

# Investigating the brand perception of a South African university ensuing a corporate re-branding strategy

**CJ De Wee**

 **orcid.org 0000-0002-9088-8263**

Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the North-West University

Supervisor: Mr JA Jordaan

Graduation: July 2019

Student number: 20801432

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank God for granting me the strength and opportunity to be able to complete my MBA studies.

I would like to thank the North-West University for allowing me to do this study and hope that it will be of value for strategic decision making.

I would like to thank my supervisor Mr Jordaan for all his help and patience with the completion of this mini-dissertation.

A special word of thanks to Ms Simone Steyn and Ms Ann-Lize Grewar for the language editing of this mini-dissertation

Last but not least, a special thanks to my best friends and family for their support and encouragement.

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Institutions of Higher Education occasionally rebrand in order to signal a strategic repositioning within the organisation or to gain a competitive advantage in a very challenging environment. This was certainly the case for the North-West University who recently undertook its second corporate rebranding since its inception as a single university and incorporation in 2004 as a single multi-campus institution. The rebranding was a direct consequence of a strategic repositioning which aims to transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution (NWU, 2018b), and to accentuate the unitary multi-campus identity. The rebranding entailed the adoption of a monolithic corporate brand. The distinctive maroon, blue and green, which represented the three campuses namely Potchefstroom, Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle respectively for a number of years, had been replaced by one primary colour purple, and two secondary colours turquoise and grey. Various averse feedback from students via social media showed that some students did not fully embrace the rebranding. This adversative attitude of students toward the rebranding needed to be investigated in order to see how students perceive the new brand in comparison to the old branding. In order for management to make strategic marketing plans, the brand perception of students about the rebranding was investigated by means of a customer-based brand equity survey.

**Methods:** In October 2018, 146 respondents on the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University were asked to complete a questionnaire aimed at measuring the brand perception of the North-West University following the recent rebranding exercise. The respondents were sampled via convenience sampling around campus and had to complete the customer-based brand equity questionnaire based on the four dimensions of brand equity, namely brand associations, brand loyalty and brand awareness, as proposed by literature. One question that was aimed at understanding the students' attitude towards the rebranding was also included. The data was analysed with SPSS.

**Results and conclusion:** The results of the empirical study revealed two dimensions of brand equity that was extracted from the data gathered. These dimensions were labelled brand image and brand awareness and this finding correlates with previous research. The results also confirmed that brand equity for the old logo was higher than that of the new logo, which indicates a decline in brand equity. The dimension of brand awareness scored the overall highest means for both the old and new branding and brand image the lowest for the new logo. The brand image of the new logo also showed lower scores than that of the old logo, and students are still uninformed regarding the rebranding. The overall attitude of the students toward the rebranding

was fairly neutral with only 8.2% of the respondents disagreeing with the rebranding and 41% being neutral about the rebranding.

**Recommendations:** Rebranding an institution of higher education can be very daunting and literature warned against possible erosion of brand equity. Based on the findings the following actions are recommended:

- Although the overall mean scores from the findings for the brand awareness dimension were higher for both logos, the findings suggest that students are still unsure as to what the logo stands for and the meaning behind the purple colour for the rebranding. The university should continue to raise brand awareness through various brand awareness campaigns on the digital as well as printed platforms.
- The brand image of the new logo scored very low in comparison to the old logo, and thus management should invest some time in order to make it more appealing to resonate with students' personalities, since students felt that this logo does not express their personalities.
- The university should conduct a campaign around the rebranding specifically aimed at communicating and informing students about the meaning behind the logo and brand colours, and how it relates to the brand attributes. This can be done on social media, the university website as well as printed media.

This study was conducted with only one unit of the stakeholders in mind, further research that is inclusive of all stakeholders like staff and alumni is advised for a more comprehensive study.

**Keywords:** branding, rebranding, brand elements, higher education, brand equity, customer-based brand equity, South-African university.

## OPSOMMING

**Agtergrond:** Hoër Onderwysinstellings herontwerp nou en dan hulle handelsmerke om 'n strategiese herposisionering binne die organisasie aan te dui, of om kompeterende voordeel in 'n baie uitdagende omgewing te werf. Hierdie was verseker die geval vir die Noordwes-Universiteit wat onlangs sy tweede korporatiewe handelsmerk herontwerp het sedert sy ontstaan as 'n enkele universiteit en inkorporasie in 2004 as enkel multi-kampusinstelling. Die herontwerp van die handelsmerk was 'n direkte gevolg van 'n strategiese herposisionering wat beoog om die NWU as 'n unitêre instelling te omskep en posisioneer (NWU, 2018b), en om die unitêre multi-kampus identiteit uit te lig. Die herontwerp van die handelsmerk het die aanneming van 'n monolitiese handelsmerk behels. Die kenmerkende maroen, blou en groen, wat die drie kampusse vir 'n aantal jare verteenwoordig het, naamlik Potchefstroom, Mafikeng en Vaaldriehoek, is vervang deur een primêre kleur pers, en twee sekondêre kleure turkoois en grys. Verskeie teenkantige terugvoer vanaf studente via sosiale media het uitgewys dat studente nie die herontwerp van die handelsmerk ten volle omhels het nie. Hierdie teenstellige houding van studente teenoor die herontwerp moes ondersoek word om sodoende te kan sien wat studente se siening is oor die nuwe handelsmerk in vergelyking met die ou handelsmerk. Ten einde vir die bestuur om strategiese bemarkingsplanne te kan maak, is die handelsmerkpersepsie van studente oor die herontwerp ondersoek deur middel van 'n kliëntgebaseerde handelsmerk-ekwiteitopname.

**Metodes:** In Oktober 2018 is 146 respondente op die Potchefstroomkampus van die Noordwes-Universiteit gevra om 'n vraelys in te vul wat ten doel het om die handelsmerkpersepsie van die Noordwes-Universiteit te meet na die onlangse herontwerploppe. Die steekproefneming van die respondente is volgens gerieflikheidssteekproefneming gedoen op kampus en hulle moes die kliëntgebaseerde handelsmerkekweitemetopname invul gebaseer op die vier diensies van handelsmerkekweitemet, soos voorgestel deur literatuur, naamlik handelsmerk assosiasies, handelsmerk lojaliteit en handelsmerk bewustheid. Een vraag wat gemik is daarop om die studente se houding teenoor die herontwerp te verstaan is ook ingesluit. Die data is deur SPSS geanaliseer.

**Resultate en gevolgtrekking:** Die resultate van die empiriese studie het twee dimensies van handelsmerkekweitemet na vore gebring wat vanuit die versamelde data getrek is. Hierdie dimensies is as handelsmerkbeeld en handelsmerkbewustheid geëtiketteer, en hierdie bevinding stem ooreen met vorige navorsing. Die resultate het ook bevestig dat handelsmerkekweitemet vir die ou logo hoër was as die van die nuwe logo, wat 'n vermindering in handelsmerkekweitemet aangedui het. Die dimensie van handelsmerkbewustheid het oor die algemeen die hoogste gemiddeldes gekry vir beide die ou en nuwe handelsmerk, en handelsmerkbeeld die laagste telling vir die nuwe

logo. Die handelsmerkbeeld van die nuwe logo het ook laer tellings getoon as die van die ou logo, en studente is steeds oningelig met betrekking tot die herontwerp van die handelsmerk. Die oorhoofse houding van die studente teenoor die herontwerp is redelik neutraal, met slegs 8.2% van die respondente wat nie saam met die herontwerp stem nie en 41% wat neutraal was oor die herontwerp.

**Aanbevelings:** Om 'n Hoër Onderwysinstelling se handelsmerk te herontwerp kan baie uitdagend wees en die literatuur het gewaarsku teen moontlike erosie van handelsmerkekwhiteit. Gebaseer op die bevindinge word die volgende handelinge aanbeveel:

- Alhoewel die oorhoofse gemiddelde tellings vanuit die bevindinge vir die handelsmerkbewustheiddimensie hoër was vir beide logo's, stel die bevindinge voordat studente steeds onseker is oor waarvoor die logo staan en wat die betekenis agter die pers kleur van die herontwerp is. Die universiteit moet aanhou om handelsmerkbewusmaking te verhoog deur verskeie handelsmerkbewusmakingsveldtogte op beide digitale en gedrukte platvorms.
- Die handelsmerkbeeld van die nuwe logo het 'n baie lae telling gekry in vergelyking met die ou logo, en dus moet bestuur tyd spandeer om dit meer aantreklik te maak en met studente se persoonlikhede te resoneer, aangesien studente voel dat hierdie logo nie uitdrukking gee aan hulle persoonlikhede nie.
- Die universiteit moet 'n veldtog reël om die herontwerp wat spesifiek gemik is daartoe om met die studente te kommunikeer en hulle in te lig oor die betekenis agter die logo en handelsmerkkleure, en die dit betrekking het op die handelsmerkkenmerke. Dit kan op sosiale media, die universiteit se webtuiste en gedrukte media gedoen word.

Hierdie studie is gedoen met slegs een van die belanghebbendes in gedagte, verdere navorsing wat alle belanghebbendes insluit, soos personeel en alumni, word aanbeveel vir 'n meer deeglike studie.

**Slutelwoorde:** handelsmerk, herontwerp van handelsmerk, handelsmerkelemente, hoër onderrig, handelsmerkekwhiteit, verbruikersgebaseerde handelsmerkekwhiteit, Suid-Afrikaanse universiteit.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>AKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>OPSOMMING</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Justification for the study.....	2
1.3 Problem statement .....	3
1.4 Objectives of the study .....	3
1.4.1 Primary objective .....	3
1.4.2 Secondary objectives.....	4
1.5 Scope of the study.....	4
1.6 Research methodology .....	4
1.6.1 Literature review .....	4
1.6.2 Empirical study .....	5
1.7 Limitations of the study .....	10
1.8 Layout of the study.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 A brief contextualized overview of the North-West University (NWU) Brand .....	11
2.1.1 The origin of the NWU brand .....	11
2.1.2 The restructuring that led to the rebranding .....	12
2.2 Brands and branding.....	14

2.2.1	Definition of a brand.....	14
<b>2.3</b>	<b>The brand elements.....</b>	<b>16</b>
2.3.1	Brand name.....	16
2.3.2	Logos and symbols.....	17
2.3.3	Package design or distinguishable characteristics .....	18
2.3.4	Slogans .....	19
2.3.5	Jingles .....	19
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Rebranding .....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.4.1	Definition of rebranding.....	19
2.4.2	Reasons for rebranding .....	19
2.4.3	Components of rebranding .....	21
2.4.4	The process of rebranding.....	21
2.4.5	Cost of rebranding .....	22
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Rebranding in Higher Education .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>2.6</b>	<b>Brand equity.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.7</b>	<b>Dimensions to brand equity.....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.7.1	Brand awareness.....	25
2.7.2	Brand associations .....	26
2.7.3	Perceived quality .....	27
2.7.4	Brand loyalty.....	27
2.7.5	Brand assets .....	28
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Theoretical framework: Customer-based brand equity .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.9</b>	<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	32
3.2 Pilot study .....	32
3.3 Measuring instrument .....	32
3.4 Statistical analysis.....	37
3.5 Summary .....	37
<b>CHAPTER 4 RESULTS .....</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	39
4.2 Validity and reliability.....	39
4.2.1 Factor analysis for the old logo .....	39
4.2.2 Factor analysis for the new logo .....	43
4.2.3 Attitude towards the rebranding .....	50
<b>CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>52</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	52
5.2 Conclusions.....	52
5.2.1 Meeting research objectives .....	53
5.2.2 Limitations to the study .....	54
5.3 Recommendations.....	54
5.4 Summary .....	55
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>56</b>

# LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Driving forces for corporate rebranding ..... 20

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test for the old logo ..... 39

Table 3: Total variance explained for the old logo ..... 40

Table 4: Principle component matrix for the old logo..... 41

Table 5: Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for old logo..... 42

Table 6: KMO and Bartlett's test for the new logo ..... 43

Table 7: Total variance explained for the new logo ..... 43

Table 8: Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the factors of the new logo ..... 44

Table 9: Principle component matrix for the new logo ..... 45

**Table 10: Comparison of factor loadings between the old and new logos ..... 47**

**Table 11: Comparison of student perception of brand equity after rebranding .... 48**

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for attitude towards the rebranding ..... 51

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: The NWU logo with two links (2004-2007) ..... 11

Figure 2: The NWU logo with three links (2007- 2017) ..... 12

Figure 3: The current NWU logo with the purple colour (2016-2018)..... 13

Figure 4: The new approved corporate colours of the NWU ..... 14

Figure 5: Cell C new corporate colours ..... 18

Figure 6: Rebranding process ..... 22

Figure 7: The old and new logos of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University ..... 23

Figure 8: Aaker's Brand Equity model ..... 25

Figure 9: Scree plot for factor analysis of the old logo ..... 41

# CHAPTER 1 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

The North-West University in South Africa is comprised of three campuses, namely the Mafikeng campus, the Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus (A short contextualised overview of the North-West University can be found in Chapter 2). The North-West University recently undertook its second corporate rebranding since its inception as a single university and incorporation in 2004 as a single multi-campus institution. The rebranding was a direct consequence of a strategic repositioning which aims to transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution (NWU, 2018b), and to accentuate the unitary identity of the North West University.

*“The North-West University was established by merger and incorporation in 2004 as a unitary multi-campus institution, with a single set of policies, systems and standards, driven by a set of constitutionally based values, promoting unity in diversity, developing its own brand and identity, and a unique institutional culture based on the unity and value system of the university.”* (NWU, 2018b)

According to the Collins Dictionary (Martin, 2016) a unitary country or organization is one in which two or more areas or groups have joined together, have the same aims, and are controlled by a single government. In this case the North-West University has three campuses which will be managed by a single management board.

With the strategic repositioning of the NWU into a unitary model, a new brand was introduced for the NWU. The corporate rebranding exercise of the North-West University that was rolled out in 2017 was the second phase to the unitary alignment strategy and involved the adoption of a monolithic corporate brand. The distinctive maroon, blue and green, which represented the three campuses Potchefstroom, Mafikeng and Vaal Triangle respectively, had been replaced by one primary colour purple, and two secondary colours turquoise and grey. The rationale behind this corporate rebranding was to strengthen the unitary identity of the North-West University by eliminating the respective colours which branded the three campuses of the North-West University.

It was clear from various statements reported in the media in 2017 that the rebranding exercise was not welcomed by all students and alumni, particularly the student leadership of the Potchefstroom campus. In November 2017, the chair of the Student Representative Campus

Counsel on the Potchefstroom campus, Jacques Hugo, addressed students in a video via social media to express his concerns with regards to the consultation process, where he claimed that the input of students was negated in the process of deciding on a new primary colour for the university (Saayman, 2017a; Saayman, 2017b). In the video he assured students that the SRC will address the matter the following year and appealed to the students to stand together in their pursuit of getting their voices heard as expressed in the results of the consultation process. Further evidence of the discontent toward the new branding of the university manifested in the form of a campaign by AfriForum Youth “Is jy PUK of is jy pers” (AfriForum, 2017). AfriForum Youth is an affiliate of AfriForum, which is an organisation aimed at protecting the rights of the Afrikaner in Southern Africa. The main concern of AfriForum Youth was that the history, the maroon colour, and the term “PUKKE”, which characterised the Potchefstroom campus, would be destroyed through the rebranding. This averse feedback followed during the rebranding not only towards the consultation process, but also toward the new corporate colours, begged the question as to how current students really feel about the new NWU brand now that the total rebranding process has been completed.

This chapter gives an overview of the problem statement, the objectives, scope, limitations, and proposed methodology for the empirical study.

## **1.2 Justification for the study**

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2018), a brand can be defined as:

*“a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, which are intended to form an identity to distinguish a business from the competition. In other words, whenever someone creates a new name, logo or symbol for a product of service, they are a creating a brand.”*

A brand is composed of a variety of brand elements which work together seamlessly to form this differential identity, which the AMA referred to above. These brand elements are the components which are essentially the main ingredients of any brand, and used by a company to differentiate or distinguish any product or service from competition (Farhana, 2012:224). These elements, which are also known as brand identities, include the brand name, URL’s, logo’s and symbols, characters, spokespeople, slogans, packages’ design or any other distinguishable characteristic such as jingles or colours (Farhana, 2012:224; Keller *et al.*, 2011).

Plewa *et al.* (2011:225) refer to rebranding as a process where an organisation modifies or changes their identity in the form of a new logo, colours or design. The main aim of a rebranding

exercise is to signify and communicate a fundamental change in a company, as argued by the various driving forces for rebranding by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:811). One of the major concerns that derive from a rebranding exercise is the risk of losing some of the brand equity of the company, which takes years to build, especially in the dimension of brand awareness (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:820; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004:479). Keller (1993, 2), refer to customer-based brand equity as the differential effect of the brand knowledge on the customer's response to the marketing of the brand, which take place when the customer has strong brand associations or when the customer becomes familiar with the product or brand. According to this definition of customer-based brand equity, it gives some insight as to how the customer selects and chooses a brand from a selection of similar brands (Keller, 1993:8). Brand awareness refers to the ability of a customer to recall or recognise a brand amongst competitors (Aaker, 2012). As rebranding can erode certain elements of the brand equity, such as brand awareness and brand associations, rebranding should be attempted with caution (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:819). Based on these findings this study seeks to investigate the perceptions of the student post-rebranding.

### **1.3 Problem statement**

The rationale behind the corporate rebranding of the North-West University was to strengthen the unitary identity of the North-West University by eliminating the respective colours which branded the three campuses of the North-West University. Considering the averse feedback in the media by students and stakeholders as stated earlier, it is important to gain an understanding into the perception of the students post-rebranding, to see how they perceive the NWU brand.

The purpose of this study is thus twofold:

- To investigate the perceptions of current students of the North West University regarding the change in the branding of the NWU, specifically with regards to the change in corporate colours, as a means to strengthen the unitary brand of the university and;
- To gain an understanding of the overall brand equity of the North-West University logo amongst its students.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

#### **1.4.1 Primary objective**

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the brand perception of current full time students by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire.

### **1.4.2 Secondary objectives**

The specific research objectives of this study are to:

- Conduct a literature study to understand the effect of rebranding on brand equity;
- Establish the perception of students regarding the colour change of the branding of the university;
- Identify the key dimensions of brand equity of the university from the data obtained;
- Investigate the overall brand equity of the University among students by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire;
- Make recommendations on how to improve or rebuilt brand equity after the rebranding process.

### **1.5 Scope of the study**

The context of the study will focus on the students as the main customers of higher education institutions (Svensson & Wood, 2007:26). The North-West University is comprised of three different campuses that is geographically discerned. They are the Mafikeng campus, The Potchefstroom campus and the Vaal Triangle campus. The study will be conducted on the Potchefstroom campus. The reason behind this decision is the fact that most of the averse feedback were picked up on the Potchefstroom campus from the exploratory research, as mentioned earlier with regards to AfriForum Youth's campaign and the SRC comments on social media. Since the main aim of the study is to enquire about the perceptions of the students regarding the brand equity of the corporate colours, and no meaningful correlation between the respective campus and the responses were included, the sample on the Potchefstroom campus were adequate.

### **1.6 Research methodology**

This study comprises of a literature review and an empirical study. The main research objective was to investigate the perception of current full time students regarding the recent rebranding of the North-West University.

#### **1.6.1 Literature review**

The literature review entailed a thorough scrutiny of available literature on the topic of corporate rebranding within the context of higher education, more specifically regarding to the perceptions thereof. Some of the other constructs which were included in the literature review, are rebranding,

the reasons for rebranding, the components and the process of rebranding. The perceptions of students were measured by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire.

Relevant guidelines that were followed for the literature review as itemised by Bryman and Bell (2015:125-126) include the following:

- Are the references up to date in the area of interest?
- Is the reference outdated?
- Was the search for literature and the review guided by the research questions?
- Were key controversies in the literature addressed in order to substantiate external validity?
- Has the researcher adopted a critical approach to present the literature review?

The sources that were consulted for the literature review were obtained from:

The NWU library database;

The keywords that were used for the literature review included: Rebranding in higher education, perceptions towards rebranding, brand equity, customer-based brand equity, rebranding universities, rebranding exercise in South-Africa.

The main aim of the literature study was to gather information in order to establish whether an existing measuring instrument can be used for data gathering or whether it would be advisable to develop a new one.

## **1.6.2 Empirical study**

### **1.6.2.1 Research design**

The research design can be seen as a master plan that describes the way through which the study will be conducted. It includes all the parts of research, such as the sample size, methods and techniques and how they all work together to address the research questions.

This study follows a quantitative approach by means of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed on campus by students in the presence of the interviewer. It was not required of the students to fill in any identification on the questionnaires.

### **1.6.2.2 Research participants**

The population of the study refers to an aggregate of the total object or subjects, based on the ability to meet certain specifications (Collis & Hussey, 2013:97). The population chosen for this study is the student corps of the North-West University, as the main customers and study population was the Potchefstroom campus

The students were required to complete the questionnaire on the Potchefstroom campus, in the presence of the interviewer. The interviewer asked students to complete the questionnaire on strategic places on campus.

### **1.6.2.3 Measuring instrument**

Where available a reliable and valid measuring instrument should always be considered to be used. The concept of Brand equity was held in high regard in the 1980s and used sparingly by advertising agencies, but was made popular in the early 1990s by Dr David Aaker through his book "Managing Brand equity" (Aaker, 1991). In 1993, Kevin Keller (1993:2) conceptualized brand equity from the perspective of the individual consumer and developed a conceptual framework for measuring brand equity, namely customer-based brand equity. Since the measuring of brand equity, as conceptualised by Keller and Aaker, came from the early 1990s, most of these conceptualizations, measurements and terms are still used and referenced today. Therefore, Aaker and Keller will be used as base reference for their invaluable contribution toward the field of brand equity.

The structured questionnaire was compiled from the three dimensions of brand equity as proposed by literature (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993:4; Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012:8; Yoo & Donthu, 2001:5). These three dimensions include brand associations, brand loyalty and brand awareness. The measuring instrument was based on a customer-based brand equity questionnaire which was developed by Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:7). It was validated and entailed a questionnaire based on a five point Likert scale. The questionnaire contains 20 questions. Six of the questions are focused on brand association, 5 questions are focused on brand loyalty and 8 on brand awareness. The 5-point scale range from 1, being "strongly disagree", 2 being "disagree", 3 being "neutral", 4 being "agree" and 5 "strongly agree." The old logo and the new logo were presented alongside each other in order to investigate how students perceive the new branding in relation to old branding.

#### **1.6.2.4 Research procedure**

It is impossible to include the entire population in the study, due to time constraints and cost implications (Bryman & Bell, 2015:183; Collis & Hussey, 2013:97). Therefore, a suitable sample of the population must be chosen in such a way that it is a valid representation of the entire population. Bryman and Bell (2015:183), refer to two methods through which sampling can be done, namely probability and non-probability methods.

#### **1.6.2.5 Probability methods**

Probability sampling refers to the process where the possibility of the person being selected to participate in the research is known, and is also called non-random sampling (Brynard *et al.*, 2014:183; Etikan *et al.*, 2016:2). Probability methods are dependent on randomness and the probability theory. With probability methods the population does not need to be precisely defined.

The advantage of this method include the following:

- Not very costly
- Needs little time to complete

Disadvantages include the following:

- Very open to sampling biases
- Not always a good representation of the population

The following techniques can be used for probability sampling:

1. Simple random sampling
2. Systematic random sampling
3. Stratified random sampling
4. Cluster sampling
5. Multistage sampling

### 1.6.2.5.1 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability techniques allow for a sample of an infinite amount of the population and this sampling technique is thus appropriate for exploratory research that is aimed at producing new notions which will be tested at a later stage (Brynard *et al.*, 2014:183; Etikan *et al.*, 2016:2).

The advantage of this method include the following:

- Decreases chance of systematic mistakes
- Minimise sampling biases
- A good representative sample of the population can be obtained

Disadvantages include the following:

- Very time consuming
- Very expensive

1. The following techniques can be used for probability sampling:

2. Volunteer sampling
3. Convenience sampling
4. Purposive sampling
5. Quota sampling
6. Snowball sampling
7. Matched sampling
8. Genealogy based sampling

The sampling strategy that was used in this study is the convenience sampling, and refers to the process where the researcher includes those participants who are easy or convenient to approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015:184; Lavrakas, 2008). Convenience sampling is beneficial, especially in cases where the target population is determined very broadly. Any student who were available at the time was approached on campus, around the library and the densely populated areas such as the cafeteria. Once the participant is approached and consent was given the research

commenced. The reason for this choice in sampling method was limited time and the researcher needed as much as possible responses in a very short timeframe.

According to Blanche *et al.* (2006:37) the units of analysis of a study refer to the entities from which the researcher wishes to draw conclusions. The unit of analysis is therefore any grouping or individual entities that the researcher will use in order to draw certain conclusions. For the purpose of this study the unit of analysis was currently enrolled students of the North-West University.

#### **1.6.2.6 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis was done by means of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The first step in the statistical analysis include the factor analysis of the customer-based brand equity questionnaire to extract the different factors, relating to higher education, as proposed by Makgosa & Molefhi (2012, 8). This is done to ensure validity of the results. The second step was the application of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability. If the reliability is good, then it means that the study can be done at a later stage and yield the same results. The last step entailed a series of paired t-tests to compare the perceptions of the students after the rebranding. Descriptive statistics were used for the last question regarding the overall attitude toward the rebranding.

##### **1.6.2.6.1 Ethical considerations**

Ethical protocol is vital to any research related project. It is thus very important to be sensitive to issues that might arise during the research process. The issues that must be kept in mind when conducting research, according to Sanjari *et al.* (2014) , include:

- Anonymity - Personal details of respondents and their direct input to the research study shall not be made public.
- Confidentiality - Data collected is regarded as confidential and was not to be shared with any third party that is not directly involved in the research process.
- Informed consent - Participants will have to sign an informed consent form giving permission to participate in the study.
- Researcher's potential impact on participants and vice versa.

The study was approved by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. All records of the research are kept for a retention period in hard copies and/or

electronic format and then destroyed in an appropriate manner. The findings of the study that was made public does not contain any raw data that could incriminate certain individuals.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

There are a number of limitations to the study, the first being that only full time students on the Potchefstroom campus were included in the study. Feedback from all three campuses could have given a more comprehensive look at the difference in perceptions from the respective campuses.

A second limitation is the fact that most students are not very informed regarding the rebranding process.

Thirdly, due to some averse influences on the NWU brand, such as the recent language policy changes and racial tension on campus, the feedback could have been influenced. To combat this influential bias, the questionnaire was developed in such a way that it only focused on the rebranding part of the NWU brand, specifically the change in corporate colours.

### **1.8 Layout of the study**

The research study comprises of five chapters and is outlined as follows:

- **Chapter one** presents the overview of the research, the motivation, focus, objectives and the proposed methodology.
- **Chapter two** is the literature review. The literature review provides an overview of the North-West University brand, definition of rebranding, definition and short summary of the important brand elements, reasons and processes for rebranding, brand equity and the theoretical framework for measuring customers' perceptions by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire. This chapter also takes a look at rebranding within the context of higher education institutions.
- **Chapter three** focuses on the research methodology which will be used in the empirical study. The methods that were used for the research are explained.
- **Chapter four** is the presentation and discussion of the research results. The results are presented in the form of graphs and tables followed by a discussion.
- **Chapter five** is the concluding chapter of the study. It identifies the limitations of the study, answers the critical questions of the research, makes recommendations based on the results of the study as well as presents recommendations for future studies

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 A brief contextualized overview of the North-West University (NWU) Brand

#### 2.1.1 The origin of the NWU brand

The NWU was established in January 2004 as part of the South-African government's quest to transform higher education (NWU, 2018). This hailed for the merger of a historically white university and a historically black university to form a brand new university that would be accessible to all South-Africans from all walks of life. The historically black university was the former University of North-West, whose students were mostly black people from rural communities. The historically white university was the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, whose students were mostly white Afrikaans people from Christian backgrounds. A third party was the Sebokeng Campus of another mainly black university, Vista, whose staff and students were incorporated (NWU, 2018).

The establishment of the North-West University (NWU) were symbolic of reconciliation and nation building and resulted in one of the most successful and stable higher education mergers in South-Africa. As part of the merger a new brand identity was developed to signal the unitary but multi-campus character of the newly established university.



**Figure 1: The NWU logo with two links (2004-2007)**

Source: (NWU, 2018b)

The old logo of the North-West University with the two interlocked links were modified to add a third link. The three links would become symbolic of a unified multi-campus University, each with their own distinctive colour and character.



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

**Figure 2: The NWU logo with three links (2007- 2017)**

Source: (NWU, 2018b)

This rebranding signified the inception of the NWU by means of the merger in 2004. The rebranding entailed institutional corporate colours which were considered by campus corporate colours, a tagline, the brand essence, a brand model and an evolved logo, as seen above. Potchefstroom was represented by maroon, Mafikeng by blue and Vaal Triangle by green.

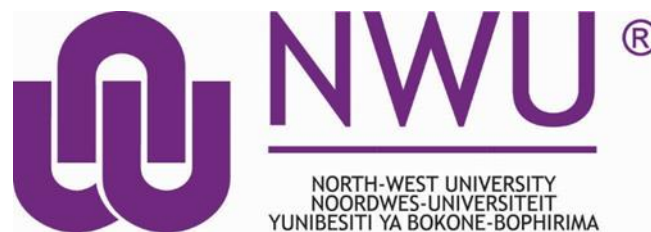
### **2.1.2 The restructuring that led to the rebranding**

In 2016 the NWU rolled out a new unitary faculty-driven model, which was aimed at total academic alignment. The consequence to this new model resulted in a complete revisit to the current use of three separate corporate colours, which represented the three different campuses. In 2017, at a council meeting of the North-West University, the council approved a new monolithic brand positioning and corporate identity that were to strengthen or enhance the new strategy of a unitary faculty-driven model (NWU, 2018). Vital to this rebranding process was the consultation with the various stakeholders, which included amongst others the students, staff and alumni.

In response to this decision of council to move ahead with a monolithic brand positioning, three proposals were developed that were presented to the various stakeholders in the form of a survey. This survey was considered to be the main consultation route. The consultation process regarding a new primary corporate colour was part of a larger process, which also entailed thorough research and careful consideration on how the visual identity would best reflect the unitary approach. Amongst the stakeholders were staff, current and prospective students, alumni, as well as various statutory bodies on the university. Three proposals were included in this survey. In the first example the primary colour is purple. This was a complete departure from the then current institutional branding. The second example is a total break-away from the institutional colours and yellow was used as the primary colour. In the third example, the primary colour is black with the current three colours as secondary colours. Where the secondary colours are used, they must be used unitarily without representing a specific campus.

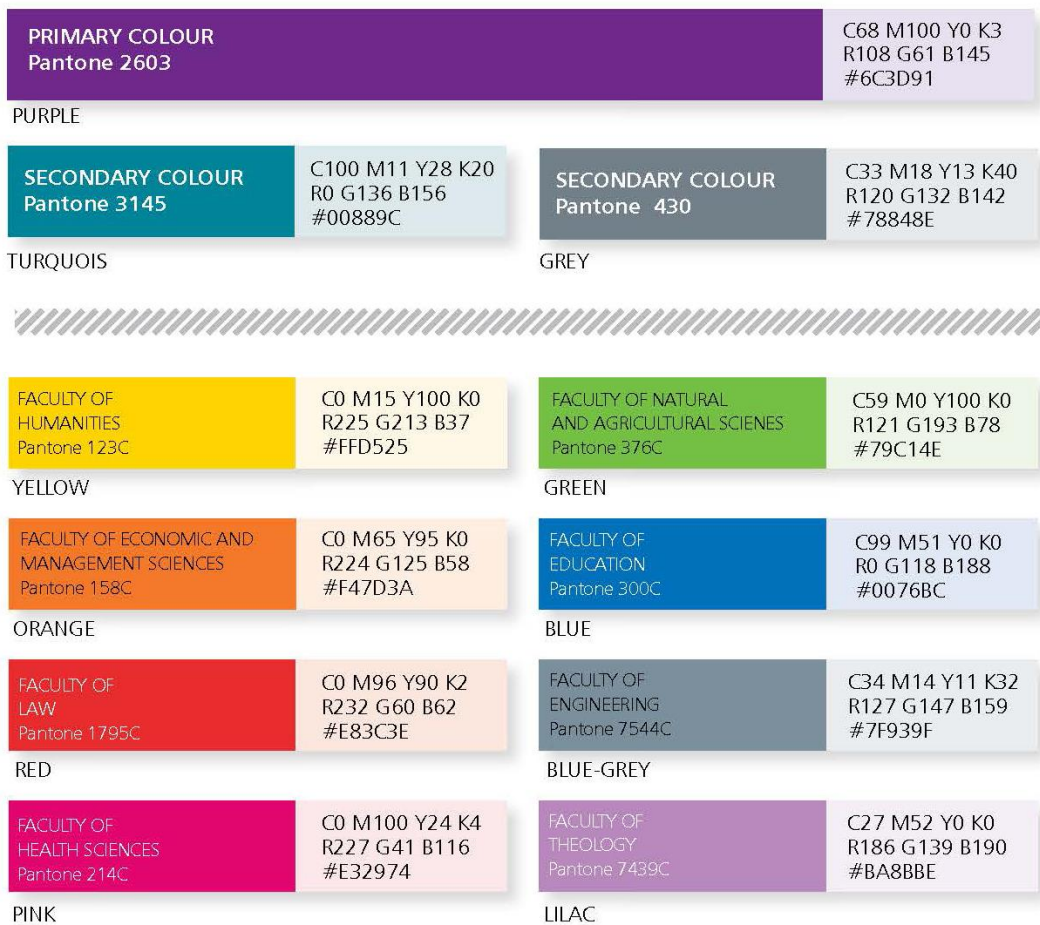
A comprehensive report was presented to an ad hoc committee of the Council on Restructuring, by the UMC (University Management Committee) on the proposed new primary colour that would best represent the unitary structure. This recommendation of the ad hoc committee for purple as the primary colour of the new corporate identity for the NWU was approved by council and the implementation of the new branding rolled out in full force at the end of 2017.

Below is the current NWU logo (Figure 3) as well as the newly approved corporate colours with the new faculty colours included. (Figure 4) of the North-West University as approved by council. The NWU logo must always be reproduced in purple. The CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and key/black) colours is for printing purposes and the pantone for embroidering of the NWU logo. The RGB (red, green, blue) format is specifically for on-screen/web usage and according to the Corporate Identity Manual the colours may not be modified in any way, or for any reason (NWU, 2018a).



**Figure 3: The current NWU logo with the purple colour (2016-2018)**

Source: (NWU, 2018)



**Figure 4: The new approved corporate colours of the NWU**

Source: (NWU, 2018a)

The above-mentioned contextualised overview gave an overview of the NWU brand and its evolution over the years, as well as the restructuring that led to the most recent rebranding. The next section will focus on the definition of key constructs, such as brand, branding, rebranding, the components and process of rebranding, as well as the theoretical framework for measuring customer-based brand equity.

## 2.2 Brands and branding

### 2.2.1 Definition of a brand

The world we live in revolves around branded content, and we have been exposed to brands for centuries. However, the concept of a brand remains hard to define. The complex nature of the

word can be shown in the number of ways it is defined by revered branding specialists and experts in the field of interest, for example:

*“A brand is any label that carries meaning and associations.” (Kotler & Keller, 2015:88)*

*“A brand is a name and or symbol that is directly used to sell products or services.” (Miller & Muir, 2005:3)*

*“The sum of all the parts of a business, product or organisation.” (Edge & Milligan, 2009)*

As seen from the above-mentioned different definitions of a brand, it is quite hard to fathom. It is easy to recognise but hard to define. All of these definitions have one thing in common, and that is essentially the identity that is ascribed to the company, product or service. The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2018), whom is considered to be the best professional body in the marketing field, define a brand as:

*“... a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, which are intended to form an identity to distinguish a business from the competition. In other words, whenever someone creates a new name, logo or symbol for a product of service, they are a creating a brand.”*

As stated earlier, the concept of branding has been around for ages and can broadly be referred to as the process where one can differentiate the goods of one producer from the other. The OED, as cited by Brown (2016:3), on the other hand define a brand as:

*“A piece of burning, smouldering or charred wood; a stigma, a mark of disgrace; a torch, a sword; a kind of blight, leaving leaves with burnt appearance; a special or characteristic kind (brand of humour); an identifying mark burned on livestock or (formally) criminals, etc. With a hot iron used to for this; particular make of goods, an identifying trademark, label, etc., to designate ownership.”*

According to Brown (2016:3) a product or service can only be defined as a brand when subjected to a number of legal constraints, one of which is legal ownership though patent rights or being trademarked. Without this legal ownership anyone can use any available content, as it legally does not belong to any one person. That's why the latter part of the definition of the OED of a brand is of great importance, which refer to the identifying trademark to signal ownership.

Branding has become exponentially important to business, especially in their marketing strategy, because developing and building a brand takes a long time and requires a great deal of investment. A brand is composed of a variety of brand elements which work together seamlessly to form a brand identity. The following section provides an overview of the most important brand elements of a brand, as these elements help with consumer brain mapping and play a pivotal role in building brand equity (Farhana, 2012:223).

## **2.3 The brand elements**

Brand elements are the components used to differentiate or distinguish a product from competition and is essentially the main ingredients of the brand (Farhana, 2012:224). These elements, which are also known as brand identities, include the brand name, URL's, logo's and symbols, characters, spokespeople, slogans, packages' design or any other distinguishable characteristics such as jingles or colours (Farhana, 2012:224; Keller *et al.*, 2011:142). These brand elements are used to improve brand awareness and also to enable strong and favourable brand associations, according to Keller *et al.* (2011:142).

Keller *et al.* (2011:142) also suggests the following criteria that is useful for choosing and designing brand elements in order to build brand equity:

1. Memorability
2. Meaningfulness
3. Aesthetic appeal
4. Transferability
5. Adaptability and flexibility over time
6. Legal and competitive protection and defence

Memorability refers to easy to recognise and to recall. The meaningfulness of the brand is the ability to convey descriptive and persuasive content. Aesthetic appeal refers to the design elements and the brand style. Transferability is the ability of the brand to cover more than one product, and adaptability and flexibility over time refer to the relevance of the brand over a period of time. Legal and competitive protection and defence stand for the legal and unauthorised infringement of the brand. (Keller *et al.*, 2011:147)

Below is a short summary of each of the above-mentioned brand elements.

### **2.3.1 Brand name**

The brand name form the foundation for brand equity (Keller *et al.*, 2011:147). Aaker (1991) refers to the brand name as the core component of the brand, which forms the basis for awareness and other communication efforts (Farhana, 2012:226). Brand names are the foundation upon which

the identity of the company is built, and Lerman and Garbarino (2002:635) argue that once the brand name is launched it becomes the psychological property of the customer.

Farhana (2012:226) proposed that brand names must be simple and easy to spell and pronounced, and should be meaningful, distinctive for brand recall and recognition, as well as memorable.

A paramount of brand equity is encapsulated in the brand name and therefore rebranding efforts are more revolutionary in nature by modifying either the logo or the corporate colours of the company (Farhana, 2012:226; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:805). Brand names are therefore a long-term commitment. Brand names are used as a very short way of communicating, as it is noticed and registered in the memory within seconds. From inception brand name should convey a message on its brand positioning and its brand promise, in order to gain a competitive advantage and grab the customer's attention (Keller *et al.*, 2011:148).

### **2.3.2 Logos and symbols**

The visual elements play an integral role in brand equity, and the brand visual appearance is vital in establishing and maintaining a market presence (Farhana, 2012:226; Keller *et al.*, 2011:155).

A logo is the visual representation of the brand, is an integral part of the corporate identity (Middleton, 2010:4), and is used to identify or distinguish a brand from competitors.

Logos as a visual icon provide two basic functions:

1. Identification and;
2. Differentiation.

There are various types of logos which include trademarks, company names, personal branding. The options are endless.

When building brand equity, the visual elements play an important role in building brand equity, especially with regards to brand awareness (Farhana, 2012:226).

Logos and symbols are used to reinforce brand meaning and in some cases it is literal representations of the brand name that is aimed at enhancing brand awareness. Logos that convey meaning is much more prone to be remembered and recognised (Farhana, 2012:226).

In the overall business sector a few other businesses also opted for either a complete rebranding or at least a change in corporate colours. The South-African telecommunications company, Cell C, recently changed their iconic black and white colours for a more vibrant orange colour (Villiers, 2018), and the South-African bank ABSA chose a passionate red for their rebranding. In all these cases the rebranding was not accepted without disapproval from various stakeholders (Dicey, 2018). Below is the new Cell C corporate colours in relation to the old corporate colours

**Figure 5: Cell C new corporate colours**



Source: (Villiers, 2018)

It is thus clear that familiarity is trusted and that logos are more sentimental to their stakeholders.

### **2.3.3 Package design or distinguishable characteristics**

Packaging and the visual characteristics refer to the physical appearance of the container and include the design, colour, shape, labelling and materials used (Farhana, 2012:228). Farhana (2012:228) argues that distinctive packaging is vital to the strength of the brand, due to the fact that it is the closest that the customers can get to the brand. Packaging therefore creates a brand identity and ultimately encapsulates brand equity, and thus also influences buyers' decisions (Farhana, 2012:228). Differentiated and great package design can lead to flagship and iconic brands, such as Coco-Cola (Farhana, 2012:228).

One of the most important aspects to package design is colour, and research shows that people recall the colour of the packaging first, the shape second, and the logo third (Farhana, 2012:228).

Packaging is thus a very important element of brand equity. In the Higher education context this refers to the aesthetics and visual components of the brand, which include the corporate colours and the marketing material on both print and digital platforms.

### **2.3.4 Slogans**

Keller *et al.* (2011:158) refer to slogans as short phrases that communicate descriptive or persuasive information of the brand. Slogans encapsulate the brand essence and is therefore integral to brand equity. Usually, a slogan is vital for marketing material and activities and works as a quick way of building brand equity (Keller *et al.*, 2011:158). A slogan, according to Keller *et al.* (2011:158), functions as a useful hook or handle for customers to comprehend the brand meaning and positioning. Aaker (2012:232) refers to a slogan as the ribbon that ties the whole packaging together. Slogans are important for a brand as they enhance brand image, help with brand recognition and recall, and also aid in differentiation (Kohli *et al.*, 2007:420).

### **2.3.5 Jingles**

Jingles are the melodic messages that express the brand, and are usually composed by professional musicians that is aimed at permanently registering the brand in the minds of consumers and normally has a catchy tune and choruses (Farhana, 2012:231; Keller & Lehmann, 2003:27). Although jingles are not transferable, they communicate the brand benefits in a clever and humorous style and lead to enhanced brand awareness (Keller & Lehmann, 2003:27).

## **2.4 Rebranding**

### **2.4.1 Definition of rebranding**

According to Plewa *et al.* (2011:225), rebranding can be defined as a process where an organisation modifies or changes their identity in the form of a new logo, colours or design. Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:804), in earlier research, referred to rebranding as the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination thereof. Daly and Moloney (2005:30) on the other hand, refer to rebranding as change in a brand identity, where the brand name is discarded for something new. More specifically with regards to higher education, Judson *et al.* (2008:54) refer to rebranding as the process of giving an existing brand a different name, term, sign or symbol, design or even a combination of the design elements that is intended to identify the value provided by a higher education institution and to differentiate itself from competitors.

### **2.4.2 Reasons for rebranding**

There are a number of reasons why an established brand would resort to a rebranding exercise. Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:807) argue that an organisation is unlikely to rebrand if nothing in the organisation has changed. Therefore, the main drivers for rebranding, as proposed by

Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:811), would be events and or processes that cause a change in the company’s structure, strategy or performance that hails for a redefinition of the company’s identity. They proposed four main categories of the drivers for rebranding is presented in the table below:

**Table 1: Driving forces for corporate rebranding**

Driving forces for corporate rebranding	Change in ownership or structure
	Change in corporate strategy
	Change in competitive position
	Change in external environment

Source: Adapted from Muzellec & Lambkin (2006)

In most cases of rebranding, the reasons vary between change in strategy and brand positioning for competitive advantage. In 2008 the Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications opted for a new visual identity in order to reposition themselves in the market and to define themselves with a strong proposition (Green, 2016). CBS College Sports Network rebranded in 2011 to CBS Sports Network to reposition themselves and elevate the cable’s profile in the sports TV world by dropping the word College from their name (Werpin, 2011). In 2015 the Long Island University in New York rebranded by shortening their brand name to LIU. The reason for the rebranding was also to reposition themselves for a competitive market share (Anon, 2012). With a number of smaller departments and six campuses, this rebranding also signified a strategic change in the form of a unified communications strategy (Anon, 2012). This is very similar to the unitary multi-campus strategic approach that the North-West University embarked on.

However, the main aim of a rebranding exercise is to signify and communicate a fundamental change in a company, as can be seen from the various driving forces for rebranding above (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:811). One of the major concerns that derives from a rebranding exercise is the risk of losing some of the brand equity of the company, which takes years to build, especially in the dimension of brand awareness (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:820; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004:479). Brand awareness refers to the ability of a customer to recall or recognise a brand amongst competitors (Aaker, 2012:10). As rebranding, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, can erode certain elements of the brand equity, such as brand awareness and brand associations, rebranding should be attempted with caution (Muzellec & Lambkin,

2006:819). Changing a business's name may lead to the damage of all the values that the old name signified, in a very short space of time (Ahonen, 2008:31).

### **2.4.3 Components of rebranding**

Rebranding usually consist of one or more components, the name, logo (which include the colours) and slogan, and happen on a continuum ranging from evolutionary to revolutionary change, according to Stuart and Muzellec (2004:474). Revolutionary change refers to a process where all three components are being changed, whilst evolutionary change refers to the modification or change of only one component. Further research by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:804) suggested a third component, which they refer to as positioning. Positioning in turn refers to the reassignment of a company meaning or corporate brand and to communicate new benefits to the stakeholders.

According to Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006:853), name change is the most commonly used method of signalling an identity change. Name change can be very risky and some brand equity might be lost during the rebranding (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:820; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004:479). Rebranding by means of logo change is a very speedy way of updating a corporate image, but once again this should be attempted with caution as logos possess high recognition (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004:474).

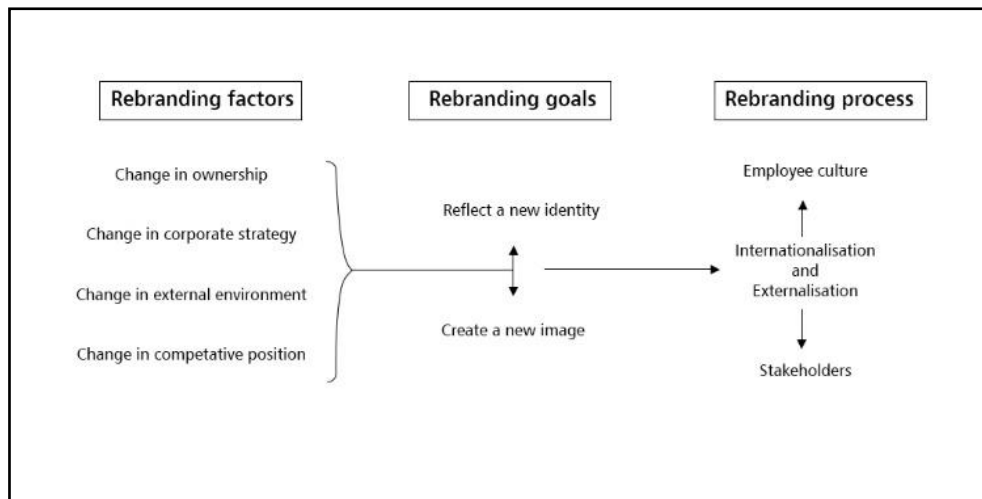
The safest and least risky way to update a corporate image or to reposition the company for competitive advantage, is my means of a slogan change (Chad, 2016:348).

As stated earlier, positioning, as suggested by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:820), can change or remain the same throughout the rebranding process.

### **2.4.4 The process of rebranding**

Studies on the process of rebranding (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:804; Stuart & Muzellec, 2004:479) propose a term rebranding mix. Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:821) proposed a three phase model which include the following:

1. Rebranding factors;
2. Rebranding goals and;
3. Rebranding process.



**Figure 6: Rebranding process**

Source: Adapted from Muzellec & Lambkin (2006)

### 2.4.5 Cost of rebranding

Rebranding can be a very a costly exercise and Plewa *et al.* (2011:240) argue that it goes beyond the point of just changing the logo and colours. It also encompasses all the public connection with the consumer. Some of the most common cost associated with rebranding, as summarised by Plewa *et al.* (2011:240), include the following:

1. Colour consultation with regards to matching mixing pantone for printing elements
2. Redesign of logo and brand elements
3. Replacing branding in public spaces with the new branding
4. Changing signage
5. Redesigning stationary and promotional items

It is thus clear that rebranding needs to be carefully considered from a financial perspective in order to ensure that it is a sustainable and beneficial exercise.

## 2.5 Rebranding in Higher Education

In the South-African higher education landscape, only one other University besides the North-West University has rebranded in recent times. Branding can easily become outdated, especially in the ever changing and developing business nature, and therefore needs to adapt and be updated often. However, with brand equity, especially brand awareness, it is cautioned that customers might not always embrace changes in branding (Farhana, 2012:227; Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:819). This can be seen in the media feedback after the recent rebranding of the South-African University, The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, to a more contemporary look and feel. The reason for the rebranding of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) was to reposition itself as a global institution. By dropping the word "Metropolitan" it allowed them to rebrand itself beyond the geographical metropolis of Port Elizabeth. The change was also accompanied by a change in the university logos and colours (Gumede, 2017).

However, feedback on social media showed that the public and students were not very impressed with the new logo, which was designed by an external agency, and was referred to as "toddler blocks" (Spies, 2017). Below is the new branding of NMMU in relation to the old branding.



**Figure 7: The old and new logos of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University**

Source: (Spies, 2017)

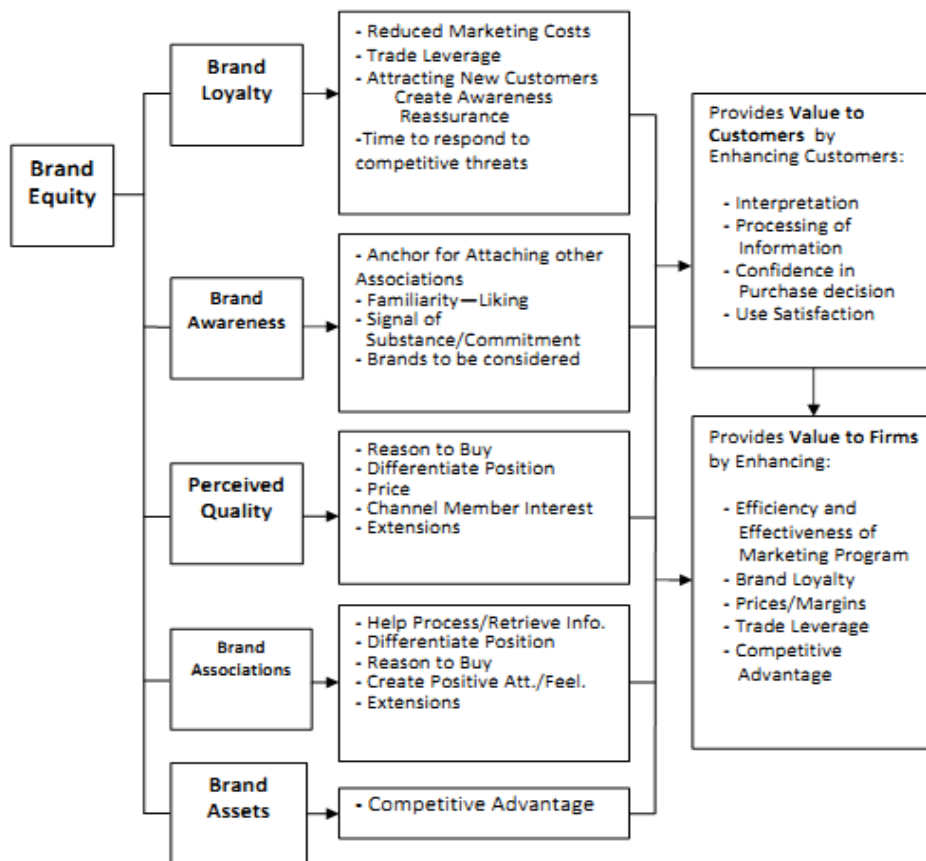
The rebranding of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to the Nelson Mandela University was almost entirely revolutionary, considering the change in the logo as well as the corporate colours. The rebranding of the North-West University, on the other hand, was mostly evolutionary in the sense that the logo and the fundamental meaning behind the three interlinked links remained. However, they opted for a monolithic brand positioning by adopting a brand new primary corporate colour for the university. The main reason behind new monolithic brand positioning and corporate identity were to strengthen or enhance the new strategy of a unitary

faculty-driven model (NWU, 2017). This correlates with the research done by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006:810), who found that one of the driving forces behind corporate rebranding was to signify a change in corporate strategy.

## **2.6 Brand equity**

Brand equity is an important aspect to branding and each firm or company is aimed at fostering and building a positive brand equity. Brand equity has been reviewed through various perspectives, and is mostly associated with the commercial market. Through his book “Managing Brand equity” (Aaker, 1991) in the early 1990s, the concept of Brand equity was made popular by Dr David Aaker, even though it was held in high regard in the 1980s and used sparingly by advertising agencies. His studies on brand equity was mainly based on the monetary value of a brand, specifically with regards to accounting purposes. However, it was soon revealed that brand equity held immense strategic value especially from a marketing perspective.

According to Aaker (2012:7) Brand equity is defined as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbols that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm/or to that firm’s customers”. Aaker (2012:8) argues that brand equity comprises five dimensions, namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand assets, as can be seen from the following figure:



**Figure 8: Aaker's Brand Equity model**

Source: Aaker (1991)

## 2.7 Dimensions to brand equity

### 2.7.1 Brand awareness

Brand awareness refers to the ability of a customer to recall or recognise a brand as part of a product, and is basically the strength of the brand's presence in the minds of consumers (Aaker, 1991; Christodoulides *et al.*, 2015; Keller, 1993; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Aaker (1991) also refers to other levels of brand awareness, such as top-of-the mind and brand dominance.

Keller (2016:14) proposed two sub-dimensions for brand awareness, namely brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall refers to the ability of the consumer recall a brand and connect it to a product type or class of products. Brand recognition on the other hand, is the ability of existing and prospective consumers to recognise a brand through its features like logos, taglines, colours, product features, and other attributes (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). A brand

with a higher brand recognition leaves a more lasting impact on the minds of the consumer, and generates a high brand loyalty over a period of time.

Aaker (2012:10) reasoned that brand awareness can be perceived as a sign of quality and the consumer's familiarity with the brand up to the point of purchase.

In the context of higher education, Brand awareness refers to the "ability of students to identify and remember the university brand", and is dependant of brand recognition and recall dimensions as stated earlier (Woyo *et al.*, 2014:1). On the other hand, Brand image can be defined as the aptitude to give connotation the brand, and is assessed through product and non-product related attributes and symbolic and functional benefits (Woyo *et al.*, 2014:1).

### **2.7.2 Brand associations**

Aaker (2012:25) defined brand associations as anything that is "linked" in memory to the brand. In layman's terms, brand association encompasses the meaning of the brand to customers and can be reflective of the features of the product or brand. Keller (1993:3) on the other hand, refer to associations as the "informational nodes linked to the brand node in the memory and contain the meaning of the brand for the consumers".

Brand association is the core component of the brand upon which the image rests and forms the foundation for purchasing decision and brand loyalty (Aaker, 2012:25). It is essentially the collective elements that define the brand image and encapsulate all brand related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs and attitudes (Keller, 1993:3; Kotler & Keller, 2015:88).

Brand associations can be categorised into attributes, benefits and attitudes. In this case the attributes refer to the features of the product and can be further broken down into product-related and non-product related features (Keller, 1993:4).

Product-related attributes refer to the physical composition or a service requirement (Gladden & Funk, 2002:79), where non-product-related associations refer to the extrinsic factors that influence the customers' decision-making processes and include the price, packaging and imagery, amongst others (Keller, 1993:4). Logo design is also considered a non-product related association as it relates to the customers' ability to recall and recognise the brand (Gladden & Funk, 2002:55).

Brand attitude is defined as the customers' overall evaluation of the brand and their response thereof (Keller, 1993). This is important as it gives insight into consumer's choice (Keller, 1993) and Gladden and Funk (2002:55) argue that brand associations can help managers build their brand names and help marketers to determine the components of brand equity in order to refine their targeting operandi.

Organising a set of brand associations in a meaningful way can create a brand image.

Brand associations are very important to a company, as they create value through (Keller, 1993:5):

1. Processing information;
2. Providing reasons to buy, as well as;

The provision of a basis for extension.

### **2.7.3 Perceived quality**

Aaker (2012:19) refers to perceived quality as the customers' perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service, with respect to its purpose in relation to its competitors or alternatives. Perceived quality is thus the reason behind the buy-in, and in the case of a university it would reflect the quality of the qualifications, accreditation and student life.

According to Moisescu (2005:214) a brand will be associated with its perception of the overall quality and not necessarily on the knowledge of the product specifications. This perceived quality is also the deciding factor and ultimately determine the brand's differentiation and competitive positioning within the market. Perceived quality is also directly related to attracting members and supporting a higher price and brand extension (Aaker, 2012:19). Customer satisfaction has been documented by Low and Lamb (2000:368) as an important factor in perceived quality. They argue that products and services are perceived by customers as high quality when customer satisfaction has been met. The top universities that is ranked to be the best will also be much more expensive.

### **2.7.4 Brand loyalty**

Brand loyalty is the core of brand equity and the attachment that the customer has to the brand (Aaker, 2012:21). Oliver (1997:34) defines brand loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive

same-brand or same-brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviours”.

According to literature, loyalty can be categorised into two levels, namely behavioural and cognitive (Keller, 1993:4; Keller & Brexendorf, 2017:4; Oliver, 1997:34). Behavioural loyalty refers to the repetitive purchases or the commitment to re-buy the brand as a first choice (Keller, 1993:4; Oliver, 1997:35). Cognitive loyalty on the other hand, refers to the customer’s intention to buy the brand as their first choice (Keller, 1993:4; Yoo & Donthu, 2001:12). In 2001, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001:90) argued, by means of a model, that behavioural loyalty leads to greater market share whilst cognitive loyalty leads to a willingness to pay a higher price in relation to a competitor with similar benefits. This means that brands with cognitive loyalty tend to pop up first in the minds of the customer when contemplating on buying something from the particular brand category.

Brand loyalty yields value by reducing marketing cost and leveraging trade (Keller, 1993:4). This is due to the fact that loyal customers expect an endless supply of a product and recommend others to use it as well. It is apparent that retaining existing customers is much more inexpensive than acquiring new ones (Keller, 2016:14; Oliver, 1997:35; Washburn & Plank, 2002:60; Yoo & Donthu, 2001:12). It is also true that loyal customers are much less likely to be enthused to buy from the competitor or learn about alternatives (Keller, 1993:4). Aaker (2012:21) argues that the true value of brand loyalty lies in the supply of habitual buyers over a longer period of time.

### **2.7.5 Brand assets**

Brand assets refer to patents, trademarks and channel relationships which a company can use to gain a strong competitive advantage (Moiescu, 2005:215). A trademark will protect brand equity from competitors who might want to confuse customers by using a similar name, symbol or package (Keller, 1993:3; Keller & Brexendorf, 2017:3). A patent can prevent direct competition if it is strong and relevant to the purchase decision process. Finally, a distribution channel can be indirectly controlled by a brand as customers expect the brand to be available.

The following section will look at the customer-based brand equity theoretical framework as conceptualised by Keller (1993), which will form the framework for the empirical study.

## **2.8 Theoretical framework: Customer-based brand equity**

In 2015, Charles and Gherman (2015:174) conducted an exploratory study entitled Students-based Brand equity in the Business Schools sector. In his study he conducted a customer based brand equity survey among the currently enrolled MBA students within the Peruvian business

schools. He suggested that the conceptualisation of brand equity from the perspective of the enrolled MBA students can be valuable for business schools to design marketing strategies that will lead to greater market share and attract more students. The same principle applies to a university as a whole. In 2012, Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:11) investigated the effects of rebranding on an institution of Higher Education in Botswana, with the aim of gaining an understanding into the perceptions of students following a rebranding exercise. They found that the brand equity toward the new branding was lower than that of the old one and argued that rebranding should be approached with caution as it can “erode” certain elements of a brand.

According to Keller (1993, 2), customer-based brand equity can be defined as the differential effect of the brand knowledge on the customer’s response to the marketing of the brand, which take place when the customer has strong brand associations or when the customer becomes familiar with the product or brand. According to this definition of customer-based brand equity, it gives some insight as to how the customer selects and chooses a brand from a selection of similar brands (Keller, 1993:8). Customer-based brand equity also provides marketers with insight as to how they can improve or sculpt their marketing efforts in order to enhance the overall value of the brand (Keller, 1993:8; Keller, 2016:3). When considering customer-based brand equity within the higher education landscape, it would typically refer to the way in which prospective students, staff, alumni, statutory bodies, stakeholders, and the general public perceive the overall value added to the brand, based on responses to the marketing efforts of the institutional brand (Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012:3).

Based on the definition of customer-based brand equity as defined by Keller (1993:8), customer-based brand equity is not only useful for managerial decision making, but also holds immense strategic value in the sense that brand knowledge nestled in the memory of the customer, greatly influences future marketing strategies. As this brand knowledge and recall influence future marketing strategies, it is important that managers understand how their marketing decisions will affect the customer in terms of brand related information.

Customer-based brand equity is thus a multidimensional construct and Washburn and Plank (2002:49) ascribe three dimensions to customer-based brand equity, namely customer knowledge, familiarity, and brand associations. Keller (1993, 8) on the other hand argued that brand knowledge forms the basis of customer-based brand equity, and further divided it into brand awareness and brand image. Keller further subdivided brand awareness into brand recall and recognition. Whilst brand recall refers to the ability of the customer to retrieve the brand when

cued with a brand category, brand recognition refers to the ability of a customer to confirm previous exposure to the brand when cued with the brand (Keller, 1993:16).

Tong and Hawley (2009:269) argue that customer-based brand equity occurs when the customer holds a strong favourable and unique brand association in their memory that is coupled with a high level of brand awareness.

In 2003, Keller and Lehmann (2003:29), suggested five dimensions to customer-based brand equity, namely brand awareness, associations, attitudes, attachment and activity. Additionally, in 2001, Yoo and Donthu (2001:12) also identified brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations and perceived quality as collective dimensions of customer-based brand equity.

In spite of these various views and conceptualisations of customer-based brand equity in literature, most of the concepts were most mostly concerned with the commercial markets (Aaker, 2009; Keller, 1993; Keller & Lehmann, 2003; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). In 2012, Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:3) proposed that three dimensions to customer-based brand equity could be used within the context of higher education, namely brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty. The conceptualization of customer-based brand equity in these three categories as proposed by Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:3) correlate with research done by Teh and Salleh (2011:226). They argued that when the conceptualisation of customer-based brand equity as proposed by Aaker (1991b) and that of Keller (1993) is merged, only three dimensions remain, namely brand awareness, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

Brand awareness refers to the ability of the customer to recognise and recall a brand (Aaker, 2012:22; Keller & Brexendorf, 2017:4) and according to Makgosa and Molefhi's (2012:3) research in the context of higher education brand awareness can relate to the ability of students to recognise and recall a brand ensuing a rebranding exercise. Keller (1993:8) referred to brand associations as the strength of the brand in the customer's memory that manifest in the form of meanings that the customer ascribes to the brand. Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:3) argued that these brand associations related to the ability of students to ascribe meaning to the brand after a rebranding exercise, in the context of higher education.

Brand loyalty is defined by (Aaker, 2012:21) as the attachment a customer has towards a brand and Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:3) claimed that brand loyalty within the context of higher education refers to the student's attachments ensuing the rebranding exercise.

These three dimensions of customer based brand equity, as proposed by Makgosa and Molefhi (2012:3), and the conceptualisations thereof to relate to the higher education sector, will form the basis for this study.

## **2.9 Summary**

Chapter 2 provided a literature review into the concept of a brand, rebranding, the process of rebranding, as well as the theoretical framework of customer-based brand equity in the higher education sector. According to the literature review, rebranding can erase certain aspects of brand equity and management should be vigilant in order to rebuild these aspects post rebranding. In order to address these concerns a brand equity audit should be conducted. The following chapter will look at the research methodology that was followed in order to conduct such a brand equity audit by means of a customer-based brand equity survey.

## **CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter focused on the literature review, which revealed that rebranding can damage the brand equity of an organisation if not executed with caution. Although rebranding is necessary for strategic reasons, it can adversely affect the perceptions of the customers. The main objective of this chapter is to give an overview of the research process, which includes the research methodology that was used during the empirical research process.

The questionnaire contained a cover letter which indicated that the survey was conducted for academic research to investigate the perceptions of students after the rebranding. The participants were assured that their response will be confidential. This was ensured by not asking for any identifiable information.

Students were asked to complete the questionnaires on campus. A random convenience sample of 200 students were approached and 169 were willing to participate in the study. From the 169 questionnaires only 146 were deemed valid for analysis, the rest were not filled in correctly or were incomplete.

### **3.2 Pilot study**

A sample of 10 students were asked to complete the questionnaire before the study commenced to test the questionnaire for any questions that might be confusing or unclear. The feedback from the test group confirmed that they understood the questions and the instrument was deemed acceptable by the researcher for the purpose for which it was intended to measure.

### **3.3 Measuring instrument**

The measuring instrument was based on a customer-based brand equity questionnaire which was developed by Makgosa and Molefhi (2012). Its aim is to measure the perceptions of brand equity. The questionnaire is based on a five point Likert scale where the 5-point scale ranges from 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neutral, 4 being agree and 5 being strongly agree. The structured questionnaire was compiled from the three dimensions of brand equity as proposed by literature (Aaker, 1991b; Keller, 1993; Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). The questionnaire contains 20 questions that focus on the perceptions of students by means of the three dimensions of brand equity, namely brand associations, brand loyalty and

brand awareness. One single question regarding their attitude about the rebranding was included as well.

**Brand associations** – 6 items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand association. Students had to indicate their response on a 5-point Likert scale where the 5-point scale range from 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neutral, 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree. Some of the questions included in this dimension were: *“I am attracted to this logo”, “I am attached to this logo”* and *“I have a lot of affection for this logo”*

**Brand loyalty** – 5 Items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand loyalty. Some of the question included were: *“I would love to recommend this logo”, “This logo would be my first choice”, “I consider myself loyal to this logo”* and *“I like and trust this logo”*.

**Brand awareness** – 8 items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand awareness. Some of the questions included were *“I am familiar with this logo”, “Some characteristics of the North-West University comes to mind quickly”, “I can recall this logo quickly”* and *“This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones”*.

**Overall attitude** - The overall attitude was measured by one single question: *“I am positive about the rebranding”*.

The old logo and the new logo were presented alongside each other in order to investigate how students perceive the new branding in relation to the old branding. Demographical information was omitted for this study as it does not really contribute to the significance of the study.

Below is the questionnaire that was distributed to the students:

# NWU BUSINESS SCHOOL

## Title of the study

### Investigating the brand perception of a South-African university pursuing a corporate rebranding strategy

Research conducted by:

Mr. Corne De Wee (20801432)

Cell: 081 319 3508

Date: 30 October 2018

Dear Student

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Corne J. De Wee, Masters student from the NWU Business School at the North-West University – Potchefstroom.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the brand perception of a South-Africa University pursuing a corporate rebranding strategy.

Please note the following:

- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 30 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Mr. Johannes Jordaan at [jordaan.johannes@nwu.ac.za](mailto:jordaan.johannes@nwu.ac.za), 081 299 1338, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please indicate that:



- You have read and understood the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. (Please tick)

**Ethics number (A): NWU-00693-18-S4**

**Date of consent:**

## Customer-Based Brand Equity of the North-West University

Please tick the appropriate box for both Logos (Old and New), on the Likert scale based on your personal view with regards to the corporate rebranding of the university following the recent unitary alignment strategy.

		 <p style="text-align: center;">Old logo (Green, Maroon &amp; Blue)</p>					 <p style="text-align: center;">New Logo (Purple)</p>				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Brand association</i>	1. I am attracted to this logo										
<i>Brand association</i>	2. I am attached to this logo										
<i>Brand association</i>	3. I have a lot of affection for this logo										
<i>Brand association</i>	4. This logo increases the respectability of the students										
<i>Brand association</i>	5. Thinking about this logo brings me joy and pleasure										
<i>Brand association</i>	6. This logo expresses my personality										

<i>Brand loyalty</i>	7. I would love to recommend this logo											
<i>Brand loyalty</i>	8. I will not consider any other logo but this one											
<i>Brand loyalty</i>	9. This logo would be my first choice											
<i>Brand loyalty</i>	10. I consider myself to be loyal to this logo											
<i>Brand loyalty</i>	11. I like and trust this logo											
<i>Brand awareness</i>	12. I can recognize this logo quickly among competing ones											
<i>Brand awareness</i>	13. I am familiar with this logo											
<i>Brand awareness</i>	14. Some characteristics of this logo comes to mind quickly											
<i>Brand awareness</i>	15. I know what this logo stands for											
<i>Brand awareness</i>	16. Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly											

	when I see this logo										
<i>Brand awareness</i>	17. When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind.										
<i>Brand awareness</i>	18. I can quickly recall this logo										
<i>Brand awareness</i>	19. This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones										
<i>Overall attitude</i>	20. I am positive about the rebranding										

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!**

**3.4 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis was done by means of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The first step in the statistical analysis include the factor analysis of the questions regarding customer-based brand equity, relating to higher education, as proposed by (Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012). The second step was the application of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of reliability on the extracted factors. The last step entailed paired t-test among the factors to see how the students perceive the new branding in relation to the old branding.

**3.5 Summary**

Before commencement of the research, the questionnaires were pre-tested by a test group of 10 students. Feedback from test group confirmed that they understood the questions and the instrument was deemed acceptable by the researcher for the purpose for which it was intended

to measure. The results from the empirical research will be exhibited and discussed in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation and discusses the results of the empirical study. The results are exhibited by means of figures and tables.

## 4.2 Validity and reliability

Validity was established by means of factor analysis. Factor analysis was done by using SPSS. Two separate factor analyses were conducted for the old logo as well as the new one in order to compare the perception of brand equity between the two. The main aim of the factor analysis was to explore the key dimensions of brand equity based on the data at hand.

### 4.2.1 Factor analysis for the old logo

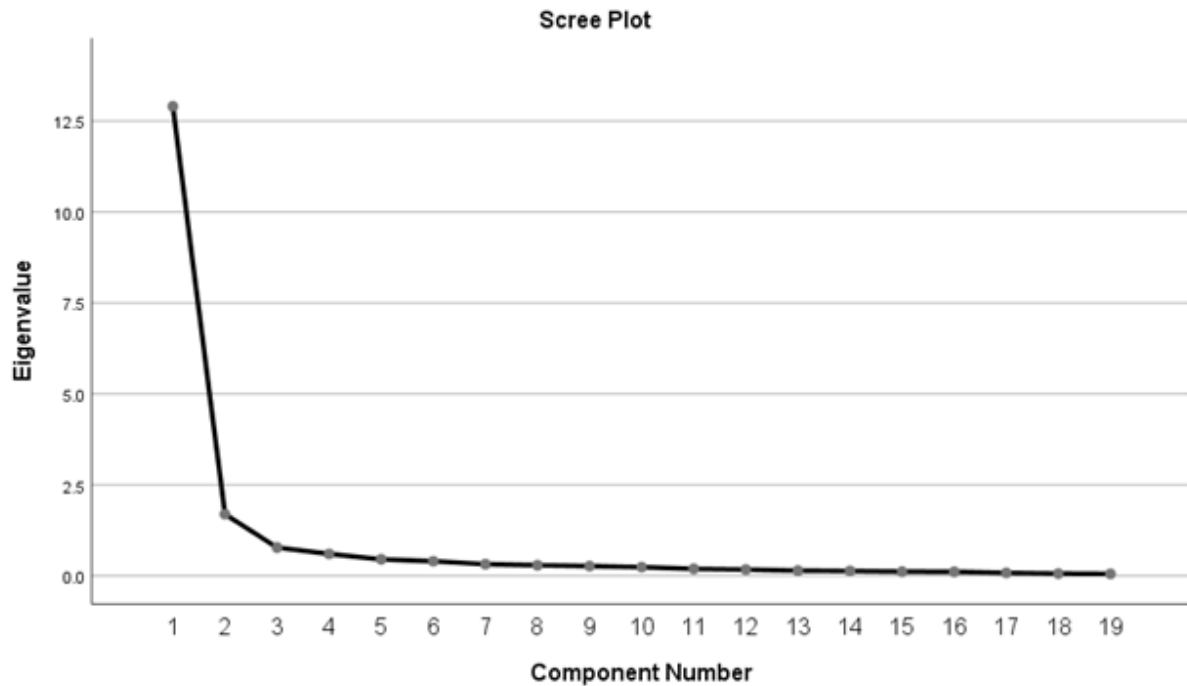
In order to test for sample size adequacy, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated for each logo. In both cases the values were well above 0.6 and we can therefore assume that the sample was sufficiently large enough for drawing meaningful conclusions.

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test for the old logo**

KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.936
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		3381.168
	df		171
	Sig.		.000

**Table 3: Total variance explained for the old logo**

<b>Total variance explained</b>							
<b>Component</b>	<b>Initial Eigen values</b>			<b>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>% variance</b>	<b>cumulative %</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% Variance</b>	<b>cumulative %</b>	<b>Rotation sums of squared loadings total</b>
1	12.906	67.925	67.925	12.906	67.925	67.925	11.368
2	1.694	8.915	76.840	1.694	8.915	76.840	10.914
3	.777	4.090	80.930				
4	.601	3.164	84.094				
5	.453	2.382	86.476				
6	.399	2.103	88.578				
7	.320	1.682	90.261				
8	.290	1.525	91.786				
9	.267	1.404	93.190				
10	.238	1.252	94.442				
11	.190	1.002	95.445				
12	.171	.898	96.343				
13	.142	.748	97.090				
14	.133	.700	97.790				
15	.114	.598	98.388				
16	.111	.584	98.972				
17	.080	.423	99.395				
18	.061	.322	99.717				
19	.054	.283	100.000				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.							
(a) When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.							



**Figure 9: Scree plot for factor analysis of the old logo**

The principal component method was used with the Eigenvalues set to be greater than 1 and a rotation method of Oblimin. The data was sorted according to size and coefficients less than 0.3 were blocked. From the factor analysis of the old logo two factors were extracted that had Eigenvalues greater than one, explaining cumulatively 77% of variance. For the first factor all 19 items were retained and for the second factor only 10 items were retained through factor analysis.

The component matrix for these two factors is given in Table 5: Principle component matrix for the old logo

**Table 4: Principle component matrix for the old logo**

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>		
	Component	
	1	2
Thinking about this logo brings me joy and pleasure	.882	
I consider myself loyal to this logo	.880	-.319
I like and trust this logo	.873	
I would love to recommend this logo	.863	

<b>Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>		
I am attracted to this logo	.859	
This logo increases the respectability of the students	.859	
This logo would be my first choice	.855	
This logo expresses my personality	.846	-.390
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind	.841	.322
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	.830	.336
I have a lot of affection for this logo	.824	
I can recall this logo	.808	.465
I can recognise this logo quickly among competing ones	.806	
Some characteristics of this logo come to mind quickly	.801	.364
Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly when I see this logo	.800	.341
I am attached to this logo	.787	
I am familiar with this logo	.782	.337
I know what this logo stands for	.738	.303
I will not consider any other logo but this one	.700	-.484
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.		

These two factors for the old logo was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alphas coefficient.

**Table 5: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for old logo**

Factor	Alpha value
Factor 1	0.973
Factor 2	0.942

The items' grouping into these two factors corresponded roughly with the research done by (Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012) who found that the two dimensions of brand equity applicable for higher education is brand awareness and brand image.

#### 4.2.2 Factor analysis for the new logo

Factor analysis was done on the new logo as well using the principal component method as a rotation method of Oblimin. The data was sorted according to size and coefficients less than .3 were blocked. From the Factor analysis of the new logo two factors were extracted that had Eigenvalues greater than one, explaining cumulatively 69% of variance.

**Table 6: KMO and Bartlett's test for the new logo**

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			.923
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2710.042	
	df	171	
	Sig.	.000	

**Table 7: Total variance explained for the new logo**

<b>Total Variance Explained</b>							
<b>Component</b>	<b>Initial Eigenvalues</b>			<b>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</b>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings Total</b>
1	11.983	63.069	63.069	11.983	63.069	63.069	11.390
2	1.096	5.769	68.838	1.096	5.769	68.838	8.407
3	.962	5.062	73.900				
4	.696	3.663	77.563				
5	.639	3.365	80.927				
6	.538	2.830	83.757				
7	.482	2.537	86.294				

Total Variance Explained							
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings Total
8	.420	2.211	88.505				
9	.389	2.046	90.551				
10	.325	1.711	92.263				
11	.286	1.503	93.765				
12	.225	1.184	94.949				
13	.217	1.143	96.092				
14	.200	1.052	97.143				
15	.142	.750	97.893				
16	.120	.631	98.524				
17	.108	.570	99.094				
18	.099	.518	99.612				
19	.074	.388	100.000				

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
a. When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Like the factor analysis of the old logo, the first factor retained all 19 items but the second factor only retained 5 items compared to the 10 items for the old logo. These two factors for the new logo was tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alphas coefficient.

**Table 8: Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the factors of the new logo**

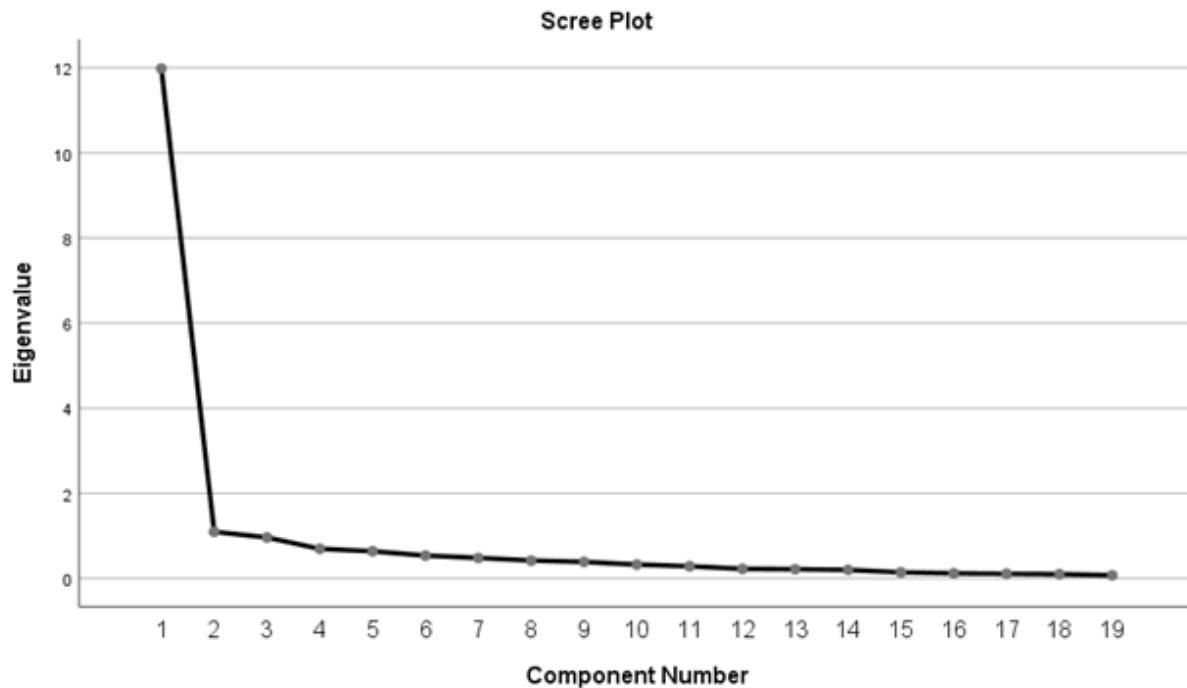
Factor	Alpha value
Factor 1	0.967
Factor 2	0.870

The component matrix for these two factors is given in Table 9: Principle component matrix for the new logo

**Table 9: Principle component matrix for the new logo**

<b>Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>		
	Component	
	1	2
This logo increases the respectability of the students	.853	
Some characteristics of this logo come to mind quickly	.844	
I am attracted to this logo	.839	
Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly when I see this logo	.828	
This logo would be my first choice	.827	-.326
I have a lot of affection for this logo	.825	
I would love to recommend this logo	.823	
I consider myself loyal to this logo	.820	
This logo expresses my personality	.819	
I like and trust this logo	.812	
I will not consider any other logo but this one	.809	-.370
I am attached to this logo	.791	
I can recognize this logo quickly among competing ones	.781	
Thinking about this logo brings me joy and pleasure	.779	
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind	.766	.321
I know what this logo stands for	.754	
I can recall this logo	.722	.498
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	.693	.495
I am familiar with this logo	.677	

**Figure 10:      Scree plot for factor analysis of the new logo**



The results of the factor analysis show that there is a difference between the factors extracted for the old and new logos. Whilst both retained all 19 items as the first factor, only 5 items were retained for the second factor for the new logo in comparison to the 10 items for the old logo. These retained factors were different for both logos with two positive loadings under the brand awareness and two negative loadings for brand loyalty. When calculating the reliability for these factors, deleting any of the negative values would not have made a significant difference in the alpha values, therefore the values were kept. The old logo retained more items for the second factor, four overlapping items were retained for both the old and new logos.

(Makgosa & Molefhi, 2012) refer to these two dimensions as being brand awareness and brand image, where brand image includes affection, attraction, attachment, loyalty, trust and preference and brand awareness refers to familiarity, knowledge, recall and recognition.

A comparison of the factor loadings for the two logos can be found in the table below:

**Table 10: Comparison of factor loadings between the old and new logos**

<b>Comparison of Factor Loadings between old logo and new logos</b>				
	<b>Old logo</b>		<b>New Logo</b>	
	<b>Factor loading</b>	<b>% of Variance and Alpha Value</b>	<b>Factor loading</b>	<b>% of Variance and Alpha Value</b>
Factor 1 – Brand image		67.925 % of variance 0.973		63.069 % of variance 0.967
I am attracted to this logo	.859		.839	
I am attached to this logo	.787		.791	
I have a lot of affection for this logo	.824		.825	
This logo increases the respectability of the students	.859		.853	
Thinking about this logo brings me joy and pleasure	.882		.779	
This logo expresses my personality	.846		.819	
I would love to recommend this logo	.863		.823	
I will not consider any other logo but this one	.700		.809	
This logo would be my first choice	.855		.827	
I consider myself to be loyal to this logo	.880		.820	
I like and trust this logo	.873		.812	
I can recognize this logo quickly among competing ones	.806		.781	
I am familiar with this logo	.782		.677	
Some characteristics of this logo come to mind quickly	.801		.844	
I know what this logo stands for	.738		.754	
Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly when I see this logo	.800		.828	
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind.	.841		.766	
I can quickly recall this logo	.808		.722	
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	.830		.693	

Factor 2 – Brand Awareness	79.840 % of variance 0.942			68.838% of variance 0.870
I consider myself to be loyal to this logo	-.319		NA	
This logo expresses my personality	-.390		NA	
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind	.322		.321	
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	.336		.495	
I can quickly recall this logo	.465		.498	
Some characteristics of this logo come to mind quickly	.341		NA	
Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly when I see this logo	.364		NA	
I am familiar with this logo	.337		NA	
I know what this logo stands for	.303		NA	
I will not consider any other logo but this one	-.484		-.370	
This logo would be my first choice	NA		-.328	

In order to compare the perceptions of the brand equity between to old branding and the new branding a series of paired t-tests were conducted on each question.

**Table 11: Comparison of student perception of brand equity after rebranding**

<b>Comparison of student perception of brand equity after rebranding</b>				
	<b>Old logo (Before rebranding) Mean (Standard deviation)</b>	<b>New logo (After rebranding) Mean (Standard deviation)</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Factor 1 – Brand image				
I am attracted to this logo	3.71 (1.181)	2.95 (.974)	4.793	.000
I am attached to this logo	3.74 (1.13752)	3.14 (1.12028)	3.589	.000
I have a lot of affection for this logo	3.66 (1.206)	2.90 (.974)	4.775	.000
This logo increases the respectability of the students	3.79 (1.052)	2.99 (1.117)	5.140	.000

Thinking about this logo brings me joy and pleasure	3.60 (1.184)	2.84 (1.017)	4.915	.000
This logo expresses my personality	3.47 (1.244)	2.90 (.988)	3.694	.000
I would love to recommend this logo	3.70 (1.171)	3.03 (1.114)	4.257	.000
I will not consider any other logo but this one	3.47 (1.365)	2.80 (1.148)	3.711	.000
This logo would be my first choice	3.67 (1.334)	2.88 (1.223)	4.318	.000
I consider myself to be loyal to this logo	3.60 (1.251)	2.88 (1.177)	4.119	.000
I like and trust this logo	3.80 (1,136)	3.08 (1.047)	4.691	.000
I can recognize this logo quickly among competing ones	4.04 (1.107)	3.28 (1.156)	5.040	.000
I am familiar with this logo	4.18 (1.008)	3.40 (1.054)	5.720	.000
Some characteristics of this logo come to mind quickly	4.03 (1.003)	3.13 (1.072)	6.158	.000
I know what this logo stands for	4.01 (1.073)	3.25 (1.118)	5.223	.000
Some characteristics of the North-West University come to mind quickly when I see this logo	3.94 (1.012)	3.16 (1.051)	5.472	.000
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind.	4.00 (.990)	3.13 (1.110)	6.262	.000
I can quickly recall this logo	4.08 (.990)	3.22 (1.117)	6.278	.000
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	4.01 (.958)	3.03 (1.104)	7.261	.000
Factor 2 – Brand awareness				
When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind	4.00 (.990)	3.13 (1.110)	6.262	.000
This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones	4.01 (.958)	3.03 (1.104)	7.261	.000
I can quickly recall this logo	4.08 (.990)	3.22 (1.117)	6.278	.000
I will not consider any other logo but this one	3.47 (1.365)	2.80 (1.148)	3.711	.000

The table above exhibits the results of the paired t-test. Since all items were retained for both logos under factor 1 that was labelled Brand image, the paired t-tests were conducted for all 19 items. Only the overlapping questions for the second factor were used for the t-test, but since all questions were used for the first factor, those values were the same as for the first factor.

If we take the factors of brand image as a basis for comparison, seeing as it retained all items for both logos, we can make the following conclusions:

- The overall means for the old logo scored higher than that of the new logo. The means that the old logo ranges between 3.47 and 4.18, in comparison to the means of the new logo who scored between 2.80 and 3.40.
- The items that scored the highest means for the old logo are: *“I am familiar with this logo”*, *“Some characteristics of this logo comes to mind quickly”* and *“I can recognize this logo quickly among competing ones”*. The items with the highest scores for the new logo were the following items *“I am familiar with this logo”*, *“I know what this logo stands for”* and *“I can quickly recall this logo”*.

The overall means for the brand awareness dimension both logos retained the highest means between the two dimensions, with mean values ranging between 4.001 and 3.47 for the old logo and between 2.80 and 3.22 for the new logo.

- The items that scored the highest for the brand awareness dimension for the old logo are *“I can quickly recall this logo”*, *“This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones”* and *“When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind”*. The highest scoring items for the new logo in the brand awareness dimension are *“I can quickly recall this logo”*, *“When I think of a tertiary institution, this logo comes to mind and”*, and *“This logo is unique when compared to other competing ones”*.
- In all cases of the retained items for the brand awareness dimension the overall scores for the old logo were higher than that of the new logo.

The item with the lowest t-value (3.589), is the item *“I am attached to this logo”*, which means that students feel more or less the same level of attached for both logos, and this can be explained by the minimal structural modification of the logo itself, besides the changing of the colour. It is confirmed by the fact that one of the highest scores for the new logo was the item *“I can quickly recall this logo”*.

#### **4.2.3 Attitude towards the rebranding**

Attitude toward the rebranding was measured using a single question *“I am positive about the rebranding”* and the following descriptive statistics were collated by SPSS:

**Table 12: Descriptive statistics for attitude towards the rebranding**

Statistics					
I am positive about the rebranding					
N	Valid	146			
	Missing	0			
Std. Deviation		1.135			
Variance		1.288			
Minimum		1			
Maximum		5			
I am positive about the rebranding					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	12	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Disagree	24	16.4	16.4	24.7
	Neutral	60	41.1	41.1	65.8
	Agree	27	18.5	18.5	84.2
	Strongly agree	23	15.8	15.8	100.0
	Total	146	100.0	100.0	

From the descriptive statistics displayed above one can see that the overall attitude is very neutral with a 41% of the responses in the neutral category, 16.4% of the respondents disagreed with the rebranding and 15.8% strongly agreed with the rebranding.

## CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

This study comprised of a literature review and an empirical study. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the brand perception of current full time students, now that the rebranding exercise has been completed, by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire. This chapter is aimed at concluding the research, stating the limitations, and providing recommendations for future research.

### 5.2 Conclusions

The sampling method that was used to conduct this research was a non-probability sampling based on the convenience method. The perceptions of the students were measured using an adapted and pre-validated questionnaire by Makgosa and Molefhi (2012). Students were asked to complete the questionnaires on campus. The questionnaire aimed at measuring the students' perception of the following dimensions:

**Brand associations** – 6 Items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand association.

**Brand loyalty** – 5 Items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand loyalty.

**Brand awareness** – 8 items were used to measure the students' perceptions regarding brand awareness.

**Overall attitude** - The overall attitude was measured by one single question: *"I am positive about the rebranding"*.

The questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert scale. The 5-point scale ranged from 1 being "strongly disagree", 2 being "disagree", 3 being "neutral", 4 being "agree" and 5 "strongly agree". The old logo and the new logo were presented alongside each other in order to investigate how students perceive the new branding in relation to old branding.

The data was statistically analyzed by means of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The first step in the statistical analysis included a validity testing through factor analysis for both logos. From the factor analysis of the old logo two factors were extracted that had Eigenvalues greater than one, explaining cumulatively 77% of variance. The factor analysis of the new logo

extracted two factors that had Eigenvalues greater than one, which explained cumulatively 69% of variance. These extracted factors were tested for reliability through the application of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability, and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient value for the extracted factors were higher than 0.7. This confirmed the reliability of the test. The last step entailed a series of paired t-tests among the extracted items to see how the students perceive the new branding in relation to the old branding.

The results of the paired t-test revealed that the brand equity of the old logo is higher than that of the new logo and that the dimension of brand awareness scored the overall highest means for both the old and the new branding.

The overall attitude of the students toward the rebranding was fairly neutral with only 8.2% of the respondents disagreeing with the rebranding and 41% being neutral about the rebranding.

### **5.2.1 Meeting research objectives**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the brand perception of current full-time students, following the recent rebranding, by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire.

The specific research objectives of this study were to:

- Conduct a literature study to understand the effect of rebranding on brand equity;
- Establish the perception of students regarding the colour change of the branding of the university;
- Identify the key dimensions of brand equity of the university from the data obtained; and
- Investigate the overall brand equity of the University among students by means of a customer-based brand equity questionnaire.

The results revealed that brand equity for the old logo was higher than that of the new logo, which means that the brand equity declined after the rebranding. Two dimensions were identified by means of factor analysis and were labelled brand image and brand awareness. This confirmed and correlated with previous research. The dimension of brand awareness scored the overall highest means for both the old and new branding and the brand image of the new logo scored the overall lowest means. The overall attitude of the students toward the rebranding was fairly neutral.

### **5.2.2 Limitations to the study**

There are a number of limitations to the study:

- The first limitation is the fact that only students on the Potchefstroom campus were included in the study.
- A second limitation is the fact that most students are not very informed regarding the rebranding process.
- Thirdly, due to some aversive influences on the NWU brand, such as the recent language policy changes and racial tension on campus, the feedback could have been influenced.

Finally, the sampling method for this research was a convenience sampling method and could not have been a true representation of the target population. Future research where all stakeholders are included can provide a broader look into the consumer perceptions of all stakeholders regarding the recent rebranding.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Rebranding an institution of higher education can be very daunting and literature warned against possible erosion of brand equity. Based on the findings the following actions are recommended:

- Although the overall mean scores from the findings for the brand awareness dimension were higher for both logos, the findings suggest that students are still unsure as to what the logo stands for and the meaning behind the purple colour for the rebranding. The university should continue to raise brand awareness through various brand awareness campaigns on digital as well as printed platforms.
- The brand image of the new logo scored very low in comparison to the old logo, and thus management should invest some time in order to make it more appealing to resonate with students' personalities, since students felt that this logo does not express their personalities.
- The university should conduct a campaign around the rebranding, specifically aimed at communicating to and educating students about the meaning behind the logo and brand colours and how it relates to the brand attributes. This can be done on social media, the university website as well as printed media.

This study was conducted with only one unit of the stakeholders in mind, further research that inclusive of all stakeholder like staff and alumni is advised for a more comprehensive study.

#### **5.4 Summary**

The study revealed that there are warnings in literature which suggest that rebranding, whether evolutionary or revolutionary, can be harmful in the sense that it can erode certain aspects of the brand equity of a brand.

Findings from the study showed that the brand equity of the North-West University has declined after the rebranding. The North-West University needs to address this decline in the dimensions of brand equity that was found, namely brand awareness and brand image. This can be done by creating a number of brand awareness campaigns on both digital and printed media platforms.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Aaker, D. 1991. *Managing brand equity: capitalizing on the value of a brand name*. New York: The Free Press.
- Aaker, D.A. 2012. *Building strong brands*. Simon and Schuster.
- AMA. (2018). American Marketing Association, Dictionary. [online] Available at: <https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B> Date of access: 28 Oct 2018.
- Anon. 2012. New Visual Identity for our campuses. <http://www.liu.edu/post/rebranding> Date of access: 8 November 2018.
- Blanche, M.T., Blanche, M.J.T., Durrheim, K. & Painter, D. 2006. *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*: Juta and Company Ltd.
- Brown, S. 2016. *Brands and branding*. Sage.
- Bryman, A. Bell, E. 2015. *Business research methods*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Brynard, D.J. Hanekom, S. Brynard, P. 2014. *Introduction to research*. Van Schaik.
- Chad, P. 2016. Corporate rebranding: An employee-focused non-profit case study. *Journal of non-profit & public sector marketing*, 28(4): 327-350.
- Charles, V. & Gherman, T. 2015. Student-based brand equity in the business schools sector: An exploratory study. Vol. 42.
- Chaudhuri, A. Holbrook, M.B. 2001. The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: the role of brand loyalty. *Journal of marketing*, 65(2): 81-93.
- Christodoulides, G. Cadogan, J.W. Veloutsou, C. 2015. Consumer-based brand equity measurement: Lessons learned from an international study. *International Marketing Review*, 32(3/4): 307-328.
- Martin, G, 2016. Collins English Dictionary (Reference edition) , Reference Reviews, Vol. 30 Issue: 4, pp.20-28, <https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-02-2016-0029>
- Daly, A. Moloney, D. 2005. Managing corporate rebranding. *Irish Marketing Review*, 17(1/2): 30-36.
- Dicey, L. 2018. Has Absa rebrand missed the mark? <https://www.businesslive.co.za/redzone/news-insights/2018-07-16-has-absa-rebrand-missed-the-mark/> Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.
- Edge, J. Milligan, A. 2009. *Don't Mess with the logo*. Pearson Education: Canada.

- Etikan, I. Musa, S.A. Alkassim, R.S. 2016. Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1): 1-4.
- Farhana, M. 2012. Brand elements lead to brand equity: Differentiate or die. *Information management and business review*, 4(4): 223-233.
- Gladden, J.M. Funk, D.C. 2002. Developing an understanding of brand associations in team sport: Empirical evidence from consumers of professional sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 16(1): 54-81.
- Green, J. 2016. NB Studio rebrands Ravensbourne with a modern twist on the university crest. <https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/ravensbourne-nb-studio-rebrand-030616> Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.
- Gumede, M. 2017. Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University to rebrand itself. <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/education/2017-07-10-nelson-mandela-metropolitan-university-to-rebrand-itself/> Date of access: 28 May 2018.
- Judson, K.M., Aurand, T.W., Gorchels, L. Gordon, G.L. 2008. Building a university brand from within: University administrators' perspectives of internal branding. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 30(1): 54-68.
- Keller, K.L. 1993. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *The Journal of Marketing*, 1-22.
- Keller, K.L. 2016. Reflections on customer-based brand equity: Perspectives, progress, and priorities. *AMS review*, 6(1-2): 1-16.
- Keller, K.L. Brexendorf, T.O. 2017. Measuring brand equity. *Handbuch Markenführung*, 1-32.
- Keller, K.L. Lehmann, D.R. 2003. How do brands create value? *Marketing management*, 12(3): 26-31.
- Keller, K.L., Parameswaran, M. Jacob, I. 2011. Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity. Pearson Education: India.
- Kohli, C., Leuthesser, L. Suri, R. 2007. Got slogan? Guidelines for creating effective slogans. *Business Horizons*, 50(5): 415-422.
- Kotler, P. Keller, K.L. 2015. Marketing Management. Pearson Education Limited.
- Lavrakas, P. 2008. Encyclopedia of survey research methods. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.
- Lerman, D. Garbarino, E. 2002. Recall and recognition of brand names: A comparison of word and non-word name types. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(7-8): 621-639.

- Low, G.S. Lamb, C.W. 2000. The measurement and dimensionality of brand associations. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 9(6): 350-370.
- Makgosa, R. Molefhi, B.A. 2012. Rebranding an institution of higher education in Botswana. *Business and economic research*, 2(2): 1-13.
- Melewar, T.C. Karaosmanoglu, E. 2006. Seven dimensions of corporate identity: A categorisation from the practitioners' perspectives. *European journal of marketing*, 40(7/8): 846-869.
- Middleton, S. 2010. Build a brand in 30 days: With Simon Middleton, The brand strategy Guru. John Wiley & Sons.
- Miller, J. Muir, D. 2005. The business of brands: John Wiley & Sons.
- Muzellec, L. Lambkin, M. 2006. Corporate rebranding: destroying, transferring or creating brand equity? *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(7/8): 803-824.
- NWU. 2017. New primary colour for the NWU. <http://news.nwu.ac.za/from-vice-chancellor> Date of access: 20 May 2018.
- NWU. 2018a. Corporate Identity Manual [https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/sites/intranet.nwu.ac.za/files/files/nwu%20kid%202018\\_f.pdf](https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/sites/intranet.nwu.ac.za/files/files/nwu%20kid%202018_f.pdf) Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.
- NWU. 2018b. History of the NWU. <http://www.nwu.ac.za/content/nwu-history-nwu> Date of access: 20 May 2018.
- Oliver, R. 1997. Satisfaction: A behavioural perspective on the consumer. New York: Irwin-McGraw-Hill.
- Plewa, C., Lu, V. Veale, R. 2011. The impact of rebranding on club member relationships. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 23(2): 222-242.
- Sanjari, M., Bahramnezhad, F., Fomani, F.K., Shoghi, M. & Cheraghi, M.A. 2014. Ethical challenges of researchers in qualitative studies: The necessity to develop a specific guideline. *Journal of medical ethics and history of medicine*, 7.
- Spies, D. 2017. New Nelson Mandela University logo slated as 'toddler lego blocks'. <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/new-nelson-mandela-university-logo-slated-as-toddler-lego-blocks-20170721> Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.
- Stuart, H. Muzellec, L. 2004. Corporate makeovers: Can a hyena be rebranded? *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(6): 472-482.
- Svensson, G. Wood, G. 2007. Are university students really customers? When illusion may lead to delusion for all! *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(1): 17-28.

Villiers, J.D. 2018. Cell C has a new brand colour - and it may look familiar to a global mobile giant. <https://www.businessinsider.co.za/cell-cs-new-orange-branding-is-nearly-identical-to-a-global-telecommunications-giant-which-dominates-in-africa-2018-5> Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.

Washburn, J.H. Plank, R.E. 2002. Measuring brand equity: An evaluation of a consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 10(1): 46-62.

Werpin, A. 2011. Watch out ESPN: CBS Rebranding 'CBS College Sports Network' as 'CBS Sports Network'. <https://www.adweek.com/tvnewser/watch-out-espn-cbs-rebranding-cbs-college-sports-network-as-cbs-sports-network/88144> Date of access: 8 Nov 2018.

Woyo, E., Halimani, H. Gwavuya, F. 2014. Brand reputation management within the higher education sector: A review of the literature on higher education brand reputation management. *International Research Journal of Marketing*, 2(1), p.1.

Yoo, B. Donthu, N. 2001. Developing and validating a multidimensional consumer-based brand equity scale. *Journal of business research*, 52(1): 1-14.