

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Student perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand

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Declaration

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Abstract

All higher education institutions require a brand that can be honest, trustworthy and which distinguishes them from others. It is vital for every higher education institution to know what it is that enables them to establish improved associations with the various stakeholders linked to the institution. Higher education institutions that are aware of their capabilities and offerings are better suited to market themselves as the best, thus creating a niche market and thereby adding prestige to the brand. This can also benefit the institutions in terms of understanding their customers and their students.

The aim of this study was to determine how the UKZN brand can be improved upon. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify student perceptions of the UKZN brand. Due to the insightful input required, a qualitative study which was exploratory in nature was adopted. Face-to-face interviews with 12 participants (students) from each of the five UKZN campuses were conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule. Those participants who were selected shared their insightful experiences, thus enabling the achievement of the study's objectives.

The core findings were that students generally experience challenges in terms of the support structures, facilities, resources and amenities. Further to this, there is a lack of social interaction amongst students in terms of social and recreational activities, as well as the differing views with regard to the students' positive perception in comparison to the public's negative perception of the brand. The analysis of the data found that whilst UKZN is viewed negatively by the public, stakeholders and some students, it is a good university with a good brand. The offerings provided by the university are of great value and benefit to students who participated in the study. In light of the preceding statement, various recommendations such as reinforcing the positive aspects of UKZN and establishing an awareness of the brand have been put forward to address the challenges faced by students as well as the ways in which the negative perception of the brand can be changed. This will ensure that potential students, stakeholders and the public will view all the positive elements and offerings of the UKZN brand.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AA	affirmative action
AMA	American Marketing Association
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Empowerment Equity
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CBBE	customer-based brand equity
FET	Further Education and Training
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
LAN	local area network
MANCOSA	Management College of Southern Africa
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NUC	Natal University College
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDW	University of Durban-Westville
UFS	University of the Free State
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UP	University of Pretoria
USA	United States of America
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

“UKZN suspends academic programmes after violent protest” (Khoza, 2015); “UKZN campus closed after protestors disrupt classes” (Singh, 2015b); “UKZN campus burns as protests boils over” (Wicks, 2015); “Teaching resumes at UKZN” (Singh, 2015a); “Students don’t feel safe” (Umraw, A., 2016); “Semester moved back a week as students cram for year-end exams” (Nsele, 2015); “UKZN students cause ‘R30m worth of damage’ in drunken rampage” (Erasmus, 2015) – the preceding statements are just a few of the news headlines that UKZN dominated in the media in 2015 and 2016. This is indicative of the negative publicity the brand has experienced over the last few years. Hence the purpose of this study was to establish the perceptions held by students regarding the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) brand and to establish how the brand can be improved.

The power of a brand in many instances increases the affiliation of the customer to the brand, and thus if the affiliation tends to be greater, the stronger the brand is. The same is true for higher education institutions in that branding in education has gained significant importance and become a tradable good or service throughout the world. Higher education institutions must therefore establish a clear discernment with regard to the needs of current and potential students (Iqbal, Rasli & Hassan, 2012).

Wiese, Van Heerden and Jordaan (2010) found that the brand of a higher education institution is similar to that of other brands; however, the function of managing a higher education brand tends to be that much more challenging than anticipated. Further, they also stated that higher education institutions in South Africa, like their counterparts throughout the world are faced with numerous challenges such as internationalisation, marketisation, increased competition and a reduction in funding. As a result, these institutions are aligning their strategies closely to that of a marketing orientation and therefore branding in higher education institutions throughout the world has undergone rapid growth.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of this study by including a brief summary of the motivation for the study, the problem statement and the aim and objectives. Thereafter

the selected research methodology, collection of data, limitations of the study as well as the outline of the study are highlighted.

1.2. MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

The UKZN brand has been the subject of negative publicity and perception for the last few years and hence a gap was identified to determine how students perceive the brand, what experiences they are searching for and how the brand can be improved. A good and clear knowledge and understanding of these factors can create significant improvements for UKZN, and will enable the university to determine its successes in ensuring that it becomes the higher education institution of choice. This in turn will improve and ultimately disqualify the negative perception held by external observers.

Further to this, limited literature exists on marketing and branding within the higher education sector (Iqbal *et al.*, 2012; Elbilbaisi, 2012), particularly within the South African context. Therefore, another factor for the motivation of this research stemmed from the need to add value in terms of providing new and useful literature that can be executed theoretically and practically (Delmestri, Oberg & Drori, 2015).

Another motivational factor is that this study can serve as a catalyst in benefitting other higher education institutions. The findings and recommendations outlined in this study can act as an impetus for other institutions to implement similar strategies to ensure optimal benefits are obtained from higher education branding.

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

A university with a well-respected brand has a great advantage; however, it requires more than a recognisable logo and slogan to stand out from the rest. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has been subject to numerous occurrences and negative influences, such as new leadership and student protest and unrest. As a result, the UKZN brand has borne the brunt of negative scrutiny and criticism by students, parents, the media and various other stakeholders. Student enrolment determinants are parents, educators, schools, other role models and stakeholders. This has an impact on the type of students applying for enrolment, as well as student expectations and attitudes after enrolment at UKZN. Fundamentally, by conducting research on the students and their perceptions, this study has attempted to understand why the brand has experienced such negativity. Further, this study has explored

what makes UKZN students proud to say they are UKZN students and identified student perceptions on how the brand can be improved upon.

1.4. AIM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

To determine why the UKZN brand has been the brunt of negativity, what makes UKZN students proud to say they are UKZN students, and to identify how the UKZN brand can be improved upon. The significance of the study is that it will benefit UKZN as an institution as well as the students of UKZN. This benefit is achieved by addressing student perceptions of the brand, providing recommendations that address these perceptions and thus improving the UKZN brand.

1.5. OBJECTIVES

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To identify the factors that contribute to student perceptions of the UKZN brand.
2. To understand the students' rationale for enrolling at UKZN.
3. To establish the students' expectations of UKZN's performance.
4. To establish the students' perceptions regarding the negative publicity, student protest actions and unrest experienced by UKZN.
5. To determine the students' attitudes and feelings towards UKZN.

This study explored the concept of branding in higher education with specific reference to the student perceptions of the UKZN brand, the factors that make the brand what it is and ways in which the brand can be improved. The difference between these concepts indicates that the expectations and experiences of students influence how the brand is perceived and valued by students, the institution's stakeholders as well as external observers. This study also identified the shortcomings of the UKZN brand as well as the salient factors that can ensure the university's success.

1.6. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

This study was specific to the students of UKZN, who have first-hand, direct experience to provide the rich and insightful data that was required for this research. A purposive sample of 60 students was selected from all five of the UKZN campuses. The sampling method used for this study was convenience sampling as it was the most suitable means of acquiring the

data collected from individuals in the population who are conveniently accessible to provide it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The researcher chose the sample of the population and ensured as many students as possible were represented in terms of gender, equal representation of all ethnic groups, students that ranged from undergraduate to postgraduate studies as well as a wide variety of academic programmes and degrees.

1.7. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

A qualitative study was conducted using face-to-face interviews as the method of data collection and the interview process was guided using a loosely structured interview schedule. This allowed for adaptability in the interview process as the interviewer probed for follow-up questions to acquire further insight and a clearer understanding of the participants' opinions, perceptions, beliefs and experiences.

The information collected was analysed according to the different categories and themes identified. This was then used to form the results and findings of the study. The information was examined to determine valid themes similar to the patterns of the objectives and questions asked.

Direct and key quotations are utilised in this dissertation to illustrate the validity and the reliability of the information collected. These quotations support the ideas, opinions, differences and similarities in perspectives, as well as the findings of the data collected. Visual presentation of the results is depicted with aid of tables and word cloud figures.

1.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) stated that the outcomes in an exploratory study cannot be generalised to the population. Therefore, the purpose of this study was not to gather information that was generalisable, but to seek the experiences and perceptions of UKZN students who were in the position to provide the first-hand experience which could be reproduced and thus establish data reliability. The limitations are discussed further in Chapter 5.

1.9. OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out in a systematic and structured manner which is reflected in the layout of this dissertation. The study is presented in five chapters, as depicted in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Overview of the study process

Chapter	Description
1	An overview of the study is provided in this chapter which encompasses the motivation, the problem statement as well as the aim and objectives of the study. Thereafter, the population and sample together with the research methodology are described. Finally the limitations of the study are briefly stated.
2	Chapter 2 introduces the concept of higher education and branding in higher education. A funnel approach is used to explain higher education characteristics and the challenges it faces. A South African context is incorporated. Thereafter the concepts of branding, its benefits and the impact it has in the higher education sector are presented.
3	This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology process and the design of this study. Thereafter, the process of how the data was collected, is presented.
4	Chapter 4 provides a description of the participants and the analysis of the collected data. Thereafter, a discussion of the outcomes of the analysis of the study, together with the findings that emanated from this study, is presented.
5	In this concluding chapter, a synopsis of the study together with the findings from the study are described. Finally, recommendations to solve the problem and recommendations for future studies are provided.

1.10. SUMMARY

Managing the reputation of a higher education institution has been recognised as an essential priority for any higher education institution. Therefore, brand management has a significant role to play in developing and establishing the relationship between a higher education institution and its stakeholders as well as showcasing the institution to the public that it serves. Hence, this study was aimed at establishing the perceptions of students towards the UKZN brand. In this chapter, a motivation for the study, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study were discussed. Thereafter the population, sample, and limitations of the study were presented and an outline of the study was illustrated. The following chapter, Chapter 2, employs a funnel approach to the literature review and qualitative research highlighting the empirical research available on the topic of higher education branding. Chapter 2 provides a critical literature review which shapes the theoretical groundwork for this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an exploration of literature that has analysed and reviewed brand management in higher education institutions. Branding is a management discipline that has acquired significant importance in higher education institutions (Krklješ, 2011). As higher education institutions become increasingly marketised and internationalised, these institutions across the globe endeavour to conceive and generate a brand strong enough to attract and retain students. The purpose of the literature review for this study was to review the concept of brand management in higher education and to build the groundwork for the basis of this study within an international and South African perspective.

This chapter defines what higher education is and describes higher education within a South African context. Thereafter, it outlines the challenges higher education institutions encounter globally and in South Africa; explores the concept of university rankings; and provides an understanding of higher education stakeholders. Finally, literature on the concepts, characteristics, principles and strategies of brand management as well as the concept of branding in higher education are unpacked to determine if the literature proves to be an effective means of highlighting the key factors of what branding in higher education institutions aims to achieve.

2.2. HIGHER EDUCATION DEFINED

Higher education encompasses all post-secondary education, research and training guidance provided at universities or similar educational institutions which are accredited as institutions of higher learning by the state (World Bank, 2011). An infinite number of qualifications are offered which range from National diplomas and foundation degrees to Honours, Masters and Doctoral qualifications (World Bank, 2011). These qualifications are acknowledged across the world as they constitute specialist expertise that employers view as accomplished, knowledgeable and qualified (World Bank, 2011). The role of higher education institutions is primarily to educate students on theoretical and formal knowledge whilst continuously dealing with the pressures of preparing students for the working world (Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012). Each country and higher education institution throughout

the world has their own unique understanding of what higher education is and what it aims to achieve. Thus, the next discussion outlines higher education in South Africa.

2.3. HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 defines ‘higher education’ as all learning programmes which lead to a qualification that meets the requirements of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) (RSA, 1997).

Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2014) stated that the pre-1994 higher education system passed on to the new democratic South Africa was largely characterised by political, economic and social inequalities of gender, race, class, area and institution conferred by the history of apartheid. Therefore, the post-1994 policies as well as the new constitution highlighted higher education as a critical area essential to economic and social transformation and growing democracy as well as human resource advancement. Walker, McLean, Dison and Peppin-Vaughan (2009) drew attention to the role of higher education in South Africa as providing for transformation in society by integrating the economic priorities with the necessity to advocate a democratic civil society. This leads to a higher education system that is transformed to foster equality, admission for personal development as well as the creation of an untroubled, fruitful and democratic society.

Kotecha (2003) suggested that within South Africa, “private institutions such as Damelin, Varsity College and Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) changed the branding landscape during the 1990s by selling an ‘experience’ (even a lifestyle) as opposed to old buildings, smiling student faces, and impressive library collections”. The reason for this was to market the academic institution as both a place of socialising and learning as it was thought that this balance was salient to students who were considering higher education as a means to an end instead of the beginning of a learning or working profession.

Africanisation of education has become a significantly contemporary topic in many African countries, including South Africa. The call for Africanisation of the curriculum is to reconstruct education to indicate African principles (Msila, 2014:431). Karodia, Shaikh and Soni (2015) stated that the present ethos at South African universities, after more than two decades of democracy, should be influenced by a culture of Africanisation such as Africa’s culture, language, identities and histories whilst aiming to remove the atrocities of apartheid. Universities should thus develop as institutions that will address the local African challenges

as it is about restoring and welcoming an African renaissance into the universities in South Africa and Africa (Karodia *et al.*, 2015). As such, this has been one of the many challenges higher education institutions have to resolve. The following discussion highlights the many challenges higher education institutions throughout the world experience.

2.4. CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION

Drew (2010) stated that the challenges faced by higher education institutions increase as the foundation of their business advances in complexity. As such, institutions experience a great deal of challenges and issues such as “being urged to provide high quality education, exist as a well-reputed university, achieve enrolment success, improve competitive positioning, provide contemporary and well-designed academic programs, and maintain financial strength” and therefore higher education institutions are made to realise that their institution needs to be run similar to that of a business (Beneke, 2011). Jones, Lefoe, Harvey and Ryland (2012) explained from their study of three universities in Australia, that universities have to conceptualise opportunities to establish and develop sustainable leadership whilst competing in a competitive global environment. They further stated that higher education across the globe has seen significant changes such as internationalisation, corporatisation (marketisation), increasing costs of higher education and student satisfaction and development over the last 25 years, all of which will be outlined in the following discussion.

2.4.1. Internationalisation

Kwaramba (2012) explained internationalisation in higher education as the utilisation of higher education services of one country by the inhabitants of another. Whilst Knight (2013) stated that it can be defined as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions (primarily teaching/learning, research, service) or delivery of higher education”, and elaborated that this occurs at all levels of education, from the local position to the worldwide position of international bodies.

The increase in the scale, intricacies and pressures of internationalisation in higher education has been characterised by an all-inclusive occurrence of globalisation, thus causing the internationalisation of higher education institutions to be viewed as both the result of and catalyst for globalisation (Zezeza, 2012). The internationalisation of educational, research and service facilities at higher education institutions improves the quality of higher education by persuading institutions to advance to international academic standards (Zezeza, 2012).

Internationalisation has created great demands for competition, association, connectedness, fragmentation and ranking within and amongst the higher educational sector (Zezeza, 2012). He further stated that education across borders creates an awareness of pertinent issues such as the expansion and development of quality assurance structures and systems and the recognition and transferability of certifications.

Kwaramba (2012) mentioned that South Africa is qualified in meeting most of its educational requirements and is thus an appealing academic hub in Southern Africa as it offers globally recognised academic qualifications, a high standard of research and training institutions and the good infrastructure of its institutions. Another common change amongst higher education institutions is the corporatisation of these institutions.

2.4.2. Corporatisation

The international business world has been growing at an exponential rate long before the change of this century. Convergent with this growth has been the internationalisation of education, especially in the tertiary education sector. Hence many of the universities have moved past their long established traditions to become participants in an internationally competitive higher education environment (Parker, 2012). Higher education institutions are experiencing saliently more competition at national and international levels, with more needs from students and the higher education sector for increased customisation and innovation amongst their academic programmes (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012).

According to Cox (2013), the marketisation of higher education institutions promotes viewing students as customers and the brand of the institution through the spectrum of a narrow market assessment. Administration in higher education institutions makes use of terminology from business school curriculums that outline branding initiatives, customer satisfaction and market competencies which are associated with a greater variety of higher education “products” that can relate to the greatest value-added student (Cox, 2013). Higher education institutions assist their brand to achieve a higher level in the higher education sector by means of competing with each other to attract customers (students) with resources, finances and standardised test scores. The corporatisation of higher education institutions can benefit these institutions due to a reduction of funding by government and hence serve as an impetus to achieve greater awareness through the marketing of their institution and brand, and thus gaining publicity and further investment from potential stakeholders and

businesses (Cox, 2013). Also, university branding can lead to a number of collaborations to develop together with research which could lead to corporatisation (Davidson, 2015).

Davidson (2015) stated that there are two elements that lead to university corporatisation: (1) there is a decrease in the amount of public funds which are available to higher education institutions; and (2) possibly an inefficient use of allocated funds. The following discussion outlines the increase in higher education costs.

2.4.3. Increasing costs of higher education

According to Mazzarol and Soutar (2012), another significant challenge is the rising cost of higher education and the need for governments to decrease government spending on education by transferring the obligation to students. Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada and Freeman (2014) stated that there is an increase in the number of students who are perturbed by the value they are receiving in comparison to the exorbitant cost of their education. Also, that the cost of average tuition fees is already high and continues to increase, as do the costs of student residence and travel to and from campus (Johnson *et al.*, 2014). The increased numbers of working and middle class students have borne the brunt of high university fees and subsequently have raked up a massive debt in order to keep up to the tuition and fee increases (Cox, 2013).

For many higher education institutions the desire to generate income from non-government sources has meant that they participate in business research projects with related affiliations to business (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). Universities throughout the globe are increasingly reliant on benevolent funding as public spending is reduced (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). The inclination towards decreasing public spending and increasing education costs has resulted in an increment in higher education privatisation (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). The nature of this has extended throughout countries such as Korea, Japan, Philippines and Indonesia, India, China, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Australia. In the USA, universities are broadening their sources of financing for research as state assistance decreases (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). De Jager and Gbadamosi (2013) argued that a reduction in subsidies to higher education institutions impacts on the research and quality of teaching, overcrowding in African higher education institutions, as well as the degeneration of facilities and maintenance on campus and the lack of resources such as academic materials, text books and laboratory consumables. The perception of quality impacts on the selection of an institution by suitable applicants and therefore to pursue this critical function, institutions

must be supplied with the necessary resources for the enhancement, upgrade and maintenance of infrastructure and they must be empowered to attract an exceptionally proficient workforce (De Jager & Gbadamosi, 2013). In South Africa, students took it upon themselves to prevent an increase in the 2016 university fees and as such participated in the #Feesmustfall student protest action (Sunday Times, 2015). An increase in higher education costs is one of the many issues that affect student satisfaction and development and as such follows in the subsequent discussion.

2.4.4. Student satisfaction and development

Satisfying students' needs and improving their advancement prospects has become complicated. Providing students with efficient and practical "learning and retaining and graduating them, are challenging higher education institutions" globally (De Lourdes Machado, Brites, Magalhães & Sá, 2011, p.415). Satisfaction of students is established by the students' comprehensive participation and involvement as consumers of a specific institution and not only their experiences in learning and teaching (De Lourdes Machado *et al.*, 2011, p.415). The image of a higher education institution is a pertinent function in establishing the students' perceptions of value and comprehensive satisfaction with that institution which in turn affects their loyalty as customers (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2013) identified social and educational amenities as important elements for also satisfying students in higher education institutions. They further stated that to provide excellent service quality to students, higher education institutions must influence every facet of the students' interrelation with all of their offerings and amenities, especially those related to their human capital. Hence, student fulfilment is a crucial influence of student loyalty and it is this loyalty that fosters favourable word of mouth and student engagement and collaboration. The above discussions were some of the challenges and changes experienced by higher education institutions globally. The challenges facing higher education in South Africa are outlined next.

2.5. CHALLENGES FACING HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, social imbalances were rooted and indicated in all areas of social life as a product of the organised banning of Blacks and women under apartheid and colonialism (Badat, 2010). The infrastructure of higher education in South Africa was no different. Economic, political and social intolerances and imbalances of race, class, gender,

geographical and institutional segregation greatly moulded and continue to mould higher education in South Africa (Badat, 2010).

Higher education in South Africa is similar to a number of countries throughout the world, such as Australia, the United Kingdom and many countries in Europe which had to deal with extensive transformational challenges (Herbst & Conradie, 2011; De Jager & Gbadamosi, 2013). Considering the oppression of the disadvantaged population in South Africa pre-1994, the government committed to the transformation from an apartheid country to a post-apartheid country which led to the higher education systems in the country being restructured and transformed (Badat, 2010; Herbst & Conradie, 2011).

2.5.1. Inequalities

According to Clare and Sivil (2014), two decades after the end of apartheid, the number of staff at many South African higher education institutions continues to indicate old inequalities, including White males dominating the professoriate. Chetty and Knaus (2016) mentioned that education at all stages in South Africa remains unequal.

Badat (2010) referred to the discussion of social inequalities and as a result stated that the banning of Blacks and women from the workforce was eradicated by measures such as affirmative action (AA) and the Broad-Based Black Empowerment Equity (B-BBEE) Act to address the inequalities. Whilst attempting to foster social equity for Blacks and women citizens, higher education institutions in South Africa had to pay serious attention to “producing and retaining a new generation of academics”. In light of the preceding statement, if this social equity for Black and women South Africans is conducted without purposeful attention, it is likely that the inequalities and imbalances that attributed to the apartheid era could be replicated. Therefore, the consequence is that the academics of the new generation must not only comprise of Black and women South Africans but rather consist of the educational and knowledgeable competencies associated with educating and learning, research and community engagement, and reconstructing and advancing higher education institutions in South Africa. The advancement of Black students having the opportunity to study in higher education institutions has led to a colossal number of disadvantaged students requiring financial aid. The subsequent discussion highlights the concept of government funding and the students’ dire need for state funding.

2.5.2. Government funding

The demise of apartheid in 1994 was pursued by a predetermined aim to alleviate its consequences. The transformational policies by the new government in 1994, was intended to focus on the inequalities of apartheid which was significantly evident in the new higher education funding structure which benefited equity of admittance, notably to disadvantaged communities (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). However, Black students have been fighting for free higher education indicating that the current student financial aid program does not adequately assist in the financial barriers to higher education opportunities (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012). The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) was developed and advanced as a means of implementing social redress for disadvantaged students (Badat, 2010). Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2014) highlighted the decrease in public subsidies to universities and that the monetary stress and pressure does not predict a good outcome in terms of attracting and retaining new academics. Further the authors argue that one of the implications of declining financial support from government has led to a significant growth in the size of classes across all disciplines and all levels.

The notion that government funding for higher education was limited became evident with the introduction of capping student enrolments as a measure of reducing the rapid expansion. The inability of the government and students to afford tertiary education has been the key factor to reduce student enrolments (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014). Related to decreasing government funding for higher education has led to the process of South African Universities annually increasing university fees to compensate for the limited public funding provided by the government (Shrivastava & Shrivastava, 2014). According to Sunday Times (2015), the announcement of an increase in 2016 university tuition fees led to #FeesMustFall, a protest action strike which involved students across the country. The students forced their way through the Parliament gates, demanding a zero percent increase in 2016. The President, after much deliberation with leaders and education role players gave in to this demand and announced that fees would not increase in 2016.

It is evident that the government funding of higher education is insufficient in terms of the new pressures on and expectations of higher education institutions. This impacts on the government's policies to increase the number of student enrolments and to address social equity. Another challenge that was experienced amongst higher education institutions in

South Africa was the legislative request for certain universities and technikons to form mergers, the discussion of which follows below.

2.5.3. Mergers

According to Kele and Pietersen (2015:12), once the mergers were decided upon, universities in South Africa experienced critical transitional changes whilst adhering to legislative policies and requirements. Karodia *et al.* (2015:341) stated that the mergers of technikons and universities created critical problems in the tertiary education sector. Service delivery and learning and teaching pedagogies were affected. Karodia *et al.* (2015:341) also identified the following challenges with regard to the mergers:

- Growth of large universities, making it difficult to administer and manage the communication process.
- Cognisance was not given to the fact that universities do not and cannot function in isolation.
- The merger studies paid insufficient attention to the crucial stakeholders in the form of industry, the function of government and of civil communities.
- Contemplation of the close associations between all stakeholders with regard to a shared purpose was overlooked.
- As with the essence of mergers, the remuneration of academics is not on par with other sectors and is worsened further by the inadequate working conditions in higher education.

All of the above additional factors have contributed to academics being lost to the public or private sector as well as emigrating to other countries. Their expertise and qualifications afford them the mobility to leave, thus resulting in the decline in academic quality and standards (Badat, 2010). Many of the challenges experienced by students in higher education led to the students drawing attention to the fact that they were not happy about their needs not being met and hence took to protest action to be heard.

2.5.4. Student protest action

In September 2015, the UKZN Westville campus was subjected to extreme vandalism and destruction by students. This led to the university obtaining a high court interdict to protect the university from any further damage caused by protesting students. The students cited

financial assistance, bursary policy, draft loans and financing for postgraduate students as their reasons for the violent protest action and destruction (Times Live, 2015).

Chetty and Knaus (2016) stated that there was a fierce shift in universities in South Africa in 2015 with regard to an interruption in the status quo – as such students protested and became resistant to language policies, exorbitant fees, systematic imbalances and colonial ideograms. This protest action was headed by the disadvantaged and working class youth which highlighted a “class struggle”. Further to this “race and class lie at the heart of opposition to South Africa’s existing, exclusive university system” (Chetty & Knaus, 2016).

Pilane (2016) described the most recent student protest action which occurred at the University of the Free State (UFS) in February 2016 as out of order, disrespectful and divided. In this instance, non-white students were fighting for the Afrikaans language to be eliminated as a medium of instruction at the university. White students have been adamant about the preservation of the White Afrikaans culture at UFS. Black students are subjected to an anti-black culture at UFS and stated that they are the majority and yet they do not have the same advantage of being able to study in their mother tongues. Students at UFS believe that Stellenbosch University and North West University students are experiencing a similar crisis to what they are dealing with. Furthermore, they believe that their struggle is far more challenging than that of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) (Pilane, 2016).

Chetty and Knaus (2016) believe that universities and academics should welcome these protest actions and the students who rose to the challenge to bring about change. They further argued that it has been a favourable action in that the students highlighted a change for the system to create ideologies that will challenge the class and racial segregation in South Africa instead of strengthening it.

Moloi, Mkwana and Bojabotseha (2014) explained that it is without doubt that higher education institutions and government need to seriously consider providing enhanced and improved equitableness, admission and excellence for all youth in South Africa.

The aim of establishing and changing universities in South Africa, as well as the enhancement of their learning and research competencies, has been crucial in considering international competition and conflict for the ideal brains (Moloi *et al.*, 2014). With regard to the challenges discussed above, effective and efficient leadership and management are of

critical importance to ensure the success and resolution of issues and challenges in higher education institutions.

2.6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

It is usually accepted that effective leadership and management skills are a necessary aspect of positive social change within any higher education institution. Hence without this form of leadership and management, neither society nor an institution has the ability to foster growth and development (Herbst & Conradie, 2011). To develop the leadership skills required to foster top quality higher education institutions, managers are required to have excellent technical and managements skills and to possess well-established emotional intelligence and social skills (Herbst & Conradie, 2011).

Smith and Wolverton (2010) stated that a distinguishing set of leadership challenges is experienced in higher education institutions. As such, the members of faculties function in a climate with limited supervision but still continue to make powerful, informed and important decisions for the institution. Leaders in education management deal with varied challenges in a wavering and competitive environment (Kalargyrou, Pescosolido & Kalargiros, 2012).

Jones *et al.* (2012) argued that in order for leadership in higher education to be effective and sustainable, a more engaging and synergistic approach to leadership is required. This fosters self-determination and contemporary and creative thought processes. Collins (2014) mentioned that it is imperative for members of faculty to consider the type of leadership they require in their institutions and subsequently recruit members they believe will be effective in that environment.

Herbst and Conradie (2011) stated that in South Africa, the leadership in higher education has been identified as ineffective and inefficient by a number of authors. This could be due to the fact that the development of leadership has been granted minimal focus by most higher education institutions. Limited attention is given to leaders and managers to hone the personal characteristics such as self-awareness, self-knowledge, interpersonal skills and integrity; attributes which are critical to effective and efficient leadership (Herbst & Conradie, 2011). Therefore, leaders and managers who have the capabilities of leading higher education institutions through the current transformational challenges would serve well in creating an impetus towards an achievement of favourable and positive university rankings, a topic which follows in the discussion below.

2.7. UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

Altbach (2015) stated that rankings have existed for a long time but have seen intense expansion over the last few decades. They offer a wide range of good and bad functions. Higher education institutions attempt to warrant their rankings for reasons such as prestige, staff and recruitment and other aims, as many higher education institutions and countries experience a growth in competition for top achieving academic students and staff, prestige and funding (Altbach, 2015). Students also compete amongst each other to attend the most distinguished schools and institutions compete for research subsidies and the support of the public. Pusser and Marginson (2013) concurred with Altbach's discussion in that rankings impact both the influence and representation of higher education institutions around the world and rankings are a salient driver in an institution's prestige and stature. Further to this, it has been accepted that rankings are necessary for the reputation of the institution and that they mould practically every facet of the higher education institutions' governance and organisation (Pusser & Marginson, 2013).

According to the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) University Ranking: BRICS 2015, the rankings of the leading higher education institutions in the five BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are available (Tucker, 2015). The following table outlines the top ten universities in South Africa.

Table 2.1: Rankings of South African universities

South African ranking	Top 10 in South Africa	BRICS ranking	World ranking
1	University of Cape Town	14	141
2	University of the Witwatersrand	28	318
3	Stellenbosch University	34	390
4	University of Pretoria	49	471-480
5	University of Johannesburg	67	601-650
6	University of KwaZulu-Natal	68	501-550
7	Rhodes University	79	601-650
8	University of the Western Cape	100	-
9	University of the Free State	130	-
10	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	151-200	-
10	North West University	151-200	-

Source: Adapted from Tucker, L. 2015. *Top Universities*. [Online]. Available WWW: <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/brics-rankings/top-10-universities-south-africa-2015> (Accessed 1 June 2016).

The top ten South African universities were featured in the QS BRICS and World rankings and they were evaluated on the universities' performance based on international reputation, the impact and production of research and internationalisation (Tucker, 2015). It is evident from the table that Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and North West University were placed 10th in South Africa. The University of the Western Cape, University of the Free State, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and North West University were not included in the world rankings whilst the universities ranked 1st to 7th in South Africa were favourably ranked in both the BRICS and World rankings.

As such the accomplishment of an institution's brand is usually an initial basis for the assessment of university rankings hence these rankings are imperative for employers, government, universities, current and eligible students and parents (Valitov, 2014), all of whom can be viewed as stakeholders in higher education.

2.8. HIGHER EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders in higher education are comprised of students, their parents, employers and/or government organisations, whose foundational need is to be satisfied (De Lourdes Machado *et al.*, 2011).

Abidin (2015) stated that quality in higher education is a comparative concept which involves a variety of stakeholders and hence educational institutions are required to focus on the perceptions of its stakeholders in order to impart successful educational initiatives. As such, an educational institution which aims to deliver excellent quality of education should also aim to discern its stakeholder needs. An example of an effective means to achieving this is through direct feedback from its lecturers and students.

The brand identity of a higher education institution has a critical function to perform, namely moulding customers' and stakeholders' perceptions, opinions and beliefs towards that institution (Goi, Goi & Wong, 2014). The concept of higher education marketing follows in the subsequent discussion.

2.9. HIGHER EDUCATION MARKETING

Marketing in higher education has been used to address two fundamental aims: (1) to captivate the most capable students; and (2) to source state subsidies, research financing, private contributions and grants and financial resources (Beneke, 2011). The concept of

higher education marketing has evolved in importance throughout the world from the 1980s onwards (Durkin, McKenna & Cummins, 2012). They further stated that due to the competition amongst the institutions, many were obliged to thoroughly consider marketing principles as they enhanced their competencies to attract and retain students from both the national and global markets. Branding aids the higher education institution to satisfy the presumptions and needs of stakeholders, to formulate resolutions regarding the strategic vision and mission, allotment of resources, hiring of staff and curriculum development (Silva, 2013). Hence the concept of branding follows in the next discussion.

2.10. BRANDING

The field of branding has emanated as a leading priority for leadership and management over the last two decades and is acknowledged as one of the most appreciated intangible assets in business (Baeva, 2011).

2.10.1. What is a brand?

A brand is associated with a service or product which possesses certain unique or distinguishable attributes and features (Amin & Danielsson, 2012). The American Marketing Association (AMA) refers to a brand as the ‘name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or any combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition’ (Keller, 2013). Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) stated that a brand can be defined as ‘a label designating ownership by a firm, which we experience, evaluate, have feelings towards and build associations with, to perceive value’. The name of the service or product is usually the initial basis for interaction between the customer and the product or service, which later develops into a placeholder as the customer remembers the perceived attributes of the product or service (Hillenbrand, Alcauter, Cervantes & Barrios, 2013). According to Addo (2013), consumers affiliate themselves to a well-established brand, its characteristics, qualities and traits and they support the idea based on a relationship which is intangible and emotional. Further, brands assist consumers by serving as a stable promise of the anticipated value of the product or service the consumers purchase. The promise of this value makes customers certain that the reward of acquiring a strong brand is greater than that of a comparable unbranded product.

Beneke (2011) stated that higher education institutions seem to be exceedingly concerned about their image and ranking in the marketplace. He further stated that their reputation or name authenticates the institution's continuation and therefore these institutions are confronted with the creation and implementation of marketing and advertising strategies to develop an institution into a brand. This leads to the following discussion on branding within the higher education context.

2.10.2. Branding of higher education

Chapleo (2010) proposed that when someone states the name of a university it will instantly awaken emotions, associations, faces and images and that the role of university branding is to manage, develop and build impressions. Chapleo (2010) also stated that the brand of a university is "a manifestation of the institution's features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students' needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions". Beneke (2011) defined branding in higher education as a "perception or emotion maintained by a buyer or prospective buyer describing the experience related to doing business with an academic institution with its product and service".

The significance in forming a brand is to be able to select a name, logo, symbol, package, design, or other attributes that establish a product or service and differentiate it from others. These disparate aspects of a brand are known as brand elements (Baeva, 2011). Valitov (2014) stated that the brand is one of the most critical elements in influencing the university competitiveness expansion. He mentioned the following three elements as the components of the university brand:

- University attributes
- The image of the university
- The value of the university brand.

The above three elements are illustrated in Table 2.2 with regard to the university attributes and Table 2.3 with the image of the university and the value of the university brand. A comparison has been done on three universities in South Africa, with UCT and Wits being the top two universities in the country and UKZN, which is rated 6th, was included for the purpose of a comparison to the best universities in South Africa.

Table 2.2: Key indicators utilised to establish the QS rankings

Key indicator	UCT	Wits	UKZN
Academic reputation	75.1 %	41.6 %	-
Employer reputation	69 %	43.3 %	-
Faculty/Student ratio	-	-	-
Staff with PHD	-	-	-
Papers per faculty	-	-	-
Citations per paper	73.8 %	36.9 %	-
Number of international faculties	369	629	410
Number of international students	3051	2003	1407

Source: Adapted from QS Top Universities. 2015. *QS University Rankings: BRICS. 2015*. [Online]. Available WWW: <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/brics-rankings/2015#sorting=rank+country=54+stars=false+search> (Accessed 1 June 2016).

The table above outlines the indicators that were used to gauge the QS Rankings. It is evident in terms of the criteria required that UCT was rated the highest for academic reputation and employer reputation, followed by Wits. The only indicators available for UKZN were the number of international faculties and the number of international students. These key indicators outlined above can be likened to the attributes as a component of a university brand.

Table 2.3: The South African ranking, BRICS ranking and World ranking of UCT, Wits and UKZN according to the QS rankings initiative

South African ranking	Top 10 in South Africa	BRICS ranking	World ranking
1	University of Cape Town	14	141
2	University of the Witwatersrand	28	318
6	University of KwaZulu-Natal	68	501-550

Source: Adapted from Tucker, L. 2015. *Top Universities*. [Online]. Available WWW: <http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/brics-rankings/top-10-universities-south-africa-2015> (Accessed 1 June 2016).

It is evident in the table above that UCT and Wits are rated the top two universities in South Africa with UKZN ranked 6th in the country. The BRICS and World rankings are also highlighted above. This ranking table indicates the image and value of these three university brands as a component of the university brand. At the centre of marketing strategy is brand positioning which follows in the subsequent discussion.

2.10.3. Brand positioning

Positioning is about the perceived position in the minds of the consumer about a brand relative to its competitors (Keller, 2013). The position of a strong brand indicates that the brand has a distinguishable, trustworthy and sustainable position in the consumer's mind. Holdsworth, Fam, Chung and Chai (2008) stated that for the creation of an effective brand positioning strategy in terms of higher education, institutions are required to determine what the most effective medium of communication would be to reach the desired target audience. Conventionally, higher education institutions rely on print media, word of mouth and public relations to attract students. As the world has become technology driven, social media and the internet have become alternate channels of communication.

2.10.4. The benefits of branding

Cant, Strydom, Jooste and Du Plessis (2006) stated that branding benefits consumers through the simple identification of a product. They further stated that attributes and benefits which are communicated assist consumers to evaluate the product; eliminate the purchasing risk; and develop a product attribute/interest. To form a positive brand image requires marketing activities that result in consumers associating the brand with strong, favourable and distinguishing features (Keller, 2013).

2.10.5. Brand equity

Brand equity is defined as “A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customer” (Nguyen Thi Bich & Balami, 2011).

2.10.5.1. Brand Equity Model

Figure 2.1 highlights the brand assets that make up the brand equity model.

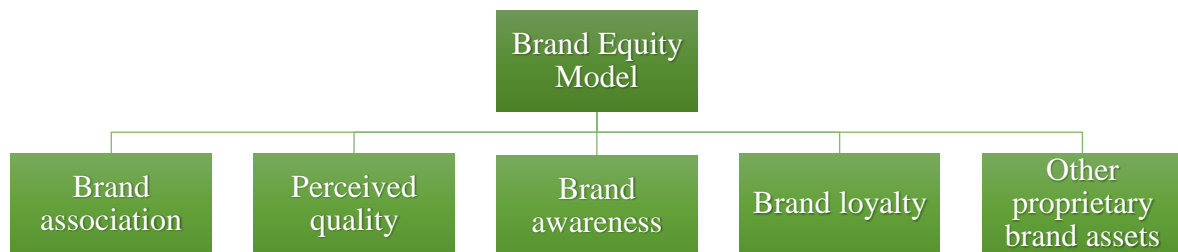


Figure 2.1: Brand Equity Model

Source: Adapted from Keller, K. 2013. *Strategic Brand Management*. Global ed. Pearson Higher Education, Harlow.

Baeva (2011) established five categories as the key determinants of brand equity which create a positive or negative value to the consumer and business. Each category can be identified as a brand asset that delivers value.

2.10.5.2. Brand awareness

Brand awareness is concerned with brand recognition and brand recall. Brand awareness represents promoting the brand through repetitive exposure in order for the target market to recognise/recall the brand in significant detail under complex conditions and time constraints to make a purchase (Hsu, Hung & Tang, 2012; Keller, 2013).

2.10.5.3. Perceived quality

Baeva (2011) stated that perceived quality can be seen as the consumer's discernment of the total evaluation of what constitutes as a quality product or service and how well the brand ranks on those features.

2.10.5.4. Brand association

Till, Baack and Waterman (2011) stated that "brand associations are called the heart and soul of the brand". They further stated that it is anything affiliated in memory to a brand and that the essential function of brand association is to generate meaning for customers.

2.10.5.5. Brand loyalty

Brewer and Zhao (2010) argued that an unwavering positive attitude towards a brand is presumed to result in a commitment to the brand which is associated with the buying

behaviour known as brand loyalty. As such, brand loyalty generally happens when a customer is certain that a product or service is the very best among similar and alternative brands with regard to the price, quality or performance. Thus the customer conducts repeated purchases and refers the product or service to others.

2.10.5.6. Other proprietary brand assets

According to Budac and Baltador (2013), other proprietary brand assets include patents, trademarks and relationships with distribution channels.

Baeva (2011) stated that the basis for brand equity is created by the brand knowledge of the consumers. Brand knowledge allows the consumer to distinguish brands and assists the mind and reactions to marketing initiatives due to this brand knowledge. Keller (2013) called this as customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and created a CBBE pyramid model, also called the brand resonance pyramid. The CBBE model will be outlined in the following discussion.

2.10.6. Brand building

The CBBE model illustrates how to establish passionate, active loyalty relationships with customers. The model addresses the way in which the positioning of a brand affects how customers feel, what they think and do, and the extent to which they connect with the brand (Keller, 2013).

The six brand building blocks highlighted in Figure 2.2 below achieve the four steps required to build a strong brand. To signify the sequencing involved, these building blocks are constructed as a brand pyramid. Building salient brand equity involves attaining the pinnacle of the pyramid and will only be accomplished if the correct building blocks are in place.

Kotler and Keller (2012) stated that establishing substantial brand equity entails advancing to the top of the brand pyramid. The six building blocks are discussed below by applying higher education examples to each of the building blocks.

Figure 2.2 outlines the six building blocks that encompass the CBBE model.

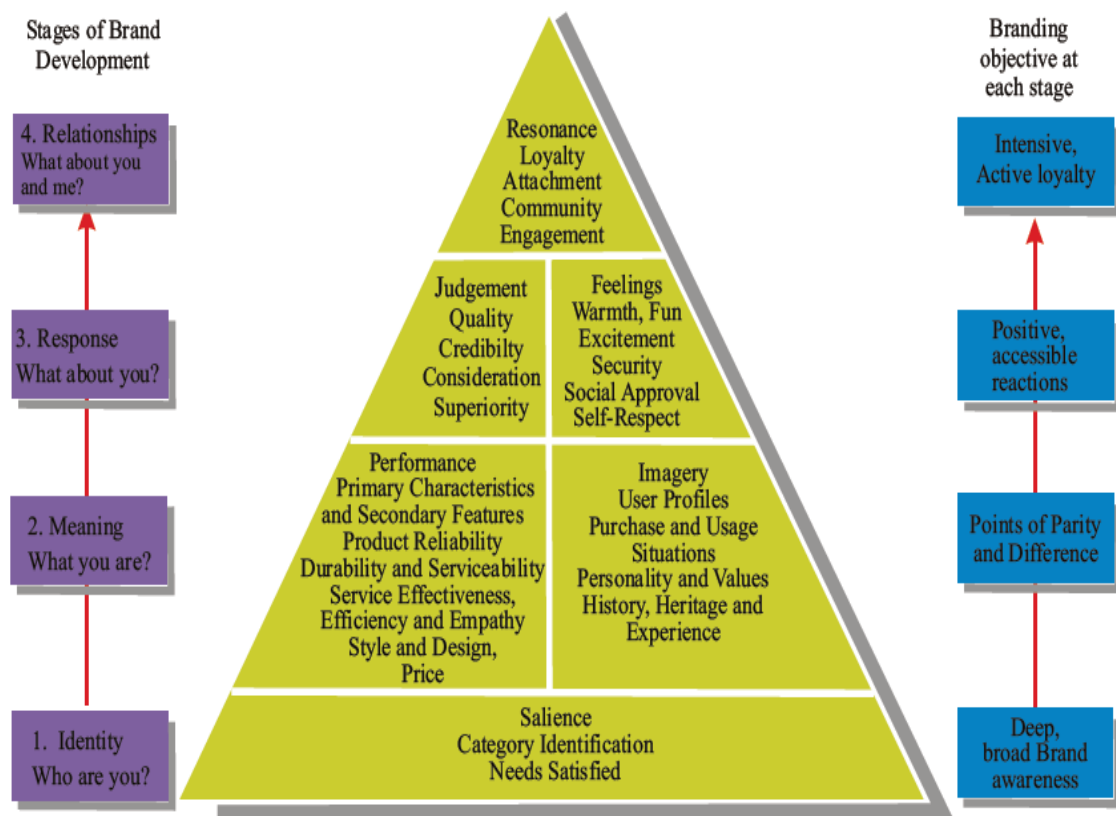


Figure 2.2: CBBE model

Source: Baeva, D.Y. 2011. *Strong brands: How Brand Strategy and Brand Communication Contribute to Build Brand Equity: The Case of Navigator*. University of Coimbra, Coimbra.

2.10.6.1. Brand salience

Kotler and Keller (2012) identified brand salience as how frequently and easily consumers think of the brand in varying buying or utilisation instances. Clarke (2009) stated that in higher education, brand salience relates to market sophistication, publicity channels, communicating information and the focus on customers. Market sophistication entails that the advertising and promotional initiatives of institutions should be well thought out and considerate to market needs. Publicity channels are the different mediums in which institutions can build awareness globally, including global affiliations such as double degrees and research collaborations, exchange partners and government and recruitment agencies. Communicating information is the means by which students receive information. The focus on customers is concerned with the marketing of customers and agents and relationship management.

2.10.6.2. Brand performance

Kotler and Keller (2012) stated that brand performance deals with how effectively the product or service satisfies the consumer's practical needs. In the case of higher education institutions, the focus on service and customer feedback at these institutions can establish their brand performance (Clarke, 2009).

2.10.6.3. Brand imagery

Kotler and Keller (2012) argued that this building block explains the external characteristics of the product or service and the way in which the brand endeavours to satisfy the consumer's psychological and social needs. In a higher education institution the brand imagery can be assessed by the various support services made available to students and the procedures utilised by the institution to build goodwill (Clarke, 2009).

2.10.6.4. Brand judgement

According to Kotler and Keller (2012), brand judgement centres on the consumer's own personal impressions and assessment of the brand. Within a higher education context, brand judgements can be evaluated by the selling features of a higher education institution in comparison to competitors (other institutions) (Clarke, 2009).

2.10.6.5. Brand feelings

This building block is the consumer's reaction to the brand and their emotional feedback about the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In higher education, the testimonials and surveys of students can establish the brand feelings of students (customers) (Clarke, 2009).

2.10.6.6. Brand resonance

The final building block explains the consumer's relationship with the brand and the degree to which they feel they coexist (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In higher education, repeated purchases is not a significant driver; however, the satisfaction of students in terms of their experience in utilising the product or service serves as a salient indicator in building customer-based brand equity (Clarke, 2009).

Figure 2.3 is an illustration of the CBBE building block utilising higher education examples.

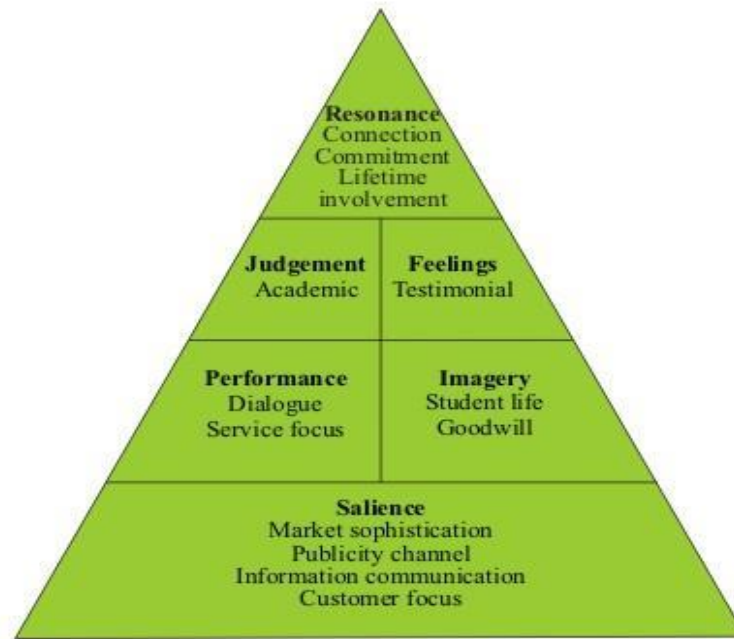


Figure 2.3: CBBE model for higher education

Source: Clarke, K. 2009. Building Customer-Based Brand Equity in Higher Education: Applying Brand Equity Theory to an International Higher Education Marketing Context. [Online]. Available WWW: <https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=1437358&fileId=2435540> (Accessed 1 March 2016).

Keller (2013) stated that the achievement of CBBE occurs when the customer has a high level of awareness and affinity with the brand and holds a strong, positive and distinguishable brand association in their memory. Within a higher education context, this is significant because it could take a number of years for a student to attain these feelings, or only once they have completed their qualification as well as years after graduation. Hence the salient focus of Keller's statement for higher education institutions is that they should accomplish a high level of awareness as students' decisions for selecting higher education institutions are most often influenced by the recommendations of family, friends and current educators. The following discussion provides a brief outline of the higher education branding landscape of South Africa.

2.11. BRANDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Branding in higher education institutions in South Africa is a fairly new discipline and has been the subject of minimal academic advancement (Delmestri *et al.*, 2015). Conventionally, many higher education institutions in South Africa have been unprogressive in terms of marketing themselves to potential students (Beneke, 2011). The key reason for this is found

in their heritage. Many higher education institutions “operated in a protected and regulated market under the apartheid regime” (Beneke, 2011).

Beneke (2011) argued that there is much scope for evaluating marketing in higher education in South Africa and therefore many benefits exist for those fearless enough to advance within this field. The practice of higher education marketing in South Africa is a complicated problem with denotations of marketing in the field differing substantially.

Many institutions in higher education are likely to be of the opinion that they are exercising real marketing and adopting business principles, when it is actually thought that they are “falling short of the mark” (Beneke, 2011).

2.12. SUMMARY

Education systems play a vital role in advancing economic growth and employment, social continuity, citizenship, identity, equal opportunity and social acceptance. Therefore, this chapter introduced the concept of higher education and the challenges facing higher education globally and in South Africa. This comprised a review of the current management and leadership skills as well as those that are required to address the challenges and to advance university rankings within the higher education sector. Thereafter the concept of branding was discussed, including branding and marketing within a higher education context. This served as an impetus towards establishing how branding and marketing principles can aid in achieving the intended outcomes that higher education institutions seek.

A review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of academic research of higher education branding within South Africa. It also revealed that branding and marketing within higher education institutions in South Africa are not as progressive as they could be in relation to the corporate branding and marketing of business organisations. Based on this, the researcher conducted further research to determine how internal stakeholders (students) consider the value of a university brand, the methodology of which is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Substantial empirical studies have been undertaken concerning branding in higher education. However, in South Africa there are minimal studies that discuss branding in higher education institutions – as was evident from the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. Hence, the researcher deemed it necessary to conduct further research to assess the value of a university brand in South Africa.

This chapter provides an overview of UKZN as a higher education institution, followed by the research methods undertaken for the study. The aim and objectives of this study are an introductory indication of the type of research methods suitable for this study. Thereafter, the data collection strategies and data analysis approaches undertaken for this study are presented.

3.2. OVERVIEW OF UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (UKZN)

3.2.1. History

The University of KwaZulu-Natal was established on 1 January 2004 as a culmination of the merger between the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville. The current university combines the rich histories of both the foregoing Universities (UKZN, 2016a).

The University of Durban-Westville was formed in the 1960s as the University College for Indians on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay. The numbers of scholars all through the 1960s were low as a consequence of the Congress Alliances' policy of ostracising apartheid systems. In the 1980s this policy allowed for the scheme of "education under protest" which pursued to reorganise apartheid establishments into places of struggle. The number of students expanded exponentially and in 1971, the College was accorded University ranking. The subsequent year, the newly-titled University of Durban-Westville (UDW) relocated into its contemporary campus in Westville and was a place of paramount anti-apartheid struggle. In 1984, UDW became independent by allowing access to scholars across all race ethnicities (UKZN, 2016a).

Established in 1910, the Natal University College (NUC) in Pietermaritzburg and the University of Natal was accorded autonomous university standing in 1949 due to the advanced expansion in the number of students, its extensive selection of curriculum and its accomplishments in and possibilities for research (UKZN, 2016a). The NUC, at this time, was already a multi-campus establishment, expanding to Durban after World War 1. The distinguishable Howard College establishment was opened in 1931. In Pietermaritzburg, in 1946, the Department of Agriculture was opened. A School of Medicine for African, Indian and Coloured students was opened in Durban in 1947 (UKZN, 2016a).

Both the KwaZulu-Natal universities were amidst the initial group of establishments in South Africa to amalgamate in 2004 conforming to the government's higher educational reconstruction strategies (UKZN, 2016a).

3.2.2. Organisational structure

Today the university is structured around four colleges comprising of 19 schools. The colleges are led by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of College, and the schools are led by a Dean and Head of School (UKZN, 2016b).

The institutional framework as an entirety is established by the vision, mission and goals of the university, planned to ensure the systematic and unsegregated management and administration of a sizeable and multiplex institution (UKZN, 2016b).

3.2.3. University campuses

UKZN comprises five campuses across the KwaZulu-Natal province, as outlined below.

3.2.3.1. Edgewood

The Edgewood campus situated in Pinetown is the University's central location for teacher education. The school offers university degrees in a variety of fields in education, conducts research and consulting and provides beginning and in-service teacher education (UKZN, 2016c).

3.2.3.2. Howard College

The Howard College Campus presently offers a comprehensive variety of degree options in the fields of Science (including Geography and Environmental disciplines), Engineering,

Law, Management Studies, Humanities (including Music) and Social Sciences (including Social Work) as well as Architecture and Nursing (UKZN, 2016c).

3.2.3.3. Medical School

The Medical School was awarded the agreement of former president Nelson Mandela, to affiliate his name to the school, which is now known as the Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela School of Medicine. The Doris Duke Medical Research Institute was established in July 2003 to educate and train a new generation of clinical researchers, develop the clinical research infrastructure in KwaZulu-Natal, and promote associations between research groups working on similar projects in South Africa and other countries (UKZN, 2016c).

3.2.3.4. Pietermaritzburg

The campus provides a variety of innovative academic programmes in the areas of Science and Agriculture, Education, Law, Human and Management Sciences, Agriculture, Theology and Fine Art (UKZN, 2016c).

3.2.3.5. Westville

The campus offers programmes in Science, Engineering, Law, Commerce and Management, Humanities, Social Sciences and Health Sciences. The Westville campus is the home of Commerce and Management fields and certain Health Sciences (UKZN, 2016c).

3.3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of a study are crucial characteristics of the study as they determine the extent, range and direction of the study. The aim of a study indicates what the research aspires to accomplish while the objectives are obtained from the aim. The study outlines how the objectives will accomplish the aim. The following sections describe the aim and objectives of this study.

3.3.1. Aim

A university with a well-respected brand has a great advantage; however, it requires more than a recognisable logo and slogan to stand out from the rest. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has been subjected to numerous occurrences and negative influences such as new leadership, student protest actions and unrest. As a result, the UKZN brand has been the subject of negative scrutiny and criticism by students, parents, the media and various

stakeholders. Student enrolment determinants are parents, educators, schools, various role models and stakeholders. These determinants have an impact on the type of students applying for enrolment, as well as student expectations and attitudes after enrolment at UKZN.

The aim of this study was to determine how the UKZN brand can be improved upon.

3.3.2. Objectives

- To identify the factors that contribute to the student perceptions of the UKZN brand.
- To understand the students' rationale for enrolment at UKZN.
- To establish the students' expectations of UKZN's performance.
- To establish the students' perceptions regarding the negative publicity, student protest actions and unrest experienced by UKZN.
- To determine the students' attitudes and feelings towards UKZN.

3.4. TYPE OF STUDY

Taneja, Taneja and Gupta (2011) identified three types of research design and stated that research design is a representation that functions as a yardstick for collecting and analysing data. The three types of research are exploratory, descriptive and causal (explanatory) research. Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that exploratory research is undertaken in new fields of inquiry, where the research outcomes are to determine the extent of the specific problem, behaviour or phenomenon, to create inceptive ideas about that phenomenon, or to assess the practicality of pursuing a more substantial study regarding that phenomenon. Descriptive research is aimed at establishing meticulous observations and comprehensive documentation of a phenomenon of notice (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Whilst descriptive studies analyse the what, when and where of a phenomenon, explanatory studies (causal research) pursue solutions to why and how kinds of questions (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2010) stated that explanatory research is the only research that determines cause and effect relationships. This study was exploratory in nature as it aimed at identifying, exploring and understanding student perceptions of the UKZN brand and their perceptions on how the brand can be improved. The type of study is an important factor in establishing the approach that has to be used.

3.5. APPROACH

Nguyen Thi Bich and Balami (2011) stated that quantitative and qualitative methods are the two types of research methods used for data collection. Quantitative methods focus on analysing current theories established on quantification while qualitative methods focus on analysing existing theories built on understanding and observation (Nguyen Thi Bich & Balami, 2011). Taneja *et al.* (2011) stated that the criteria for classifying a study as quantitative or qualitative is based on whether that study used collected data in the type of numbers (quantitative) and testing the data by utilising statistical methods, or qualitative methods which is collected data in the type of text, sounds or images (qualitative) extracted from interviews, observations or documentary verification and testing the data by utilising qualitative methods.

The selection of undertaking a quantitative or qualitative study is determined by whether the study is exploratory or descriptive in nature (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). This study was exploratory in nature as outlined in Section 3.4 above, with data derived from media reports and from students across the five campuses at UKZN. Therefore, a qualitative approach was selected to determine the student perceptions of the UKZN brand.

3.6. SAMPLING

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2013) stated that the ability to acquire data from a subset or a smaller group of the total population in such a way that the knowledge obtained is representative of the total population under study is known as a sample. Sampling is a statistical method of adopting a subset (called a sample) of a population of interest for reasons of creating observations and statistical conclusions regarding that population (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Thus it is important to establish the reasons for requiring a sample.

3.6.1. The need for sampling

Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that it is exceptionally significant to select a sample that is honestly representative of the population so that the conclusions obtained from the sample can be generalised back to the population of concern. In research exploration, which comprises various hundreds and thousands of elements, it would be reasonably impractical to obtain data from or analyse data from every element (Sekaran & Bougie 2013). Cohen *et al.* (2013) stated that influences such as time, accessibility and expenditure impede researchers from acquiring information from the entire population. Sekaran and Bougie

(2013) concurred that cost, time and alternative human resources prohibit the study of the whole population. Also, more valid results are likely to be generated because of minimised tiredness and lesser errors by the use of a sample instead of the whole population for gathering data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

3.6.2. Sampling design

According to Cohen *et al.* (2013), sampling is classified into probability and non-probability techniques.

Figure 3.1 depicts the commonly adopted sampling methods.

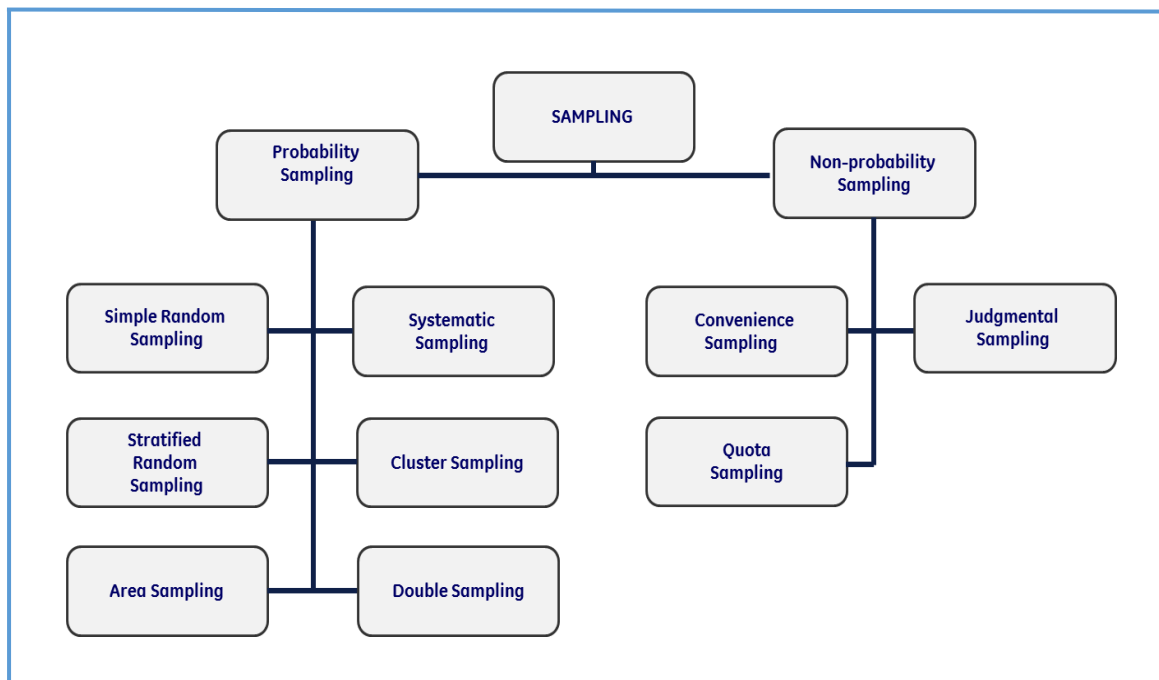


Figure 3.1: Common sampling methods

Source: Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. 2013. *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach*. Wiley, Chichester.

Probability and non-probability sampling are additionally classified into significant subgroups as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Probability sampling obtains representativeness of the greater population and is especially useful in studies which make generalisations (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, non-probability sampling endeavours to represent only a specifically mentioned group of the greater population (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Qualitative studies lean toward a focus of a smaller number of observations and data sources which are either the populace, occurrences or paperwork and are regarded to be rich in data, exemplary for study

and for them to be examined thoroughly (Cane & Kritzer, 2010). Therefore non-probability sampling, also referred to as convenience sampling, was selected for this study.

Figure 3.1 depicts that convenience sampling, judgement sampling and quota sampling are non-probability sampling techniques. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) stated that convenience sampling is the gathering of data from individuals in the population who are conveniently accessible to impart it. Cohen *et al.* (2013) stated that convenience sampling does not pursue to generalise about the greater population since it does not represent any group except from itself. Judgement sampling entails the selection of subjects who are in the ideal position to supply the data required or who are most favourably situated, and hence judgement sampling is utilised when a restricted number or class of individuals has the data that is needed (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Quota sampling aims to represent notable attributes of the greater population (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Sekaran and Bougie (2013) stated that quota sampling designs establish that specific groups are sufficiently represented in the research through the allotment of a quota. A description of the population is required to define the target population.

3.6.3. Description of the population

Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that the target population consists of individuals or items with characteristics of interest in the study. The population of interest for this study comprised all the students from each campus at UKZN. The campuses are Edgewood, Howard, Medical School, Westville and Pietermaritzburg. Therefore all registered students at UKZN were population elements for this study. Determining a suitable sampling frame would prove to be useful in selecting a sample for the study.

3.6.4. Sampling frame and sampling size

Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that the sampling frame is an attainable constituent of the target population from where a sample could be selected, commonly a list. Sampling frames may not necessarily represent the greater population and hence conclusions obtained from such samples may not be generalisable to the population (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The sampling frame for this study was a convenience sample of 12 students from each of the five campuses at UKZN. It was imperative that all race groups at UKZN were represented; hence the 12 students at each campus encompassed three Black, three Coloured, three Indian and three

White students who were of any gender, age and studying towards any discipline at the university.

3.7. DATA COLLECTION

Cohen *et al.* (2013) stated that there are numerous sorts of data collection techniques that can be used for gathering information. Data can be derived from primary or secondary sources. Primary data is information that is acquired directly by the researcher for the intended purpose of study and which can be obtained from focus groups, individuals or panels of participants. In addition, the researcher can make use of research tools such as questionnaires, interviews or observations (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The data gathered for this study is primary data and the study adopted a survey research strategy. In exploratory studies, interviews are a significant data gathering technique (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Since this study was exploratory in nature, interviews were selected as the data gathering technique.

3.7.1. Interviews

Interviews are an adaptable instrument for gathering data as they enable a multi-sensory medium of communication to be used (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Rowley (2012) identified that the three major types of interviews are unstructured, structured and semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews assist interviewers who do not possess an organised flow of questions for the participants and therefore require the participants to provide the interviewer with information (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Structured interviews are carried out when the researcher is aware of the data that is required for the intended study and administers the interview with a listing of prearranged questions for the participants (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Rowley (2012) stated that semi-structured interviews are frequently utilised. It is an integration of unstructured and structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews consist of a number of differing questions which involve probing by the researcher whilst remaining flexible for the ease of the participant (Rowley, 2012). The researcher makes use of an interview schedule which serves as a guide in administering the questions whilst most of the questions are open-ended rather than closed (Cane & Kritzer, 2012).

A semi-structured interview in the form of an interview schedule (Appendix 3) was used as the data collection instrument for this study. A face-to-face method was conducted for interviewing each participant. Since there was inadequate information available on the value

of the UKZN brand, the advantage of using an interview schedule is that limited prior knowledge is not needed in comparison to creating a well-formulated questionnaire. Using semi-structured interviews was useful for the researcher in achieving the objectives of this study which focused on discerning the attitudes, opinions, experiences, processes and the values of students (the participants).

3.7.2. Interview design

The funnelling technique was used to construct the questions and the interview schedule (Appendix 3). The introductory questions were open-ended, seeking an extensive understanding of the student perceptions of the UKZN brand. Thereafter, the questions were more concentrated with regard to the university meeting the students' needs and then understanding the student protest action. Finally, questions were incorporated on the general awareness of the university, what it has to offer students, and what improvements are necessary. These questions were formulated to be unbiased questions and not to be loaded questions. Loaded questions are inclined to influence the responses from participants.

The interviewer sourced participants mainly from the libraries, local area networks (LANs), study rooms and cafeterias. The participants had the opportunity of viewing the interview schedule before participating in the interview and could thus choose not to participate in the interview if they felt uncomfortable about providing responses to the questions. The average time of each interview was fifteen minutes.

3.7.3. Validity and reliability

Cane and Kritzer (2012) stated that validity is an evaluation of the nature in which the researcher has produced a precise representation of the phenomenon whilst reliability refers to the nature of the evaluation tool producing similar information if it were conducted by someone else at another time. Validity implies accuracy and reliability is associated with consistency (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Validity and reliability in qualitative research vary to that of quantitative studies (Cohen *et al.*, 2013).

Cohen *et al.* (2013) stated that one of the ways in which interview validation can be done is by comparing it to another interview evaluation that has displayed validity. They further stated that a practical way to establish validity in interviews is to significantly limit the amount of bias. Content validity is a measure of how good "a set of scale items matches with a relevant content domain of the construct that it is trying to measure" (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Face validity which is a subtype of content validity was the method used to determine the validity of this technique. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2012), face validity specifies that the objects which are meant to assess concepts on the surface are to be evaluated by the tool. A review of the questions in the interview schedule verifies the face validity of the tool. In qualitative studies, validity signifies that the information gathered indicates authentic outcomes which is internal validity, whilst external validity indicates that outcomes can be generalisable and conveyed to other ideas or notions (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Reliability in interviews can be augmented by attentive piloting of questions, necessary training for interviewers and inter-rater reliability in the answers (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). Bhattacharjee (2012) stated that in qualitative studies, the researcher is the information gathering tool who examines the collected data as well. Therefore, the researcher's secure and dependable information gathering techniques depend on the researcher's training and experience. For this study, secure and dependable data collection was done by conducting semi-structured interviews and using an interview schedule as a stringent guideline. Furthermore, the researcher researched media publications on the current status of the UKZN brand to become conversant with the research topic.

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cohen *et al.* (2013) stated that irrespective of their field of work, the researcher must be considerate of the impact the research has on the respondents. Furthermore, as a duty to the respondents, the researcher must uphold their dignity as human beings. Ethics are prescribed by law and conjectured societal standards (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). For this study, the proper protocols had to be followed. To corroborate that these protocols were being adhered to, the first step was to obtain a gatekeeper letter (Appendix 4) from the Registrar of the university requesting permission for students (the participants) to be interviewed. Thereafter, an ethical clearance application (Appendix 5) was submitted to UKZN to gain approval to conduct this study. During the data collection process, participants were provided information regarding the nature of this study. Further to this, the participants signed an informed consent (Appendix 2) at the onset of the interview process. Permission was requested for the interviews to be voice recorded to aid with the ease of referring back to the data and to serve as an effective means for comprehensive analysis of the information.

3.9. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Sekaran and Bougie (2013) stated that qualitative data analysis is directed at producing accurate conclusions from the information collected in words. Qualitative analysis is substantially reliant on the researcher's systematic and homogenous capabilities and their individual understanding of the societal surroundings. In comparison to this, quantitative analysis focuses on statistics and is impartial from the researcher (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Bin Zakaria, Mohamed Ali, Tarmizi Haron, Marshall-Ponting and Abd Hamid (2013) stated that the challenge in evaluating qualitative research is to establish the understanding and logic of the colossal quantity of data, to decrease the amount of information, identify important patterns and to establish a framework for presenting what the data exhibits. For this study, the data comprised the recorded interviews and specific notes taken during the interview sessions. Computer software, NVIVO, was used to analyse the data from the interviews. NVIVO is significantly beneficial in administering the analysis of interview documentation (Rowley, 2012). The interviews were transcribed and then imported into NVIVO. Each question was auto coded and assigned a node because of the large number of interviews conducted. These nodes were further coded by eliminating the irrelevant information and thereafter rearranged and combined to form themes and categories. The process used to create codes, themes and categories was inductive and deductive.

3.10. SUMMARY

This chapter has entailed a synopsis of the research methodology process adopted for this study. An overview of UKZN was highlighted, followed by the aim and objectives of the study. Thereafter, the qualitative research approach was discussed followed by the sampling techniques adopted for the study. Finally, the data collection strategies were outlined and the chapter concluded with the data analysis process selected. The analysis and discussion of the data collected are explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data collected and a complete presentation of the findings that emanated from the data analysis. The information gathered for this study was done according to the criteria set out in Chapter 3. All the participants agreed to being recorded during the interview process. The interviews were conducted in an adaptable and communicative approach which enabled participants to express their views and opinions openly. The feedback from the participants was their own individual experiences, perspectives and ideas. The interviews were transcribed and formulated for the analysis and the presentation of the findings. Interpretation, conclusion and theorisation have been used to present the results of the findings.

4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The impetus for this section is to support the credibility and quality of the participants in the sample utilised. This is conducted by presenting the experiences and knowledge of the participants interviewed.

The participants consisted of 12 students per campus, namely the Edgewood, Medical School, Howard, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses. In totality, 60 students with an equal representation of the racial groups across all five campuses of UKZN were interviewed. The fields of study of the students as well as their year of study (which ranged from first year undergraduate students to final year Master's students) varied; however, they all shared the common characteristic of being a UKZN student and therefore having the ability to provide first-hand experience and knowledge of their perceptions and experiences of the UKZN brand.

From the above description, it is apparent that the participants were positioned to provide pertinent, insightful and rich information for this study.

4.3. DATA ANALYSIS

After the data that had been gathered was analysed, themes and categories were identified which resulted in structured data that was used in the formulation of the presentation of the

results. Direct quotations from respondents were included to provide evidence and coherence to reinforce the findings of the data analysis process. In this chapter, each objective is provided with a description of the data, followed by the interpretation and conclusion from the results of the data analysis.

4.3.1. Objective One: To identify the factors that contribute to the student perceptions of the UKZN brand

The first objective aimed to provide an understanding of how the participants perceive the UKZN brand, how the UKZN brand compares to other university brands and the factors that contribute to the UKZN brand. It is important to understand the views of students in terms of their understanding of what the UKZN brand is which fundamentally sets the tone for the interview. Participants provided an overview of their perceptions of the UKZN brand, followed by comparisons to other university brands and thereafter stating the factors they believe contribute to the UKZN brand. A funnel approach was undertaken for this objective.

4.3.1.1. Question 1: What is your perception of the UKZN brand?

A good brand which provides excellent, high quality education, an internationally recognised institution, culturally diverse students, the internal perception versus the external perception of UKZN, good academic support, good facilities and the diverse fields of study available were the significant themes identified in this question. Chapleo (2010) in the literature review stated that the brand of a university is “a manifestation of the institution’s features that distinguish it from others, reflects its capacity to satisfy students’ needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and helps potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions”. This is reflective in the common themes identified in the perceptions held by the participants of UKZN.

Table 4.1: An outline of the participants' perceptions of the UKZN brand

What is your perception of the UKZN brand?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Positive Perception						48
Good brand , international and well-recognised	9	5	8	10	9	41
Excellent quality of education	-	1	1	1	-	3
Cultural diversity	-	1	-	-	1	2
Internal and external UKZN perceptions differ	1	-	-	1	-	2
Negative Perception						9
Not a good brand	1	1	-	-	-	2
Lacks the complete student life experience	-	1	-	-	-	1
High failure rate in the engineering faculty	-	1	-	-	-	1
Inadequate resources, services and facilities	-	1	-	-	-	1
Inefficient administrative staff	-	-	1	-	1	2
Strikes	-	-	1	-	1	2
Neutral Perception						3
Neither a good nor a bad brand	1	1	1	-	-	3

Table 4.1 indicates that a significant majority, that is 48 participants, had a positive perception towards the UKZN brand. Three participants had a neutral perception of UKZN, in that it is neither a good nor a bad brand. Nine participants associated negative attributes with the UKZN brand.

4.3.1.2. Question 2: How does the UKZN brand compare to other university brands?

Participants compared the UKZN brand to the brands of UCT, Wits, Stellenbosch University, and the University of Pretoria (UP), whilst Varsity College and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges were seen as inferior to the UKZN brand.

Table 4.2: Participants' belief of the UKZN brand compared to other higher education institution brands

How does the UKZN brand compare with other university brands?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Similar standards to other universities	4	5	3	9	4	25
No experience/exposure to other universities	2	1	4	-	2	9
Socially/recreationally UKZN does not compare	1	1	-	1	-	3
Lacks facilities, resources and services	4	2	2	2	6	16
Edgewood campus lacks facilities and infrastructure	1	-	-	-	-	1
Has a unique brand compared to other universities	1	-	1	-	-	2
Lacks sport facilities	-	1	-	-	-	1
Evenly represented by student bodies	-	1	-	-	-	1
High focus on student needs	-	1	-	-	-	1
Negative external perception versus a positive internal perception	-	-	1	-	-	1

Table 4.2 outlines the participants' belief of how the UKZN brand compares to other higher education institutions. All the reasons listed above were compared to other institutions, such as UCT, Wits, Stellenbosch and UP, with the exception of the Edgewood campus lacking facilities and infrastructure, which was compared to the other four UKZN campuses. Whilst the majority of participants indicated that they believe UKZN has similar standards to that of the other well-recognised university brands around the country, a significant number of participants believe that UKZN lacks facilities, resources and services, when compared to those of the well-recognised universities. Another important factor expressed by many students is the lack of social and recreational activities at UKZN. They indicated that the other well-recognised institutions around the country encompass a complete student life and that students are not exposed only to academics but also to social, sport and other recreational programmes. The following are quotations of participants from each of the UKZN campuses on their perception of the UKZN brand compared to other universities:

UKZN Howard participant: UKZN is one of the top universities in the country and is on the same level as Wits and UCT but I don't think that the brand is

well known and known for its worth. In this sense it is lacking compared to other universities.

UKZN Medical School participant: I don't think people take UKZN students seriously as they would a UCT student even though our curriculum is really good. All our degrees are accredited and are similar to that of UCT but people still think less of UKZN.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: There is a very high standard of learning and education at UKZN, only because of the name which has been perceived negatively, do students choose other universities instead of UKZN. It is of a similar level to the likes of UCT or Wits.

UKZN Westville participant: In KZN, it's the highest brand with a higher level of education than other institutions in KZN. Around the country I have heard that UCT and Wits have a higher level of education and are more internationally recognised.

UKZN Edgewood participant: It isn't a very social place. Other universities focus on a better student life for students and it isn't only about studying but the entire university experience. UKZN is good academically but there is no social interaction amongst students.

Question: 3: What factors do you believe contribute to UKZN's brand?

Participants provided their reasons, thoughts, beliefs and experiences regarding the factors that have made the UKZN brand what it is today.

Table 4.3: Overview of the factors participants believe contribute to the brand of UKZN

What factors do you believe contribute to UKZN's brand?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville
Communication between students, the SRC and management	✓	-	✓	-	-
Good lecturers, academic and support teams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good student integration and support systems amongst students	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Inadequate resources, services and facilities	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Wide variety of study choices and disciplines	✓	✓	-	-	✓
High standard of academic education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cultural diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strikes	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Affordability	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Scholarships and loans provided for disadvantaged students	-	✓	✓	-	-
Language barrier amongst lecturers	-	✓	-	✓	-
Excellent research accomplishments	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good services, facilities and resources	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of parking space	-	-	-	-	✓
Inadequate residence on campus	-	-	✓	-	-
Uneven representation of racial groups	-	-	-	✓	-
Provide more funding for the university	-	-	-	✓	-
Students affect the brand negatively	-	-	-	✓	-

Table 4.3 indicates the participants' views on the factors that contribute to the UKZN brand.

From the table it is clear that participants' responses reflect that all campuses across UKZN consist of good lecturers, academic and support teams, a high standard of academic education, and cultural diversity. This was followed by four out of five campuses experiencing good student integration and support systems amongst students, strikes, an excellent standard of academic education and good services, facilities and resources.

The aim of objective one was to identify the factors that contribute to the students' perceptions of the UKZN brand. Figure 4.1 illustrates the common factors identified in objective one.



The word cloud overview indicates that the vast majority of students across the five UKZN campuses view the UKZN brand as a good brand and that the students, lecturers, staff and the academic education are some of the factors that greatly contribute to the brand. One of the key points stated by a number of participants was that the external perception of UKZN differs greatly from the internal perception and that the media portrays UKZN negatively which is spread via word of mouth. The positive aspects of UKZN are generally not publicised. The students' experiences at UKZN and all that it offers and what is gained there are invaluable and an asset in terms of bettering their lives and for their future. Further to this, Table 4.3 above provides an informative depiction of the factors identified by the participants of UKZN as contributors to the UKZN brand.

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action affected the brand negatively and in many instances overshadowed the other areas of excellence that UKZN produces.

The following quotes represent the participants' perceptions of the factors that contribute to the UKZN brand:

UKZN Edgewood participant: Only students who want to become teachers study here, it is a place where we can all come together, connect to and support each other.

UKZN Howard participant: Culture, sports, academic staff, the history of UKZN and how everything comes together makes it what it is.

UKZN Medical School participant: The students cause the university to be viewed negatively but I don't believe that UKZN is a bad university. People associate UKZN to violent strikes and protest action and not necessarily with the academic excellence that it has.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: Many high achievers are from UKZN. Students uphold themselves. But some are disrespectful, have no ethics and morals and do not uphold the law. It is the students that affect the brand negatively.

UKZN Westville participant: The level of education from the leaders, lecturers and heads of schools are good. The students make the brand because without the students the university would not be a brand. Past alumni also make the brand with regard to research and their masters and doctoral studies.

4.3.2. Objective Two: To understand the students' rationale for enrolment at UKZN

The second objective for this study was to establish the reasons for students choosing UKZN as their preferred institution for study. It is imperative to determine these reasons in order to understand if the current brand fulfils its role of attracting potential students and retaining students currently enrolled at UKZN.

4.3.2.1. Question 4: How did UKZN's brand/branding influence your choice of institution?

In this question, participants identified their reasons for choosing UKZN as their preferred higher education institution.



Figure 4.2: Word cloud overview of the students' reasons for enrolment at UKZN

4.3.2.2. Discussion of Objective Two

The common themes were that UKZN is close to home for 28 of the participants and 17 participants chose UKZN because of the excellent quality of academic education. All the participants who chose UKZN because it was close to home appreciated that they had the support of their families and friends, indicating that the transition from high school to university was a challenging and difficult change and living at home made it easier to cope with adjusting to life as a university student. Also, in terms of affordability and resources, choosing UKZN because it is close to home was an efficient means of receiving an excellent education without the imposition of additional financial burden to their families or themselves.

The second most common reason students chose UKZN was the excellent quality and standard of academic education provided at this institution. Prior to enrolment, potential students were aware of the standard of academic excellence UKZN holds, and hence the reason for their choice. Word of mouth amongst learners and educators in high school

contributed to students becoming knowledgeable about UKZN's academic standing. More importantly, however, is that many students had older siblings and parents who are UKZN alumni which made it an obvious choice and an important contributor in creating awareness in terms of the academic excellence UKZN is capable of providing to students. The quality and effectiveness of the curriculum, lecturers, the facilities and resources were constantly reiterated by the participants.

For six students, accessibility was also a factor; however, more significantly for the three White medical school students who did not reside in KwaZulu-Natal but were accepted to study only at UKZN although they had applied to all the well-recognised universities across the country. These students were extremely thankful and happy that UKZN had given them the opportunity to pursue their dreams of studying towards medicine. However, they were of the opinion that the White minority of students are underrepresented, as are the Indian and Coloured groups.

Five participants chose UKZN because it is an internationally and well-recognised higher education institution and the remaining participants cited affordability and sporting opportunities as the determinants for choosing UKZN.

UKZN Edgewood participant: When I found out that I got accepted to study at UKZN I was in awe and could not believe that I got accepted. It was something big for me, my family and my community. If you study at UKZN, this means something really big. In my community I am a role model.

UKZN Howard participant: It is close to home, affordability, accessibility and the quality of education.

UKZN Medical School participant: It didn't. UKZN was the only one who accepted me to study medicine throughout the entire country.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: It is highly recognised internationally. It is a well-established university with high quality education.

UKZN Westville participant: It was close to home and at high school I was made aware that it was a good university with good lecturers and tutorials and that I will be able to get a good education.

4.3.3. Objective Three: To establish the students' expectations of UKZN's performance

The third objective for this study was to identify if UKZN meets the students' expectations in terms of its performance as a higher education institution. Participants indicated what their needs were, whether these needs are being met or not and subsequently how this has impacted on their perception of the brand. Achieving objective three has a direct link to objective two in terms of participants choosing UKZN as their preferred institution.

4.3.3.1. Question 5: What are your needs as a student?

The themes that emanated from this question are outlined in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: An overview of the participants' needs as UKZN students

What are your needs as a student?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville
Campus safety and security	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Excellent quality of academic education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social and recreational facilities and interaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good lecturers, support and academic staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good facilities and resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Infrastructure upgrade and maintenance	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Adequate computer LANS and Wi-Fi facilities	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Improvement and maintenance of the library system	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Maintenance of restroom facilities	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Clean campus environment	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Effective SRC	-	✓	✓	✓	-
Larger lecture rooms	✓	✓	-	-	✓
Parking facilities	-	-	✓	-	✓
Good cafeterias	-	✓	✓	-	-
More residences on campus	✓	-	-	✓	-
Provide more funding, scholarships and bursaries	✓	-	✓	-	-

Table 4.4 clearly indicates the most common and significant needs required by all participants across all the campuses were campus safety and security; excellent quality of academic education; social and recreational facilities and interaction; support and academic staff; good lecturers and good facilities and resources. It is important to emphasise that whilst many participants, if not all of them, had more than just one need requirement, a number of these needs were common needs amongst participants. Further to this, the needs of participants varied according to their own perception of importance. Participants quoted the following as their important needs:

UKZN Edgewood participant: Insufficient computer LANS, there isn't enough for all students. More lecture rooms are needed, many rooms cannot accommodate all the students who end up standing in class. This is not conducive to learning. Building structures are old. They need to be upgraded and maintained. The library is old and the Opec system needs to be improved, it does not work effectively. Competent lecturers are required to reduce the number of contract staff who are not effective. Contract staff are said to be overworked and under remunerated and therefore they do not perform at their best. At res there needs to be proper facilities such as Wi-Fi, libraries, photocopy machines and LANS.

UKZN Howard participant: Certain lecturers don't communicate and teach well. There is a language barrier amongst some lecturers and tutors, especially in English and we are unable to understand. Restroom facilities are not cleaned most of the time and is terribly unhygienic.

UKZN Medical School participant: Notes, textbooks, lecturers. Printing credit machines do not work. Parking is a major problem, we pay for parking discs but the lecturers and nurses continuously use the student parking resulting in students parking outside the campus. Students end up being fined and a third year student was knocked in front of the campus in a hit and run accident. Umbilo traffic is a serious problem. Safety and security in general, students reported muggings around campus. The SRC needs to take action in resolving the parking problem as well as the safety and security on campus and its parameters.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: Helpful and supportive counselling and mentoring, great library and the facilities and resources are good. There is a language barrier amongst lecturers, I am unable to understand some of them.

UKZN Westville participant: Sufficient resources and facilities available to complete my studies and to succeed.

4.3.3.2. Question 6a: Are your needs being met at UKZN?

Participants indicated their needs listed in Table 4.4 (at Question 5) were being fulfilled.

Table 4.5: An overview of the number of students whose needs are met

Are your needs being met at UKZN?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Yes	4	4	-	2	11	21
Yes, to an extent	7	8	12	10	1	38
No	1	-	-	-	-	1

The majority of the participants (38) indicated that their needs are being met to an extent, followed by 21 participants stating yes, that their needs are being met, and one participant at UKZN Edgewood stated no, that none of their needs are being met. Students' needs being met is very important and has a direct impact with regard to their performance as students, their perception of the brand and their attitudes and feelings towards UKZN.

UKZN Edgewood participant: Yes, they are trying their best. It cannot be done overnight but I think step by step it will be done.

UKZN Howard participant: Academically yes, the academic structure is very strong and organised and socially my needs are not met. I require more social interaction on campus and larger cafeterias.

UKZN Medical School participant: Yes, some of them such as facilities, study rooms, LANS, the library, clinics for healthcare, safety and security is provided

on campus. Needs not being met are Wi-Fi in residences, laptops for students and to ensure buses run after hours to residences.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: To an extent they are. There is unfairness in the system with regard to admittance into residence. Students with good results who are far from home are unable to receive residence. However students who are not deserving and who do not meet the requirements qualify for residence. There seems to be a disconnect here.

UKZN Westville participant: Yes to an extent. Lecturers and facilities are being met but the admin staff are not helpful.

4.3.3.3. Question 6b: How does this affect your perception of UKZN's brand?

Table 4.6: An outline of students' perceptions based on their needs being met

How does this affect your perception of the brand?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Good	7	7	4	4	9	30
Not so good	3	3	5	6	1	18
No effect	2	2	3	2	2	9

The general theme that emerged from this question was that 39 participants still maintained a good perception of the brand, whilst 18 participants had a negative perception and nine participants stated that they were not affected.

4.3.3.4. Discussion of Objective Three

In terms of the student needs, the prevailing themes that were present amongst all participants across the campuses were campus safety and security; excellent quality of academic education; social and recreational facilities and interaction; good lecturers, support and academic staff and good facilities and resources, followed by more needs required by participants; however, it is not common across all campuses but still critically important.

In terms of safety and security on campus, many participants were concerned about this factor especially during the protest action when some of the striking students forced students to be a part of the strike action or threatened to remove them from lectures. This resulted in students being left to feel vulnerable, unsafe and afraid. Also for students who live in campus residence, cases of muggings have occurred, where there isn't sufficient security presence. Another need stated by participants was the lack of social and recreational facilities and interaction at UKZN. In comparison to other universities, UKZN students do not have the complete student experience; they feel that they only have experience of the academic side of a higher education institution. In the literature review, Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2013) argued that social and educational amenities are important elements for satisfying students in higher education institutions.

Good lecturers, support and academic staff and good facilities and resources were needs which were generally met; however, the language of some lecturers, specifically from countries in Africa posed a problem for many participants in trying to decipher and understand the lectures. Punctuality of lecturers was another issue mentioned as well as some lecturers who are not technology savvy and lack the general basics of operating technology in lectures which results in lost lecture time. Administrative staff pose a massive challenge for students as students feel that the staff do not respect them, are not helpful and students are often sent to a number of places before their issue is resolved. Participants indicated that the administrative staff have an extremely bad attitude and there is a lack of empathy and assistance for students. This behaviour of the administrative staff is prevalent across all UKZN campuses.

The facilities, resources and services on campus were acknowledged as good but some participants indicated minor instances when the air conditioning did not work, which made lectures uncomfortable. Space in lecture rooms was indicated as a major concern for a number of participants as many students are left to stand or sit on the floor during lectures. Another serious issue mentioned by participants was the use of the computer LANS as the space in these LANS is inadequate and not able to cater for every student. At the Edgewood campus, a number of the participants were unhappy with the infrastructure and buildings. They stated that the campus environment lacks appeal and is depressing, it is not a place they look forward to seeing every day. Participants indicated restroom facilities are unacceptably

unhygienic and in an extremely poor condition. Participants indicated that the general upkeep of the campuses was lacking.

Increased parking facilities and good cafeterias are required and the other four campuses would like a cafeteria similar to that at Westville campus. Other requirements listed by the participants were for the library system to be improved and in working order; for an effective Student Representative Council to support and assist students; for more accommodation in campus residences; for an overall clean campus environment' and to provide more funding, scholarships and bursaries for students.

Thirty-eight participants stated that their needs mentioned have been met to an extent, while 28 stated their needs are indeed being met and just one participant stated that their needs have not been met. Despite the concerns of participants and their needs, 30 participants said that they still have a good perception of the UKZN brand, while 18 participants do not have a good perception of the brand and said that that what they had expected from the university to what they are actually receiving is disappointing. Nine participants stated that whether their needs are being met or not does not have an effect on their perception of the brand. They are at UKZN to study and gain an education irrespective of the challenges.

4.3.4. Objective Four: To establish the students' perceptions regarding student protest actions and unrest

The fourth objective of this study was to determine the students' understanding and feelings towards the strikes and protest action at UKZN. The student protest action and unrest has had a damaging effect on the UKZN brand.

4.3.4.1. Question 7a: Before joining UKZN were you aware of student unrest at the university?

The impact of strikes, protest action and student unrest had a significant impact on students who study at UKZN and an even more significant impact on the university in terms of students choosing the best university and the university attracting the best students.

Table 4.7: An overview of participants' awareness of the student unrest before joining UKZN

Before joining UKZN were you aware of the student unrest at the university?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Yes	7	10	6	10	8	41
No	5	2	6	2	4	19

Table 4.7 illustrates that 41 participants were aware of the student unrest at UKZN prior to them joining the university, and they stated that they felt certain assurance and confidence in the brand for them to consider it as a place of learning. Nineteen participants were not aware of student unrest taking place at UKZN prior to enrolment at the university.

4.3.4.2. Question 7b: How did the student unrest affect your perception of the brand?

This question identified the effects of student unrest on the participants' perception of the UKZN brand prior to them joining the university.

Table 4.8: Participants' perceptions of the effect of student unrest on the UKZN brand

How did that affect your perception of the brand?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Positively affected	-	1	1	2	4	8
Negatively affected	4	3	7	4	3	21
No effect	8	8	4	6	5	31

Table 4.8 above shows that 31 participants indicated that the student unrest had no effect on their perception of the brand, while 21 participants stated that they were negatively affected by the student unrest and viewed the UKZN brand to be negative. Eight participants viewed the strikes and protest action as a positive aspect in terms of change taking place and for

students taking a stand for what they believed in; however, none of these students condoned any sort of violence associated with the student unrest.

UKZN Edgewood participant: I felt disappointed towards the university because we pay a lot of money to receive a good education. We are forced out of class. It is a good and not so good situation because to a point we understand that they are fighting for other students as well.

UKZN Howard participant: It didn't really affect my perception, it was not a reflection of the university but the students and it was their way of asking for what they wanted.

UKZN Medical School participant: Impacted negatively as we lost time, tests got moved and so did the holidays. I had to travel up and down between Cape Town and Durban. Safety during the strikes were worrying as we were forced to join in on the strikes and cause damage to cars.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: I did not view the university in the same light as previously. But when I got here I realised the students were fighting for a cause and it was the only way to be heard. The SRC doesn't promote violence, always peaceful protests. It is some of the students that take it to extremity.

UKZN Westville participant: It has a negative effect. For me, I wonder what is being done by the university to stop and limit the number of strikes and protests. Because this impacts everything from lectures, tests, exams, traffic and safety on campus.

4.3.4.3. Discussion of Objective Four

Striking in a democratic South Africa has become a common medium of fighting for a cause that one believes in. South African History Online (2015) stated that since democracy, universities have been experiencing protest action since 2009. UKZN has had its fair share of strikes and protest action which has been widely publicised in the media. Considering these points, a staggering 42 participants were aware of the student unrest but still chose to attend UKZN. Nineteen participants indicated that they were not aware of the student unrest.

Thirty-one participants did not have their perception altered by the student unrest whilst eight participants saw the value in strikes, claiming that strikes were positive in bringing about change and transformation and creating better opportunities for students. This perception of the participants is consistent with the findings of Chetty and Knaus (2016) who stated that universities and academics should be open to these protest actions and the students who make the effort to effect change as it aims to challenge the racial and class segregation in South Africa.

Twenty-one participants were negatively affected, they felt afraid, violated in some instances and were unhappy about losing time in class, about tests and examinations being pushed out as well as their vacation time. Of these, the major concern was that UKZN could be headed towards a downward spiral affecting their standard of education and more importantly for prospective employers to view the university negatively and associate all students with strikes and protest action.

4.3.5. Objective Five: To determine the students' attitudes and feelings towards UKZN

The final objective of this study was to establish the attitudes and feelings of the students towards UKZN. The aim of this objective was to discern the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions, and experiences of the participants which would provide significant and insightful data on the suggestions and recommendations that could lead to the improvement of the UKZN brand.

4.3.5.1. Question 8: What is your attitude towards UKZN?

Table 4.9 indicates the three common attitudes towards UKZN experienced by participants.

Table 4.9: An overview of participants' attitudes towards UKZN

What is your attitude towards UKZN?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Good, positive attitude	12	8	8	12	11	51
A do not care attitude	-	2	1	-	-	3
Neutral attitude	-	2	3	-	1	6

Table 4.9 highlights that 51 participants had a good and positive attitude towards UKZN while six participants had a neutral attitude towards UKZN. Three participants had a ‘do not care’ attitude in that they are only at UKZN to achieve their degree and then leave.

4.3.5.2. Question 9: Would you recommend UKZN to others? Explain?

In this question, participants indicated their views on recommending UKZN to other potential students.

Table 4.10: Overview of students recommending UKZN to others

Would you recommend UKZN to others? Explain?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Yes	10	11	9	12	11	53
No	2	1	3	-	1	7

Fifty-three participants stated that they would recommend UKZN to others while only seven participants stated that they would not recommend UKZN to others. Wilkins and Balakrishnan (2013) found that student fulfilment is an important influence of student loyalty and it is this loyalty that fosters favourable word of mouth and student engagement and collaboration.

The following were the common reasons expressed by participants as to why they would recommend UKZN to others:

- Good student support structure
- UKZN is a good institution
- Internationally and well-recognised
- A good environment in which to study
- Affordability
- Excellent quality of academic education
- Good facilities and resources.

The following were the reasons why participants would not recommend UKZN to others:

- The engineering curriculum at Howard is different from other universities and there is a high failure rate.
- Dependent on your field of study and how it is rated at UKZN as not all curriculums are the best.
- There are better and more recognised higher education institutions such as Wits University, UCT and UP.

4.3.5.3. *Question 10: If you had the choice to study at another higher education institution, would you leave UKZN? Explain?*

Table 4.11: An overview of the participants' responses of whether they would remain at or leave UKZN

If you had the choice to study at another higher education institution, would you leave UKZN? Explain?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
Yes	3	4	4	7	4	22
No	8	8	7	5	8	36
Not sure	1	-	1	-	-	2

Twenty-two participants indicated that they would leave UKZN whilst 36 participants indicated they would not leave UKZN and two participants were unsure whether they would remain at or leave UKZN.

Participants outlined the following as reasons for not leaving UKZN:

- Familiar, comfortable and accustomed to UKZN
- Close to home
- Support of family
- UKZN is a good university
- Affordability

- Excellent quality of academic education.

The following were the common reasons why participants would leave UKZN:

- The change and experience of studying at another university
- To have a more recognised qualification
- Join an institution that is better than UKZN
- To experience the complete student life with social interaction and activities.

De Lourdes Machado *et al.* (2011) stated that student satisfaction is determined by the students' overall participation and involvement as a customer of a specific institution and not only their experiences in learning and teaching. This statement is reflective of the participants' reasons as to why they would leave UKZN (for not meeting their needs) as well as why they would remain at UKZN (for meeting their needs).

Participants quoted the following points when asked if they would leave UKZN to study at another higher education institution:

UKZN Edgewood participant: No. I feel that there are both advantages and disadvantages here and it depends on the students and what they make of it being here.

UKZN Howard participant: No. I am comfortable here and got used to studying at UKZN quite quickly.

UKZN Medical School participant: Yes, if I had the resources I would leave. I would want to experience the likes of UCT or Wits for better education and for the social activities and interaction. UKZN does not have a student university life.

UKZN Pietermaritzburg participant: Yes. To experience the change of being at another university. If UKZN incorporates a social and recreational program for students then I would stay.

UKZN Westville participant: No, I wouldn't want to leave home. I want the assistance and support of my family so I rather be here at UKZN.

4.3.5.4. Question 11: What makes you a proud UKZN student?

This question aimed to determine why participants are proud to be UKZN students.

Table 4.12: Reasons why participants are proud UKZN students

What makes you a proud UKZN student?	Edgewood	Howard	Medical School	Pietermaritzburg	Westville	Total
The excellent quality of academic education	6	3	5	4	2	19
Being a UKZN student makes me proud	4	5	1	6	6	22
Internationally and well-recognised University	3	-	-	-	-	3
Rugby and Impi are well recognised	1	-	-	1	-	2
Cultural diversity	1	2	-	1	2	6
Excellent UKZN alumni	1	1	1	-	-	3
Nothing	1	1	-	-	2	4

It is evident from Table 4.12 that two common themes are identified. Nineteen participants are proud UKZN students because of the excellent quality of academic education and 22 participants stated just being a UKZN student makes them proud.

4.3.5.5. Question 12: What changes would you make to strengthen UKZN's brand?

The following are the participants' suggestions for the changes they believe would make UKZN a stronger brand:

- Transparency and understanding between UKZN leadership and students.
- Online classes.
- Equal representation of race groups.
- Improvement and maintenance of facilities and resources.
- Residences to be upgraded and maintained as they are unhygienic with dismal conditions.
- Create empowerment groups and organisations such as women empowerment groups.

- For all UKZN campuses to be of the same standard in terms of the resources, services, infrastructure and facilities.
- Building infrastructure, facilities and services to be improved and maintained.
- Competent and quality tutors and lecturers.
- Create a social environment for social interaction for all learners.
- Improve security and maintenance.
- Adequate access to the LANS and libraries.
- Sourcing of new lab equipment as it is outdated and does not function properly.
- Improve the attitude and competencies of the administrative staff.
- Better cafeterias.
- Reinforce the positive side of UKZN in the media.
- Employing someone in a position of authority that can properly represent the students to prevent the strikes from becoming violent and unruly.
- Use an advanced fingerprint system for security purposes, especially in campus residences.
- Lecturers need to learn how to use Moodle and become more technology savvy.
- Provide financial aid to deserving students.
- The rules and regulations should be stricter and reinforced stringently.
- Campaigns and drives should be incorporated on campus to eliminate the litter on campus.
- Ensure the general upkeep of the university is maintained.
- Management needs to improve the slow systems.
- For all cultural and race groups to be well integrated and for all the students to embrace the diversity at UKZN.
- Students should be registered quicker.
- Online academy, Moodle and emails to work efficiently.

The common themes identified in Figure 4.4 was to showcase the positive side of UKZN, the benefits it provides to students, their world class research and the good projects and programmes it accomplishes. Brewer and Zhao (2010) stated that brand awareness is the largest determining criteria for a student to select a university and the brand awareness of the university is considered to be much more important than the costs and location. Participants stated that the media portrays only the negative aspects and events that occur at UKZN and fail to publicise the good that UKZN achieves.

4.3.5.7. Discussion of Objective Four

It is evident from the above questions that the attitudes and feelings of the participants were generally a good and positive attitude. Fifty-one participants indicated that they had a good and positive attitude while three participants had a 'do not care' attitude. Six participants indicated that they have a neutral perception because when their needs are met they feel positive about the UKZN brand and when their needs are not met they experience a negative perception of the UKZN brand.

The general consensus amongst students was that they would recommend UKZN to others and that they would not leave UKZN to go to another institution, citing the positive factors and experiences they have. However, only seven participants stated that they would not recommend UKZN because of the negative experiences they had encountered. Similarly, 22 participants would want to leave UKZN, primarily for the change and experience of being at another university. Nineteen participants were proud to be at UKZN because of the excellent quality of education whilst 22 participants were proud to be at UKZN just because they are UKZN students.

Participants made numerous suggestions and recommendations for changes that would strengthen the brand and ways in which UKZN can create an awareness of its brand.

4.4. SUMMARY

This chapter consisted of the data received from the interviews with 60 students, comprising 12 students from each of the five UKZN campuses. The results were analysed and presented using different layout styles such as tables and word clouds which were incorporated with discussions and relevant quotes from the participants and then presented according to

categorised objectives. Significant and minor themes in each question were identified and the prevailing themes in each of the questions were analysed and discussed. Further to this, shortcomings were highlighted, such as the lack of social activities and interaction amongst students as well as how the public perception of UKZN differs to what UKZN is actually about. Chapter 5 provides recommendations for the management and leadership of UKZN to consider how UKZN can be improved holistically and thereby improving the university brand.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Brand management in higher education paints a picture of obligating a proactive point of view to ensure the brand achieves optimal appeal so that the very best of students are recruited and the strategic goals of the higher education institution are achieved. In this respect, higher education institutions encounter a multitude of challenges in that they are compelled to provide excellent standards of academic education, to be a reputable and credible university, attain good enrolment numbers, establish a good competitive position, provide up-to-date and well-renowned academic programmes and to sustain the institution's financial strength. Management and leadership in higher education have come to the realisation that these institutions must operate as a business entity and promote their offerings using business strategies. Therefore, the management of the brand in any educational institution has been recognised as a critical priority. Hence the purpose of this study was to determine the student perceptions of the UKZN brand. The objectives were constructed to provide a significant understanding of student perceptions, expectations and performance and their attitudes and feelings towards the UKZN brand and how the UKZN brand can be improved upon. The data was collected from 60 UKZN students across the five UKZN campuses. This chapter highlights the key findings, draws on the recommendations and limitations of this study and makes recommendations for future studies.

5.2. KEY FINDINGS

This study discussed the concept of branding in higher education, how the students of UKZN perceive the institution's brand and the changes that can be implemented to make it a stronger brand. A number of conclusions were derived from this study. These conclusions cannot be generalised to the entire population; however, the participants had first-hand experience to provide salient insight into the efficiencies and drawbacks of UKZN as a higher educational institution. The main conclusion derived from this study was that students view the UKZN brand to be a good brand and that the university in general is a good higher education institution.

UKZN has achieved and maintained excellent academic standards in a number of disciplines of study and the university is well recognised nationally and internationally for their

outstanding research initiatives. Although the analysis of the data recognised UKZN to be a good institution with a good brand, excellent academic education and good facilities and resources, there are substantial challenges and shortcomings that have contributed to the UKZN brand being viewed negatively by various stakeholders, such as the negative external perception of UKZN compared to the positive internal perception. Thus it is imperative for these challenges and shortcomings to be addressed by the recommendations suggested in the following section in order to eliminate the negative perception that is associated with the brand and to prevent it from further negative and damaging effects.

There is certainly a need for UKZN to investigate and further explore the concept of social programmes and activities for interaction amongst all students so as to create a complete student life experience for students. Another significant challenge is to change the perception of the external view of UKZN. The general public and external stakeholders do not have the same mostly positive experience and perception that the students of UKZN have. This view differs greatly in terms of how UKZN is being portrayed externally. As one of the participant's stated "...The negative perceptions of the brand must be eliminated to show the public that UKZN is a great university. People need to be made aware of all the good that UKZN does..." and hence the recommendations provided in 5.3.1 below highlight how the positive aspects of UKZN can be reinforced.

The study further identified that whilst most academic support structures such as resources, facilities and amenities in and around campus are substantially good, there were students who experience significant challenges in terms of these support structures, facilities, resources and amenities not providing the desirable outcomes. This was identified as the primary factor in this study.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

The recommendations are based on the objectives, the findings of the research and the conclusions drawn from the findings. These recommendations are an effort to put forth suggestions and processes to improve the perception of the UKZN brand.

5.3.1. Reinforce the positive aspects of UKZN

This study clearly indicated that the external perception of UKZN needs to be changed. The media and various stakeholders portray UKZN to be a questionable institution, thus affecting the brand negatively. Therefore the positive aspects of UKZN will enhance the marketing of

the institution. The capabilities of students, lecturers and services should be showcased, such as excellent high achievers that represent the UKZN brand, the big projects and the research of students and lecturers. Outreach programmes and services of the university should be publicised on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and the UKZN website as there is a significant student following on these platforms. The UKZN marketing team can reach out to schools by including them to participate in such outreach programmes which could lead to the attraction and recruitment of potential students. These positive aspects can enable UKZN to market its positive image through publicity on every platform.

5.3.2. Creating a social and recreational environment for students

Evident in this study was the lack of social and recreational programmes and activities for students. This is an important success factor in attracting potential students and satisfying current students as the vast majority of high school graduates look forward to the complete student life experience consisting of both the academic and social aspects of a higher education institution. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved, such as providing better cafeterias in all campuses similar to that of the Westville campus. Included in cafeterias should be the need to provide healthy eating that promotes a healthy lifestyle. A number of programmes, activities and groups can be created to foster social interaction amongst students, such as women empowerment groups and peer assistance groups; field trips and excursions which can be done according to the relevant fields of study; UKZN can collaborate with environmental and community events to foster social engagement and interaction amongst students, such as general litter pick-ups, the painting of disadvantaged schools and social upliftment programmes in the community. There could also be activities for students who wish to support the sporting team such as the creation of a marching band. Also, a survey should be carried out amongst all students welcoming their ideas and suggestions on what they believe would be good and positive social interactions amongst students. In this way students will feel that the university cares about their needs and is attempting to help fulfil these needs as well as promoting the integration of all cultural and race groups so that students can embrace the diversity at UKZN. These factors can all create an awareness of the UKZN brand as well. It is important to emphasise that university students are semi-adults and the beginning of their journey as university students is their first introduction to and interaction in public life. The education they receive here is not only

academic but includes life skills as well. Thus, an all-round holistic development at university has the great potential to prepare and mould these students for life after university.

5.3.3. Creating adequate access to computer LANS

A substantial number of students experience difficulty in gaining access to the LANS to make use of a computer as the LANS are constantly full to capacity. There should be strict rules in place to ensure the LANS are not being abused for non-academic purposes whilst other students struggle to find the means to utilise the Wi-Fi, a computer and printer. There should be a form of monitoring mechanism in place to ensure the rules and regulations are adhered to. A lecturer or administrative staff member could be present in LANS to monitor the use of the LANS by students with regard to how long they are using the facilities and to ensure they are not being utilised for non-academic purposes. Alternatively, a surveillance system could be put in place in LANS to monitor the use of the facilities. The concept of having LANS for each year of study similar to the postgraduate LAN could potentially alleviate the issue of insufficient space for students. This warrants further investigation to establish the feasibility of this idea. Alternatively, larger computer LAN rooms can be developed in order to meet this challenge that affects the students. LANS contribute to the use of technology by students and thus the importance of adequate access to LANS has become essential for academic education.

5.3.4. Improve the attitude and competencies of the administrative staff

A common challenge that is experienced by students across all the campuses is the apathetic attitude of the administrative staff. Some of the challenges experienced included the attitude of non-caring staff, the lack of knowledge about services as well as service centres within the campuses within job-related functions, disinterest, open display of hostility and a lack of empathy with students. Such obvious poor treatment of students augurs poorly for the UKZN brand because these support/administrative staff are the brand ambassadors of UKZN. Workshops and seminars should be conducted with the administrative staff to highlight their behaviour in terms of assisting students and being empathetic towards the students and their needs and requirements. UKZN should conduct brand management with these staff members. Ultimately, it is UKZN that must treat the administrative staff well. A good suggestion is to implement a dress code with a UKZN name badge highlighting that they are proud UKZN staff members. Giving the staff members an identity can increase the positivity of the administrative staff. Also, a day of interaction between administrative staff and

students could do well to bridge the gap between staff and students. Internally, the UKZN management team should make use of opportunities to value and acknowledge the work of the administrative staff. This can bridge the gap between academia and the administrative staff to create a spirit of teamwork.

5.3.5. Provide competent and quality tutors and lecturers

Evident in the study was the student requests for competent and quality tutors and lecturers. Participants stated that the foreign lecturers are difficult to understand. Lecturers should be recruited purely on merit. International lecturers should be critically assessed in terms of fulfilling the criteria as lecturers. The criteria to determine a quality lecturer needs to be reviewed to cater for the diverse student population. For example, a Zulu first language student is already challenged with using a medium of a second language (English) to learn. This challenge is compounded with a lecturer with a foreign accent who is appointed to serve such a student at a tertiary level. Transferring knowledge to students is an extremely important medium in terms of understanding the content of their studies. It is thus critical to have excellent, coherent and qualified lecturers at any higher education institution. Another significant factor identified in this study was that lecturers should become more technologically advanced in terms of operating the equipment in lecture rooms as well as understanding how Moodle operates. Computer literacy should be a requirement of the lecturers' qualifications or they should be sent on computer literacy courses, or alternatively have the ICT staff on campus to demonstrate how the equipment works. Workshops or training programmes should be conducted in order for lecturers to become familiar with the Moodle programme.

5.3.6. Improve safety and security on campus and the residences

The nature and the intensity of study at tertiary level require students to work longer hours whether they live in a campus residence or outside of campus. Having access to the use of facilities and resources motivates students to make use of these facilities and resources. This exposed them to more danger, especially in the afternoons and evenings when the campus becomes quieter and certain students require heightened security. Therefore safety and security on campus is significantly important for students. Security at the campus residences is a factor that has not been addressed. An increase in security presence at the residences can address the problems of students feeling wary and unsafe. An advanced fingerprint system to gain access into residence could serve students well in terms of feeling safe, secure

and will prevent non-UKZN students from gaining access into any residence. In May 2016, an incident of assault at the Pietermaritzburg campus indicates the importance of security and safety at campus premises, including the competencies and capabilities of security personnel in being effective (Umraw, 2016). Also, installing surveillance cameras and equipment in and around the campus areas should be considered. Further to this, campaigns and programmes advocating the awareness of safety and security on campuses can assist to foster a safe and secure environment as well as one of non-violence.

5.3.7. Strikes and protest action to be managed efficiently and effectively

Whilst it was clear that many students were not affected by the strikes and some understood the value of it, many students were not happy with the strikes and protest action. Students are of the opinion that the management and leadership team at UKZN can do more in terms of controlling the manner in which the strikes occur and prevent them from getting out of control. This can be carried out by clear understanding and transparency between the SRC, the students and the UKZN management team. There should be a risk management team assessing the seriousness of the issues at hand and acting responsibly and timeously when they arise. An individual in a position of authority should represent the students to prevent the strikes from becoming violent and unruly. Stringent rules and regulations should be followed and enforced with students who do not uphold the name of the university and bring it into disrepute. This was raised by many participants in this study who stated it is the students who give the university a bad name. A campus radio station could be a positive initiative in terms of creating a common platform where information is shared. When decisions are made regarding any aspect of the university, especially regarding strikes and protest action, a uniform sharing of information on such a platform can foster inclusiveness for all students in terms of the occurrences and events taking place at the institution. A campus radio programme can also promote social interaction and activities as well as an awareness of the UKZN brand.

5.3.8. Improve and maintain building infrastructure and facilities

A common theme identified in the study was the improvement and maintenance of the infrastructure and buildings and the general upkeep of the university environment and facilities. The opinion of students at the Edgewood campus is that the campus lacks a university appeal and does not represent UKZN in the same way that the other four campuses represent UKZN. They thus requested that the environment of the Edgewood campus be

elevated from a college to more of a university environment. Students across all the campuses also indicated that they are dissatisfied with the appearance and ambience of the environment, buildings and infrastructure. Funding should be raised or made available to upgrade the general appearance and aesthetics of the environment so as to create a university setting for students. Amongst the remaining four campuses, certain students mentioned similar concerns with regard to the building infrastructure and facilities. An upgrade and maintenance programme or strategy should be put in place to cater for sustaining the long-term maintenance of the infrastructure of the campus. Further to this, parking facilities are inadequate. Staff and student parking should be clearly demarcated with strict rules being followed to prevent the unavailability of parking space. UKZN also needs to create more parking space to accommodate all students. Also, the cleanliness and maintenance of restroom facilities require attention. The Facilities Regulations, 1990, and the General Administrative Regulations, 1993, are two regulations that form a part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 that “refers to sanitary facilities, toilets, bathrooms, showers, dining facilities, drinking water, certain prohibitions as well as the conditions of these facilities that forms part of the work environment” (Labour Guide, 2016). It is a statutory requirement for the consistent cleanliness and maintenance of restrooms and UKZN therefore has to ensure this requirement is enforced. A largely neglected nature of the institution relates negatively to the UKZN brand. More attention should be given to the image and aesthetics of the university which will contribute positively to the brand. If the students perceive the brand well, so will the public. Thus improving the look enhances the university as a learning institution.

5.3.9. Establishing awareness of the brand

An important question in assessing the attitudes and feelings of students was creating an awareness of the UKZN brand. Some of the most significant suggestions were: to market UKZN effectively and entrench the UKZN brand in high schools such as school scoreboards as well as conducting and sponsoring programmes at schools to market the brand as the majority of university students are first high school graduates; to have a consistent interactive and online presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube; branding and marketing initiatives to be extended to other provinces as well as internationally and to showcase all the positive aspects and initiatives of UKZN.

5.3.10. Improve slow systems and processes

Slow and inefficient systems and processes impede the learning process for students. Such impediments are delays in the registration process and the ineffective performance of the online academy, Moodle and email system. Measures should be put in place to ensure timeous registration of students such as having more additional staff present during the registration process to ensure the effective and efficient registration of students. ICT systems should be operating smoothly. Whilst it is expected that certain ICT challenges are unavoidable, effective mechanisms such as consistent maintenance and upgrades of ICT equipment should be well thought out to eliminate students having continuous challenges with regard to slow ICT systems.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Identifying the limitations in this study is pertinent as it will provide valuable insight and benefits for future studies. The intention of this study was not to gather information that is generalised but to verify that the data obtained is authentic and can be replicated. This was a qualitative study that elicited the first-hand experience of the students at UKZN who actively experience the day-to-day occurrences at the university. The study was therefore based on the perceptions of these students at UKZN.

A key factor was the limited time period in which the study had to be completed. This meant that the sample size was limited in that only 12 students per campus were interviewed.

The study aimed to determine the opinions of students at UKZN. There was no input from the staff and management of UKZN. A comparison of the major universities in South Africa could not be conducted. More significant findings could have been gathered from the different perceptions of students at all the major universities in South Africa. Further to this, this study could not be compared to similar research findings as there is a lack of empirical research on higher education branding in South Africa.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Further studies should consider the following concepts for branding in higher education:

- Investigate the association of branding strategies in business to that of higher education branding strategies as the existing literature on branding in the business context

combined with the results of higher education branding can be implemented for success in higher education institutions.

- Explore the staff and management opinions and perspectives in terms of their perception of branding in higher education. Although students are key stakeholders in a university, being considerate of the staff and management in terms of understanding their stance on higher education branding, how the institution benefits from branding and how the brand can be improved upon can prove to be of great benefit to the institution.
- Conduct a similar study with a larger sample size which could improve the reliability of the data and add more input to the findings, thus enabling the study to be more significant.
- Make use of focus groups as a data collection tool. This method of collecting data is flexible and adaptable, enabling the members of the focus group to be expressive in their feelings, ideas and opinions. This fosters discussion that is authentic and dependable with proactive and innovative flow of ideas and recommendations. This data collection method would serve well to elicit insightful analysis for higher education branding amongst students and staff in higher education institutions.
- Explore the concept of higher education branding across other major higher education institutions. By conducting a study of this nature, significant and insightful findings can be established to determine how branding across the major institutions in South Africa is carried out, and what factors contribute to the success or pitfalls of other higher education brands. Such comparisons can serve as a catalyst for higher education institutions to benefit from each other's successes and failures.

5.6. CONCLUSION

The aim and the objectives of this study have been met as the information analysed for the research has identified the reasons students perceive the UKZN brand to be of value or not of value, the benefits and shortcomings that UKZN offers and ways in which the brand can be improved upon. Irrespective of some of the limitations of this study, the study has proved to be beneficial to both the students and UKZN as a higher education institution in terms of tabling the needs and opinions of students and the improvements UKZN can implement to improve and sustain the brand of the institution.

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APPENDIX 1:
Introductory Letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

Dear Respondent,

MBA Research Project

Researcher: Ms Poveshnee Moonsamy (0817011929)

Supervisor: Prof. Anesh Maniraj Singh (031-260 2675)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

I, **Ms Poveshnee Moonsamy**, am an MBA student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **Student Perceptions on the value of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand**. The aim of this study is to establish the perceptions of current students regarding the value of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand.

Through your participation I hope to understand why the brand has been the brunt of such negativity and what has contributed to the negativity. The results of the focus group are intended to contribute to establishment of the perceptions of the current students regarding the value of the UKZN brand, to identify how they can be proud UKZN students and to identify improvement that could influence the value of the UKZN brand positively.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The survey should take you about 10 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely

Investigators' Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX 2:
Letter of Consent

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP
MBA Research Project

Researcher: Ms Poveshee Moonsamy (0817011929)

Supervisor: Prof. Anesh Maniraj Singh (031-260 2675)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

CONSENT

I,.....(full names of participant), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

Furthermore, I hereby grant/do not grant permission for a voice recorder to be used to record this interview.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

This page is to be retained by researcher

APPENDIX 3:

Interview Schedule

Students' Perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) brand

1. What is your perception of UKZN's brand?
2. How does the UKZN brand compare with other University brands?
3. What factors do you believe contribute to UKZN's brand?
4. How did UKZN's brand/branding influence your choice of institution?
5. What are your needs as a student?
- 6a. Are your needs being met at UKZN?
- 6b. How does this affect your perception of UKZN's brand?
- 7a. Before joining UKZN were you aware of student unrest at the University?
- 7b. How did that affect your perception of the brand?
8. What is your attitude towards UKZN?
9. Would you recommend UKZN to others? Explain?
10. If you had the choice to study at another Higher Education Institution, would you leave UKZN? Explain?
11. What makes you a proud UKZN student?
12. What changes would you make to strengthen UKZN's brand?
13. What can UKZN do to create an awareness of its brand?

APPENDIX 4:

Gatekeeper Letter



18 January 2016

Ms Poveshnee Moonsamy (SN 213570594)
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
College of Law and Management Studies
Westville Campus
UKZN
Email: poveshnee@gmail.com

Dear Ms Moonsamy

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Student perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting interviews with students from all campuses of UKZN.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely



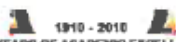
MR SS MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



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APPENDIX 5:

Ethics Approval Letter



22 February 2016

Ms Poveshee Moonsamy 213570594
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Ms Moonsamy

Protocol reference number: HSS/0145/016M
Project Title: Student perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 10 February 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Professor Anesh Maniraj Maharaj
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr M Hoque
Cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX 6:

Proof of Editing

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Language editing

I, Jeanne Enslin, acknowledge that I did the language editing of **Poveshnee Moonsamy's** dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

The title of the dissertation is:

Student perceptions of the University of KwaZulu-Natal brand

If any text changes are made to the electronic document that I sent to Poveshnee Moonsamy on 25 June 2016, the document needs to be returned to me to check the language of the changes. Feedback about the work done has been provided to Poveshnee.



Jeanne Enslin
Language editor
082-6961224.

Technical editing

I, Ronel Gallie, acknowledge that I did the technical formatting, checking of reference list and cross-referencing of **Poveshnee Moonsamy's** dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Business Administration. Feedback about the work done has been provided to Poveshnee.



Ronel Gallie
Technical editor
084 7780 292