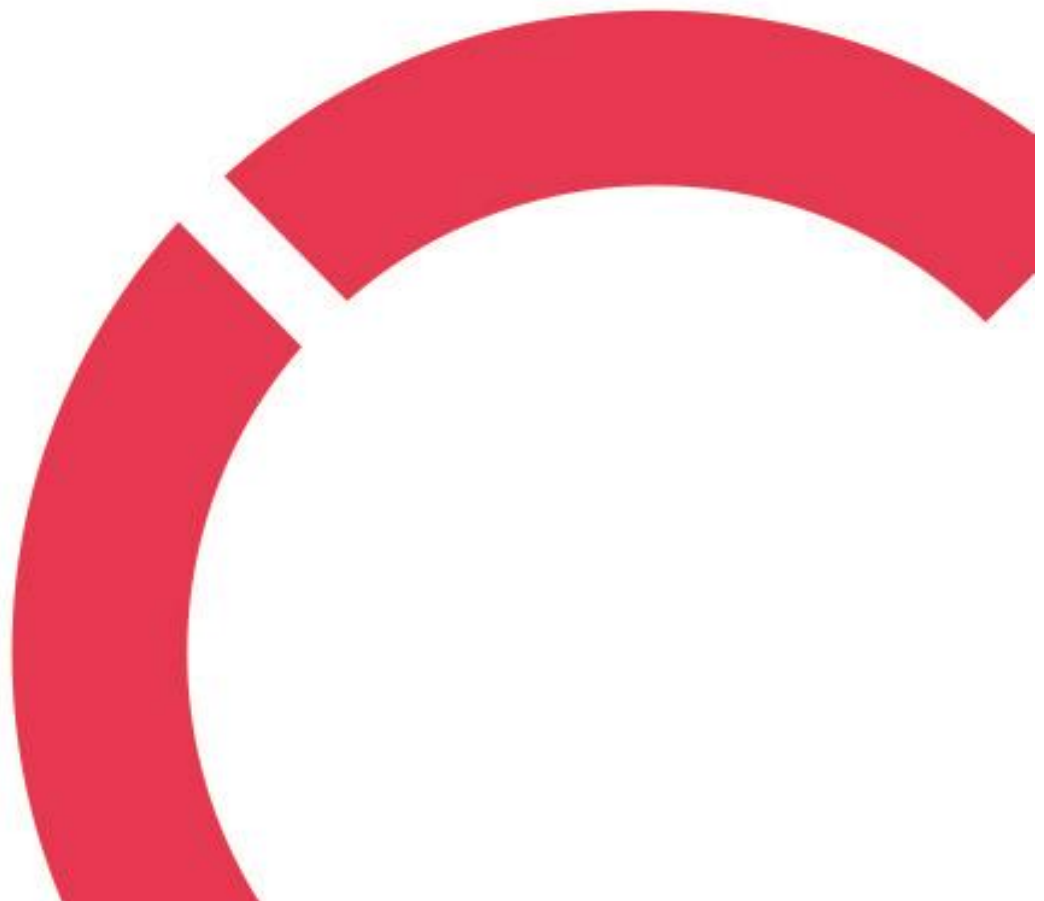


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**BRAND MANAGEMENT FOR AN SME IN THE FASHION
INDUSTRY IN CAMEROON**

Case: Mr. Brown (streetwear for men)

**Thesis
CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
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ABSTRACT

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Name of thesis BRAND MANAGEMENT FOR AN SME IN THE FASHION IN-DUSTRY IN CAMEROON Case: Mr. Brown (streetwear for men)		
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<p>The purpose of the study was to investigate strategies meant to improve brand management for Mr. Brown - a small and medium-sized enterprise in the streetwear fashion industry in Cameroon. Knowing that Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises are so important to a country's economy, it is critical for sustainable growth to recognize and improve on workable plans to enhance productivity as the country strives for an emerging economy such as Cameroon by 2035. The main goals were to identify common setbacks, strategies, successes associated within Mr. Brown streetwear fashion brand with practical stipulations for expansion.</p> <p>Interviews was the qualitative methods used in this study. The results highlight the importance of customized support systems, such as financial resources, promote long term development, door openings to new markets while maintaining quality in her operations. The study also clarifies the part that technology adoption plays in enhancing Mr. Brown street wear fashion brand for men as well as its business capacities.</p> <p>Finally, this thesis adds to the body of knowledge by shedding light on the difficulties faced by Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Cameroon relating to insights from the case study and by offering suggestions that policymakers, company owners, and support groups can implement to encourage the growth of sustainable businesses. The expectation is that this study will emulate discussions and actions targeted at establishing a favourable climate for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise to thrive in Cameroon, thereby enhancing the country's overall economic health.</p>		
Key words Cameroon, Case study, fashion industry, SME		

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research in general. It explains the background knowledge, research objectives and highlights some research questions, relevance and some significance of the research and finally the overview of the research structure.

1.1 Background

Over the years, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been seen as a key influencer for the growth of the economy, one of the reasons why many researchers turn to pay attention in this sector of business in business environments. Investing in business acknowledged the need to empower SMEs through capacity building.

SMEs contribute to a massive portion of the world's GDP, yet nobody questions the importance of the SME sector.

We are not doing enough to support and develop these businesses for the level of contribution they are to the economy. Also, so many questions have been raised on why the need for SMEs which is one of the reasons why this research set to explore and highlight some of these current needs.

Businesses are essential to society because, in addition to being necessary for survival, they can generate value for the economy and society. In every economy's growth productivity stands as one influencing factor, thus high productivity performance accounts for higher chance of economy's growth and country's peace.

After globalization many industries, organizations, companies, small businesses turned to find ways to meet up with current issues that satisfy their needs as well as their existence. In so doing many people turn to show interest on the importance of the existence of SMEs, the role they turn to play and how the resonates with the current millenia and changing times.

It is, therefore, important to explore these markets needs for developing countries and see how SMEs can fit in their contributions to enhance growth while maintaining a prominent level of efficiency in the way that they operate.

This study further explores an emerging continent Africa, filled with many natural resources. With a fast-rising economy, SMEs play a role in their contribution of economic growth.

SMEs are the backbones of most economies as it creates job opportunities, innovation enhancement and fostering economic resilience. They also contribute to the roots or foundation of businesses in the world today.

1.2 Research objectives and research question

The research focuses on the background of SMEs as the umbrella under which many brands build their roots key challenges in a clear statement of problems as well as pointing out the objectives of why the study aims at enhancing business development for Mr. Brown in the business environment.

As already mentioned, SMEs form the basic structures of the economy for the fact that they provide employment, innovation enhancement, and foster economic growth.

Entrepreneurship stands as one of the vital factors in the family tree of SMEs, answering questions of why their existence despite other existence of large-scale business operation of companies, organizations, firms and many more.

Understanding these host of factors as in the need for their existence, we can also consider need for effective strategies to enhance their growth and livelihood in a long term for sustainability.

SMEs by their size are faced with limited resources to foster self-growth, constrained market accessibility, limited source of finance, inadequate technology, a lack of sufficient business development framework of ideas. For these reasons, they struggle to be recognized, growth hindrance and their existence in an emerging market structure is not hundred percent sure.

This study focuses on addressing these problems to ensure they get a chance to stay relevant or stand out in the competitive evolving market or changing times in the global market space and the near future.

This study's main goal is to investigate and put into practice focused business development programs that enable Mr. Brown Street wear fashion brand to overcome their obstacles and to adding more meaning for their existence and survival in a long term.

Through exploring the complex dynamics of a business environment, it is important to create workable plans that improves productivity in terms of value, reach new markets, and promoting a long-term development maximizes flow of capital for continuity.

A powerful tool for marketing strategy that has been employed successfully on several occasions in the past is branding. These days, new and creative uses of branding are giving it a renewed sense of popularity. While there have been some unsuccessful branding attempts, marketers are starting to identify the right uses for branding in certain situations.

After a name has been decided upon, marketers must decide on an advertising plan to promote and advertise the name. And last, maintaining a strong brand position is a vital concern. Corporate, industrial, and service branding are new fields of branding. The future of branding strategy for marketers is going to be these unconventional branding environments. There are new branding

techniques to complement the new branding areas. Ingredient branding and brand extensions are two examples of these strategies (Joseph 1995.)

1.3 Relevance and significance of the research

Businesses search for strategies to emotionally connect with consumers, become unique, and forge enduring relationships in an era where competition has created an abundance of options. A highly visible brand is noticeable in a crowded market. Nowadays sustainability and quality alone are not enough as people develop a deep affection, faith, and sense of superiority for brands based on certain criteriums (brand story, crystalizing the brand, brand strategy etc.). Success depends on how people perceive a brand (mission, vision, values,)- practice what you preach whether it be a product, nonprofit, or start-up (Alina 2017.)Clothes and designs were customized and mostly inspired by the music performed by artists at the time. Talking about these customized clothes is all thanks to Dapper Dan, the godfather of hip - hop (Victor.C.Jr 2020) who beautifully crafted these designs for most of the artists at that time. Street wear started drawing attention in the eighties with brands like FUBU, Cross colors, Maurice Malones etc. and by the ninety's street wear was all over the streets of other cities as rap music started skyrocketing with so many raps music groups. This grew from street wear fashion to urban paving the way for other brands until date like Nike, Gucci, Adidas etc. coupled with other cultures like skateboarding which plays a significant contribution to the street wear fashion (Planet Brooklyn academy 2021) and its sudden rise to fame. Street wear has been innovated from baggy jeans to slim and oversized T-shirts which we find common in every street today as fashionable wear. Using a thorough examination of Fashion industry best practices inspired from the street of New York to the world and innovative methodologies, this research aims to deliver practical insights that can be tailored to the unique requirements of Mr. Brown Street fashion wear its potential that align with these practices.

1.4 Overview of the thesis's structure

The structure of this research covers five chapters. Chapter one introduces the research which covers background, objective of the study, significance and general overview. Chapter two covers theoretical background, branding and its evolution, brand strategy, best practices and a successful case etc. Chapter three covers Research base methodology, Qualitative research, research design, sampling

method, Data collection etc. Chapter four covers, research analysis of Mr. Brown, strategy, Swot analysis, Findings, Market positioning, target demographics, and brand perception. Chapter five covers Conclusion and recommendations.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter of the thesis explores key concepts and proposed models with keen investigations to establish and sustain a strong brand identity using analytical tool, how to market the brand for a broader view in the context of a unique culture that defines streetwear fashion industry. I will also look at some branding strategies employed by some organizations in other to enhance brand identity, how consumers react to brands and brand loyalty, the role of digital transformation in brands and role of emotional branding. Furthermore, I will go through successful and best practices that embodies streetwear brand marketing with supreme as an example, African American commodification and use of celebrity as means for marketing strategy.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis is one of the most popular tools that has been used worldwide by researchers and scholars for academic purposes. SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunity and threats) has eased our efforts in the way we direct and construct our way of reviewing information while analysis them. The SWOT model was first developed by an early scholar in the 1960s by name Albert Humphrey, has evolved over time and has been adopted and appreciated by many researchers and scholars in today's rapidly changing business environments (De Graaf, Lie, & Wilderom 2020.) The goal of SWOT analysis is to provide sophisticated insight which holds ground to better plan and handle uncertainties that can cause a business or theory and best decision making.

2.1 Brand marketing

When we talk about brand marketing, we look at the strategies, penitential methods or ways through which organizations, industries, firms, and SMEs put in place to promote and keep their standards in a competitive market environment. That is, without maintaining a good strategy, brand equity, customer loyalty, and profitability eventually stands a high chance of risk. In this section, I will look at key areas and literature like the evolution of brand marketing, branding strategies employed by some organizations, how consumers react, digital transformation and the role of emotional branding.

2.1.1 Brand marketing and its evolution

Over the years, brand marketing has significantly evolved from just distinguishing products from others or competitors to a more complex format that makes it even more attractive and engaging to consumers or target market to a more extension or level.

Kotler (1967) emphasized product differentiation as a feasible tool for brands to stand a better chance in a highly competitive market. This has been appreciated by managers in that era to improve continuous customer satisfaction. His model further highlights a framework for understanding how customers make better decisions in purchase preferences and how marketers can relate to those decisions. As time goes by market saturation began to skyrocket, as brands began focusing on psychological and emotional aspects. Aaker introduced the concept of brand equity, with key citation about the intangible value a brand contributes to a firm's products; its company name, brands, symbols, and slogans, and their underlying associations, perceived quality, name awareness, customer base, and proprietary resources such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships (Aaker 1991.)

Recent times have showed that brand experience is gradually or has become the new concept of adoption. Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (1991) argued that brand experience is a new and more interesting consumer psychological concept as consumers interact with brands on multiple sensory or different attendings, cognitive, and emotional levels, making the overall brand experience as important as the benefits of a product after fulfilling its purpose or interaction.

One important outcome of branding is to increase profit for the organization and boost growth in general. In this section, I will look at a few strategies that help a brand to boost profitability margin as well as subsequent return of investment (ROI). They include *brand positioning*, *brand extension* and *brand personality*.

Brand Positioning:

It defines the way a brand is seen (perceive orientation) with respect to the other brands or competitors. Consumers expectation is set to standard thus if they align with perceive orientation of the brand or product it makes it easier for them to associate more with the brand or stick to that product. Thus, by leveraging the ideas or prospects of the minds of consumers, marketing department, or marketers can best handle the situation of overcrowded society by creating sustainable and lasting impressions in the minds of consumers. Keller & Swaminathan (2020) cited the importance of customer-centric positioning as tool that brand must adopt to set their images to align to that of consumers desires and needs.

Brand Extensions:

A common strategy associated with branding is that customers can have different options to relate to. Apple is a good example of brand extension from producing her Mac computers to products like iPod, iPad, iPhone etc. is to extend a brand name into new categories into new we mean products of various kinds. Brand extensions can either propagate or push the core foundation of a brand identity, depending on their success either through an existing product line or into modified product line (Esfahlan & Doust 2011.) This is true if brand maintain the originality and idea of their parent product. This however gives consumers the urge to interact more with their new products based on idea of previous associated parent product.

Brand Personality:

Consumers turn to relate more with brands that defines their own personalities, as result it create a deeper connection with them based on their emotions. Studies have proven that this ideology has been used to filter out brands that turn to offer comparable or products with similar features hard to be differentiated (Ajeyalemi & Dixon-Ogbechie 2020.)

2.1.2 Consumer behaviour and brand loyalty

Consumer behaviour is key factor and explains further an understanding to the success of brand marketing strategies. Customers are one of the backbones that influences the success of a brand. however, they turn to associate more with brands not only because of price and quality but how they align with their values. This explains why brand should prioritize their reputation as side from goals and values. (Cerone 2024.)

Oliver (1999) supported in his four-stage model of brand loyalty, which explains customers move from cognitive loyalty to action loyalty through affective and conative stages. This however explains why a Strong brand loyalty leads to repetition in customer purchases, advocacy, and their ability to charge premium prices. Research in the recent years suggests the growing importance of customer engagement in driving brand loyalty. It was noted that customer shows interaction through social media, personalized marketing, and interactive experiences has proven to create a deeper and strong relationship between consumers and brands, fostering loyalty and overall high purchasing power (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan 2012.)

2.1.3 Digital transformation and branding

The invention of digital media in the millennial era has revolutionized brand marketing. Platforms like social media, creation of artificial intelligence, search engines, and e-commerce sites have pushed brands to reach a wider audience more efficiently and interactively. Studies show that social media has allowed brands to create dynamic two-way communication with consumers, thereby fostering engagement and loyalty as they solidify their space in the digital environment (Labrecque 2014.)

To a greater extent it propels or gives room for space where marketers can freely interact, create sustainable environments, gain insights through direct interaction with consumers, reinforcing good relationships by creating brand communities (Labrecque 2014.)

The digital transformation shaped new metrics for evaluating brand performance in many organizations. Information flow is easy. The supply of goods has been optimized significantly with building trust and loyalty for customers. We have witnessed a shift from traditional brand awareness to marketers focusing on online brand push and pull strategies, engagement rates, and share of voice in digital channels. The advancement of technology and social media has also pushed promotion level of product and brand positioning. This has influenced millennials who interaction through online websites giving feedback and reviews (Zeqiri 2021.)

2.1.4 Emotional branding

Emotional branding is an important key factor for brand marketing. It appeals to a customer's state, needs, perception or what they aspire for a brand's product. The concept of love marks appeals to brands that inspire loyalty beyond reason by creating a deep emotional connection or relationship with consumers. This was supported by studies that consumers are more likely to remain loyal to a brand that

elicits positive emotional responses. Come to think of it from our own perspective, there are brands that have left indelible marks on us, means everything to you just with the way it connects with you. Sometimes it is unexplainable why you cannot turn your back on them. Some common examples are Calvin Klein, Coca-Cola, Porsche, Gillette, Twinings, Nokia, LEGO, Mambo, Apple, Red Bull, Nike, PlayStation, Corona, Google (Roberts 2005.)

Another research also explores the relationship between brand authenticity and emotional branding. It explains how consumers are drawn closer to brands which is perceived as authentic, and it is often subjected to transparency, heritage, and ethical practices. Emotional branding strategies, when combined with perceived authenticity, can create lasting emotional bonds with consumers as the nature of authenticity plays a bigger role in consumers choice of brand. Consumers are easily motivated to focus on those cues that connect a deep impression in the product which for them convey authenticity (genuine, real, and/or true). It also plays a key role in decision-making process and overall perception of a brand (Beverland & Farrelly 2010.)

2.1.5 Best practices and successful cases in streetwear brand marketing

Although the precise beginnings of streetwear have proven difficult to determine, the most frequently offered theory credits the influence of American surf, skateboarding, hip-hop, and graffiti cultures that emerged in the late 1980s (Rajendran 2012). Many speculated that Shaun Stussy's Californian surf wear company Stussy was the first significant brand to target the streetwear market. His use of an artistic Do it yourself (DIY) approach in his designs made his brand relatable to several subcultures, including the skate, hip-hop, and surf communities.

Streetwear was viewed as a means of self-expression by young people as a means of standing out from the crowd and expressing their values and beliefs. Our focus, however, is on men's streetwear fashion and how they relate the art and cultural expression with the desire to display talent and follows admiration as part of the work of art and strategy.

Stussy served as a platform for those people looking to express their identities and acted as a major inspiration for numerous streetwear brands that achieved success and until sate hit has grown from just fashionable streetwear expression to luxury fashionable streetwear, such as Supreme, Off-white Truck fit, Yeezy etc. (Lobo de Macedo 2015).

It is difficult to define streetwear and street culture due to their complexity and cross-cultural influences. It is evident from analysing the terms "street" and "culture" that it has, without a doubt to include a wide range of subcultures that manifest themselves "in the streets." Before it was just a casual wear which many find it comfortable to express the feeling of belonging which later shift from traditional (production, promotion, sale, and resale) way of expression to a more sophisticated and stylish expression capturing not only the interest of artist, music, sports etc but individuals who grow love of socializing and fashion.

High-end streetwear attracted the attention of investors and leaders in the fashion industry, accounting for 5% of the \$309 billion global sales of luxury goods in 2017.

Even the second market for street wear has significantly grown as investors have massively created marketplace for purchase and resale of various sportswear and stadium brand, sneakers and streetwear as well as online markets for luxury fashion (Dominique 2020). One of the first streetwear companies to hit the fashion scene was Supreme. From a tiny store in the SoHo district, Manhattan, Supreme has developed into a major force in the world of fashion. Its casual accessories and comfortable clothing have price tags that are asymmetrical, designating it as a luxury streetwear brand (Galant & Winda 2021.)

Nonetheless, buyers all over the world are even more enticed to spend their money on its products rather than losing interest in them because not every fan can afford their products. The brand's exclusivity is enhanced by their high price which does not only reflect the quality but its ability to entice and push the streetwear fashion culture.

In addition to this pricing and sales approach, there are other formulas that have successfully propelled Supreme into the stratosphere. Following careful examination of internet forums, three additional meticulously computed formulas used by Supreme can also be found. These are its use of celebrity endorsements, its commoditization of the African American community, and its exclusivity-driven marketing (Galant & Winda 2021.)

2.2 The Commodification of the African American Community

Making culture and/or its components into a marketable good is known as cultural commodification. When executed by a person who is not a part of that culture, it may be interpreted as appropriation or appreciation. Cultural appropriation is defined as a practice that takes advantage of or makes fun of

another person's culture to gain profit or amusement. In contrast, cultural appreciation is seen to respectfully keep a particular culture from being abandoned by its people (Galant & Winda 2021.)

Cultural commodification occurs not only in disparate cultures around the world. Both cultures can coexist in one society. Less well-known subcultures are frequently commercialized by members of the dominant culture. It is evident in the Supreme case. The purpose of Supreme was never to be a fashion brand. Originally, it was intended to serve the growing New York skate community as a shop (Galant & Winda 2021.)

2.2.1 The Use of Celebrity Endorsement and Marketing Strategy

When compared to other luxury fashion brands that have existed for centuries, Supreme's humble beginnings seem insignificant. But given that the brand has been catching up to them over the last 20 years. These days, they are frequently placed next to or even in direct competition with them. Celebrity endorsements rank among Supreme's most important means of doing this. An endorsement is a well-known person's public declaration of support or approval for a person or cause. It was first used in the political sphere to show support for politicians or programs. After then, the phrase started to be used frequently in the marketing industry.

Studies conducted over time have demonstrated that this marketing strategy directly increases sales rather than relying on traditional methods of celebrity endorsement, like TV, magazine, and billboard ads. Supreme leverages well-known personalities to promote their products on social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. On their social media pages, they are spotted sharing Supreme products for their millions of followers to view.

Kanye West, an award-winning rapper, songwriter, and producer, is one of the celebrities whose endorsements have enhanced Supreme's reputation on a global scale. He has lately gained recognition for his work as an entrepreneur and fashion designer. West's contribution to the globalization of Supreme as an African American hip-hop artist demonstrates that the brand community is commercialized.

Furthermore, West is not the only one who strongly supports Supreme. It is also easy to spot other African American hip-hop celebrities uploading brand endorsements. A\$AP Rocky, Travis Scott, and Jaden Smith are a few to mention (Galant & Winda 2021.)

2.2.2 Case Supreme

Few studies have investigated the global influence of Supreme NY and its viral world or examined streetwear culture. With respect to these factors, researchers have looked at the growth of youth culture, which is important in the streetwear industry because most of its customers are under 25. To comprehend the influence of Supreme NY on the streetwear industry, one needs investigate youth culture and the ways in which clothes and identity are connected. With the variety of youth labels available, including punk, skate, hip-hop, and others, groups are identified through visual cues. Tension arises within societal ranks as teenagers transition into adulthood because their sense of individuality and expression through clothing is continuously pushed beyond conventional boundaries (Mayan 2012.)

Understanding youth culture and identity within the subculture that has come to be known as streetwear clarifies how the genre's emergence—like other forms of youth signifiers—reflects both the emergence of societal boundaries and group identification. An iconic aspect of streetwear is the sneaker's significant position as a constant symbol of the genre within modern youth fashion and society. Having the "right" shoes or image has been presented as a globally endorsed message by Supreme NY and its identity as recognized street/skate wear, as well as an empirical form of speech and societal statements (Mayan 2012.)

The purpose of Supreme was never to be a fashion brand. Originally, it was intended to be a store serving the growing skate community in New York. In the decades that preceded the Skateboarding was a niche sport in the 1990s. Initially, they targeted consumers who were skateboarders or had an interest in the culture. The store offered skateboards, accessories, and parts from well-known skate brands. It saw a moderate feat due to its convenient location near well-known skate spots like the Brooklyn Banks and the Astor Place cube. When Supreme was repositioned as a fashion brand, it began to flourish globally. However, there is a keen sense of cultural commodification in the brand's success (Galant & Winda 2021.)

Three T-shirts were part of the first collection to be released: one had a picture of Robert de Niro from Taxi Driver, another displaying two images: one of an afro-skateboarder and the other with the store's highly sought-after box logo. Since then, one has been spotted on skaters and skate enthusiasts all over the United States. In addition to the branded T-shirts and shirts, the pants have baggy cuts. Along with hoodies and tracksuits, its signature designs now include cargo pants and skate shorts. In the 1990s and 2000s, wearing clothing that was too big became popular. It was embraced by many fashion brands, particularly streetwear ones, for their collections. Supreme is without a doubt the brand that has done so

best. From top to bottom, Supreme consistently includes oversized pieces in every release (Winda & Galant 2021.)

Four years after its founding, in 1998, Supreme began working with Sarcastic. Additionally, its list of partnerships is made up of recognizable brands that have a far longer history, and their fan bases are devoted. Supreme targeted fashion brands to further elevate its level of exclusivity from a single assortment to another with both high-end luxury brands and other street-style brands.

Comme de Garçons, Levi's, Timberland, Lacoste, Dover Street Market, Stone Island, Vans, The North Face, Louis Vuitton, Jean-Paul Gautier, Bape, Nike, and Supreme are among the brands that collaborate with Supreme.

Consequently, it is reasonable to believe that Supreme capitalized on the success of its partners to increase its brand awareness among those partners' customers. Supreme works with food and beverage brands in addition to fashion brands. It released a Hydra Pak-bottled drink and an Oreo cookie. 2020 saw the release of lipstick by Supreme in association with Pat McGrath, a makeup brand. Supreme increases its recognition beyond the fashion community and surpasses demographics such as age, gender, residence, and interest by working with these brands.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will look at a few things that targets streetwear brand for men in Cameroon with a typical goal to gain potential clues that can pave way or make solutions to brand management, they consumers perceive these product and Mr Brown streetwear fits in the culture of streetwear fashion through social status like brand loyalty, its identity and it resonates with her customers. This research approach takes a qualitative research analysis and data will be collected through interviews with some members of the management team, a few loyal customers who holds the brand with greet esteem. After sampling and collecting this data, I will analyse them and gain potential insights how Mr. Brown influences the streetwear fashion culture in Cameroon and beyond its border with her unique potential values.

3.1 Research design

Looking at this body of work, data collection happens to be the main feature for quality insight. Researchers from way back and even in the present day have the following to choose or used to carry out a quality research and get results. This follows options selected froth either three distinct research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods which happens to be the three categories of that deals with research methodologies. My research is focused on qualitative research methodology and unlike the quantitative research that focuses on statistical data, numerical data etc, qualitative research focuses on interpreting information gathered from findings. They can be real time experiences from focused groups, individuals, experience and or behaviours through conducted surveys. A mixed method approach combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Qualitative research methodology is design to gain an understanding of defining reasons, opinions, peoples experience and motivations, providing detail analysis into the underlying problem and or in helping to develop ideas or hypotheses from insights gained from focused groups, observation, content analysis etc. Qualitative research is centred on the collection of sampled non-numeric data, such as interviews, observations, structured survey, to explore the depth, complexity, and contextual meaning of human behaviour and experiences (Bailey, Hennink & Hutter 2020.)

One of the most key features of this research methodology is that it allows you to explore and identify key issues that comes from your structured participant that arises from studies perspectives, understand meanings and how to interpret them. Qualitative research method is also designed to study humans,

animals in the natural state to identify how their behaviour are impacted by their environment as well as their experiences in the context of their lives (Bailey, Hennink & Hutter2020.)

In my qualitative research method, I will focus on a typical streetwear fashion brand that has been practicing the streetwear culture in Cameroon so we can gain quality insight to better manage the brand and for future purposes as well. Mr. Brown specialises in men's streetwear fashion and has been displaying the culture of streetwear fashion for over a decade. Hailing from the streets of Molyko Buea where the idea started, the brand moved to a better and favourable location at Clerks quarters Buea where it was safer to conduct business due to the ongoing Anglophone crises that affect the area (Mr. Brown 2014.)

3.2 Sampling method

Most often it is quite difficult to sample data or to go about especially doing it for first time. There are so many ways to sample data through questionnaire surveys, interviews etc for qualitative research.

Sampling is the process of selecting the objects, participants, or respondents for study purpose to improve on a particular theory or case by a researcher or writer. The participants, respondents, or objects could be categorized under structured questions, surveys, or observations. However, a sample is a group on which information is obtained from a larger population or a target population (Islam & Aldaihani 2022)

In conducting a qualitative research, researchers usually do not include bigger portions of sampled data from the population through the sampling strategies they have used. It is because data from they have gathered from the qualitative research cannot be quantified like in the case of quantitative research. Therefore, it is important to choose an appropriate sampling strategy to include the right participants, respondents, or objects for the qualitative research (Islam & Aldaihani 2022.) In this thesis, I will sample our data through semi-structured interviews conducted to targets a particular population or persons that have interacted with the brand Mr. Brown like staffs, and a few loyal customers who are big lovers for streetwear fashion and has been promoting the culture in order to gain sustainable data that precede useful information about the knowledge of streetwear fashion in Cameroon.

3.3 Data collection method

Data collection is one the most important part of a research. This is because it provides the actual information needed to conclude a solution or identify problems to bring solutions.

Data collection is the process of collecting and evaluating information or data from one or more sources, desired population, or targeted persons to find answers to research problems (Jain 2024).

This can be achieved through structured questions, interviews, observations etc to evaluate outcomes, forecast trends and probabilities that can help exiting and near future. It is an essential phase in all types of research, analysis be it qualitative, quantitative, mixed method approach, and decision-making, in different field of study like social sciences, business, and healthcare (Jain 2024.)

Since this research employs a qualitative method, data was collected through straightforward interviews and our respondents were two staffs that works at Mr. Brown and three random selected loyal customers. It was easy to access them through phone call interviews since their telephone numbers were saved in the business record. As mentioned already, I classified the respondent data in two categories: Staff and customers in which I have separate interview questions that aligns exactly the goal of our research purpose which was to gain insight for the streetwear fashion industry in Cameroon.

3.4 Data analysis method

In analysing our data, I will explore answers from our respondents through collective and straight forward with two staff members or members of the management team and three loyal customers who are open and free to be interviewed. They interview was done through phone calls with respondent which to a couple of minutes to gather information that will be needed to structure and analyse our data. To plan and prepare a smooth interview, interview questions were structure in two different patterns. The first part of the questions was done with staff members, and the other part of the questions was for the customers.

The questions were straightforward questions that defines the research purpose and align with the goal of the research (APPENDIX1).

4 ANALYSIS OF MR. BROWN STREETWEAR

In this chapter, I will look at key information that was gathered from our research method which are primary data to see how I can fit in, get better understanding on how to manage Mr. Brown streetwear for men in Cameroon. Also, a better understanding of how the streetwear fashion culture works in the country and how it can be improved as in other fashion inclined Continents like North America, Europe, and some part of Asia.

4.1 Case: Mr. Brown Street Wear

Mr. Brown Street wear fashion brand for men started its operation in the year 2014 as Boris Kiss Fashion in Molyko Buea, Southwest region of Cameroon as a roadside vendor hustle distributing second-hand sneakers, t-shirts, and pants. Founded by Takengzi Boris Atemnkeng a second-year student at the University of BUEA with the goal of promoting street fashion wear to the lower-, middle, and upper-class lovers of street fashion who could not afford brand new for themselves.

As a lover of fashion, his targets were youths from 13 to 35 years who could relate more to these trends preaching love, giving hope and networking by contributing ideas on what the nearest future of fashion will look like in the nearest future.

Later in 2017, the movement slowed down due to anglophone crises in the English-speaking part of the country and by 2019 it moved to a new location at Clerks Quarters Buea Cameroon where it changed its form from a roadside vendor to a fully owned shop with the introduction of Men's flip flops brand-new fresh imports from China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey etc of different brands (such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, HM, Zara). Some of the products sold are t-shirts, shirts, shorts, pants, joggers, bags, male suits etc.

It was a street movement that geared eyes and was appreciated by many youths, toddlers, and older people as it served quality for less and affordable prices as they could relate more to their experiences and their love for street wear fashion with these products.

4.2 SWOT Analysis of Mr. Brown Streetwear

Strengths (Internal)

Brand Uniqueness: Mr. Brown Streetwear's distinct image blends urban culture and creativity, appealing to streetwear enthusiasts.

High-Quality Products: Known for high-quality products, with a focus on originality and customer satisfaction, ensuring brand loyalty.

Online Presence: Strong digital marketing, social media presence, and collaborations with influencers boost visibility and sales.

Youth Appeal: Strong connection with millennials and Gen Z, who are major consumers of streetwear and value contemporary, trend-driven fashion.

Collaboration Opportunities: Potential to collaborate with artists, musicians, and influencers to differentiate from competitors and increase brand visibility.

Opportunities (External)

Global Expansion: Opportunity to capitalize on the growing global demand for streetwear in emerging markets like Asia, South America, and Europe.

Sustainability Trends: Increasing demand for eco-friendly fashion presents an opportunity to attract environmentally conscious consumers.

Collaborations & Partnerships: Strategic partnerships with renowned designers, brands, and influencers can boost brand exposure and desirability.

Influencer Marketing: Leveraging social media and influencer partnerships will strengthen brand presence among younger, trend-conscious consumers.

Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Model: Allows for deeper connection with consumers, enhancing customer experience and brand loyalty while gaining valuable consumer insights.

Weaknesses (Internal)

Limited Physical Importation Routes: Dependency on one primary import port (Douala, Cameroon), causing potential delays and inefficiencies in product dispatch.

Niche Market Focus: Streetwear may be a niche market, limiting expansion into broader fashion categories and attracting new, uninformed customers.

Price Barrier: Premium pricing may deter younger, price-sensitive consumers in Cameroon, limiting sales and market growth.

Dependency on Trends: Streetwear is trend-driven, making it difficult to maintain a competitive edge if the brand does not constantly innovate and keep up with ever-changing styles.

Threats (External)

High Competition: The streetwear market is highly competitive, with established players and new counterfeit brands offering lower prices.

Economic Downturns: In times of economic uncertainty, the demand for high-end streetwear may decline as consumers reduce discretionary spending.

Cultural Shifts: Rapid shifts in youth culture and fashion trends may lead to a loss of relevance if the brand fails to stay current.

Counterfeit Goods: The streetwear market is prone to counterfeit products, which could damage the brand's image and sales if not effectively addressed.

Dependence on social media: Heavy reliance on social media could expose the brand to algorithm changes and reduced visibility, negatively impacting brand exposure.

4.3 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This portion of the work highlights data gathered from interviews with two staff members of Mr. Brown who stated that the remain anonymous and three loyal customers who asked to be anonymous as well. The interview was a straightforward interview although some of the respondents felt a little reluctant to deliver information when asked upon.

Overall, it was a successful interview although the number of interviewees did not reach my expectations. This is what they said with regards to my findings:

4.3.1 Theme 1: Staff Analysis

In analysing customer perception, this what the two staffs expressed:

Staff 1: *"Our customers are mostly happy with our brand. They feel at home whenever they interact online and walk into our shop."*

Staff 2: *"They feel at ease and appreciate the unique nature of the brand."*

In analysing customer behaviour, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"Loyal customers always want to come again. They are okay about the brand."*

Staff 2: *"They are more like satisfied with the products."*

In analysing cultural influence, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"The unique nature of the brand is a big reason for promoting streetwear fashion."*

Staff 2: *"Our products are unique and align with the latest streetwear fashion trends."*

In analysing brand loyalty, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"We deliver exactly what you order for and on time. We update the latest fashion trends and products on our social media handles."*

Staff 2: *"Yes, we are a loyal brand. Our customers feel happy when they purchase from us."*

In analysing how unique the brand is, this what the two staffs had to say:

Staff 1: *"We have unique products and prices. Our products are authentic and rare since we do not sell copied goods from China."*

Staff 2: *"The brand holds an excellent value of quality and authenticity which makes it different from other brands."*

In analysing target audience, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"Our audience is mostly youths aged 16 to 35. Our social media handle is our greatest tool for marketing."*

Staff 2: *"Our audience ranges from 16 to 40, sometimes even 45 years and above love our trends."*

In analysing based on social media marketing which plays a significant role in today's digital marketing strategy, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"More traffic comes from our social media space, so it is an effective tool for us."*

Staff 2: *"Social media space has worked for us effectively and so far, it is our best marketing tool."*

In analysing challenges encountered as streetwear brand, which is a common factor for all businesses, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"Competition from other brands. Sometimes delays occur when delivering our products due to long procedures with customs duty."*

Staff 2: *"Delay of goods clearance from customs duty and lack of latest trends."*

In analysing the role played by local and global trend as an influence on the brand, this what the two staffs told me:

Staff 1: *"Local global fashion trends influence the brand since we promote each other in many ways like brand deals and marketing deals as well."*

Staff 2: *"Local global fashion brands are doing well and capable of winning the future for streetwear fashion. We collaborate with some to push the streetwear trend in the market space."*

4.3.2 Theme 2: Customer findings

How they got to know the brand

In trying access how our customers got to know about Mr. Brown it was certain that friend to friend recommendation and social media played a key role to foster visibility. This what the customers had to say:

Customer 1: *"A friend recommended Mr. Brown. Quality products and they are reliable."*

Customer 2: *"Through Facebook. Unique product, hard to see worn around."*

Customer 3: *"Through TikTok. Customer experience is top notch. I feel at home anytime."*

How the brand appeals to them (customers perception)

This is a crucial part for the brand as it gets to know where and what to focus on when it comes to customers perception. This what the customers had to say:

Customer 1: *"Their products are incredibly unique. You cannot find them easily around."*

Customer 2: *"Unique product, hard to see worn around."*

Customer 3: *"Their products are incredibly unique. You cannot find them easily around."*

Does the brand influences and push streetwear culture

To whether the influences the culture plays a key role that defines the brands' goal and value. This is what customers responded:

Customer 1: *"Mr. Brown is one of the best. I hardly find Zara products easily but got my first one there."*

Customer 2: *"Absolutely YES. The CEO has been a friend and brother. He is well informed about the latest trends like style and culture of streetwear."*

Customer 3: *"They are well informed about the culture. Their products can tell a lot."*

Brand loyalty to customers

Brand loyalty is vital for customers. It determines how likely they can recommend you and come again. This is the response from the respondents.

Customer 1: *"Yes, it is a loyal brand."*

Customer 2: *"Absolutely YES."*

Customer 3: *"Yes, it is a loyal brand."*

On quality, style and culture

Most clothing brands have a common characteristic that exhibits quality style and culture. I needed to know what our customers think so far, and these were their responses:

Customer 1: *"They are well informed about streetwear fashion. Boris has been our role model since university days in Buea."*

Customer 2: *"The CEO has been a friend and brother. He is well informed about the latest trends like style and culture of streetwear."*

Customer 3: *"They are well informed about the culture. Their products can tell a lot."*

How regular they purchase from the brand

This part of the interview was to know who loyal customers are. This what our respondent had to say:

Customer 1: *"All the time."*

Customer 2: *"Frequently."*

Customer 3: *"Sometimes when current trends pop up, I get updates, and I pay for them."*

How likely customers can recommend the brand

The idea for this part was to know how visibility, brand value plays for customers. This what the customers told me:

Customer 1: *"Most likely. All my friends have joined the movement."*

Customer 2: *"Very much."*

Customer 3: *"More likely."*

What can be improved

In trying to fill up gap holes this part of the interview gave me insights what to improve on to better manage the brand. The respondents had to say this:

Customer 1: *"Improve on delivery time and update customers regularly on social media channels."*

Customer 2: *"Introduce other influential brands and more collaboration with influencers."*

Customer 3: *"Online shopping experience, like mobile pay methods, PayPal etc."*

4.4 Market Positioning, Target Demographics, and Brand Perception

Market Positioning

Mr. Brown Streetwear comprises of mid-to-high-end fashionable products. It is a blend of a streetwear brand, which fits to trend-conscious or enthusiast individuals who appreciate and holds immense value for exclusivity, creativity, and urban culture.

The brand appeals to follow the cultural root elements and styles of streetwear fashion, which emerges from hip-hop music and street culture, skate culture, and street art. It also will follow strategies like collaborations with influencers and artist, recent and frequent drops that follows street fashion trend.

In positioning Mr. Brown we can place it as a premium brand with a focus on scarcity, authenticity, durability, and desirability products.

Target Demographics

Age Group: its main targeting age group is 16-35-year-olds, with a focusing on Millennials.

Gender: NO specification of gender, as streetwear has a strong unisex appeal.

Income Level: income level ranges from Upper-middle-class to random and enthusiast individuals who are willing to spend more on premium, exclusive and trendy products, or fashion style.

Geography: Focus Urban, metropolitan areas where streetwear culture thrives with well-informed categories or lovers of streetwear fashion. The brand seeks to expand internationally within and outside Africa into fashion-forward cities like Lagos, Johannesburg, and why not Tokyo, and Finland.

Lifestyle: The brand is designed to fit with creative minded people, artistic individuals who are music orientated like Hip-hop, afro, and urban genre, skateboarding, art, and urban fashion trends.

Brand Perception

Mr. Brown Streetwear could be perceived as a leading and innovative brand that covers every corner of the street culture. It has quality that fits the modern era with authenticity in her products, positioning itself as a brand that focus "for the culture" which has desired root in creativity drawn from Hip-Hop, Skating etc. However, the brand's exclusivity and premium pricing could make it less accessible to some, especially to underprivileged individuals and on other way enhance its products to become commodified products creating more economic value in the market than it should be.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONSThis chapter gives a general overview of the entire work answering questions of WHAT, WHY and HOW. After looking at what streetwear fashion is all about, a typical successful case of a major brand Supreme, how they implement successful strategy to better manage the brand to looking at what Mr. Brown is all about and what it has been doing so far. This can be accomplished by implementing better strategies that can be used to manage the brand, correct some gap and also provide recommendations like digital technology, sales promotion marketing strategy etc, for the future in the streetwear fashion industry in Cameroon.

5.1 Conclusion

To conclude, Mr. Brown, a streetwear fashion brand for men in Cameroon, exhibits and displays a critical role of effective brand management while establishing and growing a successful brand within an overcrowded market and optimizing an emerging initiative in preparation for future emerging 2035 initiative by the country's economy.

Through the development of a unique brand identity that resonates with local culture while aligning with global streetwear trends like that of Supreme a popular successful streetwear brand, Mr. Brown has been able to create a distinctive position in the fashion industry in Cameroon by displaying unique designs and products that matches customers perception and expectations.

By focusing on quality, authenticity, and vast community engagement for streetwear enthusiast, the brand has built a loyal customer base in the major city of Buea where the company is located and other parts of the country and outside the country, that values their products and the lifestyle it portrays especially focusing on the streetwear fashion.

To effectively manage the brand, Mr. Brown has also used social media platforms and influencer like what supreme and other well-known streetwear brand has been doing in marketing, to push its brand visibility and credibility among the target audience. This strategy is a valuable tool for Mr. Brown because not only it promotes the brand but also it encourages a sense of community wellbeing of its customers, which is essential for building long-term customer loyalty.

Additionally, by trying to adopt sustainable practices like optional methods of payments like PayPal, card payment and collaborating with local influencers, Mr. Brown can tap into a growing demand for ethical and culturally relevant fashion, that will further strengthen its brand image.

To sustain growth, Mr. Brown should continue to introduce innovative designs and trends. This will improve customer engagement and expansion beyond its regional to international markets.

Overall, Mr. Brown's journey points out or seeks the importance of a strategic approach which is vital to brand management, especially establishing a brand that is not only profitable but also culturally impactful and sustainable for the business and economy.

5.2 Recommendations

Product Innovation

The rapid growth of technology has speed up the process which organizations display their products to reach variety of channels and consumers today to a greater extent. Also, production and marketing cost has reduced with the creation of Artificial intelligence AI making it easier for companies to enhance their product. Product innovation and the expansion of product varieties is an important mechanism for firm growth as consumers turns to enjoy varieties from product of scale and enjoy modern technology through these products (Babina, Fedyk, He & Hodson 2024.)

Introducing modern designs, durable and authentic materials, with appealing trends and styles to cater to evolving consumer preferences is what Mr. Brown advocates for since it not a production brand but supply or retail brand.

Brand Differentiation

In an overcrowded market, we differentiate a brand by creating brand value both for the business and customers to the business. More attention has been paid on brand differentiation in the recent years by scholars which shows how important brand value it is to a business. One way to achieve this is through market orientation which helps to enhance brand competitiveness in an overcrowded market in addition to creating brand value. Creating differentiation for a brand in a business-to-business market follows the need for brand managers to pay maximum attention on creating a unique brand value for business customers (Foroudi, Gallear, Gupta & Rudd 2020.)

In so doing, Mr. Brown plans to achieve this by successfully developing a unique brand identity and value proposition which defines standards to stand out in the competitive market.

Product

A product is anything like an item that can be visible, held and has characteristics of feel or texture, colour, quality, weight etc a company can offer to its consumers based on request, can be bought after, purchased, used or consumed by the market as a fulfilment of the needs or desires of the market concerned. Products can be physical, people, organisations, services, places, ideas and play a greater part in the marketing mix (Anwar, Azhar & Saharuddin 2022.)

The brand's products range from premium to high-ended fashionable brands like Zara, Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, Adidas, Puma etc.

One of the strategies used to display Mr. Brown's products is through utilizing digital marketing channels, reliable and valued influencers to collaborate, as well as experiential marketing. This will help enhance brand visibility and engagement or traffic in social media space.

Price

Price plays a vital role in marketing both for sellers' perspective and that of the buyer. We define price as the amount of money exchanged to obtain an item or product and services. It could also mean the amount of money charged for a product or service you render to someone. Price is the overall value that reflects a product for which consumers can benefit from ownership of goods or services (Anwar, Azhar & Saharuddin 2022.)

At MR. Brown our prices reflect exactly the value of our products and can be purchased by anyone who meets the product standards, for example middle class to high income earners.

Promotion

Sales promotion are unique offers or part of marketing communication activities a company, manufacturers, and retailers use to boost sales. Sales promotion can also be referred to as any incentive used by a manufacturer or retailer to provoke trade with other channel members, or with consumers to buy or push a brand in addition to encouraging salespeople to aggressively sell the item. Sales promotions increase drastic sales during the promotion as it is often used to provide a short sharp margin to a company's sales (Anwar, Azhar & Saharuddin 2022.)

Channels like social media platforms for example Instagram, Tik Tok etc, digital platforms for example website, online advertising.

Loyalty programs will be also introduced for loyal customers, Mr. Brown Coupons to stimulate market demand and products as well.

Place and distribution

Place is one of the marketing mix strategies that play a significant role for a brand. It works with mostly how people are well informed about a particular product offered by a brand and how it drives and matches with their perceptions.

Our location is at the heart of Southwest province of Cameroon, Clerks quarters Buea municipality where most of the youths are highly concentrated due to many universities, higher educational institutions, and secondary educational institutions. This location serves a better spot for the business as it is safe to conduct business with high rate of urbanization and orientated individuals with the like of fashion and streetwear fashion.

Distribution channels like onsite store and online stores will be made available for consumers to buy and interact with ease the products.

Customer Experience Enhancement

Improving the online and offline shopping experience, personalized services, and customer support is one of the strategies we plan to implement through online surveys and feedback made available for customers to improve our marketing strategies.

A comfortable store with Modern designs that meet the standards of customers like washing closet, dressing room, free Wi-Fi and coffee will be made available so customers find it a place to be and network with friends which is all part of the experience.

Expansion Strategies

We plan to explore opportunities for geographical expansion into other regions or neighbouring countries and other continents like Europe and Asia, partnerships with well-known brands like Nike, and diversification into related product categories from other luxury brands like Louis Vuitton.

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APPENDIX 1.

Interview questions

Interview questions (Staff)

- 1) How well does the brand define customer perception?
- 2) How is consumers' behaviour towards the brand after interaction?
- 3) Do you think Mr Brown influences the culture of street wear fashion in Cameroon, and why?
- 4) Is Mr Brown Street wear for Men a loyal brand in your opinion?
- 5) What makes Mr. Brown different from other brands?
- 6) Who is the target audience and what strategies employed fit them?
- 7) Is social media an effective way to connect with customers?
- 8) What are the main challenges encountered as a streetwear brand?
- 9) What role do you think local and global fashion trends play in influencing Mr. Brown's designs?

Interview questions (Customer)

- 1) How did you get to know Mr. Brown streetwear?
- 2) How does the brand appeal to you?
- 3) Can you proudly say Mr Brown influences the culture of street wear fashion in Cameroon?
- 4) Is Mr Brown Street wear for Men a Loyal brand in your opinion?
- 5) What makes Mr. Brown different from other brands in terms of style, quality, and cultural aspect?
- 6) How frequently do you purchase from Mr. Brown?
- 7) How likely can you recommend our brand?
- 8) What aspects of our product and service you think can be improved?