional Branding	0.662	0.907	.615	0.814			
Brand Experience	0.709	0.924	.704	.724	0.842		
Brand Trust	0.690	0.917	.757	.752	.793	0.830	
Customer Loyalty	0,717	0.927	.746	.737	.776	.787	0.847

AMOS Output

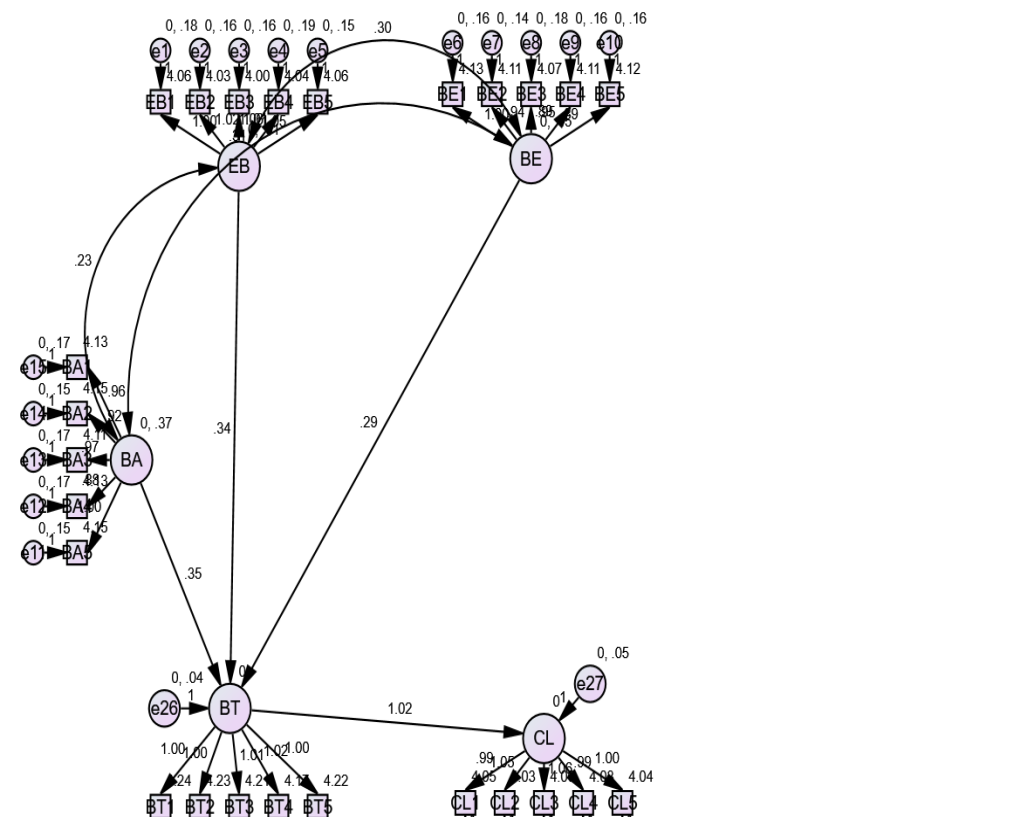
Table 7 demonstrates that the Fornell-Larcker criteria completely support discriminant validity because each construct's square root of the AVE is higher than its correlations with other constructs. This is an illustration of the fact that the concepts of consumer loyalty, brand experience, brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand trust are distinct.

4.5 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING (SEM) USING AMOS

The overall fit of the conceptual model was evaluated by using structural equation modelling (SEM), while the four research hypotheses were tested. The analysis of the SEM was carried out with IBM AMOS software. The advantage of SEM, which is more stringent than multiple regression, is that it not only accounts for measurement error but also estimates many correlations among latent constructs at the same time (Hair et al., 2019). The SEM technique was used to test the model, with multiple fit indicators and trajectory analysis. The structural model in Figure 3 is shown.

Figure 3: Structural Model

Figure 3 Structural Model



Source: Researcher's own: AMOS

The structural model in Figure 3 above reveals that the brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience are antecedents of brand trust with standardized path coefficient values of.937 and have a significant influence on consumer loyalty. All factor loadings are above 0.70, indicating good measurement quality.

4.5.1 Model Fit Indices

Byrne (2016) and Hair et al. (2019) suggested utilizing various fit indices to evaluate the structural model's overall fit. These are combined to reflect the fit of the proposed model to the covariance structure of the data observed. The following table is a list of indices for confirmation of the fitness of the structural models.

Table 8: Goodness of fit results for structural model

Table 8 Goodness of fit results for structural model

Adjustment Index	Value obtained	Recommended threshold
Chi-square (χ^2)	338.905	—
Degrees of Freedom (df)	268	—
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	1.265	< 3.00
p-value	0.002	—
NFI (Normed Adjustment Index)	0.957	> 0,90
RFI (Relative Adjustment Index)	0.952	> 0,90
IFI (Incremental Adjustment Index)	0.991	> 0,90
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.990	> 0,90
CFI (Comparative Adjustment Index)	0.991	> 0,95

Adjustment Index	Value obtained	Recommended threshold
RMSEA	0.027	< 0.08
PCLOSE	1.000	> 0,05
PNFI	0.855	> 0,50
PCFI	0.885	> 0,50

Source: AMOS

The suggested structural model proved to be an appropriate model for the data, as shown in Table 8. Hair et al., 2019 argue that the ratio of χ^2/df of 1.265 is much lower than the value of 3.00 used as a criterion. NFI = 0.957, RFI = 0.952, IFI = 0.991, TLI = 0.990, and CFI = 0.991 were all incremental adjustment indices that were more than 0.90. The Browne and Cudeck (1993) criteria for RMSEA is 0.027, which is much smaller than the recommended cutoff value of 0.08, and the PCLOSE value of 1.000 means that this is a close adjustment. In sum, these results support the structural model as well as its alignment with the observed data. The results confirmed the appropriateness of the measurement model for representing the observed data and the suitability of testing structural models.

4.6 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis tests were performed using trajectory analysis in Structural Equation Modelling. The results are shown in Table 9

Table 9: Hypothesis testing results

Table 9 Hypothesis testing results

H no	Hypothesis	Value β	T. Value	p. Value	Decision
H1	Brand authenticity $\rightarrow$ brand trust	.365	7.513	***	Accept

H2	Emotional branding → brand trust	.324	6.247	***	Accept
H3	Brand experience → brand trust	.339	5.725	***	Accept
H4	Brand Trust → Customer Loyalty	.937	17.634	***	Accept

Source: AMOS Output

The H1 hypothesis suggested that brand authenticity leads to trust in the brand. This hypothesis was supported ($\beta = 0.365$, $T = 7.513$, $p < .001$). H2 predicted that emotional branding has an effect on brand trust; this hypothesis received empirical support ($\beta = .324$, $T = 6.247$, $p < .001$). H3 hypothesized that brand experience affects brand trust; this was supported ($\beta = 0.339$, $T = 5.725$, $p < 0.001$). H4 suggested that brand trust leads to customer loyalty, and this was supported ($\beta = .937$, $T = 17.634$, $p < .001$).

4.8 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to investigate the influence of brand experience, emotional branding, and brand authenticity on brand trust and customer loyalty of Harare's ICT users. All four hypotheses were confirmed by the AMOS SEM results. This discussion below ties the empirical findings to the theory that underlies the research and to the existing empirical literature discussed in Chapter 2.

4.8.1 H1: Brand authenticity has a statistically significant and positive effect on brand trust

H1 was supported; the results showed that there was a statistically significant positive effect of brand authenticity on brand trust ($\beta = 0.365$, $T = 7.513$, $p < 0.001$). Drawing on Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), it is argued that consumers form secure attachments with brands that are regarded

as sincere and reliable. The level of trust that ICT consumers feel towards brands like Samsung, Lenovo, or the ones that were used most in this study, HP, increases when they perceive the brands as authentic in their communications, consistent in their identity, and honest in their interactions. These results are in line with those of Moulard, Raggio, and Folse (2021), who found that consistency and sincerity greatly boosted brand confidence. Similarly, Napoli et al. (2016) confirmed that brand authenticity positively influenced brand trust among South African airline customers.

4.8.2 H2: Emotional branding has a statistically significant and positive impact on brand trust

The results corroborated H2 as they reported a robust positive correlation ($\beta = 0.324$; $T = 6.247$; $p < 0.001$) between emotional branding and brand trust. There is an emotional bond that forms a sense of psychological security, which is the basis of trust, as described in Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969). As the primary ICT product of respondents was the mobile phone (45.0%), which is a highly personal and emotionally charged product, the need to build trust through emotional branding becomes particularly significant. Positive associations, recognisable identities, and a feeling of exclusivity towards ICT consumers are created by brands that develop the emotional connection, which is transferred into trust. The findings of this study are similar to the findings of Kaufmann et al. (2016) that emotional connectedness with the brand predicted brand trust among 271 German consumers shopping in retail stores, and Panda et al. (2017), who replicated the results with 320 smartphone users in India. For ICT companies, emotional communication of the brand, personal interaction with their consumers, and community building are all factors to consider in Zimbabwe.

4.8.3 H3: Brand Experience Has a Statistically Significant Positive Influence on Brand Trust

The best predictor of brand confidence ($\beta = 0.339$, $T = 5.725$, $p < 0.001$) of the model was confirmed by the fact that brand experience was the strongest predictor. The conclusion is corroborated by the Brand Experience Model (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, 2009), which states that customer trust is a result of sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioural brand experiences. The quality of interaction, the experience of digital interface, and post-purchase support are major factors determining customer trust in their ICT brands, especially for mobile phones, which are the most popular devices, and Samsung, the brand most used. The results are

consistent with the results of Brakus et al. (2009), where they found that brand experience has a significant influence on consumer trust among the 397 consumers of American culture that they surveyed. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Iglesias, Markovic, and Rialp (2019). With the knowledge of how brand experience predicts customer trust, Zimbabwean ICT companies can conclude that brand experience is a key part in building customer trust.

4.8.4 H4: Brand trust has a statistically significant positive influence on customer loyalty

The study has found that consumer trust is positively and highly significant with customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.937$, $T = 17.634$, $p < 0.001$). This provides support for Hypothesis 4 (H4) and supports the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which suggests that trust is a key factor in the development of longer-lasting client relationships. The findings are further supported by the demographic data, which indicates that 52.5% of the respondents have been using their preferred ICT brand for more than one year. This means that the ability to build long-term brand loyalty is greater among consumers with trust in a company. These findings are in line with other studies conducted in the United States, South Korea, and Poland that found that trust plays an important role in driving repeat business and consumer loyalty. For First Pack Marketing Zimbabwe and other ICT businesses, the message is loud and clear: gaining and maintaining customers' confidence is key to retaining customers, earning sustainable revenue, and gaining a competitive edge in the future. When companies make promises, keep them, and are reliable, it helps to increase customer loyalty and create long-lasting relationships.

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter deals with the analysis of data collected from ICT consumers at First Pack Marketing in Harare. It also reported on the response rate and characteristics of the respondents, which revealed that most of them were young, working, college-educated, and middle-income consumers. As for the reliability and validity of measurement scales, the study analysed the scales with AMOS. The results demonstrated convergent validity, as well as good discriminative validity and reliability. The correlation between the study's variables was analysed by structural equation modelling (SEM). The findings were in line with the study's hypotheses, as the three dimensions

of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience, as observed in the study, had a positive effect on brand trust, which had a positive effect on consumer loyalty. The results were consistent with previous empirical studies and theory. In Chapter 5, the overview, findings, ideas for further study, and recommendations are discussed.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The study was conducted with the main objective of understanding how brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience affect consumer purchasing behaviour in the ICT sector, with the intention of building consumer trust and loyalty in Zimbabwe. The research was done in a case study that involved First Pack Marketing Zimbabwe. Consistent with the objectives of the study, the chapter concludes and summarizes the findings of the study. It also offers good practice ideas for First Pack Marketing Zimbabwe and other ICT firms seeking to build customer trust and loyalty through good branding practices. Moreover, the chapter reveals the shortcomings of the research process and ends by recommending possible future research avenues that can enhance the knowledge in this area.

5.1 SUMMARY

This research employed a case study approach, specifically focusing on First Pack Marketing Zimbabwe to examine the role of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on brand loyalty and brand trust in the ICT sector in Zimbabwe. The design of the investigation used was a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. 384 respondents were given a structured self-administered questionnaire in both printed and online versions (using Google Forms), and 360 of them returned it in a useable manner, yielding a response rate of 93.75%. Convenience and purposive sampling were used by the researcher. SPSS and AMOS were used for data collection and analysis. None of the research hypotheses were disconfirmed. Brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience were all found to have statistically significant positive effects on brand trust, and brand trust, in turn, had a strong impact on customer loyalty. The study suggests that improving brand authenticity, emotional bond, and customer experiences is crucial to fostering brand trust and boosting customer loyalty within the ICT industry in Zimbabwe.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that brand authenticity has a significant influence on brand trust in the ICT industry in Zimbabwe. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) states that consumers will be more inclined to trust the brand when it's honest, transparent, and consistent. Therefore, ICT organisations with actions that are congruent with their values are more likely to engender consumer confidence in their services. It was also found that emotional branding has a positive effect on brand trust. Through empathy, individualisation, and a feeling of belonging, ICT companies can enhance the trust of their consumers and build more meaningful relationships with them.

The strongest influence found on the brand trust was brand experience. The importance of experience management in the ICT sector is highlighted as positive and consistent experiences across products, services and digital platforms are essential in building trust. Lastly, the study found that brand trust is the greatest influence on customer loyalty. In line with the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), trusted brands have greater chances to have more customers, more positive word of mouth, and more long-lasting business performance.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

ICT firms need to keep their promises in line with their service. Transparency, fair pricing, quality products, and frequent brand reviews can make a positive difference in the way consumers perceive authenticity and trust brands.

Organizations need to establish strong emotional bonds with consumers, appealing to their values and aspirations through building brand messages. Creating brand communities, communicating to customers in a personal way, and training staff to be empathetic can create a stronger emotional connection with customers.

A seamless and memorable customer experience should be the top priority for ICT companies, especially in the physical, digital, and after-sales environments. Customers may feel more satisfied and trust the service if customer feedback is taken and improved regularly, and the quality of service is continuously improved.

Establishing a high standard of product quality, reliable customer support, and ethical business practices should be regarded as a strategic asset of trust. Businesses need to have good customer relationship management, customer loyalty programs, and a complaint-handling system that can help them keep customers and build customer loyalty.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the study provide several insights into the possibility of exploring other issues concerning Zimbabwean consumers' behaviour and brand management. Factors not incorporated in the current model, such as perceived value, brand image, brand value, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), could be included in future studies. These factors can provide more general insights into the mechanisms of building and maintaining brand trust and customer loyalty in the ICT industry.

This study was limited to the ICT sector, and future researchers are therefore advised to broaden the study to other key sectors of the Zimbabwean economy, such as the financial services and banking sector, the telecommunications sector, retail, and the hospitality sector. Future research in different industries and product types might establish whether the relationships found in this study are consistent across other industries and product types. Cross-sector benchmarking can also provide some interesting insights for academics and also for practitioners.

Moreover, the study was conducted with people in Harare only. Larger and more graphically diverse samples are advised to future researchers, including participants from various provinces, urban centres, and rural communities of Zimbabwe. This would give a more representative picture of the consumer behaviour in the nation and would enhance the generalizability of the findings. More sophisticated methods of analysis, such as multigroup SEM, would be possible if the sample size were larger, enabling the analysis of differences between demographics and market segments.

Furthermore, longitudinal research designs could be used in the future to track the change of brand trust, perceived authenticity, emotional brand effectiveness, and customer loyalty over time. Research using a longitudinal approach would enable researchers to gain an understanding of the

changes in customer attitudes and behaviours over time and how organisations can adapt their brand strategy to ensure that they have stronger customer relationships. The findings of these investigations could provide ICT companies with fact-based recommendations that would be helpful in strengthening long-term customer retention and customer competitive edge.

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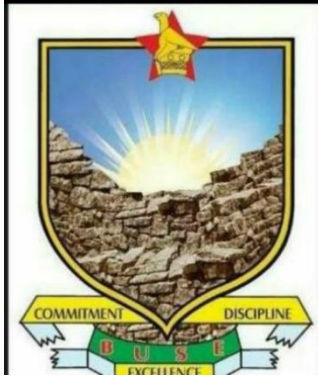
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APPENDIX A: CODED QUESTIONNAIRE



RESEARCH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent

I am Pauline Chidochaishe Mukwacha, a student at Bindura University of Science Education, researching the effects of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on consumer buyer behaviour (brand trust and customer loyalty) in the ICT industry (First Pack Case Study). This research is in partial fulfilment of my Bachelor's degree in Marketing. You are invited to participate in this study. Please note the following:

This study involves an anonymous survey. The answers you will give will be treated as confidential. You will not be identified based on the answers that you provide.

Your participation in the study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate, and you may also stop participating at any time without negative consequences.

Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. The completion of the questionnaire will take a maximum of 15 minutes.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings.

For any issues concerning this study, please contact me at the email address mukwachapauline03@gmail.com or on 0781416973

Researcher: Supervisor:

Pauline Chidochaishe Mukwacha Mr Chirimubwe

Bindura University Department of Marketing

Cell (+263) 781416973 Cell (+263) 712597401

Email. mukwachapauline03@gmail.com Email: rchirimubwe@gmail.com

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I confirm that the person requesting my consent to participate in this research has informed me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconveniences of participation. I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have sufficient opportunity to ask questions, and I am prepared to participate in the study. I know that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report or journal publications. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant

Signature.....Date.....

SURVEY: THE EFFECTS OF BRAND AUTHENTICITY, EMOTIONAL BRANDING, AND BRAND EXPERIENCE ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR (BRAND TRUST AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY) IN THE ICT INDUSTRY (FIRST PACK CASE STUDY)

Screening Question

SQ: Do you have experience with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) products or services? (laptops, mobile phones, printers, networking services)

YES ☐

NO ☐

Thank you for your time. If yes, continue. If not, stop.

The rest of the survey consists of three sections. Each question will consist of several questions relating to how brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience influence consumer buying behaviour in terms of brand trust and customer loyalty in the ICT Industry in Zimbabwe.

SECTION A: Branding

Branding refers to how a company presents itself to customers, including its name, logo, design, and overall image. It is the way a company communicates its identity and values to customers. The following are the specific aspects of branding: brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience. Your responses to the statements in each section below help us understand how branding shapes consumer perceptions and behaviour towards ICT products and services.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements in each section on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree) and also based on your preferred ICT brand.

Brand authenticity (BA), Emotional branding (EB), brand experience (BE)

Brand Authenticity (BA)

This is the perception that a brand is genuine, true to its values, and transparent in its practices.

Instruction: Please tick the preferred box

Variable	Brand Authenticity	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BA1	I feel this brand consistently delivers on its promises	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BA2	This brand gives back to its consumers	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BA3	This brand is honest in its communications	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BA4	I perceive this brand as genuine and sincere	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BA5	The brand maintains a consistent identity over time	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

Emotional Branding (EB)

Emotional branding is the process of creating a bond between a consumer and a brand by stimulating their emotions. The bond or attachment you have with the brand.

Instruction: Please tick the preferred box

Variable	Emotional branding	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
EB1	I easily recognize this brand among other competing brands	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
EB2	I will not buy other brands if this brand is available at the shop	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
EB3	This brand delivers the quality as promised	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
EB4	I have a positive association with this brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
EB5	This brand has a very unique brand image compared to competing brands	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

Brand Experience (BE)

This is the overall sum of every interaction, feeling, thought, and reaction a person has with a brand.

Instruction: Please tick the preferred box

Variable	Brand Experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BE1	I always find this brand interesting in a sensory way	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BE2	I do not have strong emotions for this brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BE3	This brand is an emotional brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BE4	This brand does not make me think	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BE5	This brand engages my senses and makes the experience memorable	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

SECTION B: Consumer buyer behaviour (Brand Trust (BT) and Customer Loyalty (CL))

Consumer buyer behaviour is basically how people make decisions about what they buy, why they buy it, and what influences those choices, including personal, social, psychological, and cultural factors.

Brand Trust (BT)

Brand trust is a customer's belief that a brand will consistently deliver on its promises, acting with honesty and reliability.

Instruction: Please tick the preferred box

Variable	Brand Trust	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
BT 1	I trust this brand to deliver what it promises	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BT 2	This brand is dependable and reliable	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BT 3	I believe this brand has my best interests at heart	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
BT 4	I feel confident in the quality and performance of this brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

BT 5	This brand is honest	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
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Customer Loyalty (CL)

Customer loyalty is the degree to which a customer is committed to continuing to buy or use a particular brand.

Instruction: Please tick the preferred box

Variable	Customer loyalty	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
CL 1	I intend to continue buying from this brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
CL 2	I would recommend this brand to others	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
CL 3	I prefer this brand over other competitors	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
CL 4	I would remain loyal even if prices increase slightly	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐
CL5	I rarely consider switching to another brand	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐

SECTION C: Demographic information

Instruction: Tick the appropriate box

1. Please indicate your age

18-25 years	1
26-35 years	2
36-45 years	3
46-55 years	4
55 years & above	5

2. Please indicate your gender

Female	1
Male	2

3. Please indicate your highest level of education

Primary education	1
Secondary education	2
Tertiary education (degree/diploma)	3
Master's degree	4
PhD	5

4. Please indicate your occupation

Student	1
Full-time employed	2
Unemployed	3
Self-employed	4
Part-time employed	5

5. Please indicate your monthly income in US\$

US\$50-100	1
US\$101-300	2
US\$301-500	3
US\$501 and above	4

6. Please indicate ICT product or service used

Computer & laptop	1
Printer	2
Mobile phone	3
Mobile money services	4
Device or software solutions	5
Networking solutions	6
If other, specify.....	7

7. Please indicate ICT brand you use most frequently

Hp	1
Lenovo	2
Epson	3
Pantum	4
Samsung	5
Apple	6
If other, specify.....	7

8. Please indicate how long you have used your preferred ICT brand

Less than 1 year	1
1-3 years	2

4-6 years	3
More than 6 years	4

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Department of Marketing

P. Bag 1020

Bindura

10 December 2025

First Pack Manager Samora

Electra House

49 Samora Machel Ave

Harare

Zimbabwe

Dear sir /madam

RE: Permission to carry out a research study at First Pack Marketing Holdings

I am a female student at Bindura University of Science Education, currently pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce (Honors) in Marketing. As a request for the completion of my study, I am carrying out a project entitled: Investigating the effects of brand authenticity, emotional branding, and brand experience on consumer buying behaviour (brand trust and customer loyalty) in the ICT industry. I am kindly requesting your assistance and permission to carry out the research study using your customers in Harare as a case study. All information is guaranteed to remain confidential and will be used solely by the researcher for academic purposes. Your assistance is kindly appreciated in advance.

Yours faithfully

Pauline C Mukwacha

0781416973

APPENDIX C: APPROVAL LETTER



First Pack

HEAD OFFICE

127 Masotsha Ndlovu Way
Cnr Seke Rd, Hatfield
Tel: 0242 581950-6
Fax: 0242 581961/58149
Harare

MOBILE

+263 731 140 000
+263 731 140 001
+263 731 140 002
+263 731 140 557
+263 731 140 888

HARARE BRANCHES

Samora Machel	0242 775693
Machine Shop	0242 775693
Beverly Court	0242 790025
Chester House	0242 794046
Park Street	0242 758387/8

BRANCHES

Bulawayo	0292 275105 / 262626
Gweru	0542 226982
Kwekwe	055 20561-4
Masvingo	0392 264485
Mutare	0202 060738

POSTAL ADDRESS

P.O. Box WGT 6
Westgate, Harare
Zimbabwe
www.firstpack.co.zw
enquiries@firstpack.co.zw

Electra House
49 Samora Machel Ave
Harare
Zimbabwe

10 December 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

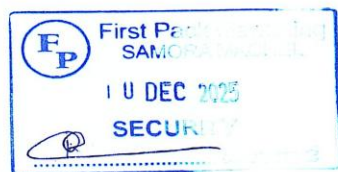
First Pack Marketing Holdings hereby grants permission to **PAULINE CHIDOCHAI SHE MUKWACHA**, a Marketing student at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE), to undertake academic research at our organization.

The research will be conducted strictly for educational purposes using questionnaires and online Google Forms. Any information collected during the course of this study will be handled professionally and treated with the strictest confidence.

We fully support this research project and wish her every success in the completion of her study.

Yours faithfully,

Branch Manager Samora
First Pack Marketing Holdings



APPENDIX D: TURNITIN REPORT

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Mukwacha PAULINE

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