

**EXPLORING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND
PRICING STRATEGIES OF GROCERY FOOD RETAILERS IN
SHOPPING MALLS OF TEMBISA TOWNSHIP, SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SARI	South African Retail Industry
StatSA	Statistics South Africa
VAT	Value Added Tax
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
FMCG	Fast-Moving-Consumer Goods
CBD	Central Business District
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprise
ADS	Advertisement
ROI	Return on Investment
POS	Point of Sale
SF	Store Front
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
PM	Price Matching
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BL	Brand Loyalty
MP	Markup Percentage
CB	Cash Back
FT	Foot Traffic
MR	Multichannel Retailing
OE	Omnichannel Experience
OR	Omnichannel Retailing
OSS	Out of Stock
QR code	Quick Response Code
VBP	Value-based Pricing
RTL	Real-Time tracking
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival

PLC	Product Life cycle
AR	Augmented Reality
AV	Audio Visual
KPI	Key performance Indicator
4IR	Fourth industrial Revolution
OST	Open System Theory
CAS	Complex Adaptive Systems
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted Qualitative Analysis Software
ATLAS.ti	Archive of Technology, Life world and Language

ABSTRACT

This study explored the marketing communication and pricing strategies used by grocery food retailers in shopping malls of Tembisa Township in Gauteng province, South Africa. A qualitative research design was adopted, and semi-structured interviews with marketing personnel, along with direct observations, were conducted to explore the dynamics of retail operations in a highly competitive township environment and to validate the information gathered. Complex adaptive systems theory was applied to gain insight into the dynamic and interconnected nature of grocery food retailing in Tembisa. The findings indicate that retailers use a broad spectrum of marketing mix elements – product, place, promotion and price – with promotional activities and price emerging as the central focus. Promotions are delivered through a combination of traditional and digital channels, including local newspapers, radio, television, in-store displays, social media (particularly WhatsApp groups) and loyalty applications. Promotional efforts are not limited to media exposure, extending to in-store activations and personalised customer engagement. Product bundling and combo offers are widely used, often structured around consumer purchasing behaviour and household needs. These bundles are strategically timed to coincide with salary pay dates to enhance affordability, to encourage bulk purchases and to ensure steady store traffic during peak shopping periods. Pricing strategies are equally diverse and integral to competitive positioning. Retailers use psychological pricing tactics, such as charm pricing (e.g., R9,99), to create a perception of affordability, alongside bundle pricing strategies that offer value-driven combinations at discounted rates. Promotional pricing through discounts, limited-time offers, and loyalty-based rewards is leveraged to stimulate demand, to encourage repeat purchases and to strengthen customer loyalty. These strategies not only address the price sensitivity of township consumers but also reinforce customer perceptions of value-for-money in an environment characterised by constrained disposable income. Despite these innovative approaches, retailers face persistent challenges. Supplier-driven pricing pressures, limited bargaining power and rising operational costs constrain profit margins, while the dense concentration of nearby retail outlets intensifies competition. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of integrated marketing communication and pricing strategies in sustaining competitiveness and driving long-term growth in township retail markets. By combining traditional, digital and psychological approaches, grocery retailers in Tembisa can attract, retain and engage consumers in a

challenging yet opportunity-rich marketplace. The study offers recommendations to stakeholders in grocery food retailing and future research directions.

KEY TERMS

Marketing communications, Integrated Marketing mix, Promotional strategies, Digital marketing, Social Media Marketing (WhatsApp marketing, loyalty cards), In-store Promotions, Product Bundling, Consumer Behaviour, Customer Retention, Township Economy, Grocery Retail sector, Target audience

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The South African retail industry is estimated to account for approximately 70% of the national retail market, with supermarkets playing a significant role and serving as a key source of supply in the retail food sector (Statistics South Africa, 2025). The SA retail sector is made up of formal and informal sectors. The informal sector encompasses economic activities that function outside the government's formal regulatory framework, characterised by being unregistered and unregulated (Etim & Daramola, 2020:2). The sector operates informally, characterised by unregulated activities, informal employment without contracts or benefits, and small-scale, labour-intensive operations driven by individual entrepreneurs or small businesses with limited organisational structure.

The informal economy exhibited notable resilience amidst economic uncertainty, with a substantial increase in non-VAT registered businesses, from 1.5 million to 1.9 million, over the past decade, reaching 1.9 million in 2023. The age group 35-44 experienced the most substantial growth, with the percentage of informal business owners increasing from 27.9% in 2001 to 33.1% in 2023 (Etim & Daramola, 2020:2). The township and rural economies, predominantly informal, play a vital role in South Africa's economic well-being, serving as a critical lifeline for marginalised communities by providing income opportunities, job creation and poverty relief. Despite often being overlooked, this sector showcases remarkable resilience and entrepreneurial spirit. The township economy was valued at approximately R900 billion, with the informal retail sector being the largest contributor (University of Cape Town, 2025). Spaza shops, numbering around 150,000, were the backbone of informal retail, offering essential goods and often being the sole retail option for local communities. These shops contribute significantly to the economy, accounting for around 5.2% of South Africa's GDP and employing 2.6 million people (University of Cape town, 2025; Statistics South Africa, 2024). The South African food market is projected to reach approximately R580.68 billion in revenue by 2025, with an expected annual growth rate of 7.65% from 2025 to 2030. The confectionery and snacks segment was the

largest, valued at around R101.7 billion in 2025. Per-person revenue is estimated at approximately R8,968.86 in 2025. The market was anticipated to reach a volume of 9.29 billion kg by 2030, with a growth rate of 5.0% in 2026, and an average volume per person of 125.65 kg in 2025 (Statistics SA, 2025). According to Statistics South Africa (2025), South African households spent an estimated R3 trillion between November 2022, Retail trade sales rose by 5.7% in the three months leading up to January 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. This growth was largely driven by two key sectors: general dealers, which increased by 7.0% and contributed 3.0 percentage points, and retailers of textiles, clothing, footwear, and leather goods, which saw a 9.4% increase and contributed 1.9 percentage points.

According to Statistics South Africa's latest report, the country's mid-year population is estimated to have reached 63.02 million in 2024, with females accounting for 51.0% (approximately 32.13 million) of the population. Gauteng remains the most populous province, home to around 15.83 million people (25.1%), followed by KwaZulu-Natal with an estimated 12.34 million people (19.6%). The Northern Cape had the smallest population, with approximately 1.36 million people (2.2%). With 362 shopping centres in Sub-Saharan Africa larger than 6,500m² and 1,300 in South Africa, the retail market is poised for continued growth and development. The retail environment in South Africa is evolving at a fast pace, influenced by urban growth, evolving customer preferences, and technological innovation. The middle market had grown substantially, with 6 million households added to this segment and 2 million to the upper end.

In the context of this study on grocery food retailers in Tembisa's shopping malls, understanding the marketing communications and pricing strategies used to target township customers is crucial. With township economies valued at approximately R900 billion, largely driven by informal retailers in Tembisa can tap into this significant market opportunity by developing effective marketing strategies tailored to township customers' needs and preferences. Analysing these strategies enables grocery food retailers to better serve their target audience, driving business growth and customer loyalty. As the retail landscape evolves, adapting marketing approaches to meet township customers' unique demands will be vital for establishing a strong presence

in these communities, ultimately enhancing brand reputation and contributing to local economic development.

1.2 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a discussion of concepts relevant to the current study , specifically, in the township economy and reviews previous studies on retailing at shopping malls to demonstrate gaps to be addressed.

1.2.1 Township economy and shopping malls

Post-apartheid, there has been an increase in economic activities centred in the township. More food and apparel retailers moved closer to the townships. Shopping malls are booming businesses, with international and local brands competing to be close to the township as possible. Big structures and upmarket shopping malls are being built and are increasing daily. The township citizens, who are the consumers that the grocery food retailers were targeting, have stopped traveling to the city CBD or Town to do their shopping. In December 2023, retail sales showed modest growth, rising 3.1% year-on-year, following a 7.6% increase in November (Stanlib, 2023). There was significant spending on fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), with nearly R637 billion spent through traditional and modern trade channels in 2024. This represented a 3.4% year-over-year growth, primarily driven by price increases. The retail market has evolved, reflecting changing consumer behaviour and economic conditions. Townships are typically located on the outskirts of cities and towns and were previously characterised by a lack of basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity (Widd & Cant, 2021:4). The "township economy" refers to microeconomic activities and businesses in townships, including diverse SMMEs like spaza shops, hair salons, taxi services, and street vendors. These businesses have played a significant role in creating a vibrant and inclusive economy but today face challenges that could hinder their growth and potential (Widd & Cant, 2021:5). Initially, the retail landscape in township areas was characterised by small, informal businesses catering to low-income consumers with basic products and services. These businesses functioned as convenience stores, capturing only a small share of consumer spending, while most economically active residents relied on CBD and urban shopping centres for their main shopping needs, using township stores for

occasional convenience purchases. In recent years we have seen a significant growth of the middle class in townships, resulting in increased spending power. This shift has attracted shopping malls and national grocery food retailers to target these emerging markets, leading to a surge in township shopping mall developments and impacting local businesses (Masisi, 2020:2). The growth of the middle class in townships attracted shopping malls and national retailers, increasing competition for local businesses. As a result, consumer behaviour shifted towards modern retail spaces, prioritising convenience and security, impacting small township businesses.

The South African retail sector has been dominated by a few major players, operating in an oligopolistic market structure. There are seven key retailers - Shoprite, Pick 'n Pay, Massmart, Spar, Woolworths, and Massmart, - collectively accounting for 80% of wholesale and retail sales (Labour Research Service (LRS), 2020). This concentration is reinforced by high entry barriers, making it challenging for new entrants. As of 2024, Shoprite led the market with a 33.2% share, followed by Pick 'n Pay, Spar, and Woolworths. Large chain retailers have opened many stores in shopping malls established in townships due to an increase in household disposable income resulting from a rise in grants, skills development, and capacity building (Masisi, 2020:19). These developments in the township have attracted the township customers and enabled them to enjoy convenient and secure shopping (Masisi, 2020:20).

This study emphasises the critical role of marketing mix elements, specifically marketing communications and pricing, in the retail business within townships. By exploring how grocery food retailers in township shopping malls leverage these elements to attract consumers, this research sheds light on effective marketing strategies. Retailers in these areas utilise marketing strategies to establish a foothold and gain market share. To succeed, organisations must address key issues and carefully consider marketing strategy elements, particularly when entering new markets. This is traditionally known as the marketing mix, this theory was traditionally known as the 4 P's, namely product, price, promotion and place (Mada, 2024:39-40). During the marketing process, marketing led the decision on the kind of products the enterprise needs to produce, price strategy to deploy, the areas they needed to target and the relevant promotional activities (Išoraitė 2024:118). Marketing is sophisticated

and needs to be adapted to changing variables in the business environment and markets (Benneth & Obinna, 2023:1838).

1.2.2 Marketing Strategy

Marketing Strategy consists of cohesive decisions carried out by a business to achieve its marketing objectives and plans, which enable business to meet its customers' requirements (Kassab, 2023:6). Sinnaiah, Adam and Mahadi (2023:39) present a conceptual framework that integrates strategic thinking, decision-making styles, and organisational performance. Marketing is used by retail businesses to identify customers, understand their needs and preferences, analyse attitudes and their purchasing decision. Kassab (2023:17) argues that the marketing strategy is a theory that is at the beginning of the conceptual phase in marketing practice; developing and executing marketing strategy is central to the marketing practice. Marketing strategy is an important organisational resource, which becomes even more critical when it is successfully combined with other resources, such as the availability of specialised export personnel, adequate financial means, and sufficient production capacity, which are also conducive to business success. One can safely refer to marketing strategy as a comprehensive plan articulated for accomplishing the marketing objectives of the organisation. It provides a template that the business or an organisation can use to attain marketing objectives. It is the building block of a marketing plan formulated from market research done by the organisation. A marketing strategy helps an organisation to concentrate on assigning its resources on the best possible opportunities (Sinnaiah et al., 2023:9)

1.2.2.1 *Marketing strategies in shopping malls*

Shopping malls have become part of the South African economy and are critical for growing the economy of our communities. A shopping mall can be described as a building structure consisting of stores that are grouped together and connected by sidewalks that allow customers to move easily from one store to another (Nusrat & Hossain, 2023:122). Othman, Bahaldin, Rahman, Abas & Sibghatullah (2022:759), describe shopping malls as providing a single platform that allows one to buy necessary products, offering a variety of shops for one to search for more cost

reasonable products and, therefore, enhance effectiveness in the transactions. Saini and Sharma (2022:2) describe shopping malls as a place of social experience; malls are associated with entertainment, fun, pleasure and are used to celebrate special occasions. They are characterised as places that provide comfortable shopping, and are preferred for localised shopping. One of the advantages of shopping malls is their local nature. They normally are built to target a certain suburb or urban area. The localised advantage allows for frequent visits, impulsive visits and convenient visits (Nusrat & Hossain, 2023:121). Compared to other forms of structure, the shopping malls have an advantage of understanding their segment market as they are built in the suburbs or urban areas that already have an understanding of its population; this enables them to be aware of their customers' disposal income and expenditure, and they can use this information to build and provide a unique service offering that meets the needs of their target customer. Nusrat & Hossain, (2023:125) service experience has become a critical factor for malls to distinguish themselves from others. Things like tangible services that help and support customers when making purchasing decisions are critical. Tangible facilities are such as a trolley, basket, air-conditioning, helpful staff etc. As Misra and Verma (2023:2) notes, shopping malls have evolved into vibrant social consumption spaces that cater to diverse age groups.

1.2.2.2 Retail tenants and shopping centres

There is an existing perception of shopping experience that consumers are expecting as they plan their visit to the shopping malls. Shopping malls need to be sociable environments, entertaining, with variety of stores, secured and convenient environments. These expectations have become a basic requirement of what shopping malls should possess to be deemed enjoyable and worth visiting. Malls are judged by consumers based on the assortment of their merchandise, proper display, availability of brands, parking facilities, pleasant internal ambience, convenience, location, exchange facilities and pricing (Nusrat & Hossain, 2023:125). Shopping mall attractiveness is critical to customer perception and experience, centre management should be able to communicate these attributes to the tenants, set rules and advise how stores need to display and be presentable (Saini & Sharma, 2022:4). Centre Management needs to ensure that facilities are made available for the tenants to afford

their customers a good and a favourable experience, to have a variety of shops and brands that are made available to attract the right customers to their premises.

1.2.2.3 Grocery Food Retailing Environment

In the Southern African grocery retail environment, cost-conscious consumers prioritise affordability above all else. For leading supermarkets, this means competitive pricing is not optional, it is essential. Shoprite, one of South Africa's top five supermarket chains, demonstrates how leveraging scale, supply chain efficiencies, and data-driven insights can deliver that affordability. As noted by Mbonu (2025:2), sustaining a price advantage in this sector depends on consistently integrating real-time information and accessible technology, from inventory analytics to automated logistics, because margins are thin and consumer loyalty is fleeting.

Beyond pricing, grocery retailers also compete through store atmospherics and cultural alignment. Shopping malls, where food retailers often anchor foot traffic, rely on these retailers to draw large numbers of shoppers. Although studies have investigated buying behaviour within the South African clothing retail industry in townships, (Kwenda 2021:37), the principles translate partly to grocery but give insight on the importance of cultural sensitivity and its influences on purchasing decisions across retail sectors. Retailers who align their offerings with customers' cultural values can create emotional connections, driving loyalty and repeat visits, advantages that matter as much for a supermarket as for an apparel store.

A more direct strategy in grocery retailing is the use of loyalty programmes. In a highly competitive environment, retailers use these programmes to create a relationship advantage and differentiate themselves from competitors (Belli, O'Rourke & Carrillat 2021:3). Loyalty programmes are a marketing tool designed to grow the quality of the relationship between customer and retailer (Belli et al. 2021:6). For grocery retailers operating within shopping malls, such programmes can draw customers into their specific store environment, converting mall foot traffic into repeat and loyal shoppers..

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Considering the previous literature studies conducted, the retail sector is one of the sectors that has brought positive change in socio-economic development and

economic growth within the townships in South Africa. In addition, previous literature indicates that marketing communications and price are crucial marketing strategy components used to drive sales and increase purchases in shopping mall retail stores. Ali and Anwar (2021:30), marketing strategy is an important tool to achieve retailers' marketing objectives. Due to limited academic literature, investigating marketing strategy of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls is pertinent (Gichiri, 2020:7), specifically, in township economy. The study by Maphanga (2023:32), explores marketing communication strategies in township grocery stores in KwaZulu-Natal. It provides valuable insights but is geographically limited and does not address mall-based retailers specifically. Wiid and Cant (2021:19) revealed a notable knowledge gap regarding informal township businesses and their marketing approaches, reinforcing the importance of targeted research on formal retail strategies in township shopping malls. Simatele, Ngonyama, and Tshaka (2024:14) examined pricing strategies, such as cost-plus pricing, in township businesses, but its scope excludes mall-based grocery food retailers and marketing communications. Nonetheless, it reveals that township economies often lack systematic pricing strategies. Therefore, the problem statement of the proposed study is summarised as follows: there is lack of academic studies on marketing strategies adopted by grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls based in townships with emphasis on marketing communications and pricing strategies.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Primary research objective

- To explore the marketing communications and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa.

1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

- To investigate the marketing communication strategy of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.
- To investigate the price strategy of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.

- To identify challenges experienced by grocery food retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township in implementing marketing communication and pricing strategies.
- To make recommendations on the marketing communication and price strategies of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa South Africa describe and implement their marketing communication strategies?
- How do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls in Tembisa , South Africa, perceive and apply their pricing strategies?
- What challenges do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls in Tembisa South Africa, experience when implementing their marketing communication strategies?
- What recommendations do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls in Tembisa South Africa, suggest for improving the implementation of marketing communication and pricing strategies?

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The current study responded to a research call by Išoraitė (2021:1587), Sedaba and Mir-Bernal (2022:2) that more research should focus on marketing strategies in businesses operating in townships. Išoraitė's (2021:1588) highlighted the importance of adapting marketing strategies to dynamic environments, such as township malls, where understanding local consumer expectations is crucial. Išoraitė (2021:1587) recommended that businesses in township malls adopt the marketing mix framework to develop tailored strategies that account for local consumer expectations. Sedaba and Mir-Bernal (2022:7) offer valuable perspectives on the practical use of the 4Ps marketing mix framework, illustrating how organisations can adapt their marketing approaches to align with distinct customer requirements. Their study highlighted the importance of effective pricing and promotional strategies in driving success in

competitive markets, particularly in underserved areas like townships. Sedaba & Mir-Bernal (2023:15) recommended that businesses in township areas adopt a tailored marketing approach using the marketing mix elements framework, considering local consumer behaviour and preferences to develop effective pricing, promotional, product, and distribution strategies that drive engagement, sales, and sustainability.

1.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study is fourfold. Firstly, this study adds to the existing limited literature by focusing on the key components of marketing strategy, namely marketing communications and pricing in grocery food retail context. Secondly, the study makes recommendations for grocery food retailers on how to effectively implement a marketing strategy within the township environment. Thirdly, the study focused on marketing communications and price strategies during the fourth industrial revolution era which had potential to impact on the processes of media selection and price determination by grocery food retailers. Lastly, the study adds significant theoretical contribution by applying complex adaptive theory to demonstrate how the external environment (technology and changing consumer preferences) impact on the marketing strategy of grocery food retailers.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides brief discussion of the research methodology adopted in the study to achieve the research objectives.

1.8.1 Research philosophy

This study was underpinned by an interpretivist research philosophy, which was implicitly reflected in the adoption of a qualitative and exploratory research design. Interpretivism emphasises the importance of context, meaning, and subjective experience, viewing reality as socially constructed rather than objective or fixed experience (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421). This philosophical stance acknowledges that individuals interpret the world differently based on their experiences, interactions, and social environments, and therefore, knowledge is best understood through these subjective interpretations.

Interpretivism moves away from the pursuit of universal laws or statistical generalisations and instead emphasises the development of a rich, nuanced appreciation of social processes as they occur in real-world settings. This paradigm values rich descriptions and insights into how people make sense of their world, positioning the researcher as an active participant in co-constructing knowledge rather than a detached observer (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:422). The interpretivist stance also places strong emphasis on flexibility, reflexivity, and sensitivity to the research setting, making it well-suited to exploring complex, real-world issues that are influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors.

By prioritising meaning over measurement, interpretivism encourages the use of qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and case studies (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022:421). These methods enable researchers to capture the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of participants in their own words, offering insights that might not have been possible through purely quantitative approaches.

In summary, the interpretivist philosophy provides a lens through which human behaviour and social interactions can be understood in depth, within the specific contexts in which they occur. This makes it particularly relevant for studies seeking to capture subjective realities, uncover meaning, and generate theory grounded in lived experience.

1.8.2 Research Design

An exploratory research design will be adopted to achieve the research objectives of the proposed study, namely, to investigate the marketing strategies used by shopping mall retailers in Tembisa, this study focuses on township retailers, with an emphasis on their marketing communication strategies and pricing strategies. An exploratory research design was employed to investigate this subject matter, given the limited existing research. This approach enabled in-depth exploration of the research topic, allowing for varying levels of depth (Olawale, Chinagozi & Joe, 2023:1384). Exploratory research enabled profiling of township households' culture and shopping behaviour, uncovering key purchasing drivers and effective marketing communications that can benefit the retail industry and foster economic growth in South Africa. This study examined current retail marketing strategies in townships and

explored how they can be adjusted to develop more effective communication strategies and efficient pricing models that align with customers' willingness to pay.

1.8.3 Research approach

Qualitative research approach was employed to explore the township community using employees of the grocery food retail groups in question. Qualitative research dealt specifically with social or behavioural science by using exploratory techniques such as interviews, survey, in-depth interviews, case studies and other personal techniques, (Olawale, Chinagozi & Joe, 2023:1384). Qualitative research allowed for many variables to be investigated which allows one to build strong theory (Olawale, Chinagozi & Joe, 2023:1388). Qualitative research was conducted to investigate the marketing communications and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa.

1.8.4 Data collection method

In-depth interviews were used to gather detailed insights on the subject, providing rich content and a new perspective on the phenomenon (Jain, 2021:544). Unlike quantitative design that uses a big sample of cases for investigation, qualitative design uses a small number of cases (Subedi, 2021:2) to efficiently understand the nature of the study. Data is collected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the study, thoroughly investigate the marketing strategies of retailers, their effective marketing communication and township-relevant pricing models (Olawale, Chinagozi & Joe, 2023:1386). The technique that will be used to collect data is in-depth interviews (open-ended questions). The data collection took place in Tembisa Township. The interview guide was used during in-depth interviews to ensure that relevant research topics which address research objectives and questions are addressed. The interview guide and consent form used in the study are attached and marked as Appendix A. This is a letter, a consent for participation in academic research, requesting voluntary involvement in academic research and was drafted disclosing the reason for the study. This letter was given to the participants with confidentiality guaranteed in the letter. Each interview was scheduled separately and estimated to take about 30–45 minutes. An audio recorder was used to record customers' responses; this was to ensure less

writing as it might have been interruptive to the participants. The interview was conducted at the shopping mall centres.

1.8.5 Pre-testing of the instrument

Pretesting helped to assess validity, reliability, practicability and sensitivity of the tool used to collect data before it was used for actual collection (Casula, Rangarajan & Shield 2020:1711). The first three interviews that embodied the population sample were conducted and served as part of pretesting. A reflective report was compiled with all the answers to the questions. A test was done to find out if the answers were valid and addressed the scope of the investigation. A test was able to identify ambiguous questions and address them by adjusting the way these questions were constructed. This evaluation was done to see if all questions were constructed correctly and could provide answers as expected, which were revealed to be appropriate.

1.8.6 Sampling

The next sections provide a discussion of sampling procedures followed to select participants in the study.

1.8.6.1 Target Population and sample method

The population can be understood as the complete set of people or organisational units from which relevant information is sought (Willie, 2024:75). Here, the investigation concentrated on grocery food retailers based in Tembisa's mall environment in Gauteng. The focal unit of analysis comprised of retail staff whose roles involve putting the stores' marketing strategies into practice. The qualitative study was accompanied by non-probability sampling. This sampling method was ideal for investigating food retailer employees, as they were selected to provide valuable insights into the study and serve as a representative sample of the overall population being investigated. Purposive sampling was applied during this research to address the research objectives of the proposed study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure that relies on the judgement of the researcher to choose a sample that provides best information to ensure that the study objectives are met (Memon, Thurasamy, Ting & Cheah, 2025:2).

1.8.6.2 *Sampling size*

Subedi (2021: 2) argued that a qualitative study may use a small sample and there are few rules for determining the sample size. In the context of this proposed study, a sample size of 10-15 was targeted consisting of grocery food retailers' employees. The sampling was Gauteng based; as the population that one can reach with such a topic is huge and practically it was going to be too difficult and costly to reach. This study was based in Tembisa and was aimed at the retail employees that are part of the planning and implementation of marketing strategy within the retail stores. The theory behind sampling is that if one can select a sample that is as close as possible to representing the population, then any observation one can make with regards to that sample will hold true for that population (Saunders, 2023:61). Four shopping malls were identified in Tembisa, these malls addressed and possessed enough information to understand the current setup of the retailers' marketing strategy, communication and pricing within the shopping centres. The sample size ranged from 10 to 15 participants, and recruitment proceeded until additional interviews yielded no further meaningful information.

1.8.7 *Data analysis*

Content analysis was used to analyse primary qualitative data to be collected in the proposed study. Kumari (2025:892) explains that content analysis involves a detailed and systematic examination of contents for the purpose of identifying patterns and themes (Kumari, 2025:893). In-depth interviews were used to gather insights via content analysis, quantifying qualitative data to identify themes and keywords by counting words, phrases, or concept frequencies, providing a deeper understanding of the subject. There was use of numbers to summarise and describe data collected, which could be later be plotted on a graph to project the meaning of the data Saunders, 2023:61. To describe the characteristics of the sample, a use of frequency table, percentage proportion was used to show if the sample represents the targeted population or not (Saunders, 2023:61). This type of analysis provided valuable information about the nature of the group investigated.

1.9 STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study is based on Tembisa Townships only. It could not be done on all the South African townships as it would have become huge. There was a limited amount of time available. South Africa has 9 provinces wherein all these townships are located, and the distance between each province is approximately 300–700 kilometers. The study focused on Tembisa Township with predominantly black consumers, in the City of Ekurhuleni which is within Gauteng Province, South Africa. Interviews were conducted using open-ended and unstructured questions. The four limitations that encountered while collecting data are as follows:

- The type of method selected for our data collection required substantial amount of time to collect data and the needed information
- Interviews required were quite different to other data collection methods as they required active involvement of the participants. The interviewer, therefore, needed to gain trust of the subject, getting the audience to open up and answer from the heart. Time was also major challenge as this type of interview is quite lengthy, as they are unstructured.
- Analysing data gathered from the interviews is often a tedious process as different questions should generate different responses, much effort was needed to analyse and find a pattern within the data gathered (Barnhill *et al.*, 2025:59).

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When conducting research, it was essential to adhere to key ethical principles as suggested in the University of South Africa research policy and by Saunders et al. (2023:56). The ethical principles required the following: to ensure informed consent, researchers had to clearly explain the study's purpose and nature to participants and obtain their voluntary agreement to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity had to be maintained by protecting participant identities and sensitive data, using pseudonyms or codes instead of names, and storing data securely. Researchers had

to ensure voluntary participation by allowing participants to opt out at any stage without penalty and avoid causing physical, psychological, or reputational harm. Finally, transparency and integrity were crucial, requiring honesty in data collection, analysis, and reporting, as emphasised by (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023:61). According to the Unisa Policy guideline, guideline number 1.2.5 “Autonomy required that individuals’ participation should be freely given, based on informed consent and for a specific purpose. Direct or indirect coercion, as well as undue inducement of people in the name of research should be avoided. These acted as barriers to autonomous decision making and may have resulted in people consenting against their better judgment to participate in studies that may have involved risks”.

To ensure that participation was not a direct or indirect coercion, I used a letter or consent form to invite all my participants after discussing with them my interest and the reason why I would like them to participate. A formal letter or a form was sent to all participants, to acknowledge our discussion and what was agreed upon; they were given a chance/time frame to read the document, agree or disagree or edit according to their understanding of what had been acknowledged in the document. Once the agreement had been reached, the intention was clearly defined and agreed upon by both the researcher and the participants, and this document was signed by both the participants and the researcher. It also clearly stated the confidentiality of the letter and how it would not be used against the participants or cause any inconvenience.

The interview invitation letter that was given to the participants disclosed the nature of the study; the letter had a confidentiality clause with a signature that stipulated information used and collected during the research would be kept confidential and would be used only for this study. The interview letter also assured the participants of their right to safety and security, that at no point would participation in the interviews cause them danger or harm.

As interview sessions were recorded using a tape recorder, participants were made aware of the use of an audio recorder and consented to the use of the device; participants were also informed about the confidentiality of their information and inputs, and I stressed the importance of confidentiality. All responses were kept in a

password-secured computer. Participants were given an option to reject the use of any data-gathering devices like audio recorders, etc. Data was highly confidential and anonymised; only the research team had access to the data.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This proposal outlined the research introduction, contextual framework, review of prior literature, as well as the problem statement and research objectives. In addition, the research methodology to be adopted in the study was presented, including ethical considerations to be observed. Finally, the limitations of the proposed study and the structure of the dissertation were outlined.

1.12 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 Introduction of the study

The chapter introduced the study with background, brief literature review, problem statement, research methodology and ethical considerations to be observed. In addition, the limitations of the study were outlined.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The chapter provides a review of previous studies on the topic to demonstrate the gaps to be addressed by the proposed study.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

The chapter provides a detailed discussion on research methodology to be adopted to realise the research objectives of the proposed study. The discussion starts with research philosophy, research design, research approach, sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 Findings

The chapter presents the findings of the research, and analysis of data collected. From these findings, the researcher demonstrates to what extent the proposed study has addressed the research objectives.

Chapter 5 Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

The chapter presents discussions based on the findings to draw conclusions and makes recommendations to key stakeholders in the shopping mall retail context. In addition, this chapter identifies future research directions on the topic of interest.

2 CHAPTER 2: THE GROCERY FOOD RETAIL INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on marketing strategy in the retail sector. It begins by exploring the fundamental concepts of marketing, delving into the intricacies of marketing strategy and highlighting its significance in driving business success from global and South African perspective. The review then examines the key components of marketing strategy, the marketing strategy and the development of marketing mix elements. A thorough analysis of previous studies on marketing strategy was conducted to identify the research gaps and opportunities that this study aims to address. Finally, the chapter discusses the relevant theoretical frameworks that underpin the research, providing a solid foundation for the investigation and analysis that followed.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the discussion of grocery retail from global and South African perspective, key concepts relevant to the study and reviews previous research on the marketing strategy.

2.2.1 Grocery retail: a global perspective

At the global level, Walmart Inc. maintains unequivocal dominance in grocery retail. According to Deloitte's Global Powers of Retailing ranking for FY2021, Walmart recorded US239.2 billion) and Costco (US82.9 billion in revenue, represents the leading European grocer but remains distant from Walmart's scale (Samadzadeh, 2023:20).

However, dominance manifests differently across regional contexts. In the UK, Tesco holds 27.7% market share, making it the national leader despite intensifying competition from discount chains Aldi and Lidl, whose combined share rose from 5.8% in 2012 to 16.4% recently (Samadzadeh, 2023:4). Zhou (2023:1) confirms Tesco's position as "the market leader of groceries" in the UK, though noting that Sainsbury's operates as the second-largest chain with an omnichannel focus. In Thailand, by contrast, no single multinational dominates; rather, digital transformation is occurring

across small and medium-sized independent stores adapting to platform-based competition from GrabMart and Foodpanda partnerships (Pimsen, Namraksa, Kraiwanit, Jangjarat, Yuenyong & Satranarakun, 2026:6). This contrast reveals that global dominance does not automatically translate into local market hegemony.

Grocery retailers globally have expanded their service portfolios far beyond traditional food retail. Samadzadeh (2023:11) documents that Tesco's service ecosystem now includes mobile telephony, banking, and financial services "focused on the needs of Tesco shoppers, alongside core offerings of fresh and packaged foods, household items, over-the-counter medications, and personal care products. This diversification strategy aims to earn and retain customer loyalty across multiple touchpoints (Samadzadeh, 2023:24). Digital services have become standard offerings globally. Pimsen et al. (2026:6) find that grocery stores in Thailand are adopting e-commerce platforms, point-of-sale (POS) digitisation, and social media marketing, with many partnering with third-party delivery services such as GrabMart and Foodpanda to extend market reach without incurring large infrastructure costs. Similarly, in the UK, Sainsbury's has implemented an omnichannel marketing focus so that their customers can buy from one place and of the best quality (Zhou, 2023:1).

Emerging technological services include AI-powered recommendation tools, customer loyalty applications, livestreaming for product demonstrations, and real-time inventory visibility (Pimsen et al., 2026:6). Samadzadeh (2023:11) notes that Tesco uses big data analytics and AI for targeted promotions, demand forecasting, and inventory optimisation, reducing waste by over \$80 million annually. However, the adoption of these services remains uneven: larger chains implement advanced systems while smaller operators focus on scalable, cost-effective solutions such as social media marketing and cloud-based inventory management (Pimsen et al., 2026:7).

Grocery retailers operate most successfully in countries with stable political economies, developed infrastructure, and consumer markets receptive to formal retail formats. Samadzadeh (2023:6) notes that free trade zones support operations like retail within circumscribed duty-free areas, providing benefits and employing 66 million globally. However, government policies can constrain expansion, as evidenced by

India's former restrictions on foreign retail ownership that thwarted efforts from Nike, IKEA, Walmart, and Tesco (Samadzadeh, 2023:6).

In developed economies such as the UK, grocery retailers operate across hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores, and pure-play online channels. Tesco operates substantial grocery stores in Ireland and Eastern Europe and previously in Korea and other Asian countries, though its Fresh and Easy brand's attempts to break into the US market were regarded as a failure (Zhou, 2023:8). This illustrates that even dominant retailers struggle when entering culturally and competitively distinct markets.

In emerging economies, grocery retailers often operate through partnerships, digital platforms, or adapted formats. Pimsen, Namraksa, Kraiwanit, Jangjarat, Yuenyong & Satranarakun (2026:6) describe how Thai grocery stores, both independent and chain-affiliated, leverage partnerships with third-party delivery services such as GrabMart and Foodpanda rather than building proprietary logistics. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, pushing even small-scale operators to invest in online platforms, delivery services, and cashless payment systems (Pimsen et al., 2026:6). Samadzadeh (2023:5) adds that emerging markets like China and India see steady growth despite global economic uncertainty, making them attractive operational destinations, though political instability, such as Ukraine's disrupted grain exports raising global wheat prices over 20%, creates supply chain vulnerabilities.

The global grocery retail industry is characterised by Walmart's quantitative dominance, yet true market leadership increasingly depends on qualitative factors: digital service integration, omnichannel capabilities, sustainability commitments, and hyper-local responsiveness. Grocery retailers today offer an expanding portfolio of digital, financial, and personalised services that blur traditional boundaries between retail, technology, and banking. Their geographic operations span developed and emerging economies, but success depends less on global scale than on the ability to navigate local political, economic, and consumer-specific conditions. The most impactful insight from this analysis is that the future of global grocery retail will not belong to the largest chain, but to those retailers, whether multinational giants like Tesco or independent Thai store owners that master the paradoxical capability of

thinking globally while acting locally, integrating technology without losing human connection, and scaling operations without sacrificing adaptability.

2.2.2 Grocery retail: a South African perspectives

The South African grocery retail sector is characterised by a high level of concentration, with five dominant players, Shoprite, Spar, Pick n Pay, Massmart, and Woolworths; collectively controlling the majority of formal grocery sales (Dakora and Rambe, 2022:7). These retailers not only lead the national market but are also recognised globally, featuring in Deloitte's Top 250 retailers list, which reflects their scale, operational complexity, and market sophistication (Dakora and Rambe, 2022: 7). Such concentration is indicative of a mature retail environment in which competition is driven less by market entry and more by strategic positioning and differentiation.

Among these retailers, Shoprite holds a leading position as the largest food retailer in Africa, demonstrating innovation through its investment in digital transformation. The establishment of ShopriteX, alongside the introduction of the Checkers Rush format a cashless and checkout-free retail concept comparable to Amazon Go; illustrates a shift towards technologically advanced retail models (Dakora and Rambe, 2022:13). This trend signals the growing importance of integrating digital capabilities into core retail operations to sustain competitive advantage.

Consumer shopping patterns further reinforce this market hierarchy. Empirical findings by Diamond (2023:68) indicate that Shoprite remains the most frequently visited retailer, followed by Pick n Pay, Checkers, and Woolworths. The consolidation of brands under Shoprite Holdings strengthens its dominance, with Checkers positioned as a more premium offering within the group's portfolio. This structure highlights how retailers manage diverse customer segments through differentiated brand positioning.

The competitive landscape is shaped by expansion strategies such as mergers, acquisitions, and organic growth, which have intensified rivalry among leading firms (Diamond, 2023: 26). As a result, retailers are required to continuously differentiate themselves through pricing, product offerings, and customer experience to remain relevant in an increasingly competitive market.

In response to shifting consumer expectations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, South African grocery retailers significantly expanded their service offerings, with a strong emphasis on digital integration. Retailers introduced mobile applications to facilitate online shopping and delivery, including platforms such as Checkers Sixty60, Woolworths' shopping applications, and Pick n Pay's ASAP service, alongside strategic acquisitions to strengthen digital capabilities (Dakora & Rambe, 2022:8). In parallel, click-and-collect services were widely implemented, enabling customers to receive their purchases conveniently without entering stores, with innovations such as designated parking collection points and automated collection systems enhancing efficiency (Dakora & Rambe, 2022: 8).

Investment in logistics and delivery infrastructure have been a critical area of development, with retailers scaling fulfilment capabilities through initiatives such as dark stores and expanded home delivery services to accommodate growing online demand (Dakora & Rambe, 2022:9). Payment systems have evolved to support these changes, with the introduction secure digital payment methods, including QR code transactions and fintech partnerships, further enabling seamless transactions (Dakora & Rambe, 2022: 9). These developments collectively supported the transition towards omni-channel retailing, where physical and digital channels have been integrated to provide a cohesive customer experience, a model increasingly recognised as essential for future competitiveness (Dakora and Rambe, 2022: 14).

The spatial structure of South African retail further shapes market dynamics. The sector is heavily centred around shopping malls, with the country hosting approximately 2,000 such centres where major retailers typically operate as anchor tenants (Dakora and Rambe, 2022: 2). While this model has historically supported high levels of accessibility to physical stores, it initially limited the adoption of online retail. However, increased competition within these environments has heightened the need for differentiation and innovation (Diamond, 2023: 26).

At the same time, structural inequalities within urban areas present both challenges and opportunities. Many low-income consumers reside on the periphery of cities, often with limited access to formal retail infrastructure (Stiehler-Mulder and Cunningham, 2022: 42). This segment, typically earning between R4,417 and R8,913 per month,

represents a significant but underserved market (Stiehler-Mulder and Cunningham, 2022: 7). Retailers are increasingly addressing this gap through delivery services and community-oriented distribution models, which improve accessibility and extend market reach (Stiehler-Mulder and Cunningham, 2022:16).

Consumer behaviour in this context reflects an offline-to-online trajectory, where trust established through physical store interactions encourages the adoption of digital shopping platforms (Stiehler-Mulder and Cunningham, 2022: 23). Furthermore, online grocery shopping can offer cost advantages, particularly for consumers without private transport, as delivery fees may be lower than the cost of travelling to retail locations (Stiehler-Mulder and Cunningham, 2022: 4).

Overall, South African grocery retailers have adapted to a complex and unequal operating environment by developing capabilities that balance affordability, service quality, and innovation. Their ability to serve price-sensitive consumers while expanding digital and logistical infrastructure provides a strategic model relevant to other emerging markets. Maintaining a strong focus on customer experience remains critical to sustaining competitiveness, even in periods of economic constraint (Frazer and Stiehler-Mulder, 2025: 9).

2.2.3 Township Economy

The township economy is a vital component of South Africa's economic landscape, encompassing a wide range of economic activities within the township landscape, including producing, distributing, exchanging, and consuming goods and services (Scheba & Turok 2020:3). As highlighted in recent economic reports, the country's GDP grew by 0.6% in Q4 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, driven primarily by agriculture, finance, and trade on the supply side, and household spending on the demand side (Statistics South Africa, 2024). The significance of household spending in driving economic growth is evident in the 2.3% increase in household expenditure in fourth quarter of the year 2024, with notable increases in categories such as clothing and footwear, food and non-alcoholic beverages, recreation and culture, and household goods. The trade sector also expanded by 1.6% over the same period, suggesting a potential return to pre-pandemic shopping patterns.

The South African township economy, estimated at 900 billion rand annually, is poised for a transformative shift (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Despite the challenges faced by township economies, research indicated that these economies have long been the heartbeat of a thriving economy, demonstrating remarkable resilience and growth despite adversity (Nxumalo, 2025:42).

In recent years, South African townships have emerged as promising business hubs, driven by entrepreneurial activity, innovation, and small businesses (Gavaza, Fihla & Stofile, 2025:72). The development of top-class shopping centres and malls in townships, such as Tembisa, has transformed these areas into attractive business destinations. Based on the importance of township economy in South Africa, the current study investigated the marketing communication strategies and pricing strategies used by grocery food retailers operating in Tembisa Township shopping malls.

2.2.4 Shopping Malls

Shopping malls have become an integral part of South African culture, emerging as popular destinations for leisure and socialisation. These spaces have evolved into lifestyle hubs, seamlessly blending retail with dining, entertainment, and cultural experiences (Ntlhe, 2023:272). There has been a growing demand for shopping malls and this has changed customer expectations, with individuals seeking retail experience. Customers are looking for shopping malls to offer a blend of shopping, recreation, and socialising, transforming these spaces into vibrant community hubs (Lontoc, Arellano & Baquiran, 2023:122). This evolution is driven by the desire for immersive experiences, entertainment, and opportunities to connect with others. According to Adeola, Adis, Moradeyo & Ibelegbu (2023:4) the physical experience of shopping malls remains in customers' minds and becomes a defining factor for retailers. A well-designed store environment, convenient systems, and polite staff can contribute to a positive brand experience, influencing customers' perceptions and loyalty (Anene, 2020:18). Adeola et al. (2023:4) added that shopping malls serve as destinations for both commerce and social connections, making them an integral part of modern urban life. They provide a space for people to connect, socialise, and enjoy various experiences, transforming them into vibrant community hubs. This

transformation reflects the changing needs and preferences of consumers, who increasingly seek immersive experiences and opportunities to connect with others. For food retailers in township shopping centres, this evolution means creating immersive in-store experiences that go beyond just selling products. By designing inviting store environments, implementing convenient systems, and training polite staff, grocery food retailers can foster positive brand experiences that drive customer loyalty.

2.2.5 Grocery Food Retailers in shopping malls

According to Hoenink, Eisink, Adams & Matias (2023:2), food retailers are businesses that primarily sell food or meals and can be categorised into six main types: local food shops, fast-food restaurants, food delivery outlets, dine-in restaurants, supermarkets, and convenience stores. These categories are based on the establishment's main offering, regardless of secondary services provided. For instance, a restaurant offering both dine-in and delivery services would be classified as a dine-in restaurant if that's its primary focus (Hoenink et al., 2023:2). This classification system facilitates the distinction between different types of food retailers and understanding their unique characteristics.

The South African grocery food retail market is characterised by a high level of concentration, with the top companies, including Shoprite Holdings Ltd, Pick n Pay Retailers Ltd, Spar Group Ltd, Massmart (Walmart Owned), and Woolworths Holdings, accounting for approximately 80% of retail sales (Global Agricultural Information Network, 2023:3). The remaining 20% of the market is comprised of the informal retail sector (Global Agricultural Information Network, 2023:4)

Food retailing typically involves the sale of perishable and non-perishable food items, including fresh produce, meat, dairy products, and packaged goods (Trude et al., 2023:805). Due to the perishable nature of many food products, this sector typically requires advanced oversight of procurement, distribution, and delivery operations (Trude et al., 2023:805). By contrast, grocery retailing encompasses a broader range of products, including food items, household essentials, and personal care products (Dakora & Rambe, 2022:61), with a focus on convenience and a wide product assortment.

By understanding market dynamics and consumer preferences, grocery food retailers in townships can focus on providing convenient, quality products and services that cater to the specific needs of their customers. By adopting efficient supply chain and logistics management practices, they can ensure smooth operations (Dakora & Rambe 2022:61). Moreover, they offer a curated selection of food items and household essentials that can create a one-stop shopping experience, attracting and retaining customers and contributing to the vibrancy of these community hubs.

2.2.6 Market Trends

South Africa's food retail industry is undergoing significant developments with the;

1. Accelerated adoption of digital sales channels and delivery-to-home options transforming consumer purchasing patterns (Redda, 2024:399). Healthier Food Options: There is a sustained demand for healthier food options, particularly in fresh produce and wellness categories
2. Plant-Based and Meat Alternative Products: There is a growing interest in plant-based and meat alternative products (Venter de Villiers, Cheng & Truter, 2024:4)
3. Halal Offering Sales: There is an increasing demand for halal offering sales.

For food retailers to remain competitive, they can consider incorporating e-commerce and home delivery services, expanding their offerings of healthier food options, plant-based and meat alternative products, and halal-certified products (Fernandez & Raine, 2021:2).

2.2.7 Marketing strategy

This section discusses definitions of marketing strategy, benefits of marketing strategy and components of marketing strategy.

2.2.7.1 Marketing Strategy Definitions

The concept of marketing strategy is defined as a set of plans or mechanisms chosen by an organisation for resource allocation, with a focus on converting distinct competencies into competitive advantage (Habib, Ranasinghe, & Prerera, 2023:2). In the context of marketing, a marketing strategy serves as a vital roadmap for businesses, enabling them to identify and target the right audience, achieve a set of

objectives, and adapt to the ever-changing environment (Sintani, Ridwaan, Savitri, & Ahsan, 2023:71). By developing a tailored plan, businesses can focus on specific customer segments, drive growth, and maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Marketing strategies at a functional level are designed to address specific challenges and opportunities within the marketing environment, aligning goals and tactics with the organisation's overall objectives (Sintani et al., 2023:70). This involves identifying target markets, understanding customer needs, and developing effective marketing and sales approaches to drive customer acquisition and loyalty. By doing so, businesses can establish a strong market presence and achieve their marketing objectives.

An effective marketing strategy comprises two critical components: strategy formulation (or planning) and strategy implementation. Strategy planning involves allocating resources to achieve business objectives, while strategy implementation brings the strategy to life through resource deployment and performance tracking (Theoharakis, Zheng, & Zhang, 2024:2). Each component contributes significantly to business performance by supporting responsiveness to shifting market environments and informed, evidence-based decision-making.

A marketing strategy is an organisation-formulated blueprint for reaching and engaging the business target audience, encompassing key marketing elements such as the value proposition, branding message, and target market demographics (Freshbooks, 2024:1). The framework further brings together the four fundamental dimensions of marketing strategy, encompassing the nature of the offerings, pricing approaches, distribution methods, and promotional efforts. The effective alignment of these dimensions enables businesses to enhance customer acquisition and meet their marketing objectives.

Based on the literature, the following elements are essential components of a marketing strategy:

1. Organisational plans that outline the overall marketing direction
2. Consolidated patterns of decisions that inform marketing strategies

3. Utilisation of customer information to develop targeted marketing strategies
4. Marketing activities, resources, and communication that convince customers
5. Driving purchasing decisions through effective marketing tactics
6. Boosting overall performance through strategic marketing initiatives
7. Achieving specific goals set out in the organisation's mandate

In conclusion, based on the discussion, this study adopts the following definition of marketing strategy: a marketing strategy is an organisational plan that serves as a roadmap for businesses to identify and target the right audience, achieve set objectives, and adapt to the environment. It involves strategy formulation and implementation, allocating resources to achieve business objectives, integrating key marketing elements such as the value proposition, branding message, target market demographics, and the 4 Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) to drive customer acquisition, loyalty, and ultimately, business success.

2.2.7.2 Benefits of marketing strategy

A carefully developed marketing strategy is essential for business success, allowing organisations to meet defined strategic priorities. By providing a clear direction and focus, a marketing strategy aligns efforts and resources towards common objectives, ensuring everyone works towards the same goals (Wahyu & Veri, 2025:34). A comprehensive marketing strategy involves understanding the target market, including demographics, lifestyle, and preferences, as well as analysing competitors and developing a tailored marketing mix (Sintani et al., 2023:70)). Through this approach, businesses can establish market distinction, enhance their strategic positioning, and drive overall growth and performance.

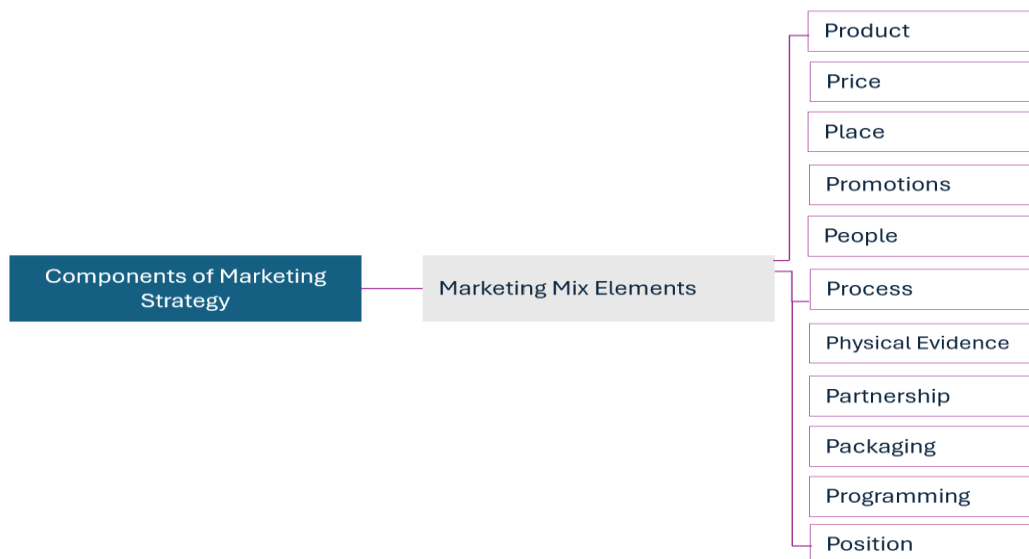
A marketing strategy also facilitates customer acquisition and retention by identifying target audiences, understanding their needs, and developing effective marketing tactics. By adopting a solid marketing strategy, businesses can reap numerous benefits, including increased customer loyalty, improved brand reputation, and long-term success (Varadarajan, 2020:3).

For grocery food retailers, a marketing strategy is particularly crucial, as it helps them understand shopping behaviour, develop effective marketing tactics, and drive business growth. The use of these insights enables retailers to formulate tailored promotion strategies, deepen customer relationships, and realise their strategic goals.

2.2.7.3 Components of marketing strategy

The marketing mix comprises 11 key elements, known as the 11 P's of marketing, which are essential to a marketing strategy. These elements are: Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Evidence, Partnership, Packaging, Programming and Position.

Figure 2. 1 11 P's of Marketing Mix



Source; Ridwan & Ningsih, (2021:34)

2.2.7.3.1 Product

The product element of the marketing mix is a vital component of a business's overall marketing strategy, encompassing both tangible goods and intangible services designed to meet customer needs (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021:77). In the context of a grocery food retail business, such as a supermarket, the product offering is critical, involving two facets: stocking a range of products and catering to the specific needs of the target market. For instance, a retailer like Shoprite in South Africa, may stock a wide range of products, including groceries, household essentials, and personal care

items, while also prioritising products that are in high demand within the local community, such as affordable staple foods and traditional ingredients.

The product mix is designed to satisfy the primary needs of customers, and the retailer's task is to ensure that they carry most of the products that are required by their target market, in this case, township households. By offering a diverse range of products, retailers can cater to the different needs and preferences of their customers, ultimately driving customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, businesses must carefully consider the features, advantages, and benefits of their products to ensure that they meet the needs of their target market. A thoughtfully developed product mix supports organisations in distinguishing their offerings and reinforcing a solid market position.

By understanding the needs of their target market and offering a product mix that meets those needs, businesses can create a compelling value proposition that resonates with customers and sets them apart from their competitors. Effective product management is essential to achieving business objectives, and retailers must continually monitor and adjust their product offerings to stay ahead of the competition and meet the evolving needs of their customers.

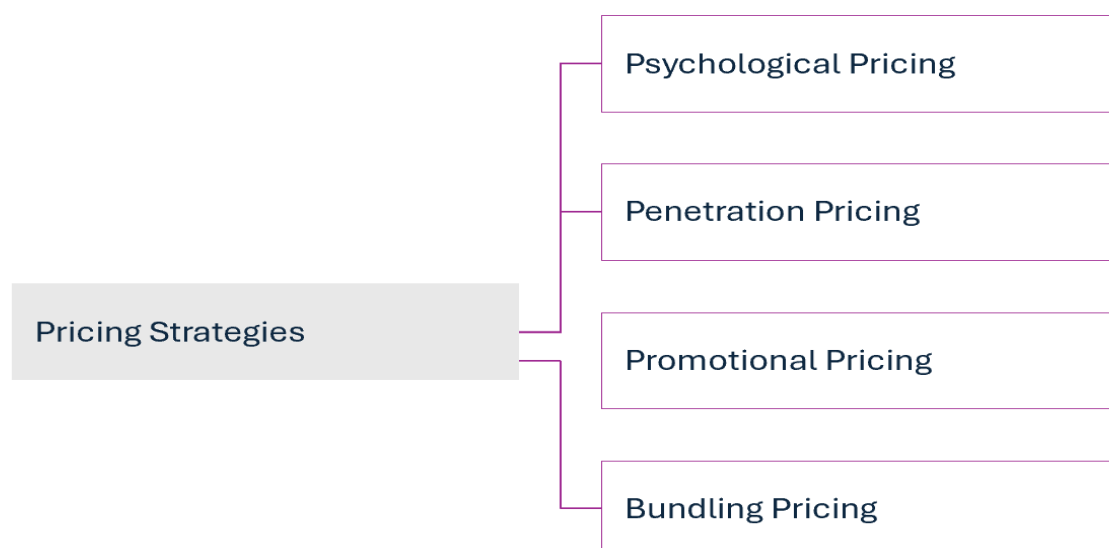
2.2.7.3.2 Price

The price element of the marketing mix is a vital component of a business's overall marketing strategy, as it directly impacts a business's revenue and profitability. According to Stephen, Liaukonyte, and Richards (2020:5), businesses determine prices for products or services based on factors like customer willingness to pay, competitor pricing, and government regulations, thus aiming to balance profitability with customer satisfaction. In the grocery food retail environment, businesses must consider numerous variables to arrive at a final price that will attract customers to their store. Organisations determine prices by considering direct and indirect costs, consumer perceived value, and desired profit margins (Steinbrenner, 2020:1). Direct costs include the cost of goods sold, while indirect costs include marketing, distribution, and overhead expenses. Consumer perceived value refers to the value that customers place on a product or service, which can influence their willingness to

pay. Desired profit margins, on the other hand, are the minimum returns that businesses aim to achieve on their investments.

In setting prices, retailers must walk a fine line between ensuring profitability and keeping customers happy. If prices are too high, customers may be deterred, leading to lost sales and revenue. Conversely, if prices are too low, businesses may sacrifice profitability and struggle to sustain themselves. As such, pricing strategies must be carefully crafted to consider the complex interplay between costs, customer perceptions, and profit goals (Ahmed, 2024:159). Retailers can use various pricing strategies, such as penetration pricing, skimming, or value-based pricing, to achieve their objectives (Gao, 2023:159). Penetration pricing focuses on introducing offerings at relatively low-price points to rapidly expand market presence, whereas skimming adopts premium pricing to capture higher margins in the early stages. In contrast, a value-based approach determines pricing according to how customers assess the worth of a product or service. Ultimately, the key to successful pricing is to understand the target market, monitor competitors, and continuously assess customer feedback. By doing so, businesses can adjust their pricing strategies to optimise profitability while maintaining customer satisfaction.

Figure 2. 2 Various Pricing strategies



Source: Researchers own Compilation (2025)

2.2.7.3.2.1 Psychological Pricing

According to Ahmed, Majeed, and Salih (2020:83), pricing strategies include psychological pricing, which influences consumers' perceptions and emotions. Specific types of psychological pricing strategies include charm pricing (prices ending with .99 or .95), prestige pricing (high prices to convey quality or exclusivity), and reference pricing (comparing prices to a higher "regular" price). These strategies aim to create a psychological impact on consumers, driving purchasing decisions and ultimately influencing consumer buying behaviour.

2.2.7.3.2.2 Penetration Pricing

This pricing approach involves introducing products at lower price levels to encourage rapid customer uptake and market expansion, frequently trading early profit margins for future revenue growth and long-term customer relationships. This strategy focuses on offering products at reduced price levels to appeal to cost-conscious consumers, often resulting in rapid market penetration, higher sales volumes, and strengthened competitive positioning. However, it may result in short-term losses, price wars, and perceived low value or quality. Penetration pricing is effective in certain situations, such as new product launches, highly competitive markets where price is a key differentiator, and markets with high demand elasticity (Faiqoh, Riyadi, Lestari & Mudjijah, 2024:2).

2.2.7.3.2.3 Bundle Pricing

The bundling approach combines a selection of products or services into a single offer at a discounted cost, increasing the perceived benefit to customers and supporting sales growth. This approach simplifies the purchasing process, reduces decision fatigue, and can help clear inventory of slow-moving products (Faiqoh, Riyadi, Lestari & Mudjijah, 2024:8). However, it may reduce profit margins, cannibalise individual product sales, and require careful planning. There are two types of bundle pricing: pure bundling, where products are only available in a bundle, and mixed bundling, where products are available both individually and, in a bundle (Faiqoh et al., 2024:9). Bundle pricing is effective for complementary products, cross-selling, and customer retention, ultimately driving sales, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth when executed

2.2.7.3.2.4 Promotional Pricing

Promotional pricing is a strategy where companies temporarily reduce prices to stimulate sales, drive demand, and increase revenue by creating a sense of urgency (Faiqoh et al., 2024:9). Key characteristics include temporary price reductions, increased sales volume, and creating urgency. This approach offers advantages such as increased sales, customer acquisition, and clearing inventory. However, it also has disadvantages, including reduced profit margins, price sensitivity, and potential negative impacts on brand perception. Types of promotional pricing include discounts, limited-time offers, and buy-one-get-one-free deals (Faiqoh et al., 2024:10). Promotional pricing is effective during new product launches, slow sales periods and in response to competitor activity (Faiqoh, Riyadi, Lestari & Mudjijah, 2024:10). As a result, pricing plays an essential role in marketing strategy and requires careful analysis and strategic decision-making.

2.2.7.3.3 Place

Distribution within marketing strategy represents a core consideration for organisations, focusing on the decisions made to ensure that products or services are easily available and convenient for customers. According to Wichmann, Uppal, Sharma & Dekimpe (2022:508), once goods are produced, businesses select distribution channels and locations that enable direct or indirect contact with customers, ensuring products are accessible and conveniently available. This involves choosing the right channels, such as physical stores, online platforms, or a combination of both, to reach the target market.

In today's digital age, businesses recognise the importance of integrating online and offline channels to maximise customer reach and satisfaction. As noted by Huang & Wu, (2022:457), this approach enables companies to provide a seamless shopping experience, leveraging the strengths of both digital and physical platforms. By integrating online and offline channels, businesses can offer customers a convenient and flexible shopping experience, allowing them to browse and purchase products at their preferred time and location. For instance, a grocery food retailer like Shoprite in South Africa may offer customers the option to purchase products online and have them delivered to their doorstep. The significance of the "place" element is further

emphasised by Pires, Prisco, Delgado & Santos (2024:1946-1947), who highlight the importance of strategic decisions in ensuring products or services are accessible and convenient for customers. This includes selecting feasible locations, providing secure parking facilities, offering personal assistance, implementing automated processes and utilising online e-commerce services and support. In township-based operations, the selection of business locations should emphasise convenience and ease of customer access, with a strong focus on transport availability. A well-planned "place" strategy can help businesses to increase customer satisfaction, drive sales, and ultimately, improve their bottom line.

Strategic decisions concerning distribution methods and locations enable organisations to improve access to their offerings for target audiences, enhancing the effectiveness of their marketing activities. For example, a business operating in a township community may choose to locate its store in a central area with good transport links, making it easily accessible to customers. Additionally, the business may also consider offering online shopping options, allowing customers to purchase products from the comfort of their own homes.

Furthermore, businesses must also consider the importance of logistics and supply chain management in ensuring that products are delivered to customers in a timely and efficient manner. A well-managed logistics system can help businesses to reduce costs, improve customer satisfaction and gain a competitive advantage in the market (Pires et al., 2024:1947). By understanding the needs of their target market and selecting the most effective distribution channels and locations, businesses can create a compelling value proposition that drives customer satisfaction and loyalty. The distribution component within marketing planning represents an essential consideration for organisational success. Recognising the value of coordinating digital and physical channels, identifying practical locations, and ensuring ease of access to offerings enables organisations to enhance financial performance (Pires et al., 2024:1947). Through the deliberate design and execution of distribution decisions, organisations can strengthen their market position and fulfil their intended marketing goals.

2.2.7.3.4 Marketing communications/Promotion

Promotion is a vital element of the marketing mix that enables businesses to communicate with their target audience, build brand awareness, and drive sales growth. According to Bondarenko and Vyshnivska (2023:22), effective marketing strategies are crucial in increasing product awareness, building brand loyalty and driving sales growth. By leveraging digital marketing channels, businesses can reach a wider audience, create engaging experiences, and foster long-term customer relationships. Promotional actions are designed to complement the marketing of a product, facilitate effective customer engagement and encourage customers to make a purchase.

Bondarenko and Vyshnivska (2023:22), state that a well-crafted promotional strategy is essential for businesses to ensure that their customers are aware of their products, where they can be found, and at what price. This involves developing a marketing communication plan that resonates with the target customer, defining who the customer is, and outlining the business's plans to engage with them. Promotional effectiveness is determined by several contributing elements, particularly the consistency and standard of engagement efforts (Bondarenko & Vyshnivska, 2023:23). Businesses must carefully consider their target audience's preferences, behaviours, and needs to develop a promotional strategy that resonates with them (Chen, 2023:146).

Because of the increasing importance of measuring return on investment (ROI), businesses now require metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of their promotional efforts and make data-driven decisions (Almestarihi, Ahmad, Frangieh, Alsondos, Nser & Ziani, 2024:1276). By employing a range of promotional tactics, such as advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and digital marketing, businesses can create a “buzz” around their products or services, build brand awareness and drive customer engagement (Anand, 2025:2). The focus is on establishing a promotional approach that supports overall marketing goals while appealing to the target market. Within the modern digital context, social media platforms have become deeply embedded in daily routines, making them an important medium for organisational customer outreach (Khanom, 2023:88). As a result, social media marketing has evolved from choice to a

necessity, enabling organisations to promote products, engage with customers and build brand awareness.

2.2.7.3.4.1 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has revolutionised brand-customer relationships by providing targeted marketing, real-time tracking, cost-effectiveness, and global reach (Singh & Bisaria, 2024:168). By contrast, traditional marketing, while effective for broad reach, falls short in precision and interactivity. However, combining both digital and traditional marketing strategies can lead to cohesive, omnichannel campaigns that effectively engage diverse audiences. Digital marketing offers several key benefits, including the ability to target specific audiences based on demographics, interests, and online behaviour (Singh & Bisaria, 2024:166). Digital marketing also enables real-time performance tracking, allowing for swift adjustments to marketing strategies. Additionally, digital marketing is cost-effective, providing a higher return on investment compared to traditional methods. Perhaps most significantly, it offers a global reach, enabling businesses to expand their customer base and market presence worldwide.

2.2.7.3.4.2 Social Media Marketing

Social media platforms play a vital mediating role in capturing consumer interest, underscoring the importance of social media marketing in modern business. By comparing it to other marketing forms, social media's necessity is critical, and businesses should prioritise this channel while being mindful of its potential drawbacks. In Gauteng, Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) employ a mix of traditional and digital marketing strategies, with a notable shift towards social media marketing (Mopeli, 2020:2). Platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are widely used to expand customer bases, boost brand visibility, and drive revenue growth. While traditional marketing tools, such as business cards and pamphlets, remain effective, their impact is often limited by cost and measurability constraints (Mopeli, 2020:8). SMMEs are increasingly leveraging social media's potential to achieve their marketing goals.

2.2.7.3.4.3 Promotional Marketing Strategies

Promotional marketing strategies include offering discounts and sales to drive sales, implementing loyalty programmes to reward repeat customers, providing free samples to introduce new products, creating memorable experiences through events and

experiential marketing, and running contests and sweepstakes to generate buzz and excitement (Bondareko & Vyshnivska, 2023:21). Businesses can utilise various media options to promote their products or services, including social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, email marketing to send targeted messages, influencer marketing to partner with popular personalities, print media such as newspapers and magazines, and digital advertising like Google Ads and Facebook Ads to reach specific audiences (Bondareko & Vyshnivska, 2023:23).

2.2.7.3.4.4 Social Media-Based Customer Engagement

Social media-based customer engagement has a profoundly positive impact on marketing outcomes, including increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and purchase intentions (Kulikovskaja, Hubert, Grunet & Zhao, 2023:12). By prioritising the creation of interactive and engaging content, businesses can foster strong customer relationships that drive marketing goals and enhance overall business performance (Kulikovskaja et al., 2023:2). Effective social media engagement strategies enable companies to build robust relationships with their customers, which is crucial for achieving improved marketing outcomes. Through social media, businesses can engage with their customers in real-time, respond to their needs, and provide personalised experiences that enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kulikovskaja et al., 2023:2). Furthermore, social media analytics can provide valuable insights into customer behaviour and preferences, allowing businesses to refine their marketing strategies and optimise their content for better engagement. A customer-oriented approach to social media engagement enables organisations to develop strong audience relationships, promote enduring brand commitment, and sustain long-term business growth.

2.2.7.3.4.5 Digital Advertising Trends

The study's key findings highlight the effectiveness of digital advertising strategies, including the dominance of video content in boosting engagement and loyalty, especially on social media platforms. Ad personalisation through AI technology also significantly improves campaign relevance and effectiveness (Prihatiningsih, Panudju & Prasetyo, 2025:133). Additionally, social media enables two-way interactions between brands and consumers, fostering stronger relationships and loyalty.

Emerging trends, such as the integration of AI, machine learning, and big data analytics, are transforming digital advertising, allowing for more targeted and efficient campaigns. To stay competitive, businesses must adapt to the latest digital advertising trends, such as video content and personalisation (Prihatiningsih et al., 2025:133). Marketers can also benefit from leveraging AI technology to automate and optimise their campaigns. Furthermore, gaining a deep understanding of consumer behaviour and preferences is essential for developing effective digital advertising strategies that drive results.

Promotion is a vital element of the marketing mix that enables businesses to communicate with their target audience, build brand awareness, and drive sales growth. By leveraging digital marketing channels, businesses can reach a wider audience, create engaging experiences, and foster long-term customer relationships. By understanding the importance of social media marketing, digital advertising trends, and promotional marketing strategies, businesses can develop effective marketing campaigns that drive marketing outcomes and enhance overall business performance.

2.2.7.3.5 People

This element of the marketing mix highlights the critical role of internal stakeholders, particularly employees, plays an important role of delivering exceptional customer experiences and upholding organisational values. According to Mahohoma and Agbenyegah (2024:48), organisations recognise the importance of prioritising employee engagement and development to foster a positive work environment that translates to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty. By investing in their employees, companies can create a workforce that is motivated, empowered, and equipped to provide outstanding service to customers.

Employees in customer-facing roles, such as sales staff, call-centre agents, support teams, and delivery personnel, act as the organisation's ambassadors and significantly impact customer experiences and business perceptions. Mandal (2022:3) indicated their interactions can either reinforce or undermine the company's values and brand image. These employees are the ambassadors of the organisation, and their behaviour, attitude, and communication style can significantly impact customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Marketing is instrumental in shaping organisational values and guiding acceptable conduct, ensuring that these aspects are actively addressed. Through clearly defining corporate values and brand identity, marketing supports informed employee behaviour and decision-making, which ultimately influences the overall customer experience (Mandal, 2022:2). This involves gaining detailed insight into the intended market segment, together with clarity regarding the organisation's mission and the values underpinning the business.

Emphasising employee engagement, ongoing development, and empowerment enables organisations to cultivate a positive workplace culture that strengthens customer relationships and retention (Mansor, Jusoh, Hashim, Muhammad & Omar, 2023:71). In turn, positive customer experiences drive organisational success by encouraging advocacy and reinforcing brand credibility.

2.2.7.3.6 Process

This component of marketing mix refers to the systems and procedures that businesses use to deliver their products or services to customers. Nomnga and Dwesini (2023:310), argued that businesses can enhance customer experiences by implementing effective service delivery processes, prioritising service quality, and leveraging technology to meet evolving customer needs. By focusing on key dimensions of service quality, such as reliability, responsiveness, and empathy, companies can drive customer satisfaction and loyalty.

One example of an effective process solution is the use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, which enable businesses to deliver products efficiently and timely to customers (Nethanani, Matlombe, Vuko & Mabizela, 2024:32). CRM systems help companies manage customer interactions, track customer behaviour, and personalise their services to meet individual needs. By leveraging technology, businesses can streamline their processes, reduce errors, and improve customer satisfaction. Rane, Achari, Choudhary (2023:428), alluded that businesses that prioritise customer experience can drive customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy by delivering valuable outcomes and creating positive, resonant experiences that meet and exceed customer expectations. Effective processes are critical to achieving this

goal, as they enable businesses to deliver consistent, high-quality service that meets customer needs.

When designing processes, businesses should aim to make things easier for customers, rather than creating complexity and confusion. By finding process solutions that add value and make it worthwhile for customers to engage with the business, companies can drive customer loyalty and retention. Ultimately, effective processes are essential to delivering exceptional customer experiences and building a strong brand reputation.

2.2.7.3.7 Physical evidence

The Physical Evidence element of the marketing mix refers to the tangible aspects of a retail environment that influence customer perceptions and experiences. According to Mahohoma and Agbenyegah (2024:48), retailers can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by prioritising store atmosphere, including factors like store layout, physical appearance, and shelving, ultimately driving business success. The physical environment of a store plays a crucial role in shaping customer attitudes and behaviours, with a well-designed space capable of creating a positive and lasting impression.

The physical evidence of a store includes the look and feel of the environment, encompassing aspects such as tidiness, spaciousness, cleanliness, and decor (Agbenyegah 2024:48). A store that is well-maintained, clean, and aesthetically pleasing can create a welcoming atmosphere, perceived as luxurious and inviting (Yendra, Idrus, & Marihi, 2025:5). By prioritising effective store design, businesses can create an environment that attracts customers and fosters a positive experience. According to Yendra et al. (2025:5), maintaining an orderly and attractive physical setting, together with strong security practices, plays an important role in fostering customer confidence. A secure environment can reassure customers, making them feel safe and valued. Retailers can also leverage their physical space to create mutually beneficial partnerships with suppliers, such as selling shelf space for visibility and convenience. The strategic use of physical evidence can be a key differentiator for retailers, setting them apart from competitors and driving customer loyalty. By carefully designing and managing their physical environment, retailers can create an

immersive brand experience that resonates with customers and leaves a lasting impression.

2.2.7.3.8 Partnership

This is a crucial element of the marketing mix, involves collaboration between businesses to achieve mutual benefits; it enhances brand visibility, and expands customer reach (Ridwan et al., 2021:39). For grocery food retailers in Tembisa shopping malls, partnerships can drive sales, improve customer experience and increase competitiveness. Examples are supplier partnerships with local farmers used to source fresh produce (e.g., grocery food retailer partnering with local farmers for fresh produce), while in-mall partnerships with restaurants or coffee shops use bundled promotions and joint loyalty programmes, digital partnerships with food delivery services like Mr. D Food or Uber Eats, and loyalty program partnerships with other retailers in the mall. By leveraging partnerships, grocery retailers can differentiate themselves and build stronger relationships with customers and other businesses (Ridwan et al., 2021:39).

2.2.7.3.9 Packaging

Packaging is a strategic tool in the marketing mix that communicates brand identity, ensures product safety, and influences purchasing decisions (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:42). For grocery food retailers in Tembisa shopping malls, effective packaging strategies may include shelf optimisation through space-efficient designs, clear labelling of nutritional information and certifications, sustainable packaging options like biodegradable materials, and culturally relevant designs that resonate with local shoppers. By adopting these strategies, retailers can differentiate their products and enhance customer appeal

2.2.7.3.10 Programming

Programming, as an essential component of marketing mix, entails designing and implementing initiatives that attract customer participation, strengthen brand loyalty, and stimulate sales growth (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:40). For grocery food retailers in Tembisa shopping malls, effective programming strategies can include in-store events, loyalty programmes, and digital engagement initiatives, such as cooking demonstrations, rewards for repeat purchases, and social media campaigns (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:40). By leveraging programming, retailers can increase customer

engagement and loyalty, improve brand reputation, and ultimately drive sales and customer retention. For instance, hosting community events or partnering with local organisations can help build strong relationships with customers and support local initiatives. By incorporating programming into their marketing mix, grocery retailers in Tembisa shopping malls can differentiate themselves and create memorable experiences for their customers.

2.2.7.3.11 Position

According to Ridwan and Ningsih (2021:41), positioning in marketing refers to creating a unique identity that differentiates a brand from competitors and influences customer perception. In the context of grocery food retailers in Tembisa shopping malls, positioning strategies can include price-based approaches that appeal to budget-conscious families, community-centric approaches that emphasise local products and cultural familiarity, or convenience-focused approaches that prioritise accessibility and speed. Retailers can reinforce their brand identity through various techniques, such as strategic store layouts, visual merchandising, promotional signage, and thoughtful product placement, ultimately shaping customer perceptions and driving sales.

2.2.8 Academic justification for selecting the 11 P's framework over the established 4 P's or 7 P's

The expanded 11Ps framework offers a more holistic marketing approach that is well suited for contemporary business environments, particularly in fast-food sectors such as food catering. Unlike the traditional 4Ps and even the extended 7Ps models, it looks at the additional strategic dimensions that are critical for addressing modern market complexities (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:37). Academic justification for this selection is supported by its enhanced capacity to evaluate market dynamics and inform effective strategic planning within highly competitive landscapes. The framework incorporates prospective elements, including the analysis of potential market developments and the assessment of a brand's competitive positioning, which are crucial for sustaining business growth in the hospitality and catering industry.

2.2.8.1 Limitations of the Conventional 4Ps and 7Ps Marketing Frameworks

Product-centric bias: The traditional 4Ps framework comprising of; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:34). It was originally formulated for

tangible goods and therefore it reflects a production oriented paradigm and overlooks the critical dimensions of customer engagement, rendering the model inadequate for service-oriented sectors such as catering, and platform based service, where service delivery, experiential quality, and relational management constitute core value drivers. While the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) are effective for tangible goods, they are "increasingly challenging" to apply in modern digital and service-based environments because they offer little guidance on building hybrid communication and lasting customer relationships (Pitri, Firmnsyah, Rijanto & Firmansyah, 2025:346)

Omission of service elements : In response to the limitations from the 4 P's framework, the 7Ps framework extended the mix to include "People," "Process," and "Physical Evidence. This adaptation was crucial to accommodate, hospitality and tourism industries which are regarded as service intensive. While this adaptation was important, however, the 7Ps generally focuses on operational aspects of service delivery rather than broader strategic concerns such as long-term market positioning and innovation management, therefore lacks long-term market positioning and innovation capacity (Ridwan & Ningsih, 2021:35). The 7Ps largely focuses on tactical service delivery, lacking the forward-looking strategy needed to anticipate future changes and proactively secure a competitive edge (Pitri et al...2025:351)

Reactive nature: Both models (4Ps and 7Ps) are largely inward-looking, prioritizing internal tactical levers over external environmental dynamics. In changing markets, this approach is insufficient for proactive strategy, which requires anticipating future changes and securing a competitive advantage. As the research by Pitri et al. (2025:358) shows, a modern marketing strategy must not only be customer-focused but also proactive and future-oriented, making the comprehensive 11Ps framework the superior option

The evolution from the 4Ps to the 7Ps was a step forward, and the 11Ps framework builds on this by adding four crucial strategic layers. Ridwan & Ningsih,(2021:34) study of the healthy food catering business, provide empirical justification for this expanded framework. The analysis demonstrated that applying the 11Ps framework is effective

in evaluating and strengthening a business's market position, highlighting its suitability for the food and beverage industry.

Although the 4Ps and 7Ps frameworks remain relevant for certain contexts, the 11Ps model is academically supported as the most appropriate for the contemporary food catering and other most competitive sectors . According to Ridwan and Ningsih (2021:38), the 11Ps uniquely integrates long-term strategic planning with comprehensive operational practices. This integration makes it the most effective approach for sustaining resilience and achieving success in a dynamic and competitive market.

2.2.9 Review of previous studies

Previous studies were conducted regarding shopping malls, marketing strategy and a few focused on township economy. The emphasis had been alluded to by Goldberg and Bothma's (2023:3) regarding the vital role played by shopping malls in the retail landscape, serving as hubs for social interaction, entertainment, and commerce. The key place marketing factors that influence shopping mall patronage include atmospherics, tenant mix, events and experiences, and accessibility and parking. Millennials are particularly drawn to shopping malls that offer unique experiences and social interactions, highlighting the importance of creating an engaging atmosphere. Misra and Verma's (2023:6) added that shopping malls attributes such as ambiance, tenant mix, parking facilities, and customer service play a significant role in shaping consumer experiences and satisfaction. These attributes have a profound impact on consumer satisfaction, with ambiance and tenant mix emerging as key drivers. Misra and Verma's (2023:14) pointed out that marketing communication can leverage these insights to promote shopping malls, highlighting their unique features and benefits to build brand awareness, drive foot traffic, and ultimately contribute to consumer satisfaction and loyalty. By understanding the shopping mall attributes that drive consumer satisfaction, marketers can develop effective communication strategies to promote shopping malls and enhance consumer experiences. In another study, Makhitha (2023:51) indicated that attributes such as location, tenant mix, parking facilities, security, and entertainment options influence consumers' decisions in

choosing the shopping mall where to shop. Makhitha (2023:53) added that the understanding of demographic differences in consumer preferences is critical, as different age groups, income levels, and occupations may prioritise different attributes when selecting shopping malls to buy from. Kemp, Prinsloo, Jaiyeoba & Tebejane. (2022:3) added that various factors drive consumers' decisions to visit shopping malls. These motivational factors include social interaction, entertainment, product variety, and convenience. By recognising what drives consumer behaviour, shopping mall marketers can tailor their offerings and marketing efforts to meet the needs and preferences of their target audience. This implies that by understanding the attributes that influence consumers' selection of shopping malls, marketers can develop targeted communication strategies to promote their shopping malls and retailers that are tenants in these malls. In addition, this makes marketing communications a pertinent tool that can help shopping malls in township areas to attract and retain customers.

In the study by Seseni (2023:494), the author alluded that the township economy plays a vital role in promoting local economic development, employment creation, and poverty reduction. According to Seseni (2023:492), township economies are characterised by informal and formal business activities that contribute to the local economy, driving economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and improving living standards in complex environment faced with challenges such as limited access to finance, infrastructure, and markets. Seseni (2023:492) argued that strategies are needed to unlock the potential of township economies and address the socio-economic challenges faced by these communities. In the context of shopping malls operating in townships, marketing communication is essential for raising awareness of offerings, encouraging consumer patronage, and supporting revenue growth. By understanding the dynamics of township economies and leveraging marketing communication strategies, retailers in shopping malls can create awareness, build brand loyalty, and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Some studies explored retailing in township economy such as (Eyk, Amoah and Yase 2022:21) and (Tshivhase 2020:16). According to Tshivhase (2020:29), incorporating township economies into local development efforts is vital for strengthening economic progress, addressing socio-economic challenges, and increasing employment

opportunities. Municipal authorities can further support this growth by facilitating resource access and implementing well-designed strategies. Supporting the role of township economies in local economic development can be done by acknowledging their potential and addressing the challenges they face. Through targeted interventions, local governments can enhance township economic activity and promote continued economic development and resilience. Eyk et al. (2022:22) investigated the shopping experience of spaza shop and uncovered that consumers are influenced by various factors, including product availability, pricing, and customer service. Therefore, understanding these factors, including pricing, is crucial for retailers operating in townships for the development of effective strategies to engage with customers and increase sales.

Other studies investigated the components of marketing strategy such as product distribution. The distribution of products plays a crucial role in influencing consumer buying behaviour, particularly for convenience products. Bellaqa, Beha and Bajrami (2025:288) argued that organisations should consider various factors, including market characteristics, customer needs, and product characteristics, when selecting distribution channels. A well-planned distribution strategy can improve product availability, reduce costs, and enhance customer satisfaction. In the study by Mohsen et al. (2023:108), the results indicated that the choice of distribution channel significantly impacts consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Mohsen et al. (2023:108) added that shopping malls can run in-store promotions, such as discounts and giveaways, to attract customers and to create a vibrant shopping experience or advertisements in local newspapers to reach a wider audience and inform consumers about promotions and services.

Few studies were conducted in the food industry. Sostar, Jupek and Huska (2024:304) indicated that grocery food industry is a highly competitive market which requires grocery food retailers and supermarkets to develop effective marketing strategies to attract and retain customers. The findings in the study by Sostar et al. (2024:308) have shown that the service marketing mix plays a significant role in influencing customer choice in grocery food retailers. Key elements of the marketing mix include product quality, variety, and availability, competitive pricing, effective promotions,

convenient location, store atmosphere, and service quality. These factors have a positive relationship with customer purchasing behaviour and satisfaction. Product attributes, such as nutrition and packaging, impact customer decisions, while competitive pricing and promotions drive sales. Convenient locations and appealing store atmospheres enhance the shopping experience, and quality service from staff fosters loyalty (Sostar et al., 2024:308). The study by Viswanathan (2024:177) alluded that the digital revolution in the food and grocery industry is transforming the way consumers interact with retailers. Key aspects to consider include mobile optimisation, personalisation through AI and data analytics, real-time tracking, subscription services, and streamlined payments, retailers are prioritising mobile-friendly platforms, offering tailored recommendations, and incorporating features like Global Positioning System tracking and Estimated Time of Arrival alerts to meet evolving customer demands. Alabi, Okeke & Igwe (2024:660) added that by providing seamless omnichannel experience and leveraging data-driven insights to optimise inventory management and supply chains, retailers can enhance customer satisfaction, drive sales, and stay competitive in a rapidly changing market. Prioritising the marketing mix for each stage of the product lifecycle is crucial for managers to allocate resources effectively and increase profitability. Understanding the critical success factors for digital transformation, such as available technology, digital media and communication, consumer reach, and brand strategy can help managers develop effective marketing strategies tailored to different stages of the product lifecycle (Majeed, Chaudhary & Chadha, 2025:8). Results of the study by Majeed et al. (2025:15) showed that in the introductory stage, "promotion" has the highest priority, while in other stages of the product life cycle, "price" has the highest priority. Advertisements and flyers comprise the most important elements of promotion, and firms should focus on using these tools to attract customers and increase sales. In the later stages of the product lifecycle, firms should pay special attention to selecting appropriate pricing strategies.

In the study by Msosa, (2023:591), the recommendations were that future research should focus on the township economy and other retailers due to the significance of the retail sector in townships and the complexity of marketing products in these areas. The study's findings highlight the importance of understanding the unique challenges and opportunities in township markets, implying that further research is needed to

explore these complexities and develop effective strategies for retailers. By examining the township economy alongside other retailers, future research can generate richer insight into market dynamics, guide strategic decision-making, and support broader economic advancement within these communities. Some of the studies on marketing strategy focused on the benefits rather than the critical components, such as marketing communications and pricing. Hermayanto, Suryalaya and Barat (2023:65) argued that marketing strategy can assist businesses to achieve goals and objectives by identifying and targeting specific customer segments, creating a competitive advantage, and building brand awareness. A marketing strategy can bring numerous benefits to businesses, including building a strong market presence through increased brand awareness, fostering meaningful connections with customers by understanding their needs and preferences, standing out from the competition by differentiating themselves, and driving business growth by boosting sales and revenue through targeted marketing campaigns (Hermayant et al., 2023:68). Marketing strategy technologies power businesses to craft tailored experiences that resonate with individual customers, boosting satisfaction and loyalty. By harnessing technologies like AR and VR, companies can create immersive and interactive experiences that revolutionise the way customers engage (Kaur et al., 2022:5). Leveraging marketing automation, businesses can eliminate repetitive tasks, reduce costs, and redirect resources to high-impact initiatives. Meanwhile, data analysis provides actionable insights into customer behaviour, empowering companies to make informed decisions that drive growth and success. Embracing the latest trends and technologies, businesses can outpace their competitors and sustain a leadership position in the market (Kaur, Singh, Gehlot, Priyadarshi & Twala, 2022:9). Harnessing cutting-edge technologies, businesses can pioneer groundbreaking marketing strategies that fuel business growth, boost profitability, and leave the competition behind. The use of marketing strategy technologies supports precise audience targeting and the creation of tailored communications that address customer preferences and behavioural drivers. By analysing data and metrics, companies can gauge the impact of their marketing efforts, fine-tune their strategies, and ultimately maximise their return on investment.

Abinav (2023:553), argued that strategic marketing functions as a fundamental investment and primary driver of business performance, not an operational expense. His research demonstrates a direct causal link between effective marketing strategies, encompassing the core elements of product, price, place, and promotion, augmented by modern digital and data-driven approaches, and significant improvements in critical outcomes such as sales volume, revenue growth, profitability, and market share. Success depends critically on developing customer-centric strategies that are fully aligned with overarching business objectives, seamlessly integrated across organisational functions, and highly adaptable to changing market conditions (Abinav, 2023:555). For grocery retailers situated within township shopping malls, this underscores the necessity of leveraging their unique location and understanding local consumer needs through targeted, localised strategies. There is an emphasis that rigorous measurement using relevant KPIs (like Return on Marketing Investment and market share) and a commitment to data driven decision making are non-negotiable for optimising these strategies and achieving sustained financial health competitive advantage in this distinct retail environment.

The grocery food retail industry continues to evolve, influenced by changing consumer patterns and the growing impact of digital technologies. Gaining insight into these developments is essential for grocery food retailers when shaping informed and successful marketing approaches. Kumo's (2023:118) key insights include the importance of personalisation, technology, sustainability, and transparency in driving customer engagement and loyalty. Effective marketing communication is critical in building brand awareness, influencing purchasing decisions, and staying ahead of market trends. By leveraging consumer behaviour research and developing targeted marketing strategies, retailers can drive business growth and achieve long-term success, highlighting the importance of marketing communication in the grocery food retail industry. The grocery food retail industry is highly competitive, and retailers need to develop effective marketing strategies to stay ahead of the competition. A study by Gichiri (2020:4) investigated the influence of micro environmental factors on marketing mix strategy among retail businesses in shopping malls in Nairobi. The study found that customers are concentrated around where the outlet is operating and are attracted to the stores due to the outlet's design aesthetics and display. When the store location

is positioned well, at a location where customers have disposable income, allowing them to access products and services at the prices offered at the mall, this attracts customers.

Spinoglio (2020:189) explains the importance of market communication strategy, and how the marketing communication channels play a vital role in reaching and engaging target customers. There are various factors that influence the utilisation of each communication channel. These include customer segment demographics, message type, and channel effectiveness. Gaining insight into these elements is essential for segmenting markets and designing impactful communication approaches. By selecting the most suitable channels and tailoring messages to specific audience segments, businesses can optimise their market communication efforts, enhance brand visibility, and drive customer engagement.

There is a lot that the business cannot control, but there is a need to focus and be consistent to the things they have control over, for example, consistently communicating who they are and how they would like to be perceived by their customer, openly engaging with customers in all their communication channels and timely responses for any queries and inquiries. These are important and, if done well, they can speak against the rumours. The Information Age has changed the way of doing things; for the business to survive consumers' scrutiny, it needs to always ensure visibility and availability to respond to the market dynamics. Branding management is one of the important marketing theories retailers need to employ; they can do this by presenting a retail brand equity from a retailers' point of view; this can have a significant impact when used by the retailer for differentiation, competitive advantage and superiority (Kencebay & Ertgan 2025:20). The lack of studies investigating marketing strategy with emphasis on marketing communications and pricing in township areas during Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) era has created a significant research gap for the current study. To develop effective marketing strategies for this context, it was imperative to conduct in-depth research that considered the unique characteristics and needs of township residents. This was achieved by investigating the marketing communications and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating in Tembisa Township, South Africa.

2.2.10 Pricing Strategies in South African Township Shopping Mall Grocery Retailing

Pricing strategy selection constitutes a foundational determinant of commercial viability for grocery retailers operating within South Africa's township shopping mall ecosystem. These retail environments are in the township shopping malls, they are occupying a distinctive market position, serving price-sensitive consumers with constrained disposable incomes while competing against informal spaza shops, larger supermarket chains, and neighbouring formal retailers. The strategic pricing decisions made by these grocery food retailer businesses directly influence their capacity to achieve growth, maintain profitability, and ensure long-term sustainability within this uniquely challenging context.

Cost-plus pricing involves calculating the total cost of producing or procuring a product and adding a predetermined markup percentage to establish the final selling price (Ndandwe & Khoza 2026:6). This method is particularly effective for large grocery retailers operating in township malls, as it ensures that all operational costs are covered while maintaining consistent profit margins (Simatele, Ngonyama & Tshaka, 2024:6). More established retailers tend to favour this approach because their experience allows them to better manage input costs and maintain stable margins over time (Simatele Et al..2024:6). A typical food grocery store at one of the township Mall, shopper purchases a 10kg bag of maize meal from a wholesaler at R45,00. After accounting for transport costs (R3,00 per bag), storage handling (R2,00 per bag), and overhead allocation (R5,00 per bag), the total cost per bag amounts to R55,00. Applying a standard 25% markup yields a selling price of R68,75. This ensures every unit sold contributes R13,75 toward profit. The strategy proves particularly suitable for staple goods with stable procurement costs, such as sugar, rice, or cooking oil, where demand remains relatively inelastic.

Ndandwe & Khoza (2026:6) value-based pricing sets prices according to the perceived worth of a product or service to the customer, rather than reference to underlying costs. This approach succeeds when retailers can identify and communicate distinctive benefits that resonate with township consumers' specific priorities. A grocery store in

one of the shopping malls in Tembisa introduces a line of pre-packaged, ready to cook vegetable trays containing onions, tomatoes, and bell peppers, ingredients commonly used in domestic cooking. Despite costing only R12,00 to prepare, the store prices the tray at R25,00, emphasising the value of time savings for working mothers, reduced waste for small households, and consistent portion sizes. The perceived convenience and quality differentiation justify the premium price, particularly among formally employed consumers who prioritise time efficiency over minimising expenditure.

Competitor-based pricing requires aligning prices with those charged by rival businesses operating within the same trading area. Given the dense concentration of grocery options in township shopping malls including national chains (Shoprite, Pick n Pay), regional players, and independent operators—this strategy holds particular relevance (Ndandwe & Khoza, 2026:6). Retailers operating within the same mall must continuously monitor each other's prices, as consumers can easily compare offerings across stores (Simatele Et al..2024:7). This strategy involves aligning prices with what is already being charged in the market, ensuring that retailers remain attractive to customers without necessarily sacrificing margins. A medium-sized food grocery retailer located in Tembisa Mall monitors the price of a 2-litre bottle of sunflower oil across three nearby competitors. Competitor A sells at R42,99, Competitor B at R43,50, and Competitor C at R41,99. The focal retailer sets its price at R42,49—positioned between the lowest and average prices. On loss-leading promotional items such as bread, milk, or eggs, the retailer may temporarily match the lowest competitor price to attract foot traffic, accepting reduced margins on these items while recovering profitability through higher-margin pantry staples, cleaning supplies, and snacks.

Market segmentation pricing involves offering different prices to distinct customer groups based on identifiable characteristics such as income level, purchase frequency, or buying capacity (Ndandwe & Khoza, 2026:7). This strategy acknowledges the heterogeneous nature of township consumers, who range from grant dependent households to middle income professional. A food grocery store in the township shopping mall implements a dual pricing structure for bulk rice purchases. Customers buying a single 2kg bag pay R35,00. However, members of the store's loyalty

programme which requires no fee but collects purchase data pay R32,00 for the identical product. Additionally, the store offers an early morning discount (7:00–9:00) of 10% on fresh produce for pensioners presenting their SASSA cards, accompanied by an evening discount (18:00–20:00) of 15% on perishable items for all customers. These segmented prices capture consumer surplus across different willingness-to-pay thresholds without alienating price-sensitive segments.

Ndandwe & Khoza (2026:7) dynamic pricing enables real-time price adjustments based on demand fluctuations, inventory levels, and external market conditions. While technologically more demanding, this strategy is increasingly feasible through electronic shelf labels and integrated point of sale systems. A grocery food retailer in the township Mall uses dynamic pricing for fresh produce during peak demand periods. On the day preceding month end salary payments (typically the 25th), demand for tomatoes increases substantially; the store raises prices from R25,00 per kilogram to R32,00 per kilogram. Conversely, on the afternoon of the 5th following grant disbursement when many households have stocked up prices for the same tomatoes decline to R22,00 to clear inventory before spoilage. Similarly, when a competitor announces a weekend promotion on chicken portions, the store automatically reduces its prices on comparable products by 8% for the duration of that promotion, responding algorithmically to competitive pressure.

Predatory pricing constitutes an exclusionary abuse whereby a dominant undertaking deliberately sets prices below an appropriate measure of cost to eliminate competitors, intending to recoup short-term losses through subsequent price increases once competition has been weakened (Sluijs, 2025:301). The seminal AKZO judgment (Case C-62/86) established the foundational legal framework for assessing predatory pricing within the European Union, articulating two alternative tests: pricing below average variable cost (AVC) is presumed abusive, whilst pricing above AVC but below average total cost (ATC) may be found abusive only when forming part of an intentional strategy to exclude a competitor (Sluijs, 2025:301).

The recent judgment in *Qualcomm versus Commission* (Case T-671/19) examined a scenario where pricing occurred above AVC yet remained below long-run average incremental cost (LRAIC) (Sluijs, 2025:302). Qualcomm supplied UMTS chipsets to Huawei and ZTE at prices situated within this intermediate range, above variable costs but below total costs when accounting for fixed research and development expenditures (Sluijs, 2025:302). The General Court upheld the European Commission's finding of predatory pricing, reasoning that in technologically intensive markets characterised by high fixed costs and low variable costs, LRAIC serves as an appropriate below-cost benchmark because it incorporates both variable costs and a fixed cost component related to Research and Development (Sluijs, 2025:302). Absent such a standard, the Court observed, predatory pricing would become impossible to prove in sectors where fixed costs dominate the cost structure (Sluijs, 2025:302).

This legal framework applies directly to food grocery retail. Consider a dominant national supermarket chain supplying staple goods such as maize meal, cooking oil, and sugar. If an independent retailer enters the market offering consistently lower prices, the dominant incumbent might respond by reducing its price on a 10kg bag of maize meal from R45.00 to R25.00. Assuming the average variable cost (the cost of purchasing the product from the miller plus transport and handling) is R30.00, the R25.00 price falls below AVC, triggering the first AKZO test: such conduct is presumed abusive without requiring proof of exclusionary intent (Sluijs, 2025:301). If, alternatively, the dominant firm sets the price at R32.00, above AVC (R30.00) but below average total cost (which might be R35.00 when including fixed costs such as warehousing and distribution infrastructure), the conduct may still be deemed abusive if the undertaking can demonstrate an intentional plan to exclude the competitor (Sluijs, 2025:301). In either scenario, the dominant firm sacrifices immediate profits, cross-subsidises losses from other product categories, and, upon the competitor's exit, raises prices above competitive levels to recoup its investment in predation.

The application of pricing strategies within South African township shopping mall grocery retailing demands contextual sensitivity and strategic flexibility. Cost-plus pricing provides reliable margin protection for staple goods. Value-based pricing

captures premium opportunities where convenience or quality differentiation exists. Competitor-based pricing ensures market relevance in intensely competitive environments. Market segmentation pricing accommodates the economic diversity of township consumers. Dynamic pricing optimises revenue through responsive adjustment mechanisms. Successful township grocery retailers typically employ a hybrid approach, deploying different strategies across product categories, customer segments, and temporal contexts. Pricing, therefore, functions not merely as a financial instrument but as a multidimensional strategic tool that, when appropriately calibrated, enables sustainable competitiveness within South Africa's distinctive township retail landscape.

2.3 DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT THEORIES

2.3.1 Systems Theory

In market research, systems theory offers a transdisciplinary perspective that treats commercial environments as interdependent wholes rather than collections of isolated variables (Harney, 2024:3). Applied to food grocery retail in Tembisa township, South African, this means that consumer behaviour, competitor actions, and economic conditions cannot be studied separately. A single change such as a price adjustment on cooking oil does not produce a linear effect. Instead, it triggers a ripple across the entire ecosystem: spaza shops adjust, taxi-rank gossip amplifies the news, household budgets are recalculated, and trust in the formal retailer may shift. Townships are volatile and complex by nature, making a systems approach not merely useful but necessary.

To understand this ripple effect, we first define the four foundational elements of systems theory: holism, interconnectedness, emergence, and feedback loops (Youvan, 2024:3). Holism insists that the whole possesses properties absent from any individual part. Interconnectedness traces the relational threads between components. Emergence explains how systems produce outcomes that cannot be predicted from isolated inputs. Feedback loops describe the cyclical process where outputs become new inputs, enabling adaptation and evolution over time.

Youvan (2024:14) further elaborates three higher order principles that are particularly relevant to township retail. The system must be analysed as a whole, not broken down into disconnected components this is called Non-reductive system hood. For example, a retailer observing declining sales cannot assume the cause is price alone. The actual drivers could be loadshedding disabling digital tills, a recent crime incident eroding community trust, or a nearby spaza shop offering informal credit. Only by examining the full system, trust, infrastructure, social habits, can the real problem be identified.

Dialectical synergy refers to when opposing forces within the system interact to produce novel outcomes. For example, spaza shops sell small portions at high unit prices, catering to daily wage earners, while chain stores offer bulk discounts, serving monthly salary households. Rather than treating these as mutually exclusive competitive threats, a strategic food grocery retailer creates hybrid offerings, half-litre cooking oil priced near spaza levels but with branded packaging, and bulk maize meal priced close to chain levels. The tension between convenience and volume generates a new market position that serves the township's dual economic reality. Adaptive becoming, is a system that survives, the one capable of evolving in response to change. For example, persistent loadshedding rendered digital tills unreliable. One independent grocery retailer does not wait for infrastructure solutions. Instead, the food grocery retailer reintroduced a manual layaway system like a credit notebook already trusted by the community, and trains two local youths to verify calculations manually. This blend of low-technology social trust with basic bookkeeping represents an emergent practice that did not exist before the crisis, illustrating adaptive becoming in action.

Within a township environment, a promotional flyer does not function as an isolated advertisement. It enters a dense field of competing message; taxi rank gossip, WhatsApp price alerts, and word-of-mouth recommendations from community elders. Effective marketing communications must therefore acknowledge the prevailing economic reality. Most customers live from payday to payday, seeking clear, honest signals such as "today's special on cooking oil" or "buy one, get one free". Moreover, they somehow trust channels already embedded in their daily lives.

Consequently, a retailer must move beyond mainstream digital platforms like Facebook. Practical alternatives include loudspeaker announcements at taxi drop-off points and voice notes sent to stokvel leaders. These channels demonstrate that the medium carries as much weight as the message. Information in a township travels most effectively through community networks, not formal media pipelines alone. Ignoring this interconnectedness renders even the best creative campaign ineffective.

Pricing cannot be reduced to a cost-plus formula. Three systemic factors demand attention; spaza shops selling small portions for daily wages at higher unit prices; chain store loyalty programmes that independent grocers cannot replicate; and supply chain vulnerabilities (truck breakdowns, loadshedding damaging cold storage). A strategic food grocery retailer establishes a base price by monitoring two reference points: the spaza price of a 10kg bag of maize meal and the chain price of fresh milk. The goal is to position between convenience (spaza) and volume (chain).

The most sophisticated tactic is dynamic bundling, which responds to the customer's changing financial position across the month. In the second week after payday, the retailer bundles 2 litre cooking oil with bread. In the final week of the month, single eggs are sold near cost. Customer price sensitivity is not static, it moves with the calendar. The system therefore forces the food grocery retailer to price not against a named competitor, but against the customer's shrinking month-end purchasing power. This emergent behaviour cannot be predicted by examining price lists in isolation.

For market researchers, systems theory provides enhanced insight into complex retail environments. Instead of linear cause and effect models, researchers uncover recurring patterns and hidden interconnections. Through the application of systems theory, market researchers can develop enhanced insight into complex systems, uncover recurring patterns and interconnections, and design more effective responses to multifaceted challenges. This approach enables researchers to analyse system behaviour, develop theories and models, and ultimately inform strategic decision making in market research contexts.

In the context of a study on grocery food retailers, systems thinking enables researchers to map the key components and relationships that drive system behaviour. The relevance of systems theory to the current study lies in its ability to

provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions between grocery food retailers and the business environment. By adopting a systems thinking approach, researchers can identify the key components and relationships that drive the behaviour of the system and develop more effective strategies to improve the performance of grocery food retailers. For example, by understanding the interconnectedness between different components of the system such as suppliers, distributors, and customers, researchers can identify opportunities for improvement and develop targeted interventions to enhance the overall performance of the system. Consider a researcher who maps the flow of fresh produce from a wholesaler to township retailers. They might discover that delivery delays in the last week of the month cause spoilage and stock outs, which forces customers to switch to spaza shops. A targeted intervention could be a shared cold storage cooperative with neighbouring retailers, stabilising supply exactly when purchasing power is most constrained. Such insights are invisible to reductionist methods.

Systems theory is not an abstract luxury for township grocery retail, it is a practical survival tool. A retailer who focuses exclusively on price misses the dynamics of trust and feedback loops. A marketer who relies solely on Facebook ignores the communicative power of the taxi rank. The volatile, complex nature of township economies demands holism, feedback mapping, and adaptive strategy.

When a grocery retailer moves from cost-plus to relational pricing, from digital advertisements to voice notes for stokvel leaders, that food grocery retailer is practising systems thinking. Adaptive becoming the principle that systems evolve or perish, turns crisis into capability. By continuously learning from feedback loops and adjusting to environmental shifts, market researchers and retailers alike can transform vicious cycles. That is the enduring lesson of systems theory for market research in complex environments.

2.3.2 Open System Theory

Traditional management perspectives sometimes treat organisations as self contained entities, closed systems that succeed or fail based solely on internal decisions. Open System Theory (OST) rejects this view. Instead, OST positions organisations as dynamic, living systems that constantly exchange resources, information, and energy

with their external environment (Ntando & Mofolo, 2024:85). For a township grocery retailer, the environment is not a distant backdrop. It is the fluctuating price of a 9kg gas cylinder at the hardware store across the road, the community WhatsApp broadcast list that names which shops have fresh chicken today, the latest loadshedding schedule from Eskom, and the whispered feedback from a customer who bought stale bread last Tuesday. Every day, the retailer takes in inputs (stock, customer feedback, cash, informal market intelligence) and produces outputs (goods sold, community reputation, waste, and economic activity). Ignoring this exchange is not an option, it is a slow path to failure.

OST therefore emphasises that organisations are not closed systems operating in isolation, but rather open systems that interact with their environment and adapt to changing conditions. In market research, this perspective highlights the need to consider the external environment and its impact on organisational performance (Ntando & Mofolo, 2024:85). By adopting a holistic approach, market research can inform organisational adaptation and response to environmental changes, ultimately improving performance. This enables researchers to understand complex interactions between organisations and their environment, informing strategic decision-making and driving business success.

One of the most powerful concepts within OST is the feedback loop, the mechanism through which an organisation receives information about the effects of its actions and then adjusts accordingly (Carreno, 2024:3). Feedback can be positive (reinforcing a successful strategy) or negative (correcting a failing one). In a township retail context, feedback loops are immediate and often brutal.

Consider a grocery food retailer who decides to run a promotion on 2kg sugar: “Buy one, get one half price.” A closed system thinker would expect a neat increase in sales volume. An open systems thinker watches what actually happens. Within hours, a nearby spaza shop undercuts the deal by offering a single small packet at a lower absolute price. Meanwhile, a customer posts a voice note on a community WhatsApp group: “The sugar at Shop A is a good deal, but check the expiry date last time some

of it was hard as a brick.” That voice note is feedback. If the retailer continuously monitors and responds to such feedback by publicly showing the expiry date on a whiteboard, adjusting the promotion to include a freshness guarantee, or asking a respected community elder to test the batch, they refine their strategy and improve their ability to meet customer needs. Over time, this adaptive capacity keeps them ahead of competitors who ignore environmental signals (Carreno, 2024:3).

For an example, a grocery food retailer notices that every Friday afternoon, sales of 5kg gas cylinders spike. The feedback is clear: customers are preparing for weekend cooking and heating. The closed response is to stock more gas. The open systems response is to ask why Friday? The answer emerges from talking to customers at the till: many households receive remittances or informal wages on Friday. The grocery food retailer then negotiates with the local gas supplier for a small discount on refills when a customer also buys maize meal creating a Friday cooking bundle that includes a gas refill, a bag of mealie meal, and a sachet of tomatoes. That bundle did not come from a spreadsheet; it came from reading the environment.

The relevance of OST to the current study lies in its ability to provide a framework for understanding the complex interactions between grocery food retailers and the business environment (Ntando & Mofolo, 2024:85). By adopting an open systems perspective, researchers can identify the key environmental factors that impact retailer performance and develop strategies to adapt to changing conditions.

What are those factors in a township setting? They include:

- Energy transition - The shift from electricity to LPG gas for cooking, and the corresponding price volatility of gas cylinders.
- Consumer behaviour - The use of community WhatsApp broadcast lists and burial society networks as primary information channels.
- Market trends - The rise of mobile money and instant EFT payments, bypassing traditional cash or bank branches.

- Regulatory requirements - New safety regulations for storing and selling gas cylinders, which affect small retailers.
- Infrastructure shocks - Loadshedding that disables electronic payment systems and refrigeration.
- Social networks - The influence of a church group leader's recommendation on where to buy fresh produce.

For instance, by understanding the impact of changes in consumer behaviour, market trends, and regulatory requirements on the grocery food retail industry, researchers can develop targeted interventions to help retailers adapt and improve performance. A practical example: A researcher notices that new safety regulations for LPG storage are causing confusion among small township grocers, leading some to stop selling gas altogether, losing a key customer draw. Instead of simply documenting the problem, the researcher designs a simple one-page illustrated guide (in the local language) showing how to store gas cylinders safely, and distributes it via the local spaza shop association and church burial society networks. That intervention works because it respects the open system, it uses trusted community structures and addresses a real environmental pressure.

Open System Theory also helps researchers to identify the interdependencies between different components of the system, such as suppliers, distributors, and customers, this is to develop strategies that improve overall system performance (Carreno, 2024:5). A closed systems view treats each relationship as a separate transaction. An open systems view sees them as a web of mutual influence.

Consider the relationship between a township grocer and an LPG gas distributor. The distributor delivers 9kg cylinders every Monday and Thursday. If loadshedding causes the grocer's electronic payment system to fail on a busy Saturday, customers cannot pay by card, and the grocer runs out of cash change. Angry customers walk to a competitor who still accepts mobile money. The food grocery retailer blames the distributor for not supplying a backup payment terminal. The distributor blames the food grocery retailer for poor contingency planning. An open systems analysis reveals

a third factor: the unreliable electricity grid and the lack of affordable mobile point of sale devices. The solution is not blame but adaptation. The grocer and distributor could agree to a weekly credit arrangement for loyal customers, or the grocer could install a simple solar-powered phone charger to keep mobile payment apps running, or the distributor could supply a manual card imprinter as a backup. By understanding the complex interactions between organisations and their environment, researchers can develop more effective solutions to complex problems and drive business success (Carreno, 2024:5). Another example: A customer who buys a 10kg bag of maize meal every month is not just a transaction. That customer belongs to a burial society (a form of rotating savings club); their purchase decision is influenced by the society chairperson's recommendation; the chairperson, in turn, trusts the retailer who offers a small discount for bulk purchases made on behalf of the society. Recognising this interdependence, a smart retailer creates a burial society register where groups earn a 5% store credit for every collective purchase over a certain amount. This strategy emerged not from internal planning alone, but from observing the environmental reality of community-based mutual support networks.

Open System Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interactions between organisations and their environment. By adopting an open systems perspective, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the environmental factors that impact organisational performance and develop more effective solutions to complex problems. The relevance of OST to the current study lies in its ability to provide a framework for understanding the complex interactions between grocery food retailers and the business environment, and to inform strategic decision-making in market research contexts.

For market researchers, this means moving beyond surveys and loyalty cards. It means monitoring gas price trends at the local hardware store, joining community WhatsApp broadcast lists (with ethical consent), tracking loadshedding schedules against customer footfall, and mapping the informal credit networks of burial societies. It means designing research instruments that capture feedback loops, for example,

asking not just “Did you buy cooking oil?” but “What made you choose this shop over the one down the road?” and “How did you hear about the special on gas refills?”

For retailers, OST translates into daily practices: checking the community WhatsApp list for complaints about competitors’ stockouts; adjusting gas cylinder pricing based on the hardware store across the street; treating every customer who walks out without buying as a source of feedback (“What were you looking for that we didn’t have?”); and building relationships with burial society chairpersons. The retailer who masters open-system thinking does not just survive loadshedding, gas price hikes, or a competitor’s special, they adapt, evolve, and often lead.

A township grocery retailer who locks the door, stocks only what the wholesaler recommends, and ignores the conversations happening on community WhatsApp lists will soon find the door locked by customers who have moved elsewhere. Open System Theory reminds us that retail is not a closed machine but a living conversation with the environment. Every loadshedding schedule, every message in a burial society group about who has fresh chicken, every change in the gas price at the corner hardware store is an environmental signal. Organisations that listen, adapt, and co-evolve with their surroundings are the ones that endure.

When a grocer uses WhatsApp broadcast lists to warn customers about a pending price increase on gas refills, or shares solar charger costs with neighbouring shops, or bundles a gas refill with maize meal on a Friday, that food grocer retailer is practising open system thinking. And in the volatile, interconnected world of township shopping mall of food grocery retailer, that is not a theoretical luxury. It is the difference between thriving and becoming a cautionary tale.

2.3.3 Complex adaptive theory

Traditional business models often assume that if you do A -lower prices, then B will happen - sales increase. In a township food grocery retail environment, this assumption fails repeatedly. A food grocery retailer drops the price of bread, and instead of a smooth sales rise, three things occur simultaneously: a spaza shop across the street launches a loss leader on maize meal, a customer posts a TikTok video

comparing prices at four different shops, and a church group decides to buy all their weekly groceries from a competitor who offered a small donation to the building fund. None of these outcomes was predictable from the initial price change alone. This is the hallmark of a Complex Adaptive System (CAS) .

Ahmad, Baryannis, and Hill (2024:10) define Complex Adaptive Systems as systems that exhibit emergent behaviour, self-organisation, adaptation, and non-linearity. These systems consist of interconnected components, retailers, consumers, competitors, suppliers, marketing channels, that interact and influence each other, leading to dynamic and adaptive behaviour that cannot be predicted by examining any single component in isolation. The food grocery retail ecosystem in townships is a prime example of a CAS, exhibiting all these characteristics. By utilising CAS theory, researchers can explore how food retailers respond to evolving market dynamics, shifting consumer demands, and competitive approaches, identifying effective marketing practices that support increased sales, customer retention, and business expansion within township communities.

Emergence refers to the phenomenon where the interactions of individual components produce system wide patterns that no single component intended or could have predicted. In township shopping malls , the food grocery retailer, emergent patterns appear constantly.

Consider the rise of cash-back loyalty that emerged spontaneously from customer behaviour, not from a corporate programme. Customers began informally aggregating their purchases, a group of neighbours would send one person to buy 20 loaves of bread, receiving a discount that the retailer offered as a bulk friend's deal. Over time, this practice self-organised into a community norm. Retailers who recognised this emergent pattern formalised it into a group buying hour every Tuesday morning, increasing foot traffic without any expensive loyalty card system. The pattern was not designed; it emerged.

Another example: A retailer noticed that every time a specific social media influencer in the township posted a video cooking with a particular brand of cooking oil, sales of that oil would spike for two days, then crash. This emergent buying rhythm was not caused by any promotion from the retailer or the brand, it emerged from the

influencer's organic content and the community's trust in that individual. By observing this pattern, the food grocery retailer began stocking extra units the day before the influencer's typical posting schedule, capturing the surge. Ahmad et al. (2024:4) note that CAS theory can provide insights into such emergent properties, enabling researchers to develop more effective marketing strategies that consider the complex interactions between different components of the system.

In a CAS, order arises from local interactions without a central planner. Township shopping malls, grocery food retailers exhibit self-organisation continuously. Suppliers, informal credit networks, and customer referral systems all organise themselves without a head office. Take the example of fresh produce supply. A food grocery retailer based in township shopping mall does not receive a centrally coordinated delivery schedule from a national distributor. Instead, multiple small suppliers, farmers from peri-urban areas, wholesalers from the city market, even backyard vegetable growers, coordinate through informal channels. A supplier hears that a particular retailer pays cash on delivery; that grocery food retailer then becomes a hub. Other suppliers converge on that hub. Soon, that food grocery retailer has the freshest tomatoes without ever signing a formal contract. This self-organisation happened because each actor (supplier, retailer, customer) made local decisions based on limited information, yet the system as a whole achieved a stable, adaptive pattern.

Another form of self-organisation occurs in customer problem solving. When loadshedding hits and a retailer's card machine fails, customers do not simply leave. They self-organise, one customer offers to pay via mobile money to a neighbour who has cash, who then pays the grocery food retailer. This impromptu triangular transaction keeps the sale alive. Over time, this behaviour becomes a norm that the retailer can facilitate by posting a sign: Mobile money to cash exchange corner. The system organised itself, the retailer merely recognised and supported it.

Adaptation is the capacity of a system to modify its behaviour in response to feedback from the environment. In grocery food retailer based in Township shopping malls, adaptation happens at multiple levels simultaneously. Consider the adaptation to social media price transparency. A few years ago, a grocery food retailer could quietly

adjust prices without immediate customer backlash. Now, a customer who notices a price increase on a 5kg bag of rice can post a photo on a local Facebook group or a community Discord server within minutes. Competitors see the post and adjust their own prices downward. The original grocery food retailer, faced with falling foot traffic, adapts by introducing a “price match guarantee” but limited to the first 50 customers each morning. That adaptation then triggers further adaptations from competitors (e.g., “We match and give you a free onion”). This chain of adaptations is non-linear and continuous.

Another deep adaptation example: A retailer observes that every month, on the 25th, sales of long-life milk drop sharply while sales of powdered milk rise. The adaptation is not simply to stock more powdered milk. The retailer investigates and learns that customers switch to powdered milk because their cash is running low and powdered milk can be bought in small sachets. The retailer then adapts by breaking down bulk powdered milk into smaller, affordable portions and also offers a last week of the month bundle: powdered milk, tea leaves, and a small bag of sugar at a discounted combination price. This adaptation is not a one-time change; it becomes a regular monthly tactic that responds to the cyclic environment.

By applying the CAS perspective, the complexity of interactions influencing marketing strategy and business performance in this environment can be more thoroughly examined. For instance, by analysing the interactions between grocery food retailers, consumers, and competitors, researchers can identify patterns and relationships that inform marketing strategy and drive business success (Ahmad et al., 2024:10). Additionally, CAS theory can help researchers understand how grocery food adapt to changing market conditions, such as shifts in consumer behaviour from cash to mobile money, or changes in competitor strategies like the introduction of a social media price challenge, and develop effective strategies to respond to these changes.

In a linear system, doubling the input doubles the output. In a CAS, small inputs can produce enormous, disproportionate effects, or large inputs can produce almost nothing. This is non-linearity. A small, seemingly trivial event: a customer accidentally drops a jar of jam in aisle two. The grocery food retailer’s staff clean it up quickly. But a child watching makes a comment about the shop with the sticky floor. That comment

becomes a running joke on a community WhatsApp group. Within a week, foot traffic to that retailer drops by 15%, not because of price or quality, but because of a perceived cleanliness issue. The cause (a dropped jar) was tiny; the effect (significant sales decline) was large. Conversely, a retailer spends R5,000 on a Facebook ad campaign and gets only three extra customers. The same day, a customer shares a photo of a friendly cashier who remembered her name, and that post gets 500 shares, bringing in 50 new customers. No linear logic explains this.

For market researchers, non-linearity means that traditional regression models and simple experiments are often misleading. A small intervention, such as training cashiers to greet every customer by name, might have a massive impact on loyalty, while a large investment in new shelving might go unnoticed. CAS theory guides researchers to look for tipping points, feedback loops, and sensitive dependencies rather than assuming proportionate causes and effects.

Complex Adaptive Systems theory provides a valuable framework for understanding complex systems in market research. Through the use of CAS theory, researchers can develop greater insight into complex systems, discern key patterns and relationships, and implement more effective approaches to addressing complex issues. The relevance of CAS theory to the current study lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interactions driving marketing strategy and business performance in the food retail ecosystem in townships.

Operating a grocery food retail shop in the Township market is about living, learning, and unpredictable ecosystem. Retailers who treat it as a linear system assuming that lower prices always increase sales, or that a good location guarantees loyalty, will be constantly surprised and often disappointed. Those who embrace Complex Adaptive Systems theory understand that emergence, self-organisation, adaptation, and non-linearity are not obstacles to be overcome but realities to be navigated.

When a retailer notices a spontaneous group buying pattern and formalises it into a “Friends’ Tuesday,” they are working with emergence. When they allow suppliers and customers to self-organise around cash-on-delivery and mobile money exchanges, they are supporting self-organisation. When they shift to powdered milk sachets in the last week of the month, they are adapting. And when they realise that a single kind

word from a cashier can out-perform a thousand rand of digital advertising, they have internalised non-linearity.

Complex Adaptive Systems theory does not offer easy formulas. It offers a lens, a way of seeing the retail environment as constantly becoming, never fixed. For the market researcher and the grocery retailer in South African townships, that lens is not a luxury. It is the difference between being swept along by the system and learning to understand it.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter discussed concepts relevant to the study and reviewed previous studies on shopping malls, township economy, marketing strategy and digital marketing to demonstrate the gap filled. The chapter further discussed relevant theories applicable to the current study, giving an overall understanding of the marketing and trends to date. The next chapter discusses research methodology adopted in the current study.

3 CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the design and application of the research methodology used in this study. This chapter outlines the research design and methodological approach adopted in the study, with a specific focus on the qualitative research strategy. It details the methods and procedures employed, as well as the rationale for their selection. In addition, the chapter addresses issues related to the study's quality and trustworthiness and explains the ethical principles that were consistently upheld throughout the research process. This study aims to examine how grocery retailers in township shopping malls in South Africa communicate with their customers. The research focuses on the strategies they use, the key factors influencing these strategies, and how elements of the marketing communication mix and pricing approaches are applied.

Chapter 3 commences by outlining the central components of the research methodology. These include the various research design options considered, the use of primary as well as secondary data sources, a comparison between quantitative and qualitative research designs, an exploration of relevant data gathering methods, and a detailed account of the research process applied in the study.

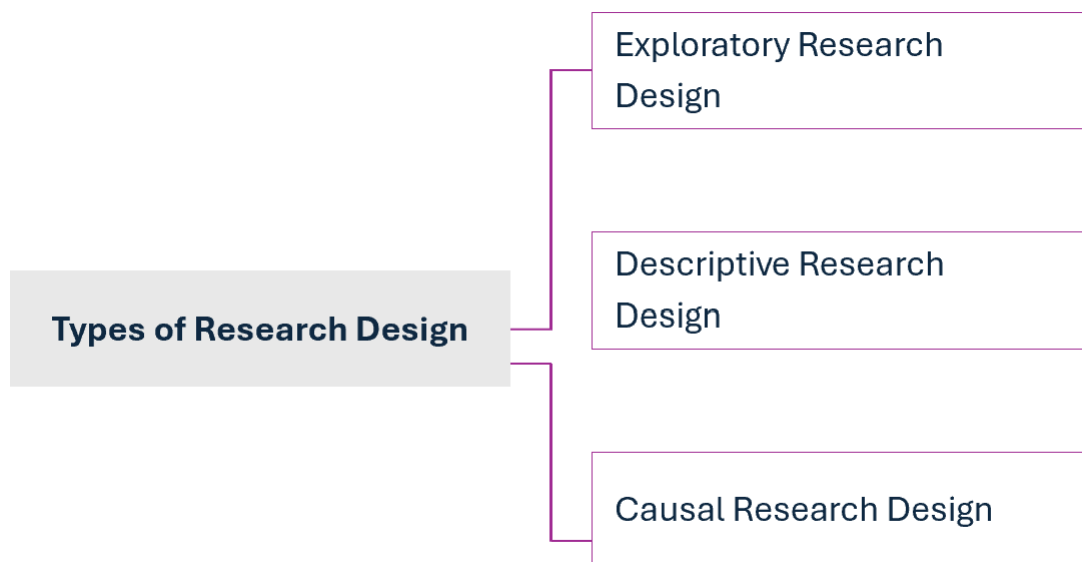
3.1.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the different types of research design relevant to the study were examined. Detailed explanations were provided for the various research approaches, together with an outline of the forms of data commonly associated with each approach. A comparison of quantitative and qualitative research methods was presented to highlight their respective strengths and methodological distinctions. In addition, the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach for the current study was clearly articulated, as it was considered the most appropriate for generating rich and contextual insights into the research topic

3.1.1.1 Types of research design

Research design refers to the overall plan or framework that guides the collection and analysis of data in a research study. It outlines the procedures and methods to be used in conducting the research, including the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques (Ansari, Rahim & Bhosale, 2022:1132). The research design offers a structured framework that directs the study, facilitating the effective addressing of research questions and the achievement of its stated objectives (Ansari et al., 2022:1132). According to Saunders et al. (2023:19), research design brings together the key elements of a study, including the research philosophy, approach, strategy, and methods, to create a coherent and logical framework through which data are generated and subsequently interpreted in order to address the research question (Gamage, 2020:91). Research design encompasses the philosophical stance, methodological choices, and strategies for data collection and analysis. It ensures that the research is coherent, aligned with its objectives, and capable of producing valid and reliable findings

Figure 3. 1 Types of research designs



Source: Compiled by the Researcher

3.1.1.1.1 Exploratory research design

Exploratory research is generally used as an initial step when a problem is not yet clearly defined or fully understood. Its purpose is to help clarify the nature, boundaries, and underlying factors of the issue, especially in situations where existing research is limited or fragmented. By allowing researchers to investigate the topic more openly, exploratory research makes it possible to uncover insights that may guide later stages of inquiry (Olawale, Chinagozi & Joe, 2023:1385). For this reason, an exploratory research design was considered the most appropriate for this study, as it enabled a deeper exploration of the research problem and supported a richer understanding of how grocery food retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa, communicated with their customers and promoted their products.

3.1.1.1.2 Descriptive research design

Descriptive research design, as noted by Ansari et al. (2022:1133), focuses on describing characteristics of a phenomenon. The research design was not suitable for exploring complex topics such as marketing communications and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers, which required in-depth information for an understanding the phenomenon. This study required a more flexible and adaptive approach to capture the nuances of the topic, including the challenges faced by retailers, their adaptations to consumer behaviour, and their marketing strategies. A descriptive design would be limiting, providing only surface-level information and failing to capture the complex relationships between variables. Conversely, an adaptable research approach, such as exploratory or qualitative methods, facilitates rich insight, contextual depth, and the identification of evolving themes and patterns, rendering it well matched to the aims of the inquiry.

3.1.1.1.3 Causal research design

Garage (2025:98) explains that causal research focuses on identifying and understanding cause-and-effect relationships between variables. This type of research focuses on identifying relationships between variables, specifically investigating how alterations in one factor can influence another variable. Grounded largely in the positivist tradition, causal research typically relies on structured methods such as experiments and statistical testing to evaluate hypotheses and establish whether these causal links truly exist. In practice, this means the researcher investigates whether

one variable can be said to produce or modify the behaviour of another. As further noted by Gamage (2025:100), causal research is particularly useful for examining clearly defined hypotheses, manipulating or controlling variables, and applying quantitative techniques to assess the nature and intensity of the relationships between variables. Gamage (2025:93), states no single design is universally superior; rather, the appropriateness of a design is determined by how well it aligns with the research context and questions being addressed. According to Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger. (2020:2), the choice of research design should be guided by the research problem and study objectives. Researchers should select a design that aligns with their research question, ensuring it is suitable for addressing the study's goals. This consideration is crucial in qualitative research, where the design should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate the complexities of the research problem. By choosing an appropriate research design, researchers can increase the validity and relevance of their findings. As previously indicated, the study sought to examine marketing communication and pricing strategies, and was therefore exploratory in nature.

3.2 PRIMARY VERSUS SECONDARY DATA

A critical aspect of the research involved identifying relevant data sources and deciding on the most suitable methods for collecting data (Ajayi, 2023:1). Part of this process required evaluating whether secondary data could adequately address the research objectives, potentially removing the need for primary data collection. Primary data collection is often undertaken when secondary data is limited or insufficient to address the research question (Ajayi, 2023:2). Secondary data may not always be available or relevant to the specific research needs, in which case, collecting primary data becomes necessary to obtain the required information. By collecting primary data, researchers can tailor the data collection process to their specific research objectives, ensuring the data is relevant and accurate for their study. In order to achieve the objectives set for the present study, both primary and secondary data were employed. As shown in Table 3.1, the data sources used in the study are grouped into two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data.

Table 3. 1 Secondary data versus primary data

Basis	Primary	Secondary
1. Meaning	Primary data refers to the first-hand data gathered by the researcher himself.	Secondary data means data collected by someone else earlier.
2. Data	Real time data	Past data
3. Process	Very involved	Quick and easy
4. Sources	Survey, personal interview experiments, observations, questionnaire etc.	Government publications, websites, books, journal articles, internal records
5. Cost Effectiveness	Expensive	Economical
6. Collection time	Long	Short
7. Available	Crude form	Refine form
8. Specific	Always specific to the researcher's needs	May or may not be specific to researchers need
9. Accuracy and Reliability	More	Relatively

Source: (Ajayi, 2023:3)

Ajayi (2023;1) explains that secondary data refers to information that was originally collected for a purpose different from the researcher's current problem or inquiry, as outlined in Table 3.1. A key benefit of utilising secondary data lies in its ability to offer essential background information and contextual insight, which can assist in more effectively framing the research problem (Ajayi, 2023:2). As indicated in Table 3.1, data obtained from prior work may originate both inside and outside the organisation. Materials held internally such as corporate records, annual statements, and sales figures serve as key sources (Olawale et al., 2023:1389). In contrast, external sources comprise information sourced from outside the organisation, including digital and online repositories, library resources, professional research agencies, industry and trade bodies, commercial publishing organisations, non-governmental institutions, and universities (Mazhae et al., 2021:8).

According to Ajayi (2023:3), drawing on existing data sources presents an economical approach to acquiring research material and yields several benefits for researchers.

Table 3.2 summarises the advantages and disadvantages associated with relying on secondary data sources (Olawale et al., 2023:1387).

Table 3. 2 Advantages and disadvantages of secondary data

Advantages	Disadvantages
Clarify or better define the research problem	The data may not be available
Develop approach to the problem	The data may not be relevant to the problem
Provides imperative background information and builds credibility for the research report	The data may lack accuracy
Can alert researchers to potential problems and/or opportunities	The data may be insufficient to solve the research problem
Answer certain research questions	The data can be outdated

Source: (Olawale et al.,2023:1387).

The use of secondary data enabled an in-depth examination of existing literature, offering a strong foundation for understanding the research topic. Academic journal articles provided up-to-date and specialised insights, while research methodology textbooks contributed theoretical and conceptual grounding for the study. The use of secondary sources allowed the research to extend existing knowledge, reveal shortcomings within previous studies, and inform the creation of a sound and appropriate research design (Olawale et al., 2023:1387).

In this study, secondary data was used to analyse the grocery food retail industry within the background of the research, as presented in Chapter 1, and to conduct a literature review in Chapter 2. These chapters relied on published academic articles and government department reports to contextualise the study. Chapter 2 offered an in-depth discussion of marketing planning and examined communication activities as a central element within the overall marketing mix, alongside a review of earlier studies related to the topic.

Following this review of the existing literature, it became clear that primary data collection was necessary to meet the research objectives. An exploratory approach was therefore adopted to gather primary data aimed at investigating the marketing

communication and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa.

According to (Mazhae et al., 2021:7), Primary data refers to information that is gathered directly by the researcher for the purpose of addressing the specific research problem being examined. Researchers typically rely on primary data when secondary sources are insufficient for answering the research question. Although the collection of primary data can be more expensive and time-consuming, Olawale, Chinagozi and Joe (2023:1389) emphasise that it is often more closely aligned with the research objectives, making it highly valuable. When collecting primary data, it is crucial for researchers to determine whether a qualitative or quantitative approach is more appropriate for addressing the aims of the study. The next section therefore presents a comparison of these two research approaches, followed by an explanation of the specific approach adopted for the current investigation.

3.3 QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The choice of an appropriate research approach involved examining different methodological paradigms and assessing their relevance in light of the study's objectives and the characteristics of the research questions. Table 3.3 outlines the key distinctions between these two approaches. Despite the distinctions between the approaches, Ismail and Bsharat (2021:73) emphasise that their effectiveness is largely determined by the extent to which each approach complements the overall research structure and addresses the study's particular goals.

A qualitative research methodology is the most appropriate approach when a study seeks to explore complex, contextual, and human-centred phenomena—characteristics that are intrinsic to marketing strategy evaluation (Ahmed, 2021:2). Qualitative research is fundamentally concerned with the collection and interpretation of non-numerical data, enabling the generation of in-depth insights into individuals' perceptions, experiences, and underlying motivations. This approach is particularly suitable during the exploratory phase of research, where the objective is to uncover new perspectives, identify patterns, and understand the reasoning behind observed behaviours (Ahmed, 2021:3).

The suitability of this methodological choice is further supported by existing scholarly contributions. Bsharat (2021:72), emphasises that qualitative methods prioritise the understanding of phenomena through rich, contextual data rather than statistical measurement. This perspective highlights the importance of meaning-making and situational context, especially for studies that aim to investigate “how” and “why” phenomena occur within real-life settings. Consequently, for researchers seeking theoretical alignment between research questions and methodological design, qualitative approaches offer a robust framework for inquiry.

Similarly, Ugwu (2023:24) reinforces this position by asserting that qualitative research is grounded in the lived experiences of individuals as active agents of meaning-making in their daily contexts. The author argues that such research is inherently focused on explaining the “why” of social phenomena, rather than merely describing the “what.” This emphasis is particularly relevant for studies examining the strategic rationale behind the selection and implementation of marketing frameworks, where understanding decision-making processes and contextual influences is critical.

In light of these considerations, the adoption of a qualitative research methodology is well-justified. It enables the researcher to capture nuanced, context-rich data and to develop a comprehensive understanding of the strategic logic, perceptions, and experiential factors influencing marketing framework selection. Such depth of insight would be difficult to achieve through a purely quantitative approach, which is typically limited to numerical analysis and lacks the capacity to fully explore underlying meanings and contextual dynamics.

Table 3. 3 Qualitative versus quantitative research

Criteria	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Purpose	To recognise & construe social interactions	To test theories, look at cause & result, & make expectations.
Group Studied	Lesser & unsystematically selected.	Longer & unsystematically selected.
Type of Data Collected	Words, images, or objects.	Numbers and statistics.
Form of Data Collected	Qualitative data such as open-ended answers, interviews, impressions of participants, field notes, & reflections.	Quantitative data using organized & validated data collection methods based on reliable measurements.
Type of Data Analysis	Identify trends, attributes, themes.	Identify relationships with statistics.
Objectivity and Subjectivity	Subjectivity is predictable.	Objectivity is critical.
Role of Researcher	Participants in the study may be aware of researchers & their prejudices, and participant characteristics may be known to the researcher.	The researcher & their prejudices are not identified to the study participants, & the features of the participant are purposely concealed from the researcher (double blind studies).
Results	Relevant or specialized assumptions that are less generalizable.	Discoveries that can be extended to other populations.
Scientific Method	Exploratory or bottom-up: From the knowledge obtained, the researcher develops a new idea and theory.	Confirmatory or top-down: With the details, the researcher checks the hypothesis and theory.
View of Human Behaviour	Dynamic, situational, social, & private.	Systematic & expected.
Nature of Observation	In a natural environment, research behaviour.	Under regulated conditions, research behaviour; isolate causal effects.
Nature of Reality Final Report	Subjective; various realities, Narrative report of research	Single reality; objective. Statistical report with correlations, average

	participants with contextual definition & direct quotations	comparisons, and effects of statistical significance
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Source: Ajayi (2023:3)

In determining the most suitable research approach, it was essential to evaluate quantitative and qualitative methodologies in relation to the study's aims and the nature of the questions being investigated. Table 3.3 outlines the key distinctions between these two approaches. Despite the differences between the approaches, Ismail and Bsharat (2021:73) emphasise that their effectiveness is largely determined by the extent to which each approach coheres with the overall research framework and addresses the particular goals of the study.

3.4 PURPOSE

The qualitative research approach is primarily aimed at uncovering new insights, perspectives, and experiences, and at developing a deeper understanding of how ideas, concepts, and relationships take shape. In contrast, quantitative research focuses on verifying facts, measuring variables, and confirming relationships or predictions through numerical evidence. In the current study the purpose was to explore the marketing communications and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa.

3.4.1 Type of questions

Qualitative research generally employs open-ended and flexible questions that allow for exploration and encourage participants to share rich, detailed insights (Bsharat, 2021:82). By contrast, quantitative research typically relies on closed-ended questions that restrict probing and aim to produce structured and quantifiable data. In the current study, open ended questions were used to investigate the marketing communication and pricing strategies of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.

3.4.2 Sample size

Qualitative research generally works with smaller sample sizes, yet it provides rich, detailed accounts that offer deep insight into the subject being explored (Ugwu, Chinyere & Eze, 2023:30). In contrast, quantitative research typically requires a much larger sample size to ensure that the findings are statistically reliable and can be

generalised. In the current study, a sample size of fifteen participants was targeted, but saturation point was reached with eleven participants.

3.4.3 Data Collected from participant

Qualitative research generates extensive and detailed information from each participant, allowing for a deeper exploration of their experiences and perspective (Bsharat, 2021:82). In contrast, quantitative research tends to produce information that varies across participants, as responses are typically more structured and influenced by the measurement scales used. Verbal responses from participants was audio recorded in the study.

3.4.4 Requirements of administration

Qualitative research often requires a highly skilled interviewer, as the interviewer plays a central role in guiding the conversation and shaping the quality of the data collected (Ugwu et al..2023:30). In contrast, quantitative research can typically be administered by individuals with fewer specialised skills, as the procedures for gathering data are more standardised and less dependent on interviewer expertise (Bsharat, 2021:73).

3.4.5 Type of analysis

Qualitative data analysis is largely interpretative in nature, drawing on the analyst's judgement to recognise patterns and assign meaning. In contrast, quantitative analysis employs statistical methods that require numerical processing and data aggregation to detect relationships and trends (Bsharat, 2021:73). Content analysis method was adopted in the current study.

3.4.6 Hardware or tools

Qualitative research often makes use of tools such as projectors, video and audio recorders, visual materials, and discussion guides to facilitate rich, interactive data collection (Bsharat, 2021:73). In contrast, quantitative research typically relies on more structured tools, including questionnaires, printed survey forms, and computer-based systems for capturing and processing numerical data.

3.4.7 Types of research

Qualitative research is generally exploratory, seeking to generate insight and deepen understanding, whereas quantitative research is typically oriented toward description and causal testing. In consideration of the distinctions discussed above, this study

adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach aligned closely with the study's objectives and differed from a quantitative orientation by emphasising an in-depth understanding of social action within its specific context, rather than seeking to generalise findings to a wider theoretical population (Abuhamda, Ismail & Bsharat, 2021:28). Consequently, as the study was not quantitative in nature, it did not aim to draw general conclusions about human behaviour based on large sample sizes. Instead, it focused on developing a nuanced understanding of the marketing communication practices of grocery food retailers (Bsharat, 2021:72).

3.4.8 Data collection methods in quantitative research

In quantitative studies, large respondent groups are surveyed to obtain original data, with the objective of generating findings that are applicable beyond the immediate sample; analysis is subsequently conducted through statistical or mathematical techniques (Hossan, Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2023:212). As Taherdoost (2021:18) explains, quantitative studies typically rely on closed-ended questions, which require respondents to choose from predetermined answer options. As shown in Table 3.3, quantitative research approaches frequently rely on techniques such as observation, experimentation, and survey-based instruments.

The following section provides a brief discussion of these data collection methods.

3.4.8.1 Observations

The observation method involves systematically documenting the behaviours of individuals, objects, and events without interacting with or questioning the respondents (Kumar, 2022:2). As Noble, Ajjawi, Billett and Goldszmidt (2024:2) note, this approach enables the researcher to act as the primary instrument for capturing and interpreting what is happening in the environment. In this study, observation was used alongside interviews to enrich the data collection process, offering an additional layer of insight that supported the overall analysis and helped address the research objectives. The on-site observations played a particularly important role by serving as a valuable means of validating the findings that emerged from the interview data. They were aimed at confirming the promotions and pricing strategies that were investigated through personal interviews with marketing personnel at the grocery food retailer shops. By physically observing the retail environment, the study sought to verify the

authenticity and implementation of the marketing strategies that were reported during the interviews. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the retailer's marketing communications (promotions) and pricing strategies, bridging the gap between theoretical discussions and practical applications. By triangulating interview-derived insights with observational data, the study sought to enhance the overall trustworthiness and reliability of the results, thereby yielding a more nuanced and accurate representation of the grocery food retailer's marketing strategies.

On-site observations were conducted at five grocery food retail stores, involving systematic documentation of promotional and pricing activities and stores layouts. The observations included assessing the store's entrance and layout, identifying various promotional types, analysing pricing strategies, reviewing loyalty program engagement, monitoring customer flow, and capturing the general atmosphere and customer behaviour. Key findings included the strategic placement of deals in high-traffic areas, a wide range of promotional types, effective use of signage and labelling, and a busy and energetic store atmosphere with customers actively engaging in promotional offers, particularly combo and birthday deals featuring both known and lesser-known brands.

3.4.8.2 Experiments

According to Zubair (2022:12), experimental research involves a structured process where the investigator introduces controlled variations in one or more independent factors to observe resulting changes in dependent variables. This method makes it possible to demonstrate causality by showing that any variation in the dependent variable can be attributed directly to the controlled manipulation of the independent variable (Zubair, 2022:19). Despite its strengths, this approach was not suitable for the present study, as experimental techniques could not generate the type of insights required to address the research objective.

3.4.8.3 Surveys

Surveys are commonly used to collect primary data through carefully structured questions that require respondents to select from predefined response categories. These questions may be communicated verbally, administered in writing, or distributed using electronic media (Taherdoost, 2023:25). As noted by Taherdoost (2023:31), surveys generally fall into two broad categories: interviewer-administered and

self-administered formats. Although surveys could have been used as a way of collecting primary data for this research, they were not suitable for achieving the study's objectives, which required a deeper, more contextual understanding of the marketing communication and pricing strategies employed by grocery food retailers in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa. In interviewer-administered settings, data can be collected through processes such as telephone interviews, where a trained interviewer asks questions over the phone and records the respondent's answers. This approach is often quicker and more cost-effective than face-to-face interviews because it reduces travel and training costs (Taherdoost, 2023:17). Self-administered surveys, on the other hand, allow respondents to complete questionnaires on their own, and these can be distributed through mail, fax, or digital platforms, enabling participants to respond at their convenience (Taherdoost, 2023:25). Despite these advantages, the structured nature of surveys made them unsuitable for the in-depth exploration required in this study.

The following section provides a brief overview of the data collection methods commonly used in qualitative research.

3.4.9 Data collection methods in qualitative research

Qualitative research involves collecting data that is shaped by the cultural, social, personal, interpersonal, institutional, and temporal factors present within the context in which the information is gathered (Abuhamda et al., 2021:72). It is used as a primary data collection approach when the goal is to gain deeper insight into a research problem and to understand the meanings individuals attach to their experiences as noted by (Abuhamda et al., 2021:75). Because qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth, it enables the researcher to explore a small number of participants in great detail, uncovering rich perspectives and nuanced understandings of the issue being studied (Abuhamda et al., 2021:76). As indicated in Table 3.3, the most commonly used qualitative data collection methods include focus groups, in-depth interviews, and projective techniques, and these methods are discussed in the section that follows.

3.4.9.1 Focus groups

According to Akyiliz & Ahmed, (2021:9) Focus group research brings together a relatively small set of participants, typically numbering six to twelve, to take part in a guided, interactive discussion focused on a particular issue. These discussions are guided by a trained moderator, whose role is to encourage conversation and facilitate the exchange of ideas among the group members (Akyiliz & Ahmed, 2021:9). A focus group serves to uncover detailed insights through interactive discussions in which participants share their perceptions, experiences, and viewpoints on issues pertinent to the research (Akyiliz & Ahmed, 2021:6). Despite its potential value for firsthand data generation, logistical challenges prevented the formation of a participant group that could adequately fulfil the study's objectives.

3.4.9.2 In-depth interviews

Rutledge and Hogg (2020:2) describe an in-depth interview as a one-to-one interaction between the researcher and an individual participant. In its semi-structured form, it enables the interviewer to explore underlying motivations and probe particular issues in greater detail, with probing playing a crucial role in eliciting meaningful and nuanced responses. According to Rutledge & Hogg (2020:2), the main objective of an in-depth interview is to encourage participants to provide detailed and reflective responses that speak directly to the research questions. This method offers several advantages: responses can be attributed clearly to the individual participant, and the absence of group dynamics reduces social pressure, allowing for a more open exchange of information (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020:2). For these reasons, in-depth interviews were selected as the most appropriate data collection method for this study, as they provided the opportunity to probe effectively and develop a deep, context-sensitive understanding of the research topic.

3.4.9.3 Projective techniques

Spry & Pich, (2021:2) explains that, projective techniques involve asking participants to respond to ambiguous or loosely defined stimuli, with the aim of inferring their underlying attitudes, emotions, motives, and beliefs from their responses. This method of questioning is unstructured and indirect, enabling individuals to express deeper emotions and perceptions associated with the research topic. Participants, for instance, may be invited to interpret images or speculate on how others might think,

feel, or behave in specific scenarios, which can uncover insights that may not emerge through direct questioning (Spry & Pich, 2021:3). While projective techniques were considered as a means of collecting primary data, constraints made it impractical to bring participants together in a format suitable for addressing the study's objectives. The research process followed in the current study is discussed in detail in the next section.

3.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS FOLLOWED IN THE STUDY

This section outlines the research process that was followed in this study to collect the primary data. Table 3.4 presents an overview of the steps involved, and each stage is discussed in detail to illustrate both its practical application and its theoretical grounding where relevant. The primary research objective is also restated in Table 3.4 to highlight how it informed the selection of the research approach used in this study.

Table 3. 4 Research Process followed used in this study

Activity	Description of process
The primary objective of the study	Investigating the marketing communications and pricing strategies for grocery food retailers in Tembisa Township, South Africa
Selecting the research design	Exploratory Research approach Qualitative research
Sampling	Non-probability, purposive sampling
Population	Grocery food retailers Tembisa Township shopping malls; Shoprite, Boxer, Checkers, Pick n Pay
Sources of data	Primary and secondary sources
Data collection method	Face-to-face interviews (semi-structured in-depth interviews) and Observation method
Data analysis	Content analysis
Data presentation	Narrative presentation and visual interpretation
Ethical considerations	Achieved through informed consent and confidentiality.
Quality of the research	Achieved through credibility, conformability, and dependability

Source: Researcher's own compilation (2025)

Table 3.4 restates the primary objective of this study, which was to investigate the marketing communication and pricing strategies used by grocery food retailers in Tembisa Township, South Africa. This objective played a central role in determining the most appropriate research approach for the study. A qualitative research approach was selected because it places strong emphasis on participants' experiences, interpretations, and perspectives, and offers the flexibility needed to explore the research topic in depth. However, this approach also carries certain limitations, such as its subjective nature and the fact that findings cannot be easily generalised to a broader population.

Despite the identified limitations, a qualitative research approach was particularly appropriate for exploring grocery retailers' perceptions, challenges, and suggested enhancements associated with the planning and implementation of marketing communication strategies. More specifically, the use of qualitative methods allowed for the generation of rich and nuanced insights by encouraging participants to share their views, emotional responses, and experiences related to the marketing communication mix employed to convey messages to both current and future consumers

The remaining stages of the research process, as outlined in Table 3.4, are discussed in the following subsections.

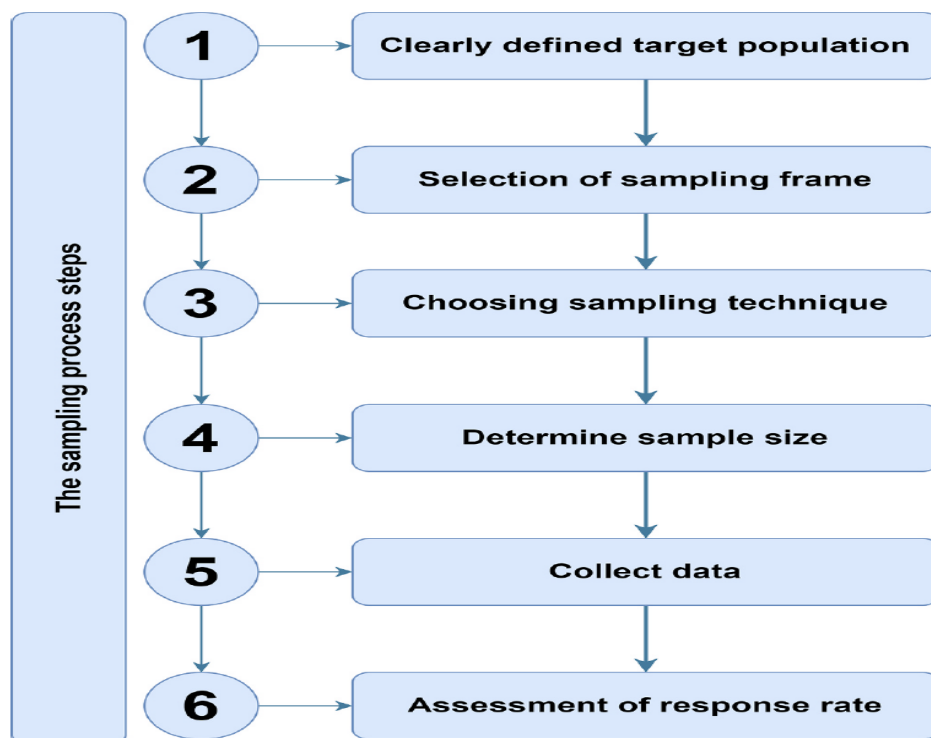
3.5.1 Stage 1: Selecting research design

Exploratory research is undertaken to shed light on situations that are not yet clearly understood or to uncover new ideas that may lead to potential business opportunities (Ismail & Bsharat, 2021:73). This approach is particularly useful when the researcher seeks additional insight into a specific issue, opportunity, or phenomenon (Abuhamda et al., 2021:28). For the purposes of this investigation, an exploratory approach was essential in surfacing meaningful insights into the problem under study and in enriching the analysis of marketing communication practices adopted by grocery food retailers situated in Tembisa Township's mall environment. By adopting an exploratory research design, the study was able to gain an in-depth and nuanced understanding of how these retailers engage in marketing communication within this specific setting.

3.5.2 Stage 2: Sampling

This section presents an overview of general sampling methods before outlining and justifying the specific sampling approach adopted for the current study. Sampling refers to the process through which the researcher gathers information from a smaller, selected subset of the larger population, known as the sample (Makwana, Engineer, Dabhi & Chudasama, 2023:763). Maholtra (2010:372) outlines five key stages in designing a sample: identifying the target population, determining the sampling frame, choosing an appropriate sampling technique, deciding on the sample size, and finally implementing the sampling procedure. These stages are briefly discussed in the subsections that follow.

Figure 3. 2 The sampling process



Source: Ahmed (2024:2)

3.5.3 Stage 3: Define the population

The target population for the study consisted of grocery food retailers located in shopping malls within Tembisa Township. Gauteng Province was chosen as the research setting due to its accessibility and ease of data collection. Concentrating on a single province was considered suitable, since the intention of the study was to

obtain detailed, context-specific insights into marketing communication practices rather than to produce findings that could be generalised at a provincial or national level. Marketing staff within these retailers were deliberately selected due to their central responsibility in the design and execution of marketing communication strategies. To strengthen the depth of the data collected, store managers and other relevant employees were interviewed as key informants, as their contributions supported a more thorough interpretation of the research problem. After defining the target population, the next step involved determining the sampling frame.

3.5.3.1 Specify the sample frame

A sampling frame refers to the operational list or equivalent reference used to locate and enumerate elements of the target population. Typical sources include phone directories, membership databases from associations, commercially sourced mailing lists, city directories, and geographic maps (Bafarasat, 2021:2). For this study, a comprehensive list of shopping malls located in Tembisa Township was compiled using Google search, which served as a reliable starting point. From this list, the grocery food retailers operating in these malls were identified and mapped for sampling purposes.

To initiate contact, the researcher used telephone communication to reach the shopping malls, request appointments, and obtain permission to engage with the grocery food retailers situated within them. Once approval was granted, mall managers shared the contact details of potential participants. The individuals were later contacted via email, telephone, or in person to obtain their consent for participation in the study. Following confirmation of their willingness to take part, in-depth interviews were arranged, allowing for a detailed exploration of their marketing communication practices. As previously noted, the target population consisted of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls within Tembisa Township in Gauteng. To ensure accurate sampling from the correct geographical area, a map of the City of Ekurhuleni where Tembisa is located was used as a reference point. The sampling methods applied in this study are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

3.5.3.2 *Select the sampling method*

The third crucial step in developing a sampling plan involves selecting an appropriate sampling method. This entails deciding between two primary approaches: probability sampling and non-probability sampling Ahmed, (2024:3). Probability sampling gives every member of the population an equal chance of being selected, whereas non-probability sampling relies on a more subjective approach, often based on convenience, quota, or purposive sampling. Given that the current study adopts a non-probability sampling approach, a more detailed explanation will be provided on both methods, with a particular emphasis on the rationale and application of non-probability sampling in this research context.

3.5.3.2.1 *Probability sampling*

Probability sampling ensures that every element in the population has a known and non-zero chance of being selected for the sample (Bafarasat, 2021:5). Ahmed, (2024:3) states, researchers may choose from several different probability sampling techniques, depending on the needs of the study. According to Noor, Tajik, and Golzar (2022:79), simple random sampling entails selecting participants through a chance-based process, ensuring that all individuals within the population have the same likelihood of inclusion. This method is effective in reducing selection bias and increases the likelihood that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the wider population.

3.5.3.2.1.1 *Systematic Sampling*

Population sample is selected at regular intervals from a list or sequence. For example, every 10th or 20th member might be chosen. This approach is efficient and can be useful when a random start point is combined with a fixed interval (Makwana, Engineer, Dhabhi & Chudasam, 2023:765).

3.5.3.2.1.2 *Stratified Sampling*

The population is divided into distinct subgroups or strata, based on characteristics such as age, gender, or income level. Random samples are then selected from each stratum, ensuring that each subgroup is adequately represented in the sample (Makwana.et al., 2023:765). This sampling method segments a population into clearly defined units, with a random process used to select which clusters will participate. Depending on the research design, researchers may examine every individual within

the chosen groups or select participants randomly from within those groups. This sampling technique is commonly applied when drawing a sample from the entire population is impractical or financially costly (Makwana et al., 2023:766).

3.5.3.2.1.3 Multistage Sampling

Probability sampling combines two or more techniques in stages. For example, a researcher might first select clusters and then use simple random sampling to select individuals within those clusters (Makwana et al., 2023:766). Multistage sampling is useful for large, complex populations where a single sampling method may not be sufficient.

3.5.3.2.2 Non-probability sampling

This type of sampling results in unequal selection chances among members of the population, which may produce a sample that does not fully mirror the characteristics of the wider population (Ahmed, 2024:3). A non-probability sampling approach is commonly guided by the researcher's judgement and incorporates the following sampling methods (Bafarasat, 2021:5);

3.5.3.2.2.1 Convenience sampling

This sampling involves selecting participants based on their availability and ease of access to the researcher, making it a practical option when time or resources are limited (Golzar et al., 2022:73).

3.5.3.2.2.2 Judgmental/Purposive Sampling

The researcher selects individuals based on their expertise or judgment about what makes a representative sample (Bafarasat, 2021:5).

3.5.3.2.2.3 Quota Sampling

Participants are selected based on specific criteria (e.g. age, occupation) that match the population's characteristics (Makwana et al., 2023:767).

3.5.3.2.2.4 Snowball sampling

This sampling involves using current participants to help identify additional individuals who share similar characteristics, allowing the sample to grow progressively through referrals (Makwana et al., 2023:767).

The sampling method used in the study is;

3.5.3.2.2.5 Purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling means that participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study (Makwana et al., 2023:766). The population can be defined as the total group of persons or entities from whom information is required (Bafarasat, 2021:1). The target population encompasses the group of individuals or elements that hold the information required for the researcher to answer the research questions (Bafarasat, 2021:2). Accordingly, this study employed purposive sampling to deliberately select store managers and marketing staff from grocery food retailers, as these individuals possessed direct experience and specialised knowledge relevant to the planning and implementation of marketing activities, enabling the collection of rich and contextually grounded data. Determine the sample size

According to Bafarasat (2021:11), the sample size represents the number of individuals who ultimately make up the final sample of a study. As outlined in the preceding sections, the study employed non-probability sampling and adopted a qualitative research approach (Ahmed, 2024:2). Because qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth, it typically relies on smaller samples, and unlike quantitative designs, there are no strict rules for calculating an “ideal” number of participants. Instead, the emphasis is placed on achieving rich, detailed data that speaks directly to the research objectives. In this study, three shopping malls in Tembisa Township were targeted, and six grocery food stores were approached. Ultimately, 11 participants from these grocery retailers were interviewed, at which point the study reached saturation. Saturation was understood as the stage of diminishing returns in qualitative sampling, where additional data collection was no longer producing new or meaningful insights (Tight, 2024:577). The final stage in the sampling plan was to implement the sampling procedure as specified.

3.5.3.3 Implementation of the sampling process

This step focused on establishing the operational procedures required for the selection of suitable sample elements (Bafarasat, 2021:5). Six grocery food retailers were strategically chosen from four prominent shopping malls to participate in the study.

Before approaching these retailers, the researcher initiated contact with shopping mall managers via telephone and follow-up emails to explain the purpose of the research, promote transparency, and formally request permission to conduct the study within their premises. This gatekeeping process was essential in facilitating access to the intended participants and supporting the smooth implementation of the fieldwork. Additionally, a map of Tembisa Township located in Gauteng was used to confirm that the participating retailers were operating within the relevant provincial area.

During the preliminary engagements, where the research objectives were discussed in detail, several mall managers played an enabling role by either directing the researcher to suitable retailers or providing direct access to them. This support was particularly important, as it enabled the researcher to focus on retailers whose employees were actively involved in marketing communication planning and execution, thus ensuring the relevance and depth of the interview data.

Participants for the in-depth interviews were selected from a range of grocery retail groups, with selection criteria based on their job roles and degree of involvement in planning and executing marketing communication activities. Interview sessions typically lasted between 25 minutes and one hour. An overview of the participants' job descriptions is provided in Table 3.5.

Table 3. 5 Summary of participant roles and responsibilities

Job Title	Job Description
Food Retail Buyer	Sources and purchases food products for the store, negotiates with suppliers, monitors market trends, ensures stock availability, and manages product pricing and quality. Implement marketing communication strategies to support promotional campaigns and pricing initiatives.
Butchery Manager	Oversees the butchery section, manages meat preparation and presentation, ensures hygiene and food safety compliance, supervises butchery staff, and controls inventory and waste. Collaboration with cross-functional teams to design and implement promotional activities that drive customer engagement
Department Manager	Manages a specific department (e.g., bakery, produce, dairy), ensures product availability and merchandising, leads the promotional team, and drives sales and customer satisfaction.

Job Title	Job Description
Customer Services Manager	Handles customer queries and complaints, manages the front-end team (cashiers, service desk), ensures excellent customer experience, and implements service improvement initiatives and marketing promotional activities.
Administration Manager	Oversees store administration including payroll, HR documentation, compliance, and reporting. Supports operational efficiency and ensures adherence to company policies. Creates compelling promotional content and messaging for channels; in-store signage, digital platforms, and print media.
Retail Manager	Responsible for overall store operations, staff management, sales performance, inventory control, and customer satisfaction. Ensures profitability and compliance with company standards. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of promotional campaigns and pricing adjustments, providing insights for continuous improvement.
Merchandiser	Plans and executes product displays, ensures shelves are stocked and marketing promotional visually appealing, monitors stock levels, and collaborates with buyers and suppliers to optimize sales
Food Ambassador	Promotes food products through in-store tastings, demos, and customer engagement. Educates customers on product benefits, supports marketing campaigns, and enhances brand loyalty.

3.5.4 Stage 4: Data collection used in qualitative research

In this study, primary data were generated through in-depth interviewing, with the interviews being guided by a semi-structured design. Ugwu and Eze (2023:12) describe an in-depth interview as a one-to-one engagement between an interviewer and a single participant, noting that a semi-structured design enables the interviewer to examine underlying motivations and explore specific issues in greater depth. Such probing is essential for generating rich and meaningful qualitative data. In alignment with this perspective, the study made use of guided, comprehensive interviews as the main data-collection technique (Spry & Pich, 2021:11).

This approach is widely recognised for yielding greater levels of participant response than alternative techniques, such as mail surveys, largely because it allows for direct

interaction with participants. As emphasised by Tight (2024:582), the researcher's physical presence during interviews is a critical component of effective qualitative data collection, as it allows for clarification, probing, and the development of rapport. To ensure consistency and focus, an interview guide was employed to provide structure and direction, while still allowing flexibility to explore relevant themes as they emerged during discussions.

The sections that follow describe how the interview guide was applied in practice and outline the researcher's approach to conducting the interviews, including the practical measures taken to enhance response rates. In collecting primary data through in-depth interviews, the guidelines proposed by Tight (2024:582) were taken into consideration, including seeking permission from store managers prior to conducting the interviews. The selected participants were contacted by phone to explain the study's purpose, ensure confidentiality, and scheduling a meeting. In most cases, a preliminary meeting was held at least two weeks before the interview to introduce the researcher and discuss the interview's expected duration. When in-person meetings were not feasible, participants were briefed over the phone.

To facilitate the in-depth interviews, the researcher carefully arranged suitable times, dates, and locations, typically opting for quiet spaces within the mall environment where participants felt comfortable and free from distractions. Prior to the interviews, participants were briefed on the study's objectives either in person or telephonically, and the research topic was emailed to them in advance to support their preparation. This early engagement helped build rapport and ensured that both the researcher and participants entered the interview well-informed and at ease. At the beginning of each session, the researcher reiterated the purpose and motivation for the study to further create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere. The interviews were guided by a flexible interview guide, which, as Rutledge and Hogg (2023:4), describe, consists of open-ended questions organised around key themes while allowing for adjustments in sequence and flow. This flexible structure provided the opportunity to probe deeper, explore emerging topics and capture the nuances of participants' experiences. The guide ensured consistency across interviews while enabling the conversation to unfold naturally, with the researcher referring to it as needed rather than following a rigid

script. When designing the guide, careful attention was given to ensuring that the prompts accurately reflected the information needs of the research and were phrased in a manner that participants could readily comprehend and respond to, as recommended by Spry and Pich (2021:17). The overarching aim to gain insight into marketing communication practices of grocery food retailers in Tembisa Township shopping malls shaped the formulation of these questions, ensuring that they were aligned with the study's objectives and capable of eliciting relevant and meaningful insights.

Table 3. 6 Link between secondary objectives and questions formulated

Secondary research objectives	Research questions
To determine the marketing communication strategy of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township	What is the nature of the marketing communication strategy adopted by of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township?
To determine the price strategy of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township.	What is the nature of the price strategy of of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township.?
To identify challenges experienced by grocery food retailers in implementing marketing communication and pricing strategies.	What are the challenges experienced of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township in implementing marketing communication strategy?
To make recommendations on the marketing communication and price strategies of grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township.	What are the recommendations to grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township regarding the implementation of marketing communications and price strategies?

Source: Researcher own creation (2025)

Using the interview guide gave the researcher increasing confidence throughout the data collection process. As more interviews were conducted, the researcher became

progressively more adept at probing for deeper insights and more attuned to the natural rhythm of each conversation. The guide helped ensure that all the essential aspects of the study were consistently addressed during the interviews with marketing personnel (see Appendix B for the full interview guide). As Rutledge and Hogg (2023:4) note, the structure of an effective interview guide should support a thorough and respectful data-gathering process, and the guide used in this study followed this principle closely. It was organised into three parts—an introduction, the core interview questions, and a closing section. The introductory stage focused on building rapport through light, informal dialogue to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. The researcher then briefly outlined the purpose of the interview, clarifying what the participant could expect during the discussion. Ethical requirements were also addressed at this point: informed consent was confirmed, the confidentiality of both the data and the participant's identity was explained, and permission to audio-record the session was requested to ensure transparency and respect for participants' rights (see Appendix A). This structured yet flexible approach helped cultivate trust and set the foundation for an open, meaningful, and productive conversation.

The in-depth interview process unfolded in a structured yet flexible manner that prioritised rapport, relevance, and the collection of rich, meaningful data. Each interview began with a gentle icebreaker that invited participants to introduce themselves by sharing their professional role and experience within the grocery food retail sector. This initial exchange not only helped put participants at ease but also offered valuable context regarding their expertise and organisational responsibilities. Once a comfortable atmosphere was established, the conversation transitioned into broader questions about their business activities, target customers, and marketing communication practices, before moving into more focused inquiries aligned with the study's objectives—such as planning considerations, chosen advertising channels, and the strategic logic behind their communication decisions. The interview guide, developed from the literature review and refined with input from the researcher's supervisor, ensured that the discussion remained anchored in the research objectives while still allowing space for participants to speak freely and naturally. Although the same core themes were addressed across all interviews, the order of questions and

the use of probes were adjusted to suit the rhythm of each conversation, enabling the researcher to explore emerging insights in greater depth. Throughout the process, careful attention was paid to selecting participants with the requisite experience, ensuring that participants were limited to marketing personnel directly engaged in communication campaign planning and implementation. Their roles were verified beforehand to guarantee relevance and credibility. Interviews were conducted in quiet, private spaces such as managers' offices or coffee shops within the mall to encourage open dialogue and minimise distractions. Rapport was strengthened through informal conversation and a warm, neutral interview style that encouraged participants to express their experiences without fear of judgement. The researcher avoided leading questions and maintained a non-directive approach, allowing participants to guide the flow of the discussion when appropriate. All sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim, capturing participants' perspectives in their own words. To minimise response bias particularly given the sensitivity of some organisational topics the researcher briefed participants personally and reassured them, both verbally and via email, that the study was solely for academic purposes and that all responses would remain confidential. During data collection, transcripts were analysed progressively, enabling the researcher to identify areas requiring further probing in subsequent interviews and to refine the depth and clarity of the conversation. This iterative approach strengthened the trustworthiness of the data by ensuring that interviews remained purposeful, responsive, and analytically grounded. Despite the rigorous adherence to interviewing procedures, the collected data still underwent editing, coding, transcription, and verification to prepare it for systematic analysis, as recommended by Hopper, Sanford and Hinkel (2021:862). Once fully processed, the data was analysed to extract insights relevant to the research problem, with data analysis understood as Hopper et al. (2021:871). note as the application of structured reasoning to make sense of the information gathered. The next sections provide a detailed discussion of the methods used to analyse the data and to present the findings.

3.5.5 Stage 5: Data analysis

Content analysis is the structured process of systematic examination and categorisation of communication data generated from open-ended or semi-structured

interviews (Hleza, Tlou, Shonhiwa & Mathonsi, 2021:553). While firmly rooted in qualitative research, it also incorporates a quantitative element through the identification of patterns based on the frequency and sequence of specific words, phrases, or concepts. This process supports the identification of key terms and the development of broader analytical themes.

For the purposes of this research, interview recordings were fully transcribed to transform the original material into a format appropriate for detailed and structured analysis. A qualitative content analysis approach was selected because it offered a robust and flexible framework for examining the subtleties and complexities associated with the planning and implementation of marketing communication strategies. Given the dynamic and multifaceted nature of this research focus, content analysis provided the depth and methodological adaptability required to explore participants' perspectives in a rigorous, structured, and meaningful manner.

3.5.6 Stage 6: Data presentation

According to Dawit (2020:4), the way data is displayed plays a crucial role in helping a researcher interpret qualitative findings. By organising information visually, the researcher can identify underlying patterns, relationships, and meanings more clearly. A carefully structured display synthesises extensive datasets into an accessible form, thereby aiding the interpretation process and the development of conclusions.

Findings can be shared through narrative descriptions or through non-narrative visual formats such as tables, diagrams, charts, matrices, and figures, or, as is increasingly common, a combination of both. Narrative text that includes direct participant quotes remains the most widely used form of presentation in qualitative reporting. The descriptive narrative provides the analytical backbone, while verbatim extracts offer the evidence that grounds the researcher's interpretations. Dawit (2020:4) outlines two main narrative approaches. The first involves weaving together descriptive commentary with selected quotations. The second approach uses more extended blocks of participant dialogue across multiple paragraphs to provide deeper insight into their perspectives.

In recent years, however, qualitative research has expanded beyond traditional narrative reporting to include more innovative, visually oriented formats. Dawit

(2020:20) highlights three major modes of visual display; tables, lists, and graphic representations, as key tools for managing large volumes of qualitative data. Presenting data in forms such as charts, networks, and other graphic structures can make analysis more efficient and insightful. In this study, the research findings are conveyed through a combination of narrative interpretation and visual representation, with tables and figures used to enhance clarity. The qualitative content analysis of themes within the marketing communication planning and execution process is translated into conceptual networks and diagrams. These visuals help illustrate the hierarchical connections between themes, categories, and clusters of codes. They also serve as tools for conceptualising and clarifying the theoretical constructs emerging from the data.

Merlo and Hawamdeh (2022:173) argue that when qualitative reports rely too heavily on dense narrative descriptions and long field notes, readers can easily become overwhelmed, which in turn hampers their ability to interpret the findings effectively. To counter this cognitive overload, they recommend incorporating visual formats—such as tables, charts, and network diagrams; to organise and present the data more coherently. These visual tools not only make complex information easier to digest but also support the researcher in refining categories, themes, and broader theoretical constructs. Ultimately, such visual representations contribute to clearer analysis and a more impactful presentation of the study's findings.

Smit and Scherman (2021:2) emphasise the increasing significance of digital tools designed to support qualitative analysis in enhancing the rigour and effectiveness of qualitative research. Although tools such as ATLAS.ti, XSight and NVivo each offer their own unique functions and capabilities, they share a common purpose: to streamline the organisation, coding and interpretation of qualitative data. By integrating these digital tools into the analysis process, researchers are able to enhance methodological rigour, ensure greater transparency, and improve the overall reliability of their findings. Ultimately, CAQDAS contributes to producing qualitative research that is both more robust and more credible.

The next section examines the central quality considerations that guided the assessment of this qualitative study. These considerations also capture the ethical standards maintained throughout the investigation and are synthesised in the subsequent part of the chapter.

3.6 RESEARCH ETHICS

Below is a synthesis of the ethical research principles that guided this study, as outlined by (Ederio, Inocian, Calaca and Espiritu, 2023:2713). Throughout the research process, the researcher was committed to maintaining high ethical standards, ensuring that the study was conducted with integrity, accountability and respect for all participants. The key ethical considerations included: Plagiarism avoidance:

In line with the ethical guidelines outlined by Ederio, Inocian, Calaca and Espiritu (2023:2713), the researcher ensured that the study was conducted with integrity, transparency and respect for all participants. Academic honesty was upheld through proper citation and acknowledgment of all authors and sources. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and individuals were clearly informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. No incentives financial or otherwise were offered, thereby preventing any form of coercion or undue influence. Throughout the research process, the safety and psychological well-being of participants remained a priority, with deliberate measures put in place to foster a respectful and secure environment. The researcher obtained explicit informed consent, with particular attention to audio and video capture, and ensured that participants were given a detailed briefing on the study's intent and boundaries. Confidentiality was carefully maintained through secure data handling practices and confidentiality agreements with transcription service providers, while requests for anonymity were honoured. The researcher remained transparent and honest about the research objectives, methods and anticipated outcomes, avoiding any form of deception and upholding objectivity and integrity throughout. All data were stored securely in password-protected systems to safeguard participant information, and careful attention was given to ensuring data accuracy, avoiding any fabrication or

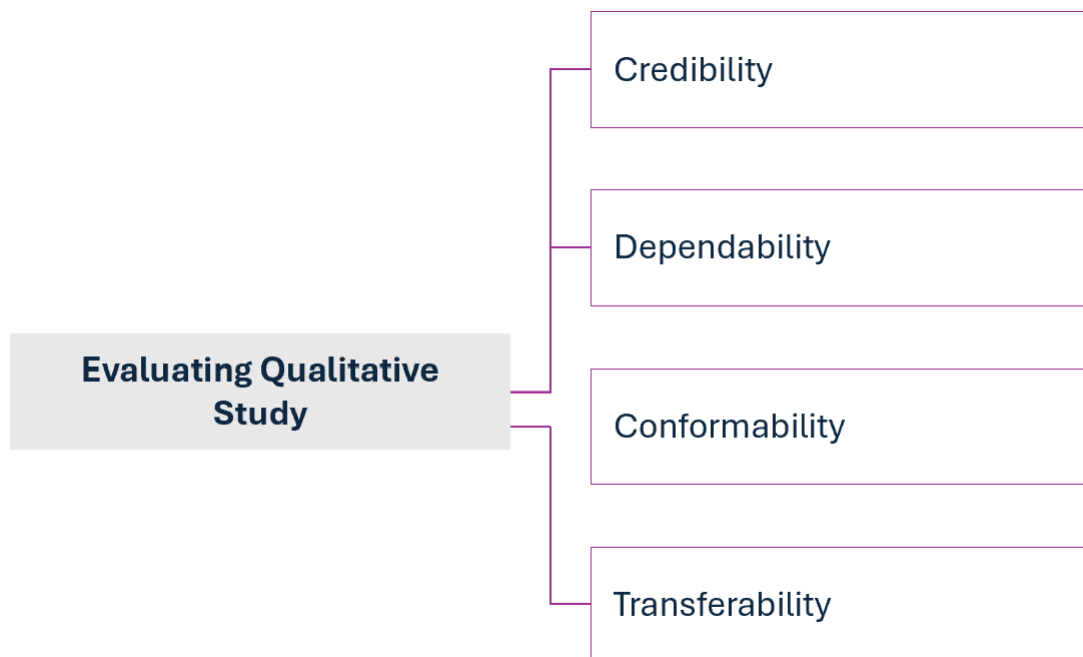
falsification. The study's findings were reported accurately and ethically, ensuring that the data were not misrepresented. The next section explores the approach used to assess the overall quality of the research.

3.7 EVALUATING QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

Busetto et al. (2020:6) emphasise the importance of evaluating the quality of qualitative research, highlighting that there are no rigid criteria, but rather strategic principles guiding the research process. These principles provide a framework for developing research designs, data collection and analysis tactics. According to Busetto et al. (2020:2), qualitative research credibility hinges on trustworthiness, achieved through transparency, rigorous methodology and adherence to evidence. Transparency involves clear documentation of research procedures for external review. Methodology requires systematic and rigorous fieldwork, avoiding bias, and ensuring completeness. Adherence to evidence means conclusions are based on accurately analysed data, grounding findings in empirical evidence. By focusing on these aspects, researchers can enhance the credibility and reliability of their qualitative research.

The next section examines the central quality issues relevant to the evaluation of a qualitative study, providing insight into the criteria used to judge its trustworthiness, rigor, and overall validity;

Figure 3. 3 Key Quality issues in Evaluating a Qualitative study



Source; Busetto et al. (2020:2)

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is a key component of establishing overall trustworthiness. As Zia UI Haq et al. (2023:151) explain, assessing credibility requires examining the researcher's depth of familiarity with the topic, the logical connection between observed data and the categories developed, and whether the findings can be verified by others. Strengthening credibility involves deliberately linking the collected data back to the research objectives, offering rich and detailed descriptions, and engaging in peer review or consultation to ensure analytical soundness (Zia UI Haq et al...,2023:151). Making data available for external scrutiny such as providing access to interview transcripts or allowing others to review the coding process, further supports transparency and demonstrates that the findings are firmly rooted in empirical evidence. Techniques such as participant verification, where participants confirm the accuracy of interpretations, also enhance the robustness of the analysis (Zia UI Haq et al...,2023:152). By systematically addressing these elements, researchers can reinforce the trustworthiness of their work, ultimately producing qualitative findings that are both reliable and meaningful.

3.7.2 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research centres on documenting the research process in a way that is logical, transparent and easy to trace. Stahl and King (2020:27) emphasise that researchers must provide a clear audit trail that shows how the study was conducted and how decisions were made at each stage. In this study, dependability is reinforced by ensuring that primary data; such as interview audio recordings and their transcriptions; are securely stored and made accessible through a CD annexure (Stahl and King, 2020:27). Additional supporting documents, including signed ethical consent forms, further contribute to the evidence base. By upholding transparency and accountability throughout the research process, the researcher strengthens the trustworthiness of the study and enables others to review, verify and confidently interpret the findings.

3.7.3 Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the study's findings genuinely reflect the data rather than the researcher's personal views, assumptions or biases. As Zia Ul Haq et al. (2023:152) explain, achieving confirmability requires demonstrating a clear, transparent link between the evidence collected and the interpretations presented. This involves grounding every analytical claim in verifiable data. One way to strengthen confirmability is by providing access to primary materials; such as the original interview transcripts, which allows others to review the data for themselves and assess whether the interpretations are justified (Zia Ul Haq et al., 2023:152). Making these supporting documents available promotes transparency, helps safeguard against subjective distortion and ultimately enhances the overall trustworthiness of the research.

3.7.4 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research relates to how well the insights from one study may be applicable or relevant in other contexts or settings. Stahl and King (2020:27) explain that demonstrating transferability requires showing where similarities may exist between the current study and other bodies of research, allowing readers to judge the extent to which the findings might hold elsewhere. This is made possible through rich, detailed and contextually grounded descriptions that give readers enough information to make their own assessments about applicability. In the present

study, the thorough analysis of marketing communication practices provides a sufficiently robust and nuanced account of the findings, enabling readers to determine whether and how these insights may be relevant to other organisational or industry contexts (Stahl and King, 2020:28).

In this study an interpretive perspective was followed. According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022; 421), the interpretive research paradigm emphasises understanding social contexts through subjective experiences and interpretations. This paradigm focuses on uncovering the meanings and definitions that individuals assign to their situations, highlighting the importance of understanding the perspectives and experiences of participants. An interpretive research perspective allows investigators to explore in greater depth how individuals understand and construct meaning within their social contexts.

This study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate how personnel working in grocery food retailers located in township shopping malls perceive their role in planning and implementing marketing communication strategies, as well as the suggestions and challenges they identify in this process. A qualitative approach was deliberately selected because it prioritises participants lived experiences, enables an in-depth exploration of their interpretations, and offers the flexibility needed to capture the complexity of their day-to-day realities. While qualitative research is inherently subjective and its findings are not intended to be generalised, this approach made it possible to obtain rich, nuanced insights by allowing participants to articulate their thoughts, emotions and experiences relating to the marketing communication mix in their own words. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to gain deeper and more comprehensive insight into the ways in which these personnel perceive and manage their involvement in marketing communication activities.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a comprehensive overview of the research methodology adopted in the study, including the rationale for selecting an inductive qualitative

content analysis approach. It outlined the data collection procedures, with specific emphasis on the use of purposive sampling to identify suitable marketing communication personnel and the application of in-depth interviews to produce rich, context-specific insights. The chapter further explained the analytical steps undertaken, detailing how qualitative content analysis was employed to systematically interpret, categorise, and organise the data, as well as how the findings were conceptualised and presented. Furthermore, this section examined the approaches adopted to maintain research quality and integrity, including considerations of reliability, validity, and ethical practice across the investigation. This methodological grounding provides a clear framework that supports and contextualises the discussion of results in the subsequent section.

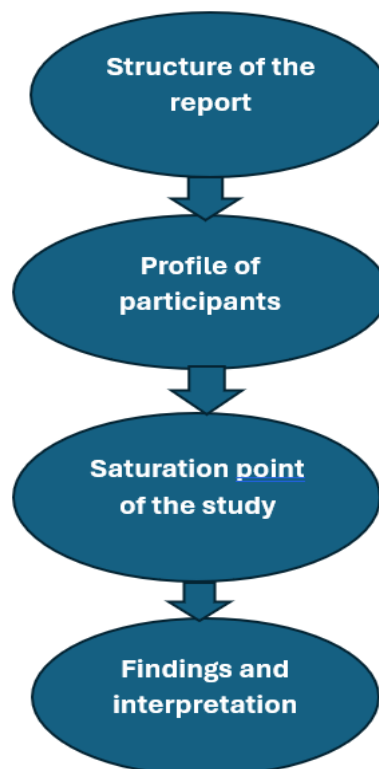
4 CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology adopted in this study. This chapter presents the findings derived from the interviews conducted to achieve the research objectives of the study. The primary objective of the study was to investigate the marketing strategies of shopping mall grocery food retailers based in Tembisa Township. In this chapter, the findings and interpretations are presented in addressing secondary objectives formulated to realise the primary objective. As indicated in Chapter 3, the study followed a qualitative approach to achieve the research objectives. In-depth interviews were conducted with grocery retail store managers, and with customer care employees of the food grocery retail stores operating in the shopping malls to achieve the research objective of the study. This chapter focuses on several key components of the study. It first outlines the structure of the qualitative report, followed by a description of participant profiles and a discussion of data saturation. The chapter then presents and interprets the findings derived from in-depth interviews and on-site observations conducted at the food grocery retail stores. The

empirical findings discussed in this chapter follow the diagrammatic flow outlined in Figure 4.1

Figure 4. 1 Structure of the Chapter



Source: Researcher's own creation

4.2 STRUCTURE OF THIS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

The presentation of qualitative research findings is not constrained by a single prescriptive format. Rather, researchers may adopt various approaches to data display

and structuring, depending on the nature of the data, the research questions, and the intended audience. Broadly, these approaches fall into two categories: narrative presentation and non-narrative presentation (Saunders et al., 2022:651). Narrative presentation involves the construction of coherent textual accounts that convey participants' perspectives, illustrate divergences and convergences in their accounts, and contextualise these accounts within the researcher's interpretive framework. Non-narrative presentation, by contrast, relies on visual and tabular formats; such as tables, figures, diagrams, charts, and matrices, to organise and represent patterns, relationships, and thematic structures within the data.

Its also facilitates the identification of linkages, contradictions, and emergent themes that support the drawing of evidence-based conclusions (Saunders et al.,2022:651). This process aligns with the iterative and interpretive logic that characterises qualitative inquiry.

Despite the utility of visual formats, narrative text supplemented with direct quotations remains the predominant mode of presentation in qualitative studies. Descriptive prose provides the analytical scaffolding through which data are contextualised and interpreted, while verbatim extracts function as primary evidence that substantiates the researcher's claims Saunders et al. (2022:652) . The inclusion of participants' own words serves to preserve authenticity, reduce researcher imposition, and enable readers to assess the plausibility of the interpretations offered.

Saunders et al..(2022:651) identify two main strategies for presenting data in narrative form. The first strategy involves the interweaving of brief quoted extracts with concise analytical commentary provided by the researcher. The second strategy entails the use of lengthier quotations or extended dialogue segments that span multiple paragraphs. Such presentations are particularly valuable when capturing complex narratives, interactional dynamics, or detailed experiential accounts that require minimal mediation to retain their meaning and context.

An essential component of this reporting structure is the consistent linking of empirical findings to the study's theoretical framework and to existing literature. This integrative approach ensures that the analysis moves beyond mere description to provide theoretically informed interpretation. By situating participant accounts and observed practices within established conceptual and empirical debates, the researcher demonstrates the relevance of the findings, identifies points of convergence or divergence with prior studies, and contributes to cumulative knowledge development (Yin, 2018:175). In this study, each thematic section therefore includes explicit reference to relevant theoretical constructs and literature, allowing the findings to be evaluated in light of current scholarly understanding.

In addition to participant interviews, narrative presentation is also appropriate for reporting findings derived from non-interactive data sources. In this study, narrative descriptions are used to convey observations and interpretations arising from on-site visits to grocery retail stores (Yin, 2018:175). These observations provide contextual detail regarding service processes, customer interactions, and environmental factors that are not easily captured through tabular data alone.

To maximise analytical rigour and communicative effectiveness, this study employs a mixed-format approach. Both narrative and visual displays are utilised in the reporting of findings. Discussion sections articulate the interpretive analysis, while tables and figures are employed to summarise key themes, illustrate patterns, and facilitate cross-comparison across data sources. This combination ensures that the report remains accessible to readers while preserving the depth and contextual richness inherent to qualitative research.

4.3 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The section provides the profiles of the participants that indicate the bases for their selection to participate in the study. The participants targeted in the study were store managers and marketing employees within food grocery retail stores operating in the shopping malls. The second point of consideration in selection of participants was their involvement in the marketing strategies of these stores, specifically marketing

communications (promotions) and pricing strategies. The basis for selecting the respondents included the level of retail industry experience, and most importantly, their personal involvement in implementation their stores' marketing strategies.

Table 4. 1 Profiles of participants

Participants	Positions	Gender	Retail years of the employment
Participant 1	Retail Store Buyer	Female	5
Participant 2	Department manager	Male	7
Participant 3	Merchandiser	Male	3
Participant 4	Merchandiser	Male	3
Participant 5	Butchery manager	Male	5
Participant 6	Customer service manager	Male	3
Participant 7	Butchery Manager	Male	9
Participant 8	Merchandiser	Female	3
Participant 9	Administration Manager	Female	7
Participant 10	Food Ambassador	Male	4
Participant 11	Retail manager	Male	8

Source: Researcher' s own creation

Table 4.1 depicts that all participants in the study had a minimum two years' experience in grocery retail stores which was sufficient to enable them to answer research questions. Participants 1 and 2 had the most food grocery retail experience, with seven years each, while Participants 7 and 11 had nine and eight years respectively. Regarding positions held, the sample included six managers, two merchandisers, one store buyer, one food ambassador, and one retail store buyer. The group comprised eight males and three females. Male participants predominantly held managerial roles, whereas female participants were appointed to operational positions such as merchandiser and store buyer. Table 4.1 shows that all of participants are involved in implementation of marketing strategies of their respective grocery retail stores in one way or another. All the participants demonstrated in-depth knowledge on the marketing strategies of their grocery retail stores as they were able to share in-depth insights on

the marketing communications (promotions) and pricing strategies in their respective stores.

4.4 SATURATION POINT OF THE STUDY

The saturation point of the study was reached during the eleventh interview covering 2182 words with time duration of less than 15 minutes. Saturation point is defined as a point of diminishing return to a qualitative sample, where, as the study goes on, more data that does not necessarily lead to more information is obtained (Mwita, 2022:417). A total of 36 456 words were reached from the 11 in-depth interviews, which serves to illustrate the volume of the study. The total duration of all interviews was 260 minutes and 17 seconds. Table 4.2 shows the total word count reached in each in-depth interview and duration of each interview.

Table 4. 2 The total word count of participants during in-depth interviews

Participants	Word count	Interview duration
Participant 1	6251	49 minutes and 5 seconds
Participant 2	2347	18 minutes and 00 seconds
Participant 3	2457	14 minutes and 29 seconds
Participant 4	3739	25 minutes and 22 seconds
Participant 5	3077	19 minutes and 01 seconds
Participant 6	3894	29 minutes and 02 seconds
Participant 7	3948	22 minutes and 48 seconds
Participant 8	2989	19 minutes and 57 seconds
Participant 9	2829	20 minutes and 48 seconds
Participant 10	2743	25 minutes and 34 seconds
Participant 11	2182	12 minutes and 04 seconds
Total	36 456	260 minutes & 17 seconds

Table 4.2 depicts that the first interview covered 6251 words and 49 minutes and 5 seconds. This was because the researcher was still nervous and had no confidence when conducting the first interview. However, with the second and third interviews, the researcher gained confidence and was able to be precise in asking research questions of the study within a reasonable time. Table 4.2 shows that the interviews reached peak by covering 3948 words during the seventh interview and started to go downwards during the eighth one, and until the saturation point during the eleventh interview. Despite reaching saturation of interviews, the researcher conducted five on-

site observations which took 15 hours to complete and were done in five days where each took three hours.

4.5 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The findings and interpretations presented in this section are informed by responses from the in-depth interviews conducted to address the main aim of the research. To complement this focus, a number of secondary objectives were identified.

4.5.1 Secondary research objective 1

The secondary research objective 1 aimed to explore the marketing communication strategy (promotions) of grocery food retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township. This secondary objective was examined by posing the following guiding question: How do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa South Africa describe and implement their marketing communication strategies? Participants indicated that the marketing communication strategy comprises of promotional campaigns which are informed by promotional analysis in terms number of customers attracted to visit the grocery stores. To support these findings, verbatim reports of participants are cited below.

And then we do what we call a promotion analysis as to see what the last promotion was like. How much did we sell and if we dragged too many feet into the store or there were too many sales like that at the time of the promotion that we can determine oh, so this thing is most likely to be bought by our customers. So, we try to look for deals just to bring in more feet like even if money. (Participant 1)

According to Participant 1, marketing communication promotions are carried out to attract customers in the grocery stores to buy so that revenue is generated. Participant 1 added that the planning of promotional campaigns is developed considering the days of the week and period within the month to check if it is month end or not, so that customers can get value from special deals. This finding is justified by the verbatim report below.

we try to, obviously, put deals around that time so that we can draw them

at least close to month end also and we're able to serves our customers also because we're going to try something at a better deal (Participant 1).

On a month end weekend – from the 25th it's our month end. That is one biggest week in the work and then month end. We try to look for deals so that we don't get to lose everything. At least we get to take a few into the store. But month end we're busy with our promotions. Elderly are paid around the 3rd, 4th, 5th, it depends on the day, which day is it, but they are the ones that buy from our store (Participant 1).

Participant 3 alluded that promotional campaigns in the grocery store are driven by suppliers of grocery products in terms of which products should be included in special deals. In addition, participants indicated that Facebook social media platforms and short text messages are used to support promotional campaigns. To support these findings, participants are quoted saying:

Then the supplier will say I have these types of products which can we move into specials, how much can I get that and how many times [indistinct]. And then after that when they have, whatever that they have, they are brought down to their stores and then it goes to print, it goes to TV. (Participant 3)

Automatically when you scan that code, that code gives them your number, you get the SMS, you get updates. Maybe if you scan it, you want Facebook, you say yes, then you get an invitation. If you browse your things, each – they don't have to invite you. (Participant 3)

According to participants, the promotional campaigns are planned for busy periods in a month to ensure that retail stores attract many customers to generate sales and revenue to avoid losses as elderly receive pension grants shortly after month-end. Participants alluded that although having target market is imperative, the focus is on all customers in the area, including the elderly as they sell grocery products. To support these findings, the verbatim reports from participants1, 2 and 4 are cited below.

There are lot of elderly people in this area, we focus on elderly people who live around the shopping mall as our main target customers. (Participant 1)

Participant 3 added that promotional campaigns are sometimes developed to sell the available products in the store not to make profit gain. To support this finding, participant 3 is cited saying:

Sometimes they lose to gain, sometimes they don't gain anything, but they have to make special promotion to move the product. (Participant 3)

Participants indicated that different approaches are used as part of marketing communication promotions. These approaches include the use of rewards points, loyalty card system, point sale promotions, promotional displays, store ambassadors, use referrals, and exclusive online promotions. Participant 1 indicated that the store has reward points cards for customers as part of promotions. In addition, according to participant 1, emphasised that these reward cards are linked to cellphone numbers which allow customers to view special deals and receive text messages regarding special promotional deals. Once the customers have reward cards, their cellphone numbers are captured in store database. Participant 1 verbatim is cited to support this finding.

Customers even know if you lost Rewards card, there's no need to panic, you will get an SMS with the link, just click on it or you just use your cellphone number to redeem whatever we're offering. We send text a day before the promotion starts, usually DC sends it, if it's pay day for pensioners and grant recipients' weekend or mainly month end, we send text township stores, get the link to check the rewards. Then customers know there's a promotion. (Participant 1)

With Textme, and how it works, once you register for Rewards, your number is automatically added onto the database. (Participant 1)

Cellphone number is the same as Reward card. The only difference is that Reward card is visible, it's there, it's physically there but with cellphone number you don't have the card, you just have your number. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 added that promotional displays are also used in the store as part of the point of sales promotional campaigns. This is supported by the quote below.

We usually display a day before the promotions, we do displays. We look for a product or combination of products that we feel this one is the best and it will draw attention. (Participant 1)

So, the point of sales needed to be there and be clear[vernacular] so that customers can see this is a promotion. (Participant 1)

Participant 10 explained that the store's marketing communication strategy involves a loyalty card system. When customers join, their details are registered, and they receive messages about upcoming and ongoing promotions. To receive discounts on promoted items, customers must use their loyalty card or provide their cellphone number at the till or checkout.

You come into the store, we register you, we give you your card, the details and the [inaudible] is registered and then you get messages of promotions that are coming in or promotions that are currently running, when you come into the store you must use that card or you use your number, your cell phone number if you don't carry the card, you give your cell phone number and then you get mostly the discounts on particular items that will be running on the promotion (Participant 10)

Participant 4 has highlighted that they use a multi-channel marketing approach to support their marketing communication strategy. By leveraging their presence on social media, radio, retail and print, they can reach their customer base, driving foot traffic to their shop while increasing their brand visibility and effectively reaching their target audience.

As a grocery outlet (participant identified the store), brand promotion is carried out across several promotional channels, spanning digital platforms, radio, in-store promotions, pamphlets, and newspaper publications. This multi-channel approach allows us to reach our target audience wherever they are, catering to individuals' preferences. For instance, you might see an advert online. This is how we use marketing tools to effectively communicate with our customers. (Participants 4)

Participant 6 added that one of the ways used in their grocery store to enhance brand visibility is through branded motorbikes and drivers' uniforms, effectively turning drivers into ambassadors who generate interest and inquiries. This strategy is

complemented by positive word-of-mouth referrals, further amplifying the brand's presence.

You know, because of our drivers go to the customer, I think the motorbike is also branded (mentioned the name of grocery store) so they are all over the show, they are on the roads, they go everywhere, best way of brand visibility. And they also, sometimes company give us badges to wear with (mentioned the name of grocery store) So people would normally enquire from us what is (mentioned the name of grocery store) and then we explain to them. (Participant 6)

Participants 6 highlighted that some of the promotions are exclusive to online store customers. Exclusive deals create a sense of value, generate interest and differentiate these customers with unique benefits.

On online store (mentioned online store linked to the brand) there are exclusive deals for our customers only. Sometimes you even wonder why this particular item is selling for so much, only to find out that there are online special deals. (Participant 6)

Participant 9 mentioned that the store utilises local newspapers and television as an advertising channel. By including pamphlets in these newspapers, which are delivered directly to the customers' doors, the store then provides visibility that enables customers to plan their purchases in advance.

Marketing, and as much as they would normally, they do that in store, they will also advertise it on TV, so that people are just aware when they come in, they know what they are looking for and, in the newspapers, as well, the local newspapers that are given out every week. (Participant 9)

Participant 2 highlighted that their marketing efforts focus on the key service departments, namely, Bakery, Butchery, and Fresh Produce (Fruits and Vegetables). These areas are crucial to driving their daily sales and customer visits, as they require frequent purchases due to their perishable nature. By maintaining high standards and attractiveness in these departments, the store can increase foot traffic and sales.

At store (mentioned the stores name), we focus on the service departments like butchery, bakery and fruits and vegetables that's where mostly our focus is. We realise

that if you can get this there is no way you are going to lose a customer because most of the customers – those are the daily customers coming to our stores. So, if you can get that one, that is where they buy their daily stuff in those departments because in terms of groceries, sometimes they buy once a month but things like bread, veggies and stuff, they don't like buying them – because they like them fresh because you cannot buy veggies and keep them for a time. So, they prefer them fresh. That is why it's very important for us to ensure that all those departments are up and running and always keep the fresh stock (Participant 2)

Participant 2 alluded that their marketing strategy incorporates a tracking system and analytics, enabling them to monitor customer reactions to promotions across various channels. This allows them to identify which channels drive the most traffic to the store and growth.

We keep a record, every week when there is a promotion – there is sort of a database for customers who reacted – so we are able to see if we getting more customers on Facebook or our customer base then that on app, it also tells us and informs us that our customers like what they see on Facebook and in so much days we have had so many customers. So that is why it's important to engage the customers and even that SMS thing, we have a tracker that records whereby it shows who you have sent SMS's to and then how many came to the store to buy the promotion. (Participant 2)

What we also track is the customer growth in our stores because that's important to compare that, to also see that there is growth or more feet into the store. So those platforms they also help us in tracking are we growing, it is a business based on the customer growth or have we dropped as a business on customer. (Participant 2)

Participant 11 explained that their marketing communication strategy involved utilising their own website and Facebook page for advertising and reaching their customers. Furthermore, they also leveraged the centre management's Facebook page to target local customers and those who followed the shopping centre on social media.

And internally we've got our own website and Facebook that we do, and then there's also centre management, I've got a Facebook website whereby they do advertising for us for the store (Participant 11)

4.5.2 Secondary research objective 2

The secondary research objective 2 aimed to investigate the price strategies of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township. To support this objective, the study sought to answer the following question: How do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls in Tembisa , South Africa, perceive and apply their pricing strategies? Participants 3 indicated that setting of prices of products in the grocery store is influenced by the availability of inventory in the store. Support for this finding can be drawn from Participant 3's response, as reflected below:

The reason, you cannot sit with the stock that cannot move, so you must drop the price. It's different mechanism from the other stores because in family stores when you see this thing is not moving, you will never keep it. But other stores, maybe the [indistinct] the supermarkets, they are forced because that one customer makes a difference. If the product is not moving, you must cut down the price. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 added that the setting of the price strategy of grocery products is influenced by location which in other areas are cheaper, while more expensive in other parts. To support this finding, Participant 3 is cited as saying:

When you are in Cape Town, the prices are otherwise. They are high, they are like really, really, high. Cape Town is expensive and then you come to Johannesburg. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 spoke to cross-merchandising as one of the pricing strategies that influences customer perception of value and price. Showing related products together helps customers see more value, spend more per purchase, and buy multiple items. This strategy uses product combinations to boost sales and revenue.

So, one of the things we do I would say we do cross-merchandising, for instance if you can come into the store, you will see there's a small display and it has a chocolate, we have something with the slippers etc because it's a Valentine season. It's not a bundle per say but people would think it's a bundle, the trick is they are individually priced. So when it's like that, people don't really see the pricing, they would say oh my word, it's Valentine's day and I need to spoil my person, let me just get this pair of shoes or

slippers, let me get that and chocolates and then they ask if we can make a basket for them and that's what we do. (Participants 6)

Participant 7 alluded that one of their pricing strategies revolves around offering low-priced combos and bulk buying options on fast-moving products, ensuring they remain affordable and competitive for customers.

In our store (mentioned the name of store name). We encourage bulk buying; combos as promotional on some lines, using value-based pricing. They sit down and come with what – they sit down and discuss what cooking oil goes hand in hand with, maize meal. For instance, it's rice, maize meal, cooking oil are popular, every month we have lots of customers coming to the store to buy. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 explained that one of their pricing strategies incorporates dynamic pricing, where special pricing points are applied on specific days of the week. The price point caters for peak customer shopping days.

Yes, in-store promos are just for Friday, Saturday and Sunday promo only, that's where the customers get the item price, a certain price. After Sunday the price of the item will go back to the normal price. (Participants 7)

Participant 8 highlighted that their store offers detailed pricing for things like their food and vegetable market, unlike many other stores that price by packet. This approach prioritises convenience and yields benefits, as customers tend ease over price consideration.

Then (mentions the store) you can get one onion if you are staying alone, you can get one orange, one potato, and you do not have to buy a packet. (Participants 8)

Participant 9 explained that, from a supplier perspective, final pricing is shaped by three primary considerations: production expenses, the brand's market standing (often reflected through packaging), and the level of quality associated with the offering.

Yes, the cost of manufacturing the product, the quality of the product and the actual final packaging will determine the price of the product (Participant 9)

Participant 9 also mentioned that one of the pricing strategies used by the suppliers involves a supplier paying for shelf space, with premium visibility spots commanding higher fees by the store.

Yes, they are paying for space within the shop, the supplier is paying for space within the (mentioning the store's name) store for their brand (Participant 9)

Participant 2 explained that their pricing strategy relies heavily on negotiations with suppliers. They continually discuss prices with suppliers to align with their planned promotions whilst maintaining their commitment to offering low and affordable prices to their customers.

We normally pass the pressure to the suppliers because we cannot carry the burden alone. The suppliers, we are their clients obviously, so we tell them what we're going to put on promo and at what price. Then we ask them to give us those items on certain prices. Then the price we are going to leave it to them, then they have their clients who also want to satisfy the customers, and the suppliers want to satisfy us as their clients. That's where we struggle with a balance. (Participant 2)

Participant 11 explained that their pricing strategy consists of standard prices set by the head office, and the negotiation process is not transparent to them. They also offer combo deals where prices are determined based on product sales volumes when negotiating with our own local store suppliers. Additionally, there is flexibility to lower prices to drive volume sales for specific products.

Okay, normally we have standard prices that we –the customers mostly know our prices, so sometimes we offer them combo's, sometimes we drop the prices to push volume on the sales of that product. We look at products that we know that they are selling faster, and, on those products, we try to negotiate a better pricing on them with the supplier, with our internal suppliers. But in terms of the national – I don't know how national is doing it because they do it from their Store head office, they negotiate for all the other stores. When they put something on promotion, that price has already been negotiated with those suppliers on a national level (Participant 11)

The secondary research objective 3 aimed to identify challenges experienced by grocery food retailers operating shopping malls of Tembisa Township in implementing

marketing communication and pricing strategies. To examine this secondary aim, the research focused on the following guiding question: What challenges do grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls in Tembisa South Africa, experience when implementing their marketing communication strategies? What are the challenges experienced by shopping mall retailers in implementing price strategy? Participants indicated that promotions and prices are developed by stores' district committee which serve as a challenge in their stores as the store manager had to negotiate for improved promotional campaigns. Participant 1 is cited saying:

Prices are determined by District Committee. We challenge them, that's what we call negotiating a deal, we call them to say this is our own promotion in the store, they offer you promotions where they run those promotions. (Participant 1)

So that they know the promotion is only for this store, it's not for every store at (mentioned store name) So we try have our own promotions, hence we look for deals that meets the customers' needs. (Participant 1)

This thing last time sold, but now it's not even included in the promotion, how about we ask for a deal on particular product so that everybody is happy. (Participant 1)

Participant 4 added that in formulating promotional campaigns there are many challenges that include lack of support from stakeholders and having well clear well-formulated objectives. Other challenges include lack of visibility and alignment. Participant 4 is cited saying:

We have quite a lot of challenges because I would say, let's say lack of pure objectives, I'll tell you why I say lack of pure objectives, we have – let me just take them one by one and then I'll explain to you, but I won't go into much detail. So, the challenges that we're facing for lack of specific objective, lack of buying from the stakeholders. (Participant 4)

So, the reason I'm saying a lack of clear objective, let me see, I don't want to give you the whole thing that I wrote here. So, I'll start here where it says without specific directives around how to and how much stakeholders are often left playing the

guessing game, it gives more details about where to spend time and resources to campaigns. (Participant 4).

Lack of visibility, different execution progress, lack of alignment. So, the importance of visibility into strategy execution begins with infilling a sense of confidence amongst all stakeholders, not just confidence in the critical strategy and challenge, but that it drives focus and resources out on the strategy plan. That progress is being made by the right people at the right time for the business (Participant 4).

Participant 3 added that one of the challenges they experience includes setting prices of the products as consumers buy based on the affixed price not on loyalty. Participant 3 is cited saying:

The challenge is setting prices because lately people buy by pricing. Customers are not buying because of being loyal to store. No, it does not happen like that, it's pricing. (Participant 3)

Participant 6 explained that one of the challenges affecting marketing communication strategies is the issue of stock discrepancies due to delayed system updates. When promotional offers are advertised on the app and customers respond only to find that the product in question is out of stock. This leads to customer complaints ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the marketing efforts.

When there is no stock, we check on the system, when was this thing ordered and when we received it. If it's something like a month ago, there's no way that 150 of a particular product is not on our shelves, it's not in our backup. So, what we do is we fix count and then they reorder (Participant 6)

Participant 7 added that the challenges with the combo pricing strategy is that certain products in a promotional bundle are sold at a loss, when the supermarket could not secure a supplier's discounts, potentially impacting profit margins.

Sometimes on promo we take a knock, products are priced less on a promo, find that the normal price of the item is R50, you sell it below cost, so meaning you are losing but it is a win/lose situation. (Participant 7)

Participant 8 explained how pricing strategy can be influenced by seasonality, especially with fruit, if fruits are out of season. They will be sourced from other countries or imported. As a result, the prices become higher when compared to (our locally sourced oranges in season prices).

Now oranges are not in season, usually our supplier will maybe outsource oranges, maybe from other countries or import them. they will be expensive compared to when we get them from our local supplier (in wintertime). So now a customer maybe buys oranges and that orange will maybe cost R10 or R12 for one orange and the customer starts complaining that it's too much, it's too expensive and increases customer complaints (Participant 8)

Participant 9 emphasised the importance of timely communication and quick turnaround times to remove promotional materials once a product is out of stock or promotion has expired. This includes ensuring discounter prices are updated promptly to avoid customer complaints.

I think the only thing that I can add or say about that is the clear communication because there's nothing more upsetting than walking into a place and you either want to buy something and that special has expired but the posters or whatever are still there. The wrong pricing on products as well, so I think those are just things that if we can take proper control of that, it would change a lot because you get a lot of customers in general complaining on that level (Participant 9)

Participants 2 noted that their marketing strategy promises customers low prices, but with the rising inflation and increasing costs are making it challenging to keep this promise. They must balance cost considerations with their commitment to customers.

At the moment the burden is that we're currently experiencing, the food prices that are going up and the promise that we made to the customers that we'll get the prices – we'll get it at a lower price, that is one of the biggest challenges because when the food goes up, obviously you have to adjust the price accordingly but at the same time we have to think about the promise to the customers that they are going to buy stock cheap. That is one of the challenges we are facing at the moment. The promise that

we make to the customers, we must get the balance first before we can say yes, we are certain now. (Participant 2)

Participant 5 highlighted that their business faces challenges, such as high supplier prices and stock availability. To overcome these challenges, building a network of reliable suppliers who offer competitive prices is crucial, requiring significant effort and relationship building.

There's a lot of challenges. It's pricey. It's availability. You must have, how can I say, the right people to speak to, to give you the right price, to sell at the right price. But there's always problems. But we work through it if it's big. (Participant 5).

Participant 11 explained that one of their marketing communication challenges is ensuring pamphlets reach the target audience when distributing them. Issues include inaccessible areas in the township due to safety concerns and distributors not following instructions, resulting in some pamphlets not being delivered. This can lead to existing customers missing out on promotions or potential customers being unaware of deals, ultimately affecting foot traffic to the shop.

Yes, the only challenge that we have is in terms of us distributing the pamphlets to our local areas, it still is not getting into the right hands of our customers. Sometimes the challenge that we have is you'll send guys to go and distribute the pamphlets, they will never give all the pamphlets to the customers that is around here, because some of them will walk into the store to say that they don't know what our promotions are and that is a very worrying factor. Let's say for instance the area – I would like to start targeting that area first because it's close by, the area is close by and for us to give pamphlets in the area is quite difficult because it's not as safe as you've like it to be, so those are our two different scenarios (Participant 11)

Participant 11 further explained the challenge they face when delivering the pamphlets, noting that often the materials do not reach the intended recipients. Instead, the delivery personnel may leave them at the door or gate, where they can either be misplaced or fall into wrong hands, potentially not reaching the target customer.

It never gets to the right hands, yes. They leave it at the gate, it might end up in somebody else's hands, (Participant 11)

Participant 10 explained that one of their marketing communication strategy challenges is timely delivery, particularly during promotions that drive a high-volume order. With the shop primarily servicing an old age home, managing deliveries can be complex. Elderly recipients often have fixed schedules, which leads to missed deliveries when the driver arrives at their destination. The team then needs to follow up with phone calls to reschedule, adding complexity to the delivery process.

Mostly some of the challenges are the time that our deliveries go to the – that is one big challenge that we have because in our store we only have one driver. So, in a day maybe you will have deliveries, 15, 20 from 09:00 in the morning. So, it's like we need to [inaudible] the time, we need to deliver the orders on time to people. So, the driver will be going and coming [inaudible] taking them to the retirees(granny's), most of the time the retirees (granny's) will be going on tea or lunch, so when the driver gets to their house, they are not there, they are already in the dining hall. So, we will then call to find out what time will be best (Participant 10)

4.6 ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

This section presents additional findings derived from interviews with participants in addressing questions related to three secondary objectives of the study.

4.6.1 Additional findings on marketing communications

Participants indicated that in developing promotional campaigns as part of marketing communication, promotional analysis is conducted against the previous year and weekly sales. In addition, the participants indicated that the stores also measure the effectiveness of the promotional campaigns by checking the stock of products to determine which products were sold in large quantities and which ones remained in inventory. To justify this finding, verbatim reports from participants are provided.

The promotions, so they send us a bulletin for the whole month as to this is the promotion and as a buyer [inaudible] with the promotions, then I can see a week or

two before because our promotion lines, a month or two, so already this promotion is going to come when, then I do my analysis. They are a bit similar, like we just compare from last year's week, depending [vernacular]. Last year this promotion – the leaflets, we don't throw them away, we have a file where we file them, that way we can check the leaflet, check the promotion analysis to say okay this thing last year, it was so much and then every month [vernacular] the promotion dates, the promotion numbers that we can check from how far did it sell, and which week was it. (Participant 1)

We usually after the promotion we check how much stock do we have left from those promotions, which one did sell, which one didn't sell, and we try to push them again to see if they will sell. When the next promo comes, then you know I don't have to order this much again because [vernacular] but if you order according to statistics. (Participant 1)

Participant 2 noted that to overcome the perception of high prices, they looked for a variety of suppliers that are affordable to enable competitive pricing. In-store promotions played a crucial role in changing customer perceptions and eventually showcasing the stores' affordability. Consistency was key, and the strategy proved effective.

When I first arrived here in this store, some of the prices were a bit high So I wrote to the store manager, and I spoke to him. I said guys, for us to lure customers into our store we must check the [inaudible] of the customer because now everybody knows that store (participant mentioned store name) is expensive. So, let's negotiate to the supplier, let's beat our competitors, let's change how the customers think about us and you will see the customers will come into store and we'll start beating our competitors. And you know what, that thing really worked for us (Participants 2)

Participant 5 mentioned that a family store uses an external company for their marketing strategy and communication.

We're using an outside company that does our marketing for us with the leaflets, pamphlets. The Store (mentioned the name) is a well know brand. So, it's their prerogative if they want to shop here or not. (Participant 5)

Participant 11 explained that their store is located near an old age village home and offers a convenient service for seniors. They can call in to place orders based on the weekly promotions featured in pamphlets which are then included with their weekly groceries, and drivers deliver the items to their homes at designated times.

On this one I will say the promotions, because these old people are on pension, so every cent counts for them, everything counts. So, we make sure that our service to them doesn't have any hiccups, whatever they call in for on their orders, we make sure that we deliver, we make sure that we have the products. Each promotion, they place orders for those promotional products, we make sure it's in the store for whenever the customer comes to the store, whatever they need, that is advertised. (Participant 11)

4.6.2 Additional findings on pricing

Participant 1 revealed that in the store they use what is called “eye level pricing” to capture customers’ attention at the point of sales for visibility. In addition, when putting promotional prices, the normal prices of products are not removed from displays for customers to evaluate the price differences. Participant 1 is cited saying:

With pricing there's this thing we call an eye level, so the KVI we put them on eye levels, even when a customer comes through, the first thing that they see is that price. Prices need to be at eye level so that prices can catch the eye of the customer and they get to sell, without even having to talk. (Participant 1)

Then we leave the promotion price, so that you can differentiate and evaluate. (Participant 1)

Participant 3 revealed that in setting price, there is price manipulation in grocery stores to deceive customers. Participant 3 is cited saying:

And then yet the other thing is, even though the people will put pricing, they play with the system and then they manipulate the system whereby there's no growth for other people, it's only for them. (Participant 3)

4.6.3 Additional findings on challenges

Participant 3 revealed that employees working in grocery retail stores are exposed to health risks especially those working in cold-rooms fridges. To support this finding, Participant 3 is cited saying:

You get those people who are working in grocery store (mentioned the name of store), sorry to mention it but they are working in the fridges and then they get sick and no one says anything. Once they retire, it's finish. (Participant 3)

Participant 11 explained that promotions often lead to long queues, and they strive to keep the lines moving, rather than letting them back up. The goal is to show customers that the process of transaction is efficient even if the queue is long. When customers see the cashier working diligently, it helps alleviate some of the frustration associated with waiting lines.

We try, we have to – we try to make sure that customers see that we try our level best to push those queues to come through, at least not just sitting down there, just going as slow as you can. You're not being worried about the queues, that's a big worrying factor. If somebody is standing in front of their customers, going as fast as they can, the customers in the queues, way at the back but they can see that this person is really trying (Participant 11)

4.7 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS FROM ONSITE-OBSERVATIONS

This section provides a summary of findings derived from onsite observations to confirm and triangulate findings from in-depth interviews.

4.7.1 Marketing communications and promotions

The onsite observations discovered that stores use entrance as a marketing space to showcase new promotional campaigns and existing programs. Upon entering, customers were greeted with promotional pamphlets neatly placed on the trolleys. Kiosks were strategically located near the entrance to offer additional pamphlets for those customers who may have missed them. Onsite observations confirmed the use of quantity promotions, combo promotions and in-store promotions linked to stores' birthday celebrations. Quantity promotions include the promotions of products where customers were encouraged to buy two or more products at a reduced price. Family food hampers, fruit bundle deals and product combinations (combo) promotions involve the promotional campaign where customers are enticed to buy related products, such as food products, vegetables, home cleaning detergents, deodorants

and cosmetics. Fruits bundle promotions include the same packets of fruit priced at a discounted price when bought in sets of four, offering a clear discount from the single packet price. The fruits bundle promotions offer discount that apply to all customers with or without the store loyalty card. In addition, in one of the stores visited, the observation was a promotion of packets of vegetables which offers a discount when bundled in sets of two items and the promotion ended on the weekend. This promotion was exclusively available to loyalty cardholders. Onsite observations confirmed that, in the physical stores, there was also communication about the online promotions being run by grocery retail stores.

In addition, the onsite observations uncovered the use of display advertisements, the use pamphlet advertising and in-store electronic screen advertising displays regarding the promotions in stores. Moreover, onsite observations discovered that there were competitions which pushed the sale of breakfast food at normal prices, such as cereals which encourage customers to buy in larger quantities to increase the chance to win prizes such as cellphones, air-fryers and microwaves. In one of the grocery retail stores visited, the observations were that the store had a competition where customers could save and win a share of R6 million in instant cash on selected items. In another store, competitions were used as part of in-promotions where customers are required to scan QR code on the purchased products of a particular supplier and stand a chance to win cash prizes of about R500 000. The onsite observation also discovered that stores offer Online Exclusive Deals. The Online Exclusive Deals were marked as exclusive to online shopping and could only be accessed when purchasing online using a store loyalty application (App). This approach allows the store to offer special promotions to customers who prefer to shop online. Appendices C and F have pictures attached of these promotions captured during onsite observations and observational notes to justify these findings.

4.7.2 Pricing of products

During onsite visits to grocery retail stores operating in shopping malls, observations regarding pricing strategies revealed that odd pricing and psychological pricing strategies were widely used in stores and during promotions to entice customers into perceiving prices as lower. Odd pricing involved setting prices with lower margins

below the actual price; for example, a product that had been priced at R40 was often priced at R39.95. With psychological pricing, products or combo products were priced at R99.99 instead of R100. These pricing strategies aimed to psychologically trigger or charm customers' perceptions, making them believe products were being sold at lower prices.

Through onsite observations, it was discovered that prices had often been determined by suppliers, particularly for new brands that had entered the market, which were priced competitively low. This indicated the variety of suppliers that had been accommodated to cater to different customer segments and introduce new brands to the market.

The onsite observations also confirmed that prices had been set for selected items that had been discounted from their original prices during store birthday celebrations. These discounted prices had been set lower to remain competitive compared to rivals. Furthermore, during promotions, stores had showcased the original price alongside the discounted price, providing transparency and highlighting the promotion's value to customers. The prices reflected had been consistent with those advertised on television.

Additionally, onsite observations revealed that stores had listed discounts in two ways: either as a specific rand value saved on purchase or as a percentage off the original price of the product(s). This clear presentation provided customers with a detailed understanding of the discount they received.

Appendices D and F are attached, featuring pictures of different prices captured during onsite promotions.

4.7.3 Loyalty and reward cards

The onsite visits to grocery retail stores confirmed the widespread use of loyalty and rewards cards by customers to earn points and access reduced prices. The observations provided valuable insights into the differences in functionality between loyalty cards and reward cards across various stores.

One way loyalty cards work is by allowing customers to earn points that can be redeemed for cash or used to purchase products within the respective stores. This is often referred to as a store's Rewards program, a free loyalty program that awards customers with points, known as Rewards or Cash Back, for shopping at specific stores. The more customers spend, the more points they earn, which can be used to purchase products at a discount price or redeemed later.

Additionally, customers are rewarded for repeat purchases from the same brand store, earning more points with increased spending. Another reward program offers customers discounts on promotional products when they use their card during purchases, providing an opportunity to buy products at a reduced price compared to customers without a rewards card.

One of the loyalty program worked as follows: every time a customer shopped, they were required to present their loyalty card, which was scanned before making payment at the cashier. The loyalty program operated on a points system, where customers earned 1 point for every R1 spent, with additional points awarded on special deals. These points could be redeemed for discounts at payment points, allowing customers to receive free items like bread and milk or fuel discounts. As part of the incentives, customers with loyalty cards earned extra points on certain days, such as Double Points Day, and enjoyed personalised discounts tailored specifically for them. In one of the stores, we discovered a promotion called Swipe and Save. The Swipe and Save promotions require customers to swipe their loyalty cards to save a certain amount on their purchases, making it easy to track discounts.

Additionally, the observations revealed that staff in the grocery retail stores were well-trained on the reward program, and a dedicated table was set aside for cards and reward program information. Customers can use loyalty cards for both in-store purchases and online shopping through the store's mobile application (App) to qualify for discounts. Each time customers shop, they are required to scan their loyalty card, use their personal identification number (ID), or enter their card number. Appendices E and F are attached, providing information on how to access the loyalty and rewards

programmes of these grocery retail stores, along with observation notes that further support the findings of the onsite observation.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the structure of the chapter, the profile of participants, saturation point of the study, the findings and interpretations derived from the responses of participants during the interviews and onsite observations during grocery retail stores visits. The responses were obtained based on the formulated research questions linked to the secondary objectives developed to achieve the primary objective of this study. The next chapter focuses on the discussions, conclusions and recommendations to key stakeholders and future research directions proposed by the study.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research objective of this study was to investigate the marketing strategies of grocery food stores operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township in South Africa as explained in Chapter 1. The research findings and interpretation of empirical data were discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter revisits the research objectives of the study to demonstrate that the research methodology and research findings have indeed achieved these objectives. The research findings of this study are summarised and discussed with the findings of the previous studies discussed in Chapter 2. In evaluating the research findings of this study, the secondary objectives formulated and outlined in Chapter 1 are revisited; the empirical research findings regarding each objective are provided and are compared to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Recommendations based on the research findings are made for stakeholders in the grocery food stores and other retail stores operating in South African context. Finally, the contributions of the study, limitations of the study, the recommendations for future research, and reflections are provided.

5.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND PROMOTIONS

This section revisits the first secondary research objective which was derived from the primary research objective of this study. The first secondary research objective was stated as follows:

To investigate the marketing communication strategy of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.

Developing a marketing strategy for grocery food stores is crucial for achieving marketing objectives such as customer retention and revenue generation. Marketing communications and promotions are essential components of this strategy, as they inform, remind, and persuade customers to shop at the stores, as discussed in Chapter 2. This study investigated the marketing communications and promotions of grocery food retailers in Tembisa Township, with findings presented in Chapter 4.

The study revealed that traditional media platforms, such as pamphlets, local newspapers, and television, alongside digital platforms like social media and short messaging services (SMS), are used to communicate promotional campaigns. These findings align with Marwan's (2022:150) study on the effectiveness of pamphlets in conveying marketing messages. Retailers employ a multi-channel marketing approach to support their communication strategy, leveraging social media, radio, and print to reach their customer base, drive foot traffic, and increase brand visibility. This approach is consistent with the findings of Singh and Bisaria (2024:164), Khanom (2023:93), and Marwan (2022:150), who emphasise the importance of combining traditional and digital platforms.

The study also found that marketing communication strategies comprise of promotional campaigns informed by an analysis of customer traffic. These promotions aim to attract customers and generate revenue. Notably, online promotional campaigns were found to be exclusive to online shoppers, creating a sense of value and differentiation. These campaigns are planned strategically, considering factors like days of the week and month-end periods, to maximise customer engagement and sales.

Furthermore, the study revealed that promotional campaigns are often driven by suppliers who decide and determine which product should be on special for that period. This finding adds new insights to retail literature. Furthermore, although the identification of distinct markets remains important, marketing communication and promotional activities in this context are location-focused, effectively engaging a defined geographic area (Tembisa Township). These initiatives are adapted to address the requirements of the local customer base, reaching a wide range of consumers, including older residents. This supports the views of Sintani et al. (2023:70) on the importance of target markets.

The study also found that promotional campaigns are sometimes designed to sell available products, particularly those nearing expiration, rather than solely for profit. Retailers also use branded motorbikes and drivers' uniforms as part of their marketing

efforts, effectively turning drivers into brand ambassadors. In-store promotional displays and point-of-sale campaigns further enhance brand visibility, consistent with (Bondarenko & Vyshnivska's , 2023:22) findings.

Moreover, the study discovered that tracking systems and analytics are used to measure the effectiveness of promotional campaigns, enabling retailers to monitor customer reactions and identify the most effective channels. The findings also highlighted the combined use of promotions, loyalty card systems, and store ambassadors, adding new insights to retail literature. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the marketing communications and promotional strategies employed by grocery retailers, highlighting the importance of a multi-channel approach, strategic planning, and supplier-driven promotions.

5.3 SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: PRICING STRATEGIES

This section addresses the second secondary objective, which stems from the primary objective of the research. It is stated as follows:

To investigate the price strategy of grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township.

Price strategy is also an important component of the marketing strategy, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the study. The study investigated the pricing strategies of shopping mall grocery retailers in Tembisa Township. To achieve this secondary 2 of the study, the following question was asked: What is the nature of the price strategy of shopping mall retailers in Tembisa Township? The findings discovered that odd and psychological pricing strategies are dominantly used in grocery retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township to influence consumers' perceptions to consider the price as lower. The findings regarding the use of psychological pricing in grocery food retail stores concurs with the findings in the study by Ahmed et al. (2020:83) in emphasising that psychological pricing influences consumers' perceptions and emotions. The findings revealed that setting of prices of products in the grocery store is influenced by the availability on the inventory in the store. This led to use of cross-merchandising, bundle, combo (combination of products) pricing.

Another factor that influenced the setting of price of grocery retailers operating in the shopping malls is the location of the store. The location of the store tended to influence the price. The finding that the pricing of products in grocery food stores was influenced by products' availability. The influence of cross-merchandising and a combination of products on promotional campaigns add new insights to retail literature. Despite the preceding findings, the findings revealed that pricing of a products are determined by three key factors, namely, the manufacturing cost, strength of the brand in the market (referred to as packaging) and quality associated with the product. The pricing strategy of retailers relies heavily on negotiations with suppliers. The findings that pricing products in grocery food stores is determined by manufacturing cost and quality of the product supports the views by Ahmed *et al.* (2020:83) that prices are determined considering direct and indirect cost. The findings that pricing in grocery food stores depend on packaging and negotiations with suppliers add new insights to literature in retail.

In addition, the findings revealed that retailers use displays for complementary products together, to create perceived value, increase average transaction value and encourage multiple purchases. This strategy leveraged product combinations to drive sales and revenue. Pricing strategies revolve around offering low-priced combos and bulk buying options on fast-moving products, ensuring they remain affordable and competitive for customers. Another pricing strategy used by retailers is dynamic pricing, where special pricing points are applied on specific days of the week. The findings revealed that a detailed pricing method is being used in food and vegetable markets. The price method prioritises convenience and tends to yield benefits, as customers tend to ease over price consideration. To access shelves in stores, the suppliers pay for shelf space, premium visibility spots commanding higher fees by the store. The findings further discovered that what is called "eye level pricing" is used to capture customers' attention at the point of sales for visibility. According to store managers, eye level pricing is placement of product prices at the point where customers can see without bending or looking up as explained by participants in retail store. In addition, when putting promotional prices, the normal prices of products are

not removed from displays for customers to evaluate the price differences. The use of detailed pricing and eye level pricing adds new insights to retail literature.

The study discovered that grocery food stores use loyalty and rewards cards by customers to gain points and access to reduced prices. The findings from onsite observations provided insights regarding the major difference in the functionality of loyalty cards and reward cards of these different grocery food stores. With loyalty cards, customers earn points which are translated into cash that can be used to purchase products in the respective stores. Store Rewards is a free loyalty programme that gives customers points called Rewards or Cash Back when they shop at those specific stores. The more they spend, the more they earn and can buy at discount prices or use at a later stage. When customers buy more from the same brand store, the more points they are likely to earn. Customers with rewards cards can buy promotional products at lower prices during purchases, unlike those without a rewards card.

In addition, the findings discovered that staff in the grocery food stores were appropriately trained on the reward programme and there is a table set aside for cards and reward programmes. The findings regarding the training of staff on reward programmes adds insight. In one of the grocery stores visited, the findings discovered that customers could turn these points into discounts, free groceries, or even fuel savings at selected fuel stations. Customers can sign up for the loyalty programme for free in-store, online, or use the loyalty application (App). Every time customers shop they need to present a loyalty card, which is scanned before making payment at the cashier. These points are redeemed for discounts at payment points to get free items like bread and milk, or fuel discounts. Additionally, customers with loyalty cards can earn extra points on certain days, such as double points day, and enjoy personalised discounts. Customers can use loyalty cards for both in-store purchases and online shopping through the store's application (App) to qualify for discounts. Each time customers shop they are required to scan the loyalty cards, or use personal identification number (ID), or enter their card number.

5.4 SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND PRICING STRATEGIES

This section revisits the first secondary research objective which was derived from the primary research objective of this study. The third secondary research objective was stated as follows:

To identify challenges experienced by grocery food retailers operating in the shopping malls of Tembisa Township in implementing marketing communication and pricing strategies.

The findings discovered that promotions and prices are developed by a store's district committee and suppliers. This serves as a challenge in their stores as the store manager had to negotiate for improved promotional campaigns. In addition, the findings revealed that one of the challenges they experience includes setting prices of the products as consumers buy based on the fixed price, not on loyalty. These findings on the preceding mentioned challenge add new insight into retail literature that consumers buy products on the fixed price rather than being loyal to the brand or grocery food store. This supports the view by Liaukonyte and Richards (2020:88) in that businesses determine prices for products or services based on factors like customer willingness to pay. The findings further discovered that one of the challenges affecting marketing communication strategies is the issue of stock discrepancies due to delayed system updates, when promotional offers are advertised on the software applications and customers respond well, only to find that the product in question is out of stock. This leads to customer complaints, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the marketing efforts. In addition, the findings revealed one of challenges with the combo (product combination) pricing strategy is that certain products in a promotional bundle are sold at a loss, when the supermarket could not secure a supplier's discounts, potentially impacting profit margins. The finding that pricing of product combinations in grocery food stores often leads to loss is new. The findings revealed that pricing strategy is also influenced by seasonality, especially with fruit, if fruits are out of season. Fruits will be sourced from other countries or imported. The findings that the pricing of seasonal products are determined by availability in the season concur with the view by Dong, Rao, Liu, Jang, Lu & Guo (2020:39481) which

alluded that availability influences price. As a result, the prices become higher if compared to our locally sourced oranges in season prices. The findings revealed that marketing strategy promises customers low prices, but with the rising inflation and increasing costs are making it challenging to keep this promise. Retailers must balance cost considerations with their commitment to customers.

In addition, the findings uncovered that grocery food stores face challenges such as high supplier prices and stock availability. To overcome these challenges, building a network of reliable suppliers who offer competitive prices becomes crucial, requiring significant effort and relationship building strategies. The preceding findings regarding the high prices of suppliers add new insights. Moreover, the findings revealed that one of their marketing communication challenges is ensuring pamphlets reach the target audience when distributing them. Issues include inaccessible areas in the township due to safety concerns and distributors not following instructions, resulting in some pamphlets not being delivered. This can lead to existing customers missing out on promotions or potential customers being unaware of deals, ultimately affecting foot traffic in the shop.

Lastly, the findings discovered that one of marketing communication strategy challenges is timely delivery, particularly during promotions that drive a high-volume order. With the shop primarily servicing an old age home, managing deliveries can be complex. Elderly recipients often have fixed schedules, which leads to missed deliveries when the driver arrives at their destination. The grocery retail store staff must follow up with phone calls to reschedule, adding complexity to the delivery process. The findings regarding the challenge related to time delivery of marketing communications in grocery food stores are new, and they add insights to retail literature.

5.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study made a significant theoretical contribution by adopting complex adaptive theory to demonstrate how external factors impact on grocery food retail stores in developing marketing communications, promotional campaigns and setting of prices.

The study uncovered how technology, customers and suppliers impacted on the marketing communications, promotional campaigns and prices of products in grocery food stores.

In addition, a review of available academic sources revealed that the topic has not been extensively explored in the South African context. Only a small body of research currently addresses marketing communication and pricing practices within South African grocery food retail environments. This study investigated key components of marketing strategy (marketing communications and pricing) that has received limited attention in the literature and therefore, the study makes a significant contribution by filling this gap and further benefits grocery food stores operating in shopping malls within township economy.

The study discovered that traditional media platforms, such as pamphlets, local newspapers and television and digital platforms (social media and short-messaging services (SMS)) are used to communicate retailers' promotional campaigns. This study further contributes to grocery food stores by discovering the shifting of media usage trends and approaches that will help to increase the reach of the stores' marketing communication activities. This research offers meaningful insight for grocery food stores by illustrating the benefits associated with integrating multiple communication platforms within marketing and promotional activities. Leveraging a coordinated channel strategy enables campaigns to reinforce one another, ultimately enhancing their impact and reach. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that retailers strategically plan promotional activities around peak monthly trading periods in order to maximise customer turnout and sales. This approach is particularly significant in the context of elderly consumers, who typically receive pension payments shortly after the end of each month. The study revealed that grocery retailers in Tembisa Township predominantly employ odd and psychological pricing strategies to influence consumers' perceptions of prices. These strategies aim to make prices appear lower, thereby driving sales and revenue. Notably, the introduction of the concept of "eye-level pricing" in the retail sector represents a significant contribution to academic

literature, as it offers new insights into the impact of product placement on consumer behaviour.

Furthermore, the study identified several challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of marketing communications and pricing in grocery food stores. These challenges may include ensuring consistency in pricing strategies across different product lines, managing the impact of external factors such as competition and economic fluctuations, and optimising the use of promotional campaigns to drive sales and customer engagement. By addressing these challenges, grocery retailers can improve their marketing efforts and ultimately drive business growth.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS TO RETAIL STAKEHOLDERS

The recommendations to grocery food stores stakeholders are provided based on the findings of study as aligned with the secondary research objectives.

5.6.1 Secondary objective 1: Marketing communications/promotions strategy

The findings of the study discovered that traditional media platforms, such as pamphlets, local newspapers and television and digital platforms (social media and short-messaging services (SMS)) are used to communicate retailers' promotional campaigns. In addition, the findings revealed that promotional campaigns in the grocery stores are driven by suppliers of grocery products in terms of which products should be included in special deals. The findings revealed that marketing communication strategy comprises of promotional campaigns which are informed by promotional analysis in terms of number of customers attracted to visit the grocery food stores. Marketing communication promotions are carried out to attract customers in the grocery stores to buy so that revenue is generated. These marketing communications are planned considering the days of the week and period within the month. The best time to market has been identified as the mid-month (15th) and end of the month. These are the times when customers can get value from special deals.

The findings further discovered that although identification of specific market is imperative, the marketing communications and promotions are area specific. The findings further revealed that retailers have online promotional campaigns for online

shoppers. Some of the promotions are exclusive to online store customers. Exclusive deals create a sense of value, generate interest and differentiate these customers with unique benefits. Furthermore, the findings further discovered that tracking systems and analytics are used to measure the results of promotional campaigns, enabling retailers to monitor customer reactions to promotions across various channels. The findings discovered that promotional campaigns are tied up with the use of rewards points, loyalty card system, point sale promotions, promotional displays, store ambassadors, use referrals, and exclusive online promotions.

5.6.1.1 Recommendations derived from attainment of secondary research objective 1

Based on the findings outlined in this section, it is recommended that grocery food stores should appoint and train retail buyers to acquire negotiating skills to have the ability to get reduced deals from suppliers when signing store-supplier contracts. In addition, it is recommended that grocery food stores should keep online customers' database with special days, such as birthdays and wedding anniversaries, to have personalised exclusive promotions for these customers. Grocery food retailers are encouraged to maintain the use of tracking mechanisms throughout promotional periods to evaluate campaign effectiveness. Information derived from these mechanisms can assist in identifying media platforms that best engage the intended customer base. Moreover, it is recommended that grocery food stores should continue the use of rewards points tied with promotional campaigns, loyalty card system, point sale promotions and store ambassadors, if these yield revenue.

5.6.2 Secondary objective 2: Pricing strategy

The study revealed that grocery stores in Tembisa Township predominantly employ odd and psychological pricing strategies to make prices appear lower to consumers. These strategies are designed to influence customers' perceptions and drive sales. Furthermore, the study found that inventory availability plays a significant role in determining prices. When stock levels are high, stores often use cross-merchandising, bundle and combo pricing to clear inventory and boost sales.

Additionally, store location was found to impact pricing, with prices varying across different areas. Some locations have higher prices due to factors such as rent, transportation costs, and local competition. By contrast, stores in other areas may offer lower prices due to lower operational costs. These findings contribute new insights to retail literature, highlighting the importance of considering product availability and location when developing pricing strategies. By understanding these factors, retailers can optimise their pricing approaches to drive sales, revenue, and customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that pricing of a products are determined by three key factors, namely, the manufacturing cost, strength of the brand in the market (refer to as packaging) and quality associated with the product. The pricing strategy of retailers relies heavily on negotiations with suppliers. Moreover, the findings revealed that retailers use displays for complementary products together, to create perceived value, increase average transaction value and encourage multiple purchased. This strategy leverages product combinations to drive sales and revenue. Pricing strategies revolve around offering low-priced combos and bulk buying options on fast-moving products, ensuring they remain affordable and competitive for customers. Another pricing strategy used by retailers is dynamic pricing, where special pricing points are applied on specific days of the week. The findings revealed that a detailed pricing method is being used on food and vegetable market, The price method priorities convenience and tends to yield benefits, as customers tend to ease off over price consideration. To access shelves in stores, the suppliers pay for shelf space, with premium visibility spots commanding higher fees by the store. The findings further discovered that what is called “eye level pricing” is used to capture customers’ attention at the point of sales for visibility. In addition, when putting promotional prices, the normal prices of products are not removed from displays for customers to evaluate the price differences. The use of detailed pricing and eye level pricing adds new insights to retail literature. The study further discovered that grocery food stores use loyalty and rewards cards by customers to gain points and access to reduced prices. The findings from onsite observations provided insights regarding the major difference on the functionality of loyalty cards and reward cards of these different grocery food

stores. With loyalty cards, customers earn points which are translated into cash that can be used to purchase products in the respective stores. Store Rewards is a free loyalty programme that gives customers points called Rewards or Cash Back when they shop at those specific stores. The more they spend, the more they earn and can buy at discount prices or use at a later stage. When customers buy more from the same brand store, the more points they are likely to earn. Customers with a reward card enjoy exclusive discounts. When they use their card during purchases, they get to buy products at a reduced price, unlike non-reward cardholders. In addition, the findings discovered that staff in the grocery food stores were appropriately trained on the reward program and there is a table set aside for cards and reward program.

5.6.2.1 Recommendations derived from attainment of secondary research objective 2

Grocery food retailers should build strong brand presence in the market to attract many suppliers to compete for shelf space so that they have more bargaining power. This will allow grocery food retailers to have power on retail prices of products. Grocery food stores should continue with psychological and product bundling pricing if these pricing strategies yield increased revenue. Grocery food stores should continue placing normal and promotional prices on the products on special, as this promotes transparency and has potential to bring trust from customers. Grocery food stores should be aggressive to persuade customers to sign up for loyalty and rewards cards which will drive these customers to their stores. In addition, grocery food stores should have safe access to parking and entertainment and functional facilities such as Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), as these attributes have a potential to attract customers into the malls.

5.6.3 Secondary objective 3: Challenges experienced by grocery food retailers

The findings discovered that promotions and prices are developed by a stores district committee and suppliers. This serves as a challenge in their stores as the store manager had to negotiate for improved promotional campaigns. In addition, the findings revealed that one of the challenges they experience includes setting prices of the products as consumers buy based on the fixed price not on loyalty. The findings further discovered that one of the challenges affecting marketing communication

strategies is the issue of stock discrepancies, due to delayed system updates. When promotional offers are advertised on the software applications and customers respond well, they find that the product in question is out of stock; this leads to customer complaints ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the marketing efforts. In addition, the findings revealed one of challenges with the combo (product combination) pricing strategy is that certain products in a promotional bundle are sold at a loss, when the supermarket could not secure a supplier's discounts, potentially impacting profit margins. The finding that pricing of product combinations in grocery food stores often leads to loss is new. The findings revealed that pricing strategy is influenced by seasonality, especially with fruit, if fruits are out of season. Fruits will be sourced from other countries or imported. As a result, the prices become higher if compared to our locally sourced oranges in season prices. The findings revealed that while the marketing strategy promises customers low prices, rising inflation and increasing costs make it challenging to keep this promise. Retailers must balance cost considerations with their commitment to customers.

In addition, the findings uncovered that grocery food stores face challenges such as high supplier prices and stock availability. To overcome these challenges, building a network of reliable suppliers who offer competitive prices becomes crucial, requiring significant effort and relationship building strategies. The preceding findings regarding the high prices of suppliers add new insights. Moreover, the findings revealed that one of their marketing communication challenges is ensuring pamphlets reach the target audience when distributing them. Issues include inaccessible areas in the township due to safety concerns and distributors not following instructions. This results in some pamphlets not being delivered. This can lead to existing customers missing out on promotions or potential customers being unaware of deals, ultimately affecting foot traffic in the shop.

Lastly, the findings discovered that one of marketing communication strategy challenges is timely delivery, particularly during promotions that drive a high-volume order. With the shop primarily servicing an old age home, managing deliveries can be complex. Elderly recipients often have fixed schedules, which leads to missed deliveries when the driver arrives at their destination. The grocery retail store staff

must follow up with phone calls to reschedule, adding complexity to the delivery process.

5.6.3.1 Recommendations derived from attainment of secondary research objective 3

To improve operational efficiency and responsiveness to market dynamics, businesses should decentralise pricing and promotional decisions by empowering store managers to adapt strategies to local conditions. Implementing dynamic pricing models that respond to demand fluctuations, seasonal trends, and inventory levels can help optimise revenue and reduce losses. For example, a simple message like “Out-of-season fruit imported just for you” subtly communicates to customers that import costs are reflected in the pricing, helping to manage expectations around discounts. Enhancing inventory management through real-time tracking and automated updates will reduce the risk of stockouts and overstocking. Building strong relationships with suppliers is crucial for negotiating better prices, discounts, and payment terms. Continuously updating the supplier list helps identify new entrants who may be more open to negotiation as they seek market access. Profitability can also be improved by refining product bundling strategies—ensuring that high-margin items in a bundle offset the cost of lower-margin ones. Marketing efforts should expand beyond traditional pamphlets to include digital channels such as social media and local WhatsApp groups, while also improving distribution logistics and partnering with community organisations to reach underserved areas. Delivery processes should be streamlined by offering flexible scheduling and collaborating with services that specialise in serving elderly customers. Pricing strategies must be regularly reviewed and adjusted in response to inflation and changing market conditions to remain competitive. Investing in technology across inventory, supply chain, and customer engagement functions will further enhance operational performance. Finally, implementing customer loyalty programmes can encourage repeat purchases and reduce sensitivity to price changes.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A purposive sampling method was used in the study in selecting participants. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the broader retail industry

but are applicable specifically to grocery food stores. In addition, the research objective was not to be representative, but to investigate the marketing strategies of grocery food stores operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township and allow other researchers to transfer the findings. Furthermore, the study was confined to grocery food stores only operating within Tembisa Township which is located within the borders of the Gauteng Province, South Africa which served as geographic limitation. Qualitative approach was used to collect in-depth data, and a small sample size of 11 participants was used, and five onsite observations were conducted due to limited budget. Having limited budget served as limitation in the study to cover large population and conduct more onsite observations.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From the research findings, conclusions and limitations discussed, the following suggestions for future research are provided: As the study was confined to grocery food stores, application of this study on suppliers and manufacturers of grocery products may yield different results, which could be of benefit to the grocery retail industry. As the study was confined to one township in one province, the views of people outside the selected participants were not represented. Future research could aim to identify more participants in other townships and provinces of South Africa. Furthermore, expanding the sample by including customers may produce different results.

As the study used a qualitative approach and covered open-ended questions only, future research should try to incorporate a mixed methods approach to cover closed questions and more participants using surveys. As the marketing communications and promotions and pricing appear to be key elements in the marketing strategy, therefore, further research can be conducted to determine the relationship between the marketing communication budgets, pricing strategies and its impact on sales in the grocery food stores. In addition, future research could focus on how to measure the effectiveness of online promotions, loyalty programmes and reward programmes on the revenue of grocery food stores.

Setting a price was found to be a complex task in grocery food stores, therefore, future research should focus on different approaches and skills needed to render the task without hinderances.

The study discovered the use of loyalty and reward cards to entice customers to buy in larger quantities or buy combos (combination of related products). Therefore, future research should focus on developing measure or metrics to measure the effectiveness of these methods.

In the current study, it was found that female participants constituted the majority. Therefore, further studies may be conducted to further establish the gender parity in the management of grocery food stores.

Further research can also be conducted using the desktop approach to investigate the messages of the online marketing communication and promotions to gain insight on how technology is used as part of e-commerce.

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study aimed to understand how these retailers navigate the complexities of marketing communications and pricing in a township context, and how their strategies compare to findings from previous research. The insights gained were used to draw conclusions and formulate practical recommendations for improving marketing effectiveness and operational efficiency in similar retail environments.

The findings revealed that marketing communications and pricing strategies are primarily guided by the stores' overarching marketing objectives. Grocery retailers in Tembisa utilise a combination of traditional tools—such as in-store displays, pamphlets, television, and local newspapers—and digital platforms like social media (particularly Facebook) and websites. These channels are used in tandem to reinforce promotional messages and reach a broader audience. However, the effectiveness of these tools is often hindered by logistical challenges, such as pamphlet distribution issues in inaccessible areas due to safety concerns and non-compliance by distributors, which can result in missed promotional opportunities and reduced foot traffic.

Pricing strategies in these stores are influenced by several factors, including supplier costs, product availability, quality, and seasonality. For instance, when fruits are out of season locally, they are imported, leading to higher prices that conflict with the stores' promise of affordability. This creates tension between maintaining customer trust and managing rising operational costs due to inflation and supply chain constraints. Moreover, pricing decisions are often made by district committees and suppliers, limiting store managers' flexibility and creating challenges in executing effective promotional campaigns.

The study also uncovered operational issues affecting marketing communication, such as stock discrepancies caused by delayed system updates. These discrepancies lead to customer dissatisfaction when advertised promotional items are unavailable, undermining the credibility of marketing efforts. Additionally, combo pricing strategies—where multiple products are bundled together—sometimes result in losses when supplier discounts are not secured, further impacting profit margins.

Another significant challenge identified is the complexity of managing deliveries, especially during high-volume promotional periods. This is particularly relevant for stores servicing elderly communities, such as old age homes, where delivery schedules must be carefully coordinated to meet specific needs. Despite these challenges, loyalty and rewards programmes are actively used by customers to access discounts and accumulate points, although the effectiveness of these programmes varies across different stores.

Onsite observations provided valuable insights into the functionality and customer engagement levels of loyalty programmes, highlighting differences in how they are implemented and perceived. The research suggests that grocery food stores should engage in ongoing assessment and adjustment of communication practices and pricing approaches to sustain competitiveness and respond effectively to market shifts. Building strong supplier relationships, improving inventory systems, and enhancing communication channels are essential steps toward overcoming current challenges.

To conclude, the investigation expands insight into township retail marketing dynamics, while providing practical recommendations to support grocery food retailers

in refining their strategic initiatives. The chapter closes by acknowledging the study's limitations, which include the scope of geographic coverage and the reliance on qualitative data, suggesting areas for future research to build on these findings.

5.10 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Embarking on this master's research project was both a daunting and transformative journey. At the outset, the task felt overwhelming, but through perseverance, I developed resilience, a deeper sense of personal commitment, and essential time management skills. This process significantly enhanced my academic writing abilities and broadened my understanding of the marketing discipline. Balancing multiple roles—as a mother, a full-time professional, a student, and a semi-entrepreneur—while conducting rigorous academic research was a true test of endurance and adaptability.

During this journey, I explored a wide body of academic work related to marketing, developing an informed appreciation of multiple research frameworks and methodological approaches. I learned how to conduct field research with academic rigor, analyse data meaningfully, and present findings in a scholarly manner. I also developed the ability to make practical recommendations for stakeholders in the grocery retail sector, articulate research limitations, and propose directions for future studies. One of the most valuable aspects of this experience was learning to accept constructive criticism from my supervisor, which helped refine both my thinking and my work.

Ultimately, this research has underscored the critical role that marketing communications—particularly promotions—and pricing strategies play critical role in retail success. It is essential for grocery food retailers to select appropriate communication tools to effectively create awareness around promotional campaigns and pricing offers. In a competitive market, these strategies are not just operational choices but strategic imperatives that influence customer engagement, loyalty, and overall business performance.

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APPENDIX A - Consent form and question guide



Permission for an academic research study Dept. of Marketing management & Retail

Research conducted by: Ms. Lindiwe Maphumulo Cell:
063 686 0625

Dear Shopping Mall Manager

Kindly accept our request to obtain your permission to allow retailers in your shopping mall to participate in our research study. Retailers are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Ms Lindiwe Maphumulo, Master of Commerce student from the Department of Marketing and Retail Management at the University of South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the marketing strategy of Food Retail Stores operating in the Tembisa Township, South Africa. The employees' perceptions on the marketing strategies of the food retailers operating in the shopping malls will be captured in order to recommend how these marketing efforts can be improved going forward to ensure increased number of customers to shop at the malls.

Please note the following:

- The interview should take 30-45 minutes of participants.
- All responses will be kept confidential. This means that the responses will only be shared with the research team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify participants.
- The participation in the study is very important to us; however, participants may end the interview at any time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal, and to the benefit of the retailers operating in the shopping mall. We will provide retailers with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof SS Makgopa at 0784775209 (e-mail: makgoss@unisa.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that you understand the information given above and that you give you're a permission to allow retailers in the shopping mall to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Manager's signature

Date



INTERVIEW
GUIDE.pdf

APPENDIX B - Consent form and on-site observation sheet



Consent for on-site observation an academic research study

Department of Marketing management and Retail

Research Title: Marketing strategies of Grocery food retailers operating in shopping malls of Tembisa Township, South Africa

Research conducted by:

Ms P.L. Maphumulo (36390631)

Cell: 0832129841

Dear Store Manager

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Ms Lindiwe Maphumulo, master's Student from the Department of Marketing and Retail Management at the University of South Africa.

The aim of this study is to investigate the marketing strategies (marketing communications and pricing) of Grocery food retailers in Tembisa Township to gain insight on how marketing strategies (promotions and pricing) are executed. Understanding the marketing strategies of grocery retail stores will assist in identifying the marketing tools used. In addition, also identify challenges experienced by implement marketing strategies and furthermore, recommend what can be done by dealerships in developing marketing communication strategies in the future.

Please note the following:

The in-site observations will last for thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour.

Please note that photographs taken will not be published in report with the name of the store.

Other addition responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses and photographs will only be shared with the research team members, and we will ensure that any information we include in the report does not identify participants and stores.

Your participation in the study is very important; however, you may end the interview at any time.

Please take note that you will not benefit directly from your participation as you will not receive payment or financial reward, however, the results of the study will be of scientific and practical importance in developing marketing strategies.

There are no foreseeable physical or psychological risks involved in participation. You might be mildly inconvenienced by the time it will take for interview

Please remember that you don't have talk about something you don't want to.

Please contact my Supervisor, Prof SS Makgopa, on tel. (012) 429-2993 (email: makgoss@unisa.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study or if you would like to be informed of the final findings of the study. The findings will be available by the end of August 2025.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in the interview?

Please sign the form to indicate that you understand the information given above and that you give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Store Representation

Date

Onsite-observation sheet

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods)

[illegible]

Use of loyalty and reward cards

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Number of customers on cashiers' tills

Other relevant observations

[illegible]

**COLLEGE OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE RESEARCH ETHICS
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

12 May 2022

Dear Miss Portia Lindiwe Maphumulo

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
2022 to 2025**

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)
ERC Reference # : 2022_CRERC_004(FA)
Name: Miss Portia Lindiwe Maphumulo
Student No#: 36390631

Researcher(s): Miss Portia Lindiwe Maphumulo; lindiliegh@gmail.com ; 083 212 9841
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Department Marketing and Retail Management
University of South Africa

**"Investigating the marketing strategy of shopping mall retailers in Tembisa
Township"**

Qualification: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Economic and management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years (**12 May 2022 until 11 May 2025**).

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the College of Economic and management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee on **12 February 2022** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College of Economic and management Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no

4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.

6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **(11 May 2025)** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.
8. Permission is to be obtained from the university from which the participants are to be drawn (the Unisa Senate Research, Innovation and Higher Degrees Committee) to ensure that the relevant authorities are aware of the scope of the research, and all conditions and procedures regarding access to staff/students for research purposes that may be required by the institution must be met.
9. If further counselling is required in some cases, the participants will be referred to appropriate support services.

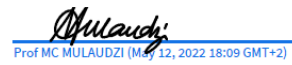
Note:

*The reference number **2022_CRERC_004 (FA)** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Dr Vaola Sambo
Chairperson, CRERC
E-mail: Esambovt@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 4355


Prof MC MULAUDZI (May 12, 2022 18:09 GMT+2)

Prof MC Mulaudzi
Acting, Deputy Executive Dean: CEMS
E-mail: tshilmc@unisa.ac.za
Tel: 012 429 3724

APPENDIX D - Marketing communications and promotions



Pamper Steak & Kidney 400g

2 For R45.00 (Smart Price)

R25.99



Huggies Gold Pants Size 5,
Jumbo Pack 50 Nappies

2 For R430.00 (Smart Price)

R279.99



Dettol Even Skin Tone Bath
Soap 175g

2 For R28.00

R18.99

APPENDIX E - Prices of products

The image is a collage of several supermarket product advertisements. The top left features a large ad for **FARMER'S CHOICE** **Chicken**, specifically **Individually Quick Frozen Mixed Portions in 15% Brine**, with a price of **189⁹⁹** for a **5 kg** pack. To the right, a **Sunlight** **Laundry Soap Bar** is shown for **19⁹⁹** (500g). Below the chicken, a **3 DEALS PER CUSTOMER** offer is highlighted for **SASKO** **CAKE WHEAT FLOUR** (10kg), **SUPER MAIZE MEAL** (10kg), and **SPEKKO** **LONG GRAIN PARBOILED RICE** (10kg), all for **R329**. To the right of this, a **NESTLE** **CREMORA COFFEE & TEA CREAMER** (750g) and **NESTLE** **RICOTTY INSTANT COFFEE** (250g each) are advertised for **56⁹⁹**. The bottom right features a **6x1** pack of **UBRAND** **FULL CREAM LONG LIFE MILK** for **89⁹⁹** per pack. Various smaller product labels like **14x150g/30g**, **500ml**, **4x150g**, and **500g** are visible at the bottom of the collage.

APPENDIX F - Loyalty and reward cards of grocery retail stores

Activate Your (mentioned store name) Rewards Card Online

After receiving your store Rewards Card, follow the below instructions:

1. Dial *120*7070*CARDNUMBER#
2. Add Store loyalty reward App on WhatsApp contact using the number 0860 313 141 and send a 'Hi' to sign up.
3. Download the (mentioned store name) app from the [Apple](#) or [Google](#) Play Store.
4. Scan the QR code on the back of your new Store Rewards Card and follow the instructions.

Present Your Store Rewards Card at Checkout

When you're ready to make a purchase at a participating store, simply present your Store Rewards Card at the checkout counter. If you find yourself in store without your Store Rewards card simply log onto your Store SA App, Click the "My Account" tab, then click on "My (mentioned store name) Rewards Card" to access your virtual Store Rewards Card which you can scan at the till. You earn 1 point for every R2 purchase which can be used to buy products at discounted price. Accumulate 1000 points before redemption.

APPENDIX G - On-site observation notes

Onsite-observation sheet store 1

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions):

- At the entrance, there is a stand where all the promotional pamphlets are placed for customers to pick up a copy as they come in.
- Just as you enter, the bundled specials that you can buy using a reward card are displayed.
- The first department on the left as you come into the store is the Fresh Produce department, where there is also a promotion under R100 bundled, with small vegetables that looked like they were suitable for a small household, e.g., 1 kg onions, cabbage, 1 kg potatoes, and 1 kg beetroot.

The following promotions were observed:

1. "Super Savings" promotion, in each department, bundled items that show how much you are saving with the reward card, which comes with free data if you port your number to Store mobile.
2. A Coca-Cola promotion with Boka Rugby Club competing, where you can win prizes worth R5 million and experience prizes when you buy any Coke and Powerade product.
3. A Lunch Box Fillers promotion targeted at back-to-school lunch boxes.
4. A Family Hamper promotion, which includes a 4 kg hamper bundled with Russian, polony, viennas, liver spread, and pizza ham, looking like a breakfast or lunch box combo.
5. A Get More for Less promotion, where you can buy a combo of about 3 to 4 products at an even lower price.
6. 2U Online Promotions, which are online-only promotions for e-commerce purchases.
7. Vegetables sold in bundles under the "Priced Right" promotion.
8. A Store competition where you can save and win your share of R6 million in instant cash on selected items.
9. A supplier (Kellogg's) competition where you can win prizes, including iPhones and X-boxes, when buying one of their 18 items, valid until August.
10. A supplier (Jacobs Coffee) promo, Save & Win, where you can share in R6 million in instant cash when you buy any 3 of their products.
11. A Choose as Good, as the Best for Less promotion, featuring Store brand selected brands with a double money-back guarantee.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods):

Onsite-observation sheet store 2

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions):

Store also had a display at their entrance with a promotional pamphlet and a stand for their loyalty card, which was hard to miss.

- There was a big sign promoting their birthday offer, Store Swipe and Get More this Birthday, targeted at rewarding customers, where you get 50 rewards when you spend R750 or more on advertised products. This promo is in partnership with Nedbank, so if you pay with a Nedbank card, you get a chance to win R5000 in Greenbacks, which is a Nedbank loyalty card.
- A bundle combo was offered for Excella long-grain Rice 10KG, Itau Super maize meal 10Kg, and Golden cake powder 10kg, at a reasonable price from specific suppliers.
- There were supermarket promotions where you buy 2 of the same product at a discounted price.
- A promotion called Never Pay More than the Store Price featured an Essentials Combo of rice, maize meal, and flour from different suppliers.
- A Grooming Kit promotion was offered by one of the suppliers, where you pay for any 2 of their products and pay less.
- The Deals Just for You promotion featured health and beauty products.
- Your Favourite Discount Supermarket promotions offered discounted prices for bakery products.
- The fruit department had a promotion called Citrus Blast, where you stand a chance to win a hamper worth R500 when you purchase 2 of the advertised citrus products.
- A This Week Combo featured 3 vegetable items.
- Another promotion was called Your Favourite Discount, where 3 items were charged at one price under R100.
- Paying with a Capitec card earned you rewards on certain items.
- There were deals called Combos You Need priced at less than R100, much cheaper compared to the competition.
- The Daily Combo focused on items required daily, priced at less than R100.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods):

The pricing promo was related to their upcoming birthday, and some were linked to the reward program. Pricing is also based on the product item, with certain items discounted or bulked at a lesser price.

- There is no price discount, but when you buy certain products stipulated in the promo for a minimum of R750, you get 50 rewards on your loyalty card.
- An Essential Bundle features 3 essential items at R99.
- A Cupboard Combo offers a Combo You Need at R90.
- There is a promo called Never Pay More than the Store Price, where items are charged cheaper than the competition.
- The Your Favourite Discounted Store promotion features a 3-item combo charged at less than R70.
- The This Week Combo, also called 999 for all, features pricing of less than R79 for 3 items, with vegetables limited to 2kg or less.

Use of loyalty and reward cards

Store Rewards is a free loyalty program that gives you points called Rewards or Cash Back when you shop at Store stores. The more you spend, the more you earn, which you can later use for discounts or free stuff.

How It Works is that you Get a Card– Sign up for free in-store usually at the till or sometimes online.

Every time you buy something you will need to scan your Rewards card or give your phone number linked to it.

What you get is 1 Reward point for every R1 spent. When you reach 1,000 points you'll get a R10 voucher like a coupon

Number of customers on cashiers' tills

There about 10 and more and there were about 7 tills open.

Other relevant observations

Store is more like a wholesaler they sell lot of things in bulk, these that are combos are essential things that are needed by any household.

A very reasonable price. Most of the promos are on unknown brands that you will necessary not buy. Every till is either with birthday promo or supplier promo

Onsite-observation sheet store 3

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions):

This store featured a promotional stand near the entrance, where customers are greeted by a stand with various offers as they entered. The store was bustling, and the fruit and vegetable section to the left showcased clearly marked promotions.

The following promotions were observed:

1. Fruit Bundle Deal: A bundle of the same packets of fruit priced at a discounted price when bought in sets of 4, offering a clear discount from the single packet price. This discount applies with or without the Smart Shopper loyalty card.
2. Weekend Winner Special: A promotion on packets of vegetables offering a discount when bundled in sets of 2, valid until the end of the weekend. This promotion is exclusively available to Smart Shopper cardholders.
3. Thomson Family Hamper: A supplier promotion featuring a bundle of the same product at a discounted price.
4. Birthday Big Deal: A promotion on selected items, valid until July 23rd.
5. Birthday Deals: Selected items discounted and marked as "SAVE".
6. No Name Everyday Value: A promotion offering discounts on selected No Name items.
7. Bank Promotion: Earn up to 30% back in eBucks and 20% back on in-store promotions when using an Bank card (name of the bank mentioned).
8. Clover Promotion: Buy any 3 Clover items and stand a chance to win an air fryer or microwave. Customers are prompted to write their contact details on the slip and place it in the entry box located near the entrance.
9. Red Tag Prices: In-store discounted prices on selected items, clearly marked with red tags.
10. New Flavor Launch: Marketing of a new flavor of a juice brand, informing customers of the new available flavors.
11. In-Aisle Promotions: Big signs highlighting items on promotion in the aisle.

12. Scan and Win: Buy a supplier's brand product, scan the QR code, and stand a chance to win a share of R500,000.

13. Buy All 7 Combo: A combo promotion featuring essential family food items at a discounted price of less than R600.

14. Essential Food Combo: A bundle of 3 essential food items usually bought by families at the end of the month, offered at a discounted price.

15. Deodorant Promotion: Buy any 2 deodorants from a specific supplier and stand a chance to win 1 of 10 VIO double tickets to Comic Con. Follow the promotion to enter via WhatsApp. 16. Cleaning Items Promotion: Buy all 4 cleaning items from a new supplier at a very reasonable price.

17. Jacobs Promotion: Buy any 2 Jacobs products and swipe your Smart Shopper card to win a share of R500,000 in Smart Shopper points.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods):

- Their standard prices are labeled with a white sticker.
- There are prices called Loyalty Program prices - these are the prices you qualify for when you present a Loyalty Program card at the till.
- Our Birthday is Big Deal prices for selected items that have been discounted from their original prices. These prices are quite competitive compared to their competition.
- Pricing is based on suppliers, especially new brands that are new to the market, priced very reasonably. This shows the variety of suppliers being accommodated to ensure that they cater to different kinds of customers and are introducing new brands to the market.
- Pricing is based on No Name brands, which promise a money-back guarantee.
- Some promotions show how much you save in big bold letters within the deal, instead of the price of the item.
- Red price stickers are used for all standard prices that are discounted for a period, normally priced at R0.99, labelled as low prices.
- Combo prices are discounted and lower than if you had to purchase single items separately.
- Everyday use pricing is clearly discounted for items that are for day-to-day consumption.
- Essential combos of 1-2kg quantities in sets of 4 are charged at less than R10.

Use of loyalty and reward cards

Their loyalty program is a free rewards system that gives you points, like cash back, when you shop. You can turn these points into discounts, free groceries, or even fuel savings. To get started, you sign up for free in-store, online, or via the app. Every time you shop, you present your loyalty card, which is scanned before you make payment at the till. For every R1 you spend, you earn 1 point, and sometimes more on special deals. You can redeem your points for discounts at checkout, free items like bread and milk, or fuel discounts at BP garages if your card is linked. Additionally, you can earn extra points on certain days, such as double points day, and enjoy personalized discounts picked just for you. If you link your loyalty card to BP, you can also save up to R2 per litre on fuel.

Number of customers on cashiers' tills

All their tills we open about 8 and there were about 8 – 12 people on the queues.

Other relevant observations

There was a buzz as you come in, most people were buying their groceries, taking advantage of the combo deals and birthday deals

Most of the promos are on unknown brands that you will necessary not buy

Most of the Isle had promo or supplier promo

Onsite-observation sheet Store 4

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions):

This store effectively utilizes its entrance as a marketing tool to showcase all its new and existing programmes. Upon entering, customers are greeted with promotional pamphlets neatly placed on the trolleys, and a kiosk strategically located near the entrance offers additional pamphlets for those who may have missed them.

As customers enter the store, they are presented with an attractive display of products, including flowers, bakery items, sweet treats, and seasonal gift ideas. Selected products that complement each other as gifts are thoughtfully placed together at the entrance, with clear and prominent discounts labeled on them.

The store offers a range of promotions to its customers, including:

- Xtra Saving promotion: Exclusive discounts on select items for loyalty program customers, providing them with additional savings opportunities.
- Everyday Value promotion: A selection of items is promoted and priced competitively to offer customers great value for their money.
- As Seen on TV price promotion: The store showcases the original price of an item alongside the discounted price, providing transparency and highlighting the value of the promotion. The prices reflected are the same as those advertised on TV.
- Swipe & Save promotion: When customers swipe their loyalty card, they can see the amount they will save on their purchases, making it easy to track their discounts.
- XXL Savings promotion: Special deals on select items are available to loyalty program customers, offering them even more savings opportunities.
- "SAVE" promotional deals: The store offers various promotional deals under the "SAVE" banner, providing customers with additional ways to save.
- Everyday Value promotion: Discounted prices are offered on select items in the store, making it easier for customers to purchase everyday essentials at a lower cost.
- Lower than Last Year deals: The store highlights certain items that have been priced lower than the previous year, demonstrating its commitment to offering customers the best value.
- Vegetable packages comprising three items are made available for a total price of R50, providing customers with a practical and budget-friendly way to shop.
- Partnership with Vitality: When customers purchase one of the store's 2500 healthy food items, they can earn up to 75% back in Vitality points, providing them with an added incentive to make healthy choices.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods):

The store offers various pricing strategies to provide customers with great value. Here are some key features:

- Loyalty Program Discounts: All discounted prices apply when you have a loyalty program card. These special prices are only accessible when you present your loyalty card at the till, ensuring that loyalty program members receive exclusive benefits.
- Competitive Pricing: The store's XXL Savings section offers selected items at discounted prices from their original prices. These prices are carefully set to be quite competitive compared to the competition, making the store a great destination for customers looking for value.

- **Transparent Pricing:** The prices displayed on products clearly show the amount you're saving from the deal, along with the new price in large print. This transparency helps customers understand the value of their purchase and makes it easier to make informed decisions.
- **Affordable Pricing Strategy:** Most prices end in .99c, which is a deliberate pricing strategy aimed at maintaining the perception that the products are affordable. This approach helps to attract price-conscious customers who are looking for great value.
- **Discount Presentation:** The store lists discounts in two ways: either as a specific rand value saved or as a percentage off the original price. This clear presentation provides customers with a detailed understanding of the discount they're receiving.
- **Online Exclusive Deals:** Some deals are marked as exclusive to online shopping and can only be accessed when purchasing through the online shop. This approach allows the store to offer special promotions to customers who prefer to shop online.
- **Essential Vegetable Combos:** The store offers essential vegetable combos consisting of 1-2kg quantities in sets of 4, priced at less than R10. These combos provide customers with an affordable and convenient way to purchase fresh produce, making healthy eating more accessible.

Use of loyalty and reward cards

loyalty program is a free rewards program that helps you save money every time you shop. You get exclusive discounts and earn cash back, which is deducted from your grocery amount at the till. You can use the card for both in-store purchases and online shopping via the store's app, qualifying you for discounts. Every time you shop, scan your loyalty program card, or use your ID number, or enter your card number. As a member, you can unlock member-only prices on thousands of products and use your points for cash back at the till. Additionally, you'll enjoy Xtra Hot Deals, which offer deep discounts exclusive to members, and Personalized Specials, featuring tailored offers based on your shopping habits. If you shop online, you'll also qualify for free delivery or discounts

Number of customers on cashiers' tills

All their tills we open about 7 and there were about 7 -10 people on the queue.

Other relevant observations

There was a buzz of their online pickers picking items for the online delivery and also a buzz of people taking advantage of the loyalty discounted pricing

Lot of packers from different suppliers packing their items and show casing their new products.

They have about 5 tills for 10 items only and the rest are for the normal groceries,

Their loyalty cards are visible at the tills and quick tutorial on how to sign up

Onsite-observation sheet Store 5

Marketing communication (promotion) activities (types of promotions):

As you pass by the store, you're greeted by large signs on the wall featuring promotional flyers for selected in-store items that are on sale or discounted. Although the stand that normally carries the pamphlet was empty, possibly due to a stockout, all the specials were displayed on a wall frame, resembling a copy of the pamphlet. This store appears to cater to bulk buyers, as most items are sold in bundles of 3 to 20 at low prices.

The following promotions were observed:

- Extra Savings: "Get more" promotions featuring products bundled in pairs, with a clear message of "buy both for" and a discounted price. The promotions clearly highlight the offer's validity period, specifying the start and end dates.
- White Sticker Products: Regular products are displayed with white stickers, and some still offer a "buy 2 for" deal at a discounted price.
- Supplier Competitions: Customers have a chance to win one of 10 R100 cash vouchers every month by purchasing products from specific suppliers.
- Discounted Product Lines: Prices in green indicate discounts on specific product lines, such as the "Herbal only deal".
- Quantity-Based Pricing: Prices decrease as the quantity purchased increases. For example, a product might be priced at R99 each, but R96 each when buying 10, and R95 each when buying a pallet or more.
- Brand-Specific Discounts: Certain promotions offer discounts on specific brands, making them cheaper than their competitors.
- Combo Deals: Bundles of essential household food products or specific brands are offered at a combined price, which is cheaper than buying individual items.
- New Product Promotions: Promotions showcase new product lines or flavors, raising customer awareness and encouraging trials.
- Attention to Customers: Signs apologizing for any inconvenience caused by misprints on pamphlets for specific items demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction.

- Supplier Competitions: Various competitions are run in partnership with suppliers, such as "Energy to go further" and a chance to win a pair of limited sneakers with product purchases.
- Bulk Buying Promotions: Bulk buying promotions are available in the butchery, offering discounts on purchases of 3 to 6 of the same quantity item.
- In-Store Advertising: Larger pillars in each aisle are used for advertising by certain brands, which likely pay a fee to display their products' pictures and names. This makes it convenient for customers looking for specific products to find them easily.

Pricing strategies (types of pricing methods):

- Normal prices are labelled with white or yellow stickers, featuring the shop's name, quantity, and product name.
- Most prices end in .99c, reflecting the store's focus on affordability and making products more attractive to customers.
- "Buy any" deals feature whole number pricing, rather than .99c pricing, providing a clear and straightforward pricing structure.
- Bulk pricing follows the .99c pricing format, with prices varying based on quantity. The more products you buy in bulk, the lower the price per item. For example:
 - Buy each item at R399
 - Buy 10 or more at R389.99 each
 - Buy 20 or more at R384 per item
- Combo deals featuring 3 items with a 10kg quantity are highly competitive compared to other stores, making it a worthwhile purchase to buy these items as a bundle rather than individually.

Use of loyalty and reward cards

No loyalty program

Number of customers on cashiers' tills

There were about 13 tills open and there were about 10 or more people on the queue.

Other relevant observations

People buy in bulk in this store, and there was buzz and it was a Monday when the observation was done. Their bakery is full with longer queues and well-priced.

Combos were a bargain compared to other retail shops, they carried brands similar to other retail food store, so there no compromise on quality. The shop looks very ordinary, no high-end look or furnisher etc

APPENDIX H: EDITOR DECLARATION

Robbie Hitt Freelance Editing, Proofreading and
Assessing of Manuscripts

Member of Cape Peninsular University of
Technology Language Editing Team Member of
Mandela University Language Editing Team

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LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER DECLARATION

I, **Robert Hitt**, being the holder of the following qualifications:

B.A. HONS. (English) H.D.E. certify that I am the language editor for

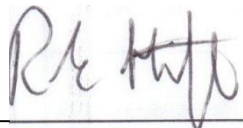
Portia Lindiwe Maphumulo

with a thesis entitled:

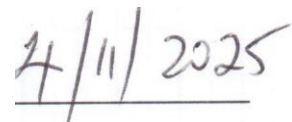
**INVESTIGATING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND PRICING
STRATEGIES OF GROCERY FOOD RETAILERS IN SHOPPING MALLS OF
TEMBISA TOWNSHIP, SOUTH AFRICA**

I have edited the thesis in its entirety. I have made a number of comments regarding
changes that need to be made.

I believe that the thesis is satisfactory for submission to the university examiners, if the
changes are made according to my comments by the student.



LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER



Date