# Understanding Millennial relationships and consumption of no and low alcohol beer brands

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of brand image on brand relationships (brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment), and the impact of these relationships on the current and future consumption of millennial consumers' no and low alcohol (NoLo) beer brands. It also explored the moderating role of traditional word of mouth (WOM) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on the relationship between current and future consumption.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study sample included 439 millennials from Gauteng, South Africa, who actively purchase and consume NoLo beer. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the proposed hypotheses. A descriptive research design and non-probability sampling method were utilised, with reliability validated prior to SEM. Structural equation modelling examined both direct and indirect effects.

**Findings/results:** Findings show NoLo beer aligns with millennials' values and strengthens their identities, making them feel unique and accepted. Most hypotheses were accepted, except H4. Millennials may view NoLo beer as a functional product, trusting it without emotional attachment. Their attachment may not lead to current consumption but instead, it leads to future consumption as they await stronger brand identities or better products.

**Practical implications:** The study offers NoLo beer sellers valuable guidelines to better understand and anticipate the consumption behaviour of South African millennials.

**Originality/value:** This study provides insights into the structural properties linking the brand image with the current and future consumption of NoLo beer among millennials. Understanding this growing market segment is crucial for successful sales.

**Keywords:** brand image; brand relationships; consumption; millennials; no and low alcohol (NoLo) beer; South Africa.

## Introduction

Brands play a crucial role in establishing emotional connections with consumers, especially as millennials reshape consumption patterns and brand interactions (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2024; Bump, 2023). In South Africa, the expanding no and low alcohol (NoLo) beer market underscores the necessity for brands to understand these shifts to effectively engage with this demographic (Filter, 2022). Companies increasingly recognise the importance of positive relational exchanges – driven by trust, commitment, loyalty and satisfaction – as they adapt their strategies to build robust consumer relationships (Arshad, 2023; Roberts-Lombard & Reynolds-de Bruin, 2017). This focus on RM aligns with the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which posits that consumers (such as millennials) learn from their social interactions and emotional experiences, shaping their perceptions and behaviours towards brands (Li et al., 2022).

Millennials prioritise authentic relationships and experiences, favouring brands that align with their values and lifestyles (Olga, 2018). Consequently, brands must cultivate a strong image that fosters trust and loyalty, which are crucial factors in purchasing decisions (Khan et al., 2021; O'Carroll, 2019; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). This brand image significantly influences overall satisfaction, impacting consumer choice (Diputra & Yasa, 2021; Jamshidi & Rousta, 2021; Susanto et al., 2022). As consumers encounter various brand-related stimuli, their emotional responses enhance satisfaction during purchases (Lin, 2015). Thus, brands must meet consumer expectations to build lasting attachments through trust, which reflects SCT's emphasis on social context and emotional experience in shaping consumer behaviour (Ismail, 2022). The theory suggests that

consumers' interactions with brands can inform their expectations and satisfaction, reinforcing the importance of emotional engagement in marketing strategies to strengthen trust (Joshi, 2021, Li et al., 2022).

Trust is paramount in these relationships; consumers gravitate towards brands that consistently deliver on their promises (Rew et al., 2023). This trust arises from perceptions of a brand's reliability and integrity, informed by past experiences and brand associations (Haudi et al., 2022). Previous research has established positive relationships between brand satisfaction and attachment, as well as between brand trust and attachment (Hsieh et al., 2022; Ismail, 2022; Sung et al., 2023; Thomson et al., 2005; Xu et al., 2022). In South Africa, where consumer trust can be volatile, RM that builds trust and satisfaction is crucial. These elements form the foundation for long-term relationship building, as trust fosters confidence in brand reliability, while satisfaction addresses the fulfilment of social needs (Chen & Sriphon, 2022; Van Tonder & De Beer, 2018). This dynamic emphasises the reciprocal nature of trust and satisfaction, echoing the SCT, which illustrates how positive experiences with a brand can lead to repeated favourable evaluations and enhanced loyalty (Alyahya et al., 2020; Boateng et al., 2016).

Research indicates that word of mouth (WOM) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) significantly influence consumer decisions in the NoLo category. Digital platforms like social media, blogs and review sites are essential for sharing consumer experiences (Todri et al., 2022). Millennials utilise both online and offline channels for purchasing decisions and are particularly influenced by social media (Hall et al., 2017). The critical role of eWOM in enhancing brand awareness and credibility highlights its impact on millennial purchasing decisions, as it reduces uncertainty and shapes purchase intentions (Abdullah et al., 2023; Siddiqui et al., 2021). The SCT suggests that consumers observe and imitate the behaviours of their peers and social networks, making WOM a powerful tool for shaping brand perceptions and decisions (Perera et al., 2019). This study seeks to bridge the managerial gap by emphasising the influence of WOM and eWOM on the consumption patterns of millennial South Africans, providing actionable insights for marketing strategies within the NoLo market.

The South African alcohol industry is evolving, with millennials at the forefront. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic accelerated the growth of NoLo beverages because of restrictions on alcohol sales. However, few studies have examined consumer perceptions of these products, particularly in relation to brand image and relationships (Kosłowski et al., 2021). Most existing research focusses on developed markets, with studies on craft beer prioritising experience over the unique aspects of NoLo beverages (Collins et al., 2023; Van der Merwe, 2020). As such, this gap highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how brand image and relational factors influence consumer choice in the South African context, especially as millennials navigate their brand interactions through social influences and emotional relevance. Understanding millennial consumers is essential for NoLo companies, marketers and advertising agencies, as this demographic drives industry changes and prefers brands that reflect their values, emphasising trust and authenticity (Bump, 2023; O'Carroll, 2019; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). With millennials relying heavily on WOM and eWOM for purchasing decisions, brands must prioritise these factors to foster strong relationships and enhance customer retention in the NoLo market.

Current literature often focusses on the impact of alcohol marketing on youth consumption, with systematic reviews addressing long-term effects (Jernigan et al., 2017; Noel et al., 2020). Research on NoLo beverages has begun to explore marketing strategies but lacks insights into how brand relationships influence consumer choices. While brand image, attachment and trust are acknowledged as critical in alcoholic beverage marketing, their specific impact on NoLo beverages remains underexplored. As such, this study aims to address this gap, guided by the question:

> How do brand image and brand relationships (brand satisfaction, brand trust, and brand attachment) influence the behavioural outcomes (current and future consumption and WOM) of millennial consumers of NoLo beer in Gauteng, South Africa?

This article will first outline a theoretical framework, followed by an in-depth literature review of the proposed constructs and hypothesised relationships. It will then provide insights into the methodology, the results obtained and the practical implications derived from the study.

# Theoretical framework and hypotheses testing
## Theories grounding the study

Technological and cultural shifts require marketers and manufacturers to adapt (Sima et al., 2020). These changes necessitate ongoing trust and satisfaction for sustained consumer relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nkosi, 2024). Relationship Marketing (RM) theory provides a framework for these relationships, emphasising trust and satisfaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Additionally, SCT explains consumer behaviour through the interaction between environment and individual behaviour (Bandura, 1986).

## Relationship marketing

Relationship Marketing theory highlights the importance of fostering trust, satisfaction and engagement, which is particularly relevant in building strong brands that resonate with millennials' lifestyles and values (Barska et al., 2023; Olga, 2018; Rosário & Casaca, 2023). Trust is established when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity (Van Deventer & Redda, 2023), while satisfaction relates to the realisation of social needs, promoting emotional bonds and potential commitment (Nur et al., 2023).

Furthermore, brands and companies increasingly recognise the significance of developing and maintaining positive relational exchanges, which are essential for generating positive WOM both online and offline, thereby influencing buying behaviour (Roberts-Lombard & Reynolds-de Bruin, 2017). Word of mouth entails sharing experiences, thoughts and information with other consumers, thereby influencing their decisions, perceptions, emotional connections and behaviour towards organisations and their respective brands (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2024; Manyanga et al., 2022). Consequently, RM theory involves a comprehensive approach to marketing by managing existing customer relationships effectively to drive behavioural outcomes, such as future consumption (Roberts-Lombard & Petzer, 2018).

## Social cognitive theory

Social Cognitive Theory provides valuable insights into consumer behaviour, highlighting the reciprocal interaction between individuals and their environment (Bandura, 1986). Known as social learning theory (Pincus, 2004), SCT explains why individuals adopt certain behaviours, based on outcome expectations, direct experiences and observations (Ratten & Ratten, 2007). It posits that individuals can influence their actions (McCormick & Martinko, 2004).

Social Cognitive Theory is particularly relevant to millennial consumption, examining the dynamic interplay between environmental and personal factors (Rizkalla & Erhan, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). Millennials' strong brand attachment impacts their consumer behaviour, lifetime value and behavioural intentions (Hemsley-Brown, 2023). Brand attraction for millennials often hinges on seeing themselves in the brand (Thellefsen et al., 2013), with well-established brands helping develop strong associations (Du Plessis et al., 2023).

Exposure and experience shape millennials' attitudes towards brands, leading to long-lasting positive impressions (Tresnadi et al., 2024). Social Cognitive Theory's determinants, self-efficacy and outcome expectations, align with millennial values, reflecting beliefs about their ability to perform behaviours and the perceived value of outcomes (Çoban et al., 2023; Romeo et al., 2021). Understanding these factors is crucial, as millennials' consumption patterns are influenced by their environment and personal experiences. Social Cognitive Theory offers marketers a unique perspective on millennial behaviour, highlighting environmental stimuli's role in shaping decisions (Lin, 2015). Incorporating SCT helps tailor strategies that resonate with millennial values and behaviours, fostering stronger brand relationships.

# Literature review
## The no and low alcohol beer market

With global alcohol consumption declining, the NoLo sector has seen significant growth, with a 32% increase from 2018 to 2022 (Fallert, 2019; Furnari, 2019). Reduced beer sales and a shift towards healthier lifestyles have boosted demand for low- and no-alcohol alternatives (Bendersky, 2023). Millennials, particularly those aged 18–34, are driving this trend, which accelerated with a nearly 7% drop in global beer volumes in 2020 (IWSR, 2023). In the United States of America, rising prices have also led to decreased beer purchases (Maloney, 2023). Anheuser-Busch InBev, the world's leading brewery, predicts that by 2025, NoLo beers will make up at least 20% of its global volume, driven by popular non-alcoholic options like Stella Artois Liberté and Jupiler 0.0 (Kearney, 2023). In South Africa, with 15.9 million Millennials (Naidoo, 2023), beer producers must understand millennial purchasing behaviour for low- and no-alcohol beer to capitalise on this expanding market (Olga et al., 2018).

## Brand image

Brand image refers to the perceptions of a brand as represented by brand associations held in consumers' memories (Supiyandi et al., 2022). Consumer behaviour is significantly influenced by brand image (Haudi et al., 2022). When presented with a brand, consumers experience it, develop an image in their minds and tend to choose brands that resonate with their self-image (Kang et al., 2022). A strong brand image fosters trust and loyalty, making it crucial for attracting and retaining customers (Khan et al., 2021; O'Carroll, 2019; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Millennials, a key demographic for NoLo products, value authenticity, trust and social responsibility (O'Carroll, 2019; Rank & Contreras, 2021). By examining brand image in the NoLo and millennial contexts, companies can tailor branding efforts to this influential group, driving growth and fostering loyalty.

## Brand relationships (brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment)

The selection of brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand attachment to measure brand relationships was deliberate because of their foundational and comprehensive nature in capturing the essence of consumer–brand interactions (Gómez-Suárez, 2019; Hess & Story, 2005; Popp & Woratschek, 2017). Although Nicholls (2022, 2023) has conducted studies on consumer behaviour regarding NoLo beverages, focussing on marketing strategies and consumer use, no research has specifically investigated brand-related and brand relationship constructs.

## Brand satisfaction

It can be argued that when consumers' actual self-view and ideal self-view align with the brand's identity, their basic needs are satisfied (Schnebelen & Bruhn, 2018). High satisfaction levels often lead to repeat purchases and positive WOM, making it vital for assessing brand relationship success (Flynn, et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019). For millennials, who value authenticity and emotional engagement with brands, satisfaction encompasses emotional variables that combine with their experiences when engaging with products (Ma & Wang, 2021).

This degree of satisfaction determines a brand's position in their future purchasing decisions. When satisfaction is high, the emotional attachment is stronger, leading to higher loyalty and advocacy (Shahid et al., 2022). This is particularly important for NoLo brands, as they cater to millennials' growing preference for healthier lifestyle choices (Campos Nogueira, 2019), making their satisfaction a key driver of brand success.

## Brand trust

Brand trust is crucial for long-term commitment, as it involves confidence in a brand's reliability and integrity (Van Deventer & Redda, 2023), mitigating perceived risks in today's dynamic market (Hansen et al., 2018). Brand trust influences positive consumer attitudes, as, without it, even satisfied customers may hesitate to engage deeply with the brand (Suhan et al., 2022). Trust is especially important to millennials, who value transparency and authenticity, and are quick to disengage from brands that fail to meet these standards (Valette-Florence & Valette-Florence, 2020). For NoLo brands, trust is paramount as these products cater to health-conscious millennials who seek assurance in the quality and integrity of their choices (Campos Nogueira, 2019; Olga, 2018). It refers to consumers' belief in a brand's ability to provide reliable products and services (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2017), which is essential for fostering advocacy in the NoLo brands market segment.

## Brand attachment

When brands enhance consumers' self-perceptions, they form strong emotional bonds and consumer–brand relationships. Brand attachment, defined as the emotive bond between the consumer and brand (Japutra et al., 2018), drives these relationships and favourable behaviours (Ugalde et al., 2023). It includes emotions and brand representations (Frasquet et al., 2017) and is a powerful predictor of behaviour (Ku & Lin, 2018). For millennials, especially in the NoLo market, brand attachment is crucial for influencing purchasing decisions and loyalty, growing stronger over time (Hemsley-Brown, 2023).

## Current consumption and future consumption

Consumption contributes to social status and placement (Falke et al., 2022). For millennials, consuming brands is about identification, status and personality (Eastman & Iyer, 2021). Consumers often try a brand's product initially, and if satisfied, continue to purchase it (Tuti & Sulistia, 2022). Trust and satisfaction foster strong brand relationships, leading to brand attachment (Ismail, 2022; Sung et al., 2023). Long-term relationships with brands require attachment and positive brand perceptions, influencing both current and future consumer behaviour (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2022). For millennials in the NoLo market, these attachments and perceptions are crucial, impacting their purchasing decisions and loyalty.

## Traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth

Traditional WOM revolves around oral and interpersonal communication between receivers and communicators (Ismagilova et al., 2017). It is a naturally occurring phenomenon (Bartschat et al., 2022) and is critical because the receiver of the information trusts the sender, reducing anxiety, vulnerability and uncertainty about a transaction (Kong et al., 2020). For millennials, trust and authenticity are vital in their consumption choices, making traditional WOM an influential factor when considering NoLo products.

Consumer communication has evolved in the digital age, leading to the rise of eWOM, which is non-firm-sponsored product information shared online (Iqbal et al., 2022a). Hussain et al. (2020) noted that eWOM now often replaces traditional WOM in discussion groups, blogs, forums and social networking sites. Millennials, being digital natives, rely heavily on online information provided by others, which significantly influences their behaviour, subjective norms, beliefs, intentions and attitudes (Pang & Wang, 2023). In the NoLo market, eWOM is particularly important because it allows millennials to access a broad range of opinions and experiences from their peers, enhancing their decision-making process.

For millennials, who value social proof and peer recommendations, both WOM and eWOM play crucial roles. Traditional WOM provides personal, trusted endorsements, while eWOM offers a vast, diverse array of perspectives. Together, these forms of communication reduce uncertainty and build trust, making them powerful tools for influencing millennial consumers in the NoLo market. Understanding the importance of WOM and eWOM can help marketers effectively reach and engage this demographic, ultimately fostering stronger brand loyalty and driving growth in the NoLo sector.

# Theoretical model development

## The relationship between perceived brand image and brand satisfaction

Brand image, comprising distinctive brand associations, influences consumers' expectations (Manyanga et al., 2022). Brand satisfaction is an outcome-oriented attitude based on consumers' initial exposure and impression (Rakhmawati & Tuti, 2023). As brand image affects consumers' expectations, it consequently impacts their satisfaction with products or brands (Jamshidi & Rousta, 2021). The stronger the affiliation between a brand's image and a millennial's self-concept, the stronger the emotional bond and satisfaction (Iyer & Mallika, 2023). Thus, brand image significantly influences satisfaction (Bernarto et al., 2022). Based on this, we propose:

> **H1:** Millennials' brand image of NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their brand satisfaction.

## The relationship between brand image and brand trust

Consumers' perceptions of a brand are based on its image; those with a higher brand image associate it with better quality and value (Kolańska-Stronka et al., 2023). The brand image consists of beliefs about a brand, while brand trust is the willingness to rely on it (Utami, 2023). Brand associations in consumers' memories guide their insights and trust in the brand (Hayuni & Sharif, 2023). Song et al. (2019) found that brand image is crucial for establishing trust, suggesting that a valuable brand image enhances millennial trust in products and services. Kim and Chao (2019) further stated that a strong brand image increases consumers' trust and likelihood of purchase. Therefore, we propose:

> **H2:** Millennials' brand image of NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their brand trust.

## The relationship between brand satisfaction and brand attachment

The more satisfied consumers are with a brand, the greater their identification and emotional attachment, as their expectations are fulfilled (Ismail, 2022). Consumer satisfaction includes emotional components, relating to feelings towards the brand (Hsieh et al., 2022). Brand attachment expresses consumers' connectedness with a brand (Arya et al., 2019) and is shown through strong memory structures and self-brand connections (Fazli-Salehi et al., 2021). A brand's ability to resonate with millennials' self-identity is key to developing attachment (Shetty & Fitzsimmons, 2022). Considering these findings, we propose:

> **H3:** Millennials' brand satisfaction of NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their brand attachment.

## The relationship between brand trust and brand attachment

Brand trust creates an emotionally charged bond between consumers and brands, signalling care and connection (Sung et al., 2023). It fosters positive emotional attachment, providing a comfort zone for consumers (Barijan et al., 2021). Brand attachment, driven by trust, offers consumers a sense of security in their relationships with brands (Khan et al., 2020). Over time, exposure and interactions develop brand trust, enhancing relationships and attachment (Tuti & Sulistia, 2022). For millennials, trust accelerates devotion to a brand, driving consumer behaviour through attachment (Kim & Chao, 2019). Consequently, we propose:

> **H4:** Millennials' brand trust of NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their brand attachment.

## The relationship between brand attachment and current consumption

Kim and Chao (2019) noted that consumers use brands to satisfy experiential and emotional needs. Pina and Dias (2021) agreed, stating that brand attachment leads to positive emotions and favourable evaluations with each experience. Through brand consumption, consumers define their identity and express their values (Yuanita & Marsasi, 2022). Vahdat et al. (2020) found that higher attachment increases association with the parent brand. These emotions influence millennial purchasing behaviour (Marsasi & Yuanita, 2023), enhancing their tendency to choose brands they regularly use (Huang et al., 2018). Accordingly, we propose:

> **H5:** Millennials' brand attachment to NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their current consumption.

## The relationship between brand attachment and future consumption

According to Mnqanqeni and Shava (2023), brand attachment motivates consumers' repurchase intentions. Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021) found that emotionally attached consumers become more loyal and perceive fewer risks. Consequently, strong brand attachment leads to resistance to switching brands (Shimul et al., 2023). Ansary and Hashim (2018) highlighted the fact that understanding brand attachment is crucial as it influences consumer behaviour and enhances lifetime value. When millennials bond with brands, these attachments lead to repeat purchases (Iqbal et al., 2022b). Kim and Chao (2019) confirmed that brand attachment indicates the frequency of current consumption and the likelihood of future purchases. Accordingly, we propose:

> **H6:** Millennials' brand attachment to NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their future consumption.

## The relationship between current and future consumption

Consumers engage in consistent social acts like consumption to communicate their identities (Kolańska-Stronka et al., 2023). Signs and symbols in everyday life serve as tools for this communication, helping consumers define and express themselves (Chen et al., 2020). Current consumption reflects the search for a unified self, influencing future behaviour (Anderson et al., 2021). Millennial consumers' behaviour is tied to their identities, with brands enhancing self-identity driving future consumption (Gonzalez-Jimenez, 2017). Previous experiences shape future attitudes and purchasing behaviour (Yu & Lee, 2019), meaning millennial attitudes towards a product impact future decisions (Barska et al., 2023). As such, we hypothesise:

> **H7:** Millennials' current consumption of NoLo alcohol beer has a significant and positive influence on their future consumption.

## The moderating role of traditional word of mouth

In practice, a moderating effect involves a third variable influencing the relationship between two other variables, affecting the strength or nature of the relationship between the independent variable (predictor) and the dependent variable (outcome) (Dawson, 2014).

Ngoma and Ntale (2019) highlight the fact that traditional WOM significantly impacts millennial purchase decisions, particularly supporting repeat purchases. Millennials who share or receive positive WOM about products or brands tend to remain loyal in their consumption patterns. ZorBari-Nwitambu (2017) notes that positive WOM, driven by satisfied customers, influences repeat purchases and is a key predictor of a company's future success (Chatterjee, 2019). Practically, for millennials, traditional WOM affects the relationship between their current and future consumption of low- and no-alcohol beer. Positive reviews and recommendations from friends and family increase their likelihood of continued consumption, while negative feedback can decrease it. Thus, traditional WOM plays a crucial role in shaping millennials' ongoing purchasing decisions.

Based on this, we propose:

**H8:** The relationship between millennials' current consumption and future consumption of NoLo alcohol beer is moderated by traditional word of mouth.

### The moderating role of electronic word of mouth

Practically, for millennials, eWOM heavily influences their attitudes and behaviours. Millennials increasingly share information, research recommendations and rely on eWOM for decision-making (Todri et al., 2022). This reliance helps them reduce perceived risk and potential losses (Kurnaz & Duman, 2021). Higher social media usage enhances eWOM, increasing millennials' likelihood of future consumption (Koufie & Kesa, 2020). As such, we propose:

**H9:** The relationship between millennials' current consumption and future consumption of NoLo alcohol beer is moderated by electronic word of mouth.

Considering the discussion earlier in the text, the hypothesised model in Figure 1 is proposed.

## Research methodology

This study utilised a descriptive research design to explore millennials' brand image, relationships with brands and consumption behaviours. Because of the use of convenience sampling, which is a non-probability method, the findings cannot be generalised to the larger population (Burns & Bush, 2019). A positivistic paradigm, supporting quantitative methodology, was adopted to enhance trustworthiness and validity (Kamal, 2019; Kankam, 2019). Quantitative research, aligned with positivism, analyses relationships within collected data (Mohajan, 2020). A pilot study was conducted to ensure feasibility and resource efficiency (Kuhn et al., 2023). Data were collected using a mixed-mode method of self-administered and online questionnaires from postgraduate students, with 33 usable responses from 42 completed questionnaires.

After ethical clearance was obtained, an experienced data-collection company, collected data in Gauteng by distributing

an online Google form questionnaire via social media platforms where participants had to indicate that they were from one of the following metropolitan areas: Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni and Tshwane. A combination of quota and convenience sampling secured a final sample of 439 millennial respondents, defined as those born between 1980 and 1996, aged 27–43 years in 2023 (Scott et al., 2024). Non-probability sampling, despite its subjective nature and lack of representativeness, is valuable in surveys involving large populations where random sampling is impractical. It is useful for obtaining estimates that are not meant for generalisation. Quota sampling is particularly effective for examining traits within specific subgroups and exploring relationships between these subgroups (Anieting & Mosugu, 2017). Quota sampling was employed to ensure the sample's representativeness of the South African population. Firstly, the ethnicity of the population was scrutinised to match the demographic distribution and secondly, the gender distribution was based on data from Statistics South Africa (2022).

The questionnaire was distributed during August 2023 and September 2023, aligned with the research problem and objectives, and included screening questions ('Have you consumed low- and no-alcohol beer in the last 12 months?'; 'Do you live in the Gauteng province?'; 'Do you live in one of these cities? You may only select one city' and 'Do you fall within the 27–43 year age bracket?') to ensure respondents' relevance. Section A gathered demographic information, while subsequent sections utilised a five-point Likert scale to collect data on the main constructs. The Likert scale is commonly used, but the ideal number of points (4, 5, 6 or 11) is debated. Research finds no major differences in internal structure measures like means, standard deviations, correlations or Cronbach's alpha. However, more points seem to reduce skewness (Leung, 2011). Relevant literature
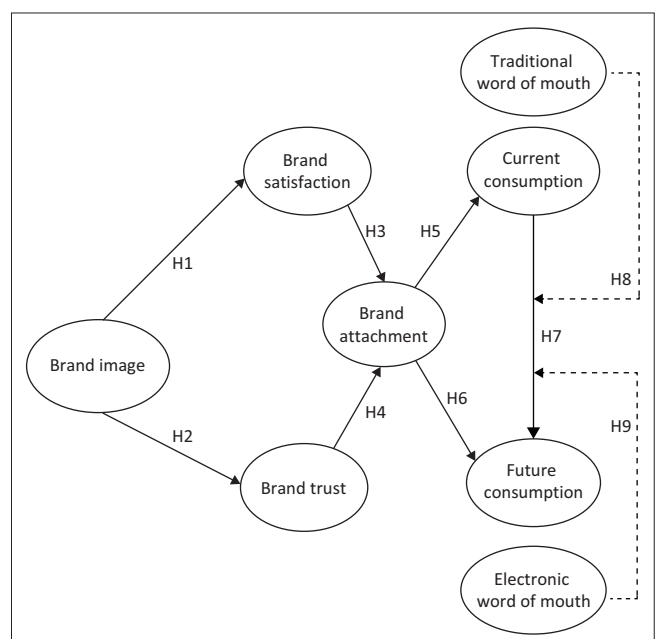


**FIGURE 1:** Proposed conceptual model.

and previous studies were used to develop the measurement constructs (see Appendix Table 1-A1). Structural equation modelling (SEM) was employed to explain relationships between variables and latent constructs, combining measurement models (CFA) and structural models (path models) (Amini & Alimohammadlou, 2021).

# Results

## Profile of respondents

The typical respondent in this study fell within the 27–43 (62%) age bracket, was black people (77%), spoke isiZulu (17.1%), held a degree (32.3%) and was single (44.6%). Black consumers who are aged 23–29, speak isiZulu, are students and are not married or in a relationship consume low- and no-alcohol beer.

## Common method bias

Harman's Single Factor Test is one of the most widely used, although debated, techniques for identifying Common Method Bias (CMB). In this approach, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) aggregates all items into a single factor to check if a significant portion of variance is explained by that factor. If a large variance is accounted for, it suggests potential CMB. Some researchers, such as Malhotra et al. (2007) and Chang et al. (2010), criticise this test for its insensitivity and argue that it fails to reliably detect subtle bias. Others, such as Fuller et al. (2016), contend that the test is useful when method bias is significant enough to influence the results. Alternatively, this test can be conducted via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), where all items are intentionally loaded onto a single factor to evaluate model fit. A good fit in this context indicates a high probability of method bias. In the context of this study, CMB was tested using both an EFA and a CFA approach, to indicate that CMB was not present in the study.

The results from Harman's Single Factor Test reflected in Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate that CMB is not a significant issue in the data. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.954, which is excellent and indicates that the sample size is sufficient for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is highly significant (Chi-square = 16109.699, degree of freedom [$df$] = 1081, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the variables are correlated enough to proceed with factor analysis. The first component extracted through principal component analysis explains 39.458% of the total variance. As this value is below the critical threshold of 50%, it suggests that a single factor does not dominate the data, reducing the likelihood that CMB is a major concern.

The results of the CFA for Harman's Single Factor Test as reflected in Table 3 indicate that a single-factor model does not adequately fit the data, which suggests that CMB is not a significant issue. The key fit indices – such as root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (0.123), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) (0.541), comparative fit index (CFI) (0.561), goodness of fit index (GFI) (0.43) and standardised root mean squared

residual (SRMR) (0.1127) – are far below the acceptable thresholds, indicating that forcing all items onto a single factor does not explain the variance sufficiently (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2015). These poor fit statistics suggest that the observed relationships among the variables are not driven by a single underlying factor, such as method bias. Typically, if CMB were present, the single-factor model would have shown a stronger fit to the data. However, because this model fails to fit well, the evidence points to no significant CMB. In practice, researchers rely more on comparative fit indices (CFI, TLI) and error-based indices (RMSEA, SRMR) to assess model adequacy (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

In conclusion, the poor model fit demonstrated in the CFA results confirms that CMB is not a major concern in the dataset, as the data's variability cannot be accounted for by a single factor.

## Confirmatory factor analysis

A CFA was used to validate factor loadings and measurements, assessing relationships between observed indicators and latent variables (Shirvan et al., 2022). Fit indicators included Chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, TLI, GFI and SRMR. Evaluating the goodness-of-fit (GoF) of the model is crucial in SEM, involving construct, convergent and discriminant validity (Yusof et al., 2017). Reliability was assessed using composite reliability from CFA results (Aimran et al., 2017). The statistical objective of CFA is to confirm measurement theory (Hair et al., 2020).

## Measurement model assessment

Using SPSS Amos 24, a CFA was conducted. The initial model had 35 items across eight latent constructs: brand image, brand trust, brand satisfaction, brand attachment, current consumption, future consumption, traditional WOM and eWOM. Because of reliability and validity issues (items cross-loaded and low factor loadings), nine items were

**TABLE 1:** Harman's single factor (unrotated) analysis (using exploratory factor analysis).

| Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin and Bartlett's test | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy | | 0.95 |
| Bartlett's test of sphericity | Approx. Chi-square | 16109.70 |
| | $df$ | 1081.00 |
| | Sig. | 0.00 |

$df$, degree of freedom; Sig., significance.

**TABLE 2:** Total variance explained.

| Component | Initial eigenvalues | | | Extraction sums of squared loadings | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Total | % of variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 18.54 | 39.46 | 39.46 | 18.54 | 39.46 | 39.46 |

**TABLE 3:** Harman's single factor test (using confirmatory factor analysis).

| RMSEA | TLI | CFI | GFI | SRMR |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0.12 | 0.54 | 0.56 | 0.43 | 0.11 |

RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; GFI, goodness of fit index; SRMR, standardised root mean squared residual.

removed, leaving 26 for the second CFA to enhance model results. Literature supports these adjustments, as covariances were included only between errors of items measuring the same construct (Tarkkonen & Vehkalahti, 2005). Table 4 shows the measurement model results. All GoF measures were within acceptable limits. The improved model had a chi-square of 1225.344, df of 544 and a significant *p*-value (0.000). The model fit indices showed acceptable GoF (CMIN/ *df* = 2.252, TLI = 0.932, SRMR = 0.0562, CFI = 0.941, GFI = 0.856 and RMSEA = 0.053).

Table 5 provides insight into the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha measures, average variance explained (AVE) and the means and standard deviations of the items used to measure the eight constructs of the study. The results indicate convergent validity, as all factor loadings are 0.5 or higher, where all 26 items ranged from 0.567 to 0.907, exceeding 0.5. Cronbach's alpha measured reliability by comparing the shared variance among items in an instrument to the total variance, indicating all values in the accepted range between 0.766 and 0.940. Each item's AVE was above 0.3, ranging from 0.566 to 0.781(Hosany et al., 2015). The means of the items varied between 2.07 and 2.61, with standard deviations from 0.792 to 1.083, indicating consistency in the measurements of the study's constructs.

## Convergent validity, discriminant validity, nomological validity and composite trait reliability

The measurement model demonstrates convergent validity, as all factor loadings were above or equal to 0.5. AVE estimates, all above 0.5 (see Table 6), further support this validity (Malhotra et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing inter-construct correlations with the square root of AVE for each construct, all of which were lower than the smallest AVE (74%), ranging from 0.280 to 0.830 (Malhotra et al., 2017). Nomological validity was established with R2 values between 0.50 and 0.75, indicating moderate to substantial predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2014). Lastly, composite trait reliability exceeded the 0.7 threshold, ranging from 0.788 to 0.988, confirming reliability (see Table 6).

## Linearity and multicollinearity

Multicollinearity arises when variables in a regression model are highly correlated with both the dependent variable and each other (Shrestha, 2020, p. 39). Pallant (2010) noted that this occurs when independent variables have a correlation of 0.9 or higher. The constructs for the study correlated well with one another, with no multicollinearity evident.

**TABLE 4:** Measures for goodness-of-fit (measurement model).

| CMIN/*df* | RMSEA | CFI | TLI | GFI | SRMR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.252 | 0.053 | 0.941 | 0.932 | 0.856 | 0.0562 |

RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; GFI, goodness of fit index; SRMR, standardised root mean squared residual; CMIN, Chi-square minimum; *df*, degree of freedom.

**TABLE 5:** Cronbach's alpha, factor loadings, average variance explained, means and standard deviations.

| Constructs | Items | Cronbach's alpha | Factor loadings | AVE | Overall M | Overall SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand image | BI1 | - | 0.77 | 0.57 | 2.42 | 0.79 |
| | BI2 | 0.80 | 0.75 | - | - | - |
| | BI3 | - | 0.74 | - | - | - |
| Brand trust | BT3 | - | 0.88 | 0.74 | 2.19 | 0.93 |
| | BT4 | 0.85 | 0.83 | - | - | - |
| Brand satisfaction | BS3 | - | 0.84 | 0.72 | 2.10 | 0.86 |
| | BS4 | 0.89 | 0.87 | - | - | - |
| | BS5 | - | 0.85 | - | - | - |
| Brand attachment | BAT1 | - | 0.75 | 0.65 | 2.32 | 0.91 |
| | BAT2 | 0.90 | 0.74 | - | - | - |
| | BAT3 | - | 0.77 | - | - | - |
| | BAT4 | - | 0.88 | - | - | - |
| | BAT5 | - | 0.87 | - | - | - |
| Current consumption | CC1 | - | 0.67 | 0.58 | 2.60 | 0.90 |
| | CC2 | 0.80 | 0.81 | - | - | - |
| | CC4 | - | 0.80 | - | - | - |
| Future consumption | FC1 | - | 0.57 | 0.57 | 2.43 | 0.89 |
| | FC2 | 0.77 | 0.84 | - | - | - |
| | FC4 | - | 0.81 | - | - | - |
| Traditional WOM | TWM1 | - | 0.78 | 0.71 | 2.07 | 1.03 |
| | TWM2 | 0.88 | 0.89 | - | - | - |
| | TWM3 | - | 0.86 | - | - | - |
| eWOM | EWM1 | - | 0.85 | 0.78 | 2.56 | 1.08 |
| | EWM2 | - | 0.91 | - | - | - |
| | EWM3 | 0.94 | 0.88 | - | - | - |
| | EWM4 | - | 0.89 | - | - | - |

M, mean; SD, standard deviation; AVE, average of variance extracted; WOM, word of mouth; eWOM, electronic word of mouth.

**TABLE 6:** Average variance extracted, squared inter-construct correlations.

| Construct | Current consumption | Brand image | Brand satisfaction | Electronic WOM | Brand attachment | Traditional WOM | Brand trust | Future consumption |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current consumption | 0.76† | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Brand image | 0.42 | 0.86† | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Brand satisfaction | 0.43 | 0.78 | 0.85† | - | - | - | - | - |
| eWOM | 0.57 | 0.44 | 0.39 | 0.88† | - | - | - | - |
| Brand attachment | 0.28 | 0.77 | 0.65 | 0.31 | 0.83† | - | - | - |
| Traditional WOM | 0.44 | 0.69 | 0.74 | 0.43 | 0.65 | 0.84† | - | - |
| Brand trust | 0.48 | 0.77 | 0.84 | 0.40 | 0.61 | 0.68 | 0.86† | - |
| Future consumption | 0.58 | 0.69 | 0.77 | 0.47 | 0.62 | 0.83 | 0.67 | 0.85† |
| Composite trait reliability‡ | 0.81 | 0.92 | 0.91 | 0.80 | 0.92 | 0.93 | 0.99 | 0.82 |

WOM, word of mouth; eWOM, electronic word of mouth.

†, Average variance extracted (AVE) reflected diagonally and squared correlations below AVE.

‡, Composite trait reliability is reflected in the bottom column.

## Structural model assessment

After assessing the psychometric properties and assumptions, the structural properties of the model were evaluated. The GoF indices indicated an acceptable fit: CMIN/*df* = 2.252, TLI = 0.932, SRMR = 0.0562, CFI = 0.941, GFI = 0.856 and RMSEA = 0.053 (see Table 7). Overall, the structural model showed adequate fit.

Table 8 and Table 9 provide insight into the findings with respect to the hypotheses formulated for the study. The majority of hypotheses were accepted, except for H4. Based on these findings, nomological validity was also evident.

The moderation effect of traditional WOM and eWOM on the relationship between current and future consumption was tested using an interaction effect in Amos version 24. Figure 2 shows that traditional WOM positively moderates this relationship ($\beta M$ = 3.375; $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, traditional WOM strengthens the link between current and future consumption, whereas eWOM weakens it. The interaction plot in Figure 3 confirms that eWOM reduces the impact of current consumption on future consumption.

# Discussion

Most hypotheses were validated, except for H4. It is evident that there is a relationship between brand image and brand satisfaction (H1) and brand image and brand trust (H2). This result indicates that NoLo beer aligns with millennials' values and strengthens their sense of identity, making them feel unique and accepted. Consumers are increasingly making decisions based on the brand image, rather than the product itself (Khan et al., 2023). For new products like NoLo beer brands, it is crucial for marketers to ensure millennials

perceive their products positively. A solid brand image cultivates trust and loyalty, making it essential for influencing purchasing decisions (Khan et al., 2021; O'Carroll, 2019; Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2019). Brand satisfaction also has a positive relationship with brand attachment (H3). Thus, a strong alignment enhances emotional bonds and satisfaction (Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022). High consumer satisfaction with a brand fosters greater identification and emotional attachment, fulfilling their expectations (Ismail, 2022). This satisfaction, encompassing emotional components and feelings towards the brand (Hsieh et al., 2022), often leads to repeat purchases and positive WOM, crucial for brand relationship success (Flynn et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2019). This finding aligns with the outcome that brand attachment has a positive and significant influence on the current consumption of NoLo beer. This implies that when millennials feel affectionate towards low- and no-alcohol beer brands and receive pleasure from consuming such beer brands, their current consumption of NoLo beers will be strengthened (H5). Therefore, for millennials, who prioritise authenticity and emotional engagement, satisfaction merges emotional variables with their product experiences (Ma & Wang, 2021), influencing future purchasing decisions. High satisfaction strengthens emotional attachment, boosting loyalty and advocacy (Shahid et al., 2022).

**TABLE 7:** Measures for goodness-of-fit (structural model).

| CMIN/*df* | RMSEA | CFI | TLI | GFI | SRMR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.25 | 0.05 | 0.94 | 0.93 | 0.86 | 0.06 |

RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; CFI, comparative fit index; GFI, goodness of fit index; SRMR, standardised root mean squared residual; CMIN, Chi-square minimum.

**TABLE 8:** Hypothesis testing (direct relationships).

| Hypothesis | $\beta$ | Sig. | Finding |
|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | 0.74 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| H2 | 0.77 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| H3 | 0.69 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| H4 | 0.12 | 0.14 | Rejected |
| H5 | 0.51 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| H6 | 0.82 | 0.00 | Accepted |
| H7 | 0.29 | 0.00 | Accepted |

Sig., significance.

**TABLE 9:** Hypothesis testing (moderating relationships).

| Hypothesis | B | Sig. | Moderating effect | Finding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H8 | 0.14 | 0.00 | 3.37 | There is a full moderation effect |
| H9 | -0.13 | 0.00 | -3.60 | There is a moderating effect, but it is negative |

Sig., significance.

WOM, word of mouth.

**FIGURE 2:** Interaction plot for the moderation of traditional word of mouth on the relationship between current and future consumption.
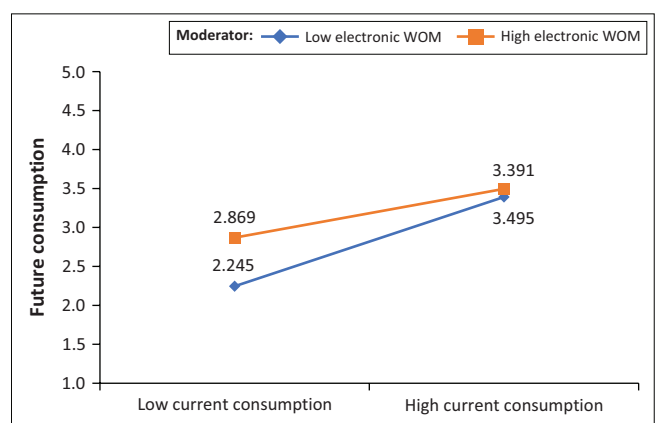
WOM, word of mouth.

**FIGURE 3:** Interaction plot for the moderation of electronic word of mouth on the relationship between current and future consumption.

Regarding hypothesis 4 which has been rejected, it is evident that brand trust does not have a relationship with brand attachment. Millennials might view NoLo beer primarily as a functional product, relying on it for its health and lifestyle advantages without developing a deep emotional connection to the brand (Beverland et al., 2010). This practical perspective implies that their trust in NoLo beer does not necessarily lead to immediate consumption. The moderating relationships (H8 and H9), on a practical level, mean that traditional WOM and eWOM have different influences on how millennials' current consumption of NoLo beer affects their future consumption. When friends or peers share positive experiences and recommendations about NoLo beer in-person, it significantly strengthens the likelihood that millennials who currently consume NoLo beer will continue to do so in the future. This is evidenced by the positive moderation effect ($\beta M = 3.375$; $p < 0.01$), indicating that personal recommendations are highly influential in encouraging ongoing consumption. Traditional WOM is thus a powerful tool for fostering long-term customer loyalty among millennial consumers.

In contrast, online reviews, social media posts and other digital recommendations (eWOM) have a weakening effect on this relationship. The data show that eWOM reduces the impact of current consumption on future consumption, meaning that despite current users being exposed to eWOM, they may be less likely to continue purchasing NoLo beer compared to those influenced by traditional WOM. This could be because of a perceived lack of authenticity or trust in online sources compared to personal interactions. Therefore, while eWOM should not be ignored, its role may be more about maintaining general brand awareness rather than driving strong future consumption.

## Theoretical implications

The theoretical contributions made by the study are grounded within the contexts of RM theory, SCT and the field of Marketing Management as contextualised further in the text.

This study offers numerous academic contributions to the field of marketing by enhancing an understanding of consumer behaviour in relation to NoLo beer, particularly among millennials. The validation of hypotheses concerning the relationships between brand image, brand satisfaction and brand trust underscores the importance of a positive brand image as a key driver of consumer perception and behaviour. As noted, millennials increasingly prioritise brand image over product attributes, aligning with the tenets of SCT, which posits that individuals' decisions are influenced by their interactions and observations within their social environment. This finding emphasises the necessity for marketers to craft compelling brand narratives that resonate with millennial values, thereby creating a sense of identity and belonging. By fostering a strong brand image, marketers can cultivate consumer trust and loyalty,

which are essential for influencing purchasing decisions in a competitive marketplace. These insights also contribute to RM theory, as they highlight the importance of emotional connections between consumers and brands, suggesting that effective marketing strategies must prioritise the creation of meaningful brand relationships to enhance consumer loyalty.

Furthermore, the study's findings regarding brand satisfaction and emotional attachment reveal a nuanced understanding of how consumer satisfaction drives repeat purchases and positive WOM. The established link between high satisfaction and emotional attachment suggests that emotional engagement is crucial for millennials when interacting with brands. This aligns with SCT's focus on the importance of emotional responses in shaping behaviour, indicating that marketers should prioritise emotional fulfilment in their strategies. Additionally, this connection reinforces the principles of RM, as brands that successfully foster emotional bonds with their consumers can expect higher levels of loyalty and advocacy. The implications for marketing management are significant; managers should design marketing campaigns that resonate emotionally with their target audiences, ensuring that brand experiences meet or exceed consumer expectations. By integrating emotional dimensions into marketing strategies, brands can enhance customer loyalty and create advocates who contribute positively to brand perception through WOM promotion.

The study also provides valuable insights into the contrasting impacts of traditional WOM and eWOM on consumer behaviour. The rejection of hypotheses concerning brand trust and attachment suggests that millennials may regard NoLo beer primarily as a functional product, relying on its health benefits rather than developing deep emotional connections. This practical perspective may limit the effectiveness of eWOM compared to personal recommendations, which are shown to have a significantly positive impact on future consumption behaviours. This finding reflects the relevance of RM theory, as it emphasises the importance of personal interactions in building trust and loyalty. From a marketing management perspective, this distinction calls for a strategic emphasis on fostering traditional WOM through community engagement and personal connections, particularly in promoting products like NoLo beer that appeal to health-conscious consumers. While eWOM remains important for maintaining brand awareness, its potential to drive deep consumer loyalty appears limited compared to the influence of personal recommendations. Thus, marketers should prioritise building authentic relationships within communities, leveraging personal interactions to strengthen brand loyalty and encourage ongoing consumer engagement. Overall, these contributions enhance an understanding of consumer dynamics in the NoLo beer market and provide actionable insights for effective marketing management strategies that cater to the unique preferences of millennial consumers.

## Managerial implications

To enhance the market presence of NoLo beer among millennials, producers should implement practical strategies that align with the findings of the study. Firstly, it is crucial to develop products that resonate deeply with millennials' tastes and self-images. This can be achieved through targeted market research to understand their preferences, which should inform product development. For example, brands can launch limited-edition flavours or collaborations with popular influencers in the wellness space. Implementing A or B testing on product packaging and branding can also help identify which designs and messages most effectively resonate with consumers. Additionally, establishing a robust influencer marketing strategy that emphasises the brand's values, such as sustainability and inclusivity, can create strong, favourable associations in consumers' minds. Brands should focus on engaging millennials through social media campaigns that highlight these themes, ensuring that messaging is consistent across all platforms to strengthen brand image and build trust.

To foster brand attachment, which is linked more closely to brand satisfaction than to trust, NoLo beer brands should prioritise enhancing the overall consumer experience. This can involve creating engaging, interactive brand experiences, such as tasting events or community-based initiatives that allow consumers to connect personally with the brand. Implementing reward programmes that encourage repeat purchases, similar to Woolworths Rewards or Pick n Pay Smart Shopper (Shopper Rewards Compared, 2023), can also foster a sense of belonging and increase brand attachment. By offering exclusive benefits or discounts for loyal customers, brands can create emotional bonds that lead to increased satisfaction. Additionally, storytelling is key; brands should share authentic customer testimonials that reflect the real-life impact of their products, reinforcing the emotional connection and aligning with the consumers' identities and values.

Finally, while traditional WOM is a powerful tool for building long-term loyalty, NoLo beer brands must also address the challenges posed by eWOM. To leverage WOM effectively, brands should encourage in-person advocacy by hosting events where consumers can share their experiences and recommendations directly. Implementing referral programmes that incentivise existing customers to bring in new consumers can further amplify these efforts. On the digital front, enhancing the authenticity of eWOM can be achieved by collaborating with credible influencers who genuinely align with the brand values, as well as encouraging user-generated content that showcases real experiences. Maintaining transparency in communications and responding promptly to consumer feedback can help build trust online. By balancing efforts between traditional and electronic WOM, NoLo beer brands can create a comprehensive marketing strategy that boosts both current and future consumption among millennials.

## Conclusion, limitations and future research

This study has several key limitations that suggest avenues for further research. Firstly, it focusses exclusively on millennial respondents (born between 1980 and 1996), aged 27–43 years in 2023 (Scott et al., 2024). While millennials are a significant driver of the NoLo beer market, excluding other age groups limits the representation of the broader South African consumer base. Secondly, the study is confined to three metropolitan areas in Gauteng: the City of Ekurhuleni, the City of Johannesburg and the City of Tshwane. Although Gauteng is the smallest province, it holds 26.6% of South Africa's population (Statistics South Africa, 2022). This geographical limitation means the findings might not reflect the perspectives of consumers in other regions, which could yield different results. Thirdly, the study employs a quantitative approach, providing numerical insights but lacking depth in understanding the cognitive decision-making processes of participants. Future research could benefit from including diverse age groups, expanding geographical coverage and incorporating qualitative methods to explore the underlying motivations and attitudes of consumers. Common method bias was not used in this study and should be included in follow-up studies.

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

E.S., M.R.-L. and I.L. contributed equally to the article.

### Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Johannesburg School of Consumer Intelligence and Information Systems Research Ethics Committee (reference no.: 2022SCiiS042).

## Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, M.R.-L., upon reasonable request.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

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# Appendix 1

**TABLE 1-A1:** Constructs and measurement items.

| Construct | Items | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Brand image | • BI1: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands are desirable *(brand perception)* <br>• BI2: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands have unique features (e.g., the product name and product design) *(brand perception)* <br>• BI3: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands provide good value to their users (e.g., the brand is distinct and aligns with my personal values) *(brand perception)* <br>• BI4: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands improve the way I am perceived by others *(brand association)* <br>• BI5: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands provide me with social approval *(brand association)* <br>• BI6: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands help me feel accepted *(brand association)* | Raji et al. (2019) |
| Brand satisfaction | • BS1: Overall, I am satisfied with low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(personal feelings)* <br>• BS2: When I compare low- and no-alcohol beer brands with other brands, I am very satisfied *(personal feelings and subjective evaluations)* <br>• BS3: The quality of low- and no-alcohol beer brands is always excellent *(subjective evaluations and experience)* <br>• BS4: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands meet my expectations *(experience and expectations)* <br>• BS5: My decision to choose low- and no-alcohol beer brands is the right one *(personal feelings and subjective evaluations)* | Rodrigues et al. (2022) |
| Brand trust | • BT1: I trust low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(integrity/reliability, benevolence)* <br>• BT2: I rely on low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(reliability, brand competence, benevolence)* <br>• BT3: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands are authentic (e.g., a brand that is true, transparent and consistent) *(honesty/brand competence, benevolence)* <br>• BT4: Low- and no-alcohol beer brands are safe *(expectations/beliefs and ability/performance)* | Konuk (2021) |
| Brand attachment | • BAT1: I feel affectionate towards low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(emotional link and connection)* <br>• BAT2: I feel low- and no-alcohol beer brands are friendlier than other brands (e.g., brand personality and brand tone are friendly and warm) *(emotional link and connection)* <br>• BAT3: I get pleasure from consuming low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(emotional link and connection)*. <br>• BAT4: I feel closely connected to low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(bond, connection, self-referential and self-defining)* <br>• BAT5: I am attached to low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(bond, connection, self-referential and self-defining)* | Jeon (2022) |
| Current consumption | • CC1: I consume low- and no-alcohol beer brands to be accepted into social groups *(in-group membership and in-group identity, value)* <br>• CC2: I like consuming low- and no-alcohol beer brands consumed by celebrities *(self-concept, meaning, identity)* <br>• CC3: I consume low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(needs and satisfaction)* <br>• CC4: I only choose low- and no-alcohol beer brands that people I admire also consume *(self-concept, meaning, identity)* | Thapa et al. (2022) |
| Future consumption | • FC1: I am likely to consume low- and no-alcohol beer in the future to uplift my social status *(social status)* <br>• FC2: In the future, purchasing low- and no- beer is something I plan to do *(consumption experience)* <br>• FC3: In the future, I intend to purchase low- and no-alcohol beer because my peers do so *(reference groups)* <br>• FC4: I have a desire to purchase low- and no-alcohol beer in the future *(consumption experience)* | Choi et al. (2021) |
| Traditional WOM | • TWM1: I would recommend low- and no-alcohol beer brands to others *(person-to-person, informal, face-to-face and consumer-to-consumer communication)* <br>• TWM2: I would say positive things about low- and no-alcohol beer brands to others *(person-to-person, informal, face-to-face and consumer-to-consumer communication)* <br>• TWM3: I would speak favourably of low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(person-to-person, informal, face-to-face and consumer-to-consumer communication)* | Paramita et al. (2021) |
| eWOM | • EWM1: I regularly read online reviews and other online sources to determine which low- and no-alcohol beer brands make a good impression *(multi-platform, format and marketspace, diverse communication forms)* <br>• EWM2: I refer to online reviews and other online sources to choose an attractive low- and no-alcohol beer brand *(multi-platform, format and marketspace, diverse communication forms)* <br>• EWM3: I collect information using online reviews and other online sources before choosing a low- and no-alcohol beer brand *(multi-platform, format and marketspace, diverse communication forms)* <br>• EWM4: I perceive information obtained from online reviews and online sources as very important when choosing low- and no-alcohol beer brands *(multi-platform, format and marketspace, diverse communication forms)* | Gopal et al. (2022); Rao et al. (2021) |

Note: Please see the full reference list of this article: https://doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v55i1.4625 for more information.