

Perceptions of Craft Beer Brands as Determined by Female Consumers in Ireland

Dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MSc Marketing (Digital Media)

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Declaration

I, Jamie Marie Karp, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School's academic honesty policy.

Signed: Jamie Marie Karp

Date: 19th August 2018

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I would also like to thank my boyfriend, who was my number one supporter through this entire journey. His ongoing love and support helped me always see the bright side of things and for that, I am forever grateful.

I would also like to dedicate this to my father, who is no longer here with us, but still inspires me to always try my best at everything I do. I know he would think it is pretty cool that I went back to school.

Abstract

Within the ever-increasing competitive craft beer industry in Ireland, developing and managing strong brands is critically important for company survival and success. Females are the fastest growing customer segment within this competitive market, thereby becoming an important and influential customer segment to tap into. Brands exist in the minds of consumers, and therefore a brand is only as strong or effective as it is perceived by the consumer. Therefore, female consumer brand perceptions towards craft beer become critically important within this competitive industry.

This dissertation set out to explore the female consumer brand perceptions of craft beer in Ireland. The specific objectives of this research study were:

- To examine how the craft beer industry can attract the female consumer
- Determine the key elements of a brand strategy toward the female consumer
- Factors that influence female consumer's decision to purchase craft beer
- Based on the fact that females are more brand loyal than men (Melnik et al., 2009), examine if brand loyalty can be established with the female consumer

This research study adopted a mixed method approach, by conducting semi-structured interviews with three marketing managers of Irish craft beer brands (qualitative) and developing questionnaires for female consumers aged 18-34 in Ireland (quantitative). All primary research findings, including the secondary research through the form of literature review, was compared with and contrasted to each other.

The findings of this research demonstrate that females perceive the craft beer industry as a way to experience an innovative beer tasting experience but the majority consider themselves as not brand loyal. The primary research also illustrates that female consumer taste and style preferences are evolving alongside the craft beer industry. There is evidence to support that the

style of the beer and brewing origin are important factors to consider for branding towards females in this market. Craft beer brands develop strong, differentiated brands in order to compete within the competitive market. Currently, the brands do not consider gender demographics when developing their branding and marketing strategies. However, evidence within the primary research demonstrate that there are opportunities for the brands to develop branding strategies towards them.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In recent decades, brands have flooded the consumer market and have become increasingly important for companies. Strong brands become companies' single most important intangible asset (Aaker, 1991). It is strongly argued that brands are the best way to compete in a market, by way of creating attributes and associations in a consumer's mind, resulting in perceived added-value (Aaker 1991 & Keller 1993). Strong values connected to a brand, allows a brand to stay at the forefront of a consumers' awareness, thus can be extremely beneficial in the success of a brand.

Within the ever-increasing competitive craft beer industry in Ireland, developing and managing strong brands is critically important for company survival and success (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Having only 3% of the total market share of the alcohol industry, craft beer brands In Ireland are competing in a small, niche market, where their brands need to stand out from the others (Independent Craft Brewers of Ireland, 2018). Brands exist in the minds of consumers, and therefore a brand is only as strong or effective as it is perceived by the consumer (Jones, 2017).

Branded products, like alcohol, have been in the market for a very long time. However, societal perceptions towards alcohol consumption has evolved tremendously (Engs & Hanson, 1990). Historically, female drinking patterns had mostly been associated with the respective societal expectations during any one decade. For example, alcohol was frequently consumed by women during childbirth throughout the ages and the consumption of beer was once considered beneficial for women who were breast feeding (Engs & Hanson, 1990). While female drinking patterns have since evolved, branding and marketing of beer products had reinforced and perpetuated the attitude that beer was consumed by men (Scovotti & Spiller, 2014 and McQuiston & Caldwell, 2016).

Contrary to this notion, in today's modern world, more women are consuming beer products, and as a result, are contributing to the success of the craft beer market (O'Connor 2017). Research shows that female consumers in Ireland are becoming a larger demographic within the ever-increasing craft beer industry (Mintel, 2017). Females are gravitating towards craft beer options, and are just as likely to consume craft beer, as they would be to choose wine or spirits (Scovotti & Spiller, 2014). Accordingly, craft beer brands have recognised the potential to target this demographic, going so far as to tap into this new consumer market with clever tactics. For example, a very successful craft beer company in Scotland, BrewDog, has launched a specific pink beer to market towards female consumers (The Independent, 2018). The historical notion that beer is a man's choice of drink does not remain relevant in today's world.

Consumers' views on craft beer continue to evolve and attract new customer segments. To sustain the growth in micro-brewing, the craft beer industry in Ireland needs to examine female perceptions towards brands so that they can create a craft beer culture as open to women as it is to men. Despite growing interest of females towards craft beers, the researcher found no academic research on female perceptions towards craft beer in Ireland. Industry reports found by the researcher only highlighted female taste preferences but did provide any other consumer insight. Therefore, examining female perceptions towards craft beer brands is worthy of academic research.

1.2 Problem Orientation

With the increase in feminism and empowerment of females, comes changing consumer perceptions and behaviours (Moss, 2009). Historically the craft beer industry was male consumer dominated and research shows that this is still the case (Mintel 2018 and Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). However, with the biggest growth area of craft beer drinkers being young women between the ages of 21-34, the question remains, does the craft beer industry further develop, promote and manage their brands to attract more females? (Donati, 2017). Gendering a product to attract a certain demographic may become problematic, in that this strategy can further perpetuate

gender stereotypes. It is evident that what women want and desire from products and services has changed during the last decades. However, what is not clear, is their perceptions towards an industry that continues to be predominately comprised of and targeted to men.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 “Craft” Brewery Definitions

Despite the significant increase in craft beer availability, one single definition within the literature does not exist. However, common characteristics mentioned throughout the literature help identify what constitutes a craft beer. As stated by Kleban & Nickerson (2012), craft beer recipes are often produced from a malt flagship or brewed full-bodied from German or English brewing origins; the brewing process is slow and production scale is small. Craft breweries or microbreweries focus on differentiation by creating beer locally, using both traditional and non-traditional ingredients to create innovative new flavours (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012 and Reid et al., 2014).

It is very important to define what constitutes a microbrewery or “*craft brewery*” in Ireland, as now more than ever, the definition is being widely adopted and used within the beer industry (Donati, 2017 and Mintel, 2017). Due to the significant increase in demand for craft beer, the meaning behind this term craft has caused confusion to consumers. In Ireland, macro breweries are releasing products into the market claiming to be craft beer products from independent Irish breweries in order to profit from this popular consumer trend (Donati, 2017). This has led to some beers being misidentified as craft beer.

In Ireland, the Irish revenue defines a microbrewery as “an independent brewery that produces under a certain quantity of beer in a year.” (Revenue Irish Tax and Customs, 2018). More specifically, Revenue states the following criteria to qualify as a microbrewery:

- located within the European union
- legally and economically independent of any other brewery
- situated physically apart from any other brewery
- Quantity of beer brewed must not have exceeded 40, 000 hectoliters

It is important to highlight that Irish revenue do not stipulate that the brewery must be located in the Republic of Ireland to be considered a microbrewery, as per their requirements. However, when consulting independent organisations, such as Beoir, other definitions become available. Beoir (2018), an independent organisation, defines Irish craft beer as “*produced on the island of Ireland by an Irish company which makes less than 40,000hL per year*”. The organization strives to raise support and awareness of independent microbreweries in Ireland (Beoir, 2018). Alternatively, the Independent Irish Craft Brewers of Ireland (ICBI), the official representative trade body for independently operated microbreweries in Ireland, launched an official symbol for independently brewed Irish craft beer in attempts to protect the notion of craft beer becoming a diluted concept. The symbol confirms that the brewery the beer comes from is independently owned and small scale, a registered microbrewery (as recognised by Irish Revenue’s definitions), and that the brewer has complete ownership of the brand (ICBI, 2018). While not one definition exists, the characteristics of being produced on a smaller local scale, producing under 40,000hL and being independently owned appear to be the common characteristics of a microbrewery in Ireland.

1.3.2 Setting: The Irish Craft Beer Revolution

The alcohol beverage industry, like many others, has witnessed major disruptions to the marketplace. The landscape of the Irish alcohol industry is changing. As of 2017, research demonstrates that alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland is decreasing (Fitzgerald, 2015). Consumers are becoming more health conscious and are choosing to socialise less in the pub (Mintel, 2018). These changes in consumer behaviour are assumed to be contributing factors in the declining industry growth. However, beer remains Ireland’s most popular alcoholic drink,

accounting for almost 50% of the market share (Alcohol Beverage Federation of Ireland (ABFI), 2018). Overall, Irish consumers are drinking less, however, the desire for diverse flavours, stronger alcohol content and variety has only increased in popularity (Mintel, 2018).

The revolution of craft beer began in the 1970s, in response to mass production of “fizzy beers” dominating the market place (IPSOS, 2018). Craft beer was introduced as the gap for something new in the market. Individuals began brewing their own beer at home, which then evolved into creating microbreweries which produced beer that was made local and used experimental flavours in their recipes (IPSOS, 2018). Today, Ireland continues to witness a craft beer phenomenon. Irish consumers are increasingly more interested in trying unique, value added beers and are willing to pay a premium price for such products (Mintel, 2018). The craft beer landscape has reacted to this changing consumer trend and as a result, continues to witness significant growth, in terms of increased craft beer consumption and the number of micro-craft breweries operating in Ireland. In 2012, there were 15 Irish craft breweries who were classified as Irish craft brands, that is: produced on the island of Ireland by an Irish company (Beoir, 2018). Six years later in 2018, there are 72 (Beoir, 2018, Mintel, 2018 & Passport, 2018). The success of the Irish craft beer industry over the past decade is expected to continue to grow both in on and off-trade premises (Mintel, 2018).

Irish consumers are increasingly shifting away from their traditional pints and are looking for the latest innovative craft beer options, hence creating significant demand for craft beer brands (O’Connor, 2017). In particular, younger consumers and women are gravitating more towards choosing different flavoured beers (O’Connor, 2017). With this increased demand comes a great amount of choice in the Irish market. Local Irish brands strive to survive, compete and stay relevant within a highly competitive, niche market. Global brands, who once dominated the Irish beer market, must now compete within this noisy craft beer industry. Even the producer of Ireland’s most iconic global brand, Guinness, is facing intense pressure to compete and has launched their own versions of “craft beer” extensions, such as Hop House 13 and Rockshore Lager (Mintel, 2018).

With the increase demand for craft beer products in Ireland comes many opportunities and challenges for craft beer brands. As evidenced in a recent Mintel (2018) report, craft beer is high in demand within Europe, providing opportunities for craft beer brands to export. However, these brands run the risk of being perceived as selling-out, becoming mass produced craft brands. This could affect their consumers and cause damage to their brand. Therefore, targeting different consumer segments, such as females, could provide the industry increased market growth, without jeopardizing their craft credentials.

1.4 Justification and Rationale

Dublin, Ireland has witnessed a significant economic and cultural growth in the last decade and continues to witness a strong, healthy economy, where unemployment is low, and the Irish and Dublin economies are ranking amongst the most competitive in Europe (European Commission, 2018). Drinking alcohol remains one of the most popular social pastimes for Irish consumers (Mintel, 2018). With beer being the most popular alcoholic beverage in Ireland, and the changing consumer trends, Dublin is the ideal city to examine when looking at consumer perceptions towards a constant and ever-changing craft beer marketplace. Craft beer in Ireland continues to do well in both on and off-trade premises, with the selection of craft beer brands continuously increasing (Drinks Industry Ireland, 2016). With other alcohol sales declining, craft beer is the only category to benefit from the economic downturn. Ireland continues to witness a high craft beer demand from consumers, who have gravitated away from mainstream, mass-produced beer and have shifted towards smaller, local brands.

Yearly industry reports provided by Mintel, Bord Bia and Passport provide insights into the changing consumer trends towards alcohol consumption, including craft beer. However, these studies provide a general overview of craft beer consumers, with only differentiating gender based on taste preferences. It is worthwhile to examine the female perceptions on craft beer brands in Ireland, as the demographics surrounding craft beer demand and consumption are

changing. To date, there lacks any formal academic research on female perceptions towards craft beer, as it remains a relatively niche market, having developed over the last few decades. The practical benefits of this research will attempt to change this status and unveil a new perspective on female craft beer consumption. The industry leaders will be able to develop their beer products, branding and marketing activities towards women accordingly, which can result in a larger market share.

1.5 Research Question and Objectives

The overarching research question that this research study seeks to answer is:

What are Female Consumers (18-34) brand perceptions towards Craft Beers in Ireland?

For carrying out this research study through qualitative and quantitative methods, the researcher has developed the following objectives:

- To examine how the craft beer industry can attract the female consumer
- Determine the key elements of a brand strategy toward the female consumer
- Factors that influence female consumer's decision to purchase craft beer
- Based on the fact that females are more brand loyal than men (Melnyk et al., 2009), examine if brand loyalty can be established with the female consumer

1.6 Thesis Outline

This dissertation was prepared as part of a 12-week research study at Dublin Business School. A structured format was implemented to acquire findings that supported the overall aims and objectives of this study. An introduction to the topic area is discussed in chapter 1 and highlights the research issue, justification and rationale of this study, the research question and subsequent objectives. Following the introduction, a literature review in chapter 2 will present previous

findings on the major themes concerning the problem area, such as branding, marketing, brand equity, brand loyalty and consumer behaviour. All themes will discuss and relate specifically back to the female demographic and craft beer industry as appropriate. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology in full detail and will provide justification for the mixed method approach. Primary research has been conducted using in-depth interviews and consumer surveys as decided on by the researcher. After careful analysis of the data collected through the mixed method approach, the findings will then be presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 will present a critical in-depth discussion concerning the research question and objectives, by directly relating back to both secondary and primary research. After the completion of cross-referencing and analysis of all the research conducted, conclusions and recommendations for future research are presented in chapter 6. Lastly, chapter 7 will present self-reflection on carrying out the dissertation and highlight the researcher's learning styles.

1.7 Limitations

Like with all short-term studies, there are limitations within the methodology implementation of this study. The nature and scope of this research study will not be able to transfer to all contexts, as the research is focused on a specific gender/age demographics and geographic location. The subjective nature of the research poses risks with receiving biased responses. Additionally, the researcher had never conducted primary research before, therefore, possible research errors could have occurred. Further details of research limitations can be found in section 3.8 of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

To gain a better understanding and knowledge of brand perceptions, the literature review specifically focuses and critically analyses relevant themes associated with this research area. The literature review will begin with defining what a brand is and its significance. The second literature theme is focused on the importance of branding and its implications for the success of a brand. The next theme focuses on the marketing concept and will discuss gender stereotypes within marketing. Brand equity is defined and explained in the next theme and highlights the most important contributing factor to brand equity, which is brand loyalty. The last theme will briefly discuss consumer behaviour trends in relation to the consumer decision-making process and consumer brand perceptions. All of these themes will relate directly back to the female consumer and craft beer industry as applicable.

2.2 What is a brand?

'Brands are frames: they implicitly influence the perceived value of products and product experiences through framing.' (Barden cited in Jones 2017, p.16).

Each and every day, we are exposed to thousands of brands, whether we are consciously aware or not. Brands have been around for centuries, but the strategic importance of a brand is evident now more than ever. In today's competitive marketplace, creating and managing a strong brand image within a consumer's mind allows companies to gain significant competitive advantages (Jones, 2017).

The concept of brand has been widely discussed and debated in the academic world (Aaker, 1991 & Keller 1993). Academics and researchers have not agreed upon one definition of brand. As pointed out by Maurya & Mishra (2012), *"each expert comes up with his or her own definition of*

brands” (p. 122). According to the American Marketing Association (2018), “*a brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme.*” Another definition provided by Kotler et al., (2012) states that a brand is “*an entity which offers customers (and other relevant parties) added value over and above its functional performance*” (p. 467). From these general definitions, it can be argued that a brand is a way in which companies effectively differentiate and promote themselves to be easily identifiable to their consumer base. Furthermore, successful brands create strong, positive and lasting impressions that consumers perceive to be of personal value.

Historically, the concept of brands has evolved over time. In the early sixteenth century, whisky products were shipped from the distillers in wooden barrels with the name of the producer on the barrel (Aaker, 1991). Moving ahead to the twentieth century, consumers have an abundance of choice in the marketplace. Brands become the single most important asset for a company. By developing strong, differentiates brands, companies make it easier to attract and retain consumers preference and loyalty (Jones, 2017).

2.3 Brand Management

Brand management or branding is a discipline more than 30 years old that emerged in the late 1980s, that focuses on managing the intangible asset defined as a brand (Corporate Excellence, 2012). Branding a product/service becomes critically important in any marketplace, because often, competitors are competing for the exact same customers. Therefore, the main role of a branding strategy lies in creating long-term competitive advantage (Todor, 2014). As argued by Todor (2014), a competitive advantage can be achieved primarily by two pathways: low cost or differentiation. It is apparent that only one brand can be the cheapest, therefore differentiation is the best competitive advantage. While there is not one definition of branding provided in the literature, the consensus is that branding provides an effective way to differentiate a company’s products/services from competitors (Islam et al., 2014).

Branding is a technique and strategy in which a company aims to get the product to stand for something in the minds of consumers (Jones, 2017). Branding is aimed at changing the way people think about a particular product or service and as a result, their consumer behaviour towards a product (Jones, 2017). According to Nicks and Hanney (2016), "*brands exist in people's minds as a network of thoughts, feelings, images, stories, associations, colours, sounds, symbols and memories*" (p.3) Evidently, branding has a huge influence on the decision-making process for consumers. Creating emotional brand associations is an important aspect of branding, where consumers feel positive towards a brand. With this emotional association with a brand, consumers are more inclined to cognitively process information about it and develop more trigger points in the minds of consumers, making it easier and faster to recall or recognize the brand (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2015). Therefore, branding can be demonstrated by a heuristic (mental short-cut) that initiates an almost automatic decision, without a consumer exerting much conscious thought (Nicks and Hanney, 2016 & Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be argued that the brand that takes the least amount of mental effort will be the most preferred choice by the consumer. These decisions happen in seconds but are important decisions to consider when marketers craft effective branding strategies (Nicks and Hanney, 2016).

Branding goes further than just differentiating a product; it is about creating brand preference, which occurs when a brand is preferred within a defined category (Aaker, 2014). Aaker (2014) argues that the goal here is to outperform competition through the use of incremental innovation to make the brand more attractive or less costly. Resources spent on clever ways to communicate through advertising, impactful promotions and more social media programs can help make the brand preferred over the competition (Aaker, 2014). Equally important, branding needs to take into consideration continuously evolving consumer behaviour, attitude and technology changes (Jones, 2017). If branding does not reflect consumers' attitudes, then the brand risks negatively impacting their perception towards the brand. Therefore, companies must consider multifaceted consumer perceptions and attitudes when developing their branding strategies.

According to Aaker (2014), successful brand management should focus on building and enhancing these three main elements. *Brand awareness* demonstrates the strength of a brand in a consumers' mind. The awareness of a brand can directly affect consumer's perceptions, liking and consumer behaviour towards a brand (Aaker, 2014). A brand wants consumers to recall their brand first in order to positively affect their consumer decision making process. *Brand Associations* relate to product attributes, design, quality, user imagery, programs, brand personality, symbols -anything that connects the customer to a brand. The brand management goal involves determining which brand associations to develop and enhance. These associations can directly affect the brand-customer relationship, customer decision making process, the brand experience and can impact brand loyalty (Aaker, 2014). *Brand loyalty* relates to acquiring brand loyal consumers and is at the heart of any brand's value, as once achieved, the loyalty from consumers can be persistent. The ultimate goal is to create a meaningful consumer-brand relationship through building and enhancing these key branding elements. All of these elements mentioned are strongly influential and interconnected with each other and are all contributing factors to acquiring brand equity which will be discussed in detail in the literature review.

Another important branding concept in today's marketplace is the concept of brand personality (Kotler et al., 2015). Brand personality is defined as "*the set of human characteristics associated with a brand*" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). With brand personality, researchers are focused on how the personality of a brand allows consumers to express themselves and it seen as a way for a brand to differentiate themselves in a product category (Grohmann, 2009). Jennifer Aaker (1997) developed a framework to determine brand personality by identifying five distinct dimensions (sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness) that is determined by how a consumer characterizes a brand. Consumers may identify brands to represent a certain personality based on if they perceive brands to be extensions of their selves or because marketers portray brands to have certain characteristics. Furthermore, consumers may characterize brands based on human personality traits that are directly associated with their gender (Grohmann, 2009). A pertinent example used by Grohmann (2009) is the Ford car brand which is marketed through the slogan "Built Ford Tough", which can result in consumers identifying this brand as a

rugged, masculine brand (p.106). The creation of brand personalities can be very influential on the perceptions of consumers.

Within the craft beer industry, branding strategies, including brand personality, are critically important in creating a brand image for their customer base. As outlined by Kleban & Nickerson (2012), there are many components in which a craft beer brand must focus on their branding strategy. Firstly, craft beer brands must know who their target market is and the quality of their beer products should be the number one factor to reach this dedicated niche customer segment (Kleban and Nickerson, 2012 & Scovotti and Spiller, 2014). The design of unique labels, logos and images are what makes craft beer brands stand out from competition (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Effective branding within the craft beer industry becomes crucially important for brand awareness and a way to compete within such a highly competitive marketplace

As evidenced by the extensive literature, branding is a multifaceted concept that involves strategic development, planning and positioning of a product/service. It is critical for marketers to employ strategic branding in order to effectively differentiate their products/services in order to resonate with their consumer base.

2.4 The Marketing Concept

The emergence of marketing in its present form has been around since the 1940s, when the television was first introduced, which resulted in the significant growth of advertising (Moss, 2009). The important and widely used concept of the marketing mix was first developed by Jerome McCarthy (1959), which incorporates an organizations' 4P components, such as product, price, promotion and place, in hopes to promote a consistent product positioning within the market (Moss, 2009 and Bellin, 2016). The positioning of the traditional 4Ps directly affect the purchasing decisions of consumers. The product can be chosen based on whether needs will be met. The price of the product can impact the decision to buy, where the consumer may compare different substitutes based on price. Promotion is a popular way to entice customers, as some may be driven by promotional incentives. Lastly, place is a significant factor for buying intention,

as the availability or the convenience of a product/service may play a role in the consumers decision to purchase. This framework continues to be widely used within the marketing literature, as it allows brands to make strategic positioning decision for their products/services.

Marketing literature continued to evolve after the development of the 4Ps and in 1961, Albert Frey conceptualized that marketing could be divided into two categories, relating to offering and process (Moss, 2009). The offering component was concerned with factors such as product, service, packaging, brand and price. Whereas the process element referred to activities such as advertising, promotion, personal selling, publicity, distribution channels, marketing research, strategy formation and new product development (Moss, 2009). However, missing from these earlier models are explicit references to consumers (Moss, 2009). Robert Lauterborn was a strong believer that marketing must help the company deliver more value to the consumer (Kotler et al, 2002). He proposed an alternative to the 4Ps which is meant to be more consumer-oriented and is illustrated below.



Figure 1 4C model

This extension to the marketing mix steps away from the traditional mass marketing approach to focus on understanding what the actual needs and wants are from consumers. The 4P framework later evolved by Bitner and Booms to include an additional 3Ps to the mix: people, physical evidence and process (Kotler et al, 2002). This extended version of the model was designed to consider important marketing elements within the service industry. All of the marketing

frameworks mentioned have one specific goal in mind, which is to effectively position their product/service in a way that will be most effective in reaching their consumer segments.

As evidenced by the literature, marketing is continually evolving; thus, academics and researchers are continuously trying to understand the needs and desires of consumers. Marketing communications plays an integral role in the development of positive brand associations that have meaning, relevance and purpose for customers. Marketing is a core function for a company and strives to highlight a brand's competitive advantage by aligning how the branded product will satisfy the consumer needs, where the brand and consumer can enter a mutually beneficial relationship (Fill & Turnbull, 2016). As highlighted by Kotler et al., (2002), part of developing a marketing strategy consists of a positioning strategy, that includes important decisions regarding the branding of a product or service. For brand marketing strategies to be effective, consumers must be convinced that there are meaningful and advantageous differences in a particular brand.

Modern marketing concepts and principles continue to evolve at a fast rate with the increased usage of new media and technology (Belch & Belch, 2014). Unquestionably, the rise of new media is transforming the customer decision making process and should be considered for an online brand presence. Integrated marketing communications plans advocate the use of multichannel marketing communications, in order to create a consistent brand message across all channels (Fill & Turnbull, 2016). Within this strategy, a brand can advertise through different channels to reach more of their customers and at the right stage of their customer journey. With the rapid growth of social media, use of mobile and access to the world wide web, marketers are now faced with new ways to reach, influence and engage with consumers.

Building strong consumer-brand relationships is at the forefront of marketing activities for craft beer brands. Craft beer market their brands to local restaurants, bars, shops and off licences and festivals (Mintel, 2018 and Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Craft brands also strive to build strong relationships with wholesalers and retailers, as they themselves can serve as promoters of the

brand. Craft breweries typically do not have huge marketing budget like macro breweries. Accordingly, social media has provided craft brands a new marketing platform to promote and advertise their brand with a low marketing budget (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Like any brands, craft beer brands need to be aware of what consumers are saying about them and what their competition are doing in terms of advertising and marketing. Therefore, social media again provides this insight.

2.3.1 Marketing and Gender Stereotypes

Branding products according to societal gender stereotypes has been around for a long time (Solomon, 2017). For example, blue products are for boys and pink is for girls. Historically, branding and marketing efforts were designed to influence and attract male consumers until market research discovered that majority of the household purchase decisions were actually influenced and made by women (Moss, 2009). However, gender stereotypes and roles have evolved tremendously, and are being challenged, which could have a fundamental impact on how marketers decide to profile their customer base depending on gender.

Gender stereotypes exist in many product lines. A recent article by Fine and Rush (2018) highlights that gender stereotypes are present in children's toy products. They argue that some toys can be identified whether they are targeted towards boys or girls by the brand's labelling, sex of the model playing with the toy, and the colour of the product and packaging. Fine and Rush (2018) conclude that gender stereotyping perpetuates old-fashioned views on genders that do not relate to today's modern world. Conversely, According to Pervan (2015), Japan has been instrumental in designing gender-based brands, where companies have produced specific brands for women including a car by Toyota, computer by Panasonic and a beer by Asahi. However, not all brands aimed at specifically targeting women has witnessed the same level of success.

In respect to the alcohol industry, Babycham, the first alcoholic drink specifically marketed towards women, was launched in 1951 and was positioned as a sparkling champagne, that "*nice girls could order with impunity*" (Broadbent, 1996, p.5). Eventually, sales of this brand dropped

dramatically as the brand had perpetuated old-fashioned stereotypes that were not resonating with modern women (Clifton, 1988). More recently, one of the leading Scottish Craft Beer brands, BrewDog, introduced a specific branded pink IPA beer marketed towards women, in support of acknowledging gender pay gap (The Independent, 2018). The company received tremendous backlash on the product offering, as some could argue that it perpetuated the gender stereotypes even greater (The Independent, 2018). It is evident that as societal outlooks and behaviours evolve, brands need to strategically develop their branding so that it reflects these modern views.

2.5 Brand Equity

Brand equity is an important and extremely relatable concept to that of branding and marketing, as strategic marketing management can directly impact brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Brand Equity is conceptualised as the *“added value endowed to products and services by a brand name”* (Kotler et al., p.936). With such high importance, brand equity has been a popular topic of interest to academics for decades, with a vast amount of literature available on the topic. However, the concept can be difficult to define, measure and monitor. Even with this complexity, brand Equity is arguably considered to be the most valuable intangible asset for a company (Jones, 2017). Significant rewards lie with successfully marketing a brand and acquiring brand equity.

Authors Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) have introduced the two most widely accepted definitions of brand equity. Aaker (1991) defines brand equity as *“a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service and/or to that firm’s consumers* (p. 15). Conversely, Keller (1993) defines brand equity as *“the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand”* (p.1). Both widely used definitions have contributed significantly to academic literature and reinforce the importance on the differential value placed on brands by consumers. Therefore, examining the elements contributing to brand equity, as well as monitoring and measuring brand equity is critically important for companies.

Brand equity is primarily evaluated based on two perspectives, one based on monetary values, such as profitability and market share of a company and the other, evaluated based on consumers perceptions about a brand; the way a consumer thinks, feels or acts towards the brand, otherwise known as customer equity (Kotler et al., 2012). A strong brand equals brand loyal consumers, and without that, the brand would not have a lot of worth. Therefore, Kotler (2002) argues that the fundamental asset contributing to brand equity is customer equity.

There have been various models developed to help manage and evaluate brand equity. Each model comes with their strong points and weaker points; however, a few models have been articulated extensively in the literature and are considered the most cited models (Aaker 1991 and Keller 1993). In an era of immense competition and continuous innovative industry changes, it is imperative for marketers to accurately evaluate their brand value, so they have a better understanding of consumer perception and can improve their marketing efforts accordingly. An in-depth understanding of consumer behaviour and brand perceptions allows a company to better position their brand and to make strategic marketing mix decisions surrounding the promotion of their brand.

Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991)

Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991) allows marketers to examine the relationship between consumers and the value of a brand. This model is considered to contain elements that contribute to the foundation for acquiring brand equity. A vast amount of brand equity research conducted has included Aaker's (1991) brand equity contributions and is an effective way to explore this multi-dimensional construct.

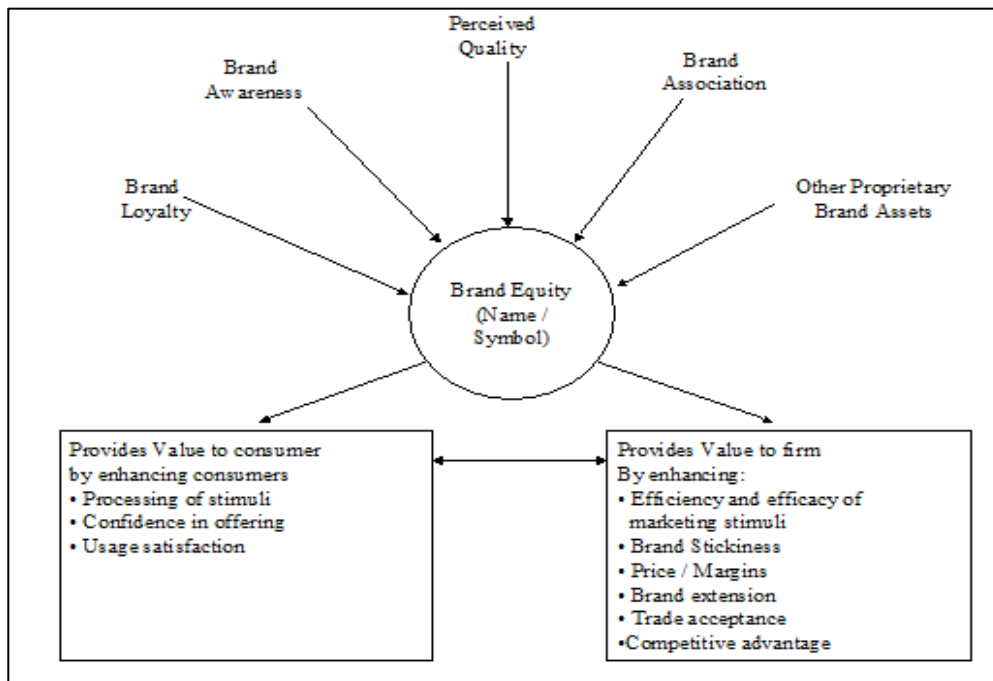


Figure 2 Aaker's Brand Equity Model (1991)

Aaker's brand equity model (1991) divides the assets of brand equity into five distinct constructs (brand awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand association and other). These dimensions are arguably considered the foundation and critical ingredients for enhancing brand equity. The model considers how brand equity provides value to both the customer and the company. This model is widely used by researchers as a standard template to examine brand equity dimensions and provides a simplistic format in which marketers can utilise when assessing their brand equity. It is evident that interrelationships exist amongst the brand equity dimensions. Perceived quality can be directly impacted by brand awareness (prior knowledge of a brand), by associations (a celebrity endorsing a product) and brand loyalty (brand loyal consumers will only purchase perceived good quality products). Therefore, it is important to understand and consider the interconnected relationships that this brand equity model demonstrates.

As argued by Aaker (1991), brand equity assets can also impact a consumers' confidence in purchasing a brand. Perceived quality and brand associations can directly impact consumers level of satisfaction with the product. For example, a consumer who decides to purchase a Guinness

might already have a perceived notion that it is one of Ireland's most valued brands. And this perceived quality could directly impact their satisfaction with the beverage. High brand equity can result in positive consumer behaviours, such as purchase frequency, brand loyalty, price insensitivity and brand referrals (Aaker, 1991, Keller, 1993 and Kotler et al, 2012). Therefore, companies with high brand equity acquire many powerful benefits.

2.5.1 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty is a major contributing factor affecting brand equity, as mentioned in the previous section. Building brand loyalty is imperative within the modern marketing environment and can provide a competitive advantage (Islam et al, 2014). Brand loyalty has been a popular topic of study for researchers. Within the changing marketing landscape, understanding the factors that contribute to brand loyalty remain critically important. In simple terms, brand loyalty reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand (Jain 2017). Loyal customers tend to become repeat customers who will choose a brand without even considering the alternatives and tend to buy more regularly (Islam et al, 2014). It is evident that brand loyalty is constructed over time through various factors, including positive experiences of the brand. Companies who want to retain brand loyal customers recognize that this takes continuous effort on their part to nurture an on-going customer-brand relationship (Islam et al, 2014).

There has been much scholarly discussion and research on what constitutes brand loyalty. Measures of brand loyalty are so numerous and varied in the literature that it would be impossible to include them all in this chapter. Some of the literature refers to the term "*loyalty*" as resulting from one or two measures; whereas other authors view loyalty as a multi-dimensional relationship construct that develops over time (Mishra, 2017). Some researchers believe that the attitude towards a brand directly relates to brand loyalty, whereas others believe that the actual purchase behaviour does (repeat purchase). The definition presented by Jacoby (1975) integrates components of brand loyalty to include both behavioural and attitudinal processes. However, Jacoby has been criticized by academics to not acknowledge the

psychological factors, such as the attitude towards the brand (Odin et al, 2001). According to Dick and Basu (1994), brand loyalty consists of consumers' commitment to repurchase and can be demonstrated by repeat purchase and other actions, such as word of mouth recommendations. However, as noted by Mishra (2017), sometimes repeat purchase does not necessarily indicate customer loyalty if the behaviour is due to situational constraints or out of convenience, which is referred to as "*spurious loyalty*" (Mishra, 2017).

As the brand loyalty concept has evolved over time, from a one-dimensional construct to a multidimensional concept, there are scholars and researchers who argue that different factors play a role in creating brand loyal customers. According to Jain (2017), there are 6 main factors that influence brand loyalty, which are satisfaction, brand image, trust, commitment, word-of-mouth recommendations and importance of relationship. However, there are many others who list other factors. Furthermore, literature suggests that there are gender differences with regards to brand loyalty, where females are more brand loyal than men (Melnyk et al., 2009). Given the vast number of product/service categories, one could argue that loyalty is extremely dependent on the context and the market. Each industry must consider different factors that impact consumer brand loyalty towards their brand. Literature states that brand loyalty is close to nonexistent within the craft beer market, due to consumers continuously seeking out new types of beers to consume (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Craft brands put their best effort forward in trying to counteract this by offering a variety of beers under the same brand name, such as seasonal or festive brews (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). However, it is evident that acquiring brand loyalty within this market is an on-going challenge.

From the literature, it appears that there cannot be one theory or model used to account for brand loyalty factors for all products/services. As supported by the literature, brand loyalty is a multidimensional construct consisting of my different definitions and theories regarding the subject matter. Marketers are concerned with the intent to re-purchase, hence their behaviour. It is evident that a lot of factors contribute to brand loyal consumer behaviour and each industry

needs to examine the specific aspects that contribute to acquiring brand loyal consumers within their respective marketplace.

2.6 Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour can be described as the process and act of searching, purchasing, using and evaluating products or services, with the expectation to satisfy one's needs (Solomon, 2017). Within this framework, marketers are primarily focused on understanding the process behind the decision making and why consumers decide to spend their money or time on products/services (Solomon, 2017). As argued by Fill & Turnbull (2016), managers previously had a higher level of influence over the way their brands were perceived, however with the increase of internet users and access to the online web, consumers now hold more of the influence and way they feel towards a brand.

2.6.1 Consumer Decision Making Process

Marketing academics have created a stage model of the buying decision making process (CDMP). The CDMP is a very important concept to look at when understanding consumer behaviour (Solomon, 2017). As highlighted by Kotler et al., (2012), the consumer passes through the following five stages:

Problem Recognition: The first step in buying process begins with a buyer recognising a problem or need triggered by internal or external stimuli. Examples of internal stimuli include hunger, thirst, whereas an external stimulus can be triggered by seeing something that triggers thoughts about purchasing

Information Search: Consumers often search out specific information prior to their purchase. This stage can be classified into two levels of involvement. One being heightened attention, where a person simply becomes more receptive to information about a product. And the latter

level is action information search, whereby the person is actively reaching out to friends, going online and searching for material regarding the product.

Evaluation of Alternatives: This is the stage in the buying process where the buyer processes product information from the competition. There is not one single process that is followed in this stage, however, consumers do pay attention to noticing the attributes that will deliver their desired benefits.

Purchase Decision: This stage dictates when the consumer decides on the brand to purchase, which may be their most preferred brand.

Post-purchase behaviour: This stage is when the buyer consciously decides if the product met their needs/desires and expresses their level of satisfaction with the product.

This model is useful to consider when looking at consumer behaviour and perceptions, as marketers strive to reach the consumer in each stage of their journey to maximise positive influence.

2.6.2 Consumer Perception

Perception is defined as the cognitive process by which individuals select, organise and interpret stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world (Solomon, 2017). Consumer perceptions are created from their individual interpretation byway of senses (sight, smell, sound, touch and taste) and are based on the way consumers interpret brand information (stimuli) (Solomon, 2017). The way the consumer interprets this information will result in their own internal opinions and purchasing behaviour towards a brand (Kotler et al., 2012). Two individuals can be exposed to the exact same stimuli under the same condition but have completely different perceptions; it is a highly individual process. This highly subjective cognitive process therefore confirms that brands do exist in the minds of consumers and vary amongst consumers.

The term *brand image* reflects consumers' general perception and feeling towards a brand – the perceptions a brand creates in the minds of consumers and arguably effects consumer behaviour (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, Zhang, 2015 & Keller, 1993). Understanding consumer perceptions towards a brand is of much interest and importance for marketers to analyze and understand. Authors are in agreement that brand image is a major contributor to enhancing brand equity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Marketing strategies are implemented directly to influence the perceptions of the consumer, in hopes to establish a positive brand image that will later drive consumer purchase behaviours, resulting in favorable outcomes for the brand, such as higher sales, increased market share and brand equity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Aaker (1991) refers to a brand, with concepts related to internal and external standpoints. The internal version of a brand refers to as a brand's identity and alternatively, the external version of a brand refers to their brand image. According to Aaker both brand image and identity constitute meaning of a brand (Jones, 2017). Therefore, the brand image is created in the consumers' mind and is critically important for the success of a brand.

A recent study was conducted on females' attitudes and preferences towards beer products in Canada. Authors Muggah & McSweeney (2016) examined the following attributes and perceptions of females towards beer. These attributes will also be looked at during this research study.

Packaging: The use of colour in advertising, store design and packaging can influence our perceptions of a brand by evoking our emotions (Solomon, 2017). For example, women are drawn towards brighter colours (Solomon, 2017). As well, the type of physical packaging can affect consumers decisions (Muggah & McSweeney, 2016).

Taste: Taste is one of the important attributes that contribute to our experience of many products (Solomon, 2017). The liking of the taste of a beer product will ultimately affect a

consumer's purchase decision. The research conducted by Muggah & McSweeney (2016) demonstrated that most women preferred sweet flavours of beer.

Price: Price plays a role in consumers' perception, especially when consumers are unfamiliar with a brand (Muggah & McSweeney, 2017). Research shows that craft beer consumers are willing to pay more a premium craft product (Mintel, 2017).

Style of Beer: Literature suggests that the style of the beer affects consumer's beer product perceptions (Muggah & McSweeney, 2017). With the increase in consumers choosing to consume craft beers, more importance has been placed on offering many different styles of beer to attract this consumer segment (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Within the Muggah and McSweeney (2017) study, data analysis conveyed that Ale and India Pale Ale had the most significant correlation of female liking.

Brand: Brands can influence consumer perceptions, and especially more so if the consumer is familiar with the brand and has a positive brand image in their minds (Aaker, 1991, Kotler et al, 2012 & Muggah & McSweeney, 2017). If brands are unfamiliar to the consumer, the brand may no bearing on their perception of the brand, as they may choose the familiar one. Extensive literature suggests that the country of origin as highlighted by the brand may also play a role in the consumer's perception (Adina & Roxana-Denisa, 2015 and Supanvanij & Amine, 2000).

The attributes described above are some of many different elements that can contribute to consumer brand perceptions. However, these ones in particular directly relate to that of purchase intention for craft beers.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review discussed in-depth concepts directly relating to the development of a brand and subsequent brand perceptions. By critically reviewing the literature surrounding these key themes, relevant theories, concepts and studies have highlighted the extensive nature of this

research area and has provided a better understanding of the related concepts contributing to this research study. It is evident that no research has been found concerning female brand perceptions towards craft beer brands, warranting the implementation of the primary research which will be further discussed in the next section.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the research methods and design decisions that were implemented within this study. It is a vital part of the dissertation that describes the research plan, justification and strategy to meet the research objectives. During the study, the researcher has carried out both primary and secondary research, all of which are detailed below. As such, the reader can obtain a good sense of the study and become aware of the techniques employed in order to reach valid and meaningful conclusions. Each section of the methodology chapter provides important information relaying each step of the research design.

This research was carried out using in-depth interviews and a consumer survey, which resulted in a mixed qualitative/quantitative method. Within this chapter, all design methods and decisions to support this approach are presented in six sections. The research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, population and sampling, data collection and data analysis are all discussed in detail within this chapter. The latter sections of this chapter discuss research ethics and methodology limitations. Under each heading, a thorough explanation and reasoning will be provided for each research decision.

3.2 Research Design

The research onion provides a useful framework to enable researchers to systematically make decisions for their research design (Saunders 2015). Therefore, the researcher consulted and followed this framework to make effective research decisions as detailed below.

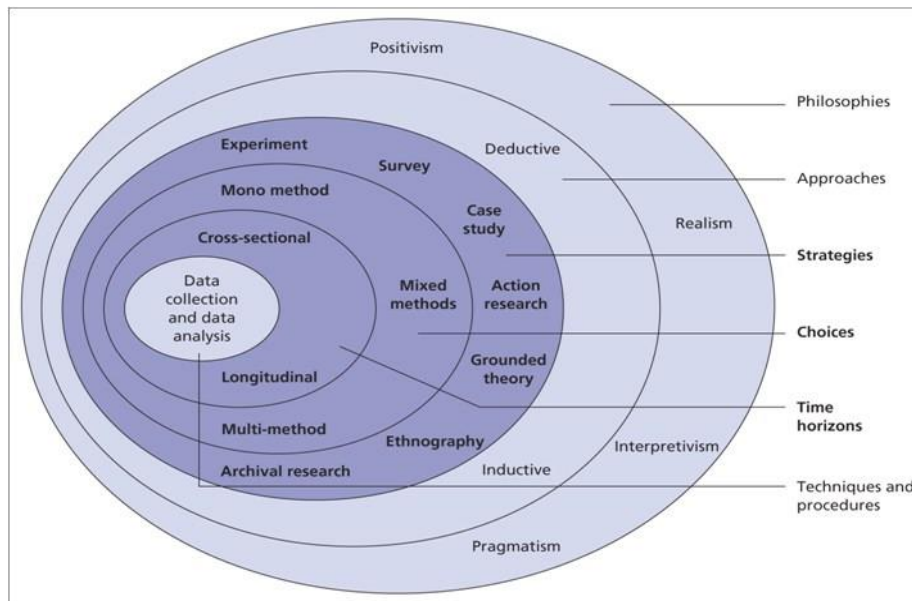


Figure 3 Research Onion

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

By conducting this research, the researcher developed new knowledge in a particular field and embarked on a process that inevitably required developing different types of assumptions. Saunders (2015) argues that a well thought-out and consistent set of assumptions will allow the researcher to create a credible research philosophy, which will help support the methodology choices, research strategy, data collection techniques and analysis procedures. The term research philosophy refers *“to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge”* (Saunders, 2015, p. 124). Simply put, the research philosophy can be defined as the function of how the researcher makes assumptions and thinks about the development of knowledge.

By using the research onion framework, the researcher adopted a pragmatism approach to the study. This approach was based on recognising that there are numerous ways of interpreting the world and understanding research because multiple realities exist (Saunders, 2015). As evidenced by a mixed qualitative/quantitative research approach, the researcher is aware that there is not one single way to interpret information. The researcher considered the complexity

and multiple factors contributing to consumer perceptions and behaviour, which lead to a pragmatist approach. The researcher believes that the combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more complex picture by noting trends and generalisations as well as in-depth knowledge from female consumers' perspectives (Creswell & Clark, 2007). For a pragmatist approach, the researcher focused attention on the research problem and then used pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem (Creswell, 2016). In this research study, the researcher identified that there was no academic literature surrounding females' perceptions towards craft beer, despite their increased consumption patterns, therefore a multi-method approach was deployed in order to gain further knowledge on the area of research.

An interpretivist philosophy is most often used for interviews; therefore, this approach was used as part of the pragmatic philosophy (which allows the integration of more than one philosophy). A qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessments of attitudes, opinions and behaviours, which lends itself to interviews. The quantitative portion of the study focused on a positivism approach, which resulted in a scientific method designed to produce pure data and facts that were obtained objectively. The research conducted was not influenced by human interpretation or bias. The researcher remained neutral and detached from the research to not influence the findings, as the researcher was objectively looking for casual relationships in the data.

3.2.2 Research Approach

A research approach refers to the plan and procedures of the detailed methods of analysis, data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). It is important that the researcher reflects and considers the right choice of approach for their respective research. By doing so, the researcher can make a more informed decision about the research design and which strategies will be most effective for the research topic. After reflecting and deciding upon the most appropriate approach for the research, the researcher was better equipped to align their research design

effectively. The two main types of research approaches are inductive and deductive (Saunders, 2015).

A deductive approach focuses on testing out a hypothesis derived from already existing theory, to see if the theory holds true to their specific area of research. A deductive approach is useful for explaining casual relationships between variables and is often used for quantitative measurement methods. Conversely, an inductive approach focuses more on exploratory data analysis, where the researcher observes and conducts their research to see if patterns appear. After analysing the patterns, the researcher can then create new theories surrounding the knowledge area. Most often quantitative data collection lends itself to a deductive approach. However, after an analysis of the literature and existing theories, it was apparent that an inductive approach should be chosen. This choice was justified due to the relatively new emergence of the craft beer industry and the abundance of theories relating to consumer behaviour and perceptions. Not one specific theory could have been tested to capture all the various factors that influence female perceptions in this relatively new industry. By using an inductive approach, the possible generation of new theories and ideas could emerge.

3.2.3 Research Strategy

A research strategy can be defined as a *“general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question(s)”* (Saunders, 2015, p. 726). It is important to highlight that not one strategy is necessarily better than another. However, by choosing the appropriate strategy, the researcher will be better equipped to answer the research question(s) and subsequent research objectives. Some research strategies are more efficient and lend themselves better to quantitative, qualitative and mixed method research designs.

After the careful analysis of the different research strategy options, the use of mixed methods in the form of surveys was warranted to conduct both objective and subjective primary research regarding the knowledge area. Surveys are a popular and widely used research strategy, as attitudes and characteristics of a wide range of topics and issues can be assessed. Surveys allow

researchers to choose a representative sample, which can be used to infer what the entire population of the target segment might do/think/act. Within this research study, different data collection methods within surveys were used – interviews (qualitative) and questionnaires (quantitative).

The researcher employed an exploratory design model that incorporated the results of the first method (qualitative) to help develop the second method (quantitative). This design was chosen based on the premise that an exploration was needed due to no guiding framework or theory (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The exploratory design model warrants the researcher to first qualitatively explore the research topic with a few participants. The qualitative findings from this research then guide the development of questions for the quantitative survey (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This was done by initially interviewing craft beer marketing managers to gain a greater sense of their branding/marketing activities, and then using this knowledge to develop subsequent questions for the consumer survey.

The exploratory design warrants many advantages due to its two-phase structure. The separate phases make this design straightforward to describe, implement and report and is easily applied to single studies. Challenges that arise from this type of design include time constraints, as this method requires considerable time to implement. Furthermore, the researcher had to decide which data to use from the qualitative phase to design the quantitative survey in order to generate the desired measures (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

3.3 Choice

The researcher chose to conduct the research in this specific manner, as many of the other approaches did not seem appropriate or involved time constraints for a three-month research study. Both experimental and observational research were deemed not appropriate for the timeframe and did not appear to be the most effective approach in answering the research question and meeting the objectives. In addition to these approaches, a case study did not seem

appropriate, as the researcher was not focused on one specific craft beer company. Therefore, the researcher felt that implementing a survey strategy in the way of qualitative and quantitative methods, would provide the necessary information and data to achieve the research objectives within the timeframe set out for the study.

The main research question warrants examination of consumer perceptions towards craft beer brands. However, it was important for the researcher to acquire more context on how the industry was targeting females. Therefore, the researcher felt that the qualitative research in the form of interviews complemented the quantitative research because of its personal nature and ability to provide further context on the issue at hand.

3.4 Time Horizons

Another key consideration when conducting research is deciding on the study design based on the number of contacts with the study population. A cross-sectional study is a “one shot” study taken at a particular time and is the most common used design (Kumar, 2005). Conversely, a longitude design studies the population by looking at perspectives over an extended period of time and is not feasible for the 3-month duration of this research study. When conducting research regarding current perceptions at a certain time of a sample population, such as the one studied in this research, cross-sectional design are deemed the most appropriate (Kumar, 2005).

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is a very important part of the research study. It is the process of collecting information and data based on their research question and objectives. There are two categories of data collection processes: secondary methods and primary methods of data collection (Kumar, 2005 & Saunders, 2015).

Secondary data sources for this study came from existing literature that had been published in books, newspapers, journals, online portals etc. There was an abundance of available information

contained in many different sources for the research topic of consumer perception and behaviour. However, limited academic sources were available regarding the craft beer industry. Most sources referred to in the literature review came from academic, peer-reviewed journals, relevant industry reports/websites and academic books.

Primary data was collected specifically for the research project being undertaken. The data collected was used by the researcher to support the objectives. Primary data collection can be divided into two groups: quantitative and qualitative. The choice of choosing quantitative and qualitative methods depends on the research area and what the overall research objectives are. For this research a mixed-method was used to provide a more in-depth look at the female craft beer consumer and the craft beer industry.

Qualitative data was collected through the use of in-depth interviews with local craft beer marketing managers to acquire a greater understanding of the research issue. Interviews were chosen to provide the researcher a more in-depth look at the industry and whether craft beer brands in Ireland had considered targeting the female consumer. The interviews were conducted in a guided format, that incorporated semi-structured, open ended questions which allowed the respondents to speak freely. The interview questions were set up to discuss specific themes in order to gain contextual insight into the industry. The data collection method for the interviews consisted of one face to face interview and two interviews over the phone. Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher in full detail.

The quantitative data was collected using questionnaires, allowing the researcher to collect data from a large amount of people and provided more control over the research. For this research, this collection method was justified since the researcher wanted to survey a larger population by deploying closed ended questionnaires to render relevant answers for data analysis. The types of questions asked incorporated a Linkert scale, which therefore lessened the amount of time participants had to invest in completing the questionnaire. This situation resulted in reaching more willing participants for the study. The researcher felt it was appropriate to ask one open-

ended question at the end of the survey. This question was critically important for the research and gave flexibility to the participants to answer freely, without being prompted with pre-arranged answers. In general, quantitative methods are cheaper and can be applied during a shorter time duration, than qualitative methods. Also, with quantitative methods, a high level of standardisation is applied, therefore making it easier for the researcher to make comparisons of findings. The method used for data collection for the quantitative research was through the use of Google Forms posted online to Facebook.

3.5.1 Population and Sample

Selecting the most appropriate population sample technique was a very important decision made by the researcher. By selecting the right sample, the data was collected effectively from the appropriate participants. During this academic study, the researcher took careful consideration when deciding on the sampling population for the primary data.

There are two main types of sampling techniques: probability and non-probability (Saunders, 2015). Probability sampling is when you can identify everyone in the population. Conversely, non-probability sampling is when you cannot list all members of the population. As argued by Saunders (2015), sampling an entire population to collect data would not likely be possible or practical during a research study. Therefore, for this research study, a non-probability sampling technique was suitable, as the researcher could not list all female consumers in Dublin. The researcher could not guarantee that all participants had an equal chance of being included in the study.

For the quantitative portion of the study, the population was determined to be female Irish residents aged 18 – 34, based on this age group to be a significantly larger percentage of craft beer consumers. The researcher did not want to limit responses to a specific geographical location in Ireland, as the researcher felt that the demographics chosen had already narrowed the scope of the research enough to generate meaningful and sufficient data.

Within the non-probability sampling method, a snowball sampling approach was used by the researcher. Initially, the researcher used her own judgement and identified a few participants to complete the questionnaire, which resulted in a snow ball effect, leading those individuals into recruiting more participants. However, one individual in particular was instrumental in recruiting a large number of participants for the questionnaire. The Sales & Marketing Manager at the Beer Club.ie posted the questionnaire on their company Facebook page which resulted in a high number of participants. These participants then recruited more people until the sample size of 150 was met. This type of sampling proved to be advantageous in rendering participants for the study as 156 respondents were received within a few days. However, a disadvantage to any snow ball sampling is it can be difficult to make inferences about populations based on the obtained sample.

For the qualitative portion of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with marketing managers of three craft beer brands in Ireland. The sampling technique used was primarily based on the availability of the marketing managers. The concept of sampling in qualitative research does not warrant a lot of significance, as the main objective of this type of research is to explore a situation, phenomenon or issue (Kumar, 2005). After the completion of three interviews, the researcher reached a saturation point, where she felt no more interviews were required, as no new information was being discovered. With qualitative research, the goal is not to quantify the data, but rather take a closer look at an issue. By conducting these interviews, the researcher gained valuable insight into the industry from a variety of backgrounds provided, which could incorporate some drawbacks, such as biases and beliefs.

3.6 Data Analysis

For this research study, the researcher used Microsoft excel software due to many factors. The researcher already had access and was familiar with the use of Microsoft Excel software. By using this software, the researcher was able to store, document, analyse and report on the data findings, including statistical analysis. The researcher used coding techniques in order to analyse

and keep the data organised. Examples of coding are: Linkert scales, for example 1= agree to 5=do not agree. Excel allowed the researcher to create appropriate charts, including pie and graph charts.

The use of an app called “Call Recorder” was used in order to record the face to face interview, as well as the interviews over the phone. Within a week of each interview, the recordings were transcribed. After the data was all transcribed, the researcher meticulously went through each transcription a few times to gain a better grasp of all the topics mentioned. After this process, relevant themes emerged and were easily identifiable. As a result, the researcher was able to qualitatively describe the data produced by the interviews into concise, coherent themes within the data analysis section of the dissertation.

3.7 Research Ethics

Several key ethical issues can arise during a research study and it was important for the researcher to examine and be aware of such issues. Privacy, confidentiality and participant anonymity issues had all been taken into consideration. All participants for both the qualitative and quantitative research signed a consent form and were informed that the information provided was confidential and would only be used for the purpose of this research study. Participants were able to opt out of the research study at any time. Furthermore, the data collected was stored carefully, with the researcher being the only one who had access to the information. Lastly, the researcher conducted themselves in a professional and respectful way during the entire research study.

3.8 Limitations of Methodology

Limitations within a research study are unavoidable, as no research study can be perfectly crafted. One of the main limitation concerns was time, as the researcher had never conducted such a large-scale research project before. The researcher had to be mindful of the research study timeline and be aware of time constraints. Another issue was the amount of available academic

literature about the craft beer industry. As mentioned earlier, the craft beer industry is relatively new and not a lot of literature existed on the topic. Furthermore, another limitation was deciding on the amount of questions to ask on the questionnaire. Lastly, the chance that respondents did not provide accurate information due to the topic was a limitation. These types of responses can negatively affect the quality and overall validity of the research that was conducted.

Chapter 4: Data -Analysis & Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the empirical data has been analysed using statistical tools and techniques to present the findings. The data collected during this research study was collected through primary sources and analysed to meet the aims and objectives of the study. Within the primary research design, two techniques, qualitative and quantitative, were employed and assisted the researcher with achieving the goals of the research study. The presentation of the findings based on technique allows the reader to easily understand the context and outcomes of the research conducted. This chapter begins with a showcase of the qualitative portion of the research, presenting an analysis of the in-depth interviews with craft beer marketing managers. The latter section provides an analysis and presentation of the quantitative findings based on a questionnaire that was administered to female consumers in Ireland.

4.2 Analysis of In-Depth Interviews (Qualitative Research)

The qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with marketing managers from three different Irish craft beer brands. The focus of this section is to present and analyse the findings from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted for this study. The manner in which these interviews were carried out were specifically designed to examine if the craft beer industry considers the female consumer in their product development, branding or marketing activities. The sample size of this study must be acknowledged, as this study cannot generalise conclusions for all craft beer brands in Ireland. However, the findings of the study provide a snapshot of how the industry is considering the increasing number of females entering the craft beer market. A critical discussion in chapter five will further provide a detailed analysis of these findings.

Responses from the interview participants will remain anonymous, and therefore the craft beer brand names will not be used. As such, the managers will be referred to as P1, P2 and P3.

4.2.1 Craft Beer Development & Branding

The development of craft beer brands is strongly based on differentiation and innovation in their brewing process and ingredients. All three participants confirmed this information, and each had a unique story behind how their brand was developed. P1 and P2 stated that their brand was first developed by a few friends whom equally shared a passion for craft beer and saw an opportunity to create their own beer and enter the fast-growing Irish craft beer market. P3 stated that their brand was created by individuals who had previously worked for macro beer companies but had interest in creating their own craft brands. It is important to note that unlike P1 and P2, P3 has four different brand names under one microbrewery. For the interview, P3 focused on their one primary brand. All participants were in agreement that the development of the brand was based on the desire to create great tasting, quality Irish craft beer.

Strategically creating a brand name and logo that resonates with consumers is a primary focus of craft beer brands. Therefore, the concept of developing a brand name was a common aspect discussed by all participants. P1 stated that the creation of their brand name and logo was determined primarily based on their providence and a local legend. Accordingly, from this legend, a character (logo) was developed that represents the wild, outdoors and reflects the nature of where the brewery is located. P1 communicated in the early development of the brand, focusing on their logo and name was critical to give the brand a platform to grow and garner interest from consumers. P2 created their brand name and logo by differentiating themselves by creating a unique fictional character, with an accompanied on-going storyline, based on comic book drawings. P3 also developed their brand name based on differentiation by emphasizing their Irish heritage and incorporating humour into development of different fictional characters.

All three participants also discussed the importance of their package design when developing their brands. It was discovered that each brand started with an initial basic logo design, which evolved into greater meaning and established brand identity for their brands. P1 stated that their focus on providence and creating strong logos, taglines and packaging significantly contributed to creating a strong brand. P2 stated that the development and continued growth of the brand

resulted from the creation of unique male and female characters and storylines that kept consumers interested. Similarly, P3 also used differentiated fictional characters on each style of beer in order to attract consumer's attention. Each participant emphasised the importance of continued innovation with regards to package designs. P2 mentioned that their brand continuously changes their branding, including labels and packaging, when they release new beer products, to tell an on-going story based on their fictional characters. P3 stated that at one point they removed the characters off their beer products but received considerable negative feedback and as a result re-placed the characters. However, P3 stated that while the characters are back, the emphasise on their labels now is to promote the style of beer, as they believe that is what consumers look for when making purchase decisions.

4.2.2 Target Market

During the interview, it was discovered that the target market for these specific brands varied. Currently, P1 states that their target market is males 30-65. However, P1 highlighted that their brand recognises the target market is continuously changing, with increasing opportunities to attract the younger generations and females. P2 stated that their target market is consumers between 25-40, with a strong male split. And P3 states that their target market is 25- 45 and did not specify a gender demographic.

With the vast amount of craft beer types and styles, the craft beer industry has the potential to appeal to many different taste preferences. The craft beer industry competes based on their innovation of flavours, aromas and styles of beer products. All three participants articulated that they offer a core range of beers, including IPAs, pale ales, lagers and stouts but also offer seasonal and limited-edition craft beer selections. It was discovered that all 3 brands' beer offerings are sold at both on and off trade premises. Additionally, all the brands have started to export their beers internationally in order to grow their market share.

All three participants acknowledged the increased participation of females towards the craft beer industry.

“actually, the fastest growing market and target market is actually females between 21-34 so it’s something that we’re certainly as a brand conscious of and something we are looking at with future beers and lines and innovations that we look at that we do want to focus on” (P1)

“We are not targeting the female consumer in any way. Because the way I look at it is that we just treat everybody exactly the same and it is kind of the way I have always done it, like without taking gender into it. We kind of target the people whether, they like craft beer.” (P2)

“Our marketing manager is a lady, ya know, but what we’ve done, it’s not really that we specifically targeted our brand at ladies, it’s more that we haven’t targeted at lads, if that makes sense? We try not to do anything to lavish, and we definitely, you know, that kind of old fashioned kind of stereotype, stereotypical stuff, we try to steer clear of all that, so we just try and to make more accessible to everyone, we don’t want to exclude anyone.” (P3)

All three participants stated that they are not directly targeting the female consumer because they create great quality craft beers that appeals to both genders. However, P1 did specifically say they are considering developing beer products to attract the preferences of females. Additionally, there were similar impressions regarding whether the industry is considered to be male dominated. P1 stated that the industry was predominately a male dominated market. Whereas, P2 states that the perception is that it is still more of a male consumer product, despite more females entering the market.

4.2.3 Craft Beer Challenges

Challenges within a highly competitive, niche market are evident in the craft beer industry. Participants were asked what kind of challenges they face. Similar findings were found from all participants. All participants were in agreeance that the competition is fierce within the craft beer industry and that their brands struggle to also compete with the brands produced from macro breweries. Marketing budget was another challenge discussed by all 3 participants. However, it

was conveyed that social media marketing has played a significant role in reaching their consumer base through this inexpensive method that can be done “in-house”. Creating engaging content through digital marketing has been a major focus for all 3 brands.

4.2.4 Brand Loyalty

The researcher felt it was important to discover if craft beer brands focused on retaining brand loyalty consumers in a typically plagued non-loyal market. All 3 participants acknowledged that acquiring brand loyal customers is a challenge, but that it can be established within the craft beer market. P1 stated that their brand has an opportunity to focus more on acquiring brand loyal consumers. While P2 communicated that they have created an exclusive beer club to engage with their existing consumer base and is the only microbrewery in Ireland to have one. And P3 stated that they have acquired brand loyal consumers and that their brand perception is strong in the marketplace.

Another important question worthy of examining was whether the product itself or the brand is more important to consumers. Similar answers to this question were conveyed by all participants.

“You could have the best beer in the world but the worst branding and the worst kind of marketing support behind the beer and you won’t sell any beer. So, marketing and branding is very important and it’s what catches the people’s attention, it’s what I suppose gets people to talk about your beer and your brand” (P1)

“If you have a killer brand, in a crowded marketplace, you have to be able to stand out there, for someone to pick it up for the first time. Once they do that, the quality inside your product hopefully will bring them back again, subsequent times.” (P2)

“I would say, in the Irish market, the branding, the characters and stuff, probably got people to notice the brand and be aware of the brand, but they’re coming back for the quality of the beer now.” (P3)

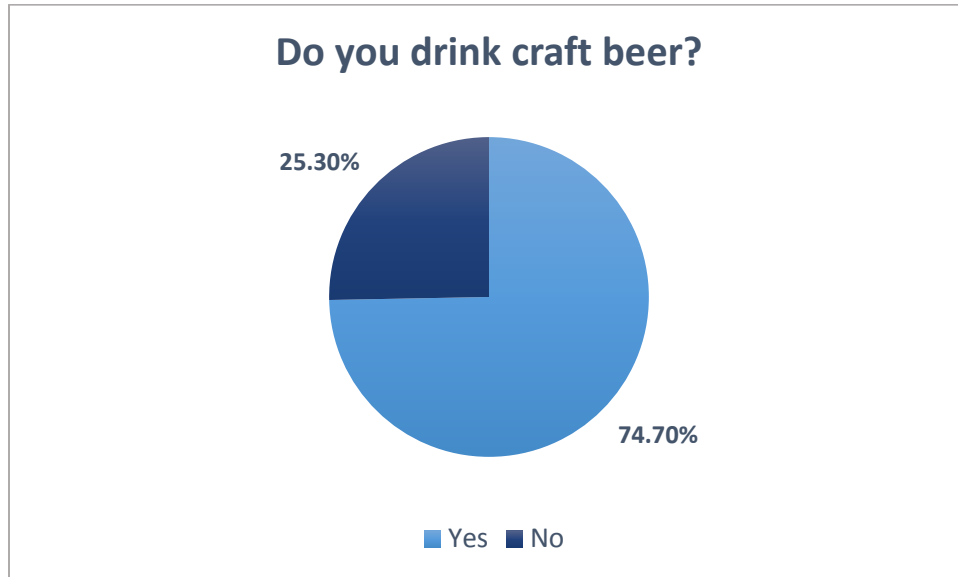
All participants felt that branding and marketing of a strong brand was just as important as producing top quality beer. All participants felt that initial branding and marketing is what initially attracts consumers to pick up a brand for the first time, but the quality of the beer is what keeps them coming back for more. The participants were also asked what their brand represents in the minds of consumers and similar findings were apparent. All participants stated that the quality of the beer was the major consumer perception towards their brands. It was also communicated by all participants that they do not take themselves too seriously except for producing top quality beer and developing strong brands. P2 stated that humour is a major element of their brand perception, whereas P3 stated that an element of fun is what they believe consumers perceive their brand to represent. However, the general consensus after the interviews is that while the increase in females consuming craft beer is on the rise, it is still very much a male dominated industry.

4.3 Analysis of Questionnaire (Quantitative Research)

The quantitative data was collected through administering a questionnaire through Google Forms, which was developed by analysing secondary research regarding the topic. The questionnaire was administered online and available to female participants aged 18 – 34 residing in Ireland. A sample size of 120 was suggested for conducting primary research and accordingly, the researcher tried to obtain this number of respondents. Due to the specific scope of the research garnered, pre-screening questions were strategically developed to ensure the validity of responses. Some participants were automatically disqualified from taking the survey if they did not meet the specific demographics for this study. In total, 156 individuals participated in the survey. However, after eliminating participants who did not meet the research qualifications, 154 responses were analysed.

- **Do you drink craft beer?**

After completing the required pre-screening questions, qualified respondents were taken to this first question. It was critically important to ask this specific question at the beginning of the survey, as this information allowed the researcher to separate the respondents into two distinct groups: those who drink craft beer and those who do not.



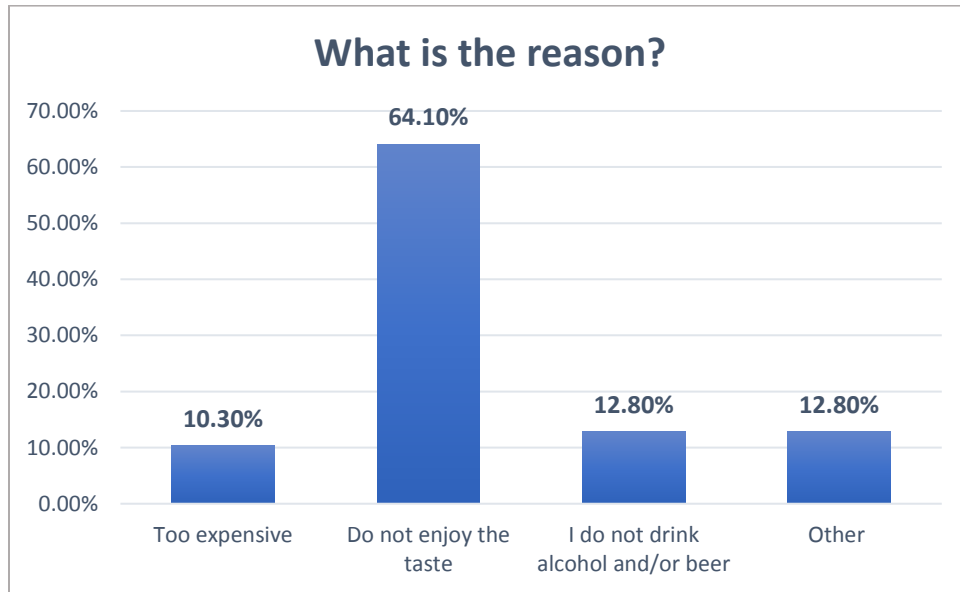
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	115	74.70%
No	39	25.3%
Total	154	100

Figure 4 Consumer Classification

From the 154 respondents, 115 (74.7%) reported that they drink craft beer. Alternatively, 39 (25.3%) respondents selected they did not drink craft beer. Evidently, this statistical information demonstrates that a significant portion of the sample population within this study consume craft beer. However, it is important to highlight that approximately one quarter (25%) does not.

- **What is the main reason?**

This research study focuses on females who consume craft beer. However, the researcher felt that it was important to ask one this additional question to those respondents who selected they do not before they were excluded from the research. The researcher strongly believes that this specific question provides significant value and contributes contextually to the research question.



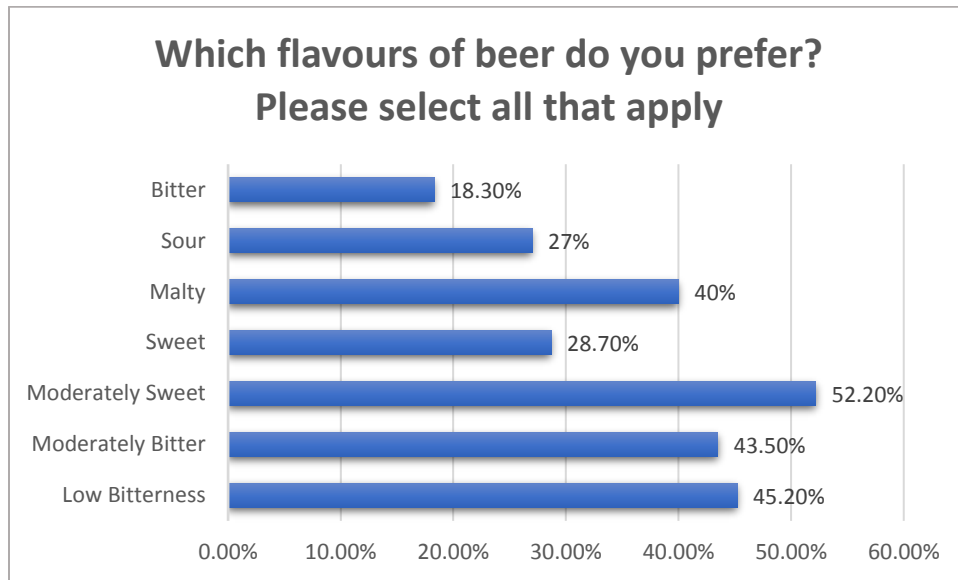
	Frequency	Percentage
Too expensive	4	10.30%
Do not enjoy the taste	25	64.10%
I do not drink alcohol/and or beer	5	12.80%
Other	5	12.80%
Total	39	100.00%

Figure 5 Consumer Reasoning

Of the 39 respondents prompted to answer this question, 64.1% (25) indicated they do not drink craft beer because they do not enjoy the taste.

- **Which flavours of beer do you prefer? (Select all that apply)**

This question pertains to respondents' preferences towards flavours of beer. The researcher felt that this was an important question to ask, as it highlights the most preferred flavours, which can be useful for craft beer brands to consider for product development, branding and marketing towards the female segment. Literature suggests that female beer consumers prefer sweet flavours, however as consumer behaviours evolve, so can preferences. Therefore, it is worthwhile examining these preferences.



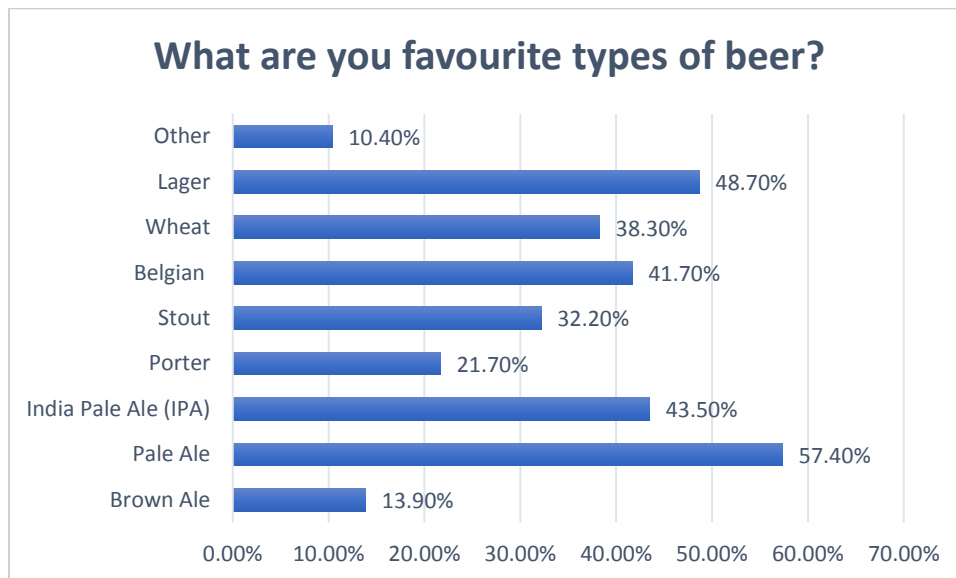
	Frequency	Percentage
Low bitterness	52	45.20%
Moderately bitter	50	43.50%
Moderately sweet	60	52.20%
Sweet	33	28.70%
Malty	46	40.00%
Sour	31	27.00%
Bitter	21	18.30%

Figure 6 Consumer flavour preferences

As indicated above, moderately sweet is the most preferred flavour with 52.2% of the respondents selecting this option. Low bitterness (45.2%) and moderately bitter (43.5%) are the next most popular answers.

- **Which are your favourite types of beer? (Select all that apply)**

Another important question to ask of female respondents was their favourite types of beer. The craft beer industry offers diverse product offerings that can appeal to a wide range of preferences. Therefore, it is important to examine specifically which types females are gravitating towards most.



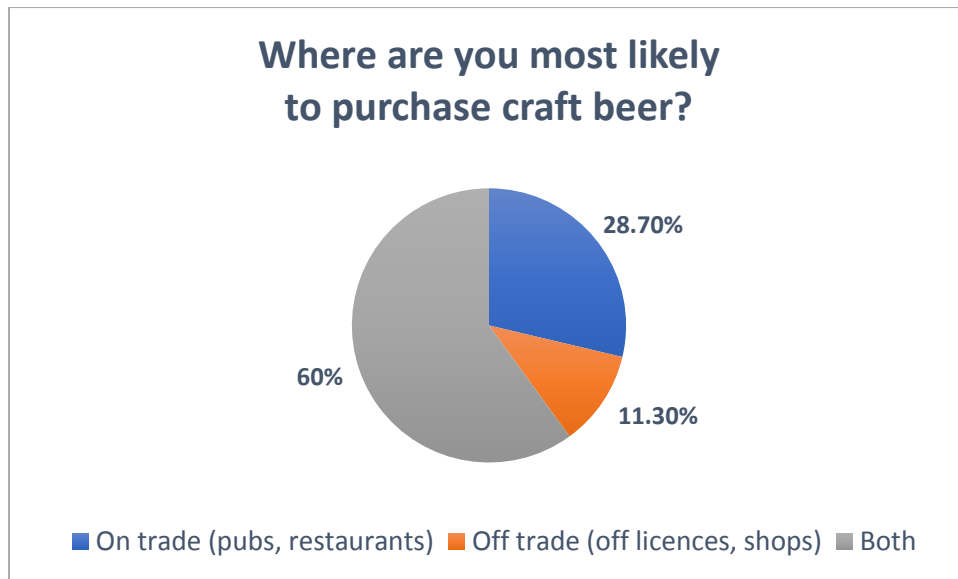
	Frequency	Percentage
Brown Ale	16	13.90%
Pale Ale	66	57.40%
India Pale Ale (IPA)	50	43.50%
Porter	25	21.70%
Stout	37	32.20%
Belgian	48	41.70%
Wheat	44	38.30%
Lager	56	48.7%
Other	12	10.4%

Figure 7 Consumer beer type preferences

The most preferred type of beer for respondents was pale ale, with 57.4% of the respondents selecting this option. The second most popular preference was India Pale Ale, accounting for 43.5% of respondents selecting this answer.

- **Where are you most likely to purchase craft beer?**

Questions pertaining to consumer behaviour were asked of the female respondents. In this question, the researcher wanted to examine where females are most likely to buy craft beer. The literature suggests that Irish consumers are increasingly drinking alcohol at home, therefore, it is important to explore consumption patterns.



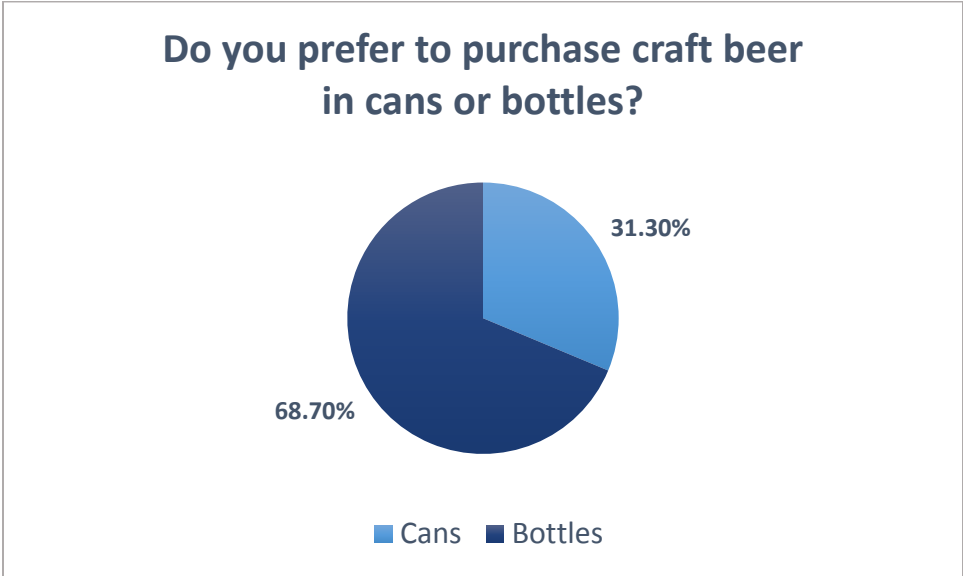
	Frequency	Percentage
On trade (pubs, restaurants)	33	28.7%
Off trade (off licences, shops)	13	11.3%
Both	69	60%
Total	115	100

Figure 8 Consumer purchase location preferences

As shown above, more than half of the respondents (60%) answered that they are most likely to purchase craft beer at both on and off-trade premises. This data presents useful findings that will be discussed in further detail in discussions.

- **Do you prefer to purchase craft beer in cans or bottles?**

The purpose of asking this question was to evaluate female consumer preferences for product packaging, as packaging can have a huge influence on the perception towards the product and can ultimately affect consumer decision-making processes.



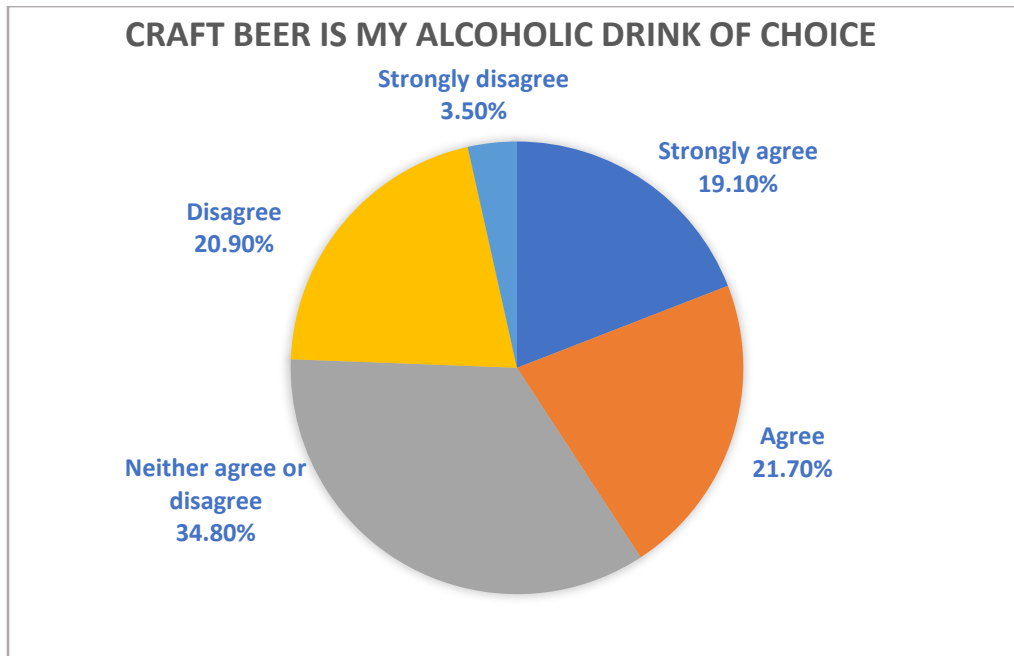
	Frequency	Percentage
Cans	36	31.3%
Bottles	79	68.7%
Total	115	100%

Figure 9 Consumer packaging preferences

The above chart demonstrates that consumers primarily prefer purchasing craft beer in bottles, accounting for 68.7%.

- **. Craft beer in my alcoholic drink of choice**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement above. The reason this question was asked was to further understand the extent to which females prefer and consume craft beer over other alcoholic drinks.



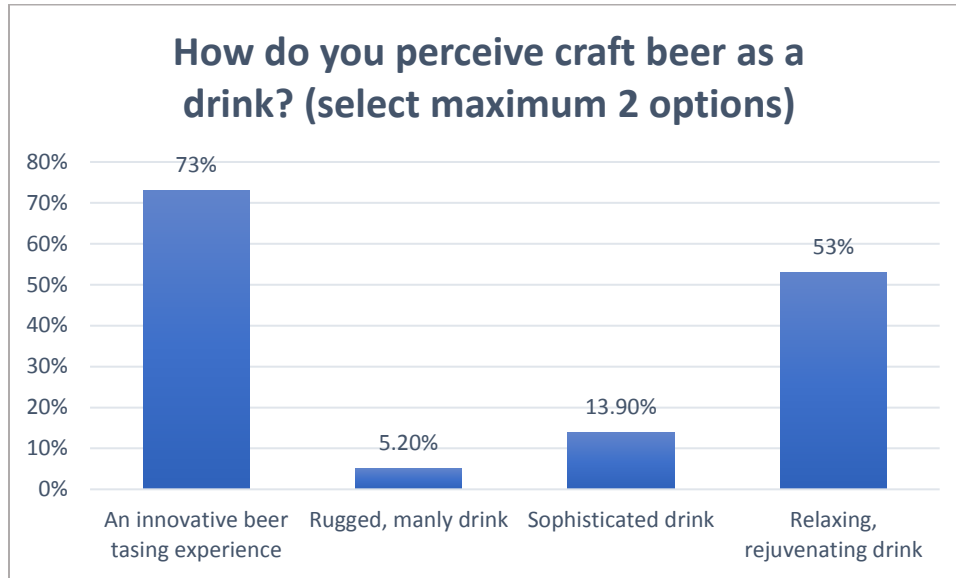
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	22	19.1%
Agree	25	21.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	40	34.8%
Disagree	24	20.9%
Strongly disagree	4	3.5%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 10 Consumer craft beer opinion

As illustrated in the above chart, 19.1% of participants strongly agree and 21.7% agree with this statement, which accounts for approximately 40% of the responses. However, it is important to note that 34.8% of respondents are undecided, by selecting neither agree or disagree.

- **How do you perceive craft beer as a drink? (Select only 2 options)**

The main purpose of asking this specific question was to understand how respondents perceive craft beer as an alcoholic option.



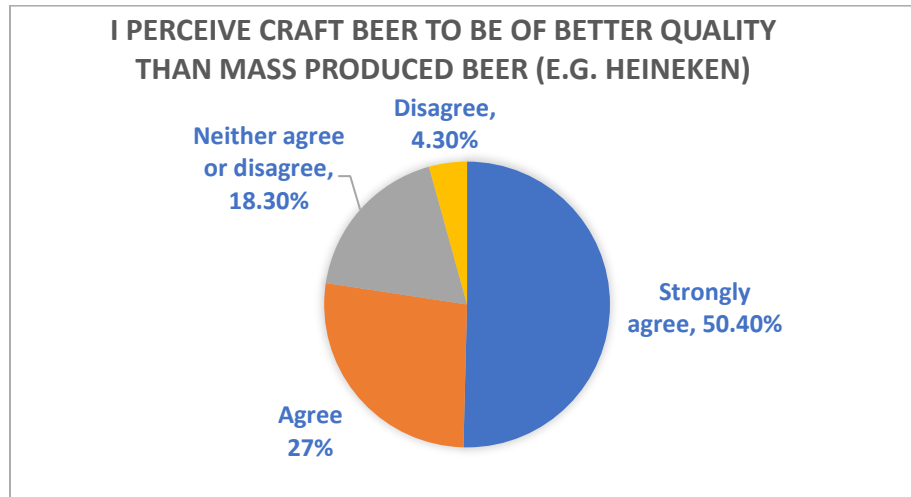
	Frequency	Percentage
An innovative beer tasting experience	84	73.00%
Rugged, manly drink	6	5.20%
Sophisticated drink	16	13.90%
Relaxing, rejuvenating drink	61	53.00%

Figure 11 Consumer craft beer perceptions

The above graphs show that out of 115 respondents who took part in the survey, 73% perceive craft beer as an innovative beer tasting experience, followed by 53% perceived craft beer as a relaxing, rejuvenating drink choice. The other two options were rated significantly lower: sophisticated drink (13.9%) and rugged, manly drink (5.2%). The researcher can infer that the majority of respondents perceive drinking craft beer as a way to become innovative in their drinking habits.

- **I perceive craft beer to be of better quality than mass produced beer (e.g. Heineken)**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with this statement. It was important for the researcher to understand how strongly participants felt this was true, as the craft beer brands must compete against well-established, macro breweries. The analysis provides further insight into females' perceptions towards the industry.



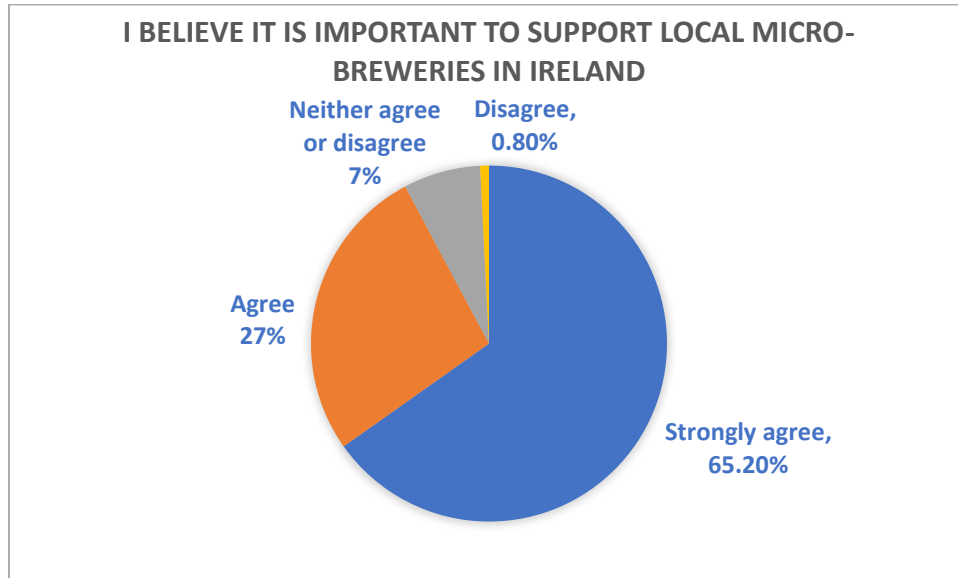
	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	58	50.40%
Agree	31	27.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	21	18.30%
Disagree	5	4.30%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 12 Consumer quality opinion

As depicted in the above chart, half of the respondents (50.4%) strongly agree, followed by a quarter of respondents (25.7%) agree with the statement. Therefore, over 75% of females perceive craft beer to be of better quality than mass produced beers.

- **I believe it is important to support local micro-breweries in Ireland**

This question was asked of participants to gain further insight into the increasing consumer trends of supporting local business.



	Frequency of Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	75	65.2%
Agree	31	27.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	8	7.00%
Disagree	1	0.8%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Total	115	100.00%

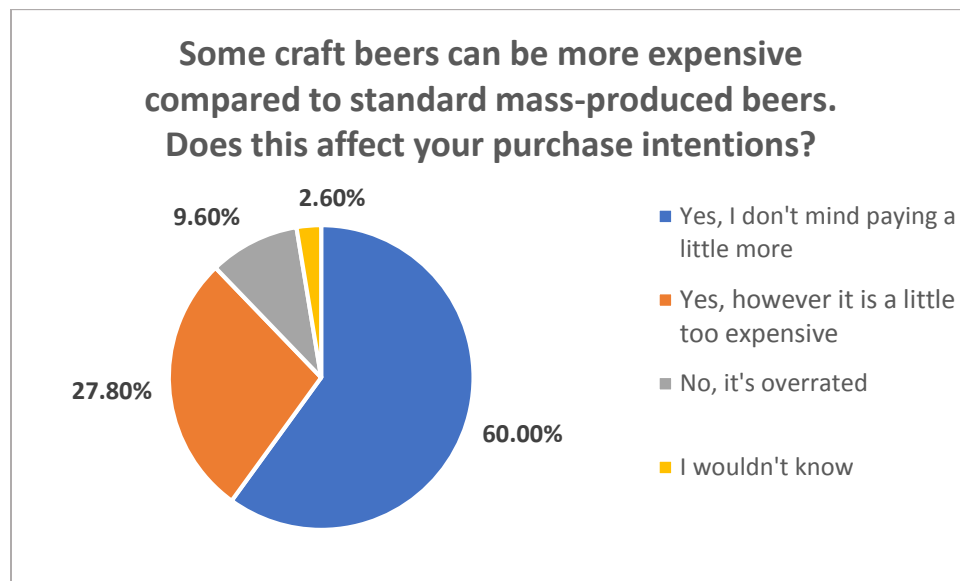
Figure 13 Consumer opinion on brewers

65.2% of respondents selected strongly agree and 27% selected that they agree to this statement. This analysis suggests that respondents could be more likely to choose a craft beer that is produced from a local Irish brewery. This will be discussed in further detail in discussions.

- Some craft beers can be more expensive compared to standard mass-produced beers.

Does this affect your purchase intentions?

Price is a significant factor that influences the perception of consumers when making purchase decisions. However, regarding craft beer consumption, research reports suggest that price does not affect consumers’ decision-making process. The reason this question was asked by the researcher was to examine whether this trend was consistent with female consumers.



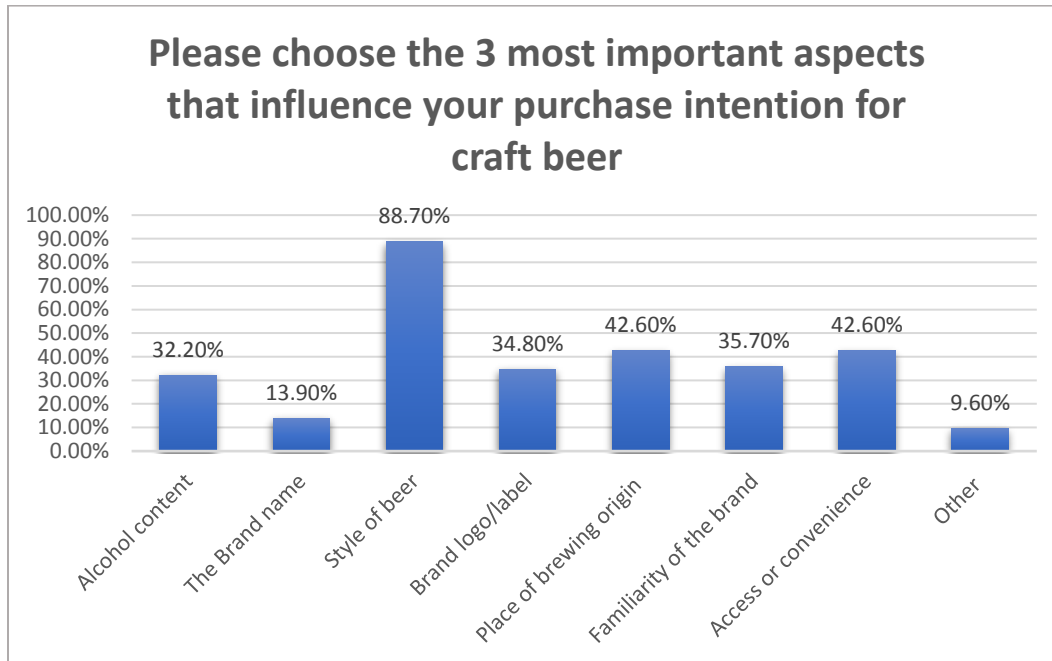
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, I don't mind paying a little more	69	60.00%
Yes, however it is a little too expensive	32	27.80%
No it's overrated	11	9.60%
I wouldn't know	3	2.6%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 14 Consumer price importance in purchase intentions

As the graph demonstrates, 60% of respondents indicated that they acknowledge craft beer is more expensive than mass-produced beers however, they do not mind paying more. While 27.8% selected that price does influence their purchase intentions and they feel that craft beer is a little too expensive. These findings are significant when it comes to examining whether or not price plays a role in females’ decisions to purchase craft beer.

- **Please choose the 3 most important aspects that influence your purchase intention for craft beer**

This question was extremely important for the researcher to ask of the respondents, as one of the main objectives of the study is to identify which factors influence female consumers to purchase craft beer. As the literature suggests, there are many different reasons why consumers choose a particular brand or product.



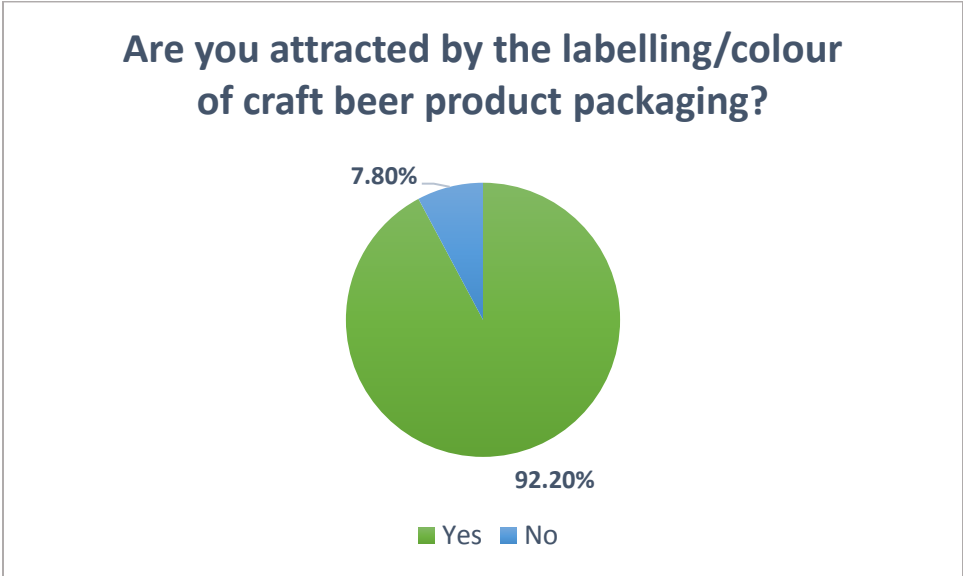
	Frequency	Percentage
Other	11	9.60%
Access or convenience	49	42.60%
Familiarity of the brand	41	35.70%
Place of brewing origin	49	42.60%
Brand logo/label	40	34.80%
Style of beer	102	88.70%
The brand name	16	13.90%
Alcohol content	37	32.20%

Figure 15 Consumer general aspects in purchase intentions

Responses summarise that the significant contributing factor influencing respondents purchase intention for craft beer is style of beer, with 88.7% respondents selecting this option. The next contributing factors which were equally selected were place of brewing origin and access or convenience, each accounting for 42.6% of the sample population.

- **Are you attracted by the labelling/colour of craft beer product packaging?**

This question was asked to examine whether respondents are attracted by craft beer packaging. It was important to ask, as the packaging, as stated earlier, can influence purchase decisions.



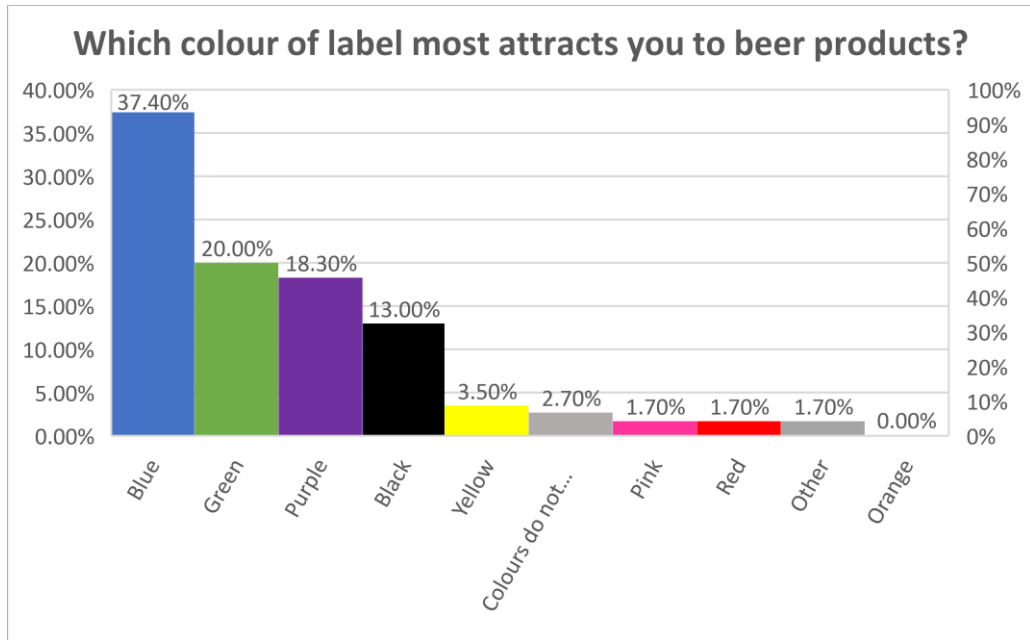
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	106	92.20%
No	9	7.80%
Total	115	100.00%

Fig 16 Consumer perception on colour/labeling

The responses showcase that a clear majority (92.2%) of respondents are attracted to craft beer products by the packaging labelling/colours.

- **Which colour of label most attracts you to beer products?**

The next question was designed to examine which label colours would most attract females towards craft beer products. The literature suggests that females and males are attracted to different colours, therefore it was worthy to examine their preferences.



	Frequency	Percentage
Blue	43	37.40%
Green	23	20.0%
Pink	2	1.70%
Red	2	1.70%
Orange	0	0.00%
Yellow	4	3.50%
Black	15	13.0%
Purple	21	18.30%
Colours do not attract me	3	2.70%

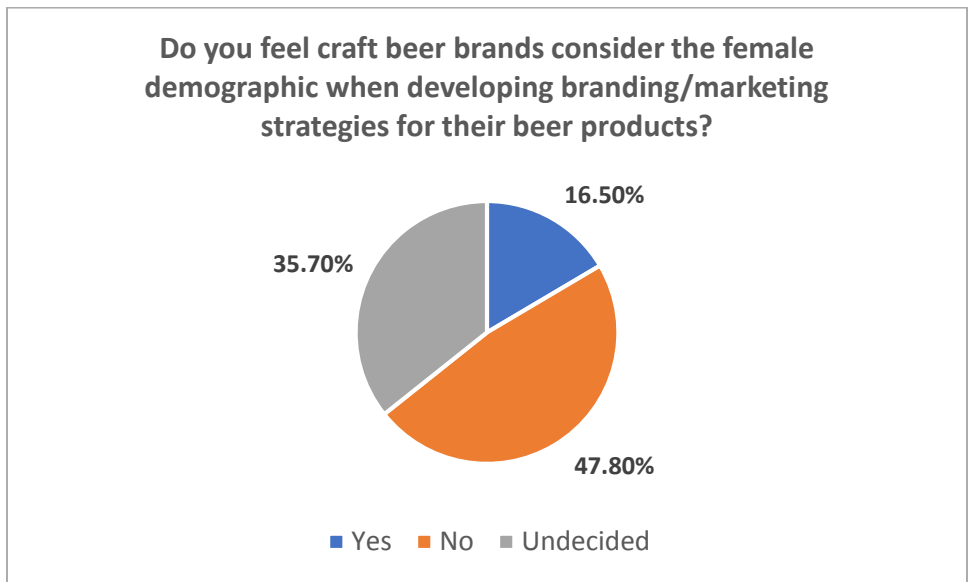
Other	2	1.70%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 17 Consumer colour preferences

As depicted in the graphs above, blue was the most popular choice of beer label colours, accounting for 37.4%. Green and purple were the second and third most popular choices from the respondents, with 20% and 18.3% respectively.

- **Do you feel craft beer brands consider the female demographic when developing branding/marketing strategies for their beer products?**

This question was critical to ask the respondents, as the way in which females feel that brands are considering their gender is of great importance to the industry.



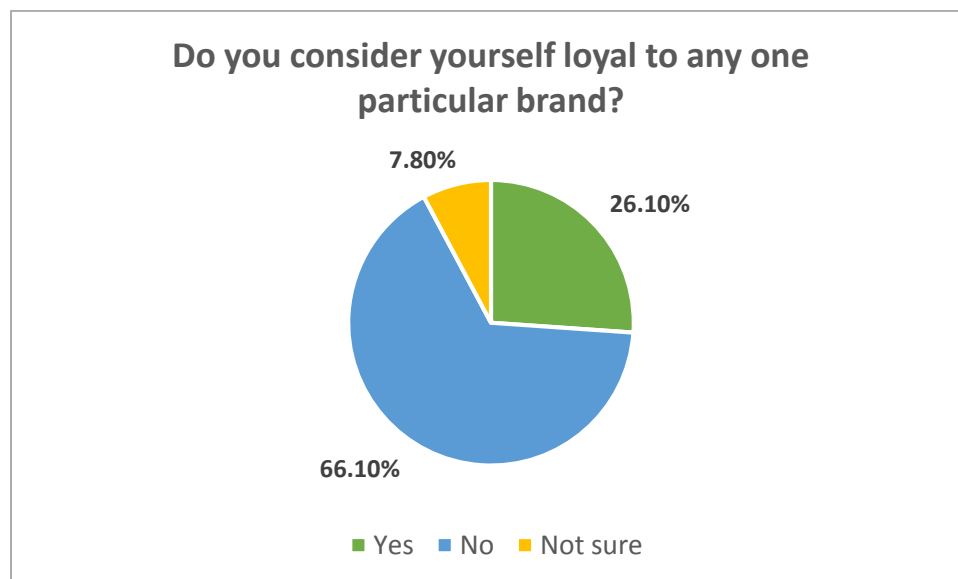
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	16.50%
No	55	47.80%
Undecided	41	35.70%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 18 Consumer opinion on female targeting

The majority of respondents (47.8%) selected that they did not think craft beer brands consider the female segment when developing their branding/marketing strategies. 35.7% of respondents were undecided and 16.5% thought the brands did consider females. This analysis will be later discussed.

- **Do you consider yourself loyal to any one particular brand?**

This question was very important to ask of respondents, as it directly relates to one of the main objectives of the study. It is beneficial to examine whether females consider themselves to be loyal to a brand, as literature suggests that this industry is typically plagued by non-loyal consumers. As well, the literature states that females are generally more brand loyal than men.



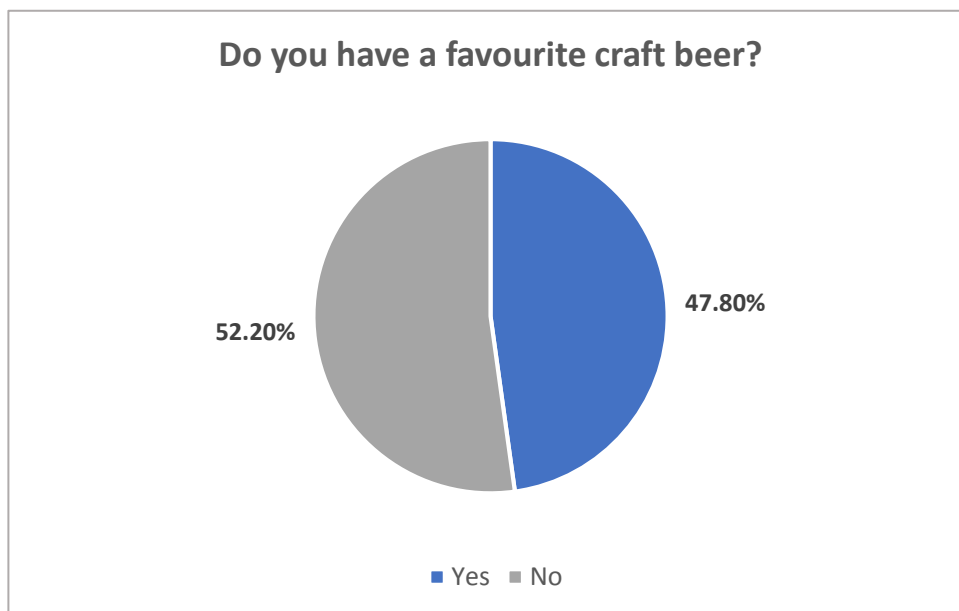
	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	26.10%
No	76	66.10%
Not sure	9	7.80%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 19 Consumer Brand Loyalty

The responses state that 66.1% of respondents consider themselves not loyal to a brand, while 26.1% of respondents feel that they are.

- **Do you have a favourite craft beer?**

In direct relation to brand loyalty, it was important to ask to examine if females who drink craft beer have a favourite brand. If females have a favourite brand, they may be more prone to choosing that brand when making consumer choices in both off and on trade premises. Also, having a favourite craft beer brand could lead to a female becoming brand loyal.



	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	55	47.80%
No	60	52.20%
Total	115	100.00%

Figure 20 Consumer beer preference

The responses indicate that it is almost even between those who have a favourite craft beer (47.8%) and those who do not (52.2%). These findings will be discussed further in the next chapter.

- **If yes, which one?**

Examining whether females have a favourite craft brand then lead to the important question of which one their favourite was. This question was the only open-ended, qualitative question asked in the survey. There were many reasons for this. In a highly competitive industry, there are too many brands to list. As well, the researcher felt that asking this open-ended question would provide an in-depth look and analysis regarding which brands are preferred and known by the population sample. This question also resulted in data that could be analysed in more than one way, giving a more thorough analysis of their preferences. Due to the nature of being a qualitative question, 54 participants responded, however some participants mentioned more than one brand, therefore 59 brands in total were mentioned. These findings are analysed below.

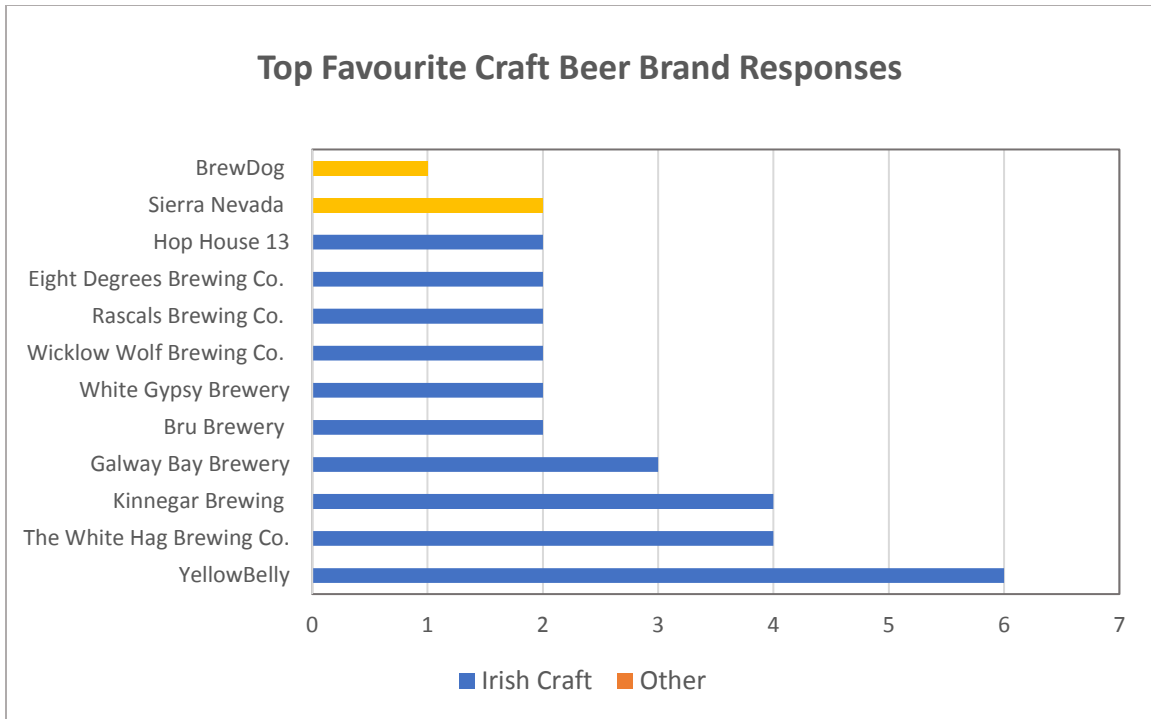


Figure 21 Consumer Top Favourite Craft Beer Brand Responses

The researcher received an extensive list of craft beer brands. The brands listed in the chart were the most popular selections, all being selected more than once. For a complete list of responses, please see appendix _. As evidenced above, the popular brand selection was YellowBelly with 6 participants selecting this option. The next two responses were equally selected with 4 responses each, Kinnegar Brewing and The White Hag Brewing Co. The information provided is extremely useful for the industry in terms of brand awareness and preference.



Figure 22 Craft Brands Preferred by Country of Brewing Origin

After sorting all the brands mentioned by country of brewing origin, it is evident that most brands mentioned are from Ireland with 23 brand mentions. The second most popular answer was United States with 6 brands being mentioned. This information is useful to know if the respondents prefer local Irish brands or imports.

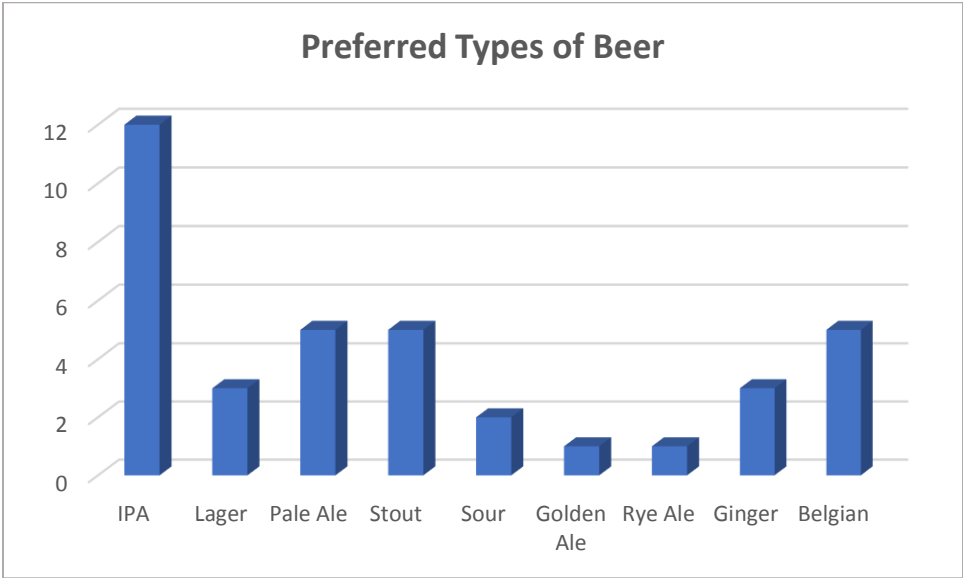


Figure 23 Consumer Preferred Types of Beer

The graph above demonstrates the respondent's preferred types of beer. The most popular type of beer mentioned was India Pale Ale (IPA) with 12 respondents mentioning this type as their favourite. Pale Ale, Stout and Belgian types of beer were equally selected and accounted for 5 mentions each.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a more in-depth analysis regarding the findings detailed in chapter 4 by directly relating these findings back to the literature review. By comparing primary and secondary research, the research question and subsequent objectives can be fully addressed. As illustrated in the introduction to the dissertation, the demand for craft beer in Ireland continues to increase (Mintel, 2018). This study investigated the brand perceptions of the market's fastest growing demographic segment, females (Mintel, 2017). A mixed method research approach allowed the researcher to gain a more in-depth look at the industry.

The main overarching research question in this study is:

- ***What are Female Consumers (18-34) brand perceptions towards Craft Beers in Ireland?***

As highlighted in chapter one, the lack of academic research on this topic warranted a more focused approach to this subject matter. Recent industry reports from Mintel (2017) highlight female beer flavour preferences but do not demonstrate their perceptions towards the brands or the industry. Accordingly, four objectives were developed to further analyse their perception. The research question and subsequent objectives for this study are addressed below.

- To examine how the craft beer industry can attract the female consumer
- Determine the key elements of a brand strategy toward the female consumer
- Factors that influence female consumer's decision to purchase craft beer
- Based on the fact that females are more brand loyal than men (Melnyk et al., 2009), examine if brand loyalty can be established with the female consumer

5.2 Attracting the Female Demographic to Craft Beer Industry

Recent industry reports and literature suggest that females have become more attracted to the craft beer industry (Mintel, 2017). Both the qualitative and quantitative primary research within this study support this notion. All industry participants interviewed acknowledged that females are becoming the fastest-growing segment. The results of the consumer survey demonstrate that 75% of the total respondents selected they drink craft beer, confirming the literature on the topic. Upon further investigation as to reasons why the other 25% selected no, it was found that 64% selected no due to the dislike of taste. With these findings in mind, the industry has the potential to attract even those females to the market because based on the premise of continuous craft beer innovation with flavours, types and styles of beer they produce, one could argue that this variety can cater to the palate preferences of a wide range of consumers.

In order to attract more females to the market, their style and flavour preferences have been investigated by analysing the secondary and primary research. Literature findings demonstrate that most females prefer sweet over bitter flavours (Mintel, 2017). Similarly, a recent study conducted by Muggah & McSweeney (2017) on females' attitudes towards beer confirmed this finding. The primary research within this study also supports this notion, with 52% of respondents selecting moderately sweet, followed by low bitterness (45%) and moderately bitter (44%) as their flavour preferences. It is important to note that while moderately sweet was the most preferred flavour within this study, the sweet option was only preferred by 29% of the respondents. Also, another interesting finding is that 44% of the respondents selected moderately bitter. These findings could indicate that female's taste preferences for craft beers are evolving.

As stated within a recent Mintel (2018) report, lager is the most popular beer type amongst Irish consumers. However, the findings within the primary research slightly contradict this statement. The most popular type of beer was Pale Ale with 57% of respondents selecting this option, with lager being the second most popular choice with 47%. Similar to that of flavour, the discrepancy

for this finding could be that consumer preferences could differ for craft beer consumption. During one of the interviews with the industry, P1 articulated that their brand's pale ale is the most preferred type for female consumers. Female craft beer consumers may be more innovative and experiential with their craft beer consumption, and therefore may not choose typical lager types.

Available literature on the craft beer industry states that the majority of craft beer drinkers are "Caucasian, male, are college educated and are between ages 21 to 50 (Kleban & Nickerson 2012). Irish industry reports that consumers aged 18- 24 in Republic of Ireland are most likely to have drunk craft beer, with the majority being males (Intel, 2017). With this in mind, the industry participants were asked during the interviews who their target market for their brand is. Their responses varied, with two out of three participants stating that males were the gender demographic of their target market. P3 specified an age range without mentioning a specific gender. Interestingly, P1, alluded that their brand is "dipping their toes into the water", as in are seriously looking at and considering expanding their target market to include females. Alternatively, the other two industry participants both stated that their branding does not target a specific gender, as they produce beer that is meant to be enjoyed by everyone. They also noted that they have no plans to change this strategy.

With much of the literature stating that there are noticeable gender differences in preferences for beer styles and flavours, it would be hard to comprehend how a brand does not take this into consideration when developing their branding strategies. When asked in the consumer survey, "do you feel that craft beer brands consider the female segment in their branding and marketing activities?", 48% of the respondents selected no, with another 36% stating they were unsure. These findings suggest that while more females are entering the craft beer market, a significant amount either feel that the brands do not consider them specifically or are not sure. It could be possible that the respondents had never consciously thought about this previously, nevertheless, this analysis should not be overlooked. While there is evidence to suggest that females do not want beer products to be branded through gender stereotypes, it is an interesting finding to

know that the majority do not feel their gender demographic is being considered. The industry may believe they have incorporated gender-neutral branding, however, one could argue that this finding suggests that their branding activities are still mostly geared towards their largest consumers, males. Indisputably, this notion warrants further research in discovering why the female consumers perceive the craft beer branding as such and how craft beer companies can make their branding more attractive to females while balancing the gender-differences in style and flavour preferences.

5.3 Brand Strategy Towards Females

Extensive literature highlights the importance of brand management as a way for a company to differentiate themselves and promote their brand message (Todor, 2014). Developing, managing and promoting the most valuable intangible asset, the brand, requires strategic branding decisions (Jones, 2017). All interviewees relayed that the development of their brand was based on their passion for producing quality Irish beer. Accordingly, their brand strategy revolved around relaying the quality and passion through creation of unique brand names, logos and packaging.

All three participants discussed in length the importance of their brand labels and packaging on their branding strategy. As stated within the literature, packaging hugely influences consumer perception towards products (Murray & McSweeney, 2017). P3 described that after the removal of regular characters on their craft beer labels, their brand received considerable negative feedback from their consumers that resulted in the characters being put back on the labels. The importance of labels within this industry cannot be underestimated. With regards to the physical packaging of a product, the primary research found that 69% of female consumers prefer purchasing craft beer in bottles instead of cans. This finding is valuable for the industry to consider when developing branding strategies towards the female segment.

It is argued that females are attracted to brighter colours (Solomon, 2017). Despite this, the consumer survey did not confirm this argument. While 92.2% of female consumers state that they are attracted by labels of craft beers, the colours which most attract them appear to be darker colours. Blue (37.4%), was the most popular choice, followed by green (20%) and purple (18.3%). The discrepancy of this finding could be based on the context, based on the type of market. Females are gravitating towards what has been and continues to be a male dominated industry. Conventional, stereotypical feminine colours may not be preferred by females, as they may feel that those colours further perpetuate gender stereotypes. As mentioned in the literature review, evidence of this was demonstrated by BrewDog. Their strategic decision to create a pink beer specifically for women received considerable negative feedback (The Independent, 2018). During the interview portion of the study, the idea of implementing gender-neutral branding was also confirmed, with all three participants believing that females do not want to be treated any differently within the industry.

Supporting local businesses is becoming an increasing consumer trend that can be directly correlated to that of a branding strategy. A differentiating factor for craft beer brands is that they are founded on providence and local production (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Female consumers were asked to identify their level of agreement with *"I believe it is important to support local micro-breweries in Ireland"*. The results indicate that a total of 92.2% either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This analysis suggests that females are more likely to choose local craft beer than imported beer options. Therefore, it can be argued that brand management towards females should highlight the providence aspect of their craft beer brand and accordingly, develop a brand-consumer relationship with the female segment based on this.

5.4 Customer Decision Making Process of Craft Beer

Consumer behaviour is a highly subjective process, that involves a consumer's decision-making process towards products/services (Solomon, 2017). As stated within the literature, many factors can influence a consumer's decision-making process. While price normally is influential on purchase decisions, craft beer literature specifically states that price does not affect their purchase decisions (Mintel, 2017). However, further investigation was warranted on this matter to analyse whether females demonstrated the same consumer behaviour. The primary research results conveyed that 60% of female respondents acknowledge that craft beer is more expensive than mass produced beer, but they do not mind paying more. Findings also included support that over half of respondents strongly agreed and a quarter of respondents (25.7%) agreed with the statement that craft beer is of better quality than mass produced beers. These two findings directly relate to one another, as it could be inferred that because female consumers perceive craft beer to be of better quality, price does not hinder their craft beer purchases.

Based on a study on females' attitudes towards beer, and other related literature, specific craft beer attributes were identified and analysed during this research study, such as alcohol content, the brand name, style of beer, brand logo/label and brewing origin (reference). The quantitative primary research found that 88.7% of respondents selected style of beer as the most important aspect influencing their decision to purchase craft beer. Similar findings were found within the literature and through the qualitative primary research. P3 stated that consumers are primarily looking for the style of beer and therefore, their brand labels emphasise the style of the beer as the largest identifier object on the label. This analysis can be extremely beneficial for craft beer brands to consider when developing their packaging design to attract female consumers. The next most influencing factors were brewing origin and access or convenience, which were equally selected. Again, there is strong evidence that females are looking for craft products based on where the beer is produced. Access or convenience seems very relevant in this industry, as not every pub or shop carries every type of craft beer. Only 14% of respondents selected that the brand name influences their decision making, however brand familiarity seems to be more

influential with 35% of respondents selecting this option. The literature highly supports the importance of brand awareness or brand familiarity and its advantages (Aaker, 1991). In order to increase brand awareness within this highly competitive market, craft beer brands aim to get their brand as noticeable as possible by strategically placing themselves at craft festivals, more shelf space at shops and implementing effective social media marketing to become more visible to their market. With so many craft beer brands available, a brand's ability to stand out in a consumer's mind is imperative.

Another question regarding female consumer's craft beer purchase intention looked at where they are most likely to purchase craft beer. More than half of the respondents (60%) answered that they are most likely to purchase craft beer at both on and off-trade premises. Knowing where the female consumers are purchasing craft beer is useful for the industry to be aware of, as their branding and marketing strategies likely differ between on and off-trade premises.

5.5 Brand Loyalty

As supported by the literature, brand loyalty is a multidimensional construct consisting of many different definitions and extensive theories regarding the subject matter. Nevertheless, most academics agree that brand loyal is critically important for brands to obtain and is defined by more than just repeat purchase behaviours (Mishra, 2017). Consumers' attitudes or perception towards the brand do impact their loyalty (Dick & Basu 1994, Jacoby, 1971). Within the craft beer industry, brand loyalty can be difficult to attain, as craft consumers are known to be brand-switchers, who seek out new innovative brews (Kleban & Nickerson, 2012). Findings within the primary research both confirm and contrast the existing literature.

Despite literature stating that females are more brand loyal to men (Melnyk et al, 2009), the findings within the primary quantitative research do not correlate with this. The consumer survey demonstrated that 66.1% of survey respondents identified as non-brand loyal. However, 27% identify as brand loyal. Therefore, one can infer that more than 1 in 4 respondents are brand

loyal. The industry participants all agreed that brand loyalty is a challenge but is attainable and present within the industry. The discrepancy of findings could be a result of many different factors. It could be argued that craft beer companies are overly optimistic and hopeful that they do have a cohort of brand loyal consumers within such a competitive marketplace. In particular, the activity of one brand stands out from the rest. P2 articulated that their brand has established an exclusive craft beer membership for their consumers. Therefore, one could infer that brand loyal consumers could be acquired through this type of brand-consumer activity. However, based on the results of the consumer survey, coupled with literature, it would appear establishing brand loyalty for the female demographic in this market is a challenge.

An interesting finding is that despite 66% of females selecting they are not brand loyal, 48% selected that they have a favourite craft beer brand. While the respondents may not identify themselves as brand loyal, it can be argued that they can still have one favourite brand in mind. When respondents were asked to identify their favourite craft brand, a vast amount of data was collected and analysed. The vast majority of brands mentioned were Irish brands, with ten out of the twelve most popular brand mentions being Irish craft brands. The most popular brands mentioned were YellowBelly (11%) and Kinnegar Brewing and White Hag, with 7% respectively. By Beoir's definition all of these brands are classified as Irish craft brands. The most popular brand, YellowBelly, is a craft brand established in 2015 whose microbrewery operates in Wexford. Their beer is founded on progressiveness and innovation with their beer styles and ingredients, with over 100 different brews created (YellowBelly.ie). There appears to be an element of fun and humour in their overall branding strategy, which can be argued to appeal to females respondents. With this brand being the most popular brand mentioned, this accounts for only 11% of the respondents. It could be derived that this analysis represents a small percentage of the sample population, and therefore is not representative of all female consumers in Ireland. A wide diversity of brands were mentioned and this information is important when identifying brand awareness within the industry for female consumers. However, the fact that the majority of brands mentioned were Irish, coupled with the most popular brands being Irish

suggests that female consumers prefer local Irish craft brands and therefore, that the origin of brewing is an important factor to their craft beer purchase decisions.

A number of brands mentioned by the female consumers are considered non-craft brands. For example, Guinness and Hop House 13 were mentioned as favourite craft beer brand, despite neither one meeting the criteria for being Irish craft. Blue Moon and BrewDog were also mentioned, and with their production quantity, neither one of these brands are considered to be craft beer any longer (Mintel, 2018). The data demonstrates that non-craft beer brands are being identified which correlates directly with the qualitative data and literature. P1 states that “it is a confusing time for consumers”. The literature identifies that macro breweries are trying to tap into the consumer demand by creating their own versions of craft beers. It can be argued that if consumers cannot identify what is a craft beer, then this concept becomes diluted and is not able to attract as many consumers to the market. With organisations such as the Independent Craft Brewers of Ireland creating labels to be placed on identified authentic Irish craft brands, consumers have a better chance in identifying real craft brands.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The relatively new and increasingly popular craft beer industry in Ireland presents a strong basis for this research. With beer being the most popular alcoholic drink consumed in Ireland, the craft beer revolution has changed the industry dynamic and is attracting more and more females into the market with its diverse product style and taste offerings. The focus of this dissertation was to explore the brand perceptions of female consumers in Ireland. Brands are the most important intangible asset to a company and aim to positively influence the perception of their consumer base. Brand awareness, brand loyalty, consumer behaviour and preferences were therefore key aspects to provide a scope of knowledge for the industry within this thesis.

The primary research demonstrates that a significant number of females are seeking out a new innovative beer drinking experience. Considering that craft beer by definition offers differentiation and innovation in comparison to beer from macro breweries, this makes the craft beer market attractive to females. While most females still primarily prefer “moderately sweet” drinks, other flavour preferences were demonstrated in the primary research, illuminating possible evolvment of taste. Ireland’s most popular style of beer, lager, is not the most popular preference among females, again demonstrating their desire for variety. Accordingly, these taste and style preferences suggests that females, like other consumers, are emerging themselves into the craft beer industry and as such, are becoming more innovative with their craft consumption.

As the craft beer market is heavily competitive within the overall market for alcoholic drinks, attracting more females to the industry offers a large potential for future growth. For the craft brands to maximise their influence on female consumers, the industry needs to be more aware of what females are looking for in a brand. The two positively influencing factors towards craft beer purchase intention are style of beer and origin of brewing. Therefore, effective branding strategies towards females should incorporate these features.

Research demonstrated that female consumers perceive this industry as a chance to become innovative in their beer consumption based on the positively perceived quality, for which they are willing to pay more for. Through the use of interviews, it was found that craft beer brands acknowledge the increase in female craft consumption but are not specifically targeting the females, in order to avoid gender stereotypes. While there is strong evidence that females do not want branding/marketing that perpetuates these stereotypes, there is evidence to support that there is a missing link in the development of a craft brand-female consumer relationship. A major finding in the study demonstrates that almost half of the female respondents do not feel that branding and marketing strategies consider their gender demographic. A more specific study to analyse the gap between the dislike of gender-specific marketing strategies and the feeling of not being considered in current strategies shown by primary research should be considered to support the development of a stronger relationship between brands and female consumers.

To establish brand loyalty within the craft market is a difficult yet not impossible task according to the industry participants interviewed. Data analysis within the primary research supported that most females do not identify themselves as brand loyal, although literature suggests that females are more brand loyal. Craft brands will need to work hard at establishing brand loyalty with female consumers. Additionally, there was also evidence to support that more awareness surrounding what a craft beer is is required in order to not dilute the craft beer concept. As a result of higher awareness, craft brands will have a better chance to stand out from the macro brewed brands, hence attracting more female consumers who are looking for an innovative beer tasting experience through local brews.

There is a wide scope of further research warranted on this topic with regards to females' perceptions of craft brands. The research did not cover to what extent different types of branding such as the use of humour affect their perceptions. Furthermore, consumer behaviour in relation to how involved female consumers are with their favourite craft brands should be studied. A study dedicated to examining the brand-female consumer-relationship would be extremely

beneficial, as building strong consumer-brand relationships are pivotal in fostering brand awareness and ultimately brand loyalty.

Overall, this study aimed to analyse the brand perceptions of female consumers in the craft beer market in Ireland. Besides the beforementioned further research topics, a second important point for further analysis is to embed this thesis into a higher-level overview. Possible research topics are comparisons of the female and male perceptions as well as a comparison of the perception within the market for alcoholic drinks or within an international context. This will enable a generalisation of results that are not gender or market specific.

Chapter 7: Reflection and Learning Styles

7.1 Introduction:

This chapter of the dissertation focuses on self-reflection and is an assessment of my learning styles in respect to the completion of the master's program and dissertation. In particular, this section will evaluate my learning styles, highlight the experience of completing the dissertation and the challenges I overcame during the study.

As I reflect back on the past academic year, I have learned so much. This year has brought about many changes in my life, with the biggest one giving up full-time employment to head back to school. I was inspired to go back to school to gain more knowledge and become qualified in a field that I find most interesting, marketing. The marketing industry is constantly evolving and with increased technology, one could argue that it is the most exciting time to become involved. By pursuing this interest, I have realised it is never too late to pursue your goals and ambitions. By completing this master's program, I have increased my chances of employability in the marketing field and have developed skills that I can apply to this industry.

The idea behind reflective writing is about converting an experience into a written reflective account, that turns this experience into learning. This process often starts with taking a step back to describe an experience, which can lead into a reflection and subsequent re-evaluation of the experience. Having studied a Human Resources degree 9 years prior, my learning styles have changed considerably. By completing this course, I have become more aware of my strengths and weaknesses associated with completing academic assignments. And by completing the final assignment of the masters, the dissertation, I was able to recognise my learning styles and how I was able to overcome challenges along the way.

I have accessed my reflections of this dissertation first through the use of Gibb's Reflective Cycle. And I will conclude this section with an assessment of my learning styles through the framework developed by Honey & Mumford.

7.2 Gibb's Reflective Cycle

Description (*What happened?*)

I recall sitting in Research Methods during first term and being told we had to decide on a topic for our first proposal. I remember the only thing that came to mind was craft beer. And because I personally enjoy drinking craft beer, I thought it might be an interesting to acquire more insight into other females' perceptions of the industry. And so I ran with this topic for the first proposal and all was sorted, or so I thought.

First term flies by and before I know it we are taking RM2, along with other pretty intensive marketing courses. I must admit, I left thinking about my second proposal late in the term. After speaking to a few classmates, I decided I needed to change topics to somehow include a digital aspect. Long story short, my topic changed 2 or 3 times more before my final submission for RM2.

Even after the submission of RM2, my focus changed a few more times during the start of the dissertation. After finally deciding on a topic, which was back to female perceptions and craft beer, I felt more confident in sticking with one idea! After this, the biggest hurdle was writing the literature review. Deciding on which themes should be included was the biggest challenge. But I will not say that the rest of the dissertation was a breeze; each and every section I tackled, new challenges arose. With the methodology, the hardest part was developing the questionnaire and making sure I captured the items I wanted to research. Second guessing which questions I chose remained a common theme. Data collection and analysis went more smoothly as I felt confident in presenting the data I had found. I found the discussion the most interesting part because this section of the dissertation allowed me to think laterally by interpreting, correlating and

presenting all the research in a coherent, concise way. In the end, the thesis was completed and done to the best of my ability. And surprisingly enough, I wouldn't change a thing.

Feelings (*what were you thinking and feeling?*)

To be honest, my feelings were everywhere during this dissertation. There were times of excitement for taking on such a large independent research study to stress and anxiety with keeping to timelines and proceeding with the steps of the research study. At times, it felt like I was constantly second guessing my decisions. However, these emotions were to be somewhat expected, as I do take assignments and school seriously, and as a result put extra pressure on myself to perform to the best of my ability. In the end, I learned a lot from this study, including time management and research skills.

Evaluation (*what was good and bad about the experience?*)

The most difficult part of the entire study was deciding on the research question and subsequent objectives. I found this part the most challenging, as I knew that deciding upon these elements would ultimately affect the entire trajectory of the study. Great importance rested on these decisions. By not being confident in my ability to research a particular topic, the first few weeks of the dissertation were a struggle. Due to my inability to not commit to one research question and objectives delayed me in progressing with the dissertation. Luckily, after consultation and guidance from my supervisor, I was able to take charge of my research and continue along the dissertation journey.

The most enjoyable part of the research study was conducting the primary research. Previously, I have never conducted this type of research. I was delighted that I had the opportunity to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research. This mixed method approach allowed me to acquire great insight into the industry, by interviewing local industry marketing managers and administering a questionnaire to female consumers in Ireland. I thoroughly enjoyed conducting the research and analysing the results.

Conclusion (*what else could you have done?*)

In the end, I am satisfied with the completion of my dissertation and the research and time management skills I have developed. However, it is clear that I could have done things differently that inherently would have made the research process easier. I wish that I had not been so indecisive on the topic and had stuck with my original idea from the very first meeting with my supervisor. This would have been a huge time saver, as well a lot less stress at the beginning of the dissertation. I also know that in preparation for this research study, I could have focused more on learning how the actual dissertation process worked, as I had never previously completed one before.

Action Plan (*if it arose again, what would you do?*)

I have learned so much through completing this research dissertation. At one point this task seemingly impossible when self-doubt crept in. Having completed this dissertation, I have a much better understanding on how to conduct a large independent research study. Accordingly, my research, critical analysis and time management skills have all immensely improved. Equally important, I have learned to trust my gut instinct more and the abilities I have to make appropriate contextual decisions. The confidence that I have acquired through this process will be carried with me to future career opportunities within the marketing field.

7.3 Honey & Mumford

According to the Honey and Mumford (1986) model for learning, I am quite confident that I classify as a reflector. According to their theory, reflectors learn by observing and thinking about a situation. They want to consider all the possible angles and implications before deciding or considering an option. Reflectors tend to be more cautious and thoughtful in their decision making and often spend their time listening and observing. After being out of the academic world for almost a decade, I found myself trying to understand each assignment I had been given throughout this program. By doing so, I often reflected on the best approach to tackle the

assignment and or which angle I should use for arguments in essays. While my learning style is clearly defined as a reflector, sometimes this learning style can become a fault, in that I may over reflect or overthink when understanding and/or applying concepts. However, going forward, I am prepared to take on different learning styles given the context, so that I can strengthen my learning accordingly. I feel that the dissertation process has helped me tackle this issue by having the continuous support of my supervisor and deciding when enough reflection had taken place.

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Appendix

SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR FEMALE CONSUMERS

1. Do you drink craft beer?

- Yes
- No

2. If no, what are the main reasons (please click as many as apply)

- Too expensive
- Do not enjoy the taste
- I do not drink alcohol and or/beer
- Other

3. Which flavours of beer do you prefer? Please select all that apply

- Low bitterness
- Moderately bitter
- Moderately sweet
- Sweet
- Malty
- Sour
- Bitter

4. What is your favourite type of beer?

- Brown Ale
- Pale Ale
- India Pale Ale (IPA)
- Porter
- Stout
- Belgian
- Wheat
- Lager
- Other

5. Where are you most likely to purchase craft beer?

- On trade (pubs, restaurants, festivals)
- Off trade (off licences, shops)
- Both

6. Do you prefer to purchase craft beer in cans or bottles?

- Cans
- Bottles

7. Craft beer is my alcoholic drink of choice

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. How do you perceive craft beer as a drink? (select only 2 options)

- An innovative beer tasting experience
- Rugged, manly drink
- Sophisticated drink
- Relaxing, rejuvenating drink

9. I perceive craft beer to be of better quality than mass produced beer (e.g. Heineken)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I believe it is important to support local micro-breweries in Ireland

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. Some craft beers can be more expensive compared to standard mass-produced beers. Does this effect your purchase intentions?

- Yes, I don't mind paying a little more
- Yes, however it is a little too expensive
- No, it's overrated
- I wouldn't know

12. Please choose the 3 most important aspects that influence your purchase intention for craft beer

- Alcohol content
- The brand name
- Style of beer
- Brand Logo/label
- Place of brewing origin

13. Are you attracted by the labelling/colour of craft beer product packaging?

- Yes
- No

14. Which colour of label most attracts you to beer products?

- Blue
- Green
- Pink
- Red

- Orange
- Yellow
- Black
- Purple
- Colours do not attract me
- Other

15. Do you feel craft beer brands consider the female demographic when developing branding/marketing strategies for their beer products?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

16. Do you consider yourself loyal to one brand?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

17. Do you have a favourite craft beer?

- Yes
- No

18. If yes, which one? (open ended qualitative question)

QUESTIONS FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1. Give me a brief history about your brand
2. Thanks for telling me about the company. Can you give me a brief description of how the brand was developed?
3. What important factors went into creating that brand?
4. Who is your target market for your brand?
5. Where are your crafts beers available?
6. Based on your target market, what types of product styles do you offer?
7. What do you think the brand represents in the minds of the consumers?
8. The craft beer market has become crowded, full of marketing noise, what are the biggest challenges?
9. Have you developed marketing strategies to overcome these challenges? And if so, what are they?
10. Considering the concept of business growth/market share, coupled with the fact that more women are consuming craft beer, is your brand targeting the female craft beer consumer? Is the female consumer segment important to your brand?

11. How are you targeting female consumers? What is your branding towards them?

12. In future, how do you see your brand developing and creating a strong connection with both male and female consumers?

13. At the end of the day, is it more about the product itself or the branding that is most important for attracting consumers?