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Brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders and implications for corporate brand management in South Africa

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management: Strategic Marketing (MMSM)

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A Research Report submitted by

Mankwe, Olivia Sithole

ABSTRACT

Band co-creation is gaining significance as an area of study as the branding logic shifts from the view of customers as passive supporters of brands to multiple stakeholders as active collaborators and co-creators of brands. Firms and academics alike are investigating ways to effectively harness increasing stakeholder involvement in brand management. However, research specific to brand co-creation remains fragmented and sparse. It is mostly apparent in the context of consumers as stakeholders, and very little considers multiple stakeholders.

As the subject of brand co-creation is new and emerging, in extant literature, there is limited understanding of how organisations incorporate multiple stakeholders in their brand building interventions. Furthermore, in South Africa, no such study has been undertaken. This study contends for a multiple stakeholder perspective on brand co-creation by exploring brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad managerial implications. The study is an explorative, qualitative study, employing a single case study approach, located at a local firm that interfaces with multiple stakeholders in its operations.

The findings indicate that brand co-creation as a term is new and unfamiliar in practice, confirming extant literature. Furthermore, the increasing and deepening stakeholder network that organisations must contend with in brand building engagements was confirmed. Importantly the study revealed the tension that brand co-creation creates from a management perspective, alongside various other management inferences. The findings express that co-creation of brands between an organisation and its multiple stakeholders is challenging traditional perspectives of brand management, implying shared control and authority over brands. This creates a power duality and greater negotiation of terms between brands and their increasingly complex stakeholder network. The findings offer practical solutions and guidelines for practitioners to consider prior to engaging in brand co-creation interventions with multiple stakeholders.

DECLARATION

I, Mankwe Olivia Sithole, declare that this research proposal is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Mankwe Olivia Sithole



(Type your name in full here, and sign in the space above)

Signed at 15 Robin Road, Kyalami Hills
On the **27** day of **March 2018**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my beautiful daughters, Kuhle, 6 and half and Lwazi, 13 months old. May you grow up to be wonderful human beings: confident in your abilities, comfortable in your skin, grounded in your values, gracious in your relationships and determined in your pursuit of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey was challenging and rewarding. As a working mom of two I am grateful for my family for their unwavering support, understanding and love. With that here's to a few great humans:

My darling husband, Gaby Sithole, without you I am an aimless soul. Thank you for the generous love you give to me and all that you do for our family. The girls and I are lucky to have a fortress like you to look after our hearts, minds and souls.

My parents, who have sacrificed so much to give me a better chance at life. Mama and Papa your efforts have not gone un-noticed.
To my siblings, may we continue to love and support each other through life's ebbs and flows.

To my in-laws, particularly Mama Billy, your support through this journey has been heartwarming. I love and appreciate you so much.

To my friends, particularly Gail and Justine, you have encouraged and pushed me to see this through and follow in your exemplary footsteps!

Lastly, to my supervisor, DR. Yvonne Saini, thank you for your guidance and wisdom in this journey, and most importantly your patience.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa. This paper contends for a multi-stakeholder perspective on brand co-creation conceptualisation by addressing research interest related to broader, non-consumer stakeholders and their role in co-creating brands. As the discipline of brand management becomes more complex and sophisticated, it touches on all stakeholders and their relationship with brands as well as impacts all aspects of an organisation (Gregory, 2007; Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Stakeholder-oriented brand management is increasingly gaining importance as it considers the active role of multiple stakeholders in co-creating brand meaning (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2012) and value. Evidence of stakeholder brand co-creation is more apparent in literature on consumers as stakeholders and only in recent times, is there a shift towards a multi-stakeholder co-creation perspective (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2012).

To this end, there's a need for more scientific research to broaden academic knowledge and understanding of brand co-creation between organisations and their increasingly complex stakeholder networks (Jones, 2005; Kornberger, 2010; Ind, Iglesias and Schultz, 2013); Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015; Hillebrand, Driessen & Koll, 2015; Pera, Occhiocupo, and Clarke, 2016) and the implication that has on corporate brand management broadly (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum ,2013). Vallaster & von Wallpach (2012) noted that, when multiple stakeholders interact with brands, it alters the role of management. The scholars claim that in this context, management will struggle to keep control of the brand

meaning as they are no longer the sole creators of brand meaning, but rather they have become one of the many contributors of brand meaning in a co-creation process, and thus must actively engage with key stakeholders to maintain brand consistency (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2012). This paper seeks to contribute to the brand co-creation literature in the context of multiple stakeholders by exploring brand co-creation interactions with multiple stakeholders and the broad implications on corporate brand management (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum ,2013).

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

According to Chakravorti (2010) the role of stakeholders in marketing and branding literature is expanding. There's an evident shift in brand management thought that perceives brands as social systems (Iglesias, Ind & Alfaro, 2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013) where brand value is a result of co-creation between an organisation and all its stakeholders who are active and not passive to the value created (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Merz et al., 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Vargo & Lusch (2008) add that increasingly in literature, there's an acknowledgement that the value of a brand is co-created by the interface of multiple stakeholders as opposed to just the dyadic interaction between the organisation and its customers.

The notion of stakeholder marketing has placed emphasis on the extended number of stakeholders that brand custodians ought to consider in their brand building efforts (Hillebrand, Driessen & Koll, 2015; Ming, Wang & Sengupta, 2016). Stakeholder marketing asserts that relationships with customers maybe influenced by the interaction with other stakeholders and that a diversified network of stakeholders rather than just the dyadic relationship between an organisation and its customers contributes towards creating brand value (Gummesson, 2008; Frow and Payne, 2011).

Theoretically, marketing thought has also shifted from a goods-dominant logic (G-DL) where companies make products and consumers passively buy them to a service-dominant logic (S-DL) where consumers connect and engage in conversation with companies during the design, production, delivery and consumption phase (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Payne et al.,2009). The change in marketing thought has spilled over to branding literature and incited the force of brand co-creation and re-focused organisations around the consumer as a value creator (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the same breath, stakeholder theory asserts that organisations rely on a network of relationships where firms are obligated to the network either legally, morally or contractually (Jones, 2005) and that brand value is created through dialogical relations with multiple stakeholders (Ind et al., 2013).

Today, organisations are challenging their own orthodox views of value creation and are seeking newer and more innovative ways of integrating resources towards gaining inimitable capabilities that will enable them to carve out compelling competitive advantages (Saarijärvi and Kuusela, 2013). Multiple stakeholders are now participating in upstream processes such as idea generation, design and productions aspects of an organisation. Correspondingly, organisations are increasingly switching towards being “open” by opening their internal idea and innovation processes to stakeholders (Chesbrough, 2003). This manifests in companies receiving insight and input from their various stakeholders, co-creating value propositions with them and promoting greater brand engagement (Chakravorti, 2010). This approach contrasts the historical linear approaches to marketing where brands controlled the message, the interactions and the consumer experience (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015).

While studies on brand co-creation and value co-creation broadly are increasingly developing albeit mostly conceptual (Pillai, 2012); they are largely focused on consumers as co-creators of value as opposed to a broader stakeholder network see (Merz et al., 2009; France, Merrilees & Miller, 2015; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). However, Merz et al. (2009, p.328) contend that the concept of branding is converging into a new logic that perceives brands as “collaborative, value co-

creation activities of firms and all of their stakeholders". Leading studies in co-creationperceive the development of brand meaning as a social interaction co-created within a dynamic stakeholder network (see Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Payne et al., 2009; Merz et al., 2009) which contradicts earlier articulation of co-creation as a dyadic relationship between the customer and the firm (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Scholars in the brand co-creation space thus concede that research has mostly empirically considered brand co-creation in relation to consumers and marketers and has insufficiently delved deeply into how brand co-creation occurs within a broader stakeholder network (Ramaswamy &Ozcan,2015; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Brodie, Whittome & Brush, 2009).

Relatedly, Gregory (2007) laments that while corporate branding literature recognises the crucial role of all stakeholders, there's little attention paid both in literature and in practice on how the broad range of stakeholders can be actively included in developing corporate brands (Gregory, 2007). Thus the purpose of the study is to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implication on corporate brand management. Specifically, from an academic perspective, the paper employs the service dominant logic (S-DL) and stakeholder theory as foundations to understand the phenomenon. From a practitioner's perspective, the paper seeks to highlight that brand co-creation is not limited to the dyadic relationship between brands and customers, but rather it includes the broader relationships between the organisation and other stakeholders who are equally an important source of brand value (Mitchell, 2002; Hillebrand et al., 2015; Pera et al.,2016).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.3.1 *Main problem*

To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.

As discussed in the context of the study, there's a dearth of academic research that delves into the realities of brand co-creation and stakeholder complexity. Merz et al. (2009) highlighted as a key challenge, how to incorporate multiple stakeholders in the innovation as well as as creative processes of organisations. According to Jones (2005, p.10), brand value is a "multifarious construct that is affected by, or the sum of, a gamut of relationships". Similarly, Iglesias et al. (2013) in their study concluded that brands cannot be considered from the perspective of just consumers or the organisation, but rather from a broader stakeholder view of brand management. Brand co-creation is thus gaining significance as an area of study as firms and academics alike are investigating ways to effectively harness increasing stakeholder involvement to provide opportunities for brands (Juntunen, 2012; France et al., 2015; Iglesias, Ind and Alfaro, 2013; Grandy & Levit, 2015).

However, the literature supporting these claims is emergent (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015) and there remains a paucity of empirical research on how brands are co-created with multiple stakeholder (Iglesias et al.,2013; Gyrd-jones & Kornum, 2013; Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013).

1.3.2 *Sub-problems*

- The first sub-problem is to explore brand co-creation engagements (the nature of engagements) in a multiple stakeholder context in South Africa.

- The second sub-problem is to understand the broad managerial implications of brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder South Africa

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 *The first sub-problem: research questions*

1. How does brand co-creation manifest within a broader stakeholder network?
2. How can a broad range of stakeholders be actively included in brand building efforts?
3. Who are the most salient stakeholders that are actively participating in brand co-creation efforts?
4. Which channels of engagements are prevalent in a multiple stakeholder brand co-creational interaction?

1.4.2 *The second Sub-problem: Research question*

1. What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction?

2. What are the broad managerial implications of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on brand management?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to achieve the following theoretical and empirical research objectives:

1.5.1 *Theoretical objectives:*

- To contribute to the understanding of brand co-creation in a multi-stakeholder context.
- To contribute towards expanding existing knowledge on co-creational brand strategies and broader perspectives of stakeholder value
- Understand the impact of brand co-creation on corporate brand management.
- The role of the organisation in a brand co-creation context

1.5.2 *Empirical objectives:*

1. To further understanding of how organisations can co-create value with multiple stakeholders.
2. Investigate the role of various stakeholder groups in modern brand management.
3. Identify brand co-creation channels in a multi-stakeholder perspective.

1.6 RESEARCH GAP & JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This paper is conceived from a wider exploration of co-creation and brand co-creation literature. In brand management literature, the notion of brand and branding is evolving. However, explanations of co-creation and brand co-creation are emergent, ambiguous and require clarification (Ballantyne et al., 2011; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Juntunen, 2012; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Saarijarvi & Kuusela,2013; Iglesias et al.,2013; Grandy & Levit, 2015). Payne et al. (2009) suggest that research in this space remains fragmented and sparse. Pillai (2012) adds that additional empirical studies are required in co-creation because the prevailing research is predominantly abstract. Similarly, the idea of brand co-creation

specifically is a new phenomenon, to this end, there's a dearth of adequate research in the space that is supported by theoretically grounded frameworks of what brand co-creation is and entails (Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2015).

The stakeholder-focus branding era as purported by Merz et al. (2009) suggests that brand value is co-created with multiple stakeholders. According to Merz et al. (2009), scholars in the branding area from the early 2000s have begun to embrace a stakeholder approach to branding which implies that (a) brand value is co-created within a stakeholder network, (b) brand value is developed through social interactions with different stakeholders and (c) stakeholders form a network relationship with brands. So how then does brand co-creation happen with multiple stakeholders? Ind et al. (2013) discuss that there is certainly limited understanding of how organisations incorporate co-creation in brand building processes with multiple stakeholders. Until recently, consumers have been the main actors in a brand co-creation context, suggesting that the work in brand co-creation in a multi-stakeholder environment is still underserved (Hatch &Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Iglesias et al., 2013).

Correspondingly, Wang & Sengupta (2016) assert that the marketing space has evolved beyond the consumer and now takes into consideration a broad range of stakeholders such as investors, suppliers, employees, customers, distributors who are a valuable resource that can enable organisations to compete more effectively in the market place (Frow and Payne, 2011; Hillebrand et al.,2015). Wang and Sengupta (2016) further posit that stakeholders do more than affect the product brand, but also contribute towards shaping the corporate brand. While interest in investigating the link between stakeholders and brands is at an early phase, existing research acknowledges the active role that multiple stakeholders play in co-creating brand value e.g. (Iglesias et al.,2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Grandy & Levit, 2015; Pera et al., 2016; Kazadi et al.,2016). However, there is still a dearth of research that addresses how stakeholders create brand value or the role of multiple stakeholders as a marketing resource (Wang and Sengupta,2016).

An extensive literature review indicates that various scholars are in agreement that although consumers are key to the brand co-creation process, very little research addresses brand co-creation from the perspective of multiple stakeholders (Merz et al.,2009; Brodie et al., 2009; Frow &Payne, 2011; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Hillebrand et al., 2015; Pera et al., 2016). The scholars further argue that stakeholder marketing despite growing interest, has to date not gone further than acknowledging that organisations have multiple stakeholders (Pera et al., 2016; Hillebrand et al., 2015). This study responds to the need to further understanding of how organisations can co-create value with multiple stakeholders.

We have considered some prior research and conceptualisations of co-creation within a branding context towards uncovering the emergent issues. The analysis has revealed that brand researchers are moving toward a co-creation approach to branding, where brand co-creation is seen as a process of building brands together (Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2015). The topic of brand co-creation has been tackled within various context and in particular from the perspective of consumers and only recently from a multiple stakeholder context.

Based on extant literature the study of brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder network and the impact on corporate brand management is underserved. In particular, there's no evidence of such a study in South Africa. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to better articulate brand co-creation in relation to various stakeholders (Brodie et al., 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Iglesias et al, 2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013) and to observe this phenomenon in a corporate brand context as corporate brands have to take into consideration a broader view of stakeholder needs (Balmer, 1995, de Chernatony, 2002; Gregory, 2007; Helm & Jones, 2010).

Consequently, corporate brands create a rich setting for complex stakeholder dynamics. Abratt and Kleyn (2012) are also in agreement that from a corporate brand perspective, research has been predominately conducted with consumers in mind and that brand experiences with a broader stakeholder groups such as

suppliers, shareholders and distributors must be considered, managed and directed so as to build resilient corporate brands.

Saarijarvi & Kuusela (2013) expand that the value-creating system should thus be reinvented where different players such as employees, customers, suppliers, partners, communities work in unison to co-create brand value. The objective here is to broadly understand how organisations interface with various stakeholders towards developing, maintaining and enhancing their corporate brand. In so doing, the study seeks to address appeals for more research on brand co-creation across various stakeholder settings (Iglesias et al.,2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Brodie et al.,2009; Frow & Payne, 2011; Hatch & Schultz, 2010) and the need for more inclusive, interactive and integrated perspectives of brand co-creation (Merz et al., 2009; Ming et al., 2016).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Marketing and branding transactions have become open, interactive and relational in nature (Zhang & He, 2014), this calls for a need for branding literature to consider a more inclusive and holistic approaches to brand building efforts broadly. Similarly, there's a need to grasp the various brand relationships that corporate brands are involved with and how value can be co-created. In literature, there's evidence of a growing trend on the part of organisations to open multiple channels of communication to multiple stakeholders. Consequently, different stakeholder groups are demanding to learn more and know more about the companies behind the brands they support (Gregory, 2007; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010) forcing transparency and accountability from organisations (Gregory, 2007). According to Frow & Payne (2011), there's a need to explore a wide range of co-creation opportunities with other stakeholders and literature seems to "ignore value co-creation opportunities offered by adopting the stakeholder perspective" (Frow and Payne, 2011, p.245).

As the trajectory of business points towards more collaborative approaches, brand co-creations emerges between brands and consumers; between consumers; across various stakeholders and across multiple media channels, some of which are beyond the control of organisations (Shao et al., 2015). Thus the need to uncover collaborative, practical brand engagement strategies that best facilitate effective multi-stakeholder relations is urgent. The objective is thus to understand how brands co-create together with different stakeholders (Ind, Iglesias & Schultz, 2013; Frow and Payne, 2011). From a brand co-creation perspective, this calls for a need to understand the various stakeholders who affect the creation and destruction of brand value. Jones (2005) suggests that brand value lies in the array of synergistic relationships. The issue for brand custodians and managers lies in identify which relationships are sources of value therefore ripe for co-creation efforts.

Thus, the study seeks to provide corporate brand managers with practical considerations on how to incorporate brand input from increasingly diverse stakeholder networks. Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) posit that brand co-creation has altered how brands are managed in that it's not about managing the brand anymore but rather facilitating co-creation infrastructures across multiple platforms that enable or dis-enable joint creation of brand value with multiple stakeholders. This suggests that corporate brand managers have to develop newer ways of engaging with stakeholders as uncharacteristically, this requires corporate brands to be the anchors of co-creation structures and a link of co-creational activity, in an increasingly multi-sided brand ecosystem (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015).

The opportunity here is to assist brand managers to effectively operate in an increasingly networked, engaged and ambiguous world and to manage the challenges and the opportunities that come with being a brand that is open to multifarious input from diverse stakeholder groups (Haarhoff & Kleyn, 2012). This paper is significant in that it will help brand managers widen their perspective of brand relationships and to begin to include various stakeholders, where value lies, in their brand building efforts. In corporate branding literature, the essence of a

corporate brand is the covenant between the firm and its key stakeholders (Balmer and Gray, 2003). According to Brodie et al. (2009) brands interface with consumers, employees and other stakeholders thus the need to put emphasis on a multi-stakeholder perspective to brand management. Importantly, firm-centric and customer orientated perspective of brands do not adequately reflect the reality of brands and branding today. Vallaster & von Wallpach (2012) assert that brands are not created unilaterally by brand managers nor are they relevant to just customers. Thus, Frow & Payne (2011) stress that organisations must seek to create mutual value by developing co-created value propositions with the aim of improving relationships and ensuring sustainable benefits for the organisation and all its stakeholders.

1.8 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study looked at brand co-creation engagement in relation to a multi-stakeholder context limited to a South African corporate branding environment, where corporate brands facilitate relationships with a broader network of stakeholders. The study sought evidence of brand co-creation interaction and its manifestation across multiple stakeholders and the impact for corporate brand management. The investigation was from a managerial perspective and does not include a perspective of stakeholders. The study will not look at product brands or business to consumer brands but rather corporate brands in professional services context and the dynamic nature of stakeholder relations in this environment.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

For this study, there are a few terms that require definition:

Table 1: Definition of terms

Term	Evidence in literature
Co-creation –	Co-creation is illustrated as as joint activity that includes consumers and producers with the view of creating value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Roberts et al. (2005) considers co-creation as the extent to which consumers participate with organisations towards improving or finding newer solutions.
Brand value co-creation	the concept of brand value co-creation from Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015)'s articulation is an organisation-wide approach that is participatory in nature and co-evolves with stakeholders over time.
Stakeholders	''A stakeholder in an organization is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives'' (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). This is supported by Balmer (2001)'s claims that corporate brands form "covenants" with stakeholders and that stakeholders participate in an exchange relationship with organisation (Gregory, 2007).
Multi-stakeholders	**Multi-stakeholders** – Marketing and branding literature has through the years focused on one stakeholder group, the consumer, however, Gyrd-Jones & Kornum (2013) suggest that orgnanisations have multiple relationships with various stakeholder groups i.e. consumers; business to business stakeholders; internal stakeholders such as employees who carry

	the brand and brand message (Harris & de Chernatony,2001); brand communities as stakeholders (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)
Brand ecosystems –	the concept when applied in a branding context, refers to the arrangement of interaction between the socio-cultural elements within a given stakeholder group (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum (2013). The brand eco-system reflects a broader socio-cultural system not limited to the dyadic stakeholder relationships and it encompasses both the networked character of these relationships as well as the complexities of the sub-cultures that create the ecosystem (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum (2013).
Corporate brands	According to Balmer (2012), corporate brands typically refers to the informal covenant between organisations and its customers as well as the broader stakeholders. To this end, the corporate covenant functions as tool for stakeholders to discern what a brand stands for and how it's differentiated.

1.10 ASSUMPTIONS

- As the concept of brand co-creation is emergent, the assumption is participants may need contextualisation of the concept to prompt their thinking on the subject.
- Participants will engage in the interviews honestly
- Participants will be from environments that have multiple stakeholders as key stakeholders
- Participants will be affected to a certain extent by co-creational activities.

1.11 CASE SITE: SAICA

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS (SAICA)

SAICA is the foremost leading professional institute of professionals in the accounting space. The organisation houses various designations, their premium and widely known designation being the Chartered Accountant South Africa designation (CA(SA)), the Associate General Accountant (AGA), followed by the Accounting Technician South Africa Designation (ATSA). The organisation also has a sub-division called SAICA Enterprise Development, an entity which is established to develop small black enterprises and to link them with wider market opportunities. The organisation interfaces with a multitude of stakeholders in its quest to transform the accounting profession to reflect the demographics of the country and in their quest to ensure the sustainability of the profession. The institute does not deliver the qualifications directly. Depending on the designation, there various interdependencies. For example, to develop chartered accountants, the organisation depends on the school system to develop students with an above average maths mark as well as depends on universities to produce students with a Bcom Accounting with Honours degrees. These graduates are then part of a vocational training system called “articles” at the various audit firms, upon which they write two board exams instituted by SAICA. They qualifying students then become Chartered Accountants. Upon qualifying, these chartered accountants, start paying SAICA an annual fee as permission to use the designation CA(SA).

At the time of doing research, the organisation was under increasing pressure to improve ethics and accountability of their members. Over 40% of their members are CEOs of the top 100 firms on the Johannesburg stock exchange. As such the organisation represents a highly influential stakeholder group with interests beyond the boundaries of South Africa. This constituency is very important as the work they do is important in the financial services space as well as in business and government

broadly. The profession is meant to be guarded by high levels of professionalism and ethics.

The institute was riddled and implicated in reputational scandals inflicted by their member stakeholders. Specifically, KPMG, one of the leading audit and accounting firms was embroiled in a national corruption scandal in which KPMG was said to have misrepresented financial information and reports relating to a government department. The scandal was highly publicised, and became a topic of interest for various stakeholders including the general public. SAICA was lambasted for not instigating tougher measures against its stakeholders and questions were raised about the role of the organisation and the value it brings to its stakeholders and business broadly. SAICA received unprecedented stakeholder input, influence and noise.

During the same time, more fraudulent or misrepresentation of financial information emerged emanating from other audit firms who are a key constituency of the firm. In the same vain key CEOs for example the CEO and CFO of Steinhoff, a leading listed entity in the country was under fire for fraud and misrepresentation of financial information –both the CEO and the CFO are chartered accountants.
Similarly, SAICA's membership body was questioning the value of the organisation. Some of the members were questioning why the membership fees were so high; seeking to understand what value comes from the membership and largely putting the organisation under pressure to transform how it delivers value to its members; how it provides training and how it qualifies its member base.

It is against this backdrop that the study was conducted.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing thought on co-creation has spilled over to the branding discipline where the concept of brand co-creation has emerged. As co-creation is an emerging phenomenon, theories in the space are fragmented and specifically, very little research addresses brand co-creation across multiple stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Shao et al., 2015; Pera et al., 2015; Ramaswamy & Kornum, 2016). According to Pera et al (2015) several scholars recognise that while consumers are key in co-creational brand activity, little research tackles brand co-creation from a multi-stakeholder vantage point. To best understand brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder environment, we first apply a wider view of co-creation and hone in on the dynamics of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholder.

The literature review for this study commenced by firstly looking at emerging theoretical frameworks that underpin brand co-creation and the context of multiple stakeholders; secondly by tracing the evolution of brand management from a focus on goods to customers to the current awareness of broader stakeholder networks; thirdly by addressing the emergence of brand co-creation as an engagement platform; fourthly by exploring the perspective of multiple stakeholders as co-creators of brand value; and lastly by considering the implications of brand co-creation on corporate brand management broadly.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: SERVICE DOMINANT LOGIC AND STAKEHOLDER THEORY

2.2.1 *Service dominant logic (S-DL)*

The idea of where and how brand value is created, is evolving into new conceptual frames of reference. The theoretical evolution is captured in the move from a goods dominant logic (G-DL) of marketing to a Service Dominant Logic (S-DL), which is considered the “new” logic of marketing (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Payne et al.,2009). In marketing theory, the S-DL approach is seemingly the leading research approach that scholars are using to conceptualise the notion of co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Zhang and He, 2014; France et al., 2015; Shao et al.,2015). According to Vargo & Lusch (2004), the traditional goods-dominant logic of marketing is being challenged by new perspectives of marketing such as relationship marketing, market orientation, brand relationships and service marketing. The scholars advance that the existing logic is transforming from the exchange of tangible goods to exchanging intangibles goods namely skills, processes and knowledge (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Payne et al., 2009).

The S-DL perspective on co-creation reassesses the role of consumers in creating value for brands (France et al.,2015). In this instance, when customers or consumers experience or interact with brands, the value of the brand is thus co-created and realised (Merz et al., 2009). According to Grönroos (2008) customer’s faculties impact the creation of brand value, consequently, customers play a significant role in co-creating brand value. The S-DL perspective makes the following key considerations:

- service is a common element of exchange between suppliers, consumers and firms alike;
- service is process orientated as opposed to output based and customers are intrinsic to the value creation process;
- Customers are operant resources and

- value is not unilaterally created by the organisation (Merz et al.,2009).

In contrast, the G-DL considers the firm or producers as key value creators and consumers as users of value. In this instance, the customer is an operand resource, defined as a resource on which an act must be performed on to create an effect (Constantin & Lusch,1994) rather than operant resource which is a resource used to act on the the operand resource (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In a G-DL conceptualisation, economic activity centres around making and distributing items where the unit of exchange is the item or good, which is embedded with utilitarian value during the production process (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Furthermore, the firm dictates value and makes all decisions related to the resource. Payne et al. (2009) uphold the notion that the marketing perspective is shifting from focusing on tangible goods to an exchange of intangible elements such as knowledge and skills. In support of the S-DL perspective, Payne et al. (2009) further posit that, value begins with suppliers and firms understanding value creation processes with customers and how to enable such co-creation activities. This suggests that customers interact and contribute in the process of realising transactions from production to delivery and consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Payne et al.,2009; France et al., 2015).

Efforts are intensifying towards comprehending the value and meaning of brands along with the process of branding (Vargo & Lusch,2004a; Merz, et al.,2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010). The notion of brand co-creation is perceived as an S-DL centred approach thus creating implication for how the process of exchange, customers and markets are determined. Vargo & Lusch (2004) commit that the S-DL approach brings to light the idea of marketing and branding as a series of continuous economic and social interactions and processes focusing significantly on the operant resources to which organisations strive to constantly improve by developing value propositions that are better than their competitors. Merz et al. (2009) contend that the S-DL shift reflected in marketing thought is similarly evolving the brand logic and that brand management literature and S-DL can support and strengthen each other.

Merz, et al. (2009) further perceives that the branding logic is shifting from brands being an organisation-led property providing goods and services, to brands as collective conceptualisation of value that includes all firm activities and stakeholders. Similarly, the new branding thought presents an opportunity to consider brands and branding through the perspective of co-creation and creating customer experiences (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This aligns to Prahalad's (2004) perspective on co-creation where brands are experienced, a view that is in line with the service dominant logic.

In respect to the S-DL, much of the mainstream marketing literature has overlooked the relationship between the organisation and its non-consumer stakeholders (Frow & Payne, 2011). Recent studies have examined brand relationships and stakeholder perspectives, where the stakeholder perspective expounds that the value behind a brand is co-created with broader stakeholders (Zhang & He, 2014). Gregory (2007) correspondingly conceptualised the idea of a negotiated brand, where organisations engage in a continuous dialogue with all stakeholders. Zhang & He (2014) put forward that Wei et al. (2010) developed a service brand equity framework that includes engagement among organisations, customers and broader stakeholders. These studies are aligned with the shift of marketing and branding thought towards the S-DL paradigm and stakeholder focus.

Zhang & He (2014) agree that the S-DL has been widely accepted by various scholars (Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009) as a theoretical premise in various fields of study including strategy, innovation and consumer behaviour. However, some scholars suggest that the S-DL approach is incomplete and is more of a work in progress thus making it open for questioning, testing, and edification (Gummesson et al., 2010; Zhang & He, 2014). The scholars argue that S-DL lacks well recognised theoretical constructs, conceptual structures and empirically studied conclusions (Zhang & He, 2014).

At the core of marketing is value creation. To this end, the S-DL perspective is challenging the traditional view that value is created by organisations and is inherent

in the goods provided. The S-DL approach thus shifts the unilateral approach to value creation to consider the co-creation logic which purports that: organisation merely offer value propositions and that multiple stakeholders are intrinsic to the value co-creation process through joint, relational value creating processes towards the achievement of common goals (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Zhang & He, 2014). This premise is critical to the conceptualisation of brand co-creation in relation to multiple stakeholders. However, due to its emergent nature and the lack of concrete theoretical constructs, this paper looks to stakeholder theory for the development of other key constructs towards conceptualising brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder network.

2.2.2 *Stakeholder theory*

Stakeholder theory surfaced in the 1980s, with Freeman (1984)'s seminal work entitled strategic management: a stakeholder approach. His work is perceived as the springboard for the theory. The theory has since undergone various edifications over the years (Wagner, Alves and Raposo, 2012; Frow and Payne, 2011; Jones, 2005; Mitchell, 2002) and has become conventional in academic and management literature. According to Wagner et al. (2012), Freeman developed a stakeholder model, where the organisation is positioned in the centre and engages with surrounding stakeholders and the nature of the relationships are dyadic and independent from one another. In his work, Freeman (1984) sought to highlight the relationship between an organisation and its environment and how its behaviour impacts the environment (Wagner et al., 2012). Broadly, stakeholder theory tackles the idea of organisations existing just to address the needs of customers, but rather asserts that organisations have a responsibility to other people and organisations outside of the limited array of entrenched relationships that usually delineate an organisation's area of interest (Jones, 2005).

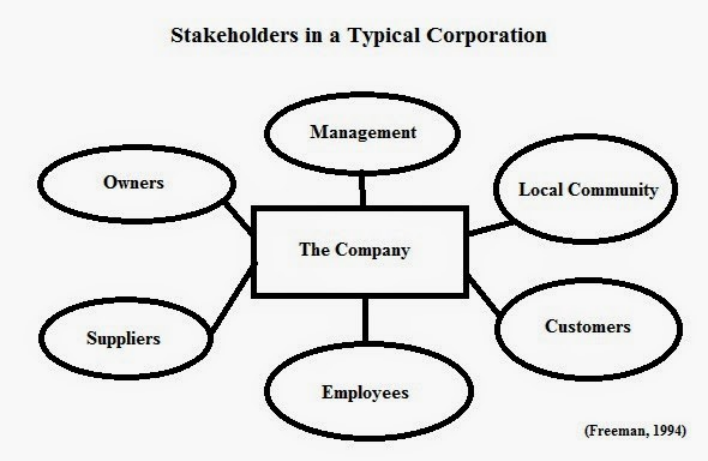


Figure 1: Stakeholders in a typical corporation: Freeman (1994)

The literature on stakeholder theory, illuminates the focus on groups that are pertinent to the success of organisations. Despite widespread literature there is little consensus in management literature on which basic groups an organisation should deem as stakeholders (Frow & Payne, 2011). According to Donaldson (1995), one of the key issues in stakeholder theory has been the development of a commonly accepted definition of stakeholders as despite the many article contributions in the space, the term has been applied inconsistently. Rowley (1997) cites Freeman's definition of stakeholder as " any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (1984, p. 25); Hill and Jones (1992) argue that stakeholders are constituents that have a valid claim to the organisation; Carroll (1993) expands the definition to include constituents that have the power to influence an organisation and Clarkson (1995) argues that stakeholders are those that have something to gain or lose depending on an organisation's behaviour as result of the organisation's behaviour. For the purposes of this paper, we adopt, Freeman's widely accepted position on stakeholder definition as indicated above.

Freeman, Wicks & Parmar (2004) posit that stakeholder theory is a managerial construct that fundamentally, requires managers to clearly articulate how they do business and what kinds of relationships they should create with stakeholders so as to carry out their organisation's purpose. The basis of the existing literature on

stakeholder theory is that the performance on an organisation is linked to how the organisation relates to its stakeholders (Mitchell, 2002). Wagner et al. (2012) highlight two key aspects of the theory, the first issue is stakeholder identification and the second is the means for stakeholder interaction, which is critical to the study. Freeman et al. (2004) argue that at the core of stakeholder theory is that economic value is constructed by people who willingly collaborate and cooperating towards improving everyone's circumstance.

Wagner et al. (2012) offer a summation of key assumptions with regards to the core of stakeholder theory.

- Organisations interact in relationships with various groups who influence or are influenced by the organisations' actions;
- The focus of the theory is on the relationships with regards to the processes and outcomes for the organisation and the stakeholder;
- The theory seeks to indicate how stakeholders influence decision making in the organisation;
- The focus of the theory is on the decision making by managers;
- Organisations must develop the ability to: identify stakeholders; develop systems and processes that enable them to identify and respond to stakeholder needs as well as establish relationships with stakeholders in accordance to the firm's objectives;
- Organisations must seek to understand and respond to stakeholder interest;
- The principles of the theory call for the categorisation of stakeholders in order of importance as not all interests can be dealt with simultaneously nor obtain equal amount of attention;
- According to Clarkson (1995) and Donaldson and Preston (1995) all stakeholders' interests are of intrinsic value to the organisation and no interest should prevail over others; and
- Clarkson (1995) divides stakeholders into two groups namely: primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders have a formal agreement with

an organisation such as employees, suppliers, shareholders, clients etc. and the secondary stakeholders are those who don't have a formal contract such as local communities, government and media.

These assumptions are pertinent to the proposed study and they delineate some of the key themes of the study. Wagner et al. (2012) asserts that although stakeholder theory states that the organisation should engage with its stakeholders, there is a dearth of studies that indicate the types of relationships that actually exists. In today's contexts, there's increased pressure on organisations to attend to various stakeholder needs; consequently, knowing who the company stakeholders are, their individual needs and how they interact with the organisation has become fundamental to organisations.

From a brand management perspective, stakeholder theory necessitates that brand managers scrutinise the brand relationships to appreciate that the value of the brand is shaped through multiple relationships (Jones, 2005). Some of the relationship are 'non-fiduciary' types of relationships but can have a significant impact on the organisation's performance. The stakeholder theory, is thus a tool that enables brand managers to understand, prioritise and manage the relationships that are of strategic importance to the brand (Wagner et al., 2012). The existing brand literature has focused primarily on equity provided by consumers or customers and has dealt very little with other stakeholders as value creators (Jones, 2005). Yet, relationships with stakeholders are critical to sustaining success in business and business in this context, is concerned with bringing together suppliers, customers, communities, employees and shareholders in an ideal environment where everyone wins over time (Freeman et al., 2004).

2.3 EVOLUTION OF BRAND MANAGEMENT

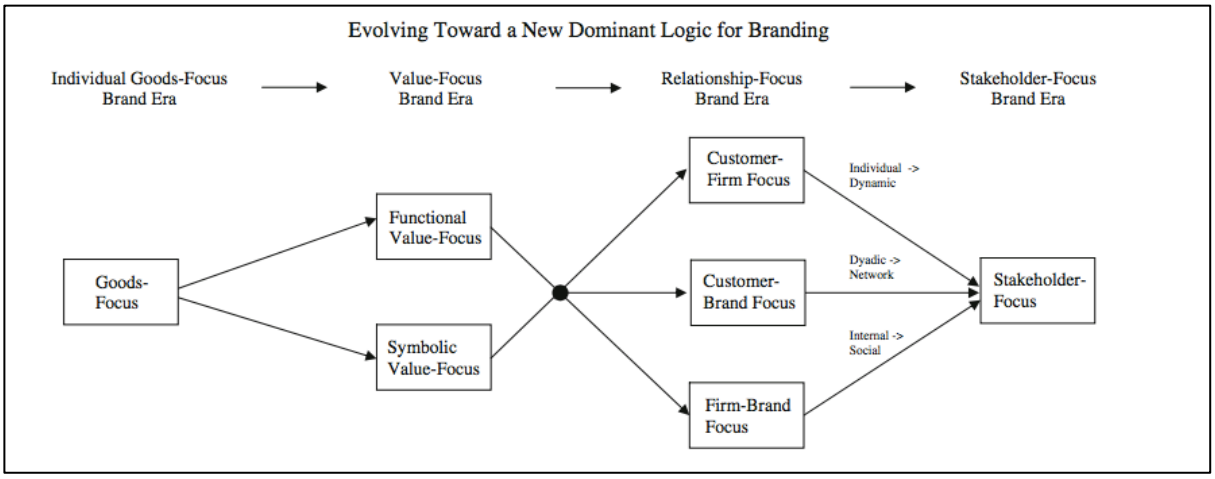


Figure 2: evolving towards a new dominant logic for branding (Merz et al.,2009)

As organisation fight to differentiate and position themselves appropriately in a hyper-competitive market, the process of branding and brand management broadly has become a critical module of corporate strategy (Devasagayam et al.,2010) across various organisations. To this end, brand management has systematically evolved over decades. Merz et al. (2009) capture a historical view of branding literature which culminates in a perspective that views brands as collaborative, value co-creation process that includes all the firm's stakeholders. In their account, the early notion of brands in the 1900s was perceived from an 'identifier' perspective where brands were seen as identifiers of choice inherent in physical attributes (Strasser, 1989; Room 1998). The strategy was driven by manufactures as a means to clearly differentiate their goods for customers upon sight of products (Strasser, 1989).

Merz et al. (2009) advance that brands in this context, were aimed at passive customers who were not involved in the value creation process, thus embodied a G-DL logic of marketing. The brand as a functional differentiator gained prominence in the 1930s as means for manufactures to deal with competition (Roth,1995) thereby creating unique brand images as a means to stand-out from competitors. The

strategic approach during this time as mapped by Merz et al. (2009) was to create brand-value through differentiated brand imagery and to communicate specific symbolic and functional value, still reflecting the G-D logic approach. In the 1990s to early 2000s, brand management literature placed importance on creating value through an accumulation of consistent brand knowledge in the minds of consumers (Keller, 1993) to brands prevailing in a dyadic customer-focused relationship forming partnerships (Aaker, 1997) and communities with consumers (Fournier, 1998; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). In this context, the assertion was that brand value is co-created and relational and is process orientated (Merz et al, 2009).

Parallel to a more customer-focused relationship conceptualisation, the notion of a brand as a promise emerged (Merz et al. 2009). The brand as a promise is a firm-brand relationship focus which identifies internal stakeholders (employees) as intrinsic to the value creation process (Berry, 2000). From the 2000s to current time, the brand management literature has articulated a more stakeholder-focused brand approach (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Ind& Bjerke, 2007, Merz et al., 2009), suggesting that not only do consumers co-create brand value, but communities (Fournier, 1998; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and all stakeholders are also contributors of value (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Ind& Bjerke, 2007). The stakeholder perspective of brand management is crucial to this paper, as it seeks to frame the new approach that sees brand value as a social, networked, interactive and ever-changing process between brands and multiple stakeholders (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Ind& Bjerke, 2007).

2.4 EMERGENCE OF BRAND CO-CREATION

2.4.1 *From co-creation to brand co-creation*

The notion of co-creation originated as a leading force in innovation management (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Hatch & Schultz (2010) elaborate that the concept of co-creation in the innovation management space appeared in the context of user-orientated innovation and the uptake of the practice spilled over to marketing and in

recent years emerged in brand management literature as brand co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Martinez, 2014) and in other instances as brand value co-creation (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015). According to Payne et al. (2009), the interaction between the supplier and the customer is referred to as co-creation or co-production. A more specific approach to conceptualising co-creation suggests that it involves customers' active involvement in product development, the scholars further indicate that customers are involved in all stages of product or services generation and evaluation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Thus co-creation conceptually is seen as a value generating process, where customers and organisations interact to create value (Iglesias et al., 2013; Grönroos and Voima, 2013).

Based on the literature review, in the co-creation space, there appears to be a general understanding and unanimity of the broad concept of co-creation, which includes customers contributing towards shaping aspects of the brand, yet, there's very little debate about formal or explicit articulation of constructs to co-creation (France et al.,2015). While the concept of co-creation is theoretically fragmented with divergent views, there are some significant congruencies in how it's perceived. The commonality is reflected in that co-creation is perceived to be a joint and collaborative engagement that includes producers and consumers in the creation of value (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In Durgee (2004)'s study of the co-creation of meaning between marketers and consumers, he revealed that co-creation between marketers and consumers occurs when empathy is applied as to how consumers engage with brand offering. This supports the notion of consumers as operant resources as articulated in the S-DL approach (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

The cohesion in thought by various scholars is further expressed in Robert, Baker & Walker (2005)'s assertion that co-creation is an active engagement with consumers towards finding new sources of value. The scholars reveal that co-creation is a means of unlocking new sources of competitive advantages. In the co-creation

process, mutual understanding and the sharing of knowledge is developed paving a way for companies to enhance their ability to address consumer needs and wants and for the consumers to choose services or products that best suits them (Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014).

Articulation of the brand co-creation theory is narrow as the subject matter is emergent and the theory is at its early stage of development (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). The notion of a brand co-creation theory has surfaced from the perspective that consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand propositions, but rather seek to be active contributors in shaping brand engagements and experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; France et al.,2015). This suggests that consumers now have a significant role in influencing the success of brands today (France et al., 2015). The rise of the empowered consumer has resulted in consumers exerting increased power over how brand are expressed (Brodie & de Chernatony, 2009). This is particularly evident in social media where consumers project their own ideas about the brands that differs significantly from what brands share with their stakeholders (Shao et al., 2015).

Fundamental to brand-co-creation is the concept of shared control over brands between organisations and stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Shao et al. (2015) advances that brand co-creation can be grasped from two perspectives namely, the consumer as a key player in the process of co-creation and the second view relating to the management of co-creational activities and processes from an organisational perspective. The scholars detail that the first aspect–consumer as a key player–pertains to the possibility of creating individualised brand experiences with consumers; while the latter aspect–management of co-creational activity–is about exercising control or having some influence over the co-creation process to facilitate manageable and predictable outcomes for the organisation (Shao et al.,2015). This provides a completely new viewpoint from which to evaluate the ability of firms to sustain brand equity (Helm & Jones, 2010).

This joint effort to work with consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) is moving organisations into the realm of open and more collaborative forms of innovation. Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) proposed that, today, brands have evolved as a result of co-created brand experiences relegating orthodox brand management approaches. The notion of brand co-creation has shifted the organisation's internal value chain from being the source of value to being but one part of greater system where value is created by attending to various stakeholder needs, consistent brand delivery, customer satisfaction, loyalty that coherently align to deliver superior returns (Helm & Jones, 2010). To this effect, the new brand management logic claims that brand value is a by-product of co-creation activities between firms and all their stakeholders who contribute to the value created (Merz et al, 2009).

In branding literature, the concept of brand co-creation is situated primarily within the brand communities space (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and alongside consumer brand relationship experience (Merz et al, 2009). Brand communities have a place in the discourse of modern day consumer culture, they are social features actively co-created by marketers and community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). According to Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), brand communities are a specialised communities founded on a set of firm, organised social relationships among people who admire a specific brand and are not confined by geographical boundaries. Brand communities are a key context for brand-co-creation (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Muniz & Guinn, 2001; Hutch & Schultz, 2010). Within the realm of brand communities, research points to brand value as a co-created phenomenon within communities as a result of the community's interaction, negotiation and perceptions of brand-related content including brand related stories as experienced by individuals (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Organisations are increasingly recognising brands as one of their most valuable assets and as a result, they are putting more resources behind nurturing their brands (Merz et al.,2009) expanding the scope of branding beyond the marketing department and the consumer. There's a seismic shift towards a more customer-centric organisational strategy which is consequently challenging the traditional

perspective of customers as passive players in the innovation and value-creation process (Martinez, 2014). The shift is marked by the dawn of creating value through co-creation by exchanging knowledge, skills and ideas with customer as partners (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) with the view of creating novel sources of customer experiences and competitive advantages (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

2.4.2 *Brand co-creation and stakeholder focus*

Various scholars argue that co-creation is now linked to stakeholder-focused approaches to branding (Merz et al., 2009; Christodulides, 2008 and Gregory, 2007). Hatch & Schultz (2010) agree that the notion of brand co-creation resonates with many scholars who are of the view that brand meaning and value transpires from stakeholder's engagement with an organisation. However, apart from these scholars suggesting that stakeholders are co-creators of brands, consumers remain the key focus for researchers (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Evidence of brand co-creation in literature is primarily considered in the context of consumers as the focal stakeholder. Currently, there's a shift towards looking at brand co-creation within a multi-stakeholder milieu (Gregory, 2007; Ind, Iglesias & Schultz,2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). This approach advances that all stakeholders add value, and that brand value occurs in the context of stakeholder-based ecosystems, where networked relationships are formed with brands and brand value is co-created as a result of lively social interactions across various stakeholders (Robert et al.,2005; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014).

The image below, depicts how co-creation takes place as articulated by Ind et al. (2013) in a connected setting where firms, individuals, brand communities and stakeholders meet via face to face and/ or through online interactions. The scholars propose that the interaction is fluid and brand and ideas are discussed.

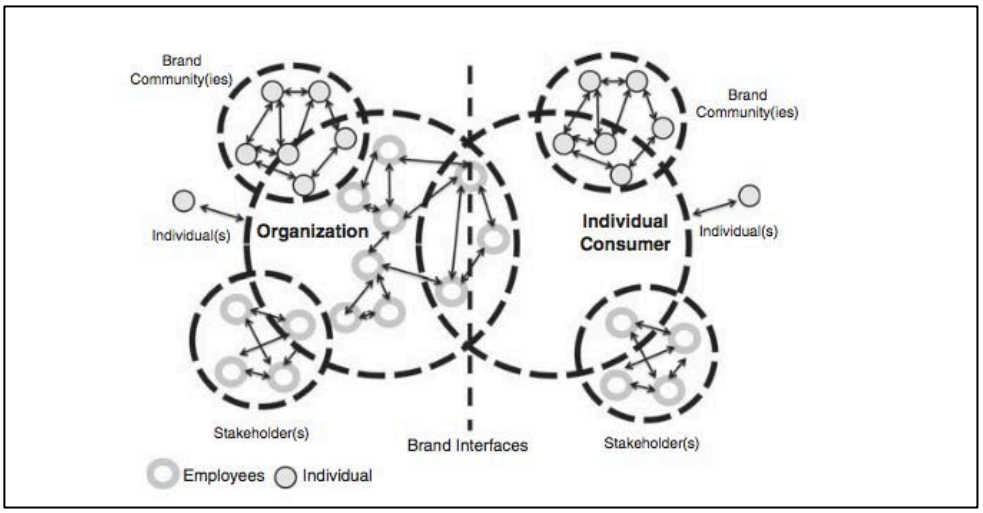


Figure 3: co-creation space as conceptualised by Ind et al. (2013).

This illustration supports the perspective of brand building as an interactive engagement where value is conversationally co-created (Ind et al.,2013) by numerous stakeholders (Merz et al.,2009). In this context, customers and broader stakeholders utilise their understandings to create meaning and value. Ind et al. (2013) further expands that in this setting, the role of brand managers is to negotiate and engage with all stakeholders with the view of understanding the meaning they attach to brands and use it as an opportunity to adapt, elucidate and reinforce the brand.

2.5 MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS AS CO-CREATORS OF BRANDS

There is increased awareness that building a corporate brand is a mutual process concerning the organisation and the broader stakeholders (Balmer and Greyser, 2003). Similarly, there's increasing awareness that the co-creation of brand value also occurs between networks of stakeholders and is not limited to the dyadic organisation-customer relationship (Grandy & Levit, 2015). Gummesson (2008) contests that just focusing on the dyadic relationship between an organisation and its

customers is insufficient and that rather all the actors inherent in the process of creating value must be acknowledged. To this end, stakeholder management has gained increasing prominence in the brand management literature (Gregory, 2007; Keller, 2008; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). Keller (2008) advances that the brand-customer relationship has been the traditional focus in literature and it is where brands derive the most value from. Freeman (1984) first theorized the imperativeness of all stakeholders to organisations. In support of this claim, Berthon, Pitt & Campbell (2009) agree that brand meaning is largely defined in plural by multiple stakeholders who create and recreate various brand interpretations that are often ambiguous and ever changing.

The multiple stakeholder dynamic is coming through in research particularly in the areas of brand communities. Brand communities innately invoke multiple stakeholders (Muniz& O'Guinn, 2001). While research in the brand community domain places emphasis on brand value as co-created between the organisations and the community members, other scholars in the co-creation space are now suggesting that there's evidence of brand value co-creation that does not necessarily include brand communities or customers (Merz et al, 2009; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) highlighted the important role that all stakeholders play in brand development. In addition, Hatch and Schultz (2010) indicate that co-creation is gaining resonance in the branding space with scholars who are of the view that other stakeholder engagement with the organisation, creates brand meaning and value too.

Hatch and Schultz (2010) conceptualised the "enterprise brand" which according to the scholars, refers to not only the organisation but all the various stakeholders who are engaged in the purpose of the organisations and its activities. The idea of an enterprise brands not only emerges as a result of a co-created brand by stakeholders, but equally by the brand identity that is co-created as a result of the engagement within and across the stakeholder ecosystems (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). In their attempt to understand stakeholder' wants, needs and behaviour better, organisations have woken up to the fact that they can now be part of their

stakeholder's experience through co-creation efforts. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) describes that the opportunity of co-participation has made customers collaborators and co-developers in the brand building process.

Gummesson (2008) argues that focusing on just the dyadic relationship between the organisation and the customers will not suffice, but rather all the various players involved in value creation should be considered. In the current creative economy, value creation is complex, multi-directional and is a result of interactions between various stakeholders and organisations (Denning, 2013). Success in this new worldview will not originate from individual processes, but rather from a coherent alignment of principles, attitudes, values and objectives that connect to create a consistent set of organisational capabilities (Denning, 2013). Ind et al. (2013) postulates that the emergence of brand co-creation points to growing movement towards a collaborative and participatory culture where stakeholders seek to contribute to their environment while organisations search for deeper understanding of various stakeholder insight.

Corporate managers now grapple with balancing diverse interest from various groups outside of just shareholders and increasingly, a brand that is able to achieve the balance of divergent interest effectively is seen to have a differential advantage (Bhaskar Chakravorti, 2010). From an organisational perspective, competitiveness lies in the organisation's ability to build strong, unique brands integrating old and new media platforms of engagement with the overall objective of fostering conversational relationships with customers (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010; Iglesias and Bonet, 2012). France et al. (2015) claim that in co-creation literature, brand engagement manifests both as an antecedent and from the common utilization of the word. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), organisations will battle to create value without engaging individuals.

Tynan, McKechnie & Chuon (2010) claim that brand owners are not just in the business of offering value to customers, but rather through co-creation, they create value as a result of inputs and influences derived from customers and the broad

stakeholders network to achieve the value sought by them. The scholars further reason that it is in the brand owner's interest, to establish business environments in which they can easily gain access to emerging ideas, expertise and facilitate continual innovation in a highly competitive landscape.

The creation of value has thus become complex and interdependent. Gregory (2007) suggests that external stakeholders who are in close proximity, are generally engaged and involved, are more likely to support the organisation largely because the organisation will most likely express values which they have co-formulated. This highlights that the stakeholder community can evolve brands as they seek to shape brands that are symbolic to them and that present material value now and in the future (Gregory (2007). The proponents of stakeholder theory, suggest that stakeholders participate in an exchange relationship in which some stakeholders are more prominent than others (Gregory, 2007). Participation within brand relationship context has become key as it increases the stakes. Thus the concept has become central to brand thinking, enabling brands to remain relevant to consumers and fosters active participation of other stakeholders with brands (Ind et al., 2013). Based on the review of the literature and the evident gaps presented above, this paper seeks to explore how corporate brands can co-create brand value together with multiple stakeholders in South Africa from the S-DL and stakeholder theory perspectives.

The overarching aim of the paper is to explore how companies, corporate brands specifically, mediate multiple stakeholders both internally and externally and engage with them strategically towards co-creating brand value (France et al.,2015; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Merz et al., 2009). More research is required on how best to incorporate multiple stakeholders in brand building efforts and how to manage brands broadly in "multi-sided brand ecosystems" (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015) where brands exist to connect and link value creation opportunities with the right resources in a broader way.

Thus the following research question has emerged from the extensive literature review:

2.5.1 *Research question 1*

How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity?

2.6 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND PRIORITISING

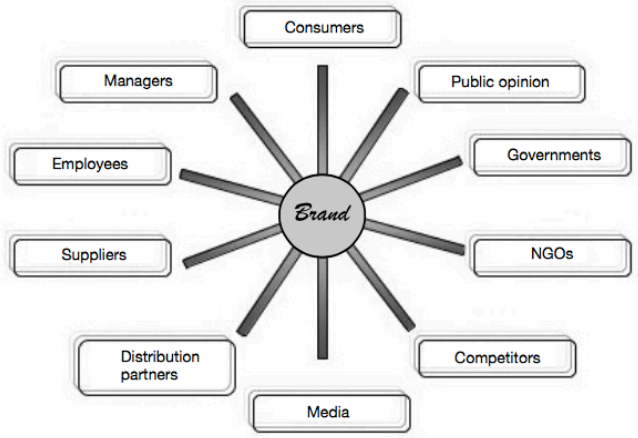


Figure 4: Daisy-wheel model of brand equities, Jones(2005)

Scholars purporting stakeholder theory propose that organisations should categorise stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholders using the Daisy-wheel above (Jones, 2005; Wagner et al., 2012). The primary stakeholders refer to the group that adds to brand value and regularly interact with the firm and the secondary come to the fore only when there's specific issues that emerge (Jones, 2005). The premise of stakeholder theory is centred on two key streams namely: definition of the stakeholder notion and the classification of stakeholders into groupings that offer an understanding of the individual stakeholder relationships relative to the organisation

(Rowley, 1997). Freeman (1984)'s proposed stakeholder theory model included a broader view of stakeholders, however, a critical issue that surfaced is how to deal with multiple stakeholders simultaneously (Wagner et al.,2012). Scholars in the space concede that its not possible to attend to all stakeholder needs and thus the need for identification and prioritisation became evident. Mitchell et al. (1997) is credited with being instrumental in developing a stakeholder theory application with the view of determining and categorising stakeholder importance. The scholars designed a stakeholder salience model incorporating three variables: power, urgency and legitimacy. As purported by Mitchell et al. (1997), the model enables managers to prioritise relationships with stakeholders.

As indicated, research in the brand co-creation space in relation to stakeholders has largely been undertaken with consumers and marketers and barely included other stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). In recent studies, organisations are seeking to enhance their brand loyalty among other stakeholders such as employees (Devasagayam et al., 2010). This is because, the internal and external brand must align in order to deliver the brand promise and employees play a critical role in delivering a consistent brand experience to customers (Schultz & Schultz, 2000). A firm's relationship with other stakeholders outside of customers is equally important suggesting that co-creation of brand value is not exclusive to the dyadic relationship between organisations and customers but rather that it's a multifaceted concept, influenced totality of the various relationships within the brand context (Jones, 2005).

This supports the view that all stakeholders add to a brand's value regardless of whether the stakeholders are part of a brand community or not. Tynan et al. (2010) in their study of co-created value within luxury brand space assert that co-creation of value necessitates complex dialogue and engagement between multiple stakeholders namely the brand owners, employees, customers, brand communities, and agencies who are part of the brand experience. The scholars argue that value in co-creation only happens when there's no separation in the process from production to consumption. To illustrate the dynamic further, Gyrd-Jones and Kornum (2013) suggest that in the retail space, retailers cannot be described as intermediaries that

purchase from suppliers and sell to customers any more, but rather, they have become orchestrators of a multi-stakeholder ecosystem where value is co-created and delivered to shoppers and subsequently assumed by the retailers and their partners.

2.6.1 *Stakeholder prioritisation*

To determine which stakeholders are most significant to the brand, Mitchell et al. (1997) advanced that key ideas are important here namely: power, which is interpreted as the capacity of the stakeholder to make an organisation act against its will; legitimacy which refers to a creation of an authentic platform of action and lastly urgency which is the extent to which claims made by stakeholder require immediate action by the organisation. In the development of his stakeholder brand value model, Jones (2005) re-interpreted the variables as: dependency, strategic significance, actuality and attractiveness. These constructs are considered useful for this paper as they provide a systematic process of determining brand relationships and the overall significance and value each relationship brings to the organisation therefore can assist brand managers in determining which stakeholders can be drawn into co-creational activity.

The premise is that every stakeholder group has different key objectives and concerns as far at the brand is concerned. For illustration purposes, investors' key concerns may be financial sustainability; suppliers and distributors may consider brand reputation while employees may concern themselves with the perceived value of the brand externally. To this effect, brand managers must be clear about the different desires of each stakeholder group (Jones, 2005). This will enable management to sort and align stakeholders.

From a stakeholder management perspective, this approach shifts brand management from just focusing on the dyadic relationship and considering value only in terms of consumers but rather how value is created for consumers, customers, suppliers, investor etc. and importantly how value can me sought for the organisation (Mitchell, 2002; Jones, 2005; Wagner et al., 2012).

1. Dependency

As opposed to referring to power as Mitchell et al (1997), Jones (2005) posits that it is more appropriate to consider relationships in terms of the degree of dependency. Dependency in this context is considered in line with the resource dependency perspective (Doyle, 2001) which asserts that an organisation is a collection of resources based on its internal principal competencies as well as its external resources that it is dependent on (Doyle, 2001). The scholar suggests that critical external resources such as special proprietary technologies may be held by suppliers and some cases retailers as they usually have direct access to customer bases etc.

2. Strategic significance

Dependency is aligned to strategic significance as a strategic stakeholder is directly linked to the core competency of an organisation. This construct in the context of stakeholder relations, is concerned with identifying and aligning stakeholders who are critical to the organisation's core deliverables and its broader concerns of value creation (Jones, 2005). Thus organisational success is more than just tending to the needs of customers, but depends more critically on having solid strategic stakeholders that can be assets in the organisation and aligning them to the strategic drive of the business. With that said, building and maintaining strategic relationships with an extended network of suppliers and other stakeholders is critical (Jones, 2005).

3. Actuality

Brand managers must determine which relationships require active engagement and investment. This variable is concerned with which stakeholders are latent, current or critical. This determines how a relationship can be managed. A latent stakeholder requires minimal engagement and investment, where as a critical stakeholder must be managed (Jones, 2005).

4. Attractiveness

The last variable is a qualitative review from the brand manager's perspective of the relationship between the stakeholder and the brand. This variable includes issues of brand image as a driver and the impact the stakeholder has on the brand's reputation (Jones, 2005). Brand managers may deem it necessary to invest in relationships that enhance its image for example an alignment with an NGO may impact positively on brand image. In this regard, Jones (2005) suggests that brand managers should assess the salience of stakeholders so as to create and maintain long-term brand value.
The above evidence in literature have informed the following second research question:

2.6.2 *Research question 2:*

Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engage with in co-creational activity and why?

2.7 BRAND CO-CREATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Iglesias and Bonet (2012) state that brand management has conventionally been grounded in product and firm orientated perspectives that view consumers as

passive beneficiaries of brand content and meaning. Today, there's budding literature that accentuates the role of brand interfaces, touch-points, relationships, engagements and brand experiences in the co-creation of brands by various stakeholders (Brodie et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009; Iglesias and Bonet, 2012). To understand the nature of brand co-creation participation in a multiple stakeholder context, we apply literature on consumer-brand engagement and relate it to multiple stakeholder context. The reason for this is that current insights into the role stakeholders assume in co-creating brands largely exists for consumers (France et al., 2015). Relatedly, the S-DL highlights that brand value is created through interaction and dialogue where there's a dual relationship between the organisation and the consumer (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). It is only in most recent research, that a broader perspective of stakeholder value is applied where literature acknowledges that stakeholder are similarly no longer victims of one-way brand communication, but rather that they are active participators and co-creators in the brand discourse (Merz et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2009; Vallaster and Wallpach, 2012; France et al., 2015).

Engagement is a relatively new concept in marketing, that is propelled by new consumer behavior as articulated in the S-DL. The term in academic literature (marketing and advertising) is explained in various ways often contradictory or in very different ways as either an all encompassing conceptualisation or as a synonym to other known concepts such as activation or involvement (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010). With the ever evolving individual and the social undercurrents of post modern consumer behavior, the idea of consumer brand engagement plays a critical role in the marketing and branding space (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010). Today, consumers seek to play an active part in their consumption process. According to (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010), this suggests that they seek to actively co-create brand content and value; socialise with other consumers; and develop their own unique brand experiences. Similarly, according to Chakravorti (2010), increasingly the significance of multiple stakeholders in corporate decision making is gaining recognition.

Payne et al. (2008) posit that engagement is a tool that is used to co-create value with customers while Hollebeek (2011) suggest that brand value is a result of brand engagement. Hatch and Schultz (2010) offer that engagement enables the development of brand knowledge and value for the firm. Thus engagement with a brand is key towards activating brand co-creation (France et al, 2015). According to Gaurav (2014), co-creation activity can manifest in physical or digital spaces, although, the ubiquity of the internet and the use of various digital platforms offers great opportunity for co-creational activity. Similarly, Vallaster and von Wallpach (2012) agree that online channels empower stakeholders to actively engage in co-creating brand meaning.

2.7.1 *Research question 3:*

What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activity?

2.8 BRAND CO-CREATION AND IMPLICATION FOR CORPORATE BRAND MANAGEMENT

2.8.1 *Corporate brands and multiple stakeholders*

According to Ind et al. (2013) Corporate brands play a central role forming sustainable relationships amid companies and various stakeholders. Balmer and Gray (2003) agree that corporate brands have various boundaries that encompass diverse stakeholders. The context of the proposed research is within a corporate branding milieu. The rationale is that corporate brands are by nature multifarious. Today, corporate brands operate within a dynamic ever-changing environment where stakeholder groups are equally diverse and dynamic (Balmer,2002; Schultz & de Chernatony, 2002).

According to Harris and de Chernatony, (2001) the notion of corporate branding can be traced to earlier articles by Bernstein (1989) as well as King (1991) who initiated the idea of a “company brand” which was later referred to as “corporate brand”. The term corporate brand was used to indicate that brands at a corporate level expand outside the organisation to include a broad variety of entities, subsidiaries and groups of companies (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). Scholarly thought on corporate branding took flight in the mid 1990s and early 2000s as an area of study within the corporate marketing arena and management broadly (Balmer, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

Corporate branding is viewed as a multidisciplinary discipline that extends across an array of concepts (Fetcherin and Usunier, 2010) and is multifaceted in nature (Balmer,2008). In literature, the notion is broad and conflicted, with very little agreement, particularly with other related topics such as brand identity (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012; Gregory, 2007). Gregory (2007) claims that a corporate brand is often expressed following on Aaker (1991)’s definition referring to the name of the company. Other interpretations include a corporate brand as a brand that cuts across the entire organisation where the organisation may have different underlying product brands (Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2004) to a corporate brand as “the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of organisation’s unique business model” (knox and Bickerton, 2003, p.1013).

Balmer (2001; 2012) makes a significant contribution suggesting that a corporate brand is a covenant, which is a promise that exist between the organisation and its broader stakeholder groups. Balmer’s contribution is critical to this paper as it includes an awareness of a broader stakeholder group not limited to just customers. Similarly, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) make a clear contribution about the differences between corporate brands and product brands. The scholars contend that among other differences, corporate brands focus on multiple stakeholders as opposed to product brands which focus on consumers. According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012) a corporate brand has two constructs: the first being the corporate expression, which is

the mechanics used by organisations to showcase their corporate identity to their stakeholders and the other is the stakeholders' views of the firm's brand.

The stakeholder perspective of corporate branding is critical to note. In corporate branding, stakeholders are enticed to have a positive view of the organisation as well as to actively support it, which contributes to the organisation's brand equity (Keller 2000). Balmer and Gray (2003) motion that the covenant formed between the organisation and its stakeholder groups as indicated earlier, is communicated through various communication channels to stakeholders and in turn the stakeholders experience the corporate brand through its products and services as well as staff behaviour (Balmer and Gray, 2003). To this end, the corporate covenant functions as tool for stakeholders to discern what a brand stands for and how it is differentiated.

According to Gregory (2007), literature on corporate branding has to an extent focused on processes required to develop corporate brand toward achieving strategic objectives but has shallow perspective on how to deploy stakeholder involvement along with the communication strategies required to involve them in the development process of corporate brands (Gregory, 2007). The scholar cites Hatch and Schultz (1997) and Cornelissen (2000) who articulated that advances in technology are resulting in intimate interactions among organisations and their stakeholders broadly thereby creating blurred boundaries resulting in organisations becoming more transparent and accountable to stakeholders.

A key threat to corporate branding according to Iglesias et al. (2013) is the gap that exists between stakeholders' perception of the brand and the brand promise delivered by the organisation. Stakeholders interact with aspects of the brand's identity and as they interface with the brand, they create own images and meaning about the organisation (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012). The scholars propose that the gap may result in a rejection of brand by the consumers and stakeholders thereby create uncertainty (Iglesias et al.,2013; Balmer, 2012). The prospective rejection of a

brand's promise by stakeholders and consumers implies a shift in the balance of power from the firm to consumers and stakeholder (Iglesias et al.,2013).

This suggests that all stakeholders must be managed in order to create unified brand alignment. Gregory (2007) adds that stakeholders can become partners with organisation through collaborative relationships that offer mutual benefit. It's also important to acknowledge that while stakeholders may interact with the brand, only a portion will go on to form relationships with the brand (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012). It is thus critical that corporate marketers acquaint themselves with how customers and stakeholders broadly, conceptualise the corporate brand as they have "an emotional ownership of brands" (Balmer, 2012, p.1065). Today, having control of every facet of the brand is seemingly impossible.

Thus corporate marketers must concede that they are losing grip of controlling the brand and perhaps their role has truly shifted towards inspiring and influencing consumers and stakeholders to co-create the meaning behind brands and value (Haarhoff and Kleyn, 2012; Iglesias et al., 2013). Gregory (2007) advanced that if organisation take the view that they exist in environments were multiple stakeholders can be seen as strategic partners, then it's reasonable to deduce that corporate brands that are collaboratively developed, present an alternative approach to a top down management view of corporate branding where senior management enforce their view.

2.8.2 *Brand co-creation and corporate brand management*

Brand co-creation alludes to the current evolution of boundaries between organisations and broader stakeholders where there's constant evaluation and redefinition of roles (Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013). Increasingly, stakeholders are viewed as operant resource (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), who are not only key value creators for organisations, but also important sources of ideas, insight and energy that can be harnessed to co-create with the organisation (Saarijärvi & Kuusela,

2013). Ind & Bjerke (2007) point to brand co-creation giving rise to management issues as it implicitly suggests shared control of brand by the organisations and its stakeholders.

This suggests that corporate brands that are collaboratively framed require a different approach to management (Gregory, 2007). The notion of brand co-creation implicitly requires authentic dialogue with stakeholders along with some level of transparency and access to product related information, which caries some risk (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Martinez, 2013). The above challenges orthodox management approaches and suggest that organisations have to exercise a new approach to management broadly. A co-created branding strategy, demands transparency from organisations and a new approach to governance as the culture emanating from brand co-creation can either aid or hinder organisations (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). The implications from a managerial perspective calls for corporate brands to be more open; leadership styles to be more participatory; and for barriers between consumers and marketers to diminish (Ind et al.,2013).

Chesbrough (2006) warns of a range of challenges in the pursuit of open collaborative strategies as it compels opening the firm up to influences outside of the firm's hierarchical boundaries. The online stakeholder community poses a bigger challenge in that it's a self-organised space where individuals are dispersed and can choose what they want and how they want it making it challenging for organisations to steer in the direction they wish to (Dahlander & Wallin, 2006). The era of Web 2.0 brings to question the current management paradigms that implies that brand managers are in control of brands (Fournier & Avery, 2011). The scholars argue that brands no longer set the agenda, but rather that consumer and stakeholders alike decide how to incorporate brands in their life. Marketers will find it hard to adjust to the new balance of power as brand management shift from the organisation-centric to facilitating brand co-creation (Shao et al., 2015).

As the crux of brand development shifts from the organisation to multiple stakeholders, it has become an even greater challenge for marketers to achieve

consistent brand value alignment across all stakeholders (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). There's increased levels of ambiguity in terms what is desirable from one stakeholder to the next. This furthermore points to the changing role of brand managers from "Instigators to orchestrators of multiple stakeholder interactions around the brand" (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013, p.1485). The scholars further suggest that organisations must then understand various subcultures of consumption and identify similarities and elements that complement each other. As engagement shifts to community, brand co-creation is not limited to firm-consumer, but also occurs between consumers and consumers both offline and online which at times may be outside the control of the organisations (Shao et.al, 2015).

Increasingly, brand owners now have to navigate their brand and brand content through consumer and stakeholder created content to align their brand stories with the desired brand story (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). This increases the investment and resources firms have to make available to penetrate multiple stakeholders across multiple channels. Ramaswamy and Kornum (2016) argue that an increased number of parties involved in a brand, divergent goals, different levels of capabilities and the various levels of involvement all contribute towards increasing issues of management particularly in online communities. Gregory (2007), adds that giving too much weight to external stakeholders may cause some senior executives to be vulnerable as it takes some of the power inherent in their role away.

Brands are becoming less and less providers of core brand messages and are moving towards being providers of operant resources for consumers to glean from and create individualised value (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Shao, Gyrd-Jones & Grace, 2015). This has led scholars to suggest that the role of brands is challenged radically in lieu of the co-creational effects evident today (Merz et al.,2009; Gröonroos, 2011; Shao et al., 2015). The shift from closed to open strategies will be a significant challenge for many corporate brands. Some big corporates are hesitant to relinquish some control over their brands to stakeholders due to fear of exposing proprietary information and yielding managerial power over the communication of the brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Martinez, 2013). Ogawa & Piller (2006) warn that

transformation of the value creation processes with all stakeholders is fundamental. The reward according to Martinez (2013) will be far greater as embracing stakeholders in a co-creation process will reveal superior value propositions for organisations.

To this end multiple stakeholders are seemingly features of modern day business, this is reflected in the way in which technology has enabled broad stakeholders to interact and co-create with brands (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). In the current digital culture, brand value is situational and is manifested in the continuous co-evolutionary interaction concerning economic and social dynamics (Potts et al, 2008). The scholars are in agreement that the stakeholder approach challenges the traditional company focused approach to management broadly (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Gregory, 2007; Potts et al, 2008).

Hatch and Schultz (2010) warn that that the multiple stakeholder approach poses a key challenge to brand management and further questions how multiple stakeholders will be incorporated in the brand development process. The question raised, is central to the proposed study. The approach of including multiple stakeholders in the brand creation process requires that brand managers to fully comprehend the challenges and opportunities inherent in following this approach to ensure a mutually beneficial process. According to Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015), in the traditional sense of brand value creation, organisations and stakeholders have specific roles to play and to a large extent, stakeholders are generally seen as passive, compliant receivers of value.

The scholars argue that in a brand co-creation context, stakeholders assume an active role in their diverse capacity through their “joint agency in creating brand value together” (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2015). This supports the argument that brand equity has shifted towards a multiple stakeholder understanding that focuses on brand value as a dynamic, multifaceted construct where all stakeholders such as employees, customers, partners, financiers are involved in the development of a

“negotiated brand” (Gregory, 2007) where value is co-created and is enhanced over time (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015).

Thus the following research questions have emerged from the extensive literature review:

2.8.3 *Research question 4:*

What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation?

2.8.4 *Research question 5:*

What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management?

2.9 CONCEPTUAL MAP

The model below represents the framework of the study. The diagram depicts that while an organisation has multiple stakeholders, Mitchell (2002) and Jones (2005) indicated that it’s not possible to engage with all stakeholder groups at the same time, thus the need to identify salient stakeholders and prioritise the stakeholders according to the organisation’s strategic direction. The selected stakeholders can then be engaged in various co-creational engagement activity with the firm. The co-

creational activity between the identified stakeholder will give rise to challenges and opportunities that may require a specific management approach.

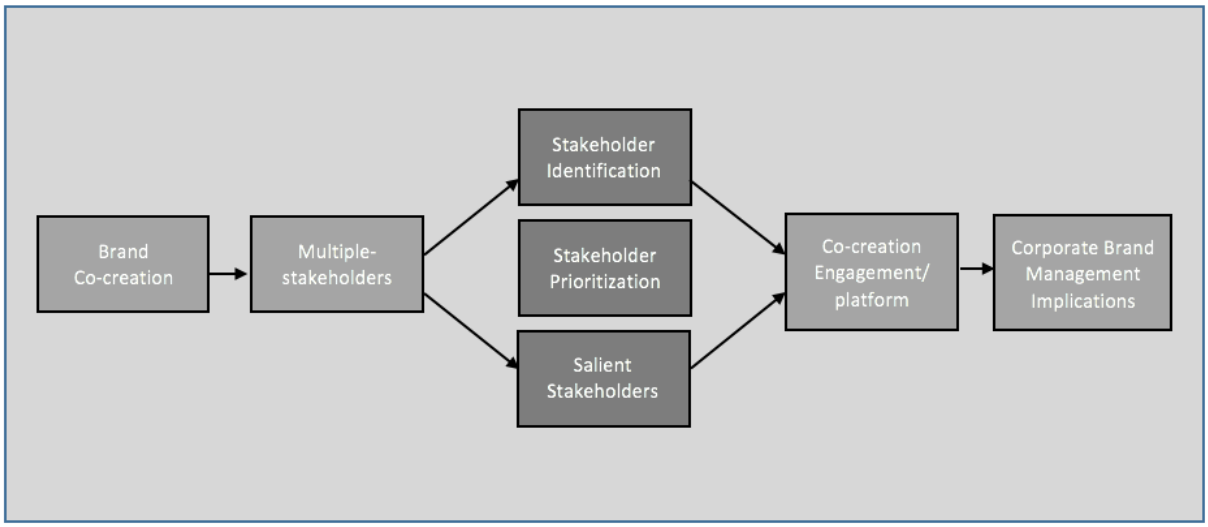


Figure 5: Multiple stakeholder brand co-creation (Adapted from Jones (2005); Merz et al (2009); Iglesias et al (2013); France et al (2015)

Kazadi et al. (2016) corroborates that increasing diverse stakeholders in the brand building process is valuable to firms and can be equally challenging as it requires more investment towards enhancing and developing stakeholder co-creation capacity and capabilities. Ballantyne et al. (2011) proposes that a collaborative approach with stakeholders is a key strategy in an increasingly complex world where dialogue and engagement can potentially reveal value creating opportunities. Relatedly, Merz et al. (2009) argues for a new collaborative logic for brand value creation and suggests that building strong brand relationships with all stakeholders along with a service-dominant perspective nurtured around brand co-creation will be beneficial to marketing managers.

2.10 CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has revealed that little focus has been paid in considering multiple stakeholders in brand co-creation efforts (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Grandy & Levit, 2015). In concluding the literature review, there's significant evidence that suggests that traditional perspectives of value and value creating resources have shifted. Today, organisations and individuals have become a dynamic, complex system of a globally networked community of open, multi-layered constructs that is not limited by boundaries or channels (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015). Pera et al. (2015) posit that the success of brand co-creation with stakeholders is dependent on two points namely, the ability to develop and implement engagement moments that will enable interaction and collaboration with multiple stakeholders and secondly the management and leadership ability to facilitate co-creation effectively.

This has informed the following Research questions:

1. **RQ1**:How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity?
2. **RQ2:** Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engage with in co-creational activity and why?
3. **RQ3:** What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activity?

Consequently, organisations with ambitions to grow, particularly into new markets have to have deep insights and thorough understanding of all stakeholder' wants and needs and this requires that consumers, marketers, suppliers and employees come together and participate in the brand development and building process (Ind et al., 2013) to identity new product and service opportunities. The managerial implication is that the locus of power has shifted, which will see firms not controlling the brand,

but rather, facilitating the co-creation of brand value and making co-creation platforms across various channels and stakeholders possible (Gregory, 2007; Ramaswamy & Gouillart, 2010; Haarhoff and Kleyn, 2012; Iglesias et al., 2013; Shao et al.,2015; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015). To which this has informed the following questions:

4. **RQ4:**What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation?

5. **RQ5:** What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management?

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The premise of a methodology chapter is to detail the methodology process and the application undertaken towards addressing the research questions. Sapsford (2006) explains that a methodology is a philosophical position of paradigms that underscores and qualifies the style of research. Wahyuni (2012) describes a research paradigm as a fundamental set of beliefs and assumptions that frame how one perceives the world. These beliefs and assumption become a framework that directs the behaviour of a researcher. With this in mind, this chapter articulates the philosophical and theoretical commitments that have influenced the decisions made about the research design, and the choices made pertaining to data collection and analysis. The chapter is presented in seven broad sections namely: research strategy; research design; data collection and storage; data processing and analysis; description of the respondents; research reliability and validity measures and research limitations.

Summary of literature review

The literature review points to a dearth of research that provides established theoretical concepts and solid empirical conclusions on brand co-creation (Merz et al., 2009; Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2016) and in particular how brand co-creation manifests across multiple stakeholders (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Juntune, 2012; Grandy & Levit, 2015;) within a corporate brand domain and even more specifically implications on corporate brand management (Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2016; Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Ind & Bjerke, 2007;). Based on the outcome of the literature review, this paper aims to explore brand co-creation engagements with multiple stakeholders and the underlying implications for corporate brand management. Specifically, the study will review evidence of brand co-creation interactions in a multi-stakeholder corporate brand context in South Africa.

The research aims to concretely address five research questions:

- How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity?
- Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engages with in co-creational activity and why?
- What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activity?
- What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation?
- What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management?

3.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Research strategy as articulated by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), is the overall approach to answering the research question. Bryman (2012) assert that research approaches contrast in terms of their epistemological and ontological orientation as well as their relationship between theory and research. There are three research approaches namely: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches (Thornhill, 2012; Robson, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Quantitative research focuses on the quantification in the data collection and analysis process and focuses on a deductive approach between theory and research; qualitative research considers participants' meaning (Saunders et al.,2012) and provides rich description of social constructs (Wahyuni,2012) while mixed methods research as purported by

Robson (2011) refers to a collection of qualitative and quantitative data collection in the same study.

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach is chosen. The rational behind the chosen methodology is premised on Saunders et al. (2012)'s advance that, qualitative research considers meaning while Quinlan (2011) extends that qualitative research focuses on words as opposed to numbers. As this study aims to explore the emergence of brand co-creation across multiple stakeholder environment, and the implication for corporate brand management, the research will seek to construct meaning and focus on the occurrence of the phenomenon and the depth of the implication on brand management. Thus a qualitative empirical assessment is best employed due to its intrinsic ability to produce meaning (Becker,1996).

Robson (2011) proposes that in qualitative research, findings are presented in a verbal arrangement. This is consistent with the approach to the research, which seeks to articulate a conceptual framework (Saunders et al, 2012). To this effect, the research takes on a constructionist ontological position which accepts that reality is ever changing, subjective and that multiple realities exists (Bryman, 2012). Grounded on this ontological assumption, the study concedes that the context of the study under investigation is influenced by the multiple stakeholders' perspectives and the managers in charge as well as their actions. Similar research in the field of brand co-creation has followed a qualitative approach. In their study, Shao et al. (2015) posit that assessing brands requires exploration of the context within which brands are situated, while Juntunen (2012) adds that existing theory in corporate branding and co-creation has gaps and requires elaboration , thus a qualitative approach will enable deeper understanding of this relatively new phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

According to Hussey & Hussey (1997), an interpretivist paradigm seeks to assist with developing theory and utilises rich data in the process. In lieu of the the exploratory nature of the study, an interpretivist epistemological position aligns with the need to

understand the context in which the research phenomenon in question occurs, thus the approach to theory is inductive (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, Bryman (2012) purports that an interpretivist approach, seeks to understand human behaviour and assumes that research must recognise the differences in people thus grasp that social action has subjective meaning. Simply put, people make sense of constructs from their own experiences. Based on this epistemological position, this exploratory research study, seeks to contribute to a clearer understanding (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Noor, 2008) of brand co-creation across multiple stakeholders and implications from a brand management perspective.

As brand co-creation literature is emergent in nature, the need to contribute to building related theory is more pressing than testing of theories. The literature review has highlighted gaps in meaning, and the need for elucidating meaning in the context of co-creation of value (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2016). Juntunen (2012) conducted a study that focused on co-creating a corporate brand in small start-up organisations. As brand co-creation is relatively new and little is known on how stakeholders engage in co-creating brands, to sufficiently address the gaps, both the ontological and epistemological positons of the study represent a subjectivist approach (Juntunen, 2012). The current gaps in the brand co-creation theory as discussed, merits deeper understanding and elaboration (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008) towards uncovering new insights into the emerging phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

Explorative studies in nature, lend themselves to emergent, untidy process of investigation (Corley, 2012). In a similar study, from a subject matter perspective, Grandy & Levit (2015), aimed to uncover value co-creation and competitive advantages within a church setting. The study is also located within an interpretivist perspective and follows a qualitative approach with the view of uncovering rich and thick explanations on value co-creation. Ponterotto (2006) claims that the concept of “thick description” is viewed as one of the key concepts in the vocabulary of qualitative research. Scholars of qualitative research stress the value of “thick” rather

than “thin” description (Schwandt, 2001). While there’s varying degrees of what thick description is, there’s consensus that the concept is concerned with the interpretation of descriptions in so far as meaning, intent, motives and circumstances with the view of characterising a particular setting (Creswell, 1998; Schwandt, 2001).

In determining the research approach, other similar studies that seek to contribute to the occurrence of brand co-creation have been considered. While few specifically address brand management challenges inherent in co-creation, many considered the occurrence of the phenomenon and the implication from an engagement perspective. Shao et al. (2015) in their study to determine the extent to which brand meaning is determined by corporate versus consumer-generated processes, the scholars employed a narrative storytelling approach which is referred to as a narrative discourse analysis. The approach, is also a qualitative approach which considers meaning in situ (Woodside, Good and Miller, 2008). Literature in the branding domain corroborates the use of a narrative approach in exploring brand meaning (Shao et al, 2015). The narrative approach to brand studies has been applied with the view of understanding why some brands are more compelling than others (Woodside et al.,2008). The authors assert that the study required this approach so as to obtain a first-hand understanding in context and derive understanding directly.

In other similar studies, Martinez (2013) examined collaborative processes of value creation with active consumers within the open co-creation framework. Similarly, the study was explorative in nature and followed a qualitative approach to provide a vivid depiction of the phenomenon in question (Yin, 2003; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The study specifically considered the use of co-creation engagement in the food and drink industry and was concerned with asking critical questions pertaining to how and why organisation engage in co-creation practices (Martinez, 2013). Iglesias et al.(2013) applied an exploratory qualitative approach to construct a new model for Brand Value co-creation, resulting from the dearth of applicable empirical research.

As a result of the evidence in literature, a qualitative approach is appropriate to answer the research questions for the proposed study sufficiently. The key advantage of a qualitative study as reflected in the above mentioned studies, is that it enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon through interviews with participants, which facilitate a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and opportunities. A qualitative approach is also emergent in nature and as such supports the discovery of constructs and theories (King & Grace, 2008).

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Saunders et al. (2012) proposes that a research design is the framework for collecting and the analysis of data to meet the research objectives. Bryman (2012) confirms that research design is a frame work that reflects important decisions about various aspects of the research process. Robson (2011), extends that research design considers practical implications of research aligned to the research intent, aims and issues of location, time and money. According to Bryman (2012), there are five generic research designs which include: cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study, comparative and experimental design. While Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales (2007) point to five qualitative methods, namely Narrative Research, Case Study, Grounded Theory, Phenomenology and Participatory Action Research.

As the study under investigation sought to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholders context and the implication on corporate brand management, a qualitative, case study approach best fits the research enquiry. This is because a case study, is a research strategy that is evidence-based and empirically investigates a contemporary occurrence within a real-life context (Saunders et al., 2012). Through the proposed study, the researcher sought to discover emergent themes to sufficiently satisfy the research question. Thus a case study tactic was adopted on the basis that it is the prevailing approach to discuss the “how” and “why”

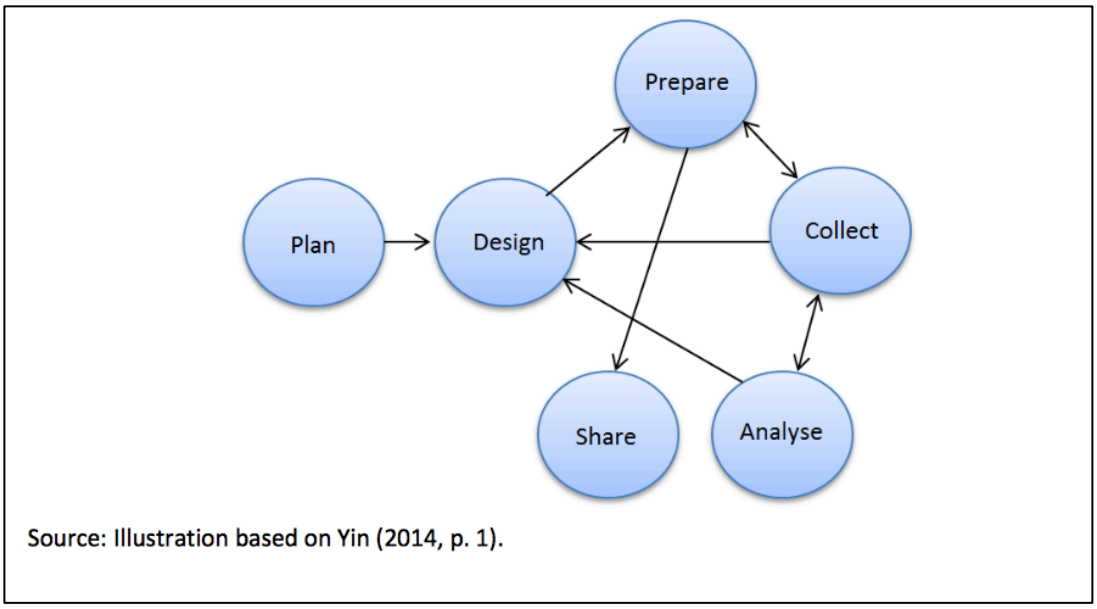
research question (Yin, 2013) within an organisational context and the approach enables the discovery of trends in real life context (Yin, 2013).

The research design employed in this study is an exploratory qualitative case study approach so as to understand the phenomenon from a managerial perspective and unpack how brand co-creation occurs within a corporate brand context. Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) substantiates the notion that case study research is a strategy that enables understanding of present dynamics in a single setting. Robson (2011) asserts that case study research widely includes the study of an individual, group or an organisation by taking into account the context in which the phenomenon occurs.

Bryman (2012) corroborates that a case study involves deep analysis of one or multiple situations thus provides the investigator with in-depth understanding of a particular group. For the purposes of this study, a qualitative single-case study design was employed. This approach enabled the researcher to gain comprehensive insight into the practice of brand co-creation within a corporate branding context and the relevant implication from managerial perspective. To this end, a case study approach provides rich data and allowed for analysis of detailed, complex data (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Tynan et al. (2010) in their study, considered how organisations and consumers co-create value in the luxury market setting. The scholars employed a case study approach to understand the nature of value co-creation which enabled the investigators to investigate the phenomenon richly in real life context (Yin, 2003; Woodside et al., 2008). Grandy & Levit (2015)'s study, aimed at uncovering value co-creation and stakeholder complexity within a church setting, similarly drawing from case studies. In their study, Pera et al.(2015) observed the motives and resources for co-creation with a multiple stakeholder context and employed a case study design approach to address the critical questions in which the researcher has inadequate control.

Similarly, due to the emergent nature of the brand co-creation topic, in their study, to further understanding of how knowledge is co-created within a multiple stakeholder context, Kazadi et al. (2016) utilised an exploratory case study research design. Their justification of this approach is that the method fits the contemporary nature of the topic, particularly when investigated within its real real life context and setting (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Bryman (2012) commits that a case study approach to research, adds to theory as opposed to generalising to a population, as such, it lends itself to in-depth study and understanding of the phenomenon in context.



Source: Illustration based on Yin (2014, p. 1).

Figure 6: Case study research process: Yin, 2014

The study in question sought to address broad questions on brand co-creation a multiple stakeholder context and the above case study research process as depicted by Yin (2014) will be considered. In-depth data will be gathered and analysed to identify respective themes (Creswell et al.,2013). The selection criteria for the case study that is to be analysed and the relevant data collection procedure will be addressed in the latter part of the methodology chapter. Post ethical clearance, data collection phase will commence. Emerging themes will be coded inductively and analysed; findings will be discussed as part of the concluding remarks; a framework

will be developed or alternatively, the outcome will add to the existing conceptual framework.

3.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND METHODS

3.3.1 *Data collection instrument*

Research instruments refers to methods used in the process of obtaining and analysing data (Saunders et al, 2012; Bryman, 2012). The methods are systematic and aid in answering the research question aligned to the theoretical framework. Quinlan (2011) corroborates that research methods are a means researchers employ to gather data for a research project. Broadly speaking, there are two types of instruments: observation schedule and an interview schedule. An observation schedule as explained by Quinlan (2011), is research instrument which records observations and Robson (2011) adds that it is interactions that occur naturally, while Bryman (2012), assert that an observation schedule indicates categories of behaviour to be observed.

The second form of data collection instrument is an interview schedule. This form of instrument is a technique that interviewers use to engage with respondents physically and address a set of questions in systematic fashion as well as record own responses (Saunders et al., 2012). For the purpose of the research proposal in question, the chosen approach to the collection of data is in the form of an indepth-interview schedule. Relying on interviews as method of data collection for a qualitative case study, is best suited to address the research question as it will enable the discovery of different views from the participants (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) proposes that in business research, the aim of the interview is to elicit diverse perspective on the research issues from the interviewees. Thus an interview guide, serves as roadmap of topics to cover (Robson, 2011). In-depth

interviews will enable the collection of large amounts of information in one session which will enable deeper understanding of emergent issues broadly and deeply.

In qualitative interviews, the approach taken may vary based on the nature of the research question and research design. Bryman (2012) postulates that qualitative interviews are divided into two major types namely: semi-structured and unstructured. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher uses an interview schedule, a set of questions with specific topics, however the interviewee has the flexibility to respond accordingly. In his co-creation study, Zhang & He (2014) used semi-structured in-depth interviews as a primary data collection strategy. Similarly, this study employed the same approach. Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) submit that an interview schedule is a guide for one to conduct interviews. Conversely, in an unstructured interview, the interviewer uses a brief set of prompts aligned to a range of topics whereby the interviewee can respond with freedom (Bryman, 2012).

In the proposed study, a semi-structured approach to the interview was applied as the researcher has to have a set frame of reference and relatively clear focus (Bryman & Belll, 2007). The research question centered on brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholders setting and the implication on brand management. To this end, the researcher maintained focus to uncover data relevant to answer the questions during discussions with the interviewees. To guide against losing track, a pre-established interview schedule, with general questions, plaid a critical role in guiding and managing the semi-structured interview process (Bryman, 2012; Wagner et al., 2012). See appendix B for the interview guide.

In lieu of the various research issues identified in the research questions, the use of an semi-structured interview guide as a measurement instrument to ensure consistency across interviews enabled the researcher to answer the research questions sufficiently as well as provide leeway for the interviewee to elaborate and develop themes further (Bryman, 2012). The semi-structured interview approach

adds value to the proposed research process as the topic is relatively new and under-researched and thus requires deep discussions with participants.

As this study addresses a phenomenon that may at first glance be unknown to the respondents, to sufficiently address the research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with contextual data indicating time, date, duration location and demographic information and probing questions (Saunders et al., 2012). The interview guide broadly encapsulated key topics that formed part of the discussions with the interviewees. Key points of discussion and questions were derived and adapted from existing literature relevant to brand co-creation and multiple stakeholder management (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Ind et al.,2013 and Shao et al.,2015).The fieldwork will comprise of 14 in-depth interviews with marketing managers, brand managers, project managers and coordinators who look after different stakeholders under the identified corporate brand.

3.3.2 *Target population and sampling (case sites)*

The target population in social research clarifies where a sample is taken from (Saunders et al., 2012). Robson (2011) explicates that the selected participants within a sample, represent a larger group described as the population and can include the population of people residing in town, or workers within a factory. This study followed a single case study approach. For the purpose of this study, a case site also refers to a population. The diversity of stakeholder groups in a corporate branding setting was crucial to the research journey. Boesso & Kumar (2016) suggest that an organisation has relationships with disparate groups of stakeholders including customers, employees, community and NGOs. These stakeholders usually focus on issues that relate to the success of the organisation as well as the greater good of society at large.

Thus maintaining a relationship with all stakeholders and not just customers is essential to the robustness of a corporate brand. The targeted population for the

purposes of this study is senior and middle managers who are responsible for building the corporate brand and managing various stakeholders of the particular organisation. Bryman (2012) expounds that a target population comprises of elements such as people, cities, regions and firms from which the researcher will select a sample. According to Saunders et al. (2011) a target population comprises of a complete set of cases from which a researcher can choose a sample that most represents the general population.

According to Robson (2011) sampling is related to the ability to generalise findings and pertains to the extent one can generalise findings. Bryman (2012) suggests that sampling is a portion of the population that is chosen for a research enquiry. The sample for this research is the respondents who will participate in the investigation. A detailed list of the sample is highlighted on Table 2. The approach used to derive at the sample is purposive sampling. According to Dever and Frankel (2000), purposive sampling approach is usually used in qualitative research specific to case study design. The approach enables strategic selection of participants to ensure variation that is required to address the research question is achieved (Saunders et al., 2011; Wahyuni, 2012). Saunder et al., (2011), also indicate that small samples that have various cases are equally a strength.

For the study, participants were purposively selected in order to address the research questions (Wahyuni,2012). Purposive sampling technique, thus considers the researcher's discretion to align to the relevancy of the research (Bryman, 2012). As the research design is case study specific, this approach ensures that participants have existing knowledge of the research issues so as to add to the quality of the discussion during interviews.

The organisation chosen for the enquiry is the South African Institute of Chartered accountants (SAICA). The organisation looks after one the most prestigious professional designation brands namely Chartered Accountant. Chartered accountants are key in business and many of them hold critical positions of power and influence in the South African economy. The organisation also has other sub-

brands under the stable and an intricate web of stakeholders from universities, donors, government, students and more. To achieve a representative view of the organisation, a mixture of senior and middle managers with different roles and responsibilities spanning different areas of influence in the organisations were assembled.

3.3.3 *Ethical considerations regarding data collection*

In business research, ethics pertain to the application of ethical principles as well as prescribed standards grounded on the ability to differentiate between the right and wrong way of going about the research process (Quinlan, 2011). Bryman & Bell (2015), refer to Diener & Crandall (1978), who suggested that ethical principles in research, can be categorised in four broad areas namely: indication of harm to principles; consent from participants or respondents; invasion of privacy or issues of deception. With this in mind, the researcher in the proposed study has taken into account the ethical considerations as outlined above. A profile of the researcher's position and motivation for undertaking the research has been provided, refer to the appendix H.

To align to the ethical consideration as prescribed in social research context by Easterby-Smith et al., (2012) and Bryman & Bell (2015), the following considerations have been addressed:

- The purpose of the study was clearly communicated to the research participants so as to create rapport and trust;
- The researcher sought consent with regards to the use of data from the participants detailing the data collection process;
- The confidentiality of the information collected from the participants is guaranteed and will not be used by third parties
- The researcher will maintain anonymity of participants, and will not befall participants with harm particularly pertaining to their respective careers and self-esteem.

Participant in the study did so voluntarily and were not in any way forced or coerced. Consent was sought at the highest level of the organisation, specifically from the Senior Executive Marketing. Participants or the organisation had the freedom to opt out at any point of the research. This provision was made available in the consent letter. Information recorded will be destroyed post the grading and publication of study. Anonymity will be prioritised and code names or pseudonym are used to denote the participants in the study. Data collection and storage raises critical points of contention within the social research space. According to Bryman & Bell (2015), digital data sharing has elevated issues of confidentiality and created legitimacy, security and data ownership concerns. In order to address ethical issues as well as data storage concerns, the researcher for the proposed study has recorded the interviews digitally with consent from the interviewees, and stored the data for safe keeping (Wagner et al., 2012).

3.3.4 *Data collection and storage*

As part of the procedure, the identified corporate brand was formally contacted in order to obtain authorisation to proceed with the research, refer to appendices for the specified letter to the organisation. In order to access the organisation, personal and business networks were probed prior to distributing authorisation letters. Meetings were scheduled with respective people at SAICA. The method of collecting data was a face to face interview which encompassed a researcher engaging with a respondent asking questions and receiving answers (Robson, 2011). Yin (2011) defines interviews as qualitative method of data collection where another person's perspective or explanation of a phenomenon is collected.

The in-depth interviews were a minimum of 30 minutes to a maximum of an hour. Participants were contacted via email and telephone. Emails were personalised for each respondent and each containing a thorough outline and purpose of the research, context of the study and substantiating why their participation and input is important to the study.

The interviews were reordered using an iPhone device and an IPad as back-up installed with an application called Voice-Recoder. Permission to record was requested in the authorisation letter, upon which each respondent signed prior to the interviews. The researcher made methodological, observational and theoretical notes in the interview as well as wrote post interview notes (Wahyuni, 2012). To safeguard the contents of the interview, data was electronically saved with access control through a password. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and printed copies of the interviews will be safely stowed.

3.3.5 *Data processing and analysis*

Saunders & Lewis (2012) advance that the processing of data refers to how researchers prepare their data so as to make it suitable for analysis. Bryman (2012) adds that data processing has to do with the development of a frame for coding so as to provide a framework for assessing answers to be analysed. In a qualitative study data processing follows specific processes different from quantitative studies. The following will be discussed: transcribing, thematic analysis and data fragmentation.

According to Saunders et al. (2012), transcribing is an account of what the respondents said in response to questions, in their own words, while Bryman et al. (2011) suggests that it's a written translation based on the audio-recorded interview. Thematic analysis of data is a categorised template representing themes that emerge from the data viewed as representing points of interest and the connection between the themes (Saunders et al., 2012; Robson, 2011). Thematic analysis is appropriate for the proposed study as it considers all the data towards identifying emerging issues and enables a summarised view. This approach is used in various studies highlighted in the literature review. Data fragmentation refers to turning data into fragments by dividing it into chunks of data with each chunk representing a specific code.

The objective of theming information in this instance, is to identify emerging trends relative to the experiences of the participants. A table of results will be developed which will enable results to be tabulated for ease of interpretation. Tabulating results in this manner, aids the comprehension and discussion of results in a systematic way. King & Grace (2008), listed respondents and assigned a number, then identified themes as aligned to the research question such as indication of brand knowledge and commitment to the brand and identified themes and emerging patterns. According to Patton & Cochran (2002), the process can be outlined as follows:

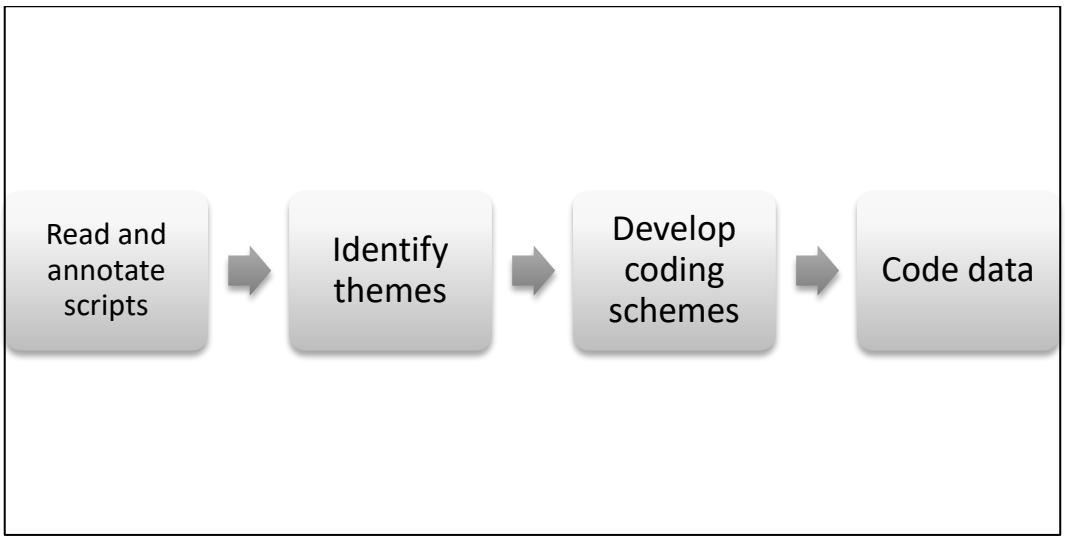


Figure 7: Thematic analysis adapted from Patton and Cochran (2002)

Pera et al.(2015) in their study of motives and resources for co-creation in a multi-stakeholder environment followed a general analysis framework to analyse and interpret the data collected (Yin, 2013). Their process was divided into three stages namely: analysis of interviews and transcripts, identifying recurring themes and analysis of common themes.

For the purposes of this study a similar approach will be followed where the following process will be applied:

- Analysis of individual transcripts with the view of understanding each respondents experience of the phenomenon and towards identifying budding themes
- Coding and categorisation of results as articulated by Cresswell (2007).
- Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that coding ought to be imaginative, unrestricted to enable themes to emerge progressively.

3.3.6 *Description of respondents*

The participants for the study are illustrated in Table 2 below. The Senior Executive Marketing will be interviewed to gain organisational context, this will be followed by marketing managers, communication coordinators and content managers/ community managers and project managers to further clarify their interaction with various stakeholder, their role in brand co-creation and how co-creation engagement impacts the management of their brands. To ensure deep insights are uncovered in the data collection process, the objective is to choose a case site that most represent a corporate brand with multiple stakeholders in south Africa. According to Patton (2002) qualitative research usually includes a small sample due to the in-depth nature of the interaction between the researcher and the respondents. In total, 15 participants will be interviewed, which aligns to the recommended number of at least 12 participants (Creswell et al., 2007).

Table 2: Profile of the case site and the respective participants

Corporate brand (SAICA and it's sub-brands)	Participants within each sub-brand
The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants	2 x Senior Executive Marketing 1x Project director Marketing 1x Marketing, Communication and Stakeholder

	Manager 2 x Project Managers 2 x Marketing Coordinators
Accounting Technicians (AT(SA)	1x GM for AT (SA 1x Marketing Manager AT(SA) 1x Project manager/ community manager AT(SA) 1 x AT(SA) member
SAICA ED (A division of SAICA)	1x CEO SAICA ED 1x Marketing and Communications Manager

3.4 RESEARCH VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

According to Bryman (2012), validity and reliability are interdependent where validity supposes reliability as a result, a measure will be valid if it's reliable. Validity thus ensures what the research intended to measure is tested.

3.4.1 *Reliability*

Quinlan (2011) describes reliability in research as the extent to which research can be deemed as dependable. Saunders and Lewis (2012) add that it is also the degree to which the data collection process can produce consistent findings. In this context, reliability of research is a measure of consistency. Bryman (2012), purports that reliability involves key factors namely: stability in terms of time; consistency of the scales employed in the research as well as inter-observer consistency. To ensure further reliability of the study, a thorough context of the background of the study will be provided (Shenton, 2004).

Various scholars are of the view that the notion of validity and reliability are not fitting for qualitative research. Bryman (2012) argues that applying reliability and validity measures on qualitative research assumes that one single view is possible and that

the research can reveal the absolute truth. Guba & Lincoln (1994) suggest that qualitative research should be assessed based on trustworthiness and authenticity which are further broken in to issues of transferability (aligned to external validity), credibility (similar to internal validity) and dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) should be considered (Houghton et al., 2013; Wahyuni,2012).

To ensure dependability, aligned to reliability, of the research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue for an audit approach to research to ensure all records are kept detailing every phase of the research process. To this end, all fieldwork notes, transcripts of interviews, decisions made during data analysis will be made available in a form that is easily accessible. This is to ensure that good practice was followed.

3.4.2 *Internal and external validity*

Bryman (2012) indicates that validity is a key indicator of reliability of data as it inherently deals with the integrity of the research. The extent to which the research can be generalised beyond the specific context is referred to as external validity. Bryman (2012) point to issues of contention with reference to the critique of the rigour in qualitative studies. To this end, alternative measures of evaluating qualitative research have been proposed. As the proposed study follows a qualitative approach, using a single case study approach, the ability to generalise is limited. The approach is inherently about adding to theory as opposed generalising to a population, which can be viewed as a limitation. The nature of the study is also limited to a particular context thereby further impeding on the generalizability of the study.

Triangulation will be applied as a form of ensuring validity of the finding. Data will be compared across different sources. Zhang and He (2014) in their co-creation study, employed semi-structured interview approach, where a minimum of 3 top or middle

managers where interviewed. To improve the reliability and validity of the research, the scholars made the following provisions:

- Interviews are to be conducted by the author of the research paper
- Coding of data and analysis is to be undertaken independently and reviewed by other researchers.
- The researcher will seek clarification and corrections from the case sites which enhanced the reliability the results.
- To ensure credibility, research will be carried out in accordance with social research good practice
- Respondent validation will be sought where the research will provide respondents with an account of what was discussed during the interview to ensure correspondence
- Qualitative research entails in-depth study of a small sample as opposed to the breadth of study that quantitative studies follows (Bryman, 2012). To this end, qualitative follows “thick description” which provides rich, contextual accounts of the phenomenon, thus creating a database of depth of information that will enable other researchers to make their own judgements about transferability of findings to other research contexts (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)

3.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Co-creation is an emerging concept an as such there’s very little theoretical frameworks that inform the concept, thus the results of the study will be limited to the context in which the phenomenon occurs. The collection of data is limited to three months, inferring limited exposure to the organisation. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the results are limited to their context thus impeding on the generalizability and transferability of the study.

The sample of the proposed study is narrowed to a South African, professional designation context and as such the respondents may have limited knowledge and understanding of the concept. Similarly, South African is an emerging market where perhaps such notions are not yet developed.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the paper outlines the presentation of the results and the process that was followed. A research guide was used to guide the process of the face to face semi-structured interviews and to ensure that some structure prevailed and that similar questions were posed across all the respondents. The interview format was semi-structured, allowing for the opportunity to dig deeper and probe more where necessary. The answers as such were not necessarily given in the order in which the guide provided, but were addressed in different ways as some responded to a question with multiple answers that related to different questions. The results derived from the research are presented in this section. Thematic analysis method was used to determine the themes extracted from the data.

The themes are derived from a process on unpacking verbatim what each of the 14 respondents said for each research question. The process commenced with transcribing all 14 interviews verbatim see appendix E (transcriptions) followed by the coding of data per respondent see appendix F (coded data) followed by tabulating like minded ideas across all 14 respondents see appendix G (tabulated ideas). Post tabulating the ideas across all the respondents, a process of combining like-minded ideas with the view of narrowing down common ideas followed and lastly, core ideas were turned into key themes as presented in the results. The themes were further synthesised into the core themes as presented in the discussion of results in chapter five.

The results are presented as follows:

- Summary of the demographical data of the 14 respondents is provided;
- Key themes are presented from each research question;
- Supporting comments from a range of respondents pertaining to the themes are presented;

- A summary of results is provided for each research question

14 respondents were interviewed from the South African Institute of Chartered accountants (SAICA). The 14 respondents each play a role within the marketing, communication and leadership space at SAICA. The respondents were selected across the the three brands the institute offers namely CA(SA), AT(SA), The Hope Factory and as well as representatives at Group Marketing level. A hierarchical mix was considered, were some respondents are senior executives and some have an administrative role. The respondents were chosen due to their role in marketing and their interface with multiple stakeholders in their roles. Many of the respondents have at least five years' experience working at SAICA suggesting that there is a fair understanding of the environment in which they work and there is general understanding of shifts in the market that may having taken place over the years particularly in so far as the role of stakeholder in building the SAICA brand.

Table 3: Profile of the respondents

Respondents	Gender	Age	Role	Education level	Number of years at SAICA
Respondent AM	Female	45-50	CEO of The Hope Factory, a division of SAICA	Post Graduate	6 years
Respondent AV	Female	35-45	Project Accountant, SAICA	Graduate	4 years
Respondent CM	Female	50-60	Senior Executive SAICA, Transformation	CA(SA)	22 years
Respondent EN	Female	55-60	Project Manager,	Undisclosed	15 years
Respondent GL	Male	45-55	Project Manager,	Undisclosed	12 years

Respondent JC	Female	40-50	Head of Marketing, The Hope Factory	Post Graduate	7 years
Respondent L	Female	35-45	Learning and development, AT(SA), a SAICA sub-brand	Graduate, AT(SA)	2 years
Respondent LX	Female	35-45	Project Manager-Marketing, Group marketing, SAICA	Post Graduate	4 years
Respondent NK	Female	40-50	Executive: GM AT(SA)	Post Graduate	6 years
Respondent NM	Female	45-50	Director-Marketing, Group Marketing, SAICA	Post Graduate	7 years
Respondent NNK	Female	20-30	Marketing Coordinator, Group marketing , SAICA	Graduate	6 years
Respondent PP	Female	40-45	Marketing Manager, AT(SA)	Graduate	8 years
Respondent TP	Female	35-45	Project Administrator, AT(SA)	Graduate	6 years
Respondent WC	Male	55-65	Senior Executive, Group marketing	Post Graduate	20 years

4.2 RESULTS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1

RQ1: How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity?

4.2.1 *Themes pulled from RQ1*

1. **Understanding of brand co-creation**
2. **Building and managing personalised relationships with stakeholders**
   - Concept of being close to stakeholders
   - Idea of managing relationships:

3. **The era of collaboration with stakeholders**
    - Collaborating with stakeholders
    - Inviting input and involving stakeholders from inception
    - Getting buy-in from stakeholders
4. **Increasing engagement with stakeholders**
    - Increasing engagement opportunities with stakeholders and keeping them in the loop
5. **Interacting with diverse stakeholders**
6. **Types of engagement**
    - Face to face dialogue/conversations
    - Why the need for engagement?

4.2.2 *Respondents views on the themes extracted from RQ1:*

Table 4: Respondents view to themes related to RQ1

Theme	Remarks	Number of times mentioned
Understanding of brand co-creation	"I have some idea of brand co-creation, its having partners to help your brand grow" "Co-creation is aligning to stakeholder strategies" "Co-creation is collaboration" "Co-creation is working with stakeholders to achieve goals;" "You can't force co-creation, there has to be common ground" "I have but I haven't engaged in what it is" "Co-creation not that much…So you have to elaborate. But I would say that my understanding of that would be who we are so our identity in the corporate space would be what I would refer to as our brand."	10 of 14 respondents don't know the concept of co-creation 4 of 14 have some idea and the others did not answer directly

	"No, it's the first time…there's always new terminology".	
Building and managing personalised relationships with stakeholders	**Concept of being close to stakeholders:** "Maintaining close relationships" "Tangible relationship with stakeholders" "To influence change, you must be close to stakeholders" "Need to get close to your stakeholders" "We have to keep stakeholders close to what we do" "We need to maintain good relationships" "We need to maintain healthy relationship" "Partnership based relationships with stakeholders" **Idea of managing relationships:** "Less likely to survive if you don't manage relationships with stakeholders"; "When there's champions for relationships, you get the best results" "Managing stakeholders well puts you in a position to negotiate" "You must manage interactions as there are different value propositions to every stakeholder"	The word relationships was mentioned 20 times by 9 out of the 14 respondents.
The era of collaboration with stakeholders	**Collaborating with stakeholders:** "Need to be more intentional towards a Collaborative approach" "Collaborative, working together…" "Collaborate with employees and listen more to their ideas" "We have been challenged to collaborate more" "Quality of your collaboration is important. Good quality means you get good input to take your brand forward"	The word collaboration was mentioned 15 times by 10 of the respondents; idea of involving stakeholders, getting buy-in

	"Now its about collaborative conversations" "Need to collaborate and partner more" "Collaborating with internal stakeholders-marketing doesn't know everything" "It's the era of collaboration" "Everybody brings ideas to the table" **The idea of inviting input and involving stakeholders from inception** "We need to Invite input" "Involve people from the beginning" "We try to involve other internal departments to avoid siloed approach" "Including people from the beginning" "We go out and seek participation of stakeholders" "Receiving input and being open minded" **Getting buy-in from stakeholders:** "Getting stakeholder buy-in is important particularly for a new brand" "Get buy-in and sign off from stakeholders" "Get stakeholder buy-in is important"	was mentioned 6 times; idea of receiving and inviting input mentioned 5 times
Interacting with diverse stakeholders	**Employees:** "More interaction with employees to promote them as brand ambassadors" "Engagement with CEO and employees –understanding the strategy more" "Staff are important to involve in your brand effort; they are the	

	lifeline of your business” “Word of mouth is important; staff must know what the organization is about so they can spread the correct message” “For staff its about brand advocacy, finding opportunity to talk about who we are” “Engaging with staff and being open to their input” “With employees there has to be a value fit”	
Types of engagement	**Types of engagement (face to face dialogue)** “Continuous dialogue” “Honest direct conversation with employees” “Face to face meeting, giving them opportunity to air their views” “Create relevant content that is engaging” “Personalised and customised engagements” “Speaking or personal interaction is more effective” “With conversation, answers come from stakeholders” “Consultation creates co-ownership of brand” “Honest direct conversation with employees” “Face to face interaction” **Why the need for engagement?** “Through interacting with stakeholders you realize the issues with the brand” “For sustainability and growth you have to manage interactions with all stakeholders” “Can’t grow alone”	

	"Stakeholders must live the brand" "Ensure alignment with stakeholders" "Use your stakeholder engagement to understand what is required" "Build solid, engaging brand" "High engagement improves reputation"	

4.2.3 *Summary of results from Research Question 1*

The objectives of research question one was to establish how an organisation interacts with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity.

Co-creation concept not know but principles of it were understood

What became clear was that brand co-creation was not known. The majority of the respondents had not come across the term brand co-creation. Upon probing further, it was evident that the concept was understood but the term as such was not known. The concept and the principles of including stakeholders and collaborating with them in their brand building efforts was to a certain extent issues that the organisation was already grappling with in light of rapid changes in technology, business and the increasing customer agency.

Building and managing personalised relationships with stakeholders

What the result also highlighted was the shift towards developing close personal relationships with stakeholders. Stakeholders in their diversity seem to hold a significant position in the organisation. The majority of respondents asserted that organisation needs to bring stakeholders closer and most importantly make effort towards building tangible, meaningful contact with them. It was said that in order for

organisations or brand to have an influential role on stakeholders, they must bring them in more. The idea of brands being less likely to survive if stakeholder relationships are not managed also came up insistently.

The era of collaboration with stakeholders

In terms of addressing how brands can engage with stakeholders, the theme of collaboration was very dominant. 80% of all respondents agreed that organisations must find more effective ways of collaborating with stakeholders. One of the respondents succinctly said today is the era of collaboration. There is an urgency towards being more proactive and in touch with stakeholders.

There was consensus among the respondents that the organisation needed to be more intentional in seeking participation from stakeholders and towards investing in more collaborative approaches. The senior executive of group marketing, respondent WC said that it's not only about creating collaborative approaches, but also improving the quality of the collaboration to take the SAICA brand forward.

Under the theme collaboration, some sub-themes emerged. The idea of including people from the beginning came up prominently and also getting buy-in from the stakeholders was a point the respondents stressed. That key to success is to get your stakeholders involved upfront particularly around new product opportunities or new initiatives that the organisation embarks on respondents concluded.

Increasing engagement opportunities with stakeholders

Increasing engagement opportunities with stakeholders came up high. The concept of providing engagement opportunities or engaging more with stakeholders was mentioned by all the respondents. SAICA is a membership based organisation and keeping their members engaged in the brand is important.

Types of engagement

Different types of engagement strategies were highlighted, key being creating face to face dialogues/ conversations with stakeholders and constantly keeping

stakeholders informed and in the loop with the direction of the brand. SAICA has over the years increased its engagement with stakeholders and now the organisation is looking at making the engagement opportunities more effective and meaningful.

The fact that brands must interact with diverse stakeholders was discussed. However, many of the respondents only highlighted that outside of key customers, employees are important and the organisations needs to improve its approach towards getting employee buy-in in terms of its strategic pursuits and rev up its engagement and collaborative intentions with employees.

Lastly the respondents also brought to light reasons why brand engagement with stakeholders was necessary. The issue of sustainability and growth was mentioned and brand engagement as a tool to understand where the gaps are with the brand offering.

4.3 RESULTS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION 2

RQ2: Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brand engages with in co-creational activity and why?

4.3.1 *Themes pulled from RQ2*

1. **Types of stakeholders**
2. **Salient stakeholders**
3. **Prioritisation of stakeholders is not a priority**
    - All stakeholders are equal
4. **Ignore stakeholders at your own peril**

4.3.2 *Respondents views on the themes extracted from RQ2:*

Table 5:Respondents view to themes related to RQ2

Themes	Remarks	Number of times mentioned
Types of stakeholders	**Main/ Primary Stakeholders:** • SAICA Members Training providers: "Training providers are our brand voice as they are the ones who interact with learners directly" • AT(SA) members • SMMEs **Internal Stakeholders:** • SAICA • Employees **Secondary stakeholders are:** • Media, • Audit firms, • Government and Government agencies: CEDA, SEFA, DTI • Parents in our context • Youth • Learners • SMME • Investing public • Sponsors • Funders • Tvet colleges, • Universities	SAICA mentioned 4 times as internal stakeholder by the other sub-brands Government was mentioned by 8 of the respondents; funders were mentioned 5 times; audit firms were mention 8 times, the media was mention 7 times, investing public was mention 6 times and the rest of the stakeholders we mentioned based on the respondent's area of influence.

	Tertiary • Speakers are stakeholder • Regulators: SAQA, FACET, SETAs • Corporate companies • Teachers • Unions • SGBs	SAICA members, ATSA members and SMME as the key stakeholders
Salient Stakeholders	**Primary stakeholders are most important:** "Yes we prioritize, my paying stakeholders" "You have to keep your basic stakeholder who pays your bills satisfied" "Primary stakeholders are the members because they pay the bills" "Other stakeholders are not as important as our members" We align with stakeholders who are important to specific objectives	5 of the 14 respondents said main members are the SAICA members
Prioritisation of stakeholders is not a priority	**All stakeholders are equal:** "No prominent stakeholder, everyone plays an important part" "Everyone has an impact" "We treat stakeholders the same" "We don't prioritise, things happen parallel" "No prioritising of stakeholders, all important because they impact the work we do" "We haven't formally prioritised stakeholders" "I treat everyone the same"	11/ 14 said they don't prioritise stakeholders; 2 of 14 said they do

	“We are nothing without the other so we can’t prioritise”	
Ignore stakeholders at your own peril	“You can’t close off the world, you will die” “Adaptive learning or you will be obsolete” “If you don’t engage you die” “If you don’t keep stakeholders engaged, you will be doing yourself a disservice” “We would be fighting a losing battle if we don’t engage with them properly” “if you don’t engage with stakeholders nobody will support you.” “If you don’t take stakeholders seriously, you will die” “Change or you will be irrelevant” “You can’t burn bridges or you will be done with” “Don’t take stakeholders for granted”	The idea of being obsolete, dying, being irrelevant was mentioned 11 times in different ways by 8/ 14 stakeholders

4.3.3 *Summary of results from Research Question 2*

The objective of the research question two was to establish who are the most salient stakeholders an organisation engages with in co-creational activity.

Salient Stakeholders

For SAICA, if one had to assert who their most salient stakeholders are, it would be its members, although only five respondents admitted that their members are salient. These SAICA members are subscription paying members who pay SAICA for the right to use their various designation, the key designation being Chartered Accountant South Africa (CA(SA)) and Accounting Technician (South Africa).

Government was named as another key stakeholder which makes sense in the context of SAICA as the organisation plays a key influential role in transforming the industry and increasing the number of black professionals in the CA(SA) space. The respondents named a diverse range of stakeholders as salient stakeholders, from parents who help influence their kids to be chartered accountants, to funders, media, private sector and the investing public as other salient stakeholders. This suggest to that it is increasingly difficult to assert who is a salient stakeholder.

Prioritisation of stakeholders is not a priority

The issue of prioritisation of stakeholders was discussed. It came out that SAICA does not necessarily prioritise stakeholders. 10 of14 respondents vehemently said they don't prioritise because all the stakeholders play their part in different ways and they are all important in shaping and moving the brand forward. However, one of the respondents assertively said that they have to prioritise their members as they are a primary stakeholder who pay SAICA. Their needs trump other stakeholders and therefore more emphasis must be placed in making members happy! Other respondents said that there isn't a formal process of prioritising stakeholders. This suggest that without a formal process or policy from a brand perspective all

stakeholders will be deemed equal. There is a strong view among the respondents that all stakeholders are important because they impact the work they, being the respondents, do. There is a sense of being democratic when dealing with diverse stakeholders. The view from the respondents is that everyone must be considered.

Ignore stakeholders at your own peril

Sentiments around ignoring stakeholders at your peril came up. In fact, warnings were cited that if brands shut themselves off from the world they will die or be obsolete. This stems from the viewpoint that brands that don't actively seek external input and participation from diverse stakeholders will become irrelevant, compromising their sustainability.

4.4 RESULTS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION 3

RQ3: What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activities?

4.4.1 *Themes pulled from RQ3*

1. **Role of stakeholders in brand building has become increasingly important**
    - Changing role
    - Stakeholder agency
    - Rapid change in society, digitization
2. **Types of co-creational activities and engagements**
3. **Stakeholders shape and influence brand**
4. **Connecting with stakeholder by determining their needs and wants**

Table 6:Respondents view to themes related to RQ3

Themes	Remarks	Number of times mentioned
Role of stakeholders in brand building has become increasingly important	**Change:** "Role of stakeholders has definitely changed" "Stakeholder involvement has changed a lot" "Role of stakeholders in brand building has changed drastically" "Stakeholder size has increased" "Stakeholder needs have changed" "Stakeholders are critical" "Stakeholders play a key role" "The role of stakeholders will never be the same" "Stakeholders are always looking for something different" "You can't build brand alone" **Customer/ stakeholder agency:** "People have more rights" "People today buy on sentiments of social media Consumer activism is high" "More choices for stakeholders"	13 of 14 respondents suggest that the role of stakeholders in brand building has either increased, changed or become increasingly important Increase in customer choice or agency was

	"People are aware that they can take ownership of own lives" "People have endless choices on brands" "People have ideas and they know things, so involving ordinary employees is important" "Market is aware and know what it wants" **Rapid change in society, digitization** "Pace of change has increased, a lot more urgency and change" "High competition, no big brands" "Move with the time" "Life has changed" "Can't plan too long, need to implement swiftly" "World is rapidly changing" "Less tolerance for mistakes" "Embrace digitisaiton" "Keep an eye on social media" "We have brought in digitization of the profession; Technology forced the institute to change"	mentioned 7 times.
Types of co-creational activities and engagements	**Co-creational activities:** • Member Committees and project structures, we have committees where stakeholders can give input" • Brand influencers as brand co-	

	creation strategy • CA2025 and CA 2035 is a co-creation strategy where CAs are invited to help shape the future of the profession • Co-creating activities include: launches, meeting, roadshows, stakeholder workshops quarterly • Events like doing business with government for stakeholders • Content creation with business day TV • We meet with them and have specific sessions like employer breakfast • Annual conference as a touch point with stakeholders • "Brand co-creation activities include all events, your conferences, your networking events, because that's where we talk about who we are and what we need to do together" • We have 3-5 networking events per annum • Co-creation activities include teacher enrichment programme • We include stakeholders in hope days, meet and greet; networking sessions; publish brag books • Youth/ learner camps	

Stakeholders shape and influence brand	"Stakeholders are important in how we shape and determine the future of the profession" "Stakeholders are an extension of your brand" "Stakeholders are channel to connect you to what is out there" "Stakeholders are the drivers of your business" "Including different stakeholders provides different perspectives" "Our external stakeholders are involved with shaping our identity" "Stakeholders give you the strength to move brand forward" "Stakeholders grow and sustain brands" "Stakeholders carry the brand" "They add value because through them we get more exposure" "Stakeholders are important because they extend our network" "We had to bring in our stakeholders to shape the future of the profession" "Stakeholder involvement leads to growth"	The idea of stakeholders influencing, shaping or extending the brand was mentioned 17 times

Connecting with stakeholder by determining their needs and wants	**Methods used to understand stakeholder needs and wants** • Engagement surveys • Telephonic interviews • Conduct member satisfaction surveys • Understand needs and expectations • Feedback post events • word of mouth; • Conferences; • Email • Research questionnaires • Focus groups “Continuous research is important” “It comes individual basis, if stakeholders know what they want, they inform us” “Networking events, people are more comfortable to voice opinions in these sessions” “Dedicated coordinators at universities looking after the needs of the bursars” “We have surveys to learn more about their needs” “Trying to understand member needs through committee structures”	**Surveys, research and face to face feedback came up a few times across respondents**

4.4.2 *Summary of results from Research Question 3*

Role of stakeholders in brand building has become increasingly important

The third research question sought to determine what inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources an organisation uses to co-create with multiple stakeholders. Various themes were highlighted. The first being the changing role of stakeholders in brand building. Many of the respondents said that the role of stakeholders in brand building has increased and changed from passive participants in brand building effort to active participants of brand building effort. The sub themes related to the main theme of the changing role of stakeholders included stakeholder agency and rapid changes in business including digitisation.

Stakeholder agency and rapid change in society as well as digitisation

Views were made by the respondents that in current times, customers and stakeholders in their diversity have a heightened sense of self-awareness and individual power. Stakeholders are exercising their choices, their voice and agency more than ever before. Coupled with that, was the impact of rapid changes that technology has brought and the general disruptions in business models forcing organisation to make fundamental changes in their brand strategies and how they relate to customers and stakeholders alike. The Marketing Director for SAICA examined that they have been forced to change and be flexible in how they deliver their qualifications, provide services to their members and their overall value proposition had to be updated to be relevant for today.

Types of co-creational activities and engagements

Many of the respondents were initially not familiar with co-creation, but upon probing they understood the concept and the principle of inviting external input into the brand. The activities that were mentioned initially were very generic and not really co-creational activities such as events, launches, conferences and seminars. However, the key marketing heads revealed interesting activities and strategies that they are now using to collaborate more with stakeholders.

The current challenge at SAICA is that their members particularly chartered accountants are disengaged and questioning the value of their membership with SAICA. Many of the members are voicing their unhappiness. To this end, SAICA has engaged in various interventions to get members to be part of specific committees and project structures where they provide input into shaping the profession of the future and the benefits thereof. The members are co-designing the CA2020 and CA 2035 strategies with SAICA and to a large extend setting the future direction of the profession. SAICA has also involved members in creating the type of content they want to consume; the types of networking events and conferences they would like to attend. Some of the members are now key speakers and key contributors to their monthly publications and events broadly.

The group marketing executive said that over the past 3 years they have increased their member engagement significantly. Their member engagement division has grown; they have more young members involved in regional committees and project structures; members are constantly providing feedback via their annual member satisfaction surveys as well as post event surveys. He says their brand has grown stronger because they have begun to implement the feedback and use their member input to grow the profession.

SAICA also includes its members in their annual advertising campaign, where members are chosen to participate as brand ambassadors but have the freedom to creatively design and direct what they want the adverts to portray. The campaign

showcases young Chartered Accountants in their personal and professional capacity adding to the narrative that with a Chartered Accountancy designation behind your name you can do and be anything you want to be.

For Accounting Technician South Africa (AT(SA), one of SAICA's designations, co-creation was necessary with the re-launch of the designation late last year. The Marketing Manager for AT(SA) said that they had to engage their stakeholders quite extensively in redefining what the brand stood for and in developing the new value proposition. They involved their primary stakeholders who are the students who study the qualifications; the members whom after qualifying pay the membership fee; the training providers who deliver the qualification to the learners and the employers who employ the accounting technicians.

AT(SA)'s objective was to align their new vision with their key stakeholders; receive input in terms of the direction the brand should take as well as get buy-in with regards to what they wanted to achieve as an organisation. What became evident across the respondents was the importance of receiving buy-in from key stakeholders. The co-creation strategy that was employed was face-to-face interventions in the form of networking events and working meetings and workshops with the various stakeholders to understand what each stakeholder wants and needs from the brand.

For the wider stakeholder network, SAICA has created public forums that include ordinary citizens, government and its members to speak about the future of South Africa and the profession broadly. At the time of the research, SAICA was dealing with unprecedented reputational challenges in so far as the credibility of chartered accountants being questioned post the KPMG and Steinhoff saga as discussed earlier in the document. To get the media and broader public to continue to trust chartered accountants, they hosted many forums and discussion to heed public discourse around the issues of integrity and trust in the accounting profession.

From a brand promotion perspective, SAICA also depends on sponsors to fund some of their member related brand initiatives. In recent times, they have had to start actively engaging with their sponsors in terms of co-creating brand activations and promotional opportunities. The Marketing Director said previously, their sponsors would put money behind events without real input in how the money would be spent and the type of content that would be aligned to that sponsorship. Now the director asserted, sponsors are co-creating the sponsorship opportunities and to a large extent determining the shape and form of each intervention. They have realised their own power and now want more value and partnership out of the relationship

The other co-creational activities that were mentioned were the involvement of staff in co-creating the organisational strategy. The marketing director said they saw a gap and increasing disengagement from their staff yet the employees are the ones providing various services to their member body. This has resulted in cross team collaborative efforts, reduction of silo working streams and more integration of people, resources and ideas across the organisation.

Stakeholders shape and influence brand

Throughout the discussions, the importance of stakeholders in their diversity was underlined. Across all the respondents, it was evident that stakeholders today have a massive role to play in moving brands forward. The idea of stakeholders influencing, shaping or extending the brand was mentioned 17 times. This also supports the earlier sentiments discussed about the clear reluctance to prioritise stakeholders. There is a sense that all stakeholders play a crucial part is propelling the institute forward. Some of the comments made were that stakeholders are important in determining the future of the profession. Which is understandable as public confidence in accountants builds the brand's reputation and determines whether students want to become chartered accountants or not. Other comments were that stakeholders are an extension of the brand and in fact carry the brand.

Connecting with stakeholder by determining their needs and wants

When asked how SAICA connects with stakeholders, many of the respondents sighted the frequent use of surveys, feed back forms post events, and continuous research. The main research sighted is the annual member satisfaction survey in which members participate and score the institute in terms of their satisfaction level with the services they receive and the general value of the brand. The respondents also mentioned that their challenge is using this feedback meaningfully. It was clear that there is effort on the institute's part to understand what their members want and need in particular. Broader stakeholder needs are determined at project level and at an individual relationship level and no real formal processes exist.

4.5 RESULTS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION 4

RQ4: What is the role of the corporate band in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation?

4.5.1 *Themes pulled from RQ4*

1. **Be transparent**
2. **Listening more and better**
3. **You can't listen to everyone and everything**
4. **Brand must have a final say on outcomes of co-creation**
5. **Brand must play a leadership role**
6. **Brand must provide big picture perspective**
7. **Brands must meet the needs of stakeholders**
8. **Brands must deliver value**

Table 7:Respondents view to themes related to RQ4

Themes	Remarks	Number of times mentioned
Be transparent	"Transparency and openness is important" "We are open and transparent…open to disclosure" "Transparency is important to building a community" "We need to improve transparency" "You are brand for external people not for you so you must be open" "SAICA is transparent, we expose everything in our integrated report" "We have nothing to hide-open and transparent" "So we are closed, but not intentionally" "ATSA is very transparent, in the learning and development space we have no choice" "It's in SAICA's best interest to be open if it's to achieve its objectives" "You need to be transparent so you can have control of what is out there" "We have to be transparent as we rely on external stakeholders to support who we are as an organization"	Transparency/ transparent mentioned 14 times by 11 respondents 10 respondents mentioned that SAICA is transparent and open) 1 respondent said that SAICA is closed, but unintentionally so"
Listening more and better	**Listening to stakeholders** "Listen to what is said out there" "Listening better"	Listening was mentioned 13 times by 8 of 14 respondents

	"creating a culture that enables listening" "Listening more to what our partners are saying and the understanding the value they want from the relationship" "We are listening more and implementing more of what is being said" "We have had to listen more and collaborate more" "We have a strong brand because we listen to member's input" "Its important to listen to clients because you are for them" "Input must work for us"	
You can't listen to everyone and everything	**You can't listen to everything:** "You build a brand by listening to people who are primary to you" "We can't listen to everyone" "Listen to stakeholders who are closer" "Must identify the most important input" "Brand input is important from stakeholders, but only from your primary stakeholders" "We get a lot of input, now its about managing what to do with all the content"	6 respondents felt that the brand can't listen to everything that is said.
Brands have to have a final say on brand	**Brands have to have a filtering process**	11 respondents felt that the brand has to

direction and outcomes of co-creation	“There has to be a final say/ decision made by organization” “Need wisdom to choose what you listen to” “Need strong filters to determine whether input is valuable or its just noise” “Involving different stakeholders is dangerous because people have different agendas” “You have to consider what they say, but can’t build a brand on collective input” “You can’t manage 20 agendas” “Who decides on your brand, can multiple people tell you what your brand should be?” “Yes, you have to deal with what is said, but stakeholders can’t dictate the direction of your brand “ “Determining what is going to make you successful as a brand cannot be determined by a collective, only a few people can determine that; the risk is having a diverse outcome” “Some input from stakeholders is uncomfortable” “You can’t take in everything; you have to know the core of your business” “How would you decide what to take in? have a vote?” “You can’t build a brand based on multiple opinions” “Sometimes to manage things the way you want to; you may have to be autocratic”	set the agenda and direction of brand even in a co-created context

	"The brand has standing processes and structures so you have to bring in external elements without breaking the rules"	
Leadership role	**Leadership role:** "Play a leadership role" "Leadership/ steward role" "Organisations have to lead the pack" "Brands fail because of leadership; Lack of leadership or direction" "Brand must play a leadership role"	Leadership role was mentioned 9 times
Big picture perspective	**Big picture perspective** "Provide a sense of purpose" "You have to paint the big picture of what is happening to them so that they can be part of the change" "Share your vision with stakeholders" "The role of the organisation is to be the champion of the brand, preaching eating and sleeping the brand" "Guide and influence input" "It's important for staff to know vision and what the organization stands for" "Sharing brand objectives" "Provide clarity in terms of goals" "You have to paint the big picture of what is happening to	Idea of providing a big picture, purpose and brand vision was mentioned 12 times

	them so that they can be part of the change”	
Meet the needs of stakeholders	**Meeting the needs of stakeholders** “Keep your brand promise” “Proactive in understanding needs and wants” “Marketing provides guidance and influences input” “Learning to do things for the benefit of our funders and not just our brand” “Role is to meet needs of stakeholders” “Create relevant brand experiences” “Delve deep to understand what the need is” “You exist to meet needs and create value” “We needed to unpack the value of the profession to business; Clarify value proposition for stakeholders; We have had to create value for our members”	The idea of meeting the needs or keeping to brand promise was mention at least 9 times
Delivering value	**Delivering value** “Always show your value to stakeholders” “Show impact of what you do” “Marketing is the point of contact to understand member and stakeholder need” “You exist to meet needs and create value” “Demonstrating value to stakeholders; More value more investment” “Its not about first level value, but creating long-term value” “People want to know what is in it for me” “If you want to co-create, you must provide value for	Delivering value was highlighted as a core responsibility of the brand- idea mentioned 13 times

	others” “Demonstrate value to stakeholders” “You can only succeed if you know what people need”	

4.5.2 *Summary of results from Research Question 4*

The research question 4 sought to unpack the role of an organisation in a brand co-creation interacton and the capabilities necessary to enable brand co-creation. Research question four and five really dealt with management issues from an organisation’s perspective.

Be tranparent

The first theme that came up was the issue of transparency. Many of the respondents believe that SAICA is very transparent and as such open to disclose what the brand is about and seeks to achieve with a broad stakeholder network. The word transparent was mentioned 14 times while 10 of the respondents vehemently said SAICA is transparent. The group marketing executive went as far as pulling out their integrated report and said that the organisation’s entire guts are exposed in the report.

It was also apparent that as a member body, SAICA has to practice a certain level of transparency to its members and broader public. Some of the respondents cited that a brand is for external purposes and as such must be transparent to the extend that it needs to be. The respondents said that it is in SAICA’s best interest to be open and transparent if it is to achieve its objectives of growing the professsion. Another respondents suggested that in the age of social media, there’s no place to hide and

that it is incumbent on all organisations to be transparent failing which their “dirty laundry” will be exposed at a later stage.

Listening more and better

The majority of the respondents brought up the issue of listening as an organisation. Listening was mentioned 13 times by 8 of the 14 respondents. This is expected as you can’t invite input into your brand and not take in what is suggested by the stakeholders. The respondents mentioned that the organisation needs to improve its listening capabilities and understand the value stakeholders want from the relationship with SAICA. The head of marketing for The Hope Factory, a division of SAICA said that part of listening is creating a culture that enables listening. She said what good is seeking to listen if the internal culture is dominating and stubborn to change.

The group marketing director said now more than ever the institute is listening more and implementing more of what is being said. He said they are conscientiously going through all the feedback, analysing it and finding ways to use the input as a direct feeder into their growth strategies. He acknowledges that perhaps five years ago they were not as meticulous or worried about being inclusive in their approach. To quote him, he said “today we have a strong brand because we listen to members’ input”. To add to this, the accounting profession is facing reputational challenges indirectly forcing SAICA to be more receptive to what is being said at a broader stakeholder level.

You can’t listen to everyone and everything

The concept of choosing who to listen to was very interesting. Although only 6 of the respondents highlighted the issue, I thought it was a pertinent dimension to the

listening theme and a direct contradiction to the earlier sentiments that said all stakeholders are equal and therefore not prioritised. The respondents said that an organisation can't listen to everyone and that only the primary stakeholders or those closest to you deserve an ear. They said that the organisation must identify the most important input and this input will most likely come from their most influential stakeholder who for SAICA is their members.

Brand must have a final say on brand agenda and outcomes of co-creation

From the concept of listening more and better, to not taking in input from all stakeholders to another interesting direction from an organisational capability perspective – the idea of brands needing to have a filtering system to be able to pick out what is most pertinent to the brand. 9 of the respondents felt that the brand has to set the agenda and direction even in a co-created context. While the respondents welcomed the ideas of collaboration, inviting input, listening and engaging more with stakeholders, it became obvious that the organisation's role in co-creation is to set the agenda; decide for itself what it will use and not use from the various inputs; and most importantly filter the gems from the dust. This idea of authority came up quite strongly which seems to balance out initial sentiments of this co-ownership of the brand with stakeholders. But when it came down to decision making about the well-being and the direction of the brand, the respondents strongly felt that it is the role of the organisation to exercise that prerogative.

One of the respondents stated some of the input that they receive from stakeholders in uncomfortable. She made an example about involving youth in their promotional strategies at school and university level. She said that while they try to bring in young people in their campaigns to help the organisation to be more current and appealing to the younger generation, they struggle with taking in what they say. According to the respondents, some of the input goes against the brand. Young people want the

profession to be edgy and off the wall she said. But accountants can't be edgy due to the nature of the work they do.

It was evident as one of the respondent said, determining what is going to make you successful as a brand cannot be determined by a collective, only a few people can determine that. In a co-created context, brands run the risk is having a diverse outcome and consequently a disjointed brand. The general sentiment was that you can't build a brand based on multiple opinions. The marketing manager for The Hope Factory said brands need the wisdom to decide which input will benefit the brand more.

Brands/organisations must lead

Other generic sentiments came up in this section. The role of the organisation playing a leadership role is expected. Taking the lead was mentioned 9 times by 9 respondents. The marketing manager for AT(SA) said that brands fail because of a lack of leadership or direction. Leadership is aligned to the idea of the organisation setting the agenda and not taking in everything. The respondents also said that not only must the brand lead, but it must provide the stakeholders with a big picture perspective; discuss with them the purpose and the broad objective of the organisation. The respondents said stakeholders will support you more if they know where you are going. The notion of providing a big picture, purpose and brand vision was mentioned 12 times by the respondents**.**

Meet the needs and deliver value

The last points on the role of the organisation in brand co-creation was the fact that brands must meet the needs of stakeholders and deliver value. Delivering value was

highlighted as a core responsibility of the brand. The concept was mentioned 13 times. I think this idea of doing what is expected and doing it well is expected particularly from a SAICA perspective as it's a member based body whose mandate is to serve the needs of its constituency and deliver real value. This is key to its makeup. The respondents also stressed the importance of unpacking their value proposition more for stakeholders. What was also key for SAICA was to be relevant and provide current, new to the world services to its members. It was agreed that for co-creation to succeed, there has to be perceived value from both ends. People exercise their rights. They want to know what's in it for me. To this end, brands must always demonstrate value to all its stakeholders.

4.6 RESULTS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTION 5

RQ5: What are the broad managerial implications from a leadership and culture perspective of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management?

4.6.1 *Themes pulled from RQ5*

1. **Open brand approach**
2. **Risks of being too open**
3. **Brand arrogance and top down culture is over**
4. **Agile, approachable flat structure**
5. **Know your brand DNA**

Table 8:Respondents view in relation to RQ5

Themes	Remarks	Number of times mentioned
Open brand approach	"Our brand management approach is open and allows for engagement" "You have to be available and open" "Being open to what is out there" "You must invite input and be open to it" "Our approach is open to input" "An open approach will help brand, working on our own is useless, must be open to grow" "Open approach enables us to influence and shape the direction of the profession" "Membership bodies have to be as open as possible" "Need to be open enough to bring anybody in to take brand forward" "Open door policy supports co-creation" "It's in SAICA's best interest to be open if it's to achieve its objectives" "Open but to relevant stakeholders" "Open and transparent to the extent that we are expected"	The idea of brand being open was mentioned 12 times
Risks of being too open	**Risk of being too open**	7 respondents highlighted the issue of risk of

	"Open approach can be risky as you are not always in control" "Cannot be open to everyone-understand who you are" "We don't have process in place to open brand to partners and stakeholders" "There are risks to being open as people have the freedom to say what they like about you. They can judge your brand openly" "The result of taking in multiple views is a disjointed brand" "Brand managers are afraid of getting things wrong" "Management needs to be brave" "You also don't want to feel like you are losing the management of your brand" "Being assertive"	being open to everyone and discussed issues around accountability
Brand arrogance and top down culture is over	**Brand arrogance:** "Brand arrogance, legacy and historic norms prevent co-creation" "Brand arrogance can create negative social media" "Current marketing space is more real not arrogant" "It used to be brands dictating, now its customers" "Heavy handed corporate push down is over" "You can't have a big ego and be defensive about your	The word arrogance was mentioned 5 times by 5 respondents and 5 other related ideas around arrogance came up from 5 other respondents

	brand” “Being bumble as a brand” “Corporates can’t be arrogant and make assumptions” “If you think you know better as brand, you will be shocked” “You can’t afford to be arrogant as a brand”	
Agile, approachable flat management approach	“Not a top-down; Flat management structure” “Culture can promote or destroy brand, need an enabling culture” “No hierarchy” “Approachable and available to stakeholders” “Allow stakeholders to self-manage” “Need to be agile” “Democratic management approach is required” “Allow access to brand” “Extending trust to stakeholders”	

Extending trust to stakeholders	Trusting stakeholders “Trust is key” “Trust requires transparency” “Extend trust to stakeholders” “Brand integrity and trust” “Need to trust your stakeholders, without them there is no brand” “Establish Brand trust to build brands today”	Trust (mentioned 6 times by 5 of the respondents and reputation 7 times)
Knowing your brand DNA	**Maintaining brand DNA (points were raised about brands needing to** “Ensure your brand DNA stands” “Aligning what the organisation’s mandate is and still enable co-creation” “How to keep brand in tact while evolving” “Your brand must be strong enough for the primary stakeholders who pay your money” “Role of business is to mitigate risk and not throw out ideas” “You can’t do things that are outside your brand” “You are guided by your brand’s vision” “You can’t derail from your true brand essence” “Knowing who you are as a brand” There’s a need to ensure alignment between what brand stands for and what others say”	12 ideas around know who you are, maintaining brand DNA and not derailing from core brand came up

	“Impact is bad if you don’t have a clearly defined space/ clear brand”	

4.6.2 *Summary of results from RQ5*

The fifth research question was aimed at unpacking the managerial implications in a brand co-creation context. Below key outcomes are discussed based on the themes outlined.

Open brand approach

The idea of a brand being open in its approach was raised 12 times. The respondents felt that brands must have an open and not a closed approach in order for brand co-creation to succeed. There was a common sense that a collaborative engaging space requires an organisation to be open and receptive to stakeholder’s input. The respondents said that you must invite input and not only that, but be open to what the input brings. One of the respondents said that an open approach will enable SAICAto influence and shape the direction of the profession. This belief is already evident in their massive CA2020 and CA2035 co-creation strategy campaign where SAICA is calling for active participation from various stakeholders to shape and influence the future of the accounting profession. The Marketing Director said they have been forced to be agile in their approach and open to input from all fronts.

Risks of being too open

With an open approach, it’s expected that the inverse of it would have to be considered. Six of the respondents highlighted the issue of risk. They said that an

open approach means that the organisation will not always be in control. This is aligned to previous sentiments of the brand setting the agenda and filtering the input to suit the direction the brand wants to take. Interestingly the Marketing Manager for AT(SA) said that she is uncomfortable with the idea of being too open as they don't have processes in place to open the brand up to partners and stakeholders and to deal with the implications that come with being open. Another respondent retorted that being open means you must be comfortable with people's freedom to say what they like about you. Not only that, the respondent further said that social media has created a platform for brands to be judged openly anyway. So organisation must get comfortable with transparency and openness and find ways to be open to input and use the input effectively towards driving their brands forward.

A sub theme of bravery was also highlighted. The respondents felt that in this new era, brand managers seem to be afraid of getting things wrong particularly because social media and digitisation widens and spreads the impact instantaneously. The is a sense that bravery and control of brand must prevail. One of the respondents said that brands must be assertive and shouldn't feel like they are losing the manangement of their own brands.

Brand arrogance and top-down culture is over

Sentiments were expressed that the heavy handed corporate culture is now a thing of the past. Although only five of the respondents brought the word arrogance up, five other cited related issues such as humility. I thought it's worth highliting from a culture perspective. It's clear that being open to co-creating with stakeholders suggests that there has to be a fundamental culture shift. One of the respondents said that brands can't afford to dictate, have big egos and be defensive about their brands anymore. One of the respondents said that brands must be humble and accept that they don't know everything and that listening to what is out there may be beneficial to the growth of the organisation. SAICA has been arrogant. This was

expressed by one of the respondents. Now the organisation is forced to listen to their stakeholders as their stakeholders are now questioning their role, their value and contribution to the profession particularly in light of the reputational crisis the organisation was dealing with at the time of writing this report.

Agile, approachable flat structure

Another managerial implication or shifts that were mentioned is the idea of flattening the management structure to really allow for an open, inclusive brand to thrive. 8 respondents brought to light that culture and management structure can promote or destroy a brand. They suggested that an enabling culture can facilitate brand co-creation. There is a broad view that a democratic management approach is necessary, one that faciliates engagements, listens more, and is open to diverse contributions. The respondents said that there shouldn't be hierarchy, instead the organisation must be approachable and available to stakeholders. One of the respondents went as far as saying SAICA must leave room for stakeholders to self manage. The need for agility and flexibility was discussed. The respondets said the world today requires organisations to be flexible in their approach and delivery.

Know your brand DNA

The idea of brand co-creation unearthed a lot of management implications. The notion of knowing your brand or having a firm brand DNA to guide you in a co-creation context was mentioned 12 times. This supports the view that brands must set their own agenda and have the wisdom to determine which input is relevant for the brand as presented in preceding results. The concerns cited where the challenges of keeping the core of the brand in tact wile evolving. One of the respondents said you can't do things that are outside your brand essence. Another responded said you have to be guided by the brand's vision to ensure that you don't

derail from what the brand stands for in the pursuit of brand co-creation. One of the respondent said that you need a tight brand strategy to control brand messaging.There is constant tension between the organisation being open, collaborative and the need to maintain control and consistency of brand meaning.

4.7 CONCLUSION OF TOTAL RESULTS

The results revealed interesting themes, commonalities and also contradictions and tensions. The important factors seemed to be the implications of co-creation on the fundamental management of the brand. The romanticised idea of creating an open and inclusive brand was lauded but when faced with practical implementation and the implications thereof, it was clear that the organisation has a strong need to control the direction of their brand and maintain brand messaging and consistency. To this end, key fundamentals or takeaways from the results were noted as follows:

1. **Brands are shaped and made stronger by wider stakeholder network:** the changing role of stakeholders in brand building was a key highlight with all the respondents suggesting that wider stakeholders are influencing and shaping the direction of brands. With the increase in customer/ stakeholder agency and the changing landscape of business, people have a voice and they are using it to approve or disprove brands. One of the respondents succinctly said that “It take a village to build a brand”.

2. **We have entered an era of collaborative, open and transparent brand management approach:** the idea of organisation dictating to end users is now being challenged. Organisations seems to be forced to change and consider more meaningfully the input of diverse stakeholders. Sentiments of the organisation being open, transparent and inviting to stakeholders was very prominent.

3. **There is an increase in effort to engage and interact more with stakeholders:** stakeholders are now being seen as an extension of brands. SAICA has certainly made significant effort to open up their channels to receive greater participation from all levels of their stakeholders. Their challenge is now how to manage the input and use it strategically to influence the brand in an appropriate way. More face to face, one-on-one interactions were cited to ramp up real, meaningful engagements with stakeholders.

4. **Co-creational activities still need to be defined:** the respondents were listing general marketing initiatives and not co-creational activations. However, upon clarifying the extent of co-creation only a few initiatives ticked the box. SAICA realised it's own gaps in co-creation and conceded that not enough is being done to include stakeholders across their brand in co-creational activity. However, this sentiment was thwarted with the views that you can't build a brand with a collective. The need to manage the two ideas lingered.

5. **The is a democratisation of stakeholders and reluctance to prioritise who is most important:** the majority of respondents suggested that stakeholders are all equal and that it is difficult for them to prioritise one over the other. Although when it came down to who do you listen to, many of the respondents suggested that your primary stakeholder's input is the most important one.

6. **Listening more is key to creating an open brand:** the idea of listening and being accepting of new ideas was highlighted. The respondents also said you can't listen without extending trust to stakeholders. They also cited that there has to be a culture shift that enables organisation to listen more and implement was is being said effectively. The ability to receive different viewpoints was discussed, which lead many of the respondents suggesting that brands can't be insular anymore and that organsiations must understand that people want to get involved in the brands they support and consume.

7. **You can't build a brand on multiple agendas:** the need to harmonise feedback and input was prevalent. The respondents felt that you can't take in and listen to everything that is being said. In doing so, you run the risk of creating a disjointed brand. The idea that brands can't be swallowed and overshadowed by stakeholders was mentioned. Now its about finding ways that work for both brands and stakeholders.

8. **Organisations must be able to receive input and filter it to align to their brand DNA:** what came up clearly was that in a co-creational effort, the organisation must influence the final outcome. The organisation has to have strong brand filters to ensure that what is co-created is still aligned to the essence of brand. To this end, SAICA cited that they don't have a process in place that enables filtering of ideas and input. They are challenged with formalising the various engagement platforms and aligning them them to brand.

9. **A culture shift is necessary – being accepting of new ideas:** the challenge of co-creation is evident when juxtaposed with the sentiments that brands tend to be arrogant in their approach. The respondents said the days of heavy handed corporate culture is over. That brands must learn to not only invite input but be accepting of new ideas. This suggests that a change in corporate culture, organisational structure and approach is necessary to enable co-creation. The respondents mentioned the need to be agile and proactive in how they deal with stakeholders.

10. **Organisation must lead, provide direction and deliver real value:** this role of the organisation in co-creation was really expected. Many respondents suggested that brands or organisation must provide clear leadership direction, provide big picture perspectives and really deliver value to the stakeholders.

The theme of control and power is a significant point in brand co-creation. To what extent do the external stakeholders have the power over the brand and to what extent does an organisation give in to external influence. These sentiments were the most critical aspects of the findings and will be discussed further against literature on brand co-creation.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research paper was to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa. The aim was to understand if co-creation is indeed practiced, and if so what does it look like in the context of multiple stakeholders, who is involved in the interaction and what are the implications from a managerial perspective. According to Pera et al., (2015) several scholars recognise that while consumers are key in co-creational brand activity, little research tackles brand co-creation from a multi-stakeholder vantage point. The objective is thus to understand how brands co-create together with different stakeholders (Ind et al., 2013; Frow & Payne, 2011).

This chapter seeks to discuss the results of the research in relation to theory and literature relevant to the study. The results will be discussed by reviewing each research question and the outcomes thereof. Liberties have been taking interms of general terms used. In the presentation of results the concept of brand, corporate brand and the organisation are used interchangeabily. In instanes the organisation is the corporate brand and the brand itself.

5.2 DISCUSSION RELATING TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

RQ1: How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity?

The first research question sought to understand how an organisation/ corporate brand interacts with diverse stakeholders in a brand co-creational brand activity. The

themes extracted in this research question include: understanding of brand co-creation; managing personalised relationships with stakeholders; collaborating with stakeholders and engagement with stakeholders.

Understanding of brand co-creation

What soon emerged in the process of addressing the research question is that brand co-creation is a term that is not familiar with many of the marketing practitioners. 12 of the 14 respondents did not know the term at face value. This is aligned to the literature that co-creation is emergent, expanding and that theories in the space are fragmented (France et al.,2015; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Pillai, 2012; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Shao et al., 2015; Pera et al., 2015; Ramaswamy & Kornum, 2016). Prahalad and Ramaswamy, (2000) and France et al. (2015) asserted that co-creation is understood when discussed in the context of consumers refusing to sit back as bystanders but rather seek to be active participants in the brands they use and support. Upon explaining the concept of co-creation in this context and the principles behind it, the respondents understood the concept of collaborating with and including stakeholders and as such could point to specific interventions practiced in the organisation and current issues that SAICA, the organisation is facing relating to stakeholder engagement.

In the brand management space today, co-creation includes other stakeholders who are not necessarily consumers (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Scholars argue that co-creation is linked to a stakeholder-focused approach (Merz et al., 2009; Christodulides, 2008 and Gregory, 2007). Incidentally, the concept and the principle of including stakeholders in their brand building efforts was a present issue that SAICA was grappling. SAICA at this time was receiving unprecedented stakeholder backlash from the general public, universities, government and SAICA members in relation to the reputational challenges the institute faced relating to the “lack” of ethics in the profession where audit firms and some key CEO who are chartered accountants were found wanting in terms of the profession’s code of conduct. This

confirms that stakeholders are not just customers and thus must be considered in the realm of brand management.

Managing personalised relationships with stakeholders

The word relationship was mentioned 20 times by 9 out of the 14 respondents. This was discussed in the context of an urgent need to build more personalised relationships with stakeholders. The respondents felt that if they don't manage relationships with their stakeholders they will cease to exist. A firm's relationship with other stakeholders outside of customers is equally important suggesting that co-creation of brand value is not exclusive to the dyadic relationship between organisations and customers but rather that it's a multifaceted idea that is influenced by the summation of various relationships within the brand context (Jones, 2005). This is largely because SAICA is a stakeholder heavy environment. Not only are their members key, but the entire network that supports the institute. According to Hatch and Schultz (2010), brand co-creation resonates with scholars who share the view that brand meaning and value is realised when stakeholders engage with the organisation. This view was shared by all the respondent, despite not having heard of the formal term brand co-creation. The respondents discussed that the institute needs to be closer to its stakeholders if it is to influence change in the profession. There was a sense that the organisation needs to form personalised relationships keep its stakeholders closer to what it does. This is affirmed by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p.5) that "a firm cannot create anything of value without the engagement of individuals".

Collaborating with stakeholders

In terms of tackling the part of the research question that seeks to understand how an organisation engages with multiple stakeholders in co-creational activities, a key sentiment that emerged was the concept of collaboration. The concept of co-creation was best described by the respondents in the context of collaboration. The word

collaboration was mentioned 15 times by 10 of the respondents; the notion of involving stakeholders and getting buy-in was mentioned 6 times and the need to invite input mentioned 5 times. These themes speak to how the respondents believe is best to involve stakeholders in brand co-creation. This aligns to the conceptualisation of co-creation as a value generating process where customers and organisation interact to create value as articulated by (Iglesias et al., 2013; Grönroos and Voima, 2013). Gregory (2007) adds that stakeholders can become partners with organisation through collaborative relationships that offer mutual benefit.

In marketing theory, the Service Dominant Logic (S-DL) approach is seemingly the leading research approach that scholars are using to conceptualise the notion of co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Zhang and He, 2014; France et al., 2015; Shao et al.,2015). According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), the traditional goods-dominant logic of marketing is being challenged by new perspectives of marketing such as relationship marketing, market orientation, brand relationships and service marketing. The scholars advance that the existing logic is transforming from the exchange of tangible goods to exchanging intangibles goods namely skills, processes and knowledge (Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Payne et al., 2009).

The above confirms the finding of the research in that the respondents felt that SAICA is now challenged by its stakeholder network to collaborate more. They said that their members felt that they needed to be involved in shaping the direction of the profession and can no longer sit back while they contribute financially to the institute but not have an active voice. This suggests that the transaction between SAICA and its members has changed from members paying a subscription fee to the institute in exchange for the designation, which is aligned to the traditional goods-dominant logic (G-DL) as cited above to members wanting active collaboration, engagement in determining the future of the profession. Merz, et al. (2009) further perceives that the branding logic is shifting from brands being an organisation-led property providing goods and services, to brands as collective conceptualisation of value that includes all firm activities and stakeholders.

Engagement with stakeholders

In the findings, the need to increase engagement opportunities with stakeholders came up high. The word engagement was mentioned 17 times across all respondents including the idea of keeping stakeholders informed and in the loop. France et al. (2015) claim that in co-creation literature, brand engagement manifests both as an antecedent and from the common utilisation of the word. Theoretically, engagement in academic literature (marketing and advertising) is explained in various ways often contradictory or in very different ways as either an all encompassing conceptualisation or as a synonym to other known concepts such as activation or involvement (Gambetti and Guendalina, 2010). The concept was used by the respondents as an all encompassing action, tool, strategy and approach to dealing with stakeholder involvement in brand building.

All the respondents were in agreement that the organisation must engage more with stakeholders. The views expressed in this regard included that through engaging with stakeholders, the organisation will realise its issues and that for sustainability, the firm cannot grow alone, but rather it will grow by building a solid engaging brand that aligns to the needs of all its stakeholders. This agrees with Hollebeek (2011) who purports that co-creation of brand value is a result of brand engagement. Engagement was brought up significantly as a tool to connect and co-create with stakeholders. Similarly, Payne et al. (2008) suggested that engagement is a tool employed in co-creating value with customers. There is a strong feeling among the respondents that for SAICA to be sustainable, more of its stakeholders must contribute in shaping the brand. The form of engagements that were mentioned included:

Table 9:Engagement Methods

Methods of engagement as cited by respondents
1. “Continuous dialogue”
2. “Honest direct conversation with employees”
3. “Face to face meeting, giving stakeholders the opportunity to air their views”
4. “Create relevant content that is engaging”
5. “Personalised and customised engagements”
6. “Speaking or personal interaction is more effective”
7. “With conversation, answers come from stakeholders”
8. “Consultation creates co-ownership of brand”
9. “Honest direct conversation with employees”
10. “Face to face interaction”

Hatch and Schultz (2010) advanced that engagement enables the development of brand knowledge and value for the firm. This is highlighted in the engagement platforms highlighted as they all seek to connect, interact and offer to stakeholder information and knowledge about the firm. Thus to France et al. (2015)’s point, engagement with a brand is key toward activating brand co-creation. According to Gaurav (2014), co-creation activity can manifest in physical or digital spaces, although, the ubiquity of the internet and the use of various digital platforms offers great opportunity for co-creational activity. Similarly, Vallaster and von Wallpach (2012) agree that online channels empower stakeholders to actively engage in co-creating brand meaning. While the scholars stress the ubiquity of digital platforms as enablers of brand co-creation, the findings also suggest that face to face dialogue and interaction is more valued to really connect and realize honest contributions from stakeholders.

5.2.1 *Conclusion to research question 1*

In conclusion, RQ1 highlighted the emergent nature of brand co-creation and the fragmentation of theory that exists. The nature of how an organisation engages with stakeholders in co-creation was explored through the lense of creating closer personalised relation ships with stakeholder. Stakeholder marketing asserts that relationships with customers maybe influenced by the interaction with other stakeholders and that a diversified network of stakeholders rather than just the dyadic relationship between an organisation and its consumers contributes towards creating brand value (Gummesson, 2008; Frow and Payne, 2011). This is affirmed in these findings as respondents agreed that closer relationships must be formed with stakeholders as all stakeholders influence the work of the institute. Similarly, finding opportunities to collaborate more with stakeholders and increasing engagement opportunities was a key finding.

The engagement opportunities cited were centered around face-to-face conversations and dialogue with stakeholders. The respondents felt that a more personalised approach to co-creation was more effective. This illustration supports the perspective of brand building as an interactive engagement where value is conversationally co-created (Ind et al.,2013) by multiple stakeholders (Merz et al.,2009). In different study, Tynan et al. (2010) asserted that co-creation of value necessitates complex dialogue and engagement between multiple stakeholders namely the brand owners, employees, customers, brand communities, and agencies who are part of the brand experience.

Thefore the findings are in agreement with this, however the concept of engagement is not neat. There remains many forms of engagment and the term is used as an all encompassing strategy and approach.There is opportunity to dive deeper ad find out the layers of engagement that a firm can consider. Digitisation has also meant that other more ubiquitous forms of engagement can be considered.

5.3 DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO RQ2

RQ2: Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brand engages with in co-creational activity and why?

The purpose of the second research question was to identify salient stakeholders than an organisation engages with in co-creation and why. The objective was to unpack who makes up multiple stakeholders in the context of the research and to what extent are those stakeholders involved in co-creational activity. The main themes that emerged from this research question were the question of salient stakeholders; the issue of prioritisation of stakeholders and the types of stakeholders.

As discussed, there's a shift towards looking at brand co-creation within a multi-stakeholder setting (Gregory, 2007; Ind, Iglesias & Schultz,2013; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). This approach advances that all stakeholders add value, and that brand value occurs in the context of stakeholder-based ecosystems, where networked relationships are formed with brands and brand value is co-created as a result of lively social interactions across various stakeholders (Merz et al.,2009; Robert et al.,2005; Nysveen & Pedersen, 2014). While the scholars paint a neat and fluid picture, in practice, it is relatively untidy and unstructured. From my findings co-creation does not fit as comfortably in organisations. From SAICA's perspective, the organisation is grappling with the issue of how to engage, collaborate and include all their diverse stakeholders in their brand building effort without compromising the

brand. This issue of compromising the brand will be discussed further in upcoming research questions discussions.

In his seminal work on stakeholder theory, Freeman (1984) sought to highlight the relationship between an organisation and its environment and how its behaviour impacts the environment (Wagner et al., 2012). Broadly, stakeholder theory contests the view of organisations are there to oblige the needs of just customers and shareholders, but rather assert that organisations have a responsibility to other people and organisations external of the limited scope of entrenched business relations that usually delineate an organisation's area of interest (Jones, 2005). This is prominently displayed in the findings.

The question of salient stakeholders

When all the respondents were asked who are their most salient stakeholders they all named a diverse selection of stakeholders. This is congruent with the view expressed by Mitchell (2002) that the basis of existing literature on stakeholder theory is that the performance on an organisation is linked to how the organisation relates to all its stakeholders. Outside of SAICA's main customers i.e. its members across their three designation, ATSA, AGA and CASA, government as a key stakeholder was mentioned by 8 of the respondents; funders were mentioned 5 times; audit firms were mention 8 times; the media was mention 7 times, investing public was mentioned 6 times and the rest of the stakeholders were mentioned based on the respondents' areas of influence. The respondents were adamant that the stakeholders named, are critical in the expression of the value of SAICA.
The existing brand literature has focused primarily on equity provided by consumers or customers and has dealt very little with other stakeholders as value creators (Jones, 2005). The finding presented assert that other stakeholders within an organisation must be considered as value creators as well. Based on the respondents' views, relationships with stakeholders are critical to sustaining success in business and business in this context, is concerned with bringing together

suppliers, customers, communities, employees and shareholders in an ideal environment where everyone wins over time (Freeman et al., 2004).

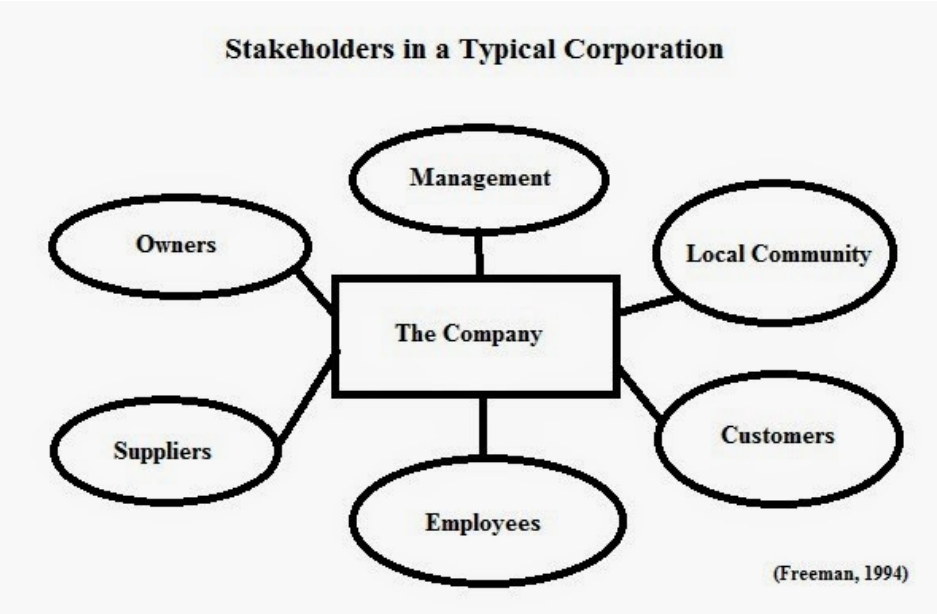
Prioritisation of stakeholders is not a priority

Scholars purporting stakeholder theory propose that organisations should categorise stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholders (Jones, 2005; Wagner et al., 2012). The primary stakeholders contribute to the value of the brand and interact with the firm on a regular basis and the secondary come to the fore only when there's specific issues that emerge (Jones, 2005). While the respondents were able to, with absolute certainty, identify their key stakeholders; what was apparent was their inability or reluctance to prioritise who is the most salient stakeholder. This is in contrast to Jones (2005)'s suggestion that brand managers should assess the salience of stakeholders so as to create and maintain long-term brand value. However, in practice, the majority of the respondents were adamant that all stakeholders are equal with the exception of 2 respondents, one of whom was the Head of Group Marketing. Many of the respondents said that they can't prioritise who to focus on as they all add value to the firm in some capacity. Only two of the respondent pointed at the SAICA members as the most salient stakeholder. When asked why, their answer was unanimous in that you have to prioritise the stakeholder who pays your bills.

They identified other stakeholders to be not as important as their members. These contributions match Jones (2005)'s views that the primary stakeholders add to the value of the brand and are in interact with the firm regularly and the secondary come to the fore only when there's specific issues that emerge. The majority of the respondents, argued that what good is focusing on the members if we can't keep universities happy, who are crucial to the pipeline of creating chartered accountants, who in turn become members. This point raised by the respondents is in accordance with Jones (2005) that value is created through multiple relationships.

Types of stakeholders

Stakeholder management is increasingly difficult in today's dynamic business context. The network of stakeholders and increased and widened. When compared to SAICA's network of stakeholders, it is evident that managing input from multiple sources is a challenge for modern day business.



Typical stakeholders by Freeman, 1994

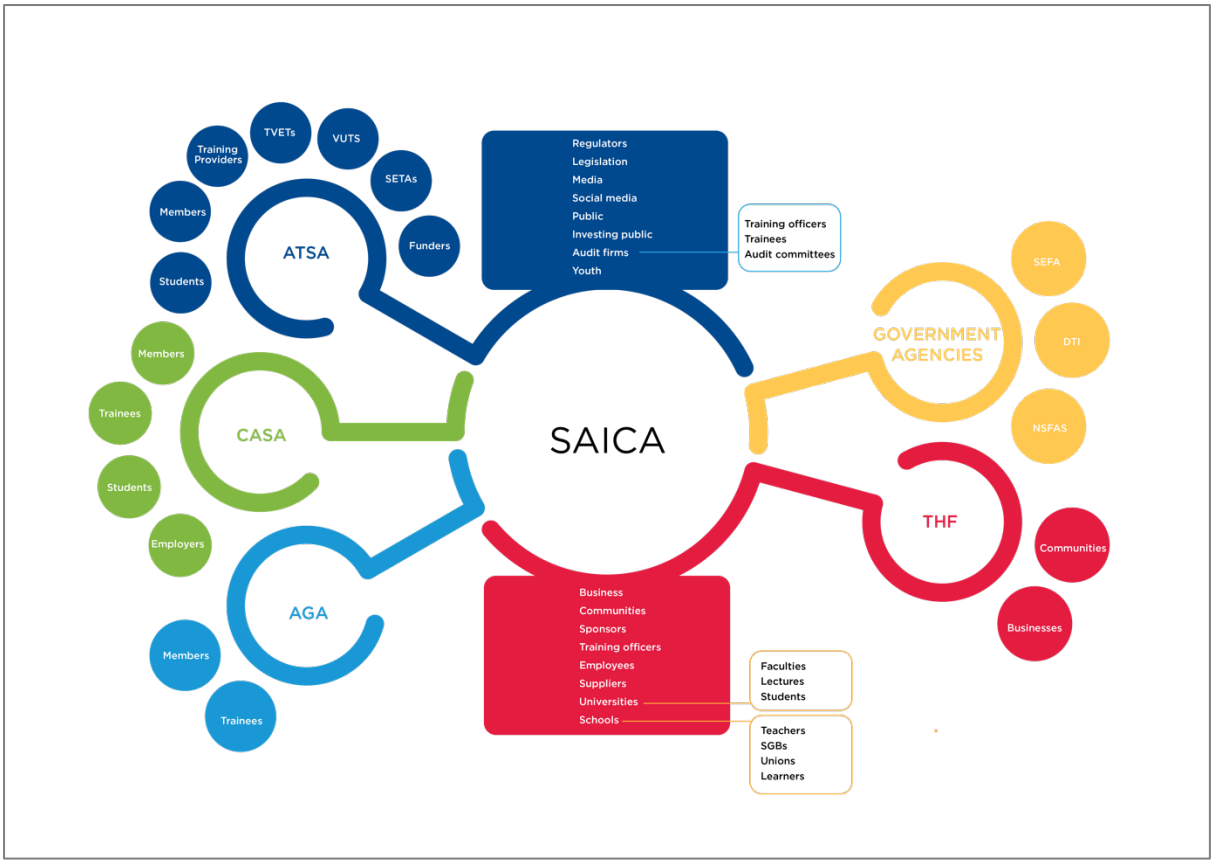


Figure 8: SAICA Stakeholder Network

5.3.1 *Conclusion relating to RQ2*

Wagner et al. (2012) stated that stakeholder theory is a tool that enables brand managers to understand, prioritise and manage the relationships that are of strategic importance to the brand (Wagner et al., 2012). However, the findings tell a different story. There is a sense that in today's time, there is a bias towards democratising of stakeholders. Respondents felt that each of the stakeholders contribute towards the brand in different was and thus cannot be relegated to a secondary, or tertiary stakeholder status.

The finding point to the fact that in today's contexts, there's increased pressure on organisations to attend to various stakeholder needs; consequently, knowing who the company stakeholders are in their diversity, their individual needs and how they interact with the organisation has become fundamental to organisations. This was further supported by warning signals the respondents provided, suggesting that organisations that ignore stakeholder influence will not be sustainable. The respondents expressed their views with deathly connotations some going as far as saying that if organisations do not take stakeholders seriously, they will die.

5.4 DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO RQ3

RQ3: What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activities?

The third research question sought to uncover the engagement platforms, strategies and resources that organisations use to connect with various stakeholders in a brand co-creational activity. Evidence of stakeholder brand co-creation is more apparent in literature on consumers as stakeholders and only in recent times, is there a shift towards a multi-stakeholder co-creation perspective (Merz et al., 2009; Vallaster and von Wallpach, 2012). This research has highlighted some examples of what is currently practiced as co-creational strategies in business from SAICA's perspective.

As discussed, the notion of a brand co-creation theory has surfaced from the perspective that consumers are no longer passive recipients of brand propositions, but rather seek to be active contributors in shaping brand engagements and experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Hatch and Schultz, 2010; France et al.,2015). The findings of the research confirm the above views. The respondents all agree that the role of stakeholders in brand building has changed. 13 of the 14 respondents suggest that the role of stakeholders in brand

building has either increased, changed or become increasingly important to what organisations become. When asked how the change has manifested, the respondents articulated various ideas:

1. **Power of individual agency:**

There is a growing view that people are no longer comfortable with being onlookers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Today people are exercising their choices and speaking up on various issues that affect them directly or indirectly. The respondents said that SAICA stakeholders are more active than ever before; they are less tolerant of mistakes on the part of the organisation; their activism is very high and there's an increased sense of self-awareness. To quote one of the respondents, "people are aware that they can take ownership of their own lives". These sentiments are echoed by Brodie and de Chernatony (2009) who claim that the rise of the empowered consumer has resulted in consumers wielding power over how brands are expressed. This is particularly evident in social media where consumers project their own ideas about the brands that differs significantly from what brands share with their stakeholders (Shao et al., 2015).

2. **Stakeholders influencing, shaping and extending brand:**

Chakravorti (2010) the role of stakeholders in marketing and branding literature is expanding. This observation of stakeholder influence expanding was mentioned 17 times. The respondents strongly felt that stakeholders now play a prominent role in shaping, influencing and extending their brand and or organisations. The consensus from the respondents was that stakeholders in their context, shape and determine the future and the direction of the accounting profession. One of the respondents specifically said that stakeholders connect the organisation to the external world and most importantly carry the brand. The above points align to France et al. (2015)'s contribution that consumers now have a significant role in influencing the success of brands today.

3. Rapid change in society and digitisation

The respondents all expressed that the rapid changes in society today are a huge factor in the changing role of stakeholders. Many of the respondents expressed that things are not the same anymore. Business models are disrupted; people are taking control of what they consume; the advent of technology in particular social media has meant that stakeholders are involved in what you do without you inviting them in. One of the respondents said that the organisation has been forced to change and to bring in more flexibility in terms of using technology to deliver value to their members and using technology to improve how they train chartered accountants. According to Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) technology has provided consumers with the flexibility to choose to be involved in brands or not and the extent of their influence can range from posting commentaries or rating brands or influencing the direction of the brands.

Forms of brand co-creation

In the extant literature, there's little evidence of explicit constructs that spell out the scope of brand co-creation forms, as a result, fused perspective of the concept are presented (Ballantyne et al.,2011). This research is exploratory in nature with the view of unearthing what is practiced under the banner of co-creation using the views expressed by Vargo and Lusch (2008) that co-creation is the organisation interacting with stakeholders to generate value.

In the co-creation literature, there appears to be a general understanding and unanimity of the broad concept of co-creation, which includes customers contributing towards shaping aspects of the brand. Yet, there's very little debate about formal or explicit articulation of constructs to co-creation (France et al.,2015). The finding indicate that co-creation exists in a more face to face realisation. The respondents

felt that in a dialogue, interactive and conversational environment, real co-creation emerges. The reasons provided included that in this conversational context, understanding of each stakeholder perspective is clearer; issues are addressed head on and expectations can be managed more effectively. The findings align to the view that brand value is a social, networked, interactive and ever-changing process between brands and multiple stakeholders (Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007; Ind and Bjerke, 2007).

While brand co-creation is expressed as the active involvement of customers, employees, partners and wider network of stakeholders, the research sought to identify what represents the act of brand co-creation. What emerged in the findings is that brand co-creation is a platform of engagement with stakeholders for a specific purpose that benefits both the participants and the organisation. From a SAICA perspective, we isolated specific engagement platforms or interventions that involved stakeholders not in a passive, linear way, but rather in an interactive, dynamic way. What was revealed were various interventions that the organisation deliberately setup to gain input, feedback and guidance from the stakeholders.

Table 10:Forms of Brand Co-creation at SAICA

Activity	Objective	Description	Stakeholder type
Member Committees	Involve members in various organisational committees as a channel to inspire active participation and contribution from the SAICA members	Regional project committees, usually subject matter specific e.g. members in business; Tax committee etc.	SAICA members
Brand influencers	Identify influential members to be the social media voice of	Brand influencers contribute to shaping the narrative of the	SAICA members and general public-thought leaders

	the organisation as well as general thought leaders on specific issues related to business	brand and constantly engage with the organisation to direct brand meaning	
CA2025/CA 2035	The objective is to shape the future of the profession to make it relevant in the context of digitisation and general business changes	Different stakeholders are involved in building the future of the profession. They participate in different platforms that are designed to bring the profession into the future. SAICA realised that its stakeholders have a significant role to play in determining the future.	Universities, Government, SAICA members; Audit firms; business and international institutes
Project structures	SAICA has project structures for various objectives	These can be a project around funding students and typically this would involve multiple stakeholders	Based on project, different stakeholders are invited
Courageous conversations	The objective of this platform was to involve the public is contributing towards shaping the ethics of business	General public, business and citizens get together and have bold, uncomfortable discussions about the future of the country	The public, Accounting professionals, Government, SAICA members

		as well as the profession	
Stakeholder Workshops	ATSA involved various stakeholders in rebuilding and re-launching the ATSA Brand	Workshops where different stakeholders were invited to shape what ATSA should be and offer to the market	Employers, training providers, TVET colleges, VUTs
Road Shows	To solicit input and get buy-in from stakeholders on initiatives the organisations seeks to implement.		Stakeholders across the board depending on what they seek to achieve
Doing business with Government	Initiative that involves government to articulate how to connect, engage and become more effective in partnership with government		Government stakeholders; SAICA members; Audit firms and SMMEs
CA annual brand campaign	Brand campaign where SAICA members are the stars in the campaign and can determine how they want to be portrayed in the advertising campaign	Brand campaign where SAICA members are the players/ active participants	SAICA members
Top 35 under 35	Initiative setup to		Young CAs

	include young CAs more prominently in SAICA events; Young people shape their own initiatives under the banner of Top 35 under 35		
Teacher Enrichment Programmes	School level programmes where SAICA seeks to influence teachers and schools to improve Maths pass rate.	Teachers, school governing bodies and SAICA comes together to come up with creative ways to improve teaching of Maths and science at schools	Teachers, parents and principals, unions
Employer workshops	Initiative to engage employers to determine what makes people more employable	SAICA connects with business to determine what business wants; types of skills required and in turn SAICA updates the training content of their various designations.	Business-corporate in south Africa.

The scholars argue that in a brand co-creation context, stakeholders assume an active role in their diverse capacity through their "joint agency in creating brand value together" (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2015). This supports the argument that brand equity has shifted towards a multiple stakeholder understanding that focuses on brand value as a dynamic, multifaceted construct where all stakeholders such as

employees, customers, partners, financiers are involved in the development of a “negotiated brand” (Gregory, 2007) where value is co-created and is enhanced over time (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015).

5.4.1 *Conclusion relating to RQ3*

SAICA has found itself in a position where it engages more with its stakeholders by soliciting collaboration and input to ensure its relevance and sustainability. The respondents said that they have upped their game when it comes to involving stakeholders. What has emerged in the findings confirms that today, organisations are challenging their own orthodox views of value creation and are seeking newer and more innovative ways of integrating resources towards gaining inimitable capabilities that will enable them to carve out compelling competitive advantages (Saarijärvi and Kuusela, 2013).

The findings also confirm the expanding role of stakeholders and cited various reasons the push for organisation to maintain relevancy. Based on the findings, an organisation must collaborate more and actively seek participation with all its stakeholders. This was not surprising also because SAICA is a membership based organisation and keeping their members engaged in the brand is important. The sentiments on brand engagement is supported by Robert et al. (2005)’s assertion that co-creation is an active engagement with consumers towards finding new sources of value.

5.5 DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO RQ4

RQ4: What is the role of the corporate band in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation?

The objective of the fourth research question was to determine the role of an organisation in a brand co-creation context and the capabilities required to enable brand co-creation. This research question speaks to the capacity of the organisation to facilitate co-creational activities. What emerged was various themes in so far as the role that an organisation must play and how an organisation must behave in the context of brand co-creation. From the themes presented in the results, four key themes stand out: Improving organisational transparency; listening more and better; control and authority over brand agenda and brands/ organisations playing a leadership role.

Improving organisational transparency

In the presentation of results, transparency was mentioned 14 times by the respondents. They were all in agreement that SAICA is transparent to the extent that it needs to be as a member body and that the organisation must improve its transparency if it is to grow the profession further. The respondents said that SAICA relies on the contributions and support of diverse stakeholders and as such must be transparent and open to the participation of its stakeholders. One of the respondents said that an organisation is not a brand for itself but rather for people, suggesting that being open and transparent in the only option the organisation has.

These views echo Hatch & Schultz (2010)'s sentiments that a co-created branding strategy demands transparency from organisations and a new approach to governance as the culture emanating from brand co-creation can either aid or hinder organisations. Cornelissen (2000) also agrees that advances in technology are resulting in intimate interactions among organisations and their stakeholders broadly

thereby creating blurred boundaries resulting in organisations becoming more transparent and accountable to stakeholders. The respondents felt strongly that changes in the business landscapes and in individuals as cited previously are resulting in different stakeholder groups demanding to learn more and know more about the companies behind the brands they support (Gregory, 2007; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010) forcing transparency and accountability from organisations (Gregory, 2007).

Listening more and better

Hatch and Schultz (2010) said that co-creation brings forth new governance and culture dimension to an organisation. This is evident in the results of the findings. Listening was highlighted as a key role or capability that the organisation/ brand must possess in order to enable brand co-creation. The concept was mentioned 13 times by 8 of the respondents. They were all aligned in their thinking that to truly co-create, organisation/brands must listen better. One of the respondents expressed that they ought to create a culture that enables listening. They also pointed out that listening without action is pointless. They have to improve their ability to listen to what is said and not only that but find ways to implement and integrate input into the organisation.

This new capability for organisation suggests that brand co-creation cannot find expression in the traditional context of brand management. Chesbrough (2006) warned of a range of challenges in the pursuit of open collaborative strategies as it compels opening the firm up to influences outside of the firm's hierarchical boundaries. Active listening, is thus a key contribution in the finding in terms of organisational capability in a brand co-creational context. This aligns to the Lego brand community case study where Lego managers expressed that they underrated the importance of listening to their stakeholders who in truth wanted to tell them where the gaps and missed opportunities were (Hatch and Schultz, 2010). Thus the notion of brand co-creation implicitly requires authentic dialogue with stakeholders along with some level of transparency and access to product related information,

which caries some risk (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Martinez, 2013).

Control and authority over brand agenda

Further to the role of the organisation/ brand in a brand co-creation context, is the role of the organisation as the controller of the outcomes of co-creation. According to the findings, in practice, the role of the organisation is to filter the co-created content to align with its brand/ organisational objectives. What soon became apparent in the findings was that while the organisation is happy to collaborate, invite input and engage with stakeholders, the respondents felt strongly that SAICA must be responsible for deciding what is important and valuable while co-creating with stakeholders. The respondents felt that the brand/organisation has to exercise authority and control over what it chooses to take in and act on. Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) did say that increasingly, brand owners will now have to navigate their brand and brand content through consumer and stakeholder created content to align their brand stories with the desired brand story.

This was evident in how the responded reacted to the question about the role of the band/ organisation in a co-created context. The respondents explicitly said that an organisation can't listen to everyone and that only the primary stakeholders or those closest to you deserve an ear. They said that the organisation must identify the most important input and this input will most likely come from their most influential stakeholder who for SAICA is their members. This contradicted earlier input about who is the most important stakeholder. When dealing with this question, the majority of the respondents felt that all stakeholders are equal. However, when it came down to the practicalities of brand co-creation and what input the organisation must consider the response was different.

The tension between collaborative approaches and authority or control was apparent in the findings. This mirrors Ramaswamy and Kornum (2016)'s argument that an increased number of parties involved in a brand, divergent goals, different levels of capabilities and the various levels of involvement all contribute towards increasing

issues of management. The assertions from the respondents were that you can't build a brand based on multiple opinions. The group marketing head said that "Determining what is going to make you successful as a brand cannot be determined by a collective, only a few people can determine that". These findings disagree with Shao et al. (2015)'s claim that brands no longer set the agenda, but rather that consumer and stakeholders alike decide how to incorporate brands in their life. The respondents felt adamant that they need to find ways to filter and manage the input coming from diverse stakeholders. The key issue highlighted in the context was the risks of creating a disjointed brand. Many respondents were concerned about maintaining the core of the brand; only taking in input that works for the brand/organisation. What is apparent however is that marketers will find it hard to adjust to the new balance of power as brand management shift from the organisation-centric to facilitating brand co-creation (Shao et al., 2015).

Gregory (2007), said that giving too much weight to external stakeholders may cause some senior executives to be vulnerable as it takes some of the power inherent in their role away. This played out vividly and confirms the view that brand co-creation is challenging orthodox management approaches and forcing organisations/ brand to rethink the extent of their power over their brands. The idea of negotiated power of brands comes to light in this context. The implication of negotiated power suggests increases in the investment and resources firms have to make available to penetrate multiple stakeholders across multiple channels.

Brands are becoming less and less providers of core brand messages and are moving towards being providers of operant resources for consumers to glean from and create individualised value (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Shao, Gyrd-Jones & Grace, 2015). The question of brands becoming less providers of core brand messages was challenged by the respondents. 11 respondents felt that the brand has to set the agenda and direction of brand even in a co-created context. Filtering content in a co-creation interaction was also brought up in the context of who sets the brand agenda? Many of the respondents were agreeable to seeking active participation of

diverse stakeholders and were lamenting the need to invite more input but were equally forthright in their view about the brand setting its own agenda. Their comments included “Involving different stakeholders can be dangerous because people have different agendas”; “Yes, you have to deal with what is said, but stakeholders can’t dictate the direction of your brand”; “Sometimes to manage things the way you want to, you may have to be autocratic”.

This illuminates the serious management challenges organisations/brands face in their quest for collaborative brand development strategies. In practice, it is easier said than done. One of the respondents said they are receiving more input and feedback than ever before and now their greatest challenge is managing the input and using it effectively. She said “we need strong filters to determine whether input is valuable or it’s just noise”. This has led scholars to suggest that the role of brands is challenged radically in lieu of the co-creational effects evident today (Merz et al.,2009; Gröonroos, 2011; Shao et al., 2015). One of the respondents summed it up to say, “We need wisdom to choose what to listen to”. This confirms that not all input is equal, and someone, in this context, the brand/ organisation must have processes in place to determine what is best for the brand.

Leadership and oversight role

What was consistent among the respondents, was the role of the brand/organisation as a leader. The respondents were adamant that brands must lead the co-creation context. One of the respondents said that brands fail because of a lack of leadership direction and another respondent said that brands must play a steward role. Again this highlighted the power dynamics between organisation vs stakeholders. The word leadership was mentioned 9 times by the respondents and related ideas such as brands/ organisation providing big picture perspective was mentioned 12 times; the organisation/brand’s role in keeping the brand promise was mentioned 9 times and

delivering value and meeting the needs of all stakeholders was mentioned 13 times. The leadership role in a brand context is expected. The challenge is understanding the type of leadership that best facilitates brand co-creation.

Ind et al. (2013) purported that the implications of brand co-creation from a managerial perspective calls for corporate brands to be more open; leadership styles to be more participatory; and for barriers between consumers and marketers to diminish. Looking at the findings, while sentiments of sharing visions and objectives and inviting input and buy-in from stakeholders were declared, the respondents were also adamant that the leadership style must be forthright and directional:

1. “provide the direction”;
2. “provide clarity of goals”;
3. “guide and influence input” and
4. “be the champion of the brand”

to a certain extent, this further challenges the concept of collaboration and working with others to build brands. It suggests that organistions are not necessarily ready to relinquish or share control over their brands. These findings agree with Fournier & Avery (2011) that the era of Web 2.0 has brought to question the current management paradigms that implies that brand managers are in control of brands (Fournier & Avery, 2011). While this era has evidently brought the management challenges to light, the absoluteness of stakeholders having power over brands and brand managers taking the back-seat is not as cut and dry as perceived. As displayed in the finding, to an extent, the brand/ organisation is still very much in charge of setting the tone of the brand or at least decides on what is important to the organisation. Brand co-creation alludes to the current evolution of boundaries between organisations and broader stakeholders where there’s constant evaluation and redefinition of roles (Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013). This is apparent in the findings that roles and authority is a key pain point in this context. In the absence of clearly defined roles, it can lead to issues related to management (Merz et al.,2009; Gröonroos, 2011; Shao et al., 2015).

5.5.1 *Conclusion of RQ4*

Increasingly, stakeholders are viewed as operant resource (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), who are not only key value creators for organisations, but also important sources of ideas and insight that can be harnessed to co-create with the organisation (Saarijärvi & Kuusela, 2013). This suggests that corporate brands that are collaboratively framed require a different approach to management (Gregory, 2007). The above challenges orthodox management approaches and suggest that organisations have to exercise a new approach to management broadly. The findings of research question four assert that the organisation must listen more and better to stakeholders. The findings further expanded to suggest that the brand/organisation cannot possibly listen to everything and thus must develop filtering processes to ensure messages and outcomes of co-creation are consistent with the core of the brand and the agenda the brands seeks to create.

It was established that the role of who determines what is right for the brand/organisation is the role of the brand/ organisation itself. This addresses Kennedy & Guzman (2016)'s question that in the extant co-creation literature the question of who has power to develop and conserve the brand's identity remains less understood. Further to this, the question of brands/ organisations exercising clear oversight and leadership over their brands was articulated in the findings, with the leadership approach expressed as being less participatory as Ind et al. (2013) suggested but rather directional and from the perspective of guardianship and championing of the brand.

Based on the findings the role of the organisation/brand in co-creation is to set the agenda for co-creation; guide and influence input and lead the brand and provide clear brand visions for stakeholders. It terms of capabilities, the organisation/brand must improve its capacity to be transparent and open itself up to external input as well as improve its ability to actively listen to what its stakeholders are saying.

5.6 DISCUSSIONS RELATING TO RQ5

Ind & Bjerke (2007) point to co-creation giving rise to governance issues as it implicitly suggests shared control of brand by the organisations and its stakeholders. This suggests that the role brand managers play has shifted from being initiators to coordinator of multiple interaction with stakeholders around the brand (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). The last research question deals with broad managerial implications both from a leadership and culture perspective of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders. This research question overlaps with research question four that dealt with the role of the organisation in the context of brand co-creation. The importance of this research question cannot be understated.

The challenges of managing a brand in a co-created context were discussed in literature (Gregory, 2007; Merz et al.,2009; Gröonroos, 2011; Shao et al., 2015; and Ramaswamy & Kornum, 2016) however the specific managerial indication were not discussed sufficiently. To this end, the objective was to bring to light some of the perceived challenges from a managerial perspective to assist in the practice of brand co-creation. In addressing the research questions, key themes were developed and synthesised to: managing the duality of an open brand; humility of brand management; a call for bravery and assertiveness; flattening of brand management structures; extending trust to stakeholders and developing a firm brand DNA.

The duality of an open brand

The shift from closed to open strategies is a significant management challenge for many corporate brands. The scholars are in agreement that the stakeholder approach challenges the traditional company focused approach to management broadly (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Gregory, 2007; Potts et al., 2008). Traditionally, organisations were very insular and closed in their management approach (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Leavy, 2014). The advent of digitisation, social media and disruptions of business models to more open access conceptualisations, have meant that organisations must open themselves up to external stakeholders and their input (Ramaswamy & Ozcan,2016).

This is evident in the findings. The respondents said that SAICA has been forced to change and become more open, participatory and flexible. The reward according to Martinez (2013) will be far greater as embracing stakeholders in a co-creation process will reveal superior value propositions for organisations. The respondents agree and acknowledge that being open will advance the brand and make it more relevant.

The articulation of an open brand was mentioned 12 times by the respondents. Similarly, when asked if SAICA has an open approach, the majority of the respondents agreed that SAICA is open to the extent that it needs to be. The respondents also stressed that SAICA is a member body and to that end, it must be open to the views and feelings of its constituency. What was also evident in the findings was that it's not just SAICA members who are critical to SAICA, but rather a plethora of stakeholders as well. The respondents stated that as a member body SAICA has to be open enough to bring in stakeholders to take the brand forward. They also said that they have to be open and available to all their stakeholders. The respondents were also certain that being open advanced and supported the objectives of the firm which echoes Vallaster and von Wallpach (2012)'s assertions that brands are not created unilaterally by brand managers nor are they relevant to just customers.

However, many of the respondents also said that they have to be open, but only to relevant stakeholders. We are open to collaboration, but it needs to be on our terms – this constant push and pull of power is a common theme in the findings. The paradox of being open but controlled is key to the findings. It is thus key to understand what this means in practice for brand managers wanting to open their channels of engagement towards building their brands. Ind & Bjerke (2007) did point to co-creation giving rise to governance issues as it implicitly suggests shared control of brand by the organisations and its stakeholders. The implied power duality inherent in brand co-creation raises critical questions from a management perspective.

The SAICA's CA2025 and CA 2035 strategies are based on the principles of co-creating the brand together with their multiple stakeholders. The organisation has actively opened itself up to receive input and participates with stakeholders in dialogues about the future of their brand. However, in the findings, they have unearthed the downside of being open. 7 respondents highlighted the risks of being open to everyone and discussed issues around inconsistencies of brand messages and brand meaning. One of the respondents said that "an open approach can be risky as you are not always in control". Another respondent pointed to being uncomfortable with being open as the organisation has not developed or put in place processes to open their brands to partners and stakeholders.

This suggest that the scope of brand managers has increased and requires a balance between protecting their brand and providing access to stakeholders without compromising either side. Based on the finding, while brand managers are open to collaboration, there is uncertainty in dealing with the implications of being open. To this end, there needs to be a framework or guidelines from a management perspective that provides management with a more systematic approach to brand co-creation. Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004) proclaim that organisations can't afford to be autonomous when developing new products, processes or creating new messaging without the contribution of consumers. The scholars further assert that

managers must focus on managing the quality of brand co-creation interactions and not just the quality of their offering to the market (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

As the epicentre of brand creation shifts from the organisation to multiple stakeholders, it has become an even greater challenge for marketers to achieve consistent brand value alignment across all stakeholders (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013). To the respondents' point, being open without processes in place to direct and facilitate a co-created context is uncomfortable for managers. There's increased levels of ambiguity in terms what is desirable from one stakeholder to the next. Determining who to please and appease among the stakeholder groups is also a pain-point for managers. This furthermore points to the changing role of brand managers from "Instigators to orchestrators of multiple stakeholder interactions around the brand" (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013, p.1485).

A call for bravery and assertiveness

An interesting dimension to the concept of an open brand, was the call from some of the respondents for brand managers to be assertive and brave. This was consistent with the firm leadership style highlighted in research question four. The is a sense that while the collaborative, open and participatory sensibility is welcomed, it does seem to interfere with the call of duty as it were. To Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015)'s point, the upsurge of digitally-enabled consumers has distressed the orthodox model of brand management, from a single-mined one-way process to a multi-dimensional, multi-stakeholder co-creation process.

The respondents said that in this new world, managers are afraid of getting things wrong as organisations can be criticised and scolded openly on public platforms. The respondents lamented that they don't want to feel like they are losing control of the management of their brand. The reality however is that today, organisations and individuals have become a dynamic, complex system of a globally networked community of open, multi-layered constructs that is not limited by boundaries or channels (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015). The call for bravery and assertiveness by

the respondents suggest that managers don't want to feel disempowered. They strongly feel that maintaining the integrity of their brands is primary to their role and as such a co-creational context should still give them the power and the space to exercise their responsibilities.

Humility of brand management

The finding further support Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) who stated that stakeholders have a role in the creation of brand value, but organisations still view them as being passive, compliant recipients of value. The encounter from SAICA's context is that the responsibility of the brand lies with them even in the context of co-creation. It is clear that the traditional brand management norms are challenged here. In the same breadth, the recipients raised points around the era of organisational/ brand arrogance being over. At least five respondents mentioned the word arrogance and another five respondents discussed related ideas such brands/organisations needing to be humbler and accepting of new ideas.

One of the respondents said that he era of heavy handed corporates is over and that historic legacies and norms will prevent co-creation. The respondents further said that if organisation think they know better; they will be shocked about the potential discoveries outside the organisation. From SAICA's perspective, it is clear that there is strong awareness of the cultural shift that is happening. To Vargo & Lusch (2004)'s point one of the respondents emphatically said "It used to be brands dictating, now its customers". There is a growing view that people are no longer comfortable with being onlookers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

The idea of brand humility is fitting, as by virtue of being open one must be able to receive input and direction. One of the respondents bluntly said "You can't have a big ego and be defensive about your brand". Fundamental to brand-co-creation is the concept of shared control over brands between organisations and stakeholders

(Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Shao et al. (2015) advances that brand co-creation can be grasped from two perspectives namely, the consumer as a key player in the process of co-creation and the second view relating to the management of co-creational activities and processes from an organisational perspective. To the scholars' point, co-creation and increased engagement with stakeholders has led to some form on introspection on the part of brands/organisations.

This joint effort to work with consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) is moving organisations into the realm of open and more collaborative forms of innovation, making it uncomfortable for them in some ways. Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) proposed that, today, brands have evolved as a result of co-created brand experiences relegating orthodox brand management approaches. This tension is evident in the finding where on the one hand the respondents are fully behind collaborative and open brand approaches, but on the other hand are consistent in their view about maintaining the old order of "us and them"

Flattening of brand management structures

Co-creation brings together consumers as a unit to engage in brand development (Kennedy and Guzmán, 2016. According to Pera et al. (2016), the success of brand co-creation, rests on two critical views, firstly creating and implementing engagement moments that allow stakeholders to interact and collaborate and secondly the development of leadership characteristics that enable an efficient brand co-creation process. The research findings also submit that brand co-creation implies that the organisation must have a culture that enables it. The respondents said that a top-down approach to management will not work, this aligns to earlier submission around the era of brand arrogance being over. The respondents said that the organisation must be approachable, allow access, be agile and bend towards change. The expectations are that today; organisations' lines of authority must be flattened to allow for a more fluid conceptualisation of management.

Ind et al. (2013) suggest that brands/ organisation must make participation a key tenant that is central to their brand thinking. The scholars say that it will highlight the importance of creating a culture of sharing and connecting with stakeholders. Some of the respondents said that SAICA must do away with hierarchical layers if it is to allow external input. The hierarchy issue points to issues of control and power. It is difficult to imagine a brand context that is fluid were power is shared internally and externally. For co-creation to flourish, organisation must overhaul their processes to enable engagements with multiple stakeholders and acclimatize to new brand governance practices and continuously negotiate and experiment in order to realize the value of involving multiple stakeholders (Hatch &Shultz 2010; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015) in their brand building effort. This sentiment was shared by the respondents – SAICA needs to adapt and change its management structures to allow for more collaboration.

Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015) posit that brand co-creation has altered how brands are managed in that it's not about managing the brand anymore but rather facilitating co-creation infrastructures across multiple platforms that enable or dis-enable joint creation of brand value with multiple stakeholders. This supports the views among the respondents that a flattened, non-hierarchical approach is likely to yield brand co-creation more effectively than an authoritarian view. Kennedy and Guzmán (2016) claim that the business as usual perspective has shifted and brand managers must change their engagement strategy approach of brand building. In the context of a flattened approach, respondents also discussed the need to be more flexible and agile. Enabling participation in your brand building implies that the organisation must bend. Further to this, Iglesias et al. (2013) warns that the most difficult aspect of this is the realization by brand managers that stakeholders have power and thus must surrender some control of the construction of the brand and its identity (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Iglesias et al., 2013 and Kennedy and Guzmán, 2016).

Based on the finding, this is a hard realisation for managers. What is evident is that it's easier to advocate for the change in management style, but when faced with the practical implications of it, the two worlds collide.

Extending trust to stakeholders

The issue of trust came up substantially from the respondents. At least 7 respondents raised the point. Their view was that brand co-creation means that organisations must extend trust to stakeholders and that trust as a principle is fundamental to co-creation. Ind et al. (2013) offered that in a brand community context, managers ought to create a trusting, collaborative environment that is open to dialogue and receptive to new notions. These views are clear in the findings. The respondents said that being a transparent open brand necessitates that the organisation trusts more. It is not possible to open yourself up to others if you don't trust that the input they provide will benefit the brand. The sentiments on trust align to Ramaswamy & Ozcan (2015)'s proposal that managers must create a trusting environment that allows participation to thrive incrementally and where participants have the freedom to express their creativity and have a sense of shared brand value. It is thus sufficient to resolve from the findings, that to build brands today, organisation must establish trust with stakeholders to allow co-creation to flourish. To this end, brand managers must resist the urge to control the brand and rather offer a flexible environment in which participants have the freedom to converse and engage (Ind et al.,2013).

Develop a firm brand DNA

How can brand managers negotiate their brand identity and meaning with multiple stakeholders? Based on the findings, the respondents felt that organisations/ brands, now more than ever, must have a strong sense of self. They presented the fact that if you know your brand, you will be able to make decisions that are aligned with what the brand stands for. This they said, is crucial for a co-created brand context. They submitted that it's important that brands align to the brand's mandate while enabling brand co-creation. A key challenge cited was how to keep the brand in tact while evolving. One of the respondents said you can't do things that are outside of brand and vision. This suggests that the concept of brand must be clearly articulated so as to manage the extent of external participation and importantly the extent of input that

will be take in by the brand/organisation. The feeling from the respondents were that brand boundaries must be developed to demarcate the open and closed areas of influence.

12 notions related to knowing your brand DNA were cited including related idea such as: knowing who you are, maintaining brand DNA and not derailing from the core of the brand. Again, this is consistent with the overarching sentiments of the findings, that the organisation must have a firm grasp on co-creation and the contexts in which it occurs. From SAICA's view, the organisation cannot derail from what it stands for, nor can it create a disjointed brand and most importantly, it must have a say on what influence it will derive from its stakeholders. This challenges the views made by Vallaster and von Wallpach (2012), that claim that in the context of brand co-creation, management will struggle to keep control of the brand meaning as they are no longer sole creators of brand meaning, but rather they have become one of the many contributors in the brand meaning co-creation process, thus must actively engage with key stakeholders to maintain brand consistency (Vallaster and von Wallpach, 2012). However, from SAICA's standpoint, there is no ambiguity about who controls the brand message and brand essence.

In a study by Gyrd-Jones & Kornum (2013) of a Lego brand community case study, the scholars advanced that brand co-creation approaches must be set on a foundation of a core set of fundamental elements of the brand and a negotiable periphery. This claim is supported by the finding. The respondents felt strongly about their brand core and essence being negotiable. The opportunity is to determine what constitutes this core area that is non-negotiable. The scholars explain further and cite a tension, which they referred to as "a fundamental duality" between the organisation protecting its core set of brand attributes which include logo systems and values with the peripheral elements which include new product development approaches or engagement channels (Gyrd-Jones & Kornum ,2013). The opportunity here is to assist brand managers to effectively operate in an increasingly networked, engaged and ambiguous world and to manage the challenges and the

opportunities that come with being a brand that is open to multifarious input from diverse stakeholder groups (Haarhoff and Kleyn, 2012).

5.6.1 *Conclusion of RQ5*

The finding presented in research question five largely confirm the abound literature that articulates the management challenges inherent in brand co-creation. While the extant literature has called for brand managers to relinquish their control over brands and to wake up to the shared control paradigm, what the findings offered was that shared control of brand is firstly not as simplistic as discussed and secondly it must be clearly specified. While there's acknowledgement from the respondents to Berthon et al. (2009)'s point that brand meaning is largely defined in plural by multiple stakeholders who create and recreate various brand interpretations that are often ambiguous and ever changing, the management implications of the duality of power in particular must be dealt with. The findings also point to a strong need to articulate brand more – boundaries of the area of influence and control must be set.

This suggests that brand managers must have a clearly defined brand that delineates what is open and closed to stakeholders. Stakeholders interact with aspects of the brand's identity and as they interface with the brand, they create own images and meaning about the organisation (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012). This suggests that all stakeholders must be managed in order to create brand alignment. To this end, there is evident tension in the manifestation of brand co-creation from a management perspective. Through the findings, what has emerged to a limited extent is a start of new brand management rulebook in relation to brand co-creation to enable organisations/ brands to manage and govern their brands in the context of a negotiated brand space (Helm & Jones, 2010).

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of the study was to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multi-stakeholder environment and to ascertain the implication for managing corporate brands. In exploring brand co-creation, the aim was to be able to identify the types of brand engagements that fall under the concept of brand co-creation in practice; understand who and how the organisation engages with multifarious stakeholders; determine what the organisations requires to enable brand co-creation and to grasp what the implications of this joint creation of value mean from a management perspective. The study was purposefully set in a corporate branding context, a professional services environment, where multiple stakeholders are a throng and contribute in their respective capacity to the value of the brand.

With the above mentioned objective, the goal was to be able to develop in some shape or form, a “new” rulebook that contributes towards enabling brand managers and brand custodians with the tools to navigate this emerging, underserved phenomenon in practice. The goal for the study was, to Keller & Lehmann (2006)’s point, provide findings that can resonate and impact the market. An extensive literature review was done in which key issues and opportunities were outlined. These issues and opportunities were confirmed and some challenged in the findings.

This chapter presents conclusions post considering the findings and the discussions of the findings in preceding chapters and concludes with recommendations for practice and further research considerations.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

In the main, the study sought to explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa. In addressing the main problem, two sub-problems were highlighted. The first sub-problem was to explore brand co-creation engagements (the nature of engagements) in a multiple stakeholder context in South Africa and the second second sub-problem was to understand the broad implications of brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder context on corporate brand management in South Africa. The setting of the study was a South African Corporate Brand, The South African Institute of Chartered Accountant (SAICA). The institute houses various professional designations and thus relates with multiple stakeholders at any given time.

Today' business context is characterised by rapid technological advancement and social changes. Individuals are empowered to know more about the brands they consume and support. This contrasts the historical linear approach to marketing where brands controlled the message, the interactions and the respective customer experience. SAICA has been forced to bend to be relevant to their stakeholders today. Similarly, there is a progressive shift in the brand management discourse that perceives brands as social systems where value is a result of a co-creation interaction between an organisation and all its stakeholders. The notion of 'all' stakeholders comes from the shift from customers as the main stakeholders involved in brand co-creation interaction as highlighted in the literature review to a multiple stakeholder focus that is investigated in this study. In essence, the study underscores that the proverbial shift has birthed contradictions and tensions in relation to openness, power and the management of brands.

The outcomes of the research problems as stated above have highlighted key considerations that are discussed below. Specifically, the findings of the first sub-problem commit that the principle of joint creation of value espoused in brand co-

creation is conceptually understood, however the term is very new and unfamiliar in practice. The emergent nature of the topic was predicated in the literature review. Scholars in literature illuminated the newness of the concept and this was established in the findings. In practice the term collaborative interaction, joint collaboration and inclusive brand strategy development is widely understood.

The expanding stakeholder network, and the importance of their role in influencing organisations or brands was sufficiently confirmed in the findings. SAICA's stakeholder network has widened and deepened in recent times. These stakeholders are no longer passive onlookers of brand activity, but rather, have become active contributors, influencers, shapers and carriers of the brand and its meaning. SAICA has a diverse stakeholder network that contributes in some key capacity towards determining the sustainability of the organisation.

A key takeout was the 'democratisation' of stakeholders and reluctance to choose salient stakeholder groups, adding to the view that advancement in society have increased individual agency and harmonised the status quo and created equality among stakeholders. It used to be that an organisation's key customers according to stakeholder theory were the most important. The findings point to a view that all stakeholders are equal in the eyes of the brand or organisation and are thus incorporated into the organisation's fold at the same time. The findings reveal that prioritising of activities and stakeholders is near impossible, diverse needs run parallel and as such must be addressed in the same vain. Importantly to the point of the thesis, organisations are no longer limited to they dyadic relationship between brands and customers but include a wider stakeholder group.

In the case study, stakeholders in their diversity, connect with SAICA in a co-created context through personalised relationships which imply developing deeper connections beyond that of stakeholder-organisation conceptualisation. This occurs through deliberate social, dialogical, collaborative engagements and interactions and through creating open, transparent and accessible pathways between the brand and

all its stakeholders. At SAICA, these forms of co-creation engagement are still elementary. Stakeholders are incorporated in these co-creation engagement by invitation, indicating that platforms of co-creation are located within the realm of the organisation, where the organisation, in this instance SAICA, actively solicits participation, input and buy-in from their stakeholder network towards furthering its own project related ambitions. The principle of joint creation of value is practiced from the perspective of the organisation meeting its own issues of relevancy and sustainability, and not from the perspective of seeking mutual value. By enlarge, the platforms are for sharing information, exchanging ideas and views where the organisation, SAICA, determines the value and appropriateness of the input.

To this end, brand co-creation is not as clear cut and fluid as perceived in literature. The constructs that make up the act of brand co-creation are not articulate. What is clear in literature is that it is the joint interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders and this is the measure used to determine the practice and forms of co-creation in this case. The findings also confirm that brand co-creation is inclusive, relational, interactive and relatively open in nature.

The second second sub-problem was to understand the broad managerial implications of brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder South Africa. SAICA is in agreement that opening up its channels of engagement to a broader stakeholder can only benefit the organisation and facilitate its growth and sustainability. The increasing move towards involving stakeholders to realise new sources of value for the organisation is apparent. Therefore, there is deliberate effort on the part of the company to create more platforms that allow input and joint creation.

Extant literature has advanced that the shift to joint creations of value will challenge orthodox management views and force brands to share control of their brands with stakeholders. What is evident in the case however, is that SAICA is not ready to share or loosen the grip of control and authority over their brands. While there is underlying concession and humility from SAICA, that the role of the organisation has had to morph from being the absolute authority and orchestrator of brand to a more

facilitator and coordinator role. What is clear is that the role of SAICA in a brand co-creation context is to provide directional leadership; guide and influence input; set the agenda for co-creation; filter the outcomes of co-creation; and to determine the viability of the external input against the brand's vision, as set by the organisation itself.

There is a consistent view that the SAICA brand and its underlying sub-brands cannot be built nor directed by multiple authors. Yes, they can help influence the direction, but the final brand decision will be the prerogative of the brand custodians. These sentiments create tension with the principles of open, shared collaborative thinking inherent in brand co-creation. To achieve this, requires a change in managerial culture and approach. This was underscored in the findings and is in line with extant literature. This implies that rules of engagement must be drawn and to a large extent negotiated between parties.

In line with the findings, implications of brand co-creation on the corporate brand necessitates: active listening and assimilation of external sources of ideas and input and no longer a unilateral approach; improved transparency and creation of pathways for open collaborative and joint interaction with stakeholders; inclusion of multiple stakeholders and not just a focus on its primary member base; knowing what your brand stands for and creating boundaries around your core brand values; extending trust and being receptive of new ideas and lastly creating a flat, non hierarchical culture that is agile and approachable.

In essence, SAICA stakeholders in their diversity have a fundamental voice and a place in the discourse of brand development at the organisation. The institute is under increasing pressure to know who their stakeholders are; what their individual needs are; and importantly, how to interact and include them in the day to day running and future development of the brand. This observation, has blurred the boundaries of control and influence over their brands and left a lingering discomfort and tension. In the case, it is clear that the locus of power has shifted; but seemingly

not without a fight. There is a strong push back from SAICA to at best assert its authority as the custodian of the brand and at worst, to concede to negotiate boundaries of brand engagement with all its stakeholders with the hope of maintaining brand consistency in the process. The findings highlight that brand co-creation is not as neat and tidy as articulated, nor does it fit as comfortably in organisatons. It is less about including multiple stakeholders in brand co-creation, but more about (1)managing the input that comes from diverse stakeholders, (2) setting brand boundaries and areas of negotiation the brand and (3) determining the level of control over brand.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings have shown that stakeholder involvement in brand building, specifically brand co-creation has become a contentious point for brand management. It has altered how brands are managed – it's no longer about just managing a brand and its offering, but rather facilitating co-creation engagements across multiple platforms of communications and interaction and across multiple stakeholders all the while ensuring brand meaning and consistency prevails. Thus, the study seeks to provide corporate brand managers with practical considerations on how to incorporate brand input from increasingly diverse stakeholder networks. From the findings, corporate brands are required to be the anchors of brand co-creation platforms and to link co-creational activity with multiple stakeholders. In this context, the role of brand managers is to negotiate and engage with all stakeholders with the view of improving understanding of the meaning stakeholders attach to brands; their visions and hopes for the brand and use it as an opportunity to modify, clarify and strengthen the brand. As stakeholders become more of collaborators and co-developers in the brand building process, there is a need to recommend the following for practice:

- a guidelines or principles from a managerial perspective, to enable brand co-creation engagements;
- a brand negotiation framework to enable brand managers to determine boundaries and areas of influence related to their brand (identify which aspect of brand are open to negotiation and which elements are not);
- a brand co-creation vs brand control matrix to highlight the implications of brand co-creation and what that means for the management of the corporate brand or brand; and

Below are a set of guidelines as determined by the findings. These guidelines are practical principles that organisations in a similar space as SAICA can consider if they want to implement co-creational brand strategies in their organisation.

Table 11:Guidelines for brand co-creation

Guidelines	Description
1. Know and understand your wider stakeholder network	Develop a clear understanding of your stakeholder network and key champions in each stakeholder group
2. Build personalised brand relationships	Build brand relationships and rapport between the organisation and stakeholder groups
3. Be open and transparent	Share information, brand visions and general brand information with stakeholders openly
4. Create interactive platforms of engagement	Develop open platforms of collaboration, engagement, interaction and sharing of ideas, knowledge and experiences with stakeholders
5. Listen more and implement more	Create methods of actively listening and assimilating external input back into the organisation
6. Extend trust to stakeholders	Show stakeholders that you trust their input by inviting them into the brand's inner circle
7. Create filtering mechanisms and feedback	Create mechanisms that enable you to differentiate and evaluate external input
8. Purposeful, transformational leadership	Brand leadership must be transformative and purpose driven
9. Agile, flat management structures	Organisations's culture must be enabling, lines of authority flattened and general approach must be flexible and agile to new ways of managing
10. Know your brand and its boundaries	Define brand clear and communicate brand boundaries

As discussed in the literature review and in the findings, there is evident tension from a management perspective in the pursuit of open and joint creation of brand value.

There is thus a need to set boundaries of influence for brand managers to be able to maintain some level of brand authority and influence, thereby maintain brand consistency. The findings revealed that brand custodians want to maintain authority over their brands irrespective of an open collaborative approach. Stakeholders interact with various aspects of the brand's identity and as they interface with the brand, they create their own images and meaning about the organisation (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). This suggests that all stakeholders and their input must certainly be managed in order to create brand alignment.

Setting brand boundaries and negotiating the brand

Gregory (2007) conceptualised the concept of a negotiated brand which recognises that corporate brands initiate the branding process by articulating the core brand values which espouse management's vision which is communicated and tested by realities on the ground. In a negotiated brand framework, multiple stakeholders interact and actively review, evaluate and refine the values in a dynamic, continuous process that evolves with time (Gregory, 2007). The negotiated view does not seek to imply chaos, but rather organisation's vision will be continuously informed by the changing realities and refreshed and supported by stakeholders who co-create it (Heugens et al., 2002). To support brand managers in their quest to on the one hand, involve multiple stakeholders in brand building initiatives and on the other hand maintain brand consistency, a negotiated brand boundaries model is developed. The model is informed by Abratt and Kleyn (2012)'s "corporate identity, corporate brand and corporate reputation" model; Gregory (2007)'s "The negotiated brand process" and Gydrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013)'s view that there is a "fundamental duality" where the organisation seeks to protect its core brand attributes while also providing a level of flexibility in their pursuit of new sources of value through brand co-creation. The model seeks to define which areas of brand identity are sacred and perhaps brand managers can delineate and ring-fence and which aspects are negotiable as it were and are open to external input and influence.

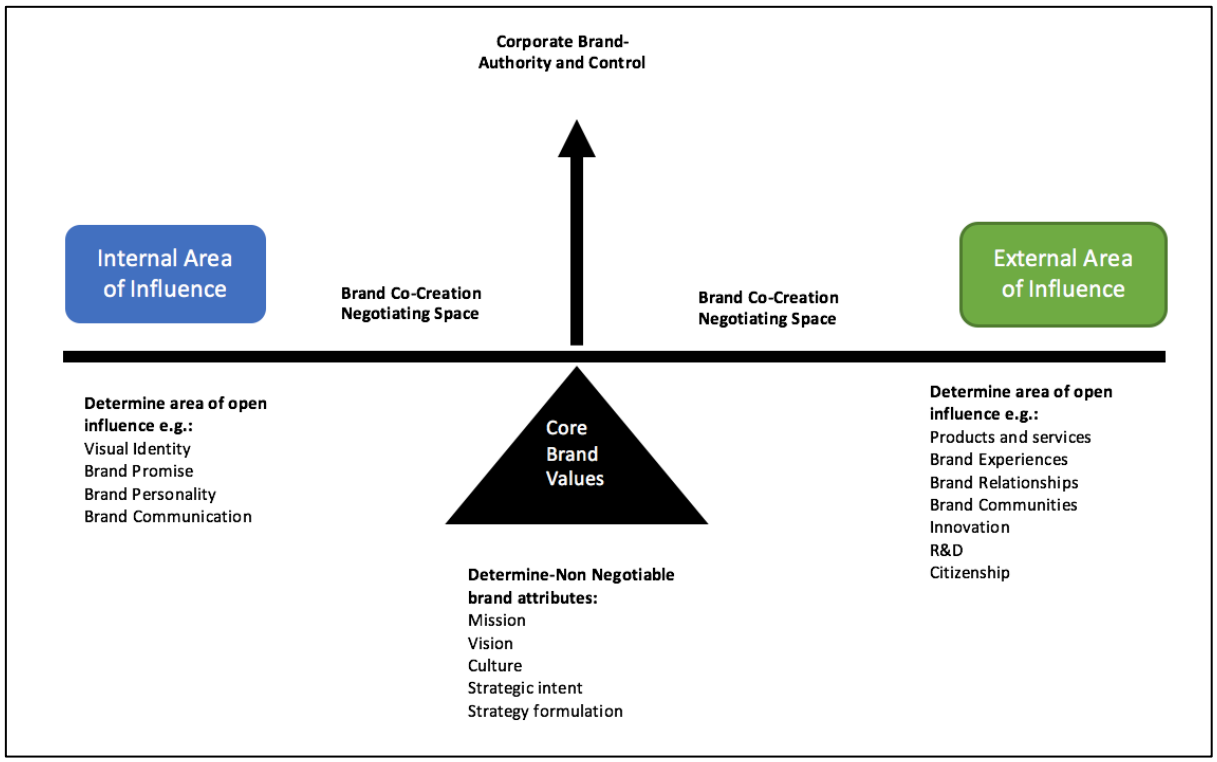


Figure 9: Negotiated brand co-creation boundaries

The above framework is conceptualised on the premise that brand custodians asserts a level of authority and control over their brands. However, with the advent of joint creations of value where organisations seek newer opportunities for growth, relevancy and sustainability through these collaborative, open strategies, they have to exercise a level of flexibility and be accepting of external influences. This agility has to be determined to ensure boundaries are set for both parties. Determining the boundaries can be a challenge. As a starting point, the findings revealed that key to brand co-creation is having a firm understanding of your own brand DNA and what it stands for.

From that premise one can shift the scale of open negotiation or open brand influence from one continuum to another, where the core of your brand is in the centre and the further you move from the centre is a peripheral space that brand managers can perhaps use to determine which elements of the brand that can be

open to influence. The internal area of influence, refers to aspects of the brands that are usually internally developed and typically very inward facings. Brand custodians can decide to use their internal area of influence as elements of the brand where stakeholders can play a part in co-developing. The external area of influence, refers to aspects of the brands that are generally outward facing and impact stakeholders.

Brand co-creation and control over brands

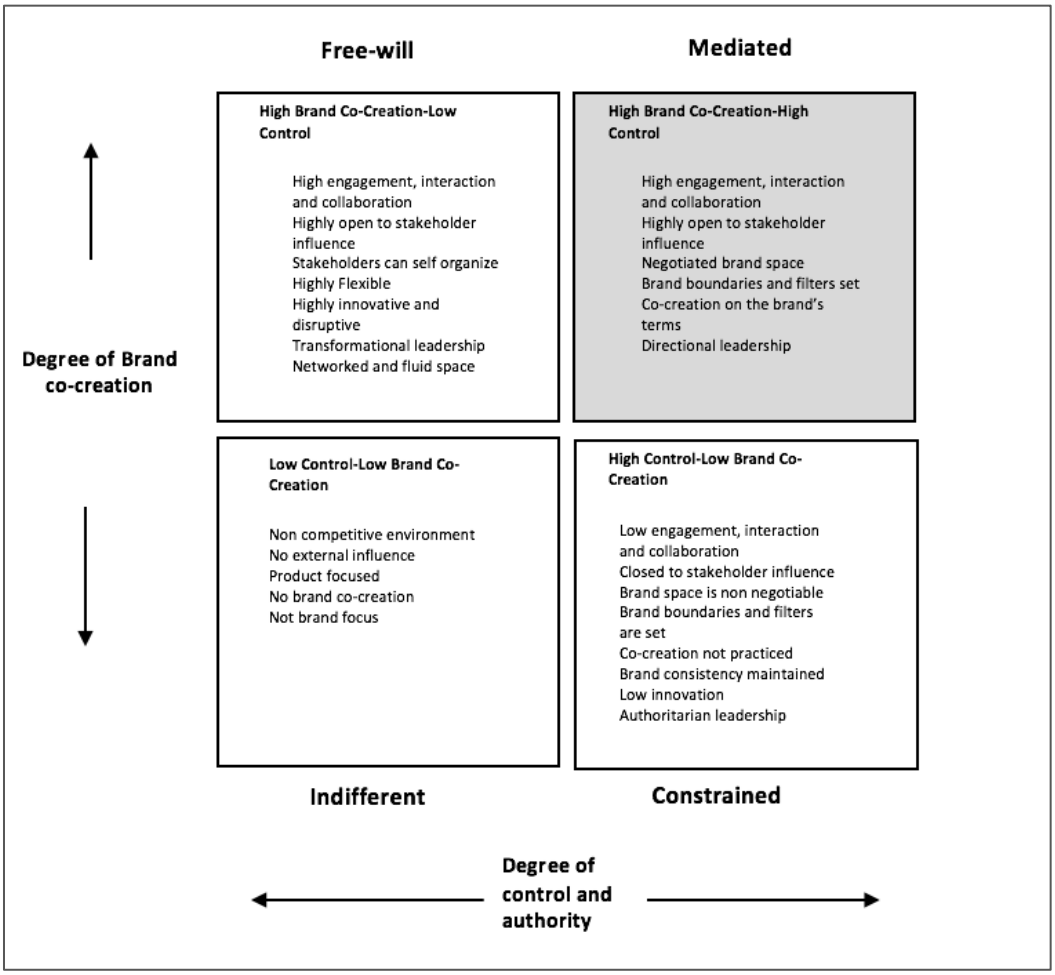


Figure 10: Degree of brand co-creation and Control over brand

The above matrix is conceptualised based on the increasing tension between brand co-creation and the need to control and assert authority over a brand. The matrix seeks to show the relationship between control of brand and brand co-creation; to show the impact of brand co-creation on brand mangement as it were through the lense of brand co-creation vs control over brand. What it idicates is that the more control brand managers have over brands, the less likely they are open to engage in brand co-creation strategies. Similarly, the more engaged they are in brand co-creation, the less grip they can have over brands. The objective therefore is to find a happy medium for organisation. This happy medium will be influenced by various factors such as organisational culture and leadership.

Explanation of the quadrants

Free-will

Based on existing literature, Brand co-creation thrives where there is less brand control. This is a space of high co-creation and low to no control or authority over brand. Here the brand management approach supports extreme brand openess and collaboration. Typically highly innovative spaces where organisation are looking to disrupt markets and be at the peak of new innovations. In this envoronment, brand leadership is tranformational in nature and adept at change.

Mediated

The mediated space is the ideal space where brand custodians will be most comfortable. This is where co-creation occurs on the brand's terms. This is a highly filtered environment where the brand's agenda is set; brand boundaries are outlined and brand leadership is directional. In this space, brand co-creation is managed and the management of it can either be inhibiting or enabling.

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Constrained

A constrained invironment is not yet open to assimilating external input. Typically "business as usual" where brands set the agenda,develop offerings based on what the organisation sees fit and communicates to external audiences. In this space, the brand has full authority over brand.

Indifferent

This quadrant is extremely non-competitive, typically not a brand focussed organsiation, very product focused – value in and value out approach.

The above frameworks will go a longway in addressing the challenges that were highlighted in the findings. They are based on the most pressing issues identified in the study. The outcome really is that it is less about the inclusion of multiple stakeholders in brand co-creation, and more about the control of the brand and filtering input from multiple stakeholders.

6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It has been widely acknowledged in literature and in the findings of the study that brand co-creation is emergent and as such lacks unanimity of thoughts in so far as fundamental constructs that make up brand co-creation (Payne et al., 2009; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2015). The predominant research in this space is mostly conceptual (Pillai, 2012) making it difficult to transfer into practice. This suggests that the scope of research is extensive and wide open towards making brand co-creation thought mainstream.

Further research is suggested off the back of identified limitations of the study prior to post analysis of the findings.
The first suggestion is to consider brand co-creation in a broader organisational context. The single case study of a professional designation environment has limited the scope of brand co-creation in practice. Perhaps more corporate brands in the business to consumer or fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) space may offer more in terms of the nature of brand co-creation platforms in that environment and the relationship those brand have with multiple stakeholders. In the same vain, the brand management of FMCGs may call for a different approach and may reveal the extent of influence multiple stakeholders have in the actual products that such firms produce.

Secondly, the study focused on the inclusion of multiple stakeholders to which the findings revealed that stakeholder networks are increasingly deepening and widening. However, the irony is that organisations are reluctant to prioritise salient

stakeholders and feel the need to treat all stakeholders as equals making it difficult to determine the value of each stakeholder group and the nature of the relationship between the isolated group and the organisation. This suggests an opportunity exists to isolate stakeholder groups and determine brand co-creation with a single stakeholder group for example Brand co-creation and employees and the effects that has on employer value proposition.

Thirdly, the concept of engagement and collaboration were prominent in the findings as methods of connecting with multiple stakeholders in a brand co-creational context. However, the ideas were used in very broad terms, both as an all encompassing concept and as strategic tool. This suggests that there is a need to deepen understanding of brand engagements and collaborative approaches in totality in so far as the design of brand co-creational interactions; the platforms in which they can exist, example either face-to-face, online or offline; whether they are organisation led or stakeholder led and the extent of financial support that is required.

Lastly, this research was from the perspective of the manager and did not consider the stakeholder's perspective in co-creation. It is thus worthwhile to delve into the realm of brand co-creation from the view of stakeholders in terms of why the want to engage more with the brands they support; what influence do they believe they have over brands; what value do they think they bring in the relationship.

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RESEARCH PLANNING

a. TIME TABLE

Table 12: Project plan for completion of research

Finalise proposal												
Panel approval												
Ethical clearance												
Gather data												
Data analysis												

Write Findings Chapter												
Write Discussion and revise Literature review												
Conclusion and revised Chapter 1												
Final draft												
Finalise report												

b. CONSISTENCY MATRIX

To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.				
Sub-problems	**Literature Review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Analysis**
To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.				
	•			•

To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.				
Sub-problems	**Literature Review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Analysis**
The first sub-problem is to**:** explore brand co-creation engagements (the nature of engagements) in a multiple stakeholder context in South Africa.	• Pera et al.(2016) • Kazadi et al. (2016) • Hillebrand et al. (2015) • Hatch &Schultz (2010) • Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, (2013) • Gregory (2007) • Muniz& O'Guinn (2001) • Jones (2005) • Ballantyne et al. (2011) • Merz et al. (2009) • Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004)	1. How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity? 2. Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engage with in co-creational activity and why? 191 3. What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and	Semi-structured in-depth interviews Marketing managers, Brand manager, project managers and communications managers	• Thematic analysis o Read and annotate scripts o Identify themes o Develop coding schemes o Code data

To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.				
Sub-problems	**Literature Review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Analysis**
	• Gregory (2007) • Fournier & Avery (2011) • Dahlander et al., (2008)		Semi-structured in-depth interviews Marketing managers, Brand manager, Project managers and communications managers	• Thematic analysis o Read and annotate scripts o Identify themes o Develop coding schemes o Code data

To explore brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa.				
Sub-problems	**Literature Review**	**Research questions**	**Source of data**	**Analysis**
• The second sub-problem is to understand the broad implications of brand co-creation in a multiple stakeholder context on corporate brand manage	• Saarijärvi & Kuusela, (2013). • Ind & Bjerke (2007) • Martinez, (2013) • Shao et al., (2015 • Singh & Sonnenburg (2012) • Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2015) • Hatch &Schultz (2010) •	• What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation? • What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management?	Semi-structured in-depth interviews Senior executives, Marketing managers/ business directors	• Thematic analysis o Read and annotate scripts o Identify themes o Develop coding schemes o Code data

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders and implications for corporate brand management in South Africa

Thank you affording me the opportunity to interview you. The purpose of my research is to understand how you interact with multiple stakeholders towards building and enhancing your brand.
I pledge that none of the information you provide will be attributable to you and should I be afforded the opportunity to publish my research, stringent measures will be taken to ensure your anonymity is preserved.
You can be assured that the ethics committee of the University of the Witwatersrand and the Wits Business School is stringent on this matter and my own academic reputation would be at stake if this were not the case.

I,…… agree to participate in the research study conducted by Mankwe, Olivia Sithole. The purpose and nature o the study has been explained to me in writing and verbally.
My participation is voluntary and I understand that I can withdraw at any time during the study without any repercussions.
I understand and give permission that the extracts from the interview may be quoted and published in the research report. I also give permission for the interview to be audio- recorded.
I also understand that confidentiality will be ensured in the research report and that no identifying features will be attached.
Signed:_____

Date:_____

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The objective of this instrument is to guide the direction of the interview. Questions will be asked in line with the mode below. The Interview Guide comprises of the following research questions, broad themes and interview questions:

Interview questions:

Opening questions

1. Briefly, please introduce yourself by indicating your name, and your role in the organisation
2. Can you provide a general description of your organisations, including corporate strategy and growth prospects?
3. Does your organisation have a well defined and establish branding strategy? If yes please briefly describe it's goals?
4. In your own words, how do you think the role of stakeholders involvement in brand building has changed?

RQ1: How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity (Merz et al., 2009; Kazadi et al., 2016; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Pera et al., 2015 and Hillebrand et al.,2015)?

1. Are you familiar with the concept of brand co-creation? If yes,
   in your own words, what do you understand by the term brand co-creation?
   If no (researcher to provide explanation of what is brand co-creation to the respondents)

2. How can brands incorporate different stakeholders in their brand building efforts?
3. How do you think brands are co-created with stakeholders other than consumers, such as employees, business partners, suppliers and

shareholders?

4. Which activities in your organisation would you say fall under brand co-creation and why?

RQ2: Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engage with in co-creational activity and why (France et al.,2015; Hillebrand et al., 2015)?

1. Please identify your organisation's main stakeholders who are involved in your brand building/ developing processes?
2. Do you think it's necessary to include or manage interactions with all stakeholders and why?

RQ3:What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activity (Pera et al., 2015; Leavy, 2014; Kazadi et al., 2016)?

1. What methods are you using to learn about your various stakeholders' needs and desires?
2. How do you include various stakeholders in your brand building efforts?
3. To what extent do these different approaches to stakeholders translate into genuine and rich dialogue and direct access?

RQ4: What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation (Hatch & Schultz, 2010); Ind et al., 2013; Shao et al., 2015)?

1. What do you think is the role of your organisation in a brand-co-creation interaction with stakeholders?
2. What are the key factors that must be taken into account when building brands today?
3. How far is your organization willing to go in disclosing who you are and how you do business to your various stakeholders?

RQ5: What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013)?

1. What is your organisation's brand management approach? Is it open to include external input and influence from stakeholders or is it closed?
2. Do you think the approach supports the brand if not, what type of approach will support your brand more effectively?
3. What is the impact of brand co-creation on organisations from a brand management perspective?
4. What management factors enable or disenable inclusion of different stakeholders in the brand building process?

APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONAL LETTER OF CONSENT

The Graduate School of Business Administration
2 St David's Place, Parktown,
Johannesburg, 2193,
South Africa
PO Box 98, WITS, 2050
Website: www.wbs.ac.za

ORGANISATIONAL LETTER OF CONSENT

MASTERS OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ORGANISATIONAL CONSENT FORM AND INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

My name is Mankwe Sithole. I am conducting research for the purpose of completing my Masters in Management in Strategic Marketing at Wits Business School. The research topic is to explore **brand co-creation engagements in a multiple stakeholder context and the broad implications on corporate brand management in South Africa**. I am conducting a qualitative study using a single case study approach. I am required to conduct research with 14 people within your organisation, across the different sub-brands. The Marketing Director or similar will be interviewed first to get an understanding of the organisational context and practice of co-creation and general stakeholder management. This will be followed by other participants that may be nominated by the director. The data will be analysed and a report will be written towards contributing to the theory based on the emerging themes and patterns that develop. The report will be made available to you.

Your organisation's participation

Before I obtain the individuals consent to participate in an interview, I require the organisation's permission to conduct a case study within the firm. Participation of the firm and the respective individuals is voluntary and will not be forced. If your firm agrees to participate, you may subsequently elect not to continue in the research process.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify the firm and the individuals will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. A pseudo-name will be used for the firm and the individuals in the published research report.

Benefits

The study will provide guidance to marketing and branding practitioners in organisations on how to implement co-creational activities and importantly how to govern the increasingly overlapping boundaries between firms and stakeholders. If you would like to receive feedback on the study, I can send you the results of the study when it is completed in 2017.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the Wits Business School. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, you may contact me on mankwes@brandcode.co.za , alternatively you may contact my dissertation supervisor, Rd. Yvonne Saini at yvonne.saini@wits.ac.za.

Consent Approval

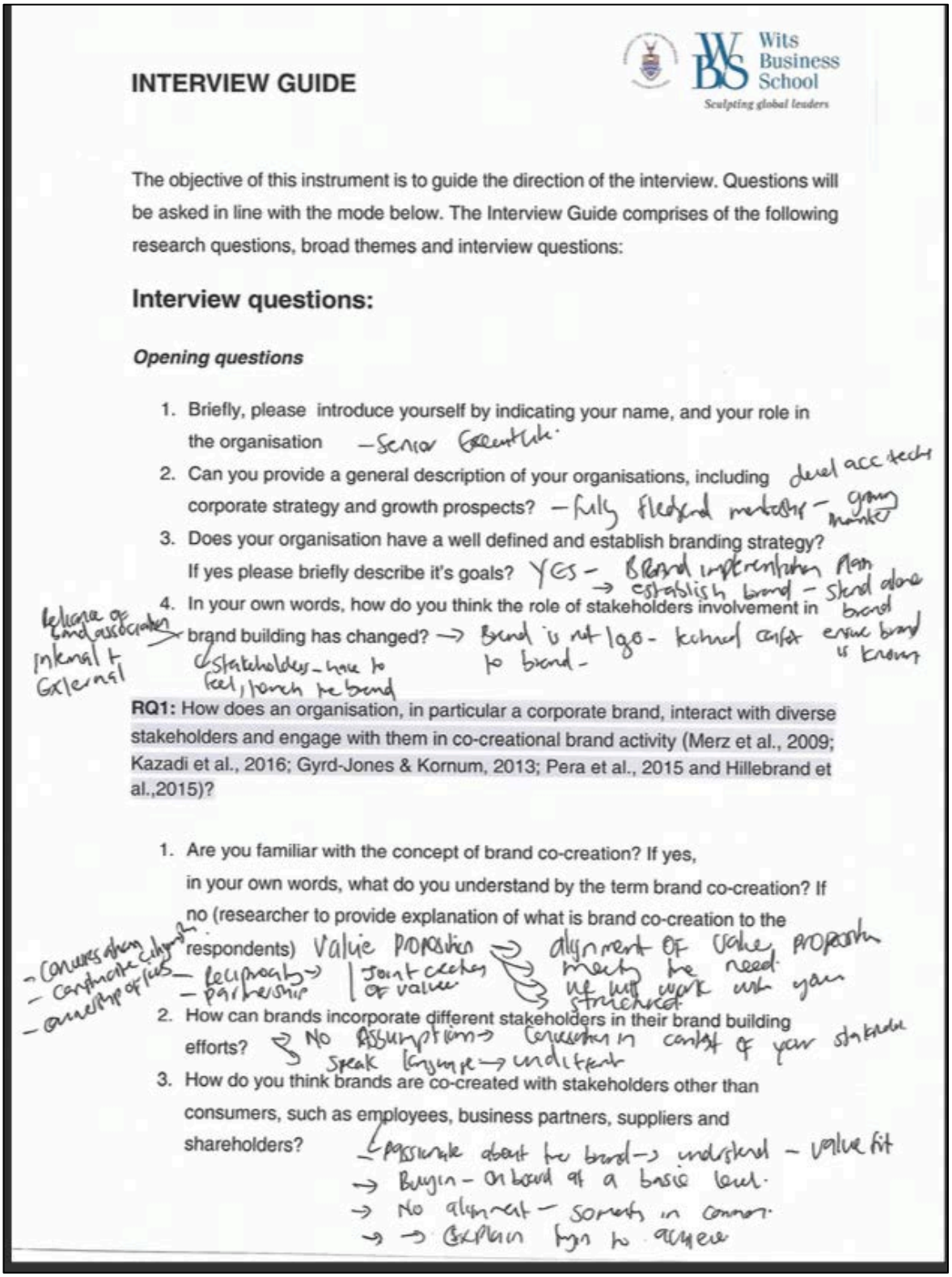
We, ***The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA)***, give Mankwe Sithole permission to conduct research within our organisation.

Signature on behalf of Firm: .....

Designation: SENIOR EXECUTIVE: BRAND .....

Date: 15/08/2018 .....

APPENDIX C: FIELD NOTES



INTERVIEW GUIDE

Wits Business School
Sculpting global leaders

The objective of this instrument is to guide the direction of the interview. Questions will be asked in line with the mode below. The Interview Guide comprises of the following research questions, broad themes and interview questions:

Interview questions:

Opening questions

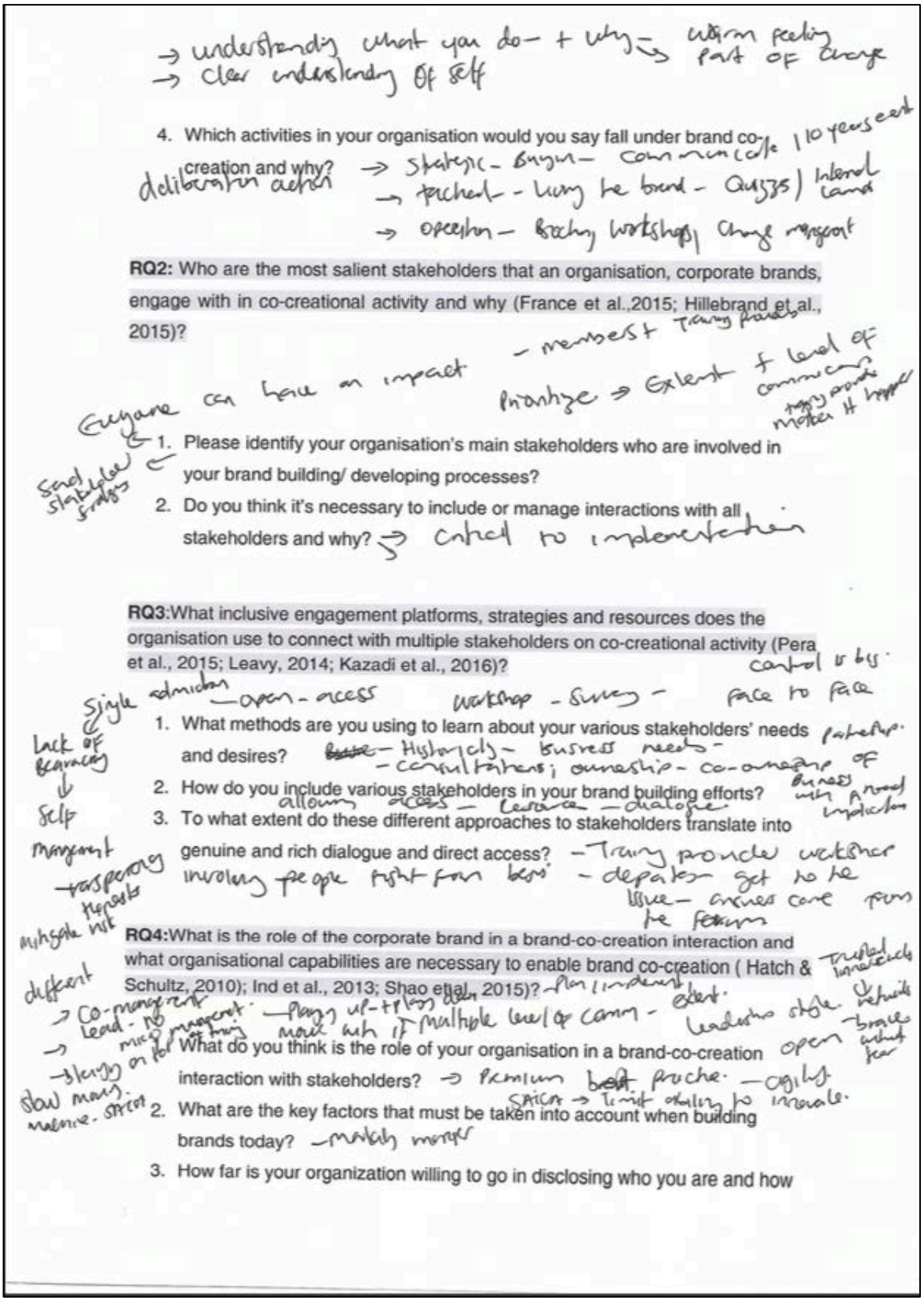
1. Briefly, please introduce yourself by indicating your name, and your role in the organisation — Senior Executive.
2. Can you provide a general description of your organisations, including corporate strategy and growth prospects? — fully fledged membership — growing market — devel acc techs
3. Does your organisation have a well defined and establish branding strategy? If yes please briefly describe it's goals? YES — Brand implementation plan → establish brand — stand alone brand
4. In your own words, how do you think the role of stakeholders involvement in brand building has changed? → Brand is not logo — technical cafet ensure brand is known to brand — stakeholders — have to feel, touch the brand

Reliance of brand association internal + External

RQ1: How does an organisation, in particular a corporate brand, interact with diverse stakeholders and engage with them in co-creational brand activity (Merz et al., 2009; Kazadi et al., 2016; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013; Pera et al., 2015 and Hillebrand et al.,2015)?

1. Are you familiar with the concept of brand co-creation? If yes, in your own words, what do you understand by the term brand co-creation? If no (researcher to provide explanation of what is brand co-creation to the respondents) Value Proposition → alignment of value proposition → meeting the need → we will work with you → structured
   - Conversation
   - Constructive citizenship
   - ownership of ideas
   - Reciprocity → | Joint creation of value
   - partnership
2. How can brands incorporate different stakeholders in their brand building efforts? → No assumption → conversation in context of your stakeholders → speak language → undifferent
3. How do you think brands are co-created with stakeholders other than consumers, such as employees, business partners, suppliers and shareholders? — passionate about the brand → understand — value fit → Buying — on board at a basic level. → No alignment — something in common. → → Explain trying to achieve

APPENDIX C: FIELD NOTES



→ understanding what you do – + why – warm feeling
→ clear understanding of self → part of change

4. Which activities in your organisation would you say fall under brand co-creation and why? → strategic – Buyin – communicate / 10 years ent
deliberation action
→ tactical – living the brand – Quizzes / internal comms
→ operation – Brochure workshops / change management

RQ2: Who are the most salient stakeholders that an organisation, corporate brands, engage with in co-creational activity and why (France et al.,2015; Hillebrand et al., 2015)?

– members + training provider
Everyone can have an impact
Prioritize → Extent + level of communication
training provider makes it happen

1. Please identify your organisation's main stakeholders who are involved in your brand building/ developing processes?
2. Do you think it's necessary to include or manage interactions with all stakeholders and why? → critical to implementation

Send stakeholder strategies

RQ3: What inclusive engagement platforms, strategies and resources does the organisation use to connect with multiple stakeholders on co-creational activity (Pera et al., 2015; Leavy, 2014; Kazadi et al., 2016)?

control is big.
Single admission – open – access workshop – survey – face to face

1. What methods are you using to learn about your various stakeholders' needs and desires? – Historically – business needs – consultations; ownership – co-ownership of business with a need implication
2. How do you include various stakeholders in your brand building efforts? allowing access – Resource – dialogue
3. To what extent do these different approaches to stakeholders translate into genuine and rich dialogue and direct access? – Training provider workshop involving people fight from bens – departments get to the issue – answers come from the forum

Lack of Bearing
↓
Self management
– transparency
honesty
mitigate risk

RQ4: What is the role of the corporate brand in a brand-co-creation interaction and what organisational capabilities are necessary to enable brand co-creation (Hatch & Schultz, 2010); Ind et al., 2013; Shao et al., 2015)? – Plan / implement
Trusted innovation
different
→ Co-management
Lead – no micro management
→ Playing up – + playing down
move with it multiple level of comm – extent.
leadership style. ↓ network
→ staying on for of training
open – brave what fear
slow moving machine – SAICA

1. What do you think is the role of your organisation in a brand-co-creation interaction with stakeholders? → Premium best practice – agility
SAICA → Limit ability to innovate.
2. What are the key factors that must be taken into account when building brands today? – market manager
3. How far is your organization willing to go in disclosing who you are and how

you do business to your various stakeholders? — learn from where you have been.

RQ5: What are the broad managerial implications (from a leadership and organisational culture perspective) of brand co-creation with multiple stakeholders on corporate brand management (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Gyrd-Jones & Kornum, 2013)? → Plug the gap → blank Gras → Resistors (Active + Nays aware)

1. What is your organisation's brand management approach? Is it open to include external input and influence from stakeholders or is it closed?
2. Do you think the approach supports the brand if not, what type of approach will support your brand more effectively?
3. What is the impact of brand co-creation on organisations from a brand management perspective?
4. What management factors enable or disenable inclusion of different stakeholders in the brand building process?

→ — early involvement
— open + transparent
→ offer to assist.
→ mitigate risk upon work with you.
— enablering people to be part of change.

— Pushing boundries.

→ New grow to big too strategic for stakeholders

→ Accessibility.

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Date: 4 August 2017

Time: 09:30-10:30

Respondent:	NK
Role:	GM ATSA
Age:	45-50
Years at SAICA:	6
Level:	Senior Executive

Data	Code
Interviewer: If you could be give me a general overview of who you are and your role in the organisation **Respondent:** I am the General Manager for Accounting technician South Africa, other title in SAICA is senior executive…so its quiet a senior, strategic decision making role. So AT(SA) is responsible for developing and nurturing uhm qualifying and regulating accounting technician space as a professional designation. We've evolved from a joint venture previously between AAT UK and SAICA and this is our first few months after the transition. We are shifting our strategy away from being a student body reliant only on funding moving towards being a fully fledged membership body…	
Interviewer: Do you have a well defined brand strategy for your business? I would say yes, because for us the strategy that we follow is not separate from the branding- we have a branding implementation plan, particularly as we moved	

out of the joint venture…firstly, we need to establish ATSA as brand, the name that stand apart from general accountant. The brand to stand alone with confidence…its not necessarily a stepping stone to other levels. So our strategy is to ensure that the accounting technician name, brand, designation becomes known. So the goal is for companies to start understand what the role of the accounting technician is within the accounting and finance teams…	
Interviewer: Are you familiar with the concept of brand co-creation, if not I can explain **Respondent:** So in my view any business that operates in the world, but in particular in SA has to be in existence because you are filling a gap, or you are meeting a need or you are creating value…the base of your brand is your value proposition, I know the term is sometimes too broadly, so we take each of our product lines and create an aspirational view to it, so its not just doing an accounting technician role, we take your aspiration is it's a building block of becoming a member... brand co-creation to me if we just pull it down to a strategy or up, I don't know which way you want to go…we have to tie into the strategies of the stakeholders that we work with, so government is a perfect example, national treasury has a technical competency dictionary we took that and we aligned our qualification to their requirements. We have aligned our qualification to meet their needs, we are creating value. So if national treasury's brand is to professionalise people in the government…public sector, then co-creation is that we will work with you to achieve your strategic goals. So to me co-creation is similar to collaboration but its more structured. We put on the table what you need as an organisation and what we need as on organisation and we work on that together. In the accounting space brand co-creation is quite popular, its quiet familiar. Its everything from reciprocity agreements with international bodies, right down to signing a partnership agreement with national treasury…we are creating a new brand or developing a brands jointly. Its critical for us, as we can't create brands by	

ourselves we do it with partnerships… Even when we visit corporates, we first research their strategy. We speak to them in their language. We went to the first rand foundation and we aligned to their objectives and they gave us 2 million rand. So the age of that push down, heavy handed corporates doesn't exist anymore. Its conversations, collaborative conversations. Also I think consumer activism is extremely high and constructive citizenship, people are very aware that they can take ownership of their lives and initiatives and so so... **Interviewer**: How can brands incorporate different stakeholders in their brand building efforts? Yah as I said, you cannot go in with that arrogance or assumptions. You always have conversation in the context of your stakeholders, so we would always start a conversation with "this is what you say you need, this is what we think we can do, then we match the two…we have very raw direct conversations and we try and understand where the stakeholder is at. We are selling a lifetime change. We are not giving them a module. We don't treat each stakeholder the same, but when we have the conversations its direct and one on one. I think its been very specific and pointed communication, not bombarding them. Allowing access to come and meet and speak to us. We have a full plan for training providers, its communication, the launch, training manuals, meetings, speaking in the same language, compliance. Its simple, consistency, honest. We do email but for key providers we do road shows.	

Interviewer: where are you getting the most impact you think in terms of the different interventions?

The best is our training provider workshop, we do them quarterly, because we are all in a rooms so it creates good conversation and debate and you tease out all the issues. Answers can come from the forum and not always from us…and I think involving people right from the beginning. Our approach is that we have nothing to hide, this is where we are…transparency, honesty yah it's basic…back to basics.

Interviewer: How do you think brands are co-created with stakeholders other than consumers, such as employees, business partners, suppliers and shareholders?

So employees have to be passionate about what they are doing, we push people to their own development. So employees must understand what the brand is and have a value fit with employees. We try and get people on board on a basic level, so they can understand challenges. So it's really about those honest direct one on one conversations. For business partners its very extensive and the best way is as I say we try to align to what their strategy, if no alignment we walk away. You can't force co-creation, there has to be something in common, a thread that pulls you together. Suppliers are slightly complicated, our training providers are the ones who face the students, they are an extension of the brand. We have 44 training providers, they are the foot soldiers, so they are very critical. Our suppliers could very well be our internal clients, our legal team, IT department. In all of this we try ad explain who we are in a basic level. All in all, we are always trying to explain what we are trying to achieve. And communicating who exactly who we are to the people.

People must understand what you do and I think understanding is underrated. I am not saying they need to know the ins and outs of your strategy. But people need to

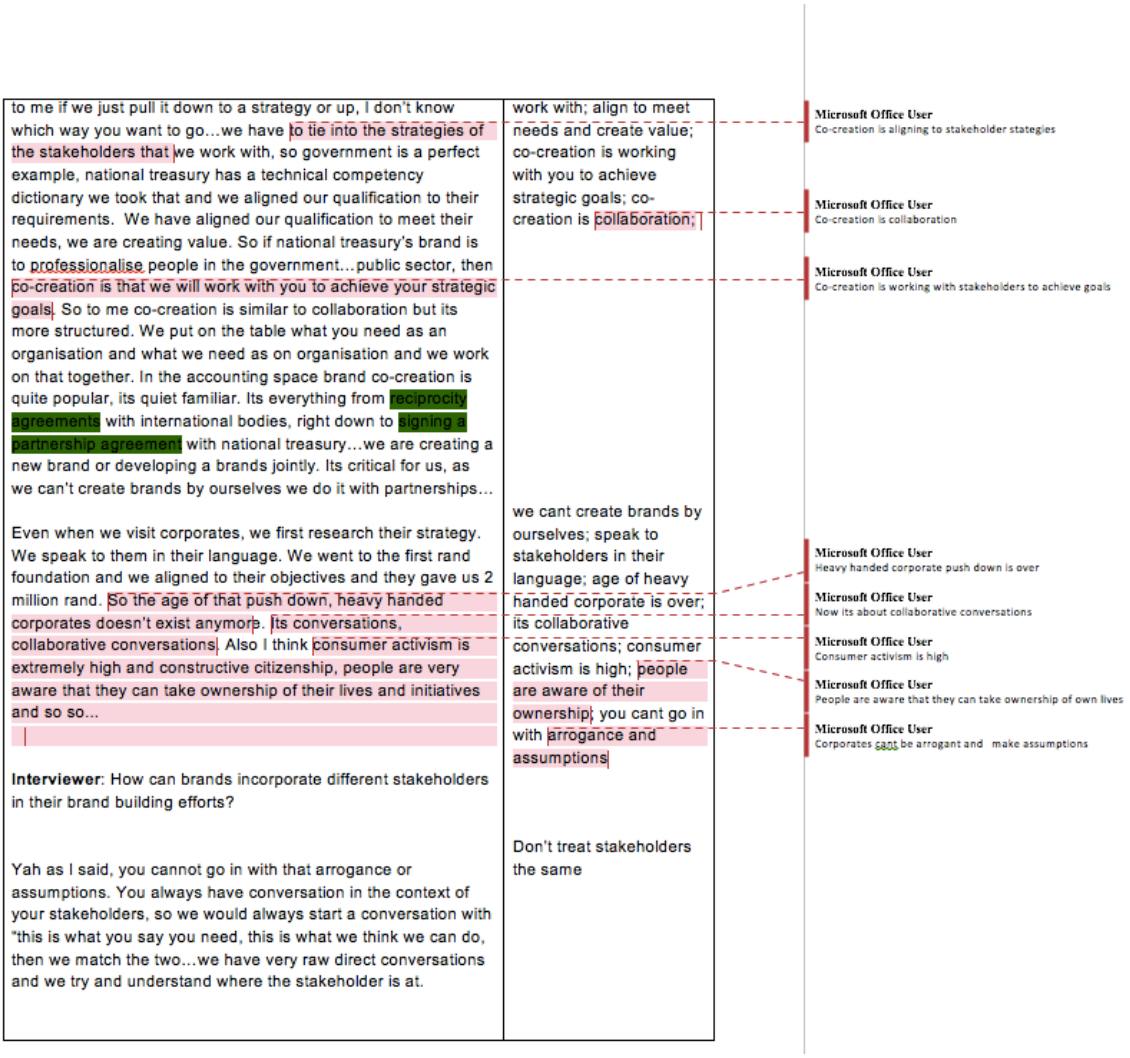
buy into your strategy. Have a warm fuzzy feeling. That are almost part of the change. **Interviewer:** which activities in your organisation would you say fall under brand co- creation and why? Because we are particularly a fresh brand, we firstly had to manage our stakeholders and let our stakeholders know that we have a new brand and in everything I do in business I have to have a strategic, tactical and operational plan. Strategically you are sending out the comms, you have buy-in; tactically we are working with our key change agents. Operationally its getting the brand out there, getting the training providers in, doing the workshops and we have done change management principles as a team. One of them is called “living the brand” which includes internal games that educate us about the brand. There has to be a deliberate intent at making sure that implementation takes place. **Interviewer:** I like the fact that you are saying you have deliberate intention to engage stakeholders… because they are so key in building your brand…second part is to understand who your stakeholders are?	
Interviewer: Please identify your organisation’s main stakeholders who are involved in your brand building/ developing processes? I think you have named some of them in the beginning, you mentioned training providers, government, you mentioned SAICA etc.… So uhm we identify stakeholders on whether they need to be aware of our objectives and also on their level of impact. We identify obviously our team, and the various stakeholders… this is our training providers, regulators and funders, vendors. We do not have the most prominent because everyone plays a key role.	

We also priorities the extent and level of communication with our trainee providers and our members. We also have a very face to face interaction and communication with our stakeholders **Interviewer:** Do you prioritise your stakeholders? I don't think we are in a position to talk about salient stakeholders because everyone can have an impact on the brand or strategy. Look our customers are salient. Our highest level of communication is to our training providers and our members. We have highlighted that as they are the ones experiencing the change and our members. Out training providers make it happen. Our internal, SAICA team its awareness and understanding. We actually look at each stakeholder type and start identifying them… **Interviewer:** Do you think it's necessary to include or manage interactions with all stakeholders and why? As I said, it's different extents, but yes.	
Interviewer: What methods are you using to learn about your various stakeholder needs and desires? I think historically, the very way the qualification was developed was based on public sector need even the international qualification, employers would sit in a room and say this is how you do things…the nature of the qualification is that in the exam, you need to be able to apply yourself and for instance do a vat return. So we would be able to do that without intense conversation, the buy-in and sign-off from employers. So if you are talking about methods, its consultation initially, with training providers its actually we shifted them to co-ownership of the qualification and created a partnership…we have done some surveys and so we but we are very face to face with our stakeholders so we would very easily in a	

meeting, conversation or workshop understand what their needs are, change in their needs or complaints. It's very open access, almost a single level organisation. Its me and the managers, there's no hierarchy, its approachable, we are available. **Interviewer**: would you say that's strength in terms of being able to get to the heart of your stakeholders? When you grow to large numbers it can be quiet a challenge as you are not accessible anymore…I can deal with things straight away. Another method is allowing your stakeholders to self-manage so that you can spend more time growing business.	
Interviewer: What do you think is the role of your organisation in a brand-co-creation interaction with stakeholders? Ok so as I said the starting point of business is knowing that you meet a need. We need to understand our role in the profession, where we fit in. where we fit in the accounting cycle. So understanding where you fit in. At the core is understanding who you are and where you fit in and not trying to be someone else. You must always improve and push the bar…we want to keep leading the pack as opposed to being complacent **Interviewer:** from a management perspective, as you look after various relationships, what do you think is your role in maintaining that…? Look …leadership style stems from different things, its leadership, style, history, experience… role of management is not to manage but to lead, and it sounds like a cliché…we really are agile, SAICA's established brand can sometimes limit our ability to be innovative, because you are so settled. We are forced to be agile and open and try things differently. I mean the new management is don't do all those extensive plans for three years, you plan and implement. The world is moving at such a rapid rate; the excitement is if you move with it…staying close to the people	

that matter. I have a trusted inner circle, sounding boards in the organisation and among stakeholders. Management needs to be brave, and realistic but without fear. I have no problem asking my team off beat…adaptive learning…things will be obsolete. SAICA is a slow moving machine…mitigate the risks instead of throwing out the solution, that another management style.	
Interviewer: How far is your organisation willing to go in disclosing who you are and how you do business to your various stakeholders? We have been open, we always disclose openly.	
Interviewer: What is your organisation's brand management approach? Is it open to include external input and influence from stakeholders or is it closed? We are totally open. I think a key is knowing where your weaknesses are and plugging the gap. You cannot be everything to everyone. Its understanding who you are and being fresh. You need to understand who your resisters are…	
Interviewer: Do you think the role of stakeholders' involvement has changed in brand building?	

APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF CODED NOTES



to me if we just pull it down to a strategy or up, I don't know which way you want to go…we have to tie into the strategies of the stakeholders that we work with, so government is a perfect example, national treasury has a technical competency dictionary we took that and we aligned our qualification to their requirements. We have aligned our qualification to meet their needs, we are creating value. So if national treasury's brand is to professionalise people in the government…public sector, then co-creation is that we will work with you to achieve your strategic goals. So to me co-creation is similar to collaboration but its more structured. We put on the table what you need as an organisation and what we need as on organisation and we work on that together. In the accounting space brand co-creation is quite popular, its quiet familiar. Its everything from reciprocity agreements with international bodies, right down to signing a partnership agreement with national treasury…we are creating a new brand or developing a brands jointly. Its critical for us, as we can't create brands by ourselves we do it with partnerships…

Even when we visit corporates, we first research their strategy. We speak to them in their language. We went to the first rand foundation and we aligned to their objectives and they gave us 2 million rand. So the age of that push down, heavy handed corporates doesn't exist anymore. Its conversations, collaborative conversations. Also I think consumer activism is extremely high and constructive citizenship, people are very aware that they can take ownership of their lives and initiatives and so so…

Interviewer: How can brands incorporate different stakeholders in their brand building efforts?

Yah as I said, you cannot go in with that arrogance or assumptions. You always have conversation in the context of your stakeholders, so we would always start a conversation with "this is what you say you need, this is what we think we can do, then we match the two…we have very raw direct conversations and we try and understand where the stakeholder is at.

work with; align to meet needs and create value; co-creation is working with you to achieve strategic goals; co-creation is collaboration;

we cant create brands by ourselves; speak to stakeholders in their language; age of heavy handed corporate is over; its collaborative conversations; consumer activism is high; people are aware of their ownership; you cant go in with arrogance and assumptions

Don't treat stakeholders the same

Microsoft Office User
Co-creation is aligning to stakeholder stategies

Microsoft Office User
Co-creation is collaboration

Microsoft Office User
Co-creation is working with stakeholders to achieve goals

Microsoft Office User
Heavy handed corporate push down is over

Microsoft Office User
Now its about collaborative conversations

Microsoft Office User
Consumer activism is high

Microsoft Office User
People are aware that they can take ownership of own lives

Microsoft Office User
Corporates cant be arrogant and make assumptions

We are selling a lifetime change. We are not giving them a module. We don't treat each stakeholder the same, but when we have the conversations its direct and one on one. I think its been very specific and pointed communication, not bombarding them. Allowing access to come and meet and speak to us. We have a full plan for training providers, its communication, the launch, training manuals, meetings, speaking in the same language, compliance. Its simple, consistency, honest. We do email but for key providers we do road shows. **Interviewer:** where are you getting the most impact you think in terms of the different interventions? The best is our training provider workshop, we do them quarterly, because we are all in a rooms so it creates good conversation and debate and you tease out all the issues. Answers can come from the forum and not always from us…and I think involving people right from the beginning. Our approach is that we have nothing to hide, this is where we are…transparency, honesty yah it's basic…back to basics. **Interviewer:** How do you think brands are co-created with stakeholders other than consumers, such as employees, business partners, suppliers and shareholders? So employees have to be passionate about what they are doing, we push people to their own development. So employees must understand what the brand is and have a value fit with employees. We try and get people on board on a basic level, so they can understand challenges. So it's really about those honest direct one on one conversations. For business partners its very extensive and the best way is as I say we try to align to what their strategy, if no alignment we walk away. You can't force co-creation, there has to be something in common, a thread that pulls you together. Suppliers are slightly complicated, our training providers are the ones who face the students, they are an extension of the brand. We have 44 training providers, they are the foot soldiers, so they are very critical. Our suppliers could very well be our internal clients, our legal team, IT department. In all of this we try ad explain who we are in a basic level. All in all, we are always trying to explain	Specific and pointed communication; giving stakeholders access to the brand; launches, meetings, roadshows; stakeholder workshops quarterly; workshops creates good conversation, debate and can tease out issues; with conversation, answers come from the forum/ stakeholders; our approach is that we have nothing to hide, we are transparent; involve people right from the beginning; Employees must understand the brand have a value fit; honest, direct conversations with employees; with suppliers and partners its about aligning to their strategies; you cant force co-creation, there has to be common ground; stakeholders are an extension to our brand Understanding what you do is underrated-people need to buy-into your strategy;

Microsoft Office User
We dont treat stakeholders the same

Microsoft Office User
Allowing access to brand

Microsoft Office User
Co-creating activities include: launches, meeting, roadshows, stakeholder workshops quarterly

Microsoft Office User
Approach is specific and pointed communication

Microsoft Office User
Workshops create good conversation and ability to debate

Microsoft Office User
With conversation, answers come from stakeholders

Microsoft Office User
We have nothing to hide-open and transparent

Microsoft Office User
Involve people from the beginning

Microsoft Office User
Honest direct conversation with employees

Microsoft Office User
Align your strategy with your suppliers and business partners

Microsoft Office User
You cant force co-creation, there has to be common ground

Microsoft Office User
With employees there has to be a value fit

Microsoft Office User
Stakeholders are an extenstion of your brand

Interviewer: would you say that's strength in terms of being able to get to the heart of your stakeholders? When you grow to large numbers it can be quiet a challenge as you are not accessible anymore…I can deal with things straight away. Another method is allowing your stakeholders to self-manage so that you can spend more time growing business.	stakeholders to self manage;	Microsoft Office User Allow stakeholders to self-manage
Interviewer: What do you think is the role of your organisation in a brand-co-creation interaction with stakeholders? Ok so as I said the starting point of business is knowing that you meet a need. We need to understand our role in the profession, where we fit in. where we fit in the accounting cycle. So understanding where you fit in. At the core is understanding who you are and where you fit in and not trying to be someone else. You must always improve and push the bar…we want to keep leading the pack as opposed to being complacent **Interviewer:** from a management perspective, as you look after various relationships, what do you think is your role in maintaining that…? Look …leadership style stems from different things, its leadership, style, history, experience… role of management is not to manage but to lead, and it sounds like a cliché…we really are agile, SAICA's established brand can sometimes limit our ability to be innovative, because you are so settled. We are forced to be agile and open and try things differently. I mean the new management is don't do all those extensive plans for three years, you plan and implement. The world is moving at such a rapid rate; the excitement is if you move with it…staying close to the people that matter. I have a trusted inner circle, sounding boards in the organisation and among stakeholders. Management needs to be brave, and realistic but without fear. I have no problem asking my team off beat…adaptive learning…things will be obsolete. SAICA is a slow moving machine…mitigate the risks instead of throwing out the solution, that another management style.	Role of organization is to meet a need and understand where you fit in in your stakeholder life; keep leading the pack; cant be complacent as a brand; role of orgnaisation is to lead not manage; need to be agile; established brands can limit innovation as they are settled; we are forced to be agile and innovative; new management is not to plan for lengthy periods, but plan and implement swiftly; world is moving at a rapid pace; management needs to bra brave and realistic; if no adaptive learning, we'll be obsolete; management needs to mitigate risks instead of throwing out ideas;	Microsoft Office User Role is to meet needs of stkaeholders Microsoft Office User Organization have to lead the pack Microsoft Office User Guard against complacency Microsoft Office User Need to be agile Microsoft Office User Established brands limit innovation as they are settled Microsoft Office User We are now forced to be agile Microsoft Office User Cant plan too long, need to implement swiftly Microsoft Office User World is rapidly changing Microsoft Office User Need to stay close to people who matter-inner circle Microsoft Office User Management need to be brave Microsoft Office User Adaptive learning or you will be obsolete Microsoft Office User Role of business is to mitigate risk and not throw out ideas

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF CODED THEMES ACROSS RESPONDENTS

AM	JC	NM	WC	NK	NNK	LX	PP	L
Concept of Brand-co-creation not known	Being customer focused	Rapid change in the last three years	Key objective is for all stakeholders to be positive about the brand; Our objective is to make our key stakeholders positive about the brand so they can tell others	Brand co-creation is understood; Co-creation is aligning to stakeholder strategies; Co-creation is collaboration; Co-creation is working with stakeholders to achieve goals; You cant force co-creation, there has to be common ground	Share your vision with stakeholders	Brand co-creation not understood	I have some idea of brand co-creation, its having partners to help your brand grow	Not familiar with brand co-creation
Maintaining close relationships	Stakeholder needs are changing	Needed to unpack the value of the profession to business; Clarify value proposition for stakeholders; We have had to create value for our members	Role of a brand person in this space must be a coach of positive thinking	You exist to meet needs and create value	Involve stakeholders through engagement	How to manage content from a stakeholder perspective on social media	Get stakeholders to know who you are	It's important for us to be on top of how our training providers-our key stakeholder are carrying out our brand
Attention of stakeholder based on money/value to organization	Continuous engagement and feedback	Co-creation is that brands don't exist in isolation	Other stakeholders are not as important and our members	Heavy handed corporate push down is over	Be transparent	I can Influence position of brand because you understand it better	Stakeholders must live the brand	Training providers are our brand voice as they are the ones who interact with learners directly
Keep stakeholders informed	Stakeholder engagement is taken to the next level	We had to bring in our stakeholders to shape the future of the profession	Our members are key, followed by the media	Now its about collaborative conversations	Have various touch-points for your stakeholders	A tight brand strategy will control brand message and content	Get stakeholder buy-in is important	Our external stakeholders are involved with shaping our identity
Tangible relationship with stakeholders	Keep an eye on social media	CA2025 is a co-creation strategy where CAs are invited to help shape the future of the profession	Primary stakeholders are the members because they pay the bills	Consumer activism is high	Ways of incorporating stakeholders in brand building	Create relevant content that is engaging	We provide information but we haven't asked them what they think	We have 3-5 networking events per annum
Partnership based relationships with stakeholders	Listen to what is said out there	Engagement and interaction with stakeholders like students and universities to help grow CA pipeline	We can't listen to everyone	People are aware that they can take ownership of own lives	Establish what their needs are	Speakers are stakeholder	Delve deep to understand what the need is	To be able to engage with stakeholders
Not formally	If you don't	We engage and	Brands collapse	Corporates cant	Events like	We have	For staff its	We use the sessions to

Prioritising stakeholders	engage you die	ask them what they need to succeed in the profession	because of a bad reputation	be arrogant and make assumptions	doing business with government for stakeholders	committees	about brand advocacy, finding opportunity to talk about who we are	update stakeholders in terms of what is happening with the brand
Primary stakeholder are those you provide service to	Role of stakeholders will never be the same	We have brought in digitization of the profession; Technology forced the institute to change	Companies are growing and some are dying, That's the nature of business	We don't treat stakeholders the same	We collaborate with stakeholders	Ensure alignment with stakeholders	With funders, its about elevating each other	We audit the use of our brand identity on the Training provider website and engage with those who are not doing the right thing.
SAICA, SMME, Government, CEDA, SEFA, DTI	Understanding customer needs and want	We have had to sit and understand member needs more	The customers are key to the success of a brand	Allowing access to brand	Content creation with business day TV	Project structures	Learning to do things for the benefit of our funders and not just our brand	We work with training providers so we can get them where we need them to be from a brand perspective
	Continuous dialogue	We had to flexible in how we do things and interact	It's up to management to decide which stakeholders are the most important	Co-creating activities include: launches, meeting, roadshows, stakeholder workshops quarterly	Stakeholder type	Including different stakeholders provides different perspectives	Events, conferences, networking, but I would say they are co-created as we have not included them in the process	Stakeholders are: TP, regulators: SAQA, FACET, SETAs; funders
Less likely to survive if you don't manage relationships with stakeholders;	Concept of brand co-creation not understood initially	Listening more to what our partners are saying and the understanding the value they want from the relationship	Secondary stakeholders are media, audit firms, government and investing public	With conversation, answers come from stakeholders	Members, youth, government, sponsors	There's a need to ensure alignment between what brand stands for and what others say	Brand co-creation activities include all events, your conferences, your networking events, because that's where we talk about who we are and what we need to do together	If you don't keep stakeholders engaged, you will doing yourself a disservice
Its important to manage stakeholder relationships; Careful not to make a mistake	Brand influencers as brand co-creation strategy	More interaction with employees to promote them as brand ambassadors	We have a members division that deals with the engagement of stakeholders, our primary stakeholders	We have nothing to hide-open and transparent	Stakeholders are the drivers of your business	Need to manage brand content and perceptions	Training providers, funders, government, municipalities, members, Tvet colleges, audit [redacted]	Stakeholders give you the strength to move brand forward
Key accounts relationships; annual survey; understand needs and expectations; committees; meeting once a quarter	Engagement, surveys, research, telephonic interviews	Engagement with CEO and employees – understanding the strategy more	Trying to understand member needs through committee structures	Involve people from the beginning			Not prioritizing stakeholders	Networking sessions to learn about stakeholder wants and needs
Challenges with receiving feedback;	Listening to stakeholders	Collaborate with employees and listen more to	Conduct member satisfaction surveys	Honest direct conversation with employees	Maintain healthy relationship	No prioritization of stakeholders	You must manage interactions as	Marketing is the point of contact to understand member

		their ideas					there are different value propositions to every stakeholder	and stakeholder needs
Speaking or personal interaction is more effective	It used to be brands dictating, now its customers	Engage with stakeholders and share with them the state of profession- increasing our accountability to them	We have a strong brand because we listen to member's input	Align your strategy with your suppliers and business partners	Stakeholders are important because they extend our network	Meet once a quarter with internal stakeholders	We included them in shapig the new brand of AT(SA)	Annual conference as a touch point with stakeholders
Embrace digitisation	Not actively engaging in co-creation	Using members as the voice of the brand in reputation building campaigns	The basis of doing marketing has remained the same, the difference is the channels	With employees there has to be a value fit	Staff are important to involve in your brand effort, they are the lifeline of your business	Annual surveys	Through interacting with stakeholders you realize the issues with the brand	We get a lot of ideas from stakeholders through networking sessions
Need to be more intentional towards a Collaborative approach	brand is very insular; we engage to get feedback, not to co-create	We have been challenged to collaborate more	Brand consistency is key	Stakeholders are an extenstion of your brand	Word of mouth is important, staff must know what the organization is about so they can spread the correct message	feedback post events	Multiple meeting where we dived deeply	newsletters
	Main stakeholders- funders and SAICA	Internally we are getting rid of siloed thinking and forcing cross collaboration	How to incorporate stakeholders in brand building process	Getting stakeholder buy in is important particularly for a new brand	Its important for staff to know vision and what the organization stands for	Create relevant brand experiences	Internally we have information sharing sessions	website

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