University of the Witwatersrand

THE IMPACT OF BRANDING ON BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION

TO STUDY AT A TVET COLLEGE:

A SOUTH AFRICAN GRADE 12 LEARNER PERSPECTIVE

by

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DECLARATION

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Siphiwe Dlamini

2020

DEDICATION

To my late mother, Mrs Thabile Petronella Dhlamini (1954-2015).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Purpose – Building a brand with a strong consumer brand knowledge structure (BKS) (i.e. brand awareness and brand image) is what drives consumers' positive response to the marketing of the brand, including behavioural intention. While the BKS of South African universities, such as the universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch, is strong and yields benefits in terms of grade 12 students' high preferences and intentions to study at these universities, little is known about the grade 12 learners' BKS and its outcomes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The research study developed a conceptual model for the higher education sector to assess the explanatory power of BKS that TVET colleges have built. Particularly, the study examined the extent to which BKS impacted grade 12 learners' intentions to study at a TVET college through brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. It also assessed the mediating role of brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness in the relationship between BKS and intentions to study.

Design / methodology / approach – The key literature on higher education branding was reviewed and relevant theories (self-congruity theory, theory of planned behaviour, self-identity theory and the customer-based brand equity theory) were evaluated to borrow ideas for the development of a conceptual model of this study. The proposed conceptual model was tested with data from a self-administered questionnaire, which was completed by 301 randomly selected grade 12 school learners from three secondary schools in Gauteng province. The data were analysed with Partial Least Squares (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Smart PLS 3 software, as well as AMOS 25.

Findings – With the exception of brand awareness, which is an element of BKS that did not significantly impact the intentions to study, brand image, the other element of BKS, significantly impacted intentions to study directly and indirectly through its significant impact on brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. Brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness significantly mediated the relationships between brand awareness,

brand image and intentions to study. This means that even though brand awareness cannot directly influence the intentions of grade 12 learners to choose to study at TVET colleges, if the awareness is translated into brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness, the intentions may develop. In terms of the explanatory power of BKS, the developed and tested conceptual model explained 58% of brand distinctiveness, 52% of brand heritage, 61.4% of brand reputation, 19.3% of brand symobolism and 31.1% of the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

Implications – Theoritically, this study contributes to the field of brand management, service and institutional marketing by expanding and testing a customer-based brand equity (CBBE) conceptual model that can be suitable for measuring outcomes from BKS building efforts and investments. Practically, the study contributes by providing insights into the benefits TVET colleges could obtain if they continue to strengthen their investments in building brand awareness and image of what they can offer current and prospective students. Some of the benefits, as this study found, will be obtained from the building of brand heritage, brand reputation, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. While this study found that these brand constructs are important and significant drivers of the intentions to study at TVET colleges, they may lead to other benefits, such as students' statisfaction, brand preferences and willingness to pay high fees, as some studies suggest.

Originality/contribution – This study is one of the first investigations into the extent to which BKS developed by TVET colleges may influence intentions to study through a number of brand-related factors. On identifying the dimensions of CBBE that are important for higher education institutions, it was found that perceived quality, reputation, emotional/symbolic environment, brand loyalty and brand awareness were important in generating students' positive responses. The current study adds value by examining the extent to which these factors can influence behavioural action, starting with intentions. The study enriches higher education literature by studying brand symbolism, brand reputation, brand heritage and brand distinctiveness in terms of their drivers (brand awareness and brand image) and outcome (intentions to study).

ACRONYMS

AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
AU	African Union
AVE	average variance extracted
BKS	Brand knowledge structure
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CBBE	customer-based brand equity
CEO	chief executive officer
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	comparative fit index
CMO	chief marketing officer
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (college)
CPE	customer perceived ethicality
CR	Composite reliability
DCA	deputy CEO: academic.
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training (South Africa)
EBBE	employee-based brand equity
FBBE	financial-based brand equity
FET	further education and training
GFI	goodness-of-fit index
HEI	higher education institution
IFI	incremental fit index
IMC	integrated marketing communications
MM	marketing manager
MR	marketing researcher
NFI	normed-fit index
PLS	partial least squares
RMSEA	root mean square error of approximation
SCT	self-categorisation theory
SEM	structural equation modelling
SIT	social identity theory
SIM	Student insights manager
SMM	social media manager
SRMR	standardised root mean square residual
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics

AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
TPB	Theory of planned behaviour
TLI	Tucker Lewis index
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WOM	word-of-mouth

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Chapter 1:
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Branding and brand management have been well established management functions and play a strategic role in companies (Sevel, Abratt & Kleyn, 2018). Brands provide the basis upon which consumers can identify and form a relationship with a product or service (Ghodeswar, 2008). Given that higher education institutions find themselves operating within vibrant and challenging environments, a brand management strategy, especially building a strong brand knowledge structure is a priority in ensuring strong student attraction and retention (Rauschnabel et al., 2016). In addition, the steady increase in competition within the sector places a greater emphasis on the significance of corporate branding in higher education (Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009).

As with commercial brand management, the advancement of a unique brand within the higher education sector helps institutions build their sustainable competitive advantage (Rutter, Roper & Lettice, 2015) such that clearly communicating their brand can be of great value to higher education institutions (Rauschnabel et al., 2016). In addition to communicating or creating university brand awareness in the minds of potential students, Panda, Pandey, Bennett and Tian (2019) suggest that brand image – in terms of service quality, reputation, heritage, trustworthiness – are also important in building a strong brand with competitive advantage. Brand awareness and brand image are, according to Keller (2020), what make up brand knowledge structure and which drives consumers' positive response to the marketing of the brand. While the brand knowledge structure (BKS) of South African universities, such as the universities of Cape Town, Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch, is strong and yields benefits in terms grade 12 learners' high preferences and intentions to study at these universities, little is known about the grade 12 learners' BKS and its outcomes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. The next section describes TVET colleges and their roles.

1.1.1 Description and the roles of the TVET sector

Governments around the world often place the TVET sector at the centre of economic and social development (Seng, 2012), seeing education and training as the foundation on which to build a skilled workforce to grow their country's socio-economic development, wealth and entrepreneurship (Orangi, Wandaka & Ngige, 2016). Furthermore, TVET colleges are perceived by some as a tool for reducing extreme poverty (Saud et al., 2011). Saud et al. (2011) and Oketch (2007) asserted that TVET is an acknowledged and effective system by which quality, current, information literate and well-informed students are prepared, skilled, or trained to facilitate vocation-specific skills over a lifetime. UNESCO defines TVET as the facets of the educational system involving general education for the acquisition of practical skills, understanding and knowledge associated with occupations in various areas of economic and social life (Rajadurai et al., 2018).

Although the goal of the TVET sector is, therefore, to prepare students for employment and the labour market, TVET colleges continue to be less of a priority among prospective students than univerisities; they are also not a priority in the labour market. That being said, TVET colleges in South Africa are increasingly expected to provide an answer to the jobs and skills crisis facing the country.

1.1.2 Why study TVET colleges?

The structure of South African higher education in the 19th century was a prototypical metropole, based on the United Kingdom (UK). Phillips (2003) implied that as the British colonial administration sought to ensure the cultural supremacy of English in the new colony, it required that the Universities Act of 1889 be overhauled to meet the growing administrative needs of the British colony (Phillips, 2003), thus impacting on how higher education was structured and designed.

Universities were established in South Africa in the 1800s. For instance, the University of the Cape of Good Hope was established in 1873, becoming the University of South Africa in 1916; and Victoria College became the famous Stellenbosch University in 1918. The University of Cape Town (formally the South African College) was founded in 1829 while the South African School of Mine (known today as the University of the Witwatersrand) dates from 1896, with university status

being granted in 1922. Rhodes University was founded in 1904, followed in 1916 by the University of Fort Hare (formally the South African Native College). The University of Natal (established in 1931) and the University of Durban-Westville merged to establish the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2004. Prior to 1994, most universities functioned along racial lines. In the current British system, education is still faced with marked social class inequalities. Since 1994, the concern in South Africa has been about those who have been excluded. However, after this period, higher education began to reframe policies towards making higher education more inclusive and equitable (Boughey, 2003).

It was only later, that the higher education sector was expanded to include technical and vocational institutions, reflecting an elitism that was inherent in the UK system where universities were developed for the landed and monied classes and were synonymous with class prestige and the development of cultural capital. It was only after the British Labour Party represented working class interests, and the economy started diversifying and industrialising, that a focus on technical and vocational skills was elevated to the rank of 'higher' education.

Social status and higher education are therefore deeply intertwined, with universities being perceived as a route to vertical social mobility (Soria, Stebleton & Huesman, 2014). In investigations into the effects of a person's social origins on their educational attainment (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2012), the role of parental status, class, and education as drivers of children's educational attainment are highlighted. It is further argued that there is a greater possibility of economic growth if children from less financially secure economic environments make more ambitious educational choices (Bukodi & Goldthorpe, 2012); while Sewell and Shah (2001) argued that children from higher social classes tend to aspire to higher educational goals - which is still connected to universities.

Students tend to build their social identities at university and understand the meaning attached to attending a privileged university, aspiring to reach the status of the university as they shape the new class into which they are moving (Soudien, 2008). Notwithstanding the increase in students from the working class entering higher education, their choice of institution largely differs from their middle and upper class counterparts (Reay, Davies, David & Ball, 2001). It is no surprise that higher

education institutions chosen by prospective students are strongly connected to their social class and ethnicity background, and also to the high schools they attended (Ball, Davies, David & Reay, 2002). Borrowing from social class literature, universities are still widely considered as the path to 'best' career option. This reflects old style English, colonial values which remain dominant globally (from the USA to India, Australia to China).

In South Africa, the historical racial segregation within universities meant that a racially divided higher education system emerged both under colonialism and, more so, under apartheid. As the concepts of social class and race are intertwined, they are important in a discussion of higher education – and both are relevant in the apartheid and post-apartheid education system. The apartheid structure of high education was divided into universities and technikons.

Bunting (2006) pointed out that the apartheid policy of separate development led to the establishment of 36 higher education institutions controlled by eight government departments. 18 of the institutions were exclusively for White people, two each were for Indians and Coloured people respectively, while six were for African people, the majority of the population.

1.1.3 Techical and vocational education

While technical and vocational education was equally segregated, the Further Education and Training (FET) system has been transformed into the TVET system and these colleges have become a key feature of of the post-apartheid education structure.

During apartheid, technical colleges were created by the various departments of education – the Department of Education and Training, the House of Delegates, the House of Representativeas as well as the former homeland administrations – to offer technical and vocational education along racially segregated lines (Powell & Hall, 2000).

In 1998, a policy initiative to change technical colleges into Further Education and Training colleges began. At the time, South Africa had 152 technical colleges, 232 delivery sites, 152 campus sites and 80 satellite sites (Powell & Hall, 2000). The policy changes under the FET Act No 98 of 1998 resulted in the reorganisation of

public Further Education and Training colleges (Akoojee, 2009), laying the foundation for transforming a previously racially separated technical college sector into an integrated one. This led to the establishment of 50 public TVET colleges and 264 campuses spread across the country, established and operated under the authority of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006 under the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET, 2016). Akoojee (2009) states that the main aims of the TVET colleges has been as follows:

- to become more responsive to development goals and the labour market;
- to do this through better partnerships with industry and curricular change;
- to have greater, though still managed, autonomy;
- to provide a higher quality of learning;
- to address equity and access; and
- to improve systems of student support.

According to Akoojee (2009), the post-apartheid restructuring of FET colleges was successful in several ways. In addition to converting 152 technical colleges into 50 merged institutions, student participation increased significantly from approximately 76 000 in 1991 to an estimated 406 000 by 2002. In 1998, there were 302 550 students enrolled at technical colleges; twenty years later in 2018, more than 700 000 students were enrolled at TVET colleges.

The restructuring of the FET sector thus saw a huge student increase and it was largely successful in creating opportunities for students to develop their skills. This is particularly the case for for Black students whose participation increased from 15% to 74% while the White student configuration shifted from 67% to 16% (Akoojee, 2009).

The South African government has invested heavily in TVET colleges and understands the critical role and benefits these have for society and the economy. In the face of high youth unemployment rates and major challenges in the youth labour market, there are ambitious plans to expand the TVET college system. This is evident in the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) policies, particularly in its recent White Paper on Post-School Education which prioritises the importance of TVET colleges in the national higher education and training

landscape. First published in 2013, the White Paper proposed an increase in TVET college students to one million by 2015 and to 2.5 million by 2030 (DHET, 2013). These proposed expansions followed radical increases in student numbers after 2010, with a particularly sharp increase between 2011 (400 273 students) and 2012 (657 695 students) (DHET, 2013). The challenges to individual TVET colleges as a result of this rapid expansion can only be deduced from these statistics (Akoojee, 2016).

The promotion of TVET is key to the development initiative that seeks to improve socio-economic challenges, reduce unemployment and eliminate poverty (Ansari & Wu, 2013). The expansion of the sectors was aimed at addressing the supply of skilled artisans into the labour market with a view to growing the South African economy. Considering the numerous economic problems facing South Africa and the catastrophically high unemployment levels, the TVET sector is in a position to contribute to economic growth and a reduction in unemployment.

There is a huge opportunity for TVET to attract school-leavers to take up TVET. The youth aged 15–24 years are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market as the unemployment rate among this age group was 55,2% in the 1st quarter of 2019 (StatsSA, 2019). Universities cannot accommodate all matriculants and it would be beneficial for school leavers and the labour market if increasing numbers entered TVET.

However, Akoojee (2009) argued that there is a structural lack of synergy between the supply and demands of skills in the labour market – seen in the revision of the curriculum, funding, student enrolment deficits, contradictory legislative contexts, and structural positioning within higher education. For TVET to be effective and strategically aligned with the changing higher education landscape, it would be beneficial to understand and analyse the challenges and successes brought by economic activities. Ismail and Abiddin, (2014) argue that training and development in the TVET sector must be consistent with industry – which raises the question of whether the current South African graduates are fit for this purpose. Currently parents do not have confidence in the sector, or the prospects offered by the TVET sector for their children's future professional careers (Ismail & Abiddin, 2014).

1.1.4 The demand for TVET colleges globally and in South Africa

Compared to South African, the demand by students for TVET colleges have had global successes. In Asia for example, TVET colleges were reimagined to respond to the emergence of green economies, focussing on and being organised for green jobs and green technologies available in green economies (Majumdar, 2011). In this situation, TVET needs to be agile with economical structural changes. In South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, the TVET systems attracted heavy investment and introduced strict quotas and entrance requirements to limit university enrolment, driving up enrolment into the TVET sector (Ngure, 2013). This has been successful and has accelerated economic growth and skilled middle-level workforce. In developed countries, the corporate sector is fighting to hire TVET graduates with the demand each year being greater than there are graduates (Wahba, 2012). As a result, TVET graduates in developed countries earn more than graduates from universities.

The demand for TVET colleges and its graduates have not been as attractive as it has been in Asia and in developed countries. The South African high education sector remains dominated by universities, both in terms of resources and prestige. Matriculants invariably choose universities over TVET colleges. The history of higher education in the country explains this – universities are older, well-known and represent achievement, heritage and prestige. Whether TVETs have achieved the same brand knowledge structure (awareness and image) and the prestige universities enjoy needs examination amongst school leavers.

1.2 Problem statement and research gap

As competition in the higher education sector increases and it becomes more difficult to attract the best students, building a distinctive and strong BKS becomes important. BKS is what consumers have heard, learned and feel about a brand that make the brand distinctive and drives their positive response to the brand (Keller, 2020). However, the resultant brand distinctiveness and the consumer responses to the brand are rarely measured. Panda et al. (2019) suggest that elements of the BKS can lead to university brand distinctiveness – especially brand image which they construe to comprise of heritage, reputation, trustworthiness and service quality. They did not empirically test these relationships, however. In addition to the need for

testing how these brand image dimensions impact brand distinctiveness, there is also the need to examine whether the distinctiveness leads to consumer response, such as purchase intention. This is particularly important in the context of higher education, where the consequences of their branding efforts are rarely measured and are likely to be different to the branding of manufactured goods which have received more research attention (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016).

Compared to universities whose BKS have been studied (see for e.g. Trapp, Girard & Boyt, 2014; Yuan et al., 2016; Panda et al., 2019), the BKS of TVET colleges and the outcomes remain vague at best. Parents continue to desire that their children go to a university – which they value and trust - compared to a TVET college (Seng, 2012). Although the DHET has urged youth to enrol at colleges to facilitate their employment, universities are still highly desired by the youth. Could this emanate from a poor BKS? How does the BKS impact the intention to study at the TVET colleges?

Considering that consumers' BKS is the core reason behind their positive response to the brand (Keller, 2020), brand knowledge of prospective TVET students generally needs to be increased if there is to be an increase in their intention to study at a TVET college. However, the path through which BKS impacts their intention to study needs examination. The path starts by measuring young peoples' perceptions of the BKS of TVETs. This can have a significant impact on their relationship with the institution and on their intentions to study there in the future (Dennis et al., 2017; Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014; Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013). Institutions with well-known brands, a strong BKS, a good reputation, and which have easily accessible, comprehensive information will have better chances of recruiting students, as well as faculty and staff (Curtis, Abratt & Minor, 2009).

The awareness, image (especially in terms of service quality), trustworthiness, heritage, reputation (Panda et al., 2019) and attractiveness of the TVET institutions may not only lead to students' willingness to enrol at TVET colleages, (Khan, Hasan & Rabbani, 2017), but may also drive brand distinctiveness and customer satisfaction as Panda et al. (2019) suggest. While a few studies have been conducted on how to improve the image, reputation and attractiveness of TVET colleges in developed countries and, quite recently, in developing countries (Khan,

Hasan & Rabbani, 2017; Ratnata, 2013), there is very limited knowledge on the use of marketing practices for the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage in public TVET colleges in South Africa (Fadahunsi & Pelser, 2013). To create the sustainable competitive advantage, Trapp et al. (2014) and Panda et al. (2019) suggest that the BKS, its dimensions and outcomes need to be studied.

1.3   Research purpose and question of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the path (i.e. brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness) through which brand awareness and brand image (BKS) influence behavioural intentions to study at a TVET college in South Africa.This study thus asks four research questions:

1) What is the BKS of TVET colleges among grade 12 learners in South Africa?
2) Through what path does the BKS of TVET colleges influence a learner's intention to study at a TVET college?
3) Does brand reputation, brand symbolism, brand heritage and brand distinctiveness mediate the relationship between BKS and behavioural intentions to study at a TVET college?
4) How much is the explanatory power of BKS in the higher education sector.

1.4   Research objectives

There are two research objectives of this study: theoretical objectives and empirical objectives.

1.4.1 Theoretical objective

The primary theoretical objective is to critically analyse the literature on the outcomes of brand knowledge structure (which includes brand awareness and brand image) and specifically evaluate brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness as BKS outcomes and predictors of behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

1.4.2 Empirical objectives

1. To examine the impact of brand awareness and brand image on brand reputation, brand symbolism and brand heritage in the TVET sector.
2. To determine the impact of brand reputation, brand symbolism and brand heritage on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.
3. To assess the impact of brand distinctiveness on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.
4. To examine the mediating role of brand reputation, brand symbolism, brand heritage and brand distinctiveness in the relationship between BKS and behavioural intentions to study at a TVET college.
5. To test the explanatory power of BKS, specifically in the higher education service sector.

1.5 Overview of the theoretical framework

1.5.1 Theoretical grounding

Four theories anchor this study, namely customer-based brand equity; self-congruity theory; social identity theory; and theory of planned behaviour. The sub-section below briefly discusses the theories and Chapter 3 discusses them in detail.

1.5.1.1 Customer-based brand equity (CBBE)

Keller (1993) conceptualised customer-based brand equity (CBBE), defining it as the differential influence of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. Largely derived from information economics and psychology (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010), the concept of CBBE is embedded in the view that the power of a brand originates from within the thoughts of consumers and what they have learned and experienced about the brand over time in terms of the brand knowledge structure (Raithel, Taylor & Hock, 2016).

Creating CBBE requires the building of a familiar brand (i.e., brand awareness) that has favourable, unique and strong brand associations (i.e., brand image) (Keller, 1993). The foundation for assessing CBBE is contained in recognising the sources of brand knowledge and the advantages they build for the brand (Hsu, Oh & Assaf, 2012). Some of the advantages in relation to physical products are brand preference, willingness to pay a premium price and repurchase intention (Buil et al., 2013). In

terms of universities some of the advantages of building a strong BKS are brand distinctiveness, brand reputation and students' satisfaction (Panda et al., 2019). Despite these benefits of BKS, CBBE literature provides various CBBE models in several industries, namely country destination (Pike et al., 2010); hotel experience (Bill Xu & Chan, 2010); retail (Çifci et al., 2016), and family restaurant (Majid et al., 2016), but they rarely examine the benefits or consumer response outcomes of building BKS (Buil et al., 2013).

This study seeks to contribute to the study of CBBE by examining the outcomes of BKS in the higher education generally and for the TVET sector specifically. It is undisputable that TVET colleges require a strong brand awareness, association and favourability to grow their brand equity among potential students. The benefits that would be generated from these efforts need examination. One of the starting points is to assess the congruence of TVET brand image in relation to the potential student's self image as prescribed by the self-congruity theory.

1.5.1.2 *Self-congruity theory*

Self-congruity theory is grounded on the basis that consumers prefer brands that associate with their self image (Boksberger et al., 2010; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Liu et al. (2010) state that self-congruity refers to the level of the consumer's self-concept linked to the image of usual brand users. This suggests that the higher the level of congruence, the greater the probability of intention to use the brand. Most researchers agree that the term "self-concept" ought to include two main components: ideal self-concept and actual self-concept (Liu et al., 2010).

Boksberger et al. (2011) investigated the degree to which self-congruity theory is applicable in tourism while in their study, Willems et al. (2011) examined self-congruity theory in relation to fashion store personality. Usakli and Baloglu (2011) applied self-congruity theory in the study of brand personality of tourist destinations, while Lui et al. (2010) applied it in the moderating effect of cultural values on decision making regarding gift-giving. Influences of self-congruity and retail brand personality on store loyalty were examined by Das (2014). The results found that gender moderates the effects of both retail brand personality and self-congruity constructs (reflects who they are and how they see themselves).

As students want to associate with institutions that resonate with their own self-image, it is critical to apply this theory to the context of higher education. This study explores this theory as a theoretical lens to understand how prospective students reinforce their self-image with higher education brands to enhance a favourable image that meets their self-image expectations in terms of brand symbolism.

1.5.1.3 Social identity theory (SIT)

Social identity theory (SIT) proposes that one aspect of a customer's self-concept and social identity stems from their unique social associations (Pecukonis, 2014; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). Henri Tajfel (1978) defined this as the person's awareness that they belong to some social groups, together with certain emotional value attached to their membership of the group. This social association is motivationally driven by an aspect of SIT and demands that individuals strive for a positive social identity as this contributes to basic human needs for meaning in life and self-esteem (Scheepers & Derks, 2016).

As Cannella, Jones and Withers (2015) argued, SIT suggests that the social classes within which individuals find themselves offer understandings of how individuals define themselves. Being a member of a TVET college, therefore, would help to unite an aspect of a student's identity and would offer guidelines for understanding and behaving suitably within their social world. Despite this, few studies have examined the impact of SIT in a higher education setting. For example, Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013) integrated socio-emotional wealth and social identity theories; Hiller, Mahlendorf and Weber (2014) built on SIT to investigate the consequence of occupational prestige; and Sindic and Condor (2014) explored SIT and self-categorisation theory (SCT) to enhance social and psychological aspects.

As the engagement with SIT has been somewhat tentative and underutilised, this study will employ it in the higher education setting. In so doing, it will seek to understand how, once a prospective student has aligned the significance of a TVET college to their self-concept and social association, a behaviour might emerge comprising their intentions of applying at a TVET college.

1.5.1.4 *Theory of planned behaviour*

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) postulates that the intention to enact a given behaviour is a product of the individual's attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Lois, Moriano & Rondinella, 2015). The theory suggests that intentions are the immediate antecedent of behaviour (Simon, 2016). The objective of TPB is to predict behavioural intention, which entails putting an individual in an aspect of subjective possibility that comprises a relation between the individual and some action; in this way intention is recognised as the precursor of behaviour (Lois et al., 2015).

Since perception influences intention to act, for this study, it is important to examine how prospective students' perception of TVET colleges' brand distinctiveness influences their intentions to study at TVET colleges. Their perceptions of the brand distinctiveness could be influenced by what the brand symbolises or by social pressures and norms that are able to shape their behaviour and, ultimately, their intentions to study at a TVET college. Considering that the intention directly impacts behaviour or action, it is therefore critical to examine what influences such intentions, so that a strategy can be developed to harness the drivers.

The theory of planned behaviour has been applied in different fields – for instance, climate change (Chen, 2016); healthy eating behaviours (Jun & Arendt, 2016); farming (Meijer et al., 2015); and alcohol addiction (Talbot, Dorrian & Chapman, 2015). From the multi-discipinary application of the TPB, this study used some idea from the planned behaviour theory to examine the extent to which brand building effots in terms of brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand distinctiveness can explain a behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

1.5.2 Descriptions of studied constructs and brief empirical literature

In investigating the path through which brand knowledge structure impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college, some dimensions and outcomes of BKS (brand awareness and brand image), in terms of brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness were studied. (These are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.)

1.5.2.1 Brand awareness

Brand awareness is defined as the ability of the consumer to recognise or recall a brand (Wang et al, 2016; Sharifi, 2014). Dew and Kwon (2010) found that among students, brands with greater levels of brand awareness were not certainly linked to more positive brand associations. However, considering that is an important building block to brand image, associations and ultimate brand equity (Tapp et al., 2014), this study proposes that a greater level of brand awareness about TVET colleges will lead to brand reputation, brand symbolism and brand heritage.

1.5.2.2 Brand image

Keller (1993) defined brand image as different kinds of brand associations as well as the favourability, uniqueness and strengths of these associations. Brand image is a contributing factor influencing consumers' subjective perceptions and subsequent behaviours (Chung, et al. 2016). Herrero-Crespo et al. (2016) found that the country image positively affects the brand image of a higher education institution, which prospective students associate directly with perceived quality. Increasing competition between institutions intensifies the necessity for institutions to understand, leverage and manage a strong brand position (Hemsley-Brown, et al., 2016). Because of this intensive competition among higher education institutions, it is important that TVET colleges differentiate their brand from the more popular and preferred university brand.

1.5.2.3 Brand reputation

Brand reputation is defined as the consumers' perception of service quality connected with the brand name (Sengupta, Balaji & Krishnan, 2015). Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) highlighted the important role of reputation for higher education institutions. Furthermore, Shin (2016) showed that the consumer attitude toward brand and product is significant if the brand reputation is higher. According to Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), brand reputation is not merely about keeping consumers satisfied but how the consumer assesses the brand over time.

Higher education brands take time to build. For students to be attracted to them, TVET colleges will need to have a brand reputation superior to universities. This will also contribute to sustainable trust and commitment to the TVET sector by students

and industry. This is particularly so because Panda et al. (2019) found that university brand reputation leads to students' satisfaction and brand heritage is one of its drivers.

1.5.2.4 Brand heritage

Brand heritage is defined as longevity – the background or root of the trademark; the main values and their historical concepts as crucial aspects in the company (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). This implies that growing a brand's heritage is not a sentimental consequence, but rather is a result of the steadiness of a company and its business from its past, present and through to the future (Martino & Lovari, 2016; Rose et al., 2016). Aaker (1996) placed heritage as an element of brand equity that now constitutes a unique part of a brand's identity and value proposition.

The negative perception associated with TVET colleges could be based on how they were created in the past. Their current focus on skills gaps, addressing unemployment and economic growth means that TVETs should be positioned to become crucial social and economic assets for the country. Their current necessity in today's higher education system and economy is understated and underutilised. However, providing a key driver of how colleges should build their image, create awareness and develop their reputations – in the same ways as well-known university brands will constantly leverage their brand heritage to strengthen their brands (Merchant & Rose, 2013).

1.5.2.5 Brand symbolism

Brand symbolism is defined as an understanding of the importance credited to a brand name, which includes how the brand name symbolises consumer characteristics (Paasovaara, Luomala, Pohjanheimo, & Sandell, 2012).The concept of symbolism has been linked to consumers' brand name preferences and perceptions (Shrum et al., 2012) which create symbolic meaning (Anisimova, 2016) and creates positive associations (Watkins et al., 2016). The creation of corporate brand symbolism is crucial to impacting consumer choices. This highlights the significance of symbolic benefits for the creation of consumer-based brand equity, as a brand concept should be symbolic, tapping into consumers' symbolic needs (Anisimova, 2016).

In looking through the theoretical lens of social identity, brand symbolism assists students to build their self-identity by studying at a TVET college. The symbolic meaning could convey the student's keen effort to close South Africa's skills and unemployment gap and to contribute to economic growth, which is seen to be the sole purpose of TVET colleges. However, students are not concerned with the national interests and many just want to obtain a qualification and get a job. Symbolic meaning of TVET colleges concerns students with being employable once they graduate.

1.5.2.6   Brand distinctiveness

Kim et al. (2016) and Wong and Merrilees (2005) defined brand distinctiveness as a company's success in building the brand grounded on distinctive products or services relative to its competitors. Distinctiveness is a perception that a company is different from its competitors and, by differentiating, companies reduce competition (Chaney & Marshall, 2013).

By differentiating themselves from other higher education institutions, TVETs can create a sustainable competitive advantage, which sees them being the preferred institutions by young people intent on acquiring work-related skills and obtaining employment. The more distinctive the brand, the higher the brand equity and the more likely the prospective students will want to associate with it. Therefore, brand distinctiveness must be the basis of an institution's strategy (Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

1.5.2.7   Behavioural intention to study

Behavioural intention is defined as the level to which a person has articulated conscious plans to perform, or not to perform, some specified future behaviour (Cigdem & Ozturk, 2016). A study by Azarcon et al. (2014) explored attrition and retention of students in higher education institutions using conjoint analysis of consumer behaviour in higher education as a tool for identifying the fundamental preferences of consumers. The study found that quality of education is the most vital element of determining retention and attrition among students. However, Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) argued that the engagement between brand and perceived choice jointly impact consumer intentions for participating in course offerings at an institution.

There is an important need for a more integrated method of consumer behaviour in the context of education. Although the literature acknowledges the role played by the quality of education and teaching in students' choices of a higher education institution, this study argues that in a highly competitive higher education environment, branding is an equally important tool. Consequently, this study proposes a conceptual model to further explore the impact of branding constructs in explaining grade 12 learners' intention to study at a TVET college.

The next section outlines this conceptual model and the accompanying hypotheses that are explored in detail in Chapter 4.

1.5.3 Brief overview of conceptual model development

The conceptual model for this study was developed from the CBBE theory in terms of BKS and its outcomes or predictive power; self-congruity theory in terms of brand symbolism and reputation; and the TPB in terms of explaining behavioural intentions with brand-related factor.

The conceptual model is structured in three parts:

- brand awareness and brand image are the predictor variables;
- brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness are the mediating variables; and
- behavioural intention to study is the outcome variable.

Limited effort has been made to examine the predictive power of BKS and how some dimensions of brand image impact behavioural intentions through brand distinctiveness, as Panda et al. (2019) highlight.

Figure 1.1 presents the conceptual model.
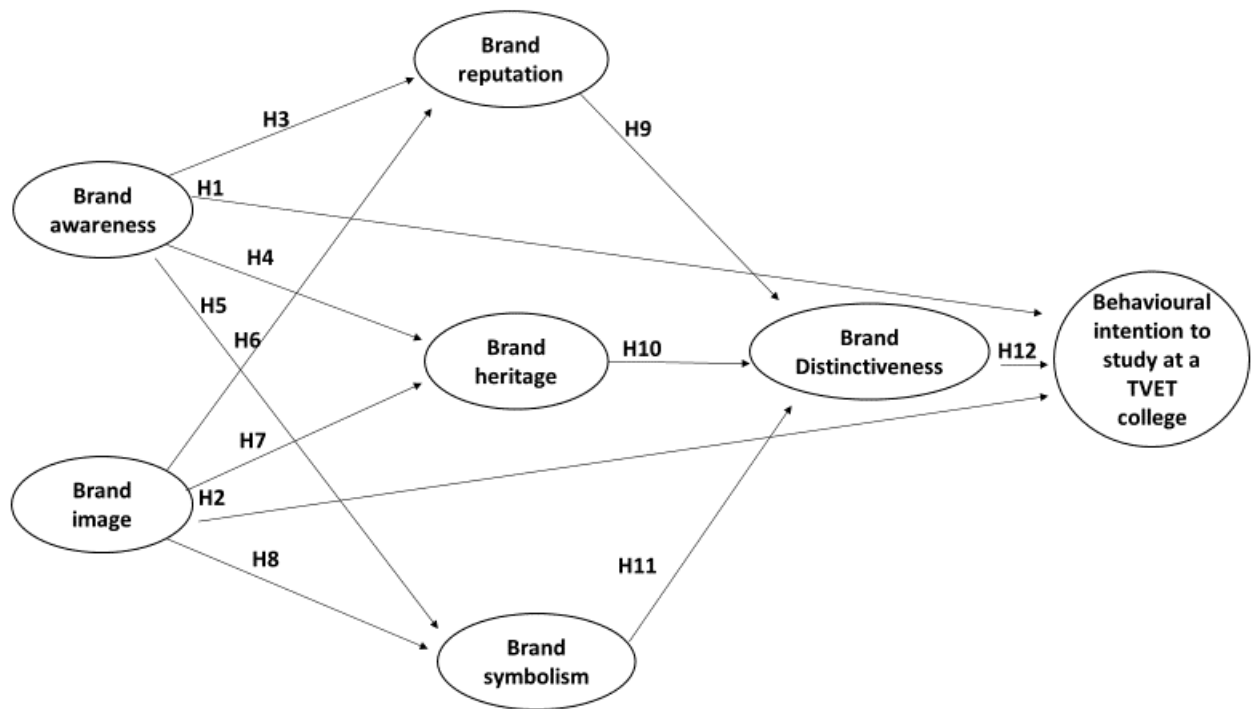
Figure 1. 1: Conceptual model

Source: Author's own

Tweleve hypotheses were formulated from the conceptual model, as follows:

H1: Brand awareness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

H2: Brand image has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

H3: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector.

H4: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector.

H5: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector.

H6: Brand image has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector.

H7: Brand image has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector.

H8: Brand image has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector.

H9: Brand reputation has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.

H10: Brand heritage has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.

H11: Brand symbolism has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.

H12: Brand distinctiveness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

1.6   Overview of the research methodology

In testing the ten hypotheses, the aim of this study is to determine if there is a positive relationship between branding and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

The study has employed post-positivism as a suitable research philosophy as it is ideal for researchers who intend to examine the causes and effects of the concepts that form the hypothesis development (Creswell, 2013). A post-positivist research philosophy has resulted in a quantitative research strategy that will assist in understanding the relationship between constructs (Taylor & Medina, 2013). The quantitative approach has meant that a descriptive research design was used. Mann (2003) indicated that a cross-sectional study is valuable when testing the relationship between constructs.

To best assess the TVET brand, all grade 12 learners registered in public high schools in Gauteng in 2018 formed the researched population. Of the 103 065 grade 12 learners, a sample size of 301 learners was identified through using systematic random probability sampling on a 616 dataset, from which a 269-sample interval was calculated. According to Malhotra and Birks (2012), systematic sampling involves the selection of research respondents from a reliable sampling frame, making use of a skip interval. Starting from one and repeatedly adding 269 intervals on the dataset, three high schools were selected.

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the 383 learners. Only 336 completed questionnaires were received, however, and after further cleaning and removing of participants who only selected neutral responses, the final usable questionnaires were 301. Twenty respondents were selected to pilot the questionnaire.

A 5-point Likert scale format was used to test the measurement scales which were derived from previous studies namely, brand awareness (Loureiro, 2013); brand image (Lien et al., 2015); brand reputation (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009); brand heritage (Wiedmann et al., 2011); brand symbolism (Bhat & Reddy, 1998); brand distinctiveness (Yasin, Noor & Mohamad, 2007) and behavioural intention to study (Lin, 2006).

The analysis was based on a Partial Least Squares (PLS) grounded Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Contrary to covariance-based SEM approaches, the PLS method has been acknowledged as the most suitable for SEM studies (Hubona, 2009). Nitzl, Roldan and Cepeda (2016) posited that PLS-SEM enables researchers to measure hypotheses in complex models. Smart PLS 3 was used to analyse the data.

Validity and reliability are important in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). Two of the commonly used validity measures for SEM are convergent and discriminant validity. Discriminant and convergent validity of the measurement items was assessed by comparing each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). The Cronbach alpha score and composite reliability were employed to measure the internal consistency of the research instrument.

Reliability is the accurate measure of an instrument and the research instrument's internal consistency (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The model fit analysis was performed through R Square and f Square tests, as well as for the estimated fit indices such as Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR); Normed Fit Index (NFI); Chi-square value; Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA); Goodness-of-fit index (GFI); Incremental fit index (IFI); Tucker Lewis index; and Comparative fit index (CFI).

To comply with ethical considerations, permission to conduct research with the grade 12 learners was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and consent was obtained from the principals of the three high schools. With regards to learners under the age of 18 – considered to be vulnerable as subjects of research – consent from each of their parents was required and obtained. In addition, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand. Participation in the study was voluntary and strict anonymity was adhered to throughout.

1.7   Significance of the study

While numerous efforts have been made to encourage participation in TVET colleges, society, parents and students in developing countries still prefer universities (Alavi, Sail & Awang, 2012). Several scholars have explored the negativity with which many in African countries perceive TVET colleges (Essel et al., 2014). In South Africa, for instance, the 2011 COTVET (Council for TVET) report cited public perceptions as being that TVET programmes are attended by individuals who have low intellectual skills, and/or are school dropouts and/or are less illiterate (Essel et al., 2014). Branding can intervene in the attraction of suitable students into TVET colleges.

According to Ahmad and Ibrahim (2015), TVET colleges are seen as being unable to operate if they are competing with universities. This problem was addressed through branding the TVET sector in a different language – such as that TVET colleges offer skills for employment and applied education. That being said, Sharma and Nagendra (2016) state that TVET skills have always been associated with blue collar work, which is associated with low pay grades, limited growth and less stimulating roles. To address these misgivings, the government needs to focus on branding strategies that promote skills development in order to increase the attraction of such programmes.

While Koenig-Lewis et al. (2016) state that several theoretical challenges have been made to the extension of general branding principles to higher education, Alavi, Sail & Awang (2012) found that rebranding TVETs enhanced recognition of their value in the eyes of parents and teachers, arguing that rebranding can change their mind sets, thus improving the image of TVET colleges.

1.8 Justification of the study

While research in the TVET sector has focused on a range of educational and organisational issues, brand behaviours remain under-researched, particularly in a developing country context. To date, TVET-related research has addressed infrastructure support and trainer attributes (Orangi, Wandaka & Ngige, 2016); performance indicators used to evaluate the learning environments (Liu & Clayton, 2016); self-reliant internships and teacher training (Klee & Andar, 2016); employee engagement (Mmako & Schultz, 2016); stakeholders (Cheong & Lee, 2016); green economy and skills development (Baumgarten & Kunz, 2016); change management (Kraak & Paterson, 2016); quality assurance of qualifications (Cho, 2016); and integration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Despite these research efforts and recommendations, however, TVET colleges continue to be considered the "weakest" connection in the entire higher education system in several countries (Seng, 2012).

Even within the branding dominion, research has mainly focused on consumer goods sectors (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). Curtis, Abratt & Minor (2009) nonetheless state that branding is understood to be a vital asset of any higher education institution, and that corporate brand management plays a crucial role in establishing positive attitudes towards the institution. The intangibility and inseparability of higher education offerings makes individual institutional branding even more important.

This study proposes a TVET branding conceptual framework that echoes the process of higher education choice. It integrates Keller's brand knowledge concept (from customer-based brand equity), including brand awareness and image, and extends it to explore other constructs such as brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study.

The growing uncertainty in the higher education sector following the emergence of the 'fees must fall' movement, provides the TVET brand with an opportunity to provide a much-needed alternative for learners, parents, the government and the economy. A positive TVET brand will improve colleges' abilities to attract the appropriate quality of grade 12 learners.

1.9   Contribution of the study

1.9.1   Conceptual contribution

To date, brand awareness (two papers), brand image (ten papers) and brand reputation (12 papers) have been explored in higher education literature (Ledden, Kalafatis & Protopapa, 2019). There is limited research on the combined predictive power of brand awareness and brand image (BKS) in the higher education sector, even though BKS is the core driver of how customers respond to the marketing of a brand. This study contributes by not only revealing the mechanisms by which BKS lead to brand distinctiveness, but by also testing whether general brand building efforts by higher education institutions can ignite the intentions to study in less popular institutions like TVET colleges in South Africa. Furthermore, heritage is important in higher education literature, yet information on the drivers and outcomes of brand heritage in higher education lacking.

This study fills these gaps by conceptualising and empirically testing a model with data from high school learners using structural equation modeling. This implies a methodological contribution as much of the higher education branding studied uses university students or alumni for data collection purposes.

1.9.2   Hypothetical relational contribution

There is limited research about how brand-related factors (i.e. brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand symbolism, brand heritage and brand distinctiveness) interact to predict behavioural intention, especially in a higher education sector like TVET colleges. The results provide insights into how efforts by the TVET sector to build brand awareness and brand image within a higher education context can lead to a number of other branding benefits, to the point of influencing prospective learners' intentions to study in these colleges.

These findings provide a useful platform from which marketing scholars can investigate these relationships in other contexts. The branding literature lacks prior research that examines brand constructs and relationships that are important for developing strong TVET brands.

1.9.3 Advancing theory building

This study borrowed ideas from four theories to explain how BKS (brand awareness and brand image) influences grade 12 learners' behavioural intention to study at TVET colleges through brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand reputation and brand distinctiveness. The four theories were customer-based brand equity (CBBE), self-congruity theory, social identity theory (SIT) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Given the lack of research in applying CBBE theory in higher education branding literature, this study makes notable contributions by revealing the strong explanatory power of BKS of intentions to study in the higher education sector. In the CBBE literature, BKS is at the heart of what drives the differential and positive response to the marketing of the brand (Keller, 2020). This study proves the value of BKS in the higher education sector, thus enriching the brand management literature. Thus, to build and manage CBBE in the higher education sector generally, and TVET colleges in particular, it is necessary to start with a strong BKS, from which brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism will be developed and which are all strong drivers of brand distinctiveness, a predictor of behavioural intention.

Consistent with the self-congruity and self-identity theories, students would want to associate with brands, including higher educational brands, that reflect their self-concept and aspirations and with which they can identify. This study contributes to the theories by revealing that investments made in creating brand awareness and developing brand image can drive prospective students to identify themselves (brand symbolism) and be proud of (brand reputation) studying in TVET colleges.

The study further revealed that when the brand symbolism and reputation together with heritage are achieved, brand distinctiveness is secured. In addition to brand distinctiveness being a driver of intentions to study at TVET colleges, as found in this study, Panda et al. (2019) also suggest it is a driver of competitive advantage and students' satisfaction. While the TPB suggests that behavioural intentions are influenced by social norms, perceived behaviour control, and attitudes, this study enriches existing research by revealing that brand-related factors also drive behavioural intentions. Therefore, this study theoretically contributes by integrating four theories to develop a conceptual model that can holistically explain how students develop intentions to study at a higher institution like TVET colleges. It

starts with developing an institution's brand knowledge structure in the minds of students.

1.9.4 Towards a TVET branding framework

This study has offered a conceptual model that delineates the path through which higher education institutions can implement their brand management strategies towards developing a distinctive brand from which a competitive advantage can be gained and positive students' responses achieved (Hay & van Gesen, 2008; Curtis et al., 2009). Beyond this, this study demonstrates the potential value of the TVET branding framework in appreciating that colleges' uses of brand symbols and heritage play a significant role in their differentiation strategy and for igniting intentions to choose amongst various options prospective students have. To this end, heritage and symbolism are key factors addressed within the wider discussion of brand management; both are equally neglected in the higher education branding literature to explore various brand relationships. As a nation's brand heritage generate power to move its higher education brands forward (Lomer, Papatsiba & Naidoo, 2016), so too should TVET colleges build and use their brand heritage and resultant distinctiveness to sell their various departments and programmes. The findings make a theoretical contribution by revealing the extent to which the creation of brand awareness and building of brand image (BKS) would drive brand symbolism, heritage, distinctiveness and ultimate intentions to study in the TVET sector. The findings are particularly valuable to managers of TVET colleges seeking to build a brand as part of a student recruitment and retention strategy.

1.10   The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Table 1. 1: Thesis structure

Chapters	Description
Chapter 1: Overview of the study	Introduction, problem statement and research gap, purpose of the study, research questions and objectives, overview of the theoretical framework, overview of the research methodology, significance and justification of the study, and the structure of the thesis.
Chapter 2: Context of the study	Introduction, higher education and TVET, the concept of TVET, importance of TVETs in the 21st century, related marketing studies in TVET, summary of the chapter.
Chapter 3: Theoretical framework	Introduction, theoretical grounding, empirical literature, summary of the chapter.
Chapter 4: Conceptual model and hypothesis development	Introduction, the ten hypotheses, summary of the chapter.
Chapter 5: Research methodology	Introduction, research philosophy, research strategy, research design, research procedures and methods, questionnaire design, data collection procedure, data analysis, validity and reliability, model fit, mediating effect, ethical consideration, summary of chapter.
Chapter 6: Presentation of results	Introduction, descriptive results, reliability and validity assessments, model fit, path modelling and hypotheses tests, summary of chapter.
Chapter 7: Discussion of results	Introduction, discussion of results for each hypothesis relationship, summary of chapter.
Chapter 8: Conclusion and recommendations	Introduction, overview of main findings, conclusions and implications of the study, recommendations, contribution of the study, limitations and future research.

Chapter 2:
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1   Introduction

This chapter explores higher education in South Africa, with particular reference to the TVET sector. It describes the various roles required of TVET locally and internationally and identifies some of the successes and challenges in implementing these. Lastly it identifies the existing research on marketing, particularly in relation to TVET, pointing to the absence of work on the TVET brand, which this study addresses.

2.2   South African higher education system

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is responsible for the higher education sector in the country, and for developing and ensuring compliance with the policies and laws governing higher education.

The sector consists of 26 public universities, 50 public TVET colleges, and 96 registered and 29 conditionally registered private institutions. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 list all the public universities and TVET colleges in South Africa.

Table 2. 1: South African universities

Universities of Technology	Comprehensive Universities	Traditional Universities
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	North West University
Central University of Technology	University of Johannesburg	Rhodes University
Durban University of Technology	University of South Africa	Stellenbosch University
Mangosuthu University of Technology	University of Venda	University of Cape Town
Tshwane University of Technology	University of Zululand	University of Fort Hare
Vaal University of Technology	Walter Sisulu University	University of KwaZulu-Natal
	University of Mpumalanga	University of Limpopo
	Sol Plaatje University	University of Pretoria
	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	University of the Free State
		University of the Western Cape
		University of the Witwatersrand

Source: Joint portfolio committees on Basic Education,
and Higher Education and Training (2016)

Table 2. 2: South African TVET colleges

Province / TVET colleges	Province / TVET colleges	Province / TVET colleges
Eastern Cape	**KwaZulu-Natal**	**North West**
Buffalo City	Coastal	Orbit
East Cape Midlands	Elangeni	Talesoi
Ikhala	Esayidi	Vuselela
Ingwe	Majuba	
King Hintsa	Mnambithi	
King Sabata Dalindyebo	Mthashana	
Lovedale	Thekwini	
Port Elizabeth College	Umfolozi	
	Umgungundlovu	
Free State	**Limpopo**	**Northern Cape**
Flavius Mareka	Capricorn	Northern Cape Rural
Gold fields	Lephalale	Northern Cape Urban
Maluti	Letaba	
Motheo	Mopani South East	
	Sekhukhune	
	Vhembe	
	Waterberg	
Gauteng	**Mpumalanga**	**Western Cape**
Central Johannesburg	Ehlanzeni	Boland
Ekurhuleni East	Gert Sibande	College of Cape Town
Ekurhuleni West	Nkangala	False Bay
Sedibeng		Northlink
South West		South Cape
Tshwane North		West Coast
Tshwane South		
Westcol		

Source: Joint portfolio committees on Basic Education,
and Higher Education and Training (2016)

Qualifications obtained in the TVET system are National Certificates (Vocational), National Certificates (Technical) and National Technical Diplomas, while at universities students obtain Higher Certificates, Diplomas (including Advanced and Postgraduate), Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees.

The South African public higher education system is hierarchical, with research at the apex and skills at the base. Research-intensive ('traditional') universities are thus at the top, while the comprehensive universities are below these, concentrating on mass higher education. Below these are the universities of technology which offer technology-based qualifications (Leibowitz et al., 2015). TVET colleges are at the base of the hierarchy. In the context of the aspirational culture prevalent in the country, institutions nearer the top of the hierarchy are perceived as more desirable; and conversely TVET suffers from being seen to be at the (less prestigious) bottom.

As the role of the TVET sector is to develop skills with a view to promoting the country's economic growth (Winch, 2013) and individual people's employability, one of the DHET's current top priorities is to reinforce and grow the public TVET colleges, transforming them into attractive higher education institutions of choice for school leavers. As noted above, the aim is to have 2.5 million students in TVET colleges by 2030, while universities must increase participation to 1.6 million by that date (DHET, 2014). The significant growth required in the TVET sector presents the challenge of attracting suitable students in large numbers to these institutions.

That being said, the South African higher education system including schooling is rated amongst the poorest performing education systems in the world, despite the government investing approximately 20% of the state budget on education to serve the population of 55 million (Leibowitz et al., 2015). It is within this context that TVET colleges are asked to make a difference to unemployemt and economic development in the country.

2.3   The concept of TVET

While there are various definitions of TVET, they all fall under the common banner of vocational education and technical education. Ayonmike (2016) reported that TVET has been broadly defined by several academics, government and organisations to be any actions that are related to acquiring skills and the creation of a skilled labour force to improve the economy and livelihood of society. Hussain & Maarof (2017) added that TVET can be defined as the educational method containing the study of technologies, sciences and the attainment of practical skills and understanding of knowledge concerning many sectors of economic life

TVET comprises technical education, vocational education, vocational training, onsite training, internship or apprenticeship training, delivered in a formal and informal method (Netherland Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education, 2010). Adamu (2016) conceptualised vocational education as any type of education that has the sole purpose of preparing individuals for employment in recognised professions, while he defines technical education as a system that prepares specialists for various industry professions.

In some settings, TVET has advanced from delivering well-trained basic workers to providing skills training whose practical methods and skills are grounded in technical knowledge (Yasaka & Alias, 2015; Omukhulu, Ogbanicael & Kimamo, 2016).

While TVET is thus largely about skills development – for employment and for the economy – Mukhtar and Ahmad (2015) have also said that TVET contributed strongly to giving pupils a framework that empowers them to take charge of their learning, emphasising that everyone has the potential to succeed, and encouraging pupils to accept responsibility for their own development.

2.4   TVET in the 21st century

2.4.1 Growing economies and reducing unemployment

In the global economy of the 21st century, countries face the critical challenges of achieving growth in employment and of sustaining economic growth and development (Aziz, 2016; Puckett, Davidson & Lee, 2012). The global agenda that requires people, industry and countries to meet the extensive challenges of an increasingly globalised economy largely relies on TVET policies that need to be implemented to create a flexible, highly-skilled and educated workforce (Cheong & Lee, 2016; Clayton & Liu, 2016; Maclean & Lai, 2011).

UNESCO estimates that 80% of jobs are based on the use of technical and vocational skills. The UNESCO TVET Strategy (2016-2021) – whose aims are summarised in Table 2.3 below – therefore unambiguously recognised the value of TVET in solving a host of challenges, such as youth unemployment and socio-economic inequalities (Ananiadou, 2013).

Table 2. 3: UNESCO TVET strategy for 2016-2021

Aims	Priorities	Description
1. Fostering youth employment and entrepreneurship	Supporting policy reviews and policy development. Promoting collaborative approaches and capacity-building.	• Whole-of-government approach to better connect and align relevant policy areas which comprise, among others, governance and regulatory frameworks institutional arrangements, equity and access (marginalised groups and women), funding, quality and relevance, qualification frameworks, curricula reform and quality assurance, teacher professional development, and the monitoring and evaluation of TVET existing and ongoing strategies and programmes. • The availability of constant and sustainable resources for TVET. • Build effective institutions and partnerships with stakeholders across governments, agents and institutions involved in TVET.
2. Promoting equity and gender equality	Promoting targeted policy measures for disadvantaged groups. Enhancing women's and girls' access to relevant TVET programmes and providing equal opportunities in the world of work	• UNESCO will develop guidelines and collect and share promising policy measures and solutions through investment in technologies. • Provision of quality and relevant training. • Promoting policy learning and providing policy support and capacity-building services.
3. Facilitating the transition to green economies and sustainable societies	Fostering cross-sectoral approaches of TVET. Promoting green skills for the smooth transition to greening economies	• Collaborating to close the digital divide. • Transform consumption and production patterns to create additional jobs to a greener economy. • UNESCO will develop practical tools to assist Member States in designing and implementing suitable and effective strategies. • By facilitating partnerships and synergies with different stakeholders for greening skills including enterprises, community and developmental partners.

Source: UNESCO (2016)

Ayonmike and Okeke (2015) advanced that one key indicator of achieving the economy diversification plan is embracing the TVET sector which is one of the major drivers of economic growth and development – a plan that is focused on creating wealth through creating jobs and improving the economy. Ayonmike (2016) then posited that several developed and developing countries recognise the significant role that TVET could play in preparing students with relevant skills and knowledge. Some developing countries regard TVET as a way of closing the skills gap, of reducing unemployment (Puckett, Davidson & Lee, 2012; Shamim & Raihan, 2016) and addressing economic under-development (Lamichhane, 2016).

That being said, TVET has played a negligible role in the global education system to date, despite the valuable impact an education systems approach to skills development, technology advances and employment can have (Cheong & Lee, 2016; Shamim & Raihan, 2016). Indeed Ayonmike (2016) argues that TVET is necessary to decrease unemployment by revitalising, energising and sustaining national economies.

That an improved TVET system has significant benefits for economies was found by Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012) - as represented in Figure 2.1. These benefits can close the skills gap by meeting the labour demands of both the public and private sectors; by reducing unemployment; by increasing productivity and competitiveness; and by keeping students in schools, thus, alleviating poverty. The improvements of TVET systems require work from stakeholders to realise these benefits for society.
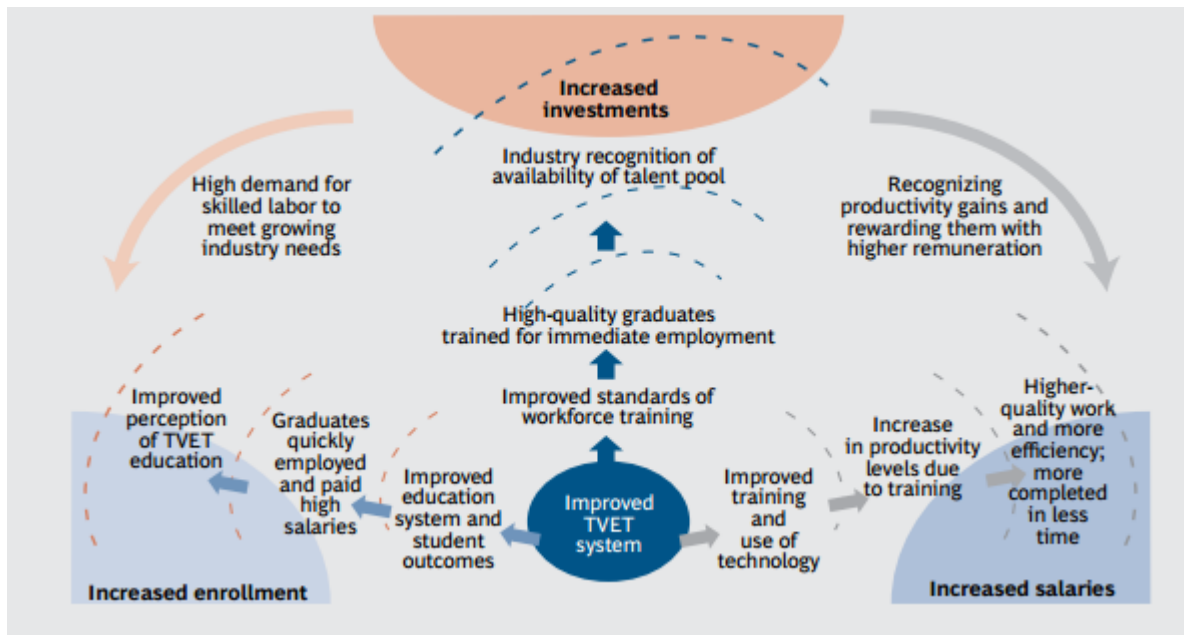
Figure 2. 1: Economic benefits of improved TVET systems

Source: Puckett, Davidson and Lee. (2012)

2.4.2 Budgets and resources

Yet the national budgets of various countries and investment in TVET is slow in developing countries. Over the years, the World Bank has commented sternly that investment by countries themselves in TVET is a very low funding priority (Lewis, 2008). However, according to Oloruntegbe et al. (2010), the national budget in most countries is overextended by various and ever-growing demands – and within the African TVET sector itself, there are no effective mechanisms and processes for prioritising and explaining budgetary appropriations.

However, Oloruntegbe et al. (2010) argued that while African governments frequently state that vocational education and skills development are the most effective means to meet employment demand in the labour force, the explanation is rarely supported by well advised and targeted efforts, nor is it co-ordinated with adequate funding. This is despite the challenges of slow economic development, high levels of poverty and education system failures faced by many African countries today, which fail to take cognisance of TVET's potential to open up a plethora of opportunities for societies and economies. Oloruntegbe et al. (2010) further argued that productivity and self-employment can be realised through well-grounded TVET since it is the best solution for fighting poverty and the many associated iniquities

plaguing the continent. Similarly, Aziz (2016) argued that governments should include funding for TVET along with the political promises they make to meet the social needs, wants and aspirations of the society and faster economic growth in the highly competitive global economy.

According to Ratnata (2013), TVET is still under scrutiny among the business and higher education sectors, their concerns including a lack of quality teachers, poor quality graduates and low pass rate. To address this, active engagement to revitalise the sector by stakeholders such as the government and business is crucial.

Ratnata added, however, that in most societies TVET graduates are viewed as not market ready (2013). This is attributed to many key factors like a lack of resources for practical training; the lack of connections between schools and potential employers; inadequate educational systems; and the lack of teachers with professional qualifications. In developing countries, the lack of resources and the low professional capacity of TVET hinder efforts to present educational programmes of quality and relevance to the labour market (Albashiry, Voogt & Pieters, 2016). Mulongo, Kitururu & Irira (2016) also observed that despite the importance of TVET for economic development, there are still scare resources, inadequate learning materials and under-qualified educators within the sector. Yasaka and Alias (2015) added that having great facilities, effective administration and eager trainees by themselves cannot accomplish a good TVET programme without skilled teachers to provide the training – but Mmako and Schultz (2016) point out that the TVET sector experiences major challenges in recruiting and retaining academic professionals, some of these being the lack of academic career development options and the lecturer-student ratio. Furthermore, Liu and Clayton (2016) argue that there is a disconnect between education policy and classroom reality.

2.4.3 Factors affecting implementation

In addition to funding and human resources challenges, then, there is a range of other factors that can hinder the implementation of TVET.

Cheong and Lee (2016) noted that TVET in developing countries is crippled by low-quality basic education – and identify eight other challenges TVET faces in these settings. These include poor budget funding and allocation towards TVET; a lack of collaboration between stakeholders at policy development level; the quick succession of policy documents; lack of institutional co-ordination with training providers; lack of synergy between public and private sector; and poor accountability of stakeholders. As such, Akoojee (2016) proposed that the role of government needs to evolve into being a regulator that sets the agenda for training and employment, rather than a provider.

The World Bank identifies three core dimensions of workforce development, being the strategic framework, system oversight; and service delivery (Cheong & Lee, 2016). As elaborated on in Figure 2.2, the strategic framework sets the agenda for workforce development associated with the economic goals of the country; system oversight sets the regulatory framework and governance of the system, the policies of TVET and the pathways for skills development; while service delivery manages the TVET institutions to ensure that concrete results are achieved.
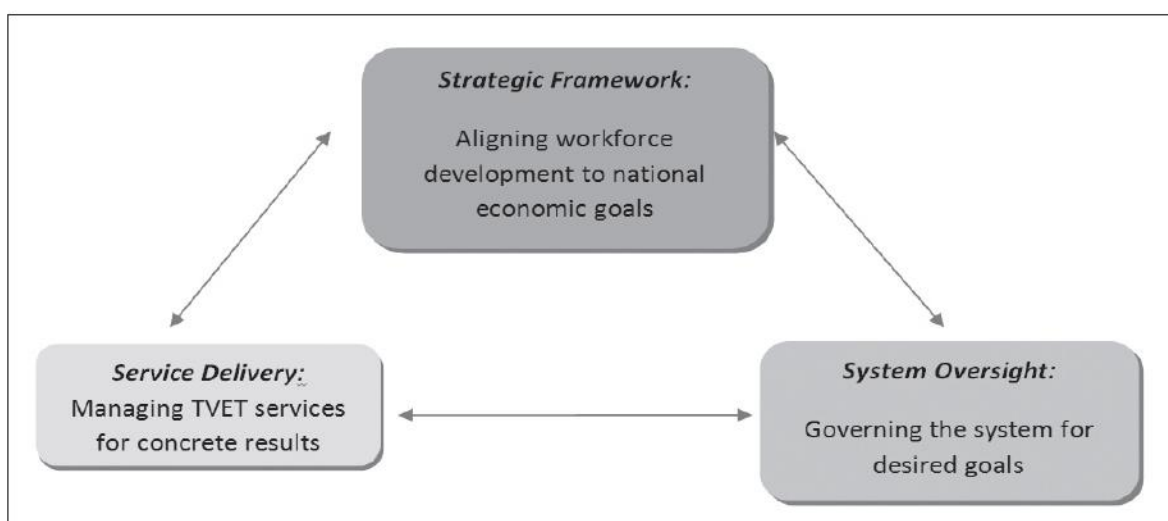
Figure 2. 2: World Bank dimensions of workforce development

Source: Cheong and Lee (2016)

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Despite the substantial roles allocated to TVET in accomplishing developmental goals, its success is likely to be muted without the linked economic (and political) enabling conditions that support its provisioning (Akoojee, 2016). Indeed, the notion of using TVET to produce jobs and to create wealth – as documented, for instance, in the South African national policy on education cited above – has not been producing the desired objectives.

Due to these and other challenges, TVET sectors in developing countries do not have the image required to attract and retain students which would enable them to fulfill their developmental roles (Khan, Hasan & Rabbani, 2017).

2.4.4 Image of poor inputs and poor outputs?

In South Africa the TVET brand has been perceived as an alternative education for students who perform poorly academically – and that the sector retains those who are performing poorly. This impacts negatively on the proposed expansion of student enrolments (Mulongo, Kitururu & Irira, 2016).

As a result, Winch (2013) noted that TVET has been perceived as an unattractive alterative within the higher education sector; and that these deep-rooted attitudes have existed for some time. Winch identifies some of the barriers that negatively impact on the attractiveness of TVET as being the lack of demand from families and potential TVET students, the attitude of schools; the lack of demand from potential employers; and a lack of government action.

In addition, Ayonmike (2016) acknowledged that TVET graduates lack certain occupational and employable skills such that they do not contribute to reducing unemployment. In addition, in some instances/ countries, those who do have skills are unemployed, indicating that industries are not absorbing these graduates into the workforce.

2.4.5 Proposals for improving the TVET sector

A number of authors identified areas for improvement within the TVET sector – many of these echoing one anoether – and made some proposals towards this. While the improvement of the TVET system cannot be the role of marketing and branding, these are nonetheless important in understanding the nature and condition of the offering to be promoted.

Lamichhane (2016) proposed that the following factors be addressed:

- that a synergy be developed between the demand for, and supply of, TVET programmes;
- that a greater awareness of sustainable development methods or models be developed;
- that high-quality TVET programmes for sustainable development are offered;
- that TVET programmes should have a long-term view for the development of quality of life rather than fast poverty reduction; and
- that outdated approaches to TVET are discarded in favour of the adoption of technology, innovation and global competitiveness in TVET.

Diep (2016) identified common strategies that could be implemented – being

- professional development of TVET teachers;
- practice of TVET quality assurance through accreditation systems; harmonisation of qualification frameworks;
- curriculum change, transferable skills and life-long learning;
- articulation of qualifications;
- labour mobility, career guidance, graduate employability and job information;
- co-operation between industrial sectors;
- good governance and TVET policy reform;
- extension of knowledge sharing and dialogues, expanding open access and equity across countries; and lastly,
- research and development.

Further, Diep (2016) proposed that TVET systems develop synchronisation and standardisation of mutually recognised qualifications across country borders to help individuals find jobs outside their own country.

That graduates need to be grounded in both the hard and soft skills was asserted by Bwanali (2016); institutions need to work on the life skills component to improve employability of TVET graduates, and institutions should collaborate with the workplace to enhance these life skills. Their model is given in Figure 2.3.
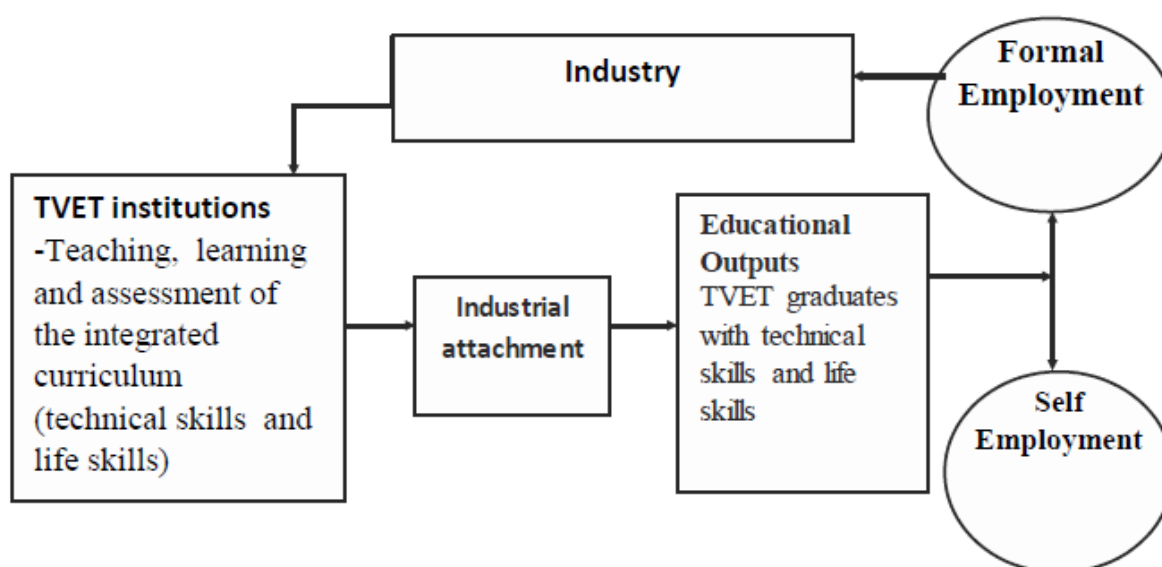
Figure 2. 3: Framework of preparation of TVET graduates in the workplace

Source: Bwanali (2016)

Amornvuthivorn (2016) identified a number of measures that need to be in place in order to transform TVET in developing countries. These included

- workforce development policy planning by academic institutions aligned with the industry demand;
- apprenticeship programmes in industry;
- occupational standards and professional qualifications development;
- curriculum development and teaching resources for skills required by industry;
- teacher development programmes;
- assessment systems;

- a process of parity between academic institutions;
- an assessment and evaluation of the TVET programme against clear objectives;
- an attraction, recruitment and selection process of students and teachers; and
- a targeted public relations campaign to promote a positive image of the vocational education system.

Here, then, is awareness of the value of image and the role marketing can play. Mulongo Kitururu and Irira (2016) also acknowledged that it is paramount that marketing strategies be developed to attract and retain students and to understand their perceptions and identify the types of information required before a prospective student can enrol at a TVET. Branding strategies can be employed to address the challenge of a TVET brand.

Finally, in exploring the attractiveness of TVET generally, Winch (2013) recommended

- a higher permeability and dual value of qualification routes;
- apprentice programmes with a strong educational and individual development element;
- quality, including a constant institutional framework and extensively recognised and respected qualifications;
- improved guidance from schools and employers; and
- image led by government and stakeholders to show potential students and families the benefits of a high quality TVET system.

This last point is primarily where the current study is located: to build an image that is centred on brand strategies to attract potential students.

2.5 Global TVET agendas

2.5.1 Global agendas

Substantial support from international bodies has generally been directed towards the establishment and expansion of public vocational education and training systems and to legitimise pre-employment training as an important component of public education (Middleton, Ziderman & Adams, 1993).

In asserting the importance of equal opportunities for all women and men to affordable, quality, technical, vocational and tertiary education, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and 8 (decent work and economic growth) provide an important international context for the TVET system (UN, 2015); for substantially increasing the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Likewise, BRICS leaders have affirmed the strategic importance of education to sustainable development and inclusive economic growth, pledging to strengthen education collaboration in which TVET loomed large (Akoojee, 2016).

And, as noted earlier in this chapter, UNESCO developed a strategy for TVET 2016-2021 which aims to enhance the relevance of the TVET system to develop all youth and adults with skills necessary for the marketplace, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2016).

Furthermore, the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the BRICS Co-operation Blueprint provide an important basis for understanding key features of the international TVET agenda. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015) provide a valuable global context for TVET, as does the acknowledgement by BRICS leaders of TVET's strategic importance. Both are elaborated on in Chapter 2.

In addition, substantial support from international bodies like UNESCO, World Bank and the African Union (AU) is directed towards the establishment and expansion of public TVET institutions to legitimise pre-employment training as an important component of public education (Middleton, Ziderman & Adams, 1993).

The African Union Commission's Agenda 2063 (African Union, 2015) advocates for the significance of TVETs and, by 2030, for all secondary school students who do not have access to universities to have free access to TVET education (Akoojee, 2016). Similarly, in its strategic planning for 2018, the South African government has implemented a fee-free system for students wanting to study at TVET colleges.

2.5.2 TVET around the world

The Boston Consulting Group researched 45 countries to assess TVET performance. Led by Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012), the research found that TVET systems can have large effects on national economies, and that this will improve the perception, employability and demand for TVET graduates. Increased enrolments in TVET and the creation of high quality skilled workers, was found to enhance productivity, competitiveness and efficiency, resulting in a return on investments for employers and employees.

Puckett, Davidson and Lee. (2012) divided 40 TVET performing countries into three categories based on their economies, namely developing economies, fast-growing economies and mature-market economies. As seen in Figure 2.4, the proposal is that developing economies – which includes South Africa – would experience a 'great upside to improving TVET systems. This supports the DHET's recently expressed intention to prioritise the development of the TVET sector.
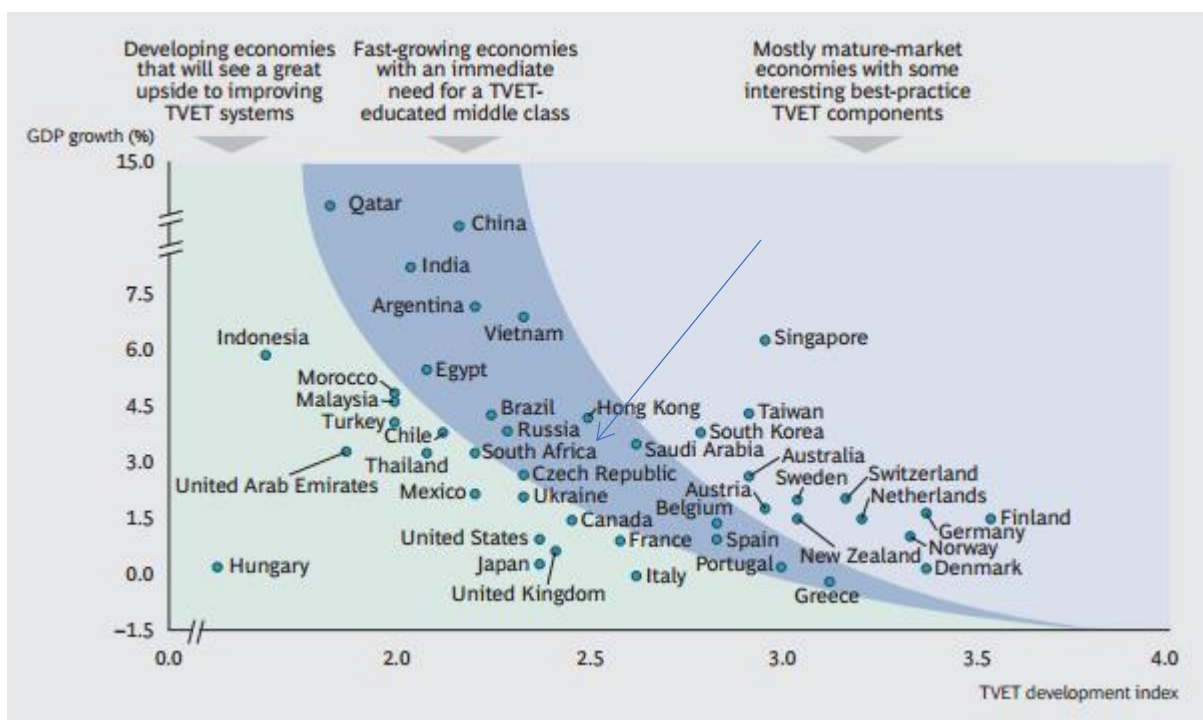
Figure 2. 4: TVET performance of TVET of 40 countries

Source: Puckett, Davidson and Lee. (2012)

Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012) found that countries such as Singapore, Australia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Finland and Germany, to name a few, have established, well-run TVET systems, which they attribute to a co-ordinated collaboration between stakeholders with shared interests and goals; performance-based support and funding from government; parity between universities and TVET; and sustained industry support. Similarly, Lamichhane (2016) found that Singapore, Australia, Switzerland, Germany, South Korea and other developed countries have sustainable TVET programmes (understood as programmes that transfer knowledge, skills and add economic value without harming cultural, environmental and social elements) – and that these have contributed to sustainable economic development.

Cheong and Lee (2016) reported on the high praise heaped on Singapore's vocational educational system - central to which is the Tripartite Alliance which brings together the key stakeholders, namely the higher education, government and the indusryty. In addition, Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012) pointed to Singapore having a clearly defined parity system between universities and TVET colleges which allows students to transfer flexibly across the two systems. They also found that the German TVET system, which is heavily supported and funded by industry, is well co-ordinated with key stakeholders ensuring accreditation, quality control and regulatory standards that result in economic development. Cheong & Lee's (2016) noted that countries such as Singapore, Germany, South Korea and Taiwan have strong technological capabilities, and all boast strong TVET systems.

In Bangladesh, formal TVET admission has been growing significantly in the past two decades. Aziz (2016) reported that as of July 2012, there were 6 420 TVET institutions which had grown by 50% between 2012 and 2016. This growth has brought with it several challenges, however, including inadequate training and development facilities, huge shortages of teachers and concerns about their abilities both with respect to pedagogy and content (Aziz, 2016). In the Malaysian example cited above, however, Cheong and Lee (2016) also observed that while transforming TVET to align with industry, there was little confidence that such government policy would result in action, underscoring the importance of confidence and leadership in order to realise the potential of TVET. Khan, Hasan and Rabbani (2017) found that in developing countries, incorporating joint efforts in government and the private sector led to a higher quality TVET to meet the individual, enterprise and economic needs.

In some contrast to the claim above of South Korea having a strong TVET sector, a study conducted in South Korea by Cho (2016) noted the gap between TVET, the national qualification authority and industrial needs, which resulted in ineffectiveness in the system. As a result, National Competency Standards were introduced to establish an industry-led TVET qualification system. (The study also proposed that the teachers, engineers, lawyers and accountants doing four-year university qualifications be moved into the TVET system (Cho, 2016).)

TVET institutions in New Zealand and China are collaborating concertedly to learn from each other's experience with a view to developing an infrastructure to design, create, and deliver co-operative model programmes (Clayton & Liu, 2016).

2.5.3 TVET in Africa

The African Commission's Agenda 2063 identifies the significance of TVET, and endorses education and science, technology and innovation-driven skills for a well-educated people (AU, 2015). The AU advocates for all secondary school students without access to tertiary education to have free access to TVET education by 2030 (AU, 2015).

TVET systems in Africa vary from country to country; they are provided at different levels in different kinds of institutions like vocational and technical schools (public and private), polytechnics, private organisations and internship training centres (Adamu, 2016).

A study by Ayonmike (2016) which explored the role of TVET stakeholders in the Nigerian oil and gas industry found that the curriculum needed to be more industry-specific to create effective relationships between the stakeholders. A review of the curriculum was recommended so that the TVET system could address the skills shortages. Their proposed model given in Figure 2.5, comprises seven key steps – from identifying needs to the monitoring and evaluation of the programme – which are all vitally important to the success of the collaboration between TVETs and industry. This model can be adopted across industries and countries as it has a clear structure and impact on advancing economies and reducing unemployment.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        Identify Skills Needs of the Oil/Gas Industries   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Consultation between Stakeholders from TVET Institutions and Oil/Gas Industries │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Setting of Goals/Objectives and Methods of Addressing the Identified Skills Needs Through │
│      TVET by Stakeholders from TVET Institutions and Oil/Gas Industries │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Planning, Development, and Review of TVET Curriculum to Address the Identified Skills │
│                          Needs                          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Retraining of TVET Teachers/Lecturers on the newly Developed Programme │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Provision of Human and Material Resources and Facilities for the newly included │
│                       Programmes                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Implementation, Monitoring, Supervision and Evaluation of the Programmes by │
│     representative from TVET Institutions and Industries │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Review the new Programme If │   │  Continue without Review  │
│ the Goals/Objectives are not met │ │                          │
└──────────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2. 5: Collaboration between TVET and industry

Source: Ayonmike (2016)

Another study conducted in Nigeria by Ezeji, Edeh & Etonyeaku (2016) found that the image of TVET programmes was extremely poor among Nigerians, given the poor curriculum teaching material and TVET policies. They suggested that these challenges need to be addressed by both government and TVET institutions.

A study conducted in Botswana by Mosalagae and Lukusa (2016) found that the TVET system is understood from the point of view of economies rather than the development of individuals, a view that demotes the importance of individual empowerment raised by Mukhtar and Ahmad earlier.

TVET in South Africa bears the historical roots of apartheid, and remains firmly influenced by this inequality and social injustice (Mosalagae & Lukusa, 2016).

2.6　Critique of the TVET sector

According to Akoojee (2016) and Oketch (2007), concerns over TVET institutions in Africa include poor quality and defined curriculum; very high cost; poor labour market outcomes; training not suited to actual socio-economic conditions; disregard of the informal sector's needs; disregard of the labour market and of the high unemployment rate among graduates. This provides a less than desirable picture of this part of the higher education system, and this is evident in the low participation rates by young people and the labour market. There are, perhaps understandably, negative perceptions of the less-than-positive image of the TVET sector with its undesirable association with those who are less educationally inclined.

However, Seng (2012) argues that the responsiveness and effectiveness of TVET colleges should be assessed by their influence on the social and economic development of the country. In principle, the TVET sector is important for the development of Africa, so the key point is to transform it so that what is offered can interface with the realities in the labour market (Oketch, 2007). All the more reason to ensure that TVET colleges offer suitable courses that would benefit from a substantial amount of rebranding to improve the uptake. For example, in Malaysia, a rebranding exercise was provided in formalising collaboration between TVET colleges and industries, primarily to provide an industry-driven programme that would make the graduates more skilled and marketable (Ariffin & Asmah, 2009). This exercise enhanced the market value of these programmes to attract more students to the colleges, specifically as the programmes were seen to be established with hard support from industry.

A strong TVET product and brand ought to be pririotised in developing countries to meet the economic and social agendas set out by governments and international bodies. Understanding the relationship between brand management and the TVET sector will drive the strategic decisions that could make TVET colleges attractive to both students and industry. Leong (2011) argues that the TVET system requires rebranding nationally to improve the perceptions of, and to create a more vibrant and sustainable, TVET sector in developing countries. Consequently, the branding of higher education sits within the broader context of government policy, international bodies and commissioned reports (Lowrie, 2007). The greatest test is the ability of

government and college management to improve the quality of what they offer and to change the image of this vocational training sector.

2.7   Marketing studies of TVET

When the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in Tanzania projected a gap of over 1.2 million low- and medium-skilled workers, TVET was seen as especially well-positioned to grow this middle-income country by 2025. Mulongo, Kitururu and Irira (2016) examined the determinants of positioning and promoting marketing strategies for TVET in Tanzania, identifying their implications for understanding the needs of stakeholders such as prospective students, parents and prospective employers. Their study found that key reasons for joining TVET were employment opportunities, attractive employment, earning potential, and entrepreneurship (Mulongo, Kitururu & Irira, 2016).

In other developing countries, such as Indonesia and other Asian countries, TVET is yet to obtain a respectable image and attractiveness in society and the marketplace (Ratnata, 2013). Puckett, Davidson and Lee (2012) and Cheong and Lee (2016) argued that this is due to the perception that TVET institutions are inferior to universities as most countries, parents, students, communities and employers favour qualifications from universities. TVET is seen as more suitable for those with lower academic performance and abilities. However, Ratnata (2013) observed that China has developed Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) at a tertiary level. This saw the opening from the mid-1990s of vocational universities which provide degrees which has assisted in improving the image of TVET pathways.

A study by Sabtu, Noor and Isa (2016) found that attrition at TVET institutions created a negative image which negatively affected marketing campaigns to attract potential students to enrol at these institutions.

Mustapha (2016) noted that ensuring the TVET sector's ongoing relevance was essential by making changes in TVET that mirrored the changes in the current labour market. One of the proposed TVET transformations was that skills training is frequently adjusted to reflect the changes in the business environment.

The rebranding of TVET in Singapore entailed a large investment of resources and strategic planning and included public relations campaigns which removed the inferior image of vocational education system (Amornvuthivorn, 2016). TVET is now seen as a respected and valued option for students.

Within the South African context, McGrath and Akoojee (2007) explored policies and practices with respect to marketing public TVET colleges. They found that appreciative and relevant marketing communication functions need to be established; that current staff members were not used as marketers of TVET colleges; and that no link was evident between quality assurance, curriculum and staff development with marketing. They proposed that adopting a marketing outlook, policy and practices in higher education would be beneficial for the TVET sector. (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007) Adding that marketing and education should be considered key elements in services marketing, they adapted marketing model from Kotler within an education context (Figure 2.6) which includes the proposal that both the internal and external stakeholders are considered.
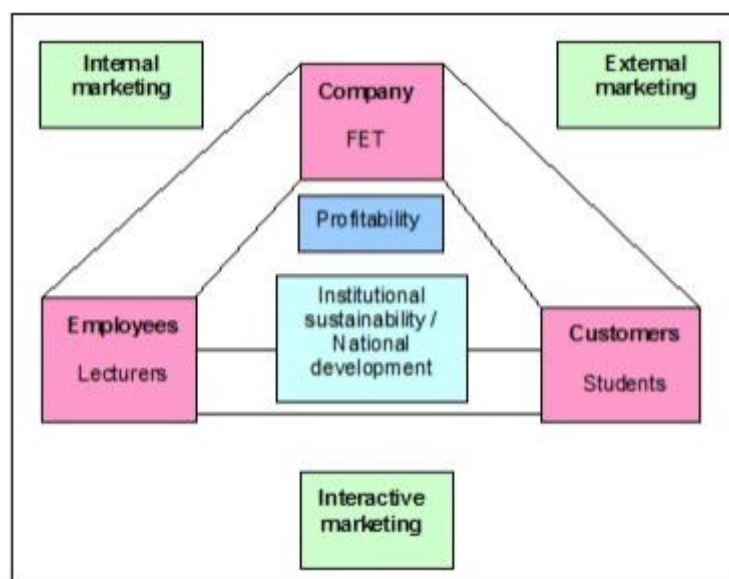
Figure 2. 6: Service marketing within an educational environment

Source: McGrath and Akoojee (2007)

Having conducted a study of marketing practices at TVET colleges in Gauteng, South Africa, Fadahunsi and Pelser (2013) found that marketing practices improved competitiveness across TVET colleges. The findings make notable contributions that

will support strategic responsiveness to the marketplace; assist colleges to improve satisfaction towards customer needs; use resources effectively – and thereby develop an image that will satisfy stakeholders' needs.

Pillay, Mbambo and Mason (2017) offered a services perspective to a student's intention to study at a TVET college as a measure of expectation and perception. This study identified positive and negative factors regarding students' perceptions of service quality at TVET colleges – including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. As none of these factors were deemed satisfactory by prospective students, this could mean that the TVET colleges do not meet their expectations, resulting in their having negative perceptions of the colleges.

Likewise, a study by Vezi (2017) investigated marketing communication, looking at prospective students' intentions to study at a TVET college. It recommended that TVET colleges could benefit by marketing, through providing information through appropriate and relevant media channels to influence prospective students' intention to study at a TVET college.

The theoretical marketing lens offered by these studies in a TVET context has neglected to explore the role that branding could play in influencing the marketing practices and policies needed in this sector. This forms the basis of this study and the next chapter.

2.8   Summary of the chapter

This chapter discussed the context of the study by providing a brief overview of the South African higher education sector, followed by a discussion of the concept of TVET and its importance in the global and local contexts. It described the value of TVET to economic growth and the reduction of unemployment in developing countries – noting that with the right agenda and priority, TVET could be successful and sustainable as in developed countries such as Singapore, Germany, Netherlands, and Australia. The challenges within the TVET sector were also identified, presenting realtiies to be adedressed in a branding exercise. Lastly, related studies of the image and attractiveness of TVET were discussed.

Chapter 3:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1　Introduction

The chapter presents the theoretical grounding for this study and a review of relevant literature.

The theoretical grounding presents the theories and concepts that anchor this enquiry – namely customer-based brand equity, self-congruity, social identity and the theory of planned behaviour. The empirical literature focuses primarily on the constructs pertaining to this study. Starting with a discussion on higher education branding, this is followed by a focus on brand knowledge, which includes brand image and brand awareness. Also discussed are brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand reputation and brand distinctiveness, as well as consumer behaviour and behavioural intention to study.

Lastly, a summary of the chapter is provided.

3.2　Theoretical grounding

In presenting the theories and concepts, the discussion starts with a broad overview of the theory; then describes where it has been applied and finally, addresses its application to the current study.

3.2.1　Customer-based brand equity (CBBE)

A brand comprises a name, sign, term, symbol, design, or a blend of these that identifies a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008); it is a valuable intangible asset for any organisation (Ebeid, 2014; Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). A brand can be of significant value to customers and organisations – and can be a vital asset for any higher education institution.

Brand equity refers to the value established by the brand (Ebeid, 2014; Chattopadhyay, Dutta & Sivani, 2010; Keller, 1993) and is seen as a brand achievement (Buil, Chernatony & Martínez, 2013). Arora (2016) argued that brand equity is the value of the brand as the result of marketing efforts; that is the residual income of brand proprietors after the return on investment in a brand. Numerous

studies have suggested that brand equity can decrease the perceived risk and enhance customer trust, which is associated with strategic marketing and sustainable competitive advantage (Shen et al., 2014; Lee & Back, 2010; Kotler & Keller, 2009).

Brand equity has been explored using different approaches (Ebeid, 2014; Kim, Jin-Sun & Kim, 2008). Arora (2016) named three main brand equity models: employee-based brand equity (EBBE); financial-based brand equity (FBBE); and customer-based brand equity (CBBE).

The current study mainly focuses on CBBE as a response to massify the TVET sector which produces an imperative to attract more students to TVET colleges. Part of this problem could be due to the lack of clarity around its significance, both socially and economically, which makes it difficult for prospective stakeholders to measure the brand's growth. Central to this study, then, is enquiry into understanding the brand attitudes and perceptions of grade 12 learners with a view to helping marketers and policy makers better utilise their marketing efforts.

3.2.1.1 *The concept of CBBE*

CBBE regards the power of a brand as originating from the thoughts of consumers, based on what they have learned and experienced about the brand over time (Raithel, Taylor & Hock, 2016).

CBBE has largely been derived from information economics and psychology (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010). Increasingly, advocates of this theory tend to emphasise the value shaped by marketing actions as perceived by customers (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016). For example, Bianchi and Pike (2010) concede that the conceptualisation of CBBE represents a shift from looking at brand equity as an intangible financial asset on an organisation's balance sheet to offering marketers a framework to measure the effectiveness of marketing activities on branding. Shen et al. (2014) and Keller (1993) defined brand equity as an evaluation of the complete value of a brand and as an overall index to measure the success of a brand.

Keller (1993) conceptualised the CBBE model, defined as the differential influence of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand - the three main concepts being "differential effect," "brand knowledge," and "consumer response". Brand knowledge - what customers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand because of their experiences over time – is central to this definition (Keller, 2003). The concept of brand knowledge consists of two distinct constructs: brand awareness and brand image.

Brand equity signifies perceptions and attitudes held by customers regarding a brand (Bianchi & Pike, 2010); and Christodoulides and De Chernatony (2010) defined CBBE as the worth of a brand signal to consumers. As such the definition of CBBE contains thoughts, feelings, images, perceptions and experiences about a brand (Raithel, Taylor & Hock, 2016).

Earlier in the conceptualisation of CBBE, Keller (1993) defined brand equity as the varying effect of brand knowledge on consumer reaction to the marketing of the brand. A brand is believed to have negative (positive) customer-based brand equity if consumers respond less (more) favourably to the product, price, promotion, or place (4Ps) of the brand (Keller,1993). The definitions provided by the scholars reinforce four key components that are discussed in the next section.

Çifci et al. (2016) noted the recent introduction in the CBBE literature of various CBBE models. This includes the brand equity models presented by Aaker (1992) and Keller (1993) which are commonly acknowledged by scholars (Çifci et al., 2016).

Scholars have also expanded the concept of CBBE, having become interested in the impact CBBE has on the customer's brand choice and brand commitment (Çifci et al., 2016; Moon, Park & Choi, 2010) as well as its usefulness in measuring the effectiveness of branding (Bianchi, Pike & Lings, 2014). CBBE is a driver for customer equity, differentiating brands, measuring brand performance and acquiring competitive advantage in the marketplace (Çifci et al., 2016).

The foundation for assessing CBBE is to recognise the sources of brand knowledge and the advantages this builds for the brand (Hsu, Oh & Assaf, 2012).

3.2.1.2 Creating brand equity

Creating CBBE requires building a familiar brand that has favourable, unique and strong brand associations (Keller, 1993). This entails building knowledge among consumers to develop a positive association between them and the brand. Hsu et al. (2013) noted that there are four steps in creating brand equity: first, marketers must understand how the consumer recognises the brand that gratifies their needs; second, the consumer must be inclined to give a meaning to the brand based on its performance; third, the consumer has cognitive and emotional reactions about brand perceptions and quality of brand personality; and lastly, a consumer becomes engaged, committed, attached and loyal to the brand.

In the context of developing the TVET brand, there is a need to better understand the TVET sector from the perspectives of prospective students. The aim is to develop positive perceptions and attitudes in such a way that they will want to associate with a distinct TVET brand. Thus, the development of CBBE among TVETs depends on various drivers that ensure a brand continues to grow and perform better than its competitors.

3.2.1.3 Components of CBBE

CBBE has four components: brand awareness, brand associations (image), brand loyalty and perceived quality (Mohan & Sequeira, 2016; Aaker, 1992). Aaker (1992) defined these as follows:

- brand awareness is a consumer's brand recall or recognition;
- brand association is the brand knowledge stored in the consumer's mind;
- brand loyalty is the connection that a customer has to a brand; and
- perceived quality is defined as the consumer's position on a product or service's overall excellence or superiority.

Keller (1993) recognised brand awareness as an imperative asset for brand equity, while Çifci et al. (2016) considered brand awareness as having knowledge-based and cognitive brand equity components.

In addition, Shen et al. (2014) described a fifth component, which is other proprietary brand assets, a category which comprises intellectual property rights, trademarks and patents.

This study uses brand knowledge as a key theoretical lens, given that the targeted population cannot measure association, loyalty or quality as they have not experienced the TVET brand as students. Brand knowledge as a theoretical lens will provide a better understanding of the students' level of perception and attitudes based on their awareness and image of TVETs; this is key to developing the desired brand. In this higher education context, it is essential to explore how this concept has been applied by various studies.

3.2.1.4 Application of CBBE in various studies

As Aaker's CBBE theory is favourable to the management of brand equity, it has become the foundation of brand equity research globally (Shen et al., 2014; Tong & Hawley, 2009) and has been widely applied in several empirical studies in various industries and fields.

For example, Pike et al. (2010) examined the effectiveness of a model of CBBE with regards to a country destination – and found that Australia is a famous, but not fascinating, destination brand for tourists from Chile. In their study, Xu and Chan (2010) created a framework for studying the relationship between hotel experience and CBBE. The results showed that hotels often use referral marketing advertising and services marketing to convey brand-related information to guests, which establishes their brand knowledge through indirect experiences. Majid et al. (2016) assessed CBBE ratings in family restaurants and found that the Chicken Rice Shop differed from other family restaurants and achieved a higher brand equity rating. Wong and Teoh (2015) studied the influence of destination competitiveness on CBBE; the results showed that functional qualities of destination competitiveness were certainly the antecedent of destination competitiveness.

Mohan and Sequeira (2016), Tolba and Hassan (2009) and Webster (2000) observed that brand equity constructs are linked with brand market performance. Mohan and Sequeira (2016) also conducted a study to measure the performance of CBBE in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The findings indicate that there is a relationship between brand equity and the performance of the business.

3.2.1.5 Applying CBBE models

Çifci et al. (2016) compared the validity of two key CBBE models – those presented by Nam, Ekinci and Whyatt (2011) and Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) – in the retail sector. Their findings showed that when brand awareness was incorporated in Nam, Ekinci and Whyatt's (2011) model, the psychometric characteristics of the model expanded and outperformed the two models.

Keller (2003) suggested that it is vital to adjust various models to measure different brands of services and products. However, it has been established that the contributions or predictive power of the five components (awareness, brand association, proprietory assets, perceived quality and brand loyalty) of Aaker's (1992) CBBE model are not the same when they are applied to certain brands or products (Shen et al., 2014). This may stem from the fact that that Aaker's (1992) CBBE model focuses primarily on the functional features of brands and disregards a brand's symbolic consumption that is critical for brand equity (Çifci et al., 2016). Hence, Nam, Ekinci and Whyatt (2011) and Çifci et al. (2016) addressed this deficiency by introducing three symbolic consumption related brand equity components: brand identification, lifestyle congruence and self-congruence.

While several of the CBBE models are applied to dominant brands of goods and services (Çifci et al., 2016; Jung & Sung, 2008), there are not many studies on the application of the CBBE models in the higher education institutions, to understand the sources and outcomes of institutional brand equities. Clark (2009) applied CBBE in the higher education context and found that the model can be useful to guide marketing strategies for institutions. The applicability of CBBE to higher education branding will not only expose how both prospective and current students have learned, think and feel about higher education instutitutional brands through assessment of their brand knowledge structure, but it will be a framework to measure the various benefits that the resultant brand equities can provide to the brand. Given

the limited application of the CBBE model to higher education branding, this study contributes through the proposed and tested model and by incorporating ideas borrowed from other theories. One of them is self-congruence theory, which is the focus of the next section.

3.2.2 Self-congruity theory

Marketing professionals and researchers have altered their thinking about the symbolic meaning customers give to brands (Das, 2014). Das (2014) described the symbolic meaning as what the brands say to their customers; it explains the attitude customers have towards the brand (Sirgy et al., 1997). Self-congruity theory is grounded on the notion that consumers prefer brands they associate with a set of personality characters congruent with their own (Boksberger et al., 2011).

Helgeson and Supphellen (2004) found that self-congruity results in a thorough understanding of the effects of symbolic brand meaning; while Das (2014) noted that symbolic brand meaning influences consumer behaviour in the form of loyalty and commitment towards the brand. With respect to the benefits of symbolic brand meaning, current literature foregrounds two aspects of research: brand personality and self-congruity (Das & Khatwani, 2016; Das, 2014; Helgeson & Supphellen, 2004). The current study focuses on the latter as an important theory that explains how consumers shape their self-image and want to associate with brands that resonate with this image.

Image congruity comprises functional congruity and self-congruity (Kang, Tang & Lee, 2015; He & Mukherjee, 2007). Self-congruity comprises social self-image and ideal social self-image; self-image and ideal self-image (Kang, Tang & Lee, 2015; Sirgy, Grzeskowiak & Su, 2005); these are discussed in more detail in the literature review below. While Sirgy and Su (2012) mention that functional congruity is a much stronger predictor of consumer behaviour than self-congruity

This study argues that self-congruity is a better theoretical lens than functional congruity to explain the social constructiveness of self-image as a concept that explains behaviour; a behaviour that informs and influences a student's selection criteria of higher education choice. Thus, it is important to understand how the self manifests as a concept that predicts a consumer's behaviour.

3.2.2.1 Self-concept

Kang, Tang and Lee (2015) referred to self-concept as a person's perception of self in relation to several characteristics, such as gender role, social class, academic performance, to name a few. Investigating the role of self-concept in consumer behaviour in terms of the relationship between self-image and perceived image of a product or service, consumer researchers identified various constructs such as loyalty, preference, attitude and choice, among others.

Most researchers agree that the term "self-concept" ought to include two main components: ideal self-concept and actual self-concept. The ideal self-concept is how a person would like to perceive themselves; the actual self-concept means how an individual actually perceives themself (Liu et al., 2010).

With repect to selecting a TVET college as a preferred higher education choice, the ideal self-concept is more powerful as it supports the young person in realising their (aspirational) ideal self. Marketing and brand policies therefore need to focus on highlighting positive factors with which a prospective student would like to associate, so that they can imagine themselves studying at these institutions without losing their self - or maybe even enhancing their own image.

Self-congruity theory has four elements: social self-congruity, ideal social self-congruity, actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity, (Han & Back, 2008; Sirgy & Su, 2012; Willems et al., 2011; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). While all four elements have been revealed to impact brand evaluation, actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity have received the strongest empirical backing and are frequently used (Das & Khatwani, 2016).

Liu et al. (2012) proposed three self-congruity constructs, however: the brand's user imagery congruity; the brand's personality congruity; and the brand's usage imagery congruity.

- Brand user imagery congruity refers to the customer's level of perceived similarity of the actual user of a brand with themselves.
- Brand personality congruity is the link between the customer's observation of a brand's personality with their observation of their own (personal) personality.

- Brand usage imagery congruity is the relationship between customers' observations of the normal use of a brand and how the brand may be suitable for use in their own context.

These two opposing perspectives vary with regard to whether the assessments of a brand are pre-exposed or lived experiences. The ideal and actual self-concept is better positioned to explain perceptions even when the consumer has not experienced the brand itself, while the user/usage congruity is geared towards observations of those who have engaged with and experienced the brand over a long period. That being said, the self is consistently at the core of the observation and evaluation of a brand.

Earlier theorisation of self-congruity by Sirgy (1986) described it as people choosing to purchase and consume goods and services that have a user image consistent with their personal self-image. Similarly, Sirgy et al. (2008) suggested that self-congruity is generally utilised to mean self-image congruence, which is the match between a person's self-concept and the image of a product, brand or service. This match is positively associated with consumer behaviour constructs such as brand attitude, brand choice, brand preference, purchase motivation, brand purchase, purchase intention, brand satisfaction, and brand loyalty (Sirgy et al., 2008).

Self-congruity theory suggests that consumer behaviour is partly informed by an individual's comparison of the image of themself and the image of a brand, as echoed in a stereotype of a common user of the brand; as such, high self-congruity occurs when a consumer's own self-image ties closely with the brand image (Das, 2014). In other words, Kim and Malek (2017) recommended that the underpinning of self-congruity theory is the notion that the value of a certain creation or brand's expressive characteristics is cognitively equal to the customer's self-concept.

That consumers choose brands that are linked to their self-image could also aply to the higher education context: (prospective) students want to associate with institutions that closely match their social and self-concept. When the connection between the brand and the consumer has been established, the evaluation of the attitude, preference, choice and being closely linked to their self-image. Once institutions are able to understand this self-concept and develop their marketing

practices and policies according to the likelihood of TVET colleges being the preferred higher education choice, self-congruity will be higher.

Self-congruity theory proposes that the more comparable the two concepts (ideal and actual self), the higher the preference for that brand, since its symbolic features reinforce and validate the individual's self-perception (Boksberger et al, 2011). Usakli and Baloglu (2011) posited the simple hypothesis in self-congruity theory that a consumer tends to choose brands or products that agree with their self-concept; this suggests that the higher the level of congruence, the greater the probability of intention (Kang, Tang & Lee, 2015). The self-congruity theory states that consumer behaviour is determined by a cognitive matching between value-expressive traits of a brand and consumer self-concept (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). Self-congruity theory claims that customers prefer brands that have personalities that are similar to their own personality (Das & Khatwani, 2016; Aaker, 1996; Sirgy, 1986; Sirgy & Su, 2012). The bigger the match among self-concept and the product or user image, the bigger the probability that customers will consume that product (Das & Khatwani, 2016; Aktan & Chao, 2016; Sirgy & Su, 2012).

In summary, it is clear that the success of any brand could be due to its match with consumers' self-concepts; that without this connection, brand failure is a real possiblity. Against this backdrop, how self-congruity theory explains different phenomena is explored in the next section.

3.2.2.2 Application of self-congruity theory in various studies

Sirgy (1986) led two studies that reinforced the idea that the stimulation of ideal self-image versus actual self-image in self-congruity processing is reliant on customers' response mode. Response mode explains whether the result is a preference decision type or a brand choice.

Investigating the degree to which self-congruity theory was applicable in tourism, Boksberger et al. (2011) found that socio-demographic and travel characteristics are limited in their capacity to clarify when self-congruity occurs. Usakli and Baloglu (2011) applied self-congruity theory in the study of brand personality of tourist destinations and found that actual and ideal congruity have an influence on behavioural intention. The influences of self-congruity and retail brand personality on

store loyalty were examined by Das (2014) who found that retail brand personality and self-congruity are complementary constructs, and not substitutable. Lui et al. (2010) applied the self-congruity theory in the moderating effect of cultural values on decision making of gift-giving. Higher value driven customers are more vigilant about continuity between self-image gifts and the image of the recipient.

Based on the argument above, it is critical to apply this theory in the context of higher education, as students want to associate with institutions that resonate with their own self-image.

From a branding perspective, Liu et al. (2012) studied the impact of the three self-congruity constructs named above – brand's usage imagery congruity, the brand's user imagery congruity and the brand's personality congruity – in customers' attitude and brand loyalty. The results were that symbolic benefits are key drivers for building a brand's personality. As such, these self-congruity constructs may signify diverse imageries that lead to different impacts in brand attitude and brand loyalty (Liu et al., 2012). From a behavioural intention perspective, Das and Khatwani (2016) checked the impacts of self-congruity on behavioural intentions – such as intention to repeat shop and intention to recommend – thus proving that self-congruity and behavioural intentions are positively related.

As customers start to favour brands for their supposed emotional characteristics rather than their practical ones, the place of self-congruity and its consequence on purchasing behaviour becomes more apparent (Kim & Malek, 2017).This theory has been applied to study several impact paths of consumer behaviour including brand attitudes, brand choice, brand preference, brand loyalty, brand image, consumer satisfaction, and store loyalty (Dasa & Khatwani, 2016; Usakli & Baloglu, 2011; Sirgy, 1986). No study examines the impacts of self-congruity on behavioural intentions to study at a higher education institution, however, although studies have examined branding constructs as identified above. Self-congruity theory – the extent to which a student's self-concept matches the TVET's image – can offer a vital foundation for establishing the TVET image.

Taking a different perspective, the next section examines the influence of a reference group on self-concept and how a consumer fits with other groups.

3.2.3 Social identity theory

Social identity theory (SIT) is among the most significant perspectives on intergroup associations (Scheepers & Derks, 2016). It was developed in the 1970s by Tajfel from within the realm of social psychology which focused on investigating contemporary societies (Tucker and Baker, 2016).

Haslam et al. (2016) note that the fundamental basis of social identity theory is the notion that social group membership gives people a distinctive sense of self-awareness from internalised social identities that involve ties to other in-group members. The theory proposes that one aspect of our self-concept and social identity stems from and, as a result, reflects our unique social associations (Pecukonis, 2014; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). Tajfel (1978) defines this as the person's awareness that they belong to some social groups together with certain emotional ties and values attached to their membership to the group.

Hughes et al. (2015) noted that SIT is a complex social psychological theory of how people's self-conceptions as members of social groups affect intergroup behaviour and the norms of the group. According to Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013), SIT is concerned with the self-concept of an individual and includes not only a personal identity, but also a social identity. The individual's wisdom of who they are and their value or worth in life is at least partly prescribed by their group associations (Pecukonis, 2014).

SIT researchers have frequently focused on the identity that some individuals gather from being part of a group (Cannella, Jones & Withers, 2015). Thus, Choi, Ahn and Lee (2017) stated that the procedure of behavioural change is driven by group or organisational norms that can be explained by the SIT.

Social associations are a key factor that need to be explored in this study, given that most of the negative perceptions and attitudes about TVET colleges appear to emanate from the social level, whether through family, friends or the broader community – groups that are likely to influence prospective students' perceptions and intentions. As the TVET brand does not seem to be favoured socially,

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prospective students could take these negative perceptions into consideration when selecting a higher education institution. It is therefore crucial to look at the self-concept of prospective students in relation to other external people who influence their choice; at how students develop their identity within a group setting. In addition, these groups of people also need to be considered when developing marketing strategies.

The motivational aspect of SIT demands that individuals strive for a liberal social identity as a basic human need for meaning and building self-esteem (Scheepers & Derks, 2016). People do not function as separate individuals in society, especially students who are still finding out who they are and trying to plan their careers. It is within this context that peer and family pressures to go a university – notably not a higher education institution more generally - after matriculating are experienced. Social pressures meant that students tend to conform to this narrative and what they study there becomes secondary to the fact that they are going to a university.

SIT proposes that people see themselves as a member of a group, depersonalises the self and grounds their beliefs, values and behaviour on the customs of the group (Choi et al., 2017). The self is formed by how people classify themselves relative to others with social identity highlighting the uniformity of action and perception among group members (Berends, Jones & Andrews, 2016). The distinctiveness of perceptions between groups is a key component that differentiates the members' group in relation to groups the member compares to (Stendal & Fuller, 2017). Prati, Albanesi and Pietrantoni (2017) argued that the perception of fitting into a group that offers a positive social identity might engender internalisation of, and conformism to group ideals, goals, standards, norms and homogeneity in behaviour and attitude. Thus, social identification with a certain group leads people to perform in accordance with the group's goals, ideals, values, beliefs, norms and behaviour. Consequently, perception predicts social identity and in turn, predicts attitude.

Notwithstanding the clarity of this arrangement, Choi et al. (2017) acknowledged that the degree to which people's attitudes and behaviours are influenced by norms of the group, and the extent to which social identification is part of this process, is still unclear. This is a simplistic view that neglects the fact that people can make their own choices and do not always conform to group norms and pressures. This is

particularly the case with people with high self-esteem who can make choices that are not linked to any group beliefs and values. Pecukonis (2014) posited that SIT is concerned with how the group is expressed within the individual more than how a person performs within the group.

Uncertainty is a real concern when people's identity does not match the group's identity. Hogg (2012) stated that social identity uncertainty is the degree to which people feel uncertain about their position and social identity within the group; they claim this is a rare type of uncertainty. As such, social identity uncertainty is the uncertainty about the social identity linked with one's group (Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung, 2017). There are risks associated with non-conformity and in most cases, people would like to minimise these risks and follow the group's norms, beliefs and behaviours. In this regard, students are prone to follow group ideals and behaviour to arrive at decisions that they believe TVETs could indeed benefit them (more than a university degree) – but this is not valued over group belonging.

Considering that people can have multidimensional identities that influence their behaviour, Hogg and Terry (2000) and Choi et al. (2017) stated that SIT proposes that group norms are internalised through social identification with the group, which is how people's behaviour is influenced by social norms. The greater the perceived social norms, the more noticeably the social identity will develop (Prati, Albanesi & Pietrantoni, 2017). Moreover, SIT addresses social influence and subjective norms, mainly emphasising interpersonal influence (Jiang et al., 2016a; Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2006). Furthermore, as subjective norms are founded on normative beliefs and the drive to comply with particular beliefs, subjective norms can be expected to connect to social identity (Jiang et al., 2016a; Ajzen, 1991).

A study by Thorbjornsen, Pedersen and Nysveen (2007) found that social identity completely mediated the influence of subjective norms on intention. The assumption is, therefore, that once students identify with the norms and values of an institution, they tend to accept the intention of choosing that institution. Likewise, Wang (2017), and Lee, Kim and Kim (2011) provided supporting evidence through their study that there is a direct impact of social identification drive on the intention to engage, which supports the suggestion that social identity encourages behaviour. It is imperative to identify the drivers or motives of social identity in the context of a group setting.

Even though it was conceptualised largely to understand intergroup processes, SIT is grounded in expectations about individuals' behaviour and motives (Hughes et al, 2015). While the emphasis of Henry Tajfel's work was intergroup exchanges - and the interplay between people's identities as members of a group and intergroup exchanges - John Turner expanded on Tajfel's work by relating its principles to intragroup exchanges, not only intergroup exchanges (Tucker & Baker, 2016).

According to Scheeper and Derk (2016), SIT also defines how individuals react to a negative social identity, coming from a group with a relatively low status, or associating with a group that is victimised against. SIT suggests that the social classes within which individuals are located, offers insighhts into how those individuals define themselves (Cannella Jones & Withers; 2015).

In this regard, being a student at a TVET college could help to unite an aspect of a (prospective) student's identity and offer guidelines for understanding and behaving correctly within their social world. Haslam et al. (2016) noted the importance of social identity from a psychological functioning perspective. This is derived from the point that when groups are internalised into a person's sense of self, the group exert a deep influence on the way the person feels, thinks and acts, providnig them with grounding and anchoring. Conversely, when people do not internalise the group identity, there are some social identity threats that may influence their behaviour and intention.

3.2.3.1 *Social identity threat*

Based on uncertainty-identity theory, Wagoner, Belavadi & Jung (2017) stated that social identity uncertainty is a rare type of self uncertainty connected to group identification. This concentrates on uncertainty about their group identity, and social membership-uncertainty, which focusses on uncertainty about their membership. When a person is uncertain of their group identity, it poses a social threat to them.

Cabano and Mishra (2017) argued that social identity threat may affect the preference for a specific brand such that a person avoids certain brands for fear of being ostracised by society for not conforming to the group identity. This could explain why, for the most part, TVET as a brand has laregly not been preferred by society and is consequently avoided to minimise social identity threats. Yet little is

known or understood about how social identity threat might influence customer choice behaviour more commonly (Cabano & Mishra, 2017).

Consumer behaviour researchers (White, Argo & Sengupta, 2012; White & Argo, 2009) have, however, clarified how social identity threats can reduce preference for identity-linked brands for customers with low and high collective self-esteem. While there is a rich body of empirical research on how the yearning to confirm one's social identity impacts brand choices (Aaker 1996; Chan, Berger & Van Boven, 2012), marketing researchers have yet to explore how social identity threats impact brand choice. Social identity threat generates an inconsistency between the image a customer would like others to hold of themselves and the image others supposedly already hold (Cabano & Mishra, 2017). Social identity threats have an effect for information processing, since they can motivate customers to neglect identity-linked marketing promotions as a fragment of a motivated forgetting psychological process (Dalton & Huang, 2014).

Generally, the literature reveals that social identity threats significantly impact a wide variety of decisions that are connected by the threat, including customer choice behaviour, information processing of marketing communications and financial decision making. To a large extent, social threats have been shown to influence brand preferences and loyalty, and reducing these threats positively affects consumers' behaviour. Therefore, it is paramount to understand what drives social identity so that marketers/management can develop strategies that reinforce these drives.

3.2.3.2   *Components of social identity*

Social identity is categorised into three components: affective, cognitive and evaluative.

The affective component includes emotional investment in social identification (Wang, 2017). Wang (2017) and Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) acknowledged that the cognitive component of social identity denotes a person's mindfulness and knowledge of membership, and includes a self-categorisation process such as people classifying themselves based on gender, affiliation or nationality of a group. Membership mindfulness and knowledge represent the evaluative component of

social identity, which Wang (2017) referred to as the self-esteem of the group. Their components are non-interchangeable and might exert different behavioural consequences, although the cognitive and evaluative components are deliberated to be more necessary than affective (Lam et al., 2010). Conversely, Tucker and Baker (2016) mentioned that there are key components within social identity theory – namely group norms, stereotyping and prototypes – and proposed that SIT offers a foundation for understanding intergroup interactions, particularly regarding group members' conflicts and the social phenomenon of stereotyping and group norms (Tucker and Baker, 2016).

Social identity that explores emotional investment, mindfulness and self-esteem better represent a person as they navigate group identity. Human beings are complex with affective and rational states and can function outside the group norms, which Wang (2017) was able to articulate in his affective, cognitive and evaluative state.

The next section delves deeper into how SIT can be applied in various settings to explain consumers' social identity.

3.2.3.3 *Application of social identity theory in various studies*

Since its conception in the 1970s, social identity theory has been considerably extended through a variety of sub-theories that concentrate on social influence, group norms, leadership within groups, self-enhancement, uncertainty reduction motivations, social mobilisation and protest, deindividuation and shared behaviour, and marginalisation and nonconformity within groups (Hogg, 2016). Previous studies have revealed that social identity theory affects behaviour (Wang, 2017; Madrigal, 2001). For example, Deephouse and Jaskiewicz (2013) integrated socio-emotional wealth and SIT to understand whether family-run companies have a better reputation than non-family-run companies. Hiller, Mahlendorf and Weber (2014) expanded on SIT to investigate the consequence of occupational prestige. Guided by SIT, Hawley, Hosch and Bovaird (2014) investigated the effect of favouritism and out-group bias on student athletes and non-athletes. Sindic and Condor (2014) explored SIT and self-categorisation theory (SCT) to enhance social psychological understandingd of a variety of formal and informal political behaviours. However, Weber (2013) argued that the engagement with SIT has been somewhat tentative, drawing mainly on

theoretically penurious versions of SIT and has resulted in SIT's theoretical perspective being underutilised. This led to a study on laying complete grounding for SIT-inspired attitude research on the European Union.

Other studies support the notion that social identity has a twofold effect on both usage and behavioural intentions (Wang; 2017; Liang et al., 2011; Gupta, Kim & Shin, 2010). For instance, Stendel and Fuller (2017) attempted to look at the changing membership of social identity development in the case of higher education in Norway and found that there is a necessity to focus on training team members to ensure appropriate use of technology to allow social identity development.

As argued above, SIT has been explored in various settings, but few studies in higher education branding have applied this theory further. For example, according to SIT by Tajfel (1978), when students know about the distinctive identity of the higher education brand and become aware of the institution's values and goals, they are highly likely to share a level of belongingness with the institution. In this context, the more the students possess brand knowledge about the institution, the greater will be their identification with the institution. Furthermore, a study by Balaji, Roy and Sadeque (2016) found that brand knowledge has a positive effect on higher education institution identification. Notwithstanding the discourse above, the multifaceted nature of selecting to which institution to apply makes it difficult to understand the influence of group norms and social identities on student behaviour.

Likewise, Balmford, Borland and Yong (2016) deduced that customers can use brands to authenticate and express their identity by connecting themselves with that brand, which they can use to communicate their actual self-image. Building a TVET brand with which groups can associate can inherently assist people in wanting to form their social identity around it if it conveys a shared group belief. It would be useful to understand how marketers/management can understand who the influencers of the group are and engage with them.

3.2.4 Theory of planned behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour originated from the theory of reasoned action (Halder et al., 2016). Han et al. (2011) recognised that the theory of planned behaviour is better equipped to predict intention than the theory of a reasoned action model. Likewise, Han, Meng and Kim (2017) suggested that, unlike the theory of reasoned action only involving the volitional process, the theory of planned behaviour explains individuals' decision-making processed and behaviours by seeing both volitional and non-volitional processes. This theory has been widely used in numerous sectors (Gwyther & Holland, 2015), and is commonly used in consumer behaviour research as a method to predicting behavioural intention (Palat, Paran & Delhommel, 2017; Simon, 2016; Chen, 2016; Yadav & Pathak; 2016; Han et al., 2011).

The theory of planned behaviour suggests that intention to enact a given behaviour is driven by a person's attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control (Lois Garcia, Moriano & Rondinella, 2015), which accounts for their perceived capability to enact the behaviour of interest (Menozzi et al., 2017). The objective of this study is to be able to examine how branding predicts behavioural intention of young people to study at a TVET college.

The theory suggests that intentions are the immediate antecedents of behaviour (Simon, 2016; Lois Garcia, Moriano and Rondinella, 2015). As Schulz and Braekkan (2017) maintained, it epitomises a social cognitive model that harvests a practical agenda to reflect on how attitudes and related constructs may predict several behaviours. In a meta-analysis of in 185 studies regarding the theory of planned behaviour, it was found that the theory of planned behaviour components – attitudes and subjective norms – were responsible for 27% of the variance in behaviour and 39% in intention, while perceived behavioural control was responsible for a substantial amount of variance (Barton, Kologi & Siron, 2016). This means that the theory of planned behaviour advances personal beliefs about the probable consequences of the behavioural belief, the normative expected beliefs, and the existence of variables that may enable or hinder performing the behaviour control beliefs which influence attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

These influences mediate for their effect on intentions and behaviour (Menozzi et al., 2017; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

As critical as the literature is that alludes to intentions influencing behaviour, other studies have revealed that intention rarely, if ever, predicts behaviour (Shi, Fan & Zhao, 2017; De Groot and Steg, 2007; Heath & Gifford, 2002). This means the theory of planned behaviour has several constraints and limitations, which leaves room for conceptual improvement and testing (Londono, Davies & Elms, 2017). A case in point is that the theory of planned behaviour has been criticised for overlooking the critical importance of norms, the extent of the situation, how behaviour is being described, and the perceived control of internal or external influences (Londono, Davies & Elms, 2017; Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Another perspective is offered by Tao and Fan (2017), who deconstructed the theory of planned behaviour to add satisfaction and trust to the original model. This provides an improved behaviour model grounded on the innovation diffusion theory, theory of planned behaviour, technology acceptance model; it also assumes the multidimensional belief framework to study separate antecedents of constructs (Tao & Fan, 2017). They highlighted the three advantages of the modified model: firstly, the relationship between belief and antecedent constructs can evidently be seen; secondly, the probable precise behaviour aspect to be applied to diverse contexts can be properly identified; and lastly, the negative and positive beliefs from focusing on a single construct impact can be averted (Tao and Fan, 2017).

Yet, this thesis maintains that intentions predict behaviour and that the intention, as argued in the previous sections, is influenced by self-image and social identity driven by social influence. This study further makes a claim that the intention and behaviour are to some degree influenced by branding; that the branding of TVET colleges would impact on various groups' perceptions and attitudes towards the sector and, accordingly, be able to influence whether or not a student might study at a TVET college. The theory of planned behaviour offers a theoretical foundation for this approach.

3.2.4.1 Components of theory of planned behaviour

Adopting a behaviour is directly governed by behavioural intentions. The intention arises because of the person's attitude toward the directed behaviour, the subjective norm and perceived control over the targeted behaviour (Palat, Paran & Delhommel, 2017). As seen in Figure 3.1, the components of the theory of planned behaviour are attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control, which lead to a behavioural intention – and then to a behaviour.
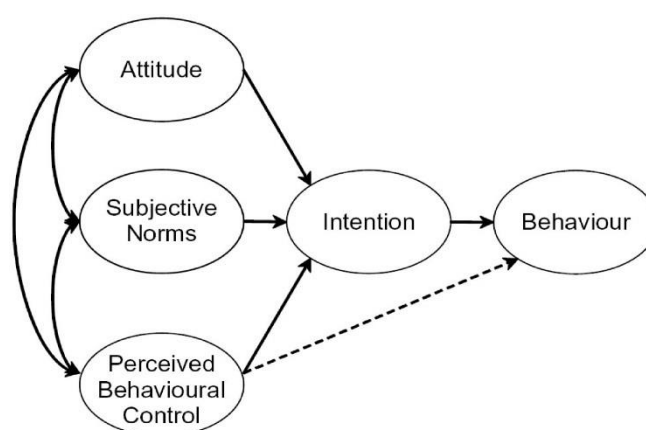
Figure 3. 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour

Source: Ajzen (1991)

Attitude toward the behaviour denotes the point at which an individual has a favourable or unfavourable assessment of the behaviour at hand (Ajzen, 1991); a favourable assessment can help a person to perform the behaviour (Shi, Fan & Zhao, 2017). Furthermore, Palat, Paran and Delhommel (2017) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) posited that attitude depends on values about the possible negative or positive consequences of the behaviour, standardised by the perceived potential of those consequences, which is understood to be the expectancy-value model of attitude.

Attitude comprises judgement of whether the behaviour at hand is good or bad; whether the individual wants to perform the behaviour and the attitude includes perceived outcomes associated with behaviour (Paul, Modi & Patel, 2016). However, Londono, Davies and Elms (2017) observed that from the outlook of a theory of planned behaviour, expected regret and anticipated impact are a part of attitudes and have not been reasonably embodied in the theory.

Attitude is an important predictor of behaviour as it leads to a brand preference, trust and commitment. The connection between attitude and intentions has been made above. This could mean that once prospective students form positive attitudes about TVET colleges, the intention to study there becomes highly possible. This attitudinal behaviour is motivated by the extent to which the TVET brand matches a prospective student's self-image and social identity to create a favourable attitude.

Halder et al. (2016) defined subjective norms as an individual's perceptions of the degree to which substantial others would recommend a given behaviour, and private motivations to comply with this social pressure, whereas Park, Hsieh and Lee (2017) referred to subjective norms as being about the individual's perception of social pressure when acting the behaviour. At some level, however, subjective norms merely capture what an individual considers others want them to do (Vlontzos, Duquenne & Niavis, 2017).

More current theoretical frameworks by (Halder et al., 2016; Park et al., 2017) have incorporated both social pressure and subjective norms in the form of descriptive and injunctive norms. This theoretical framework can be understood through the engagement of social identity theory, which states that people function within a social group setting. It is assumed that the social pressures and influences plays a critical role in facilitating a desired behaviour to apply at a TVET college. In minimising social threats, people are likely to follow social norms, which is the premise of the theory of planned behaviour.

Perceived behavioural control refers to the perceived ease or effort of engaging in the behaviour, which shows an individual's control over acting on behaviour (Halder et al, 2016). On the contrary, Palat, Paran and Delhommel (2017) mentioned that perceived behavioural control is subject to beliefs about factors enabling or hindering the targeted behaviour, and about the influence of each such factor in a set environment. Additionally, the theory of planned behaviour factors can be seen as mediators between various demographic factors, like age and gender – and the behaviour itself (Palat, Paran and Delhommel, 2017; Elliott, Armitage & Baughan, 2003). Intention, which apprehends the motivational variables that affect behaviour, together with perceived behaviour control, should account for substantial difference in the actual behaviour (Menozzi et al., 2017). The targeted behaviour and its

consistent attitudinal, normative, and perceived behaviour control beliefs have to be described in the same ways – probably with the highest degree of accuracy in terms of the act, the target, the situation, and the exact time, which Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) referred to as the principle of compatibility.

However, Tao and Fan (2017) stated that the relationship between these three components is not necessarily significant to sensibly debate and predict human behaviour in different conditions. Ajzen (1991) argues the triviality among the three components due to a uni-dimensional effect. The uni-dimensional variable probably covers all effects of beliefs, and will create the counterbalance to the negative and positive beliefs which concurrently happen in the same dimensional variable. Yet, several studies have seen how these components predict an intention and behaviour. The strength of each component varies from case to case.

This thesis argues that these components are the theoretical thread that explains brand preference. Branding is isolated as a diverse concept that influences behaviour and could be influenced by a person's self-image and social identity, where attitudes, social influences and perceived behavioural control can influence a brand choice.

3.2.4.2   *Application of theory of planned behaviour in various studies*

Understanding intentions and behaviour is considered an important task for marketing scholars. Being able to accurately predict behaviour allows scholars and management to better develop strategies that can identify motivators that change consumers' behaviours. This can influence the intention of how people prefer a certain brand and not another or perform one behaviour over another.

For example. Chen (2016) extends the theory of planned behaviour to explain the individual's energy saving and carbon reduction behaviours that can assist in alleviating climate change in Taiwan. Guo et al. (2016) examined the applicability and effectiveness of the theory of planned behaviour in predicting breastfeeding. Jun and Arendt (2016) assessed the consequences of customers' psychological aspects on their healthy eating behaviours at restaurants. They used an extended version of the theory of planned behaviour which included two new concepts – namely prototype and willingness. Meijer et al. (2015) examined farmers' attitudes towards

tree planting on farms in Malawi, using the theory of planned behaviour as a conceptual framework. Talbot, Dorrian and Chapman (2015) explored enrolled nursing students' intention to look after patients with alcohol addiction and the antecedents – preliminary factors – that predicted this within the theory of planned behaviour.

As argued above, the theory of planned behaviour has been applied in different fields and no doubt has been widely studied in marketing, which Palat, Paran and Delhommel (2017) acknowledge as evidence that there is theoretical flexibility in the theory of planned behaviour, since it allows for extensions based on the specificity of the research environment under study. The theory of planned behaviour has been empirically tested in the prediction of behaviour and may have similar results when explored in a higher education branding context.

The theory of planned behaviour was intended to explain nearly all human behaviour and has been used successfully to explain many behaviours from across disciplines by providing a strong base for predictions of intention and behaviour. To the knowledge of the researcher, this theory has not been documented in a higher education TVET context. Grade 12 learners at the end of their high school education, have, amongst other things, to decide on whether to study at a higher education institution at all, and if so, what qualification they want to pursue and to which institution they should apply. In reality, this is often not a well-thought-out process that signals an intention and behaviour on the part of the learner. This brings about the need to further apply this theory in a study of branding in TVET colleges.

3.2.5 Relevance of theoretical grounding

This section discussed the various theoretical groundings underpinning this study namely: CBBE, self-congruity theory, SIT and the theory of planned behaviour. Figure 9 illustrates how each theory fits with the empirical research and the overall conceptual model developed in this study.

As already highlighted above, CBBE is the foundation of brand knowledge which consists of brand awareness and brand image. On this premise, it is important that learners are knowledgeable about TVET colleges so they can begin to manifest a higher level of awareness and image of TVET. This will enable them to create some

perceptions and understandings of what these colleges offer and their role in the economy. Once the learners have a clear understanding of the TVET brand image, they start to move towards matching their own self-image with that of the TVET. The greater the level of correspondence between self-image with the TVET brand image, the more likely the learners would want to be associated with the brand and, consequently, study at such a college. Parts of the association manifest through the brand heritage, brand reputation and brand symbolism.

Moreover, as self-concept is well established through the conceptualisation of self-congruity, the likelihood is that the learners will seek to associate with like-minded people who possibly share the same need to be part of the TVET brand. This will indicate social acceptance and shared group norms and values. It is critical to have as advocates, people who believe in the TVET brand, as much of society and the marketplace has given universities a higher status. This influences the learners' intention to study at a TVET college, since the attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioural control somehow ground CBBE, self-congruity and self-identity theories; this means there are strong brand and social factors driving the shift away from TVET as a first choice in higher education institutions. These brand-specific factors are discussed in the next section, with great emphasis on their importance and how they manifest themselves in higher education literature.
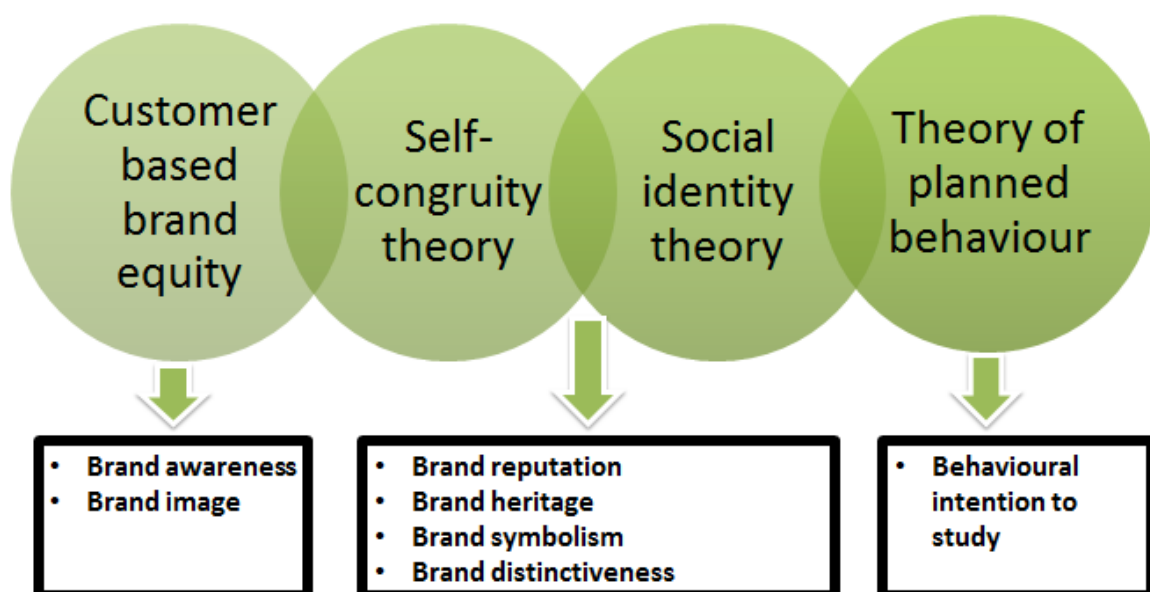
Figure 3. 2: Incorporation of theoretical groundings

Source: Author's own (2016)

3.3 Empirical literature

This section reviews the literature on higher education branding and the various studies that have been conducted to reveal the various constructs that are widely used. In so doing, it examines the commonalities within, and controversies surrounding, higher education branding.

The discussion commences with brand knowledge, which includes brand image and brand awareness – after which brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand reputation and brand distinctiveness are presented. Lastly, consumer behaviour and its importance to behavioural intention to study are explored.

3.3.1 Higher education branding

A higher education institution brand represents the sum of perceptions and feelings /that stakeholders associate with that institution (Rauschnabel et al., 2016). According to Dennis et al. (2017), these perceptions can be understood from the higher education institution's image, identity, and meaning. Students form their perceptions of brand image before enrolling at a university (Dennis et al., 2017).

Education is a unique service due to the power of connection between the student (customer) and higher education institution (brand) (Khanna, Jacob & Yadav, 2014). Dennis et al. (2017) noted that developing an effective higher education brand can reinforce this relationship building activity and create a connection between the institution and the student.

It requires a great deal of effort to deliver on this relationship, to provide the opportunities for the student to complete a qualification at the end of their educational journey. Khanna, Jacob and Yadav (2014) further argued that the awarding of a qualification to a student accounts for the success – and contributes to the brand – of the institution. Owing to critical changes in higher education in the last three decades, the demand for quality education has been highlighted.

There is general consensus among scholars such as Duesterhaus and Duesterhaus (2014) and Rauschnabel et al. (2016) that having an institutional brand adds a significant value to the institutions. To create a significant value, Mourad, Ennew and Kortam (2011) advocated that institutions should focus on strategies that improve

their brand image, which allows institutions to distinguish and identify one another from other competing institutions (Lock, 2017; Lamboy, 2011). A study by Wong, Tong and Wong (2017) revealed that the quality of teaching staff has an impact on student satisfaction and consequently, influences the institution branding, with institution branding mediating the connection between teacher quality and student satisfaction.

Institutions inhabit a highly competitive environment and are faced with the continuous struggle to attract the smartest students, the best staff members, and the most attractive grants (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). As a result, higher education institutions around the world are pursuing distinct brand definitions to differentiate themselves from one another (Waeraas & Solbakk, 2009). More recently, then, there has been a move towards marketing activities by public institutions, which are stimulated by changes in the competitive and demographic education landscapes (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014).

3.3.1.1 Relevance to higher education

Even though the theoretical frameworks for higher education branding offer interesting perspectives, a number of authors noted that few empirical pieces of research on branding are relevant to the higher education sector (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016; Dennis et al., 2017; Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013). Dennis et al. (2017) and Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) also reported that the use of suitable branding models in relation to students and higher education is scarce – and Koenig-Lewis et al. (2016) pointed out that many theoretical challenges to the adaptation of general branding ideologies to higher education have been raised. How consumers and other key stakeholders perceive institutions as brands remains largely based on the analogy of consumer goods and service brands (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016). For instance, Gambetti, Graffigna and Biraghi (2012) observed that several studies investigated the key determinants of a brand as perceived by consumers. Kalafatis et al. (2016) thus proposed that research on higher education branding research is still in its developing stages, with much still needing to be explored both from a strategic and exploratory perspective.

Notwithstanding the findings of these scholars, Waeraas and Solbakk (2009), writing in 2009, argued that branding as a concept had gained popularity in higher education institutions over the decades – and according to Wilson and Elliot (2016), higher education branding is not in its developing stages, as these other authors have claimed. Wilson and Elliot (2016) and Khanna, Jacob and Yadav (2014) asserted that the influences leading to the valuation, success and efficiency of a higher education brand have been documented in several research papers, literature reviews and case studies. Similarly, Kalafatis et al. (2016) argued that there are several reviews on the significance, management and efficiency of branding in higher education.

3.3.1.2 A TVET brand

This study notes that some of these branding constructs can affect the strength and attachment the (prospective) students have with an institution as well as their intention to studying at a TVET college. The current state of perceptions and attitudes around the TVET brand is largely negative and, as a result, fails to attract enough suitable students to these colleges. TVET institutions can use branding as an asset for developing and increasing their competitiveness and improving their reputation (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014; Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009).

Although the significance of higher education branding is recognised by existing literature, there are gaps in empirical evidence. For instance, there is a need to further research the branding of higher education institutions in developing countries in particular, where higher education systems are often complex and where TVET colleges have struggled to identify their distinct offerings. This thesis intends to increase evidence in South Africa regarding the currently undocumented TVET sector in particular. Empirically testing branding in the context of TVET choice in South Africa, will enable the sector to increase their perceptions and attitudes to better articulate the TVET brand.

3.3.1.3 Related studies on higher education branding

The complexities of higher education branding continue to be informed by several principles of branding (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016). For example, Koenig-Lewis et al. (2016) empirically assessed brand identification in higher education and its antecedents in relation to brand loyalty and brand support. They found that institutions which focus on offering superior academic experiences to their students are likely to be effective in building strong brand identification that leads to better brand loyalty and brand support.

For example, Dennis et al. (2017) examined the impact of brand attachment and its antecedents on commitment, trust, satisfaction and brand equity in higher education institutions. The study found that brand attachment antecedents on commitment has stronger impact on existing students, while the impact of brand attachment antecedents on satisfaction is stronger for graduates. In addition, Wilson and Elliot (2016) explored brand meaning for higher education institutions using metaphor analysis and found that brand meaning needs to align to the brand positioning strategies of an institution.

A study by Rauschnabel et al. (2016) developed and authenticated a six-dimension university brand personality measurement scale – comprising appeal, conscientiousness, prestige, sincerity and cosmopolitan. The dimensions strongly associate with positive word-of-mouth, brand love and students' intention to support their institutions after graduating.

Existing empirical research lacks deep insights into the nature, dimensions, and outcomes describing brand alliances in higher education. As such Naidoo and Hollebeek (2016) studied potential students' purchase intention for dual degrees, particularly the brand alliance form deployed in higher education utilising variables like attitude toward alliance; brand trust, brand familiarity and brand fit, which positively and significantly affect purchase intention. A similar study on brand alliance was conducted by Kalafatis et al. (2016). In their study Naidoo and Hollebeek (2016) acknowledged that brand alliance ignored any potential impacts of additional variables such as those identified in prior research, namely student engagement, brand engagement and brand image.

Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) noted the prominence of reputation or image as this emerges as an important distinctive characteristic of higher education institutions. The huge competition being faced among private higher education institutions prompted Lock (2017) to examine the impact of brand knowledge and brand trust through the possible dissemination of positive word-of-mouth (WOM). The moderation of WOM sources has significantly affected brand knowledge towards brand trust in private institutions. Furthermore, Lock (2017) found that websites are typically seen as institutions' platforms for strategic external communication; as such, the institution's website might well be a component of creating brand knowledge.

It is evident from extant literature on higher education branding that various branding constructs have been examined and have implications for each context. It has not been established, however, what the impacts are in the higher education branding literature of brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. These branding constructs will offer valuable empirical additions to higher education branding literature.

A single study has not been conducted to look at an holistic conceptual framework on the impact of these branding constructs, however. More importantly, the higher education branding literature reviewed above, has not clearly acknowledged the degree to which branding can influence a student's intention to select a higher education institution.

As TVET colleges offer their own unique complexities in the higher education system and their distinct brand is yet to be established, brand strategy will offer theoretical and empirical information to the higher education branding knowledge base (Wilson & Elliot, 2016), which is a focus of the next section.

3.3.1.4 Closing the theoretical gap

This section shows how this study will close the gap in the literature pertaining to branding in higher education. Names of researchers, title of their papers, and the research gap addressed have been collated to explain the current gap in the literature and how the current study will close the gap.

Table 3. 1: Empirical gap – branding in higher education

Researcher	Title of paper	Research gap addressed
Lowrie (2007)	Branding higher education: Equivalence and difference in developing identity	Focuses on marketing language, university identity and brand identity within universities
Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016)	Exploring brand identity, meaning, image, and reputation in higher education: A special section	Explores brand architecture of higher education institutions in the international marketplace
Balaji, Roy and Sadeque (2016)	Antecedents and consequences of university brand identification	Examines the role of university brand personality, university brand knowledge, and university brand prestige in developing student university identification
Dean et al. (2016)	Internal brand co-creation: The experiential brand meaning cycle in higher education	Explores how employees co-create brand meaning in higher education through their brand experiences and social interactions with management, colleagues and customers
Dennis et al. (2017)	The role of brand attachment strength in higher education	Examines the effect of brand attachment and its antecedents on commitment, satisfaction, trust and brand equity in the context of higher education institutions
Wilson and Elliot (2016)	Brand meaning in higher education: Leaving the shallows via deep metaphors	Explores brand meaning for a focal higher education institution.
Rauschnabel et al. (2016)	Brand management in higher education: The University Brand Personality Scale	Develops and validates a six-dimension University brand personality scale
Plewa et al. (2016)	Reputation in higher education: A fuzzy set analysis of resource configurations	Proposes that the key to achieving a positive reputation depends on specific combinations of higher education institution (HEI) resources and their complementarity or fit

Researcher	Title of paper	Research gap addressed
Nguyen et al. (2016)	Brand ambidexterity and commitment in higher education: An exploratory study	Investigates a university's brand ambidexterity strategy and its effects on brand image, reputation, and commitment in HEI
Naidoo and Hollebeek (2016)	Higher education brand alliances: Investigating consumers' dual-degree purchase intentions	Examines prospective students' purchase intention for dual degrees – a brand alliance type deployed in higher education
Kalafatis et al. (2016)	The added value of brand alliances in higher education	Examines perceptions of brand alliances, in the form of dual degrees, between UK universities.

Source: Author's own (2016)

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is evident, that branding in higher education is at its conceptualisation phase and a few of the researchers are looking at various antecedents that influence the brand of higher education institutions Some of these antecedents include brand personality, brandy equity, brand alliances, brand identity, brand image, brand meaning, brand attachment, brand ambidexterity and brand commitment. Several of these antecedents are located within universities and are underdeveloped within the broader higher education context, more specifically in TVET. It is evident that there is a gap in the literature.

This study will address this gap by examining the influence of brand awareness and brand image on brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, then on brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study within the TVET context.

3.3.2 Brand knowledge

Brand knowledge can be defined in terms of the individualistic inference about a brand stored in the consumer's memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information (Keller, 1993; Keller, 2003). Keller (1993) conceptualised brand knowledge as an amalgamation of brand awareness – as a possibility that a brand name will come to the mind of the consumer – and brand image, as perceptions about a brand are mirrored by the brand associations kept in the consumer's memory. For this study, brand knowledge is defined as the long-term knowledge a student has about an institution.

The concept of brand knowledge is at the very foundation of CBBE is in that it is the differential responses to marketing mix elements (Keller, 1993; Keller, 2016).

3.3.2.1 Brand knowledge and decision making

Existing literature proposes that brand knowledge is critical in the customer decision-making process (Balaji, Roy & Sadeque, 2016). According to Elliot, Choi and Li (2016), the significance of brand knowledge to customer decision making has been documented since the early 1980s. In the customer decision making process, brand knowledge is found to directly influence a customer's behavioural intentions (Elliot, Choi & Li, 2016).

Students engage in highly involved decision-making processes before they can select a TVET college as their preferred higher education choice. During this procfess, their level of brand knowledge will influence their preference for a certain institution over another. Most prospective students' lack of knowledge and understanding about TVET colleges could be among of the reasons why they continue to prefer universities. There are differences in the types of brand knowledge that prospective students acquire about TVET colleges versus universities; this being consistent with Herz and Brunk's (2017) argument that brand knowledge differs across brands.

3.3.2.2 Brand memory

Verhellen, Dens and De Pelsmacker (2016) mentioned that brand knowledge can be theorised as a memory to which several associations are related. Furthermore, Kang et al. (2017) and Baker, Rapp and Mullins (2014) observed that brand knowledge relates to the knowledge customers hold about a specific brand which relates directly to the quality of information that customers recall about a brand. This recall behaviour is mainly around that customers can hold both episodic and semantic memories, whereby brand specific semantic memories fundamentally deal with cognitive brand knowledge (Herz & Brunk, 2017). Herz and Brunk (2017) also deliberated that to assess a brand's quality, customers must cognitively process accurate brand knowledge, which proposes the significance of semantic memories in quality perception creation. Moreover, Esch et al. (2006) acknowledged that the perceptual and cognitive perspectives act in such a way that brand knowledge

influences customer reaction to the brand and the memories arising from marketing mix activity. Herz and Brunk (2017) conceptualised a memory as brand memories, which are the intense signals in a customer's mind; this means that a brand choice is completed purely on the product or service information present in the current environment.

Ultimately, the meaning that customers construct from the brand memories depends on the customer's memory, which influences their intention to select a preferred brand. Furthermore, Herz and Brunk (2017) postulate that improving understanding of the foundation of brand memories is imperative since it will not merely improve conceptual understanding of the foundation of customers' brand memories but may also produce important insights for creating and sustaining brand knowledge. If TVETs are a top-of-mind memory among students, they will form a permanent role in the customers brand memories. It is impossible for students to select a TVET when they have sofew or no memories of what the brand is and what makes it unique. Thus, a person's brand knowledge and previous experience with a brand largely impacts their attitudes and behaviour in the market, making brand memory a key factor for building a strong brand equity (Herz & Brunk, 2017; Keller, 1993).

Understanding how consumers organise brands in their memory is a crucial topic in branding research (Dew & Kwon, 2010). A greater increase in building brand memories of TVET colleges, will mean that prospective students have memories of the brand knowledge which they can mobilise in deciding their intentions to study at these colleges. Therefore, Verhellen, Dens and De Pelsmacker (2016) argued that brand responses will also be subject to customers' pre-existing knowledge structures of how aware they are of a brand.

3.3.2.3 Building brand knowledge

Brand knowledge is crucial to developing the understanding of how consumers leverage brands within their memory (John, 2016). Leveraging the brand through the customers' mind required greater understand of how to build knowledge. As such, Alimen and Cerit (2010) argued that brand knowledge could entail explicit and tacit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is theoretical, objective and comes from several sources, such as media documents and audio-visual products. Implicit knowledge is practical, subjective and personal. As the knowledge for deciding about whether to attend a TVET college comes from multiple places, this study ascribes to explicit knowledge, due to the complexities involved in deciding on which higher education institution to apply at and what qualification to register for. This multi-channel approach requires the students to gather information from the media, family and friends, school and the college itself. A study by Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrman (2005) also found that customers create brand knowledge by collecting information from various sources, such as the internet, advertisement and word-of-mouth.

Furthermore Balatj et al. (2016) acknowledged that brand knowledge comprises the learners' perception of how knowledgeable they are about the communications, missions, values, and benefits linked with the institution. Therefore, knowledge developed about the brand between the customers would be able to influence their emotional connection with the institution and its offerings (Lock, 2017; Chandon, 2003). The marketing practices required in disseminating the TVET brand therefore needs an explicit approach.

According to Matthes and Naderer (2016) and Jiang et al. (2016b), customers' knowledge develops over time and can be triggered when customers encounter various marketing promotional tactics, which impact the customers' intention and brand choice. Brand knowledge is grounded on persistent communication with consumers that provokes real understanding of the product or service (Alimen & Cerit, 2010). Prior studies suggest that brand communication plans regarding knowledge about the higher education mission and goals, campus life, and internal communication creates brand knowledge and common understanding among students (Balatj et al., 2016; Lysonski & Durvasula, 2013).

Matthes and Naderer (2016) argued that when there are recognised attitudes towards a brand, however, knowledge is less powerful. In other words, a positive attitude might inevitability be higher for familiar brands compared to unfamiliar brands (Matthes & Naderer, 2016). Conversely, Crespo-Almendros and Del Barrio-García (2016) argued that information creates more knowledge about a brand and connections with the brand – and that once assessed, these connections are transformed into attitudes towards the brand. Balatj et al. (2016) and Sujan (1985) also asserted that customer behaviour depends heavily on knowledge.

This study argues that knowledge and attitude are not mutually exclusive – and have significant impacts on brand knowledge. Students need to have the appropriate knowledge about TVET colleges before forming their attitude. It is also critical to take existing knowledge into account, however, (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006) as this will develop into positive or negative attitudes. Brand knowledge has the capacity to impact how students gather knowledge and create attitudes about the higher education institutions - and to evaluate them.

Brand knowledge forms a foundation for emotional connection between consumers and brands (Hsu & Cai, 2009). For example, a study by Akpinar and Berger (2017) claimed that, since the brand is a fundamental part of the narrative associated with emotional integral and emotional non-integral appeals, an emotional approach to brand knowledge requires customers to have a higher brand knowledge and a stronger brand choice. Prospective TVET students who are emotionally involved in gathering information about the brand will have a higher brand knowledge of TVET colleges and recognise and recall them more easily.

Emotions play a critical role in how customers gather knowledge and form attitudes towards a brand. For example, Akpinar and Berger (2017) acknowledged the importance emotionally integral appeals play in boosting brand knowledge, as customers learn more about the brand when it is associated with the narrative. This emotional integral appeal increases brand knowledge not merely by communicating product or service features, but also by showing brand image or personality (Akpinar and Berger, 2017).

For instance, De Angelis, Adıgüzel and Amatulli (2017) and Kirmani, Sood and Bridges (1999) suggested that customers with a higher brand knowledge tend to have a stronger preference than customers with lower brand knowledge. When the customers' familiarity with the brand starts to increase, so does their brand knowledge (Verhellen, Dens & De Pelsmacker, 2016). In addition, Fuchs et al. (2013) suggested that customers with a higher brand knowledge are concerned with the status that the brand is known for; they want to associate with brands with a superior status and subsequently, can respond negatively to an unfavourable brand association. Furthermore, Choi (2017) argued that building brand association among customers without previous knowledge is very challenging as brand association is the brand knowledge kept in the customer's memory (Çifci et al., 2016).

This literature shows that memories, knowledge, attitude, emotions and brand association provide a significance theoretical foundation to better explain why brand knowledge is an important starting point for the development of the TVET brand. These theoretical concepts provide an important foundation of understanding the different dimension of brand knowledge.

3.3.2.4   Dimension of brand knowledge

Brand knowledge comprises brand awareness and brand image, as portrayed in Figure 3.3 below (Hsu & Cai, 2009; Keller, 2003; Keller, 2016). Asnawi (2016) described brand awareness as being customerss recognition of the brand through names, colours, symbols and logos; it is the ability of customers to recall the brand when given commands on specific product categories at the top of the customers' mind. On the other hand, the brand image is about brand association in the mind and heart of customers, that association is a connection in the form of qualities, benefits and attitudes, and customer associations to the actual brand (Asnawi, 2016).

Lock (2017) and Esch et al. (2006) noted that earlier studies found an important connection between brand awareness and brand image; that significant levels of brand awareness would result in a positive image of the brand itself. Verbal recall of brand names specifies a robust level of knowledge while visual logo recognition reveals early knowledge when recall memory is normally less developed (Tatlow-Golden et al., 2014). As recognition is imperative for established brands (Çifci et al.,

2016), prospective students should be able to recognise TVET colleges so that they can make decisions about them.
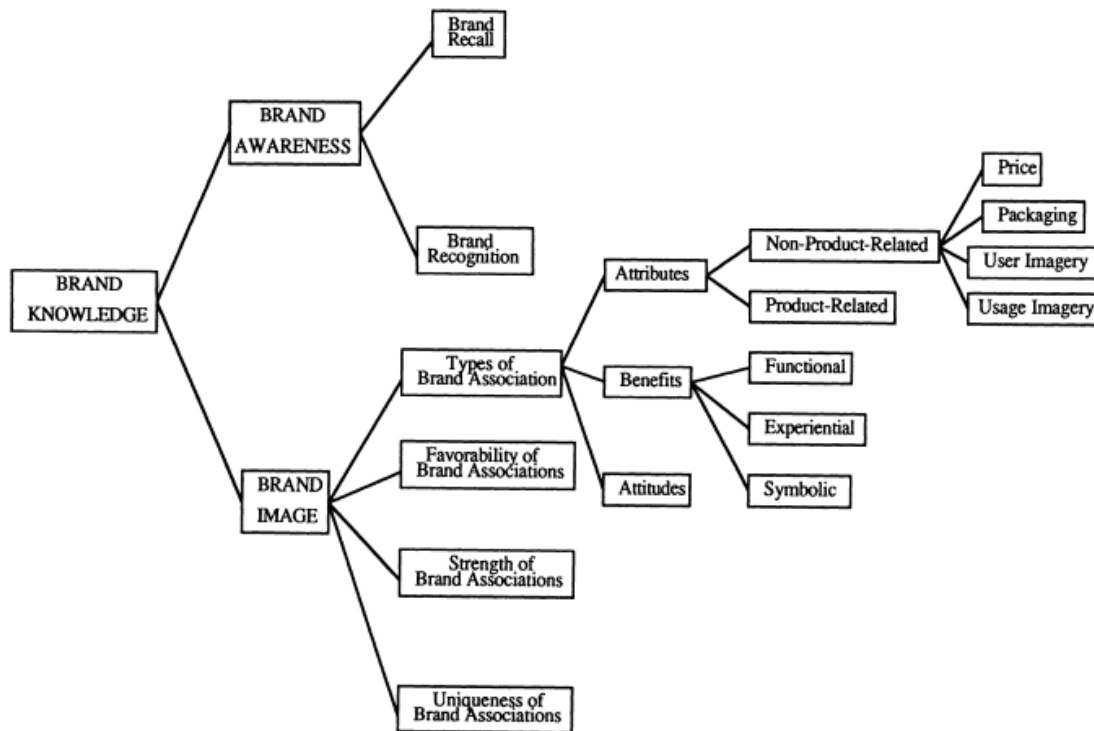
Figure 3. 3: Dimensions of brand knowledge

This study suggests that brand knowledge can shape a student's brand assessment of the TVET brand image and their level of brand awareness, which will inform their behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. Esch et al. (2006) mentioned that brand knowledge by itself is not adequate for creating strong brands in the long term, however, adn that brand relationship constructs must be considered as well. Hence this study looks at brand relationship constructs such as brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism with the links from brand awareness and brand image as dimensions of brand knowledge.

This study maintains that brand awareness and brand image are prerequisites of behavioural intention to study at a TVET college as, without the constant awareness of TVET colleges and of a positive image of them, students are likely to continue to select universities and not consider these colleges as brand awareness and brand

image affect intention (Esch et al., 2006). These are the focus of the next two sections.

3.3.2.5 Brand awareness

Brand awareness has been conceptualised since the early 1900s – and has been found to significantly impact the customer decision making process and to influence brand choice (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

Keller (2003) defined brand awareness as the ability of consumers to recall a brand amid the chaos of competing brands, while Liao et al. (2017) defined brand awareness as the probability that a brand name will be top of mind and by the effortlessness with which it is so. Brand awareness ensures familiarity with a brand. Brand awareness is the likelihood that consumers are familiar with the brand's product and services (Malik et al., 2013). It is a key branding dimension and has been revealed to influence brand choice (Aaker, 1996). Brand awareness influences the attitude of the consumers towards a product or service and the need to associate with it (Shabbir et al., 2010). Thus, brand awareness entails the strength of the brand in the memory of a consumer and is assessed by consumers' capability to recognise the brand under different circumstances (Jansen, Zhang & Mattila, 2012).

That being said, prior studies by Dew and Kwon (2010) found that among students, brands with greater levels of brand awareness were not certainly linked to more positive brand associations or recognition.

Brand awareness in this study is defined as the ability of the consumer to recognise or recall a brand (Wang et al., 2016).

The creation of brand awareness is an essential goal in many branding strategies (Homburg, Klarmann & Schmitt, 2010). Building brand awareness is frequently the first stage in building a brand (Wang et al., 2016). Aaker (1992) stated that creating brand awareness and a brand presence in the memory of consumers may be the single most vital effect associated with brand-building activities. This means that if prospective students are not aware that TVET colleges exist then the brand-building activities cannot be effective, and students are highly unlikely to consider these colleges in their higher education selection choice.

The primary emphasis, then, is on creating a higher level of recognition of TVET colleges among prospective students. As brand awareness is a crucial factor for the gathering of information about the brand (Ko, 2017), understanding the importance of brand awareness in higher education is an important step to increasing a student's intention to select a higher education institution.

Lowry et al. (2008) suggested that larger brand awareness through repeated exposure will increase the image of any brand. This is done typically through advertising exposure over time, meaning that brands with larger advertising tend to grow the biggest awareness and familiarity among customers (Lowry et al., 2008). Advertising is a critical communication channel for increasing the brand awareness of TVET colleges and could increase the recognition and recall levels among students, which will result in the desired behaviour of applying at TVET colleges. In this regard, a thorough analysis of effective communication tools is important.

As Moos (2012) argued, studies of brand awareness and attitudes enable marketers to measure levels and trends in terms of customer knowledge, perceptions, views, intentions and behaviours.

Huang and Sarigöllü (2014) proposed that brand awareness significantly influences customer decision making – which highlights the need to understand how brand awareness influences a customer's decision. Customers usually use brand awareness as a decision-making heuristic. For example, an experiment conducted by Hoyer and Brown (1990) on the role of brand awareness in the customer decision making process showed that brand awareness is a leading decision heuristic among awareness-participants subjects. Therefore, Huang and Sarigöllü (2014) supported the notion that a known brand has a much better chance of being chosen by consumers over an unknown brand.

Furthermore, brand awareness and familiarity are related, since consumers must first be aware of the brand name to feel familiar with it (Dew & Kwon, 2010). The occurrence of exposure to brands expressly improves the probability of the brand being selected, even if customers are not conscious of such exposure (Ferraro, Bettman & Chartrand, 2009). Higher level of brand awareness is linked with the higher level of customer intention (Shabbir et al., 2010) - although brand awareness has a stronger impact on intention, only if the product, once tried out, meets the

consumer's expectations (Domingo, Lao & Manalo, 2016). In some contrast to these assertions, extent literature argues that customers with no brand awareness are more inclined to try out new brands than participants with brand awareness (Hoyer & Brown, 1990).

However, this study argues that for any intention to be apparent among students during higher education selection, a higher level of brand awareness for TVET colleges is necessary in order to make an informed choice. Without this higher level of brand awareness, there will not be a higher level of intention as students would not be aware of these colleges among the numerous institutions in the higher education system from which they can select. Limited research has addressed the consequence of brand awareness in higher education and how students select institutions.

While raising brand awareness encourages people to react (Xu, Buhalis & Weber, 2017), increasing brand awareness has been not been sufficiently investigated, however (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014). Furthermore, Naik, Prasad and Sethi (2008) postulated that building awareness lacks normative guidelines for the ideal strategies to follow for enhancing brand awareness.

Nonetheless, Malik et al. (2013) posited that a higher level of brand awareness will result in a higher share in the market and superior assessments of the quality. Similarly, as for brand awareness, Girard et al. (2017) reflected that a powerful brand relishes a high level of customer awareness and customer loyalty which informs the foundation for building strong value and profitable customer relationships. Therefore, higher levels of brand awareness ultimately lead to the brand's total brand equity (Girard et al., 2017; Walsh et al., 2014a). Building brand awareness is a major factor of brand equity and managers must consider the presence of various competitors in determining their ideal course of action (Naik, Prasad and Sethi, 2008).

Liao et al. (2017) speculated that higher levels of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand image lead to higher levels of intention, which further endorses higher brand equity. Yet, a study by Huang et al. (2017) found that the mediating effect of the relationship between brand awareness and intention was not significant. In addition, Lambert-Pandraud et al. (2017) argued that individuals with less education have a limited vocabulary and lesser brand awareness. As

argued above, the level of measuring brand awareness and its key components vary from scholar to scholar.

Brand awareness is a critical tool for researchers as it helps to understand the efficiency of marketing campaigns, brand recognition and overall public image of an organisation (Domingo, Lao & Manalo, 2016). While, organisations spend substantial amounts of time building brand awareness among customers, there is limited knowledge of the financial returns of these investments (Krasnikov, Mishra & Orozco, 2009). Dew and Kwon (2010) argued that the marketing implication of brand awareness performances has been controversial, as practitioners have been unclear of its impact, even though research indicates that companies gain higher brand awareness and exposure because of continuous communication (Wang et al., 2016).

Brand awareness is important for any organisation that wants to a build a strong brand equity, irrespective of their industry, and it is equally important in building higher education brands. Without brand awareness, no communication and no transaction will occur (Malik, et al., 2013). As such, the impact of brand awareness can be linked all the way to brand equity through its impact on brand association (Girard et al., 2017). Liao et al. (2017) further affirmed that marketing managers ought to focus on brand awareness to promote brand equity.

Notwithstanding the fact that brand awareness has been explored in several settings, the impact of brand awareness on the decision making process has been conducted using only lab experiments at a customer level (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014; MacDonald & Sharp, 2000). Furthermore, the link between brand awareness and market outcome is studied mostly in the setting of service industries (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2005), while prior research reveals a positive connection between brand awareness and customer brand equity (Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014; Kim & Kum 2004; Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000).

Mishra and Sharma (2016) suggested that advertising helps in better understanding the current position of the brand from a customer's perspective. For example, a model was developed by Blattberg and Golanty (1978) called TRACKER, where variance in brand awareness was determined by advertising that impacts the uninformed segment of the market. This model was expanded by Dodson and Muller (1978) by including word-of-mouth and forgetting effects, because customers

function in a social context where they interact with other customers. While the existing marketing models investigate how to build brand awareness, these models ignore the presence of competition (Naik, Prasad and Sethi, 2008).

Buhalis and Law (2008) recommended to organisations the benefits of using online communities to collect feedback and raise awareness. TVET colleges might consider engaging with internal stakeholders to gather insights on how to increase brand awareness, based on their own experiences.

As a research construct, brand awareness has been well researched with considerable empirical evidence to support its importance. There is nonetheless a gap in the higher education literature regarding TVET colleges, considering that students can only know about such colleges if they are aware of them and have had some level of exposure and engagement. While brand awareness initiatives are crucial for the building of the TVET brand, it is also important to define what brand awareness means in the context of higher education.

3.3.2.5.1 Components of brand awareness

Earlier studies by Laurent, Kapferer and Roussel (1995) identified three standard measures of brand awareness:

- spontaneous awareness: customers are asked, without prompting, to identify the brands they know;
- top-of-mind awareness: name the brand first, when asked to identify brands they know; and
- aided awareness: brand names are presented to the customer and they indicate which brand they know.

Brand recall is the ability of a customer to create the brand from a given memory that is unique to that brand (Lowry et al., 2008) – while recognition is the procedure of perceiving a brand as formerly encountered, which is a customer's ability to recognise that they have prior exposure to the brand (Hoyer and Brown, 1990; Lowry et al., 2008). While Dotson et al. (2017), Keller (1993) and Aaker (1996) have suggested researchers should measure brand awareness through recall and recognition, others have identified strong differences between recall brand awareness and recognition brand awareness (Walsh et al., 2014a; Percy & Rossiter,

1992). They argued that brand recall and brand recognition are two distinct types of brand awareness, with the difference being on the communication consequence that happens first in the customer's mind. Yet, academic scholars have failed to deliver a solution to the relationship between how well a brand is recalled and how well it recognised in the market (Dew & Kwon, 2010).

The effect of brand awareness on prospective students' decision-making process with regards to higher education institutions, measured by both brand recognition and brand recall, reveal strong relations between them (Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016). Thus, this study maintains that to build a strong higher education brand, there needs to be a higher level of recall and recognition. This can be achieved through increasing brand awareness and reducing uncertainty of what TVET colleges are about. As recall and recognition can only succeed with constant communication and marketing practices about TVET colleges, institutions need to raise brand awareness and reduce uncertainty to improve brand performance (Son et al., 2017).

3.3.2.5.2 Brand awareness in higher education

The increasing global competition in education, both in the capitalisation of knowledge and the increasing competition for quality students, has produced the perceived need for higher education institutions to develop brand awareness and distinct competitive identity (Lomer, Papatsiba & Naidoo, 2016). The brand has become a vital tool for positional competitive advantage in the competition between higher education systems and institutions. Naidoo et al. (2014) implied that a higher education brand can be classified as a strategic asset, capable of carrying core higher education system qualities and values to develop brand awareness and distinctiveness and to inform student preferences.

As said above, this study argues that a higher level of brand awareness of TVET colleges is necessary in order that prospective students may make an informed choice. Well-known brands have a higher chance of being chosen and valued by existing and potential customers and, as a result, perform better in the marketplace compared to unknown brands (Lee, O'Cass & Sok, 2017). As such, a study by Brewer and Zhao (2010) found that higher education brand awareness – which is seen as the knowledge about what the institution represents – is associated with

(prospective) students' opinion towards the brand and overall brand reputation of the institution.

A gap in the existing literature was identified by Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) regarding how an institution can increase brand awareness and brand image in the hearts and minds of the customer. While there has been a large amount of research conducted into brand equity and, to a lesser degree, into marketing and branding of higher education institutions, a study by Hsu et al. (2013) revealed that students are highly likely to engage products/services with high brand awareness. A study by Casidy (2014) stated that higher education institutions must guarantee that all brand-related plans are effectively implemented and managed to take full advantage of the awareness of prospective and current students. Therefore, as brand advocates, students should also be involved in the development of the institution's brand campaign. Creating higher levels of brand awareness among students could increase the brand image of TVET colleges.

In the broader development of higher education brands, students' perceived brand image of institutions is as important as brand awareness. The importance of brand image is discussed in the next section to highlight its relevance to this study and its impact on higher education branding.

3.3.2.6 Brand image

Prior research has identified brand image as an essential concept within a consumers' brand choice; and brand image is of great interest to practitioners and scholars (Cho, Fiore & Russell, 2015; Kwon, Ratneshwar & Kim, 2016).

Scholars have conceptualised brand image in numerous ways through both tangible and intangible features and benefits of a brand (Cho et al., 2015). For instance, Baumgarth and Yildiz (2016) reflected on prior research that tried to understand the brand image from a verbal cognitive level perspective but could not distinguish the unconscious emotions and qualities of the brand which manifest themselves via images. Other studies have explored brand image from a consumer behaviour perspective (Aghekyan-Simonian et al., 2012; Lien et al., 2015).

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Keller (1993) defined brand image as different kinds of brand associations as well as the favourability, uniqueness and strengths of these associations. Atika, Kusumawati and Iqbal (2017) and Jalilvand and Samei (2012) considered that brand images come from a customers' own experiences in the function and consumption, which is the customer's perception. Asnawi (2016) posited that there is a consensus that customer perception of brand image is echoed through brand associations in customer memory.

Three key themes are highlighted by these definitions: perceptions, memory and association, all being central to the building of a brand image. While brand research seeks to reveal brand image as an important construct, however, measuring it is frequently met by bias (Baumgarth & Yildiz, 2016).

This study defines brand image as the perception, knowledge and association a student has about a higher education institution. These are the fundamental tools for understanding the prospective students' behaviour and intention towards TVET colleges.

Asnawi (2016) notes that the marketing literature's focus on brand image is mainly from two perspectives, namely the company and the consumer. The company perspective focuses on improving marketing activity, which is linked with the strategy of brand positioning and sustaining positive brand image; while, the customer's perspective focuses on understanding the interpretation of attitudes by the customer about the brand image.

Schmitt (2012) posited that brand image captures consumers' mental depictions of an organisation and goes beyond reputation and identity. Brand image helps a consumer to recognise their needs and wants concerning the brand and differentiates the brand from other brands (Lien et al., 2015). Aaker (1996) suggested that a positive brand image helps organisations to create a strong brand position, reinforce the brand's performance and defend the brand from competition. A good brand image increases a consumer's trust and can diminish the risk (Lien et al., 2015).

Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh, (2016) and Bian and Moutinho (2011) suggested that brand image plays an important role in assisting customers to decide whether they like the brand or not, and this consequently influences their behaviour. As such, brand image is a factor affecting a customer's personal perception and resulting behaviour and is an intrinsic cue when customers are assessing a product or service (Lien et al., 2015). Brand image contributes to influencing consumers' perceptions and subsequent behaviours and is an extrinsic cue while consumers are assessing a brand (Chung et al., 2016; Lien et al., 2015). Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh (2016) report that research proves that a customer's attitude towards a brand image is important in building commitment, trust and customer loyalty. Essentially, brand image carries customers' attitudes and perceptions towards the brand, which also signifies the quality and beneficial features of the brand as perceived by customers (Chakraborty & Sheppard, 2016; Keller, 2003; Ghaderi, Ruiz & Agell, 2015).

As such, prospective students' perceptions about TVET colleges could have an impact on their attitudes to them. As these perceptions will impact on the consumer behaviour of prospective students, it is critical for scholars and marketers to understand these perceptions clearly in order to be able to interpret the insights in a meaningful manner that will enhance strategy development. The need to understand consumer behaviour is thus important for this study as, once all the marketing and branding activities have been implemented, it is the behaviour that leads students to select their preferred higher education institution.

The main focus on attitude and perception in brand image literature neglects the impact self-congruity plays in behaviour and intention. Self-congruity theory is the theoretical foundation of this study – which maintains that for prospective students to be able to have a positive image of TVET colleges as a brand, and to consider it a possible choice for higher education studies, the TVET brand needs to connect with their self-concept.

Çifci et al. (2016) mentioned that the ideal self-congruence comprises the extent to which brand image agrees with the customer's ideal self-concept. According to Liao et al. (2017), creating congruity between customers' self-concept and brand image is vital for favourable brand assessment.

Brand image has not received enough attention as an important contributor in its relationship with self-congruity. Liao et al. (2017) and Sung, Kim and Jung (2009) suggested that congruity between brand image and self-concept is a vital area for marketing researchers. Extant literature has supported a significant relationship between these concepts for building a successful brand. Brand image's importance in higher education and how students select the institution in which to further their studies, based on their self-concept, needs to be empirically tested further.

It is probable that brand image perceptions are considerably shaped by simple associative learning developments such that brand image congruence is improved even when image-based resemblance is quite low (Kwon, Ratneshwar & Kim, 2016).

Vukasovič (2015) offered three components for building a successful brand: a favourable brand evaluation; open brand attitude; and a reliable brand image. Producing a reliable brand image requires that all integrated marketing communications (IMC) messaging should be consistent throughout all channels (Vukasovič, 2015). Giebelhausen, Chan and Sirianni (2016) confirmed that the IMC philosophy entails that marketers strategically incorporate all marketing communications in a way that sustains a consistent brand image, message and position across all consumer channels. Berry and Seltman (2007) added that the brand image is also affected by IMC tools like word-of-mouth (WOM) and the customers' own experiences with the brand. However, the connection between WOM and behavioural intention and brand image is yet to be revealed (Atika, Kusumawati & Iqbal, 2017).

Casidy (2014) noted that the impacts of positive perceptions of service quality and positive WOM communication behaviour will be stronger if the prospective students perceive that the institution has a strong brand. Students may be more confident talking about their institution to their friends if the institution has a strong brand that sends a co-ordinated message about its competitive advantage and reputation.

Manhas, Manrai and Manrai (2016) and Cai (2002) pointed out that with a clear and commanding brand image, organisations can position their products and strongly appeal to the needs and desires of their customers. Therefore, Manhas et al. (2016) suggested that the task of marketers is not merely to develop a brand image to attract customers, but to improve the sustainability of the organisation. To develop a

positive brand image, it is important to understand the components that impact it, which is the focus for the next section.

3.3.2.6.1 Components of brand image

Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) proposed that the image of an institution has two dimensions: functional and emotional. The functional dimension is concerned with the tangible characteristics that can be measured, while the emotional dimension is more interested in the attitudes and feelings towards an institution. While these components vary widely, they are equally important to how institutions build their brand image and, consequently, to how (prospective) students perceive their image, based on a clear list of factors that are most important to the student.

Three components affecting brand image – service qualities, symbolic qualities and finance qualities – were identified by Vukasovič (2015) and are given in Table 3.2. These are the key drivers of brand image in higher education.

Table 3. 2: Brand awareness sequence model

Factor	Description
Service qualities	These relate to qualities like the perceived quality of the education received, availability of courses, quality management and study method.
Symbolic qualities	These relate to qualities relating to brand personality, identity, social image, market position, social responsibility, innovation and the overall image.
Finance qualities	These relate to the relationship between services quality, price and financial stability of the institution.

Source: Vukasovič (2015)

While this study is focusing on the under-researched area of brand management concepts with respect to the TVET sector, this does not neglect the importance of other factors that impact on branding and prospective students' intention – like the quality of education, innovation and affordability, all of which influence a student's higher education choice and are not mutually exclusive. For example, three factors realting to institutional image – study environment, practicality and conservativeness – were developled in an earlier study by Brown and Mazzarol (2009) on the

significance of institutional image to learner loyalty and satisfaction within the higher education sector. These are summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3. 3: Higher education brand image factor

Factor	Description
Study environment	Relates to namely how the institution is viewed by the learner regarding being friendly, student focused supportive, innovative, and offering a variety of courses.
Practicality	Relates to how practically focused the courses were, whether admission was flexible and how workplace oriented the courses were.
Conservativeness	Relates to whether the institution was long-established, traditional or reputation (prestigious).

Source: Brown and Mazzarol (2009)

This study maintains that holistically, the factors of both Vukasovič (2015) and Brown and Mazzarol (2009) provide a comprehensive picture of the complexity of creating a higher education brand image. While these will vary from student to student and institution to institution, practicality and service quality would likely be ranked highly, as students would want to ensure they become employable and that institutions offer high quality of education with the relevant courses being available to them. It is vital to understand these components from the perspective of the customer (student) to understand realistic and relevant components.

In addition, Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) proposed that contact factors, such as staff members and facilities on campus, are critical factors which could determine the students' perception of the image and reputation of the higher education institution.

The next section discusses the importance and role of brand image in higher education.

3.3.2.6.2 Brand image in higher education

Scholars have defined brand awareness differently across the various settings, but a higher education branding specific definition is required.

Higher education institutions have been diligently practicing brand management. As noted above, the branding of institutions assists them in building their brand image among students, parents, partners, workplace and society (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013).

An institution brand indicates who and what the institution stands for and plays a distinct role that needs to be conveyed to potential students (Khanna, Jacob & Yadav, 2014). Shirota et al. (2017) emphasised that high school students are usually concerned about the brand images of higher education institutions and that this is a vital measure for their selection of an institution. And indeed, prospective students' positive recommendations can depend largely on the prestige, empathy, adventurousness and competence of the institution (Alwi and Kitchen, 2014).

Some researchers like Alwi and Kitchen (2014), Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) and Curtis, Abratt & Minor (2009) indicated that higher education institutions can successfully position their institutional brands by using their corporate brand image. For example, Alwi and Kitchen (2014) have explored the role of brand image and found that both cognitive and affective attitudinal elements appear equally important in determining corporate brand image.

Wilson and Elliot (2016), Alwi and Kitchen (2014) and Curtis, Abratt & Minor (2009) posited that by having a reputable image, an institution will benefit in several ways such as high ranking, increased enrolment of exceptional students, top employer recruitment, attracting funding opportunities, student satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, Balatji et al. (2016) found that the overall assessment of an institution's image is shaped by learners' experience, knowledge, attitude and feelings concerning the higher education institution. Herrero-Crespo et al. (2016) found that the image positively affects the brand image of a higher education institution, which students associate directly with perceived quality.

A study by Casidy (2014) suggested that students' perceptions of the extent to which the institution involves brand-oriented behaviour could have an important moderating influence on the connection between service quality and satisfaction. Such strong higher education brands are, at times, regarded as an assurance of quality (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

As, Vukasovič (2015) deduced that brand image and reputation assist to raise a degree of brand equity in a potential student. Image and reputation are certainly important in building customer loyalty among students. As such, brand reputation is the focus for the next section.

3.3.3 Brand reputation

Sengupta, Balaji and Krishnan (2015) defined brand reputation as the customers' perception of service quality connected with the brand name. Brand reputation was defined by Dahlén, Granlund and Grenros (2009) as the expectations and standards consumers have about a brand. Jurisic and Azevedo (2011) defined brand reputation as a collected attitude towards the brand. A favourable brand reputation could result in a positive attitude towards the brand. Brand reputation varies from brand attitude, which denotes a total assessment of a brand, comprising affective, cognitive and behavioural intentions (Olsen, Slotegraaf & Chandukala, 2014). For this study, brand reputation is defined as the management of perceptions, attitudes and expectations about an institution developed over time.

Earlier studies have explored reputation from the points of view of marketing, economic and organisational theory (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). Marketing scholars tend to look at reputation from a brand equity perspective and have linked it with the credibility of the organisation, while organisational theory scholars explored it from a social identity perspective which ultimately contributes to the organisation's performance (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Reputation has been adapted in various settings such as corporate reputation, country reputation and more recently, branding. Chatzipanagiotou, Veloutsou and Christodoulides (2016) and Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) highlighted the vital role of reputation for higher education institutions, which will build trust in the brand.

Reputation plays a vital role in closing the gap between customers and company identities because it goes beyond customer–brand relationships to consider customer–company relationships (Tournois, 2015). Dijkmans, Kerkhof and Beukeboom (2015) acknowledged that reputation is an attitudinal concept that consists of two components: a rational (cognitive) component and an emotional (affective) component.

Sheth and Sinha (2015) considered re-legitimising companies as an assurance for reputation. A superior reputation enables companies to realise positive profits, improved performance and sustainable marketing (Cage & Rouzet, 2015; Chen, Liu & Wu, 2016; Sheth & Sinha, 2015). Though an organisation may try to manage its reputation, it is determined by the perception of external stakeholders (Wong, Tong & Wong, 2017; Stopford, 2011). Studies on the conceptualisation of brand equity have recognised numerous other customer-related constructs that can result in greater performance and reputation (Tournois, 2015).

Sridhar (2012) stated that reputation has been broadly recognised as a valuable intangible asset, which essentially must be strategically managed to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. As brand reputation is intangible and hard for competitors to copy, it can produce a distinctive competitive advantage for the company (Montalvo, 2016). With an increased financial performance and effective marketing strategies, organisations will be able to begin to build their brand reputation to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

According to Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), brand reputation is produced over time and involves how the consumer assesses the brand; such assessments will change over time. This time factor presents an initial constraint for building a brand reputation for higher education institutions; in addition it will be more difficult to build a TVET brand reputation if there is a negative perception and attitude towards the sector, which may be partly as a result of their not yet having brand awareness and a brand image. It is important to develop a distinct brand reputation definition that is appropriate for higher education branding.

Scholars have explored brand reputation to investigate a phenomenon. For example, a study by Shin (2016) showed that the consumer attitude toward brand and product is significant if the brand reputation is high and when there is product information. A

study by Deephouse, Newburry and Soleimani (2016) found that brand reputation has a positive impact on brand choice in a developed country but not in a developing country. According to Sengupta, Balaji and Krishnan (2015) and Koh, Lee and Boo (2009), high reputation brands impact on company and value performance and yield a positive impact on brand reputation. Consequently, when failures occur in reputable brands, customers experience greater uncertainty, encouraging them to switch (Sarkar Sengupta et al., 2014). A favourable brand reputation in the minds of the consumer is therefore necessary for profitability and success (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

Brand reputation should be assessed over time by its customers (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). The assessment of the reputation must be measured both internally and externally to get a holistic performance of the brand. Boman (2017) suggests various models for measuring brand reputation. The CRI model in Figure 3.4 provides the measure of alignment between internal and external stakeholders for consistency and sustainability of the brand. This measure can ensure expectations and performance of the brand outcomes are clear from both sides. Both sets of stakeholders are important for the development and management of the reputation.

	MAC	Reputation Quotient	Corporate Personality Scale	SPIRIT	CRI
Who does it measure?	Financial analysts, CEOs and journalists.	Key stakeholders determined by organisation	Organisation's employee and customers	Stakeholders determined by organisation	Internal and external stakeholders
What does it measure?	Innovation, financial soundness, employee talent, use of corporate assets, long term investment value, social responsibility, quality of management, quality of products and services	Emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, financial performance and social responsibility	Agreeableness, enterprise, competence, chic, ruthlessness, machismo, and informality	Experience, feelings and intentions.	Alignment between vision, culture and image

Figure 3. 4: Brand reputation measurement models

Source: Adopted from Boman (2017)

3.3.3.1 Drivers of reputation management

As described in Table 3.4, Tieman (2017) showed that there are three drivers of reputation management which are within the control of the company itself: prevention; mitigation and recovery. This means that brand proprietors are, to a very large degree, in control of their reputations if they employ a compact reputation management process. Companies that are not managing their brands' reputations successfully continue to broaden their negative reputation and as result, are met with failure of marketing efforts.

Table 3. 4: Drivers of reputation management

Drivers	Description
Prevention	A highly proactive system to prevent issues and crisis from occurring.
Mitigation	This entails making decisions fast and communicating them both internally and externallyin rapid and quick moves to separate the issue. This is only possible with widespread plans and practice.
Recovery	This entails reinstating the reputation and social capital of a brand as public trust in the integrity of a product needs public reconfirmation.

Source: Tieman (2017)

In higher education brands, more brand reputation is desirable to attract top students and create a sustainable competitive advantage. Providing information to help students to choose among higher education institutions needs the creation of distinct selling propositions and the effective communication plan of these to prospective students (Chaploe, 2010). Ultimately, the institution's brand is its reputation and image (Wong, Tong & Wong, 2017). As Bruwer and Johnson (2010) recommended superior quality, credibility and competence of the product and service to achieve a successful reputation. it will become important to build the reputation of TVET colleges through demonstrating credibility, performance and heritage. The importance of heritage in branding literature and higher education is discussed in the next section.

3.3.4 Brand heritage

Brand heritage is defined as longevity – the background or root of the trademark; the main values; and their historical concepts as crucial aspects in the company (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). Martino and Lovari (2016) defined brand heritage as a

communication approach to company memory; this implies not a sentimental consequence, but rather the steadiness of a company and its business in the past, present, and into the future.

However, this study defines brand heritage as the authentic symbolism of a higher education institution, through its history and present existence, to leverage its distinct brand. It is through this symbolism focus that the next section explores the necessity of strengthening and building the TVET brand through brand symbolism.

Brand heritage has been identified as an emerging strategic tool; its adoption is rapidly growing globally (Martino & Lovari, 2016; Akbari, Salehi & Samadi, 2015). Prior research indicated the importance of heritage, stability, and a sense of grounding in consumers' minds of authenticity, quality and brand positioning (Michelson & Paadam, 2016; Rose et al., 2016).

Aaker (1996) and Rose et al. (2016) stated that heritage is an important element in the intricate process of building brand equity. This notion has been advanced more recently to constitute the company's unique conceptual category of their heritage as part of their brand's identity and value proposition. Dion and Borraz (2015) stated that a company's heritage embraces value for the customer and other key stakeholders, differentiates the brand, is difficult for competitors to replicate, and thus leads to brand equity. In addition, by building brand equity, brand heritage will build the brand associations of a company (Aaker, 1996). Therefore, developing a brand's heritage is believed to provide a means of connecting a brand's history to its current position. This concept has been studied in various contexts to understand how brands can tap into their heritage.

For instance, prior studies of brand heritage have studied specific brands within the auto, furniture manufacturing, banking and food industries (Rose et al., 2016) – and have confirmed the significance, usage, and value of brand heritage within specific contexts. In addition, they also revealed that brand heritage is a history of a company (Akbari, Salehi and Samadi, 2015). Researchers have noted the importance of heritage in building product and corporate brands; well-known brands such as Coca Cola frequently leverage brand heritage to strengthen their brands (Merchant & Rose, 2013).

Consumers are more inclined to associate a brand's endurance and strength with heritage, thus evoking heritage seems instrumental in building brand strength (Merchant & Rose, 2013). Positive association linked to a brand heritage inherently appeals to traits of trust, continuity, and comfort built through connections to the past (Curran et al., 2016). Brands with heritage are associated with companies that command values and place themselves highly relative to their heritage (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). However, as associations and perceptions are often formed by consumers, the historic component of brand heritage can positively improve consumer perceptions of authenticity and, consequently, affect brand choice (Curran

The importance of heritage in higher education branding is noted by Bulotaite (2003), in that it is associated with key symbols such as traditions, buildings and ceremonies. These associations can form the foundation of an institution's image to distinguish prospective students from others. This heritage can be used extensively to build an institution's brand and to promote and create its brand name (Bulotaite, 2003). A study by Merchant et al. (2015) found that a university heritage has an influence on university reputation, prospective students' attitudes, intentions and willingness to recommend the university. As such, brand heritage is at the heart of the institution.

While the heritage of TVET has been visibly low due to the undesirability of vocational education (Kalimasi, Heikkinen & Lassnigg, 2015), a favourable TVET heritage needs to be created to promote a distinct TVET brand. By and large, TVET colleges are unique and their heritage is the main value and distinguishing character. Given that much of the negative perception of, and attitude to, TVET colleges come from their history, this study seeks to understand how a favourable brand heritage can be developed as a key component of developing the TVET brand. The present, forward-looking aspect of heritage of TVETs is one that considers reducing skills gaps in Africa, reducing unemployment and revitalising economic growth; this is the kind of knowledge that will change students' behaviour and drive their intentions.

The management of brand heritage comprises different phases, such as activation, analysis and persistent stewardship of the heritage perspective by means of internal and external communication strategies (Martino & Lovari, 2016). To improve consumers' perception and management of brand heritage, it is important to define what brand heritage is in this higher education branding context.

3.3.5 Brand symbolism

Brands, as transporters of symbolic meanings, can assist consumers to achieve their major identity goals, projects and build a brand's name (Baxter, Kulczynski & Ilicic, 2014; Anisimova, 2016). Koksal (2014) posited that consumers often pick their brands as a symbol of their social interrelations with others. The creation of corporate brand symbolism is seen as crucial due to its ability to impact consumer choices; in so doing it highlights the significance of symbolic benefits for the creation of CBBE and tapping into consumers' symbolic needs (Anisimova, 2016). Brands always signify something and may serve as symbols of status and may show individuality and belonging (Hammerl et al., 2016). Symbolic meanings of products function in two ways: outwardly in building the social world, social symbolism; and inwardly, in building our self-identity, self-symbolism (Anisimova, 2016).

Brand symbolism is studied and takes its main ideas from consumer culture theory (Nairn, Griffin & Gaya Wicks, 2008). Brands depend on the use of symbolism and imagery to create positive associations (Watkins et al, 2016). Brands differ in symbolism in the brand's ability to communicate something about the consumer who is using it (Bernritter, Verlegh & Smit, 2016).

Brand symbolism is profoundly used for consumers to negotiate identities (Nairn, Griffin & Gaya Wicks, 2008). A developing body of research indicates that consumers use brands to highlight certain facets of their identity and restrain other facets (Bernritter, Verlegh & Smit, 2016). As such, brand symbolism is defined as the degree to which consumers contemplate purchasing a brand-name product as articulating a belief or value (Wu, 2016). In addition, brand symbolism is defined as a perception of the meaning associated with a brand name (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). For this study, brand symbolism is defined as the symbolic meanings consumers attach to a higher education institution in terms of their brand choice.

For example, a study by Tsai (2005) demonstrated that symbolism affects customers' evaluations of either utilitarian or expressive branded services or products. Brand symbolism, in relation to the concept of "cool", plays an important role in the youth's everyday social engagements (Nairn, Griffin & Gaya Wicks, 2008). Recent work by Souiden and M'saad (2011) acknowledged the susceptibility of peer influence and group association on teenagers and indirect influence on their perception of brand symbolism through group association. Likewise, Watkins et al. (2016) found that children as young as two years old can identify brands, though the ability to reason about them symbolically has not yet developed. This symbolic reasoning is believed to mature with age as children absorb the social meanings associated with brands. In their study, Baxter, Kulczynski and Ilicic (2014) revealed that consumers make use of the symbolism in a brand name when developing their judgements concerning the brand's attributes. Symbolism is a unique, increasingly growing and more interdisciplinary field of research (Hammerl et al., 2016), which is being applied in branding research.

Scholars and marketing professionals charged with the development of the brand for companies, have seriously considered the findings of the large body of empirical research on brand symbolism (Spence, 2012). Recent research has extended the concept of symbolism to brand name preferences and perceptions (Shrum et al, 2012). As symbolic outlook of brands is valid globally it is a valuable basis for research (Hammerl et al., 2016).

As consumers focus themselves on the symbolic meanings provided by brands (Tsai, 2005). It can be argued that students build symbolic meanings associated with higher education institutions. As it is assumed that prospective students want to associate with TVET colleges as a way of conveying their personality, group or peer association, the symbolic meaning they ascribe to TVET is important for their self-image and social group association, as it indicates a preferred brand that is aligned to their self-concept. Bernritter, Verlegh and Smit, (2016) state that the negative consequences of self-brand connections are stronger for brands that are perceived to be of higher symbolic meaning. The higher the symbolic meaning of TVET colleges, the greater the brand is perceived to be distinct compared to other higher education institutions. The importance of brand distinctiveness in higher education branding is discussed next.

3.3.6 Brand distinctiveness

Brand distinctiveness refers to the perceived individuality of a brand relative to its competitors (Kim et al., 2016). Wong and Merrilees (2005) defined brand distinctiveness as a company's success in building the brand grounded on distinctive products or services. Brand distinctiveness was defined by Gaillard (2007) as comprising features relating to a brand that stand out in the customer's mind. For this study, the distinctiveness of a higher education brand is the perception of what the institution communicates of the brand to its students that no other institution can copy. To further highlight the connection between higher education institutions and brand distinctiveness, this study notes that the focus on creating a TVET brand requires creating brand distinctiveness.

Previous research has established that brand distinctiveness and brand prestige are two of the important antecedents of consumer brand identification (Kim et al., 2016). The four leading branding books by Aaker, De Chernatony, Kapferer and Keller respectively all theorised around the concept of brand distinctiveness (Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

Yasin, Noor and Mohamad (2007) acknowledged that the creation of brand equity is directly dependent on brand distinctiveness, loyalty and awareness – and the more distinctive the brand is, the higher is the brand equity. Thus, brand distinctiveness is of importance to companies for the design of marketing strategies crucial to the attainment the highest value through brand essence and brand identity (Fadzline, Nor & Mohamad, 2014; Wong & Merrilees, 2005). According to Wong and Merrilees (2005), brand distinctiveness offers a path for planning and a guide for implementation; it is the brand that must be the basis of a company strategy.

Tamyez, Nor and Mohamad (2016) conjectured that brand distinctiveness is one of the superior principles in marketing theory and more companies are presently striving to develop brand distinctiveness to escape being categorised as commodity companies. Having a distinctive brand shows consistency and facilitates a better way for customer decision-making (Bridson & Evans, 2004). Therefore, consumers have more confidence in brands that they perceive to have distinctive worth; and this, in turn, reduces their decision-making process (Ahn, Kim & Lee, 2016).

Brand distinctiveness is a state of mind that leads to the basis of the brand, which can be an influential value for the brand to distinguish it from competitors in an extremely competitive business environment (Ahn et al., 2016; App & Büttgen, 2016). The brand-oriented approach of company strategy may furnish companies with a sustainable advantage over their competitors and achieve superior brand performance (Fadzlin et al., 2014; Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Keller (2008) established that brands with a distinct image get a favourable position within the minds and hearts of customers (Keller, 2008), while some scholars like Davis, Golicic and Marquardt (2008) revealed that brands with distinct images are hard to replicate and expensive to compete against, providing organisations that own them a sustainable competitive advantage. Lee, O'Cass and Sok (2017) insisted that a brand high in uniqueness includes qualities and benefits linked with the brand that make it very distinctive and unlike the competitors. This uniqueness of a brand is described as the extent to which customers see a brand as being diverse from other brands and how distinct it is compared to other brands (Lee O'Cass & Sok, 2017).

Prior research suggests that four elements are involved in building and/or maintaining differentiation: brand features, branded ingredients, brand programmes and brand services. Thus, differentiated brands can increase their credibility, carry the message of their worth, and distinguish their features.

In the higher education branding research, Judson et al. (2008) argued that it is important to understand the brand distinctiveness of an institution from within. This internal stakeholder perception perspective will mean that all internal brand messaging will be consistent with the external brand messages as the clarity of the brand will be established within the institution before it is conveyed to prospective students.

Watkins and Gonzenbach (2013) proposed using brand personality to measure the brand distinctiveness of a higher education institution to allow it to create differentiation from other institutions. Rauschnabel et al. (2016) argued that measuring an institution's personality forms part of the complete image and identity of the institution. It is evident that brand distinctiveness enables higher education institutions to differentiate themselves from others such that when prospective students perceive the institutions to be distinct. The proposed concept of brand

distinctiveness in TVET colleges may be useful in determining a student's intention, which is predicted by the brand awareness and brand image of these colleges.

3.3.7 Behavioural intention to study

3.3.7.1 Consumer behaviour

A clear issue is how to measure a prospective student's intention to study at a TVET college in ways that are understandable and like other marketing initiatives. The issue is addressed by linking consumer behaviour to intention to study, one ultimate measure of brand success in the education sector.

There is an important need for a more integrated method of consumer behaviour in the context of higher education. Despite its prevalence, research in consumer behaviour still lags in higher education, as Xiang, Magnini and Fesenmaier (2015) argued, sustaining business success centres upon a company's ability to understand and make the most of consumer behaviour trends. Yasin, Noor and Mohamad (2007) created an analysis model of sustainable consumer behaviour to demonstrate that value, motivation and sense of identification are key drivers for how people form behaviour. Given the complexity of choices available and time spent on deciding on a higher education institution, little is known of how prospective students select colleges (Moogan, Baron & Harris, 1999).

For example, Zsóka et al. (2013) found that consumer behaviour of students is due to the high intrinsic motivation of committed students. However, in the same study, Zsóka et al. (2013) noted consistencies and inconsistencies in behaviour are identified to promote the establishment of more effective educational tools for supporting sustainable behaviour. Furthermore, a study by Azarcon et al. (2014) explored student attraction and retention in higher education institutions using conjoint analysis of consumer behaviour as a tool for identifying the fundamental preferences of consumers. The study found that quality of education is the most vital element for determining retention and attrition among students. Biswas and Roy (2015) argued that consumer predispositions to satisfy a need for knowledge has a positive impact on consumer behaviour. It is in this discussion that the current study can further contribute to the study of consumer behaviour in higher education.

3.3.7.2 *Behavioural intention to study*

Behavioural intention is defined as the level to which a person has articulated conscious plans to perform or not to perform some specified future behaviour (Cigdem & Ozturk, 2016) – or as a person's clear intention to engage in a behaviour (Chen, 2016). At its simplest form, this study defines behavioural intention as the intention to study at a TVET college. This is a direct and deliberate action that this study argues is influenced by the brand management of a TVET college.

Consumer behaviour is one of the areas where the brand knowledge of students generally needs to be increased to see success in intentions to study at a TVET college. Research based on branding offers an opportunity to thoroughly measure behavioural intentions as an indicator of study intentions the higher education context. According to Cheng et al. (2016), behavioural intentions are altered through a cognitive process, where an individual's perceptions of reality can influence their behavioural intentions. Hsu et al. (2016) and Rajaguru (2016) found that the quality of and satisfaction with services influences the behavioural intentions of individuals as the outcome of value. Findings by Jiang et al. (2016b), Chen (2016) and Najib, and Tabassi (2015) highlighted the importance of behavioural intention as tending to have a long-term effect on customer relationship, influence on persuasion and signal retention or dissatisfaction conveyed by the customers.

Najib and Tabassi (2015) determined that behavioural intentions can be classified into two types: favourable behavioural intentions, which comprise loyalty of thought; and unfavourable behavioural intentions which lie about disloyalty of thought. Favourable behavioural intentions can be described as noble behavioural beliefs about the probability to display positive behaviours such as positive words-of-mouth recommendations and retention, as well as to reinforcing the relationship between the customer and the organisation. Unfavourable behavioural intentions can be described as indecent behavioural beliefs about the probability to perform negative behaviours, such as negative words-of-mouth and complaint, as well as weakening the relationship between customer and the organisation.

Furthermore, Yang, Lin and Lui (2016) argued that behavioural intention can be separated into internal and external behavioural intention: Internal behavioural intention refers to taking responsibility for individuals' own actions, while external

behavioural intention signifies that individuals ask for others' to act. The internal type specifies initiative behaviour, while the external type specifies passive behaviour. In addition, Park et al. (2016) argued that intentions can be categorised by their targeted action namely, non-specific or specific.

In the context of higher education, a more favourable behavioural intention is desired as it is a display of beneficial intention by prospective students to select a TVET college over other higher education institutions and to be in a position to persuade peers to apply at these colleges as well. This kind of intention requires a clear engagement between brand familiarity and perceived fit of the institution with the students (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016).

When bearing in mind earlier studies about image and behavioural intention, a strong preference of consumers regarding the current company image would be associated more with intention. The intention can be both negative and positive as behavioural intentions occur from positive emotions and negative emotions, which are mediated by beliefs (Millán, Fanjul & Moital, 2016; Prayoga & Abraham, 2016).

Ingram et al. (2000) used the theory of planned behaviour to explain the intentions of students applying at business schools. Perceived behavioural control was found to be a predictor of intention to apply to the institution; in this case iIntention is seen as an indicator of a certain behaviour.

The decision-making process undertaken by prospective students before selecting an institution is increasingly becoming important for both the student and institutions (Moogan, Baron & Harris, 1999). As a student is being offered a service and experience, they will only realise this once they are in the institution, however. Due to this complex decision, the engagement between the institution and student varies (Moogan, Baron & Harris, 1999). This study maintains that students partake in different behavioural intention based on the decision-making process developed by Kotler (1997), as seen in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3. 5: Student's higher education decision making process

Source: Adapted from Kotler (1997).

Using the consumer decision making process, a student will start at a problem recognition stage: this is the need to further their studies after completing grade 12. Through gathering information of the various higher education institution available, the need becomes clearer and more refined. This stage requires extensive information on courses offered, residence, fees, location and student life – factors which differ from one institution to another. At this stage, the prospective student would have several institutions in mind and will begin a process of evaluating each institution against a clear set of guidelines and criteria.

Once the prospective student has narrowed down the alternatives, they will apply at two or three institutions to increase acceptance chances. It is at this stage of a well-planned and implemented brand strategy that TVET colleges hope to appeal and attract the brightest students to apply at these colleges as their first choice. The last stage requires the evaluation of the application and to assess if they made the right choice and are happy with it.

The process indicates that selecting a higher education institution is complex and highly involved. This study seeks to position branding as one of the factors that influences a student's choice and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

3.4   Summary of the chapter

Considerable amounts of empirical research have been undertaken on CBBE, self-congruity, social identity and the theory of planned behaviour. Much of the discussion above has provided a broad overview of the theory, where it has been applied and an application to the current study which considers branding of TVET sector within higher education.

The concept of branding in general has been widely studied, and is rapidly growing in the higher education sector, possibly reflecting the increased competition between institutions and the global agenda of TVET that has been a catalyst for economic growth in developing countries.

This study proposes that successful brands in higher education would need to be built on a foundation of key constructs such as brand image, brand awareness, brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand reputation, brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study. The extant literature has allowed examination of these constructs, as well as the development of working definitions and discussions of these constructs for effective TVET brand development.

Whilst every effort has been made to carefully discuss the literature in such a way that presents positive nuances –the foundation for the next chapter – this explicitly proposes positive impacts between the predictor, mediator and outcome variable. This is set by the research objectives as detailed in chapter one.

Chapter 4:

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

4.1 Introduction

Earlier literature on relationship marketing and, consequently, its impact on consumer behaviour has not explored the role of brand relationships, as it merely argued for brands as transaction facilitators (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). It suggested that brand relationships are determined by contexts.

This study is in the higher education context. Because, of the current turmoil within the South African education system, it is important to uncover the connections between, and impacts of, brand relationships as this will help TVET colleges develop their own brand management framework. The brand relationships presented below may influence the ways in which students identify and relate to the TVET brand. In this conceptual model, brand awareness and brand image are the predictor variables. Brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness are the mediating variables while behavioural intention to study is the outcome variable. Figure 4.1 presents a conceptualised research model while the hypothesised relationships between the variables of the research are discussed thereafter.
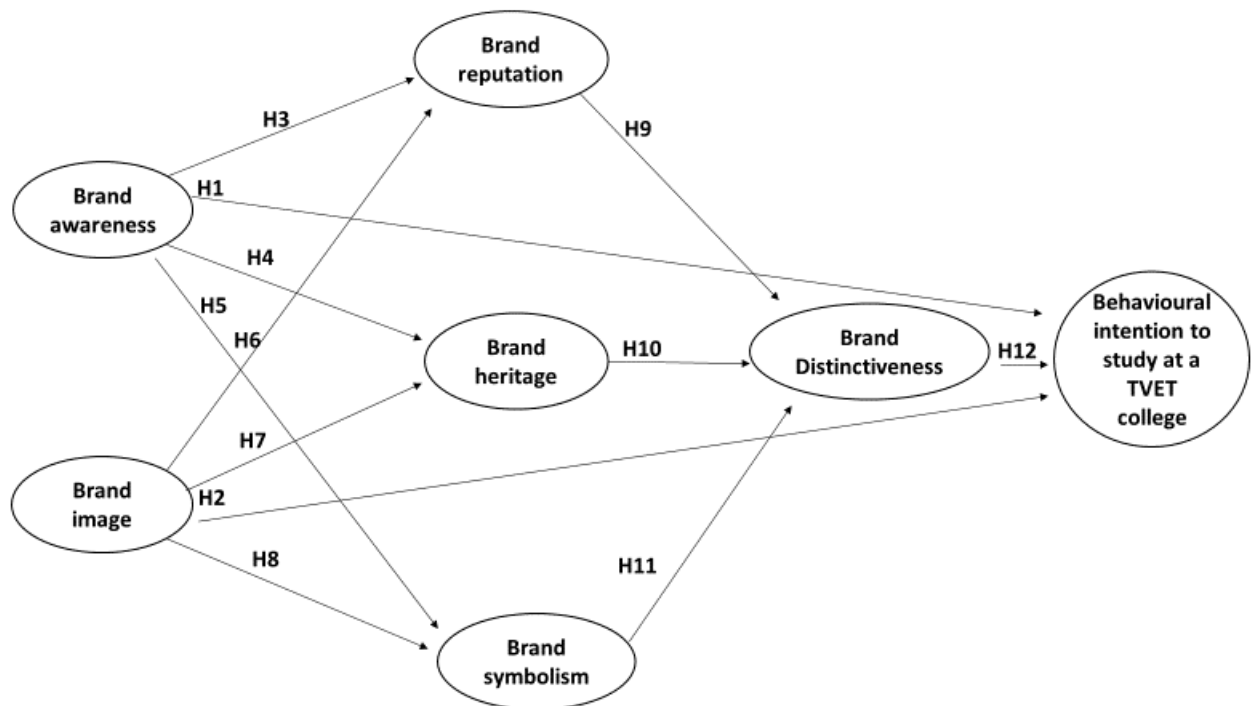
Figure 4. 1: Conceptual model

Source: Author's own, after reviewing literature (2020)

4.2 Brand awareness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college

Considering the cost of creating brand awareness, researchers have been examining whether behavioural intention can be generated from the awareness created in various sectors and product categories. Studies on brand awareness enable marketers to understand intentions (Manalo, 2016). For example, for an automobile brand, Hanzaee and Yazd (2010) found that brand awareness predicts purchase intentions. In the tourism context, there is evidence that brand awareness relates to satisfaction and intention (Kim, Han, Holland & Byon, 2009); and in the advertising context, Al-khasoneh and Sweeney (2006) developed a conceptual model that explored the relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention. Within the festival context, a study by Mason and Nassivera (2013) explored the connection between service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intention as mediated by awareness. Likewise, satisfaction with a wine festival brings about awareness and behavioural intention (Yuan, & Jang, 2008).

Although research on brand equity theory has been explored, there is a lack of research within the marketing higher education institutions context (Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016). Brand awareness influences consumer decision making when CBBE is involved (Suki & Sasmita, 2015). The higher education institution's brand equity includes brand awareness and brand image (Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016). In higher education literature, Dennis et al. (2016) mentions that an institution's brand can have an impact on the student's intention to engage with the institution in the future. While Hossler and Gallagher (1987) expose a relationship between the brand awareness of a higher education institution and the decision-making process of potential students, Brewer and Zhao (2010) found that brand awareness does not influence a student's preference for a college. As intention is a predictor of behaviour (Santiago et al., 2017), this study expects that brand awareness improves the intention of students to apply at a TVET college. Thus, this study hypothesises that

H1:   Brand awareness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

4.3   Brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college

Over the years, brand image has been well researched with respect to predicting a behaviour, such as purchase and repurchase intention (Pham, Do & Phung, 2016; Kang, 2011), and satisfaction and loyalty (Alkhawaldeh, Alsaad, Taamneh & Alhawamdeh, 2020; Cuong & Khoi, 2019; Isimoya, 2019; Chen, 2016). In other research on brand image, corporate image has been found to influence a customer's intention behaviour (Chen, 2016). A study in food truck marketing found that the brand image plays a major role in influencing behavioural intention, perceived value and customer satisfaction (Mokhtar, Othman, Arsat, & Bakhtiar, 2017). In the context of TVET colleges, and higher education broadly, the research between brand awareness and behavioural intention is lacking, while there has been some work in this area in other contexts. More so, Chen (2016) states that the education brand is important for the selection by students, parents and society, thus influencing a student's enrolment intention. The building of a unique brand image becomes imperative for creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

While the college brand image as a competitive advantage tool is yet to be researched, university brand image and institutional brand image have been explored (Hwang & Choi, 2019). That being said, Ramli and Salleh (2015) and Thuy and Thao (2017) argue that there is still a lack of literature in the area of university brand image. They note that university brand image is hard to measure, but sees heritage, trust and service quality as key drivers. With respect to universities, students are more likely to study at an institution with a superior brand image (Chen, 2016) – although Thuy and Thao (2017) argue that, over time, students make better evaluations of the university brand, notwithstanding the fact that university brand image is important to attract students (Panda, Pandey, Bennett & Tian, 2019; Brown & Mazzarol, 2009).

Brand equity, which includes brand image has been found to influence behavioural intention (Jiang, Li, Liu, & Chang, 2017), functional brand image, hedonic brand image, and behavioural intention (Raji, Rashid & Ishak 2019). In addition, behavioural intention has been researched within the college context. Hwang and Choi (2019) postulate that a student with positive behavioural intention is likely to recommend the institution to high school learners. Also, the study notes the interrelationship between an institution's brand image and behavioural intention (Hwang & Choi, 2019). Colleges with poor brand image face significant market challenges, whereas universities reap the benefit of spending millions on building their brand image (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2020). This study argues that building a strong brand image will result in more student wanting to apply at TVET colleges. The image of a college is critical in a highly competitive market (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2020). The study hence proposes the following hypothesis:

H2:   Brand image has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

4.4 Brand awareness and brand reputation

Studies have indicated that brands function as processes and not merely entities; this makes relational determinants of branding, like brand reputation, a key dimension of brand equity (Homburg, Klarmann & Schmitt, 2010). For example, in the TVET context, students would develop a notion that these colleges require a good brand equity to depict their brand reputation.

Malik et al. (2013) stated that if a company has a successful brand awareness strategy, it conveys that the products and services of the company have a good reputation in the marketplace. Similarly, Balaji, Roy and Sadeque (2016) found that institutional brand awareness is a favourable connection between the students' perception towards the brand and its reputation. Although the study looked at university brand awareness it did so from the perspective of the effect of brand knowledge on the overall opinion of the student and on the reputation of the institution – thus proving there is no empirical foundation for the relationship between brand awareness and brand reputation. Oh (2010) speculated that some companies appear to have a brand reputation grounded on broader recognition, rather than a brand image of superior product – so using the brand name without the distinction between brand awareness (or recognition) may cause confusing influences and thus reduce the value.

Brand awareness will likely result in students having a positive attitude about the brand, which might resonate with their self-identity. In a social media management context, which is a prominent platform for students, brand awareness and brand reputation have been established (Montalvo, 2016).

Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) posited that to be successful and profitable, brands should have a positive reputation and customers should anticipate that a brand will meet their expectations, shaped by its existing reputation. They added that the brand's present reputation will influence the prediction of its actions (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). If a company has successful brand awareness, it means that the products and services of the company have a good reputation in the market and are accepted by consumers (Malik et al., 2013). If the reputation is perceived as successful and recognised by customers, this means a brand has a good reputation (Kuenzel & Halliday, 2010). Companies should ensure that their systems and

processes are of high standard to keep existing consumers and to create their reputation to entice new customers (Conradie, Roberts-Lombard & Klopper, 2014). This indicated that customers identify with brands that have a favourable reputation (Cifci et al., 2016). Lowry et al. (2008) state that the lack of performance by a company will always weaken the brand reputation.

Customers with adequate brand knowledge are highly likely to examine brand-relevant communication and are more inclined to use such information to assess a brand's reputation (Kang et al., 2017). Scholars suggest awareness historically can reinforce company identity and relationships, encouraging brand reputation and attitude (Martino & Lovari, 2016). Literature on brand awareness reputation is based on extensive recognition rather than an image (Oh, 2000), which may lead to a positive emotional response to, and enhanced reputation of, the brand due to repeated exposure (Cho et al., 2015).

The notion of branding, as applied to higher education, is very different from branding in the commercial sector. Branding in higher education is about 'who we are' and is not restricted to what a product and service offers the marketplace (Vukasovič, 2015). This assertion is supported by the outcome of several studies. For example, a higher educational brand is often associated with an institution's academic reputation (Vukasovič, 2015) – while Brewer and Zhao (2010) found that higher education brand awareness (knowledge about what the institution represents) is associated with learners' opinions towards the brand and perceived overall reputation of the institution. The study tested the following hypothesis: that university brand awareness will be positively associated with perceived overall reputation. This did not look at brand reputation as a construct, but assessment of reputation was concerned with teaching, research, leadership, service and equity reputation. Therefore, the brand name (in this case, TVET) is a critical element of the institution's identity; it plays a vital role in the awareness towards the brand, and it is a good source of information.

Chui, Chow and Choi (2014) concluded that a brand name is one of the most important extrinsic cues, which evaluates perceived risk when customers encounter uncertainty about the brand. This uncertainty is caused when customers have little knowledge and previous experience of the brand. Their study indicates that

reputation plays a significant role in the customers' perception of risk. Risk is highlighted in the context of higher education since the perceived negative reputation of a TVET college could be construed as a risk if a student chose it over a university with a fairly stable reputation and a well-known brand name.

Over time, brand names develop a certain reputation, which are useful information to customers in their decision-making process (Chiu et al. 2014). TVET colleges should therefore ensure that their courses are of superior standard to retain current students and to shape their reputation to appeal to prospective students and reinforce their brand name – which will build their brand awareness. It is critical to note that brand reputation is managed over the lifetime cycle of the brand (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). Brand understanding comprises awareness, reputation, associations, and self-connection (Chatzipanagiotou, Veloutsou & Christodoulides, 2016). The literature discussed above makes references to brand awareness and brand reputation, but not providing the empirical support for this relationship. This study contributes to this gap by empirically testing this relationship.

In terms of brand awareness and its relation to brand reputation, a first hypothesis of this study emerges

H3:   Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector.

4.5   Brand awareness and brand heritage

A solid brand is one that customers know and observe as distinguished from other competing brands; thus, creating brands with a high degree of awareness and distinctiveness is vital to ensuring brand strength and sustained competitive advantage (Lee, O'Cass & Sok, 2017). To this extent, the roles of brand heritage and brand awareness are highlighted.

In the context of higher education, prior research indicates that students' direct interactions with the institution leads to the start of an institution brand personality, which institutions can create through heritage, logo, prospectus, architecture, history and location (Balaji, Roy & Sadeque, 2016). Even in developed economies such as the United Kingdom (UK), higher education institutions are being marketed in other countries through brand awareness initiatives in terms of their distinct culture and

heritage (Lomer, Papatsiba & Naidoo, 2016). Indeed Dewar, Du Cros and Li (2012) asserted that brand awareness equals heritage conservation. Awareness is the crucial component as without it, there is no identifiable brand nor is the mission of awareness conveyed by the heritage (Dewar, Du Cros & Li., 2012). Awareness of heritage is strong, and a collective memory deserves to be fostered (Xie, 2015).

Brands with a recognisable heritage are better equipped to engage with their consumers at an emotional level (Ballantyne, Warren & Nobbs, 2006). Prospective students may actively engage the history of TVET colleges to obtain a deeper understanding of their purpose and subsequent benefit; if well narrated, the concept of heritage can enhance the experience a student would expect to get at a TVET college. In their study, Michelson and Paadam (2016) confirmed how the exchange between heritage branding and the building of the symbolic capital unfolds in the relationship between brand identity and brand awareness.

Resources such as heritage, creative products symbols, tourist attractions, and so on, attract individuals to the brand, both physically or emotionally (Lomer, Papatsiba & Naidoo, 2016). Considering this, Lomer, Papatsiba and Naidoo (2016) added that higher education has been theoretically transformed from a social agenda for the 'public good' to a sector for enhancing competitiveness. Thus, this study hypothesises that

H4:   Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector.

4.6   Brand awareness and brand symbolism

Brands can function as symbols for product positioning (Wang & Yang, 2010). Aaker (1992) and Turner et al. (2015) extrapolated that the branding refers to a distinct name or symbol that classifies the product or service and differentiates it from that of competitors. Homburg, Klarmann and Schmitt (2012) and Kotler (1997) stated that the brand as a name, sign, symbol, or design is intended to create awareness of the goods and services of one company to distinguish them from those of competitors.

A TVET brand needs to be one that has a unique name and symbol that distinguishes it from other higher education institutions; and its equally important that society and prospective students are aware of it. A competitors' performance symbolises the brand's strength in the market relative to competitors (Huang &

Sarigöllü, 2014). Thus, brand awareness is believed to be one of the most treasured assets connected to a brand and represents a main component of brand equity (Ho, 2000). It is for this reason that it is important for TVET colleges to develop, and be associated with, the right symbols that create the intended awareness that encourages prospective students and society at large to subscribe to them.

The general concept of brand equity discussed earlier in chapter 3, mentions intangible brand assets. These intangible assets – such as the company name, symbols and slogans and including their perceived quality, associations, or channel relationships – are included in brand equity, which epitomises a key foundation of sustainable competitive advantage (Aaker, 1992, Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016).

Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017) offered another dimension, namely brand authenticity, based on both objective and subjective facts based on customer perception. Brand authenticity is the perceived legitimacy of a brand that is established in terms of its stability and consistency, distinctiveness, ability to maintain its promises and unaffectedness. Napolietal. (2014) and Fritz, Schoenmueller and Bruhn (2017) recognised quality commitment, heritage and sincerity as key factors of the brand authenticity measurement scale, while Morhart et al. (2015) developed four differing measurement factors to define a brand's display of authenticity – being continuity, symbolism, credibility and integrity.

Another factor, identified by Paasovaara et al. (2012), is brand familiarity explanation linked with the customer value-brand symbolism congruity explanation. This explanation knows that both the characteristics of the customer and brand can, through engagement, influence customers' perception.

Nowadays, customers purchase the products not merely for their practical features, but also for their symbolic meanings. Consumers have their own judgements about brand names and symbols (Wang & Yang, 2010). Ene and Özkaya (2016) suggested that to create brand awareness and to maintain this brand awareness, some philosophies in the areas of psychology and advertisement are used which involve several awareness-raising approaches.

This study directs its attention to the trademarks with regards to brand-identification trademarks – namely brand logos, names and symbols. Existing literature asserts that trademarks confirm their potential value (Krasnikov, Mishra & Oroz, 2009). Primarily, trademarks enable customer recognition of brands among competitors; and secondarily, brand identifier trademarks also frequently serve as significant predictive signals of performance to customers.

Lomer, Papatsiba and Naidoo (2016) set forth a different perspective, which highlights a nation (country) as an important symbolic asset in the higher education context. Thus, the nation is a key beneficiary of an education system which creates economic and symbolic wealth, which trickles into society. This means that a TVET education system needs to have significant trademarks in the form of a name and symbol. The underlying causes of the negative perceptions surrounding TVET may well be that it does not come across as an aspirational sector, nor do its symbols signify a superior brand when compared to universities.

So, a great value of a TVET brand is seen in how quickly prospective students can recognise the symbol or logo. Therefore, it is expected that

H5:   *Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector*

4.7   Brand image and brand reputation

In the marketing domain, the important role of an institutional image and institutional reputation with respect to customers' buying intention is well established. In the educational services sector, these constructs are utilised as a positioning tool to influence a student's choice of a higher education institution (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001).

Lee, O'Cass and Sok (2017) suggested that brand management, on the other hand, reflects the company's processes that are in place to generate, sustain and grow their reputational brand assets. Companies use it to drive customer knowledge and ideal expectations of a brand amidst components that are important to the customer, namely a positive brand image, desired brand association, and favourable brand positioning. Liao et al. (2017) asserted that a brand reputation is a shared depiction of a brand's previous actions and results that defines the brand's capability to bring

valued outcomes to several stakeholders. The brand image held by consumers, depends less on the marketing campaign, than it does for non-consumers (Zauner, Koller & Fink, 2012).

In the context of creating brand experience and building brand equity, Moreira, Fortes and Santiag (2017), Rajput and Dhillon (2013) and Keller (1993) implied that sensory marketing enhances reputation and brand image, which creates lasting memories. Having a better understanding of brand identity, image, meaning, and reputation influences vital strategic decisions and contributes towards effective use of marketing properties, cost-saving, and improved income from several sources (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016).

It is important to note that the desired TVET brand should have both a good reputation and align with a student's actual and social image. Cagé and Rouzet (2015) provided proof of the benefits of a reputation for product or service quality in the form of brand image. Companies create brand awareness to encourage a positive attitude toward the brand reputation and intentions (Vidya, Fanany & Budi, 2015).

Although there have been several pieces of research on brand image and brand reputation in the higher education sector, the idea of branding is yet to make its mark in the higher education literature (Khanna, Jacob & Yadav, 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Research has not empirically tested the relationship before. Jiang at al. (2016b) suggested that brand image and brand reputation are critical, since they influence customers' purchase decisions and the brand's market performance. This means that if customers do not have prior knowledge of the company's brand image, there will be no difference in its market performance compared with that of its competitors, even though prior research on brand knowledge reveals that positive brand experience stays in customers' minds and builds positive knowledge about brands (Kang et al., 2017; Judge et al., 2002). On the contrary, Kang et al. (2017) rejected the mediating effect of brand knowledge.

Brand-related constructs and the related levels of information are exchanged between companies and their external situation through brand image and reputation (Tournois, 2015). Ho et al. (2015) debated that consumers can form either a

negative or a positive impact of the company based on the image, and thus can influence the brand's reputation.

A student's perception of brand image and brand reputation leads to an increased commitment to the institution (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). Further, Vukasovič (2015) deduced that brand image and reputation assist to raise a degree of brand equity in a potential student. In this regard, image and reputation are important for building customer loyalty among higher education students generally, this possibly comprising a student's decision to stay at the institution following the completion of a qualification. While it is evident that the relationship between brand image and brand reputation exists, Nguyen and LaBlanc (2001) deduced that in a higher education context, there is little evidence to support the relationship between institutional image and institutional reputation. However, in contrast, image and reputation of some higher education institutions have been argued to be more critical factors than teaching quality itself – such that communicating the image would be important, suggesting an essential role for branding (Chaploe, 2010).

Thus, understanding the role that institutional image and institutional reputation plays in students' choices of higher education institutions will help management effectively plan their communication and branding strategies to enhance their institution's positioning statement (Nguyen & LaBlanc, 2001). Thus, this study hypothesises that

H6:   Brand image has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector.

4.8   Brand image and brand heritage

In marketing literature, history is an important component of the identity of attribute and position; it is preserved as a cause of competitive benefit (Akbari, Salehi and Samadi, 2015). Hakala, Lätti and Sandberg (2011) proposed that it has become popular for consumers to pursue comfort located in the past, and to pursue brands with an image with elements such as heritage, authenticity and stability. They also identified history, image, equity and expectancy as the four elements of a brand's heritage (Hakala, Lätti & Sandberg, 2011).

It is to use history as part of obtaining a competitive edge, that a TVET college's heritage has maintained a certain image over the years – and is able to create a stable brand heritage. Similarly, if the image is positive – based on the performance of students in the class and in the workplace – then it will ensure that heritage (past) is able to attract a high level of students and staff members to these institutions. So, Rose et al. (2016) reflected that successfully invoking brand heritage defines the stability, consistency and past performance of the brand and connects it to the present.

It is important that TVET colleges – and the government in their policy framework – develop and invest in the brand's heritage. Martino and Lovari (2016) set forth that the investment in heritage branding can truly provision the contemporary advancement of media relations into an interactive process. This would be based on the diffusion and interchange of branded contents and on engaging online influencers and, through them, guaging public opinion by making improvements of a radical inter-media agenda setting progression.

Heritage brands highlight their history as a main element of their brand identity; and they cherish, uphold and defend their heritage to generate stronger company marketing (Dion & Borraz, 2015). Brand image is based on the company's heritage (Liu et al, 2012). The conceptualisation of opinion corridors partially follows from the information on the images and heritage (Michelson & Paadam, 2016). Michelson and Paadam (2016) argued that image can attract consumers to products or services with the heritage of symbolic value. It has also been argued by Hakala, Lätti and Sandberg (2011) that symbolic and emotive connections between a brand and a consumer is highly possible with brands that attach heritage and authenticity to their image. This study predicts an interaction between brand image and brand heritage.

Superior brands could be valued more on the basis of their heritage and authenticity – but, depending on the context, some customers may be less interested in the heritage (Angelis et al., 2017). Brands can overcome the lack of valuing of heritage, however, by reinforcing the distinctiveness and the creative value of the brand (Phau, 2014). Thus, this study hypothesises that

H7:   Brand image has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector.

4.9   Brand image and brand symbolism

As already highlighted earlier in chapter 3, under the self-identity and self-congruency theories respectively, students want to associate with brands that resonate with their actual and social identities and subsequently associate with people who are like them. Balmford, Borland and Yong (2016) reiterated that customers can use brands to express and authenticate their self-identity by associating themselves with necessary qualities that have been linked to individuals of that brand; in this way, they can utilise brands to communicate their self-identity (image).

Furthermore, the theory of self-congruity grounded in this study, refers to the actual self. Liu et al. (2012) speculated that the influence of actual self is frequently more imperative than ideal self, social self, and/or ideal social self. Yet, with respect to the strong symbolic values linked with superior brands, the influence of ideal or social self can be more imperative for superior brands than that for non-superior brands (Liu et al., 2012). Brands are instrumental in assisting the customer to achieve a goal that is connected to his or her personal values (Paasovaara et al., 2012).

In this context, universities are perceived to be superior brands and TVET colleges, non-superior brands. The ideal or social self being more significant, merely reflects why universities are seen in such a positive light, while their counterpart, TVET colleges, still face negative associations. So, the symbolic elements associated with TVET colleges may currently be negative since the higher education choice is still skewed in favour of universities.

Symbolic benefits are key drivers behind superior brands. Strong symbolic features have a strong influence on image perception (Hunter & Suh, 2007). Bernritter, Verlegh and Smit, (2016) suggested that brand symbolism can impose the effects of emotion on customers' intention to endorse them; thus, if individuals want to express their emotions to others through endorsing brands, they would select brands which have the symbolic value to communicate this emotion.

Symbolic benefits are intangible attributes – like imagery (Liu et al., 2012). Liu et al. (2012) posited that the strong symbolic value associated with brands influences the ideal or social self. The symbolic element of branding highlights the considerations of

image (Michelson & Paadam, 2016). From the perspective of connecting customers' personal values to brand symbolism, the self-congruity theory is ideally placed (Paasovaara et al., 2012). Paasovaara et al. (2012) depicted that self-congruity theory proposes that customers prefer and select brands with symbolic meanings that are consistent with their self-concept. Keller (2008) maintained that a brand image is a symbolic concept shaped in consumers' minds and consists of all the information and expectations linked with a product or service. Furthermore, Lo, Tung and Huang (2017) implied that when customers are acquiring products, they are more likely to choose those brands that have popular names than those that they have never heard of before, which indicates that customers have symbolic and physical connections with the brand names.

Branding plays an important role in customers' willingness to be associated with a brand that offers added value for them through high quality, easily recognisable, positive associations and experiences and through unique features; this is in contrast with the brands that cannot propose such added value (Paasovaara et al., 2012).

In addition, Balmford, Borland and Yong (2016) maintained that branding is mostly important to enlarge differentiation between products or services by forming associations and images which lead to customers developing symbolic associations and emotional meaning which they come to value. Personal values might be an aspect of the symbolisation development of brand image (Burgess, 2017). This means that brand images should, to some degree, be partly comprised of personal value association (Burgess, 2017). Therefore, Mishra and Sharma (2016) argued that a brand name, as a symbolic element, is significant since it serves as a communication implement for customers' awareness. Consumers embrace the brand's image or are judged by others based on the brand's image; such a symbolic view therefore has high relevance within the realm of consumer behaviour (Hammerl et al., 2016).

Young people are known to place value on the symbolic meaning of brands, using them to create social identity which they then communicate to their friends. So, the student who possibly intends to study at a TVET college may do so if it helps them communicate a superior image to their peers and society. This is a difficult

undertaking as TVET colleges already have several negative meanings attached to them. Therefore, this study hypothesises that

H8:   Brand image has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector.

4.10 Brand reputation and brand distinctiveness

Marketing researchers and professionals have a growing interest in brand reputation – particularly, as the highly dynamic and competitive markets worldwide have shifted away from physical competition to psychological competition, with specific reference to reputation and identity (Wiedmann et al., 2011). Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) acknowledged that both academics and professionals agree that brand reputation is increasingly crucial for companies, and that for companies to be successful and profitable, they should have a positive brand reputation. While reputation is seen as an important resource to the company, then, it takes time to be established and can easily be damaged.

Higher education institutions also compete from a reputation standpoint and, in some instances, it is the single most important indicator of how they want to be seen by prospective students and society. In some contrast to this, however, Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) suggested that when students make a commitment to a higher education institution, a range of distinct elements influence their decision of which the brand performance and brand image concepts play key roles; fascinatingly, brand reputation is less significant. This study nonetheless maintains that a reputation is an organisation's overall appeal to its stakeholders – this being the prospective students and parents in the case of TVET colleges.

Akdeniz and Calantone (2015) asserted that a company with a high brand reputation has less reason to exaggerate quality or make a dishonest claim, as its credibility is based on the brand name exemplifying the collective effect of all previous marketing strategies and actions. This means that when quality is hard to assess, a company can use its reputation as a marketing indicator to highlight the continuous quality of its products and ease the consumer's uncertainty in decision making.

The empirical results provided by Wiedmann et al. (2011) indicated that brand reputation has a vital impact on the extent of attachment toward a brand, while Sheth and Sinha (2015) inferred that goodwill is an important resource benefiting not just

the company's operations but also their brand reputation. Brands that interchange from a shareholder to a stakeholder focus, by embracing sustainability principles that can enrich their corporate reputations, are expected to be commended by stakeholders because they go past wealth generation to a more emotionally intelligent leadership (Sheth & Sinha, 2015).

Academic research on branding of higher education institutions seeks to understand the level of connectedness between consumers (students) and brands to share their feelings and preference for the brand. However, the overall preference for brand relationships is unexplored in the current literature. The current study assumes that brand reputation is measured from the perceptions of key stakeholders (in this context, prospective students and, consequently, their parents) regarding what the college is, what it stands for and what it does. These outlooks limit the consideration of how higher education can enhance its position as a distinct brand and whether this distinctiveness then impacts its reputation – and, consequently a student's intention to study at a TVET college. Moreover, understanding how students create brand perceptions of a distinct brand allows for more profound insights into their responses to TVET colleges.

Based on the prior discussion and the empirical proof, therefore, it can be anticipated that brand reputation could have a strong influence on brand distinctiveness. This study thus hypothesises that

H9:   Brand reputation has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.

4.11 Brand heritage and brand distinctiveness

Globally there has been significant interest in the marketing of higher education institutions, particularly the empirical findings on the branding of these institutions (Rose, Rose & Merchant, 2017). Similarly, Hudson (2011) acknowledged that brand heritage is a developing construct within the marketing sphere, which proposes that the past status of older companies is predominately openly connected to their brand identity and customer appeal. While Pecot and De Barnier (2017) suggested that current literature on brand heritage involves the past, present, and future, it

nevertheless only reflects one way of highlighting that component in the positioning. Hence, this study examines the construct of higher education brand heritage.

Martino and Lovari (2016) maintained that heritage branding is supported by three main foundations, which each company variously mixes in its own communication strategy:

- company anniversaries, celebrating the major milestones of company history;
- historical archives, guaranteeing a stable investment in protecting and communicating companies' memory; and
- digital heritage, mixing the use of company website and social media to communicate branded information toward online communities.

While, findings from the study by Pecot and De Barnier (2017) revealed that brand heritage can be supported through revered or updated representations of the past, the latter leads to a market positioning based on three distinct characteristics: pioneer spirit, customer orientation, and flexibility. The former leads to a market positioning based on four dimensions: passion over profit, year on year improvement, safeguard product orientation, and special occasions.

The historic brands constitute a distinct conceptual category and require specific approaches to brand management that differ from those required for younger brands (Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007). Evidently, this extant literature highlights the importance of using brand heritage, which depends heavily on the past, as a key marketing strategy; but the present is equally important in the context of higher education. However, Hudson (2011) asserts that although brand heritage is in the present as a contemporary marketing issue and strategy, it generally inherently applies to the past. Insofar as TVETs may have a negative social image riddled with past perceptions, it can re-imagine and rebrand itself in a manner that its present and future market position will attract students, as most universities seem to be doing.

The history of a company and the history of its engagement with consumers are important elements in understanding the appeal of older brands. For instance, a company's brand personality is based on its heritage for providing a product and services consistently over time (Aaker, 1996). This will create a brand that is distinct,

which society can trust and be committed to. Rose et al. (2016) stated that brand heritage stimulates positive emotions, brings about trust, and enables brand attachment and commitment. Brand heritage adds sincerity and distinctiveness, brings authenticity and reduces risk (Dion & Borraz, 2015).

The distinctive value proposition for any company is its history. Aaker (1996) posited that the value of brands must be identified, and that distinct marketing strategies should be used to sustain and expand that value. Brand heritage, as an established concept, denotes how history plays a part that acts as a factor in managing the distinctiveness of the trademark and its proposed value (Akbari, Salehi and Samadi, 2015). Likewise, Moussa and De Barnier (2017) indicated in their study that brand trust mediates in the relationship between brand equity and brand heritage. Brand equity is critical in the development of a TVET brand since it emphasises the creation of a brand image, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty.

Drawing from the literature discussed, it is apparent that brand heritage influences brand distinctiveness. Thus, this study hypothesises that

H10:   Brand heritage has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector.

4.12   Brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness

Symbolism assists customers to form expectations based on unfamiliar brands (Fenko, Lotterman & Galetzka, 2016); it can be considered one of the components of product design and successful brand strategy (Fenko, Lotterman & Galetzka, 2016). Symbolic meanings are linked with brands that portray distinct qualities (Souiden & M'saad, 2011). A high level of brand symbolism increases the customers' intention to endorse brands (Bernritter, Verlegh & Smit, 2016).

As brand symbolism is closely linked to detecting the purposeful relationship the brand has with its customers, this study assumes that TVETs, in practice as perceived brands, are more distinct than universities. It is partially the heritage of the TVET brand that creates this distinctive brand, which does have a different

personality. As such, Kim and Hall (2014) devised that brand symbolism impacts customer perceptions of brand personality within a specific category.

Lloyd and Woodside (2013) and Aaker (1996) maintained that brand symbolism is understood to create unity for a brand's identity by making sure that brand qualities are remembered each time the brand symbol is seen. This perspective of a brand via a symbol helps customers distinguish between brands. The study by Souiden and M'saad (2011) showed the teenagers' understanding of the relationships between social identity and their perception of brand symbolism. Self-esteem was hypothesised to have a negative impact on susceptibility to peer influence. It is considered that once individuals identify with the brand's symbols, they can influence how distinctive the brand is to them. Notably, quite a few studies have proved that teenagers attach specific importance to brand symbolism and utilise it to communicate their identities (Souiden & M'saad, 2011; Grant & Stephen, 2006; Chaplin & John, 2005).

Brand cues are not merely important for expressing customer's identity and preferences; social interaction is also important and can be stimulated by appearance perception with brand cues capitalised with brand symbolisms (Kim & Hall, 2014). Similarly, Bernritter, Verlegh and Smit, (2016) posit that brand symbolism – which is the degree to which a brand symbolises the customer who is using it – has been proven to be critical in the creation of self-identity through the usage of brands and the construction of self-brand connections. This is in line with social identity theory identified earlier. The theory suggests that, on the one hand, one part of a customer's self-identity and social identity is due to the unique social associations' customers encounter. On the other hand, as perception of brand symbolism is seen to be meaningfully impacted by their self-esteem a low self-esteem is seen to be prognostic of the perception of brand symbolism (Souiden & M'saad, 2011).

Prospective students' heightened perception of the brand symbolism of TVETs could also influence their social identity and overall behavioural intention. Souiden and M'saad (2011) established that brand symbolism is utilised to distinguish oneself from group associations, which is the premise of social identity theory. While the theory prescribes group association based on an individual's own values, these

influencesfade for brands that are considered to be not connecting to anything about the brand's user.

This is significant as brand symbolism can communicate social group membership (Bernritter, Verlegh & Smit, 2016) and, to a degree, association. Based on this argument, this study suggests that, to some extent, students forge social connections within society; the tertiary institution at which they are studying creates an identity for the student. While students are creating their identity, and navigating through social connections, it will be even more crucial to develop a TVET brand that resonates with their identity; this could be achieved through a distinct brand. It is not merely about the meaning of the TVET brand, but more about the distinctiveness that students can observe about it, based on their awareness and understanding of the brand. Thus, this study hypothesises that

H11: Brand symbolism has a positive impact on brand dostinctiveness in the TVET sector.

4.13 Brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college

Behavioural intentions are the noticeable information or instant antecedent of customers for carrying out a certain behaviour which is under their full volitional control (Najib & Tabassi, 2015). Customers evaluate a brand's perceived intentions and capability and these perceptions provoke distinct emotions and drive differential brand behaviours (Kervyn, Fiske & Malone, 2012). Najib and Tabassi (2015) determined that behavioural intentions can be classified into two types: favourable behavioural intentions which comprise loyalty thought; and unfavourable behavioural intentions which lie about disloyalty thought. Sengupta, Balaji and Krishnan (2015) noted that behavioural intentions are reliant on the assessment of the recovery efforts, irrespective of the equity committed with the brand.

Wong & Merrilees (2005) asserted that it is critical that a company positions its goods or services in a unique manner, thus distinguishing them from those of its competitors; this brand distinctiveness provides firms with a marketing edge to excel against competitors. Service quality adds to the company's success by influencing customers' behavioural intention (Rajaguru, 2016).

Identity is principled by senses of distinctiveness, self-efficacy, self-esteem and continuity (Wang & Wu, 2011). Such a conceptualisation of identity makes the self-congruity theory a suitable framework for understanding the influence of distinctiveness on students' intention toward TVET colleges. Earlier research in the 1990s has assessed the impact of identity and attitude formation of individuals toward a brand and on their ensuing behaviours (Wang & Wu, 2011). Little attention, however, has been placed on brand distinctiveness and its impact on an individual's attitudes, which subsequently affects the social identities constructed by them.

Because brand distinctiveness represents the degree to which a brand represents a customer's identity through symbolic meaning, students are more likely to perceive brands as distinct. The study suggests that students who identity with the TVET brand are more likely to endorse the brand socially in group settings in order to validate and communicate their identity to society. It is worth noting that brand distinctiveness is conditional upon students' brand attitude towards TVETs.

Yasin, Noor and Mohamad (2007) mentioned that the customers' preference, intention and brand choice to a certain brand indicate the customers' favourable responses to the marketing activities of the brand, in contrast with other brands. Since CBBE occurs when the customer is acquainted with the brand and holds some favourable, powerful, distinct brand associations in their memory (Yasin, Noor & Mohamad, 2007; Keller, 1993), preference, intention and choice behaviour of a brand shows the presence of brand equity. By and large, a negative attitude will therefore affect the extent to which students observe the uniqueness and significance of TVET colleges. The current study does not reveal whether students have a different attitude and behavioural intention towards TVETs, however.

Therefore, based on the prior discussion, it is expected that brand distinctiveness has an influence on learners' behavioural intention to study. This study therefore hypothesises that

H12:   *Brand distinctiveness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.*

4.14 Gaps in the literature

Upon reviewing relevant literature and the conceptual framework, the researcher has identified some causal relational gaps which increased the justification for the composition of this conceptual framework (see Figure 13). This study hopes to fill some of those gaps. Overall, the literature reviewed in the previous sections warrants the empirical testing of the 12 hypotheses prosposed in this study.

In the context of higher education branding the importance of institutional brand awareness on perceived overall reputation is noted by Brewer and Zhao (2010) – while Lomer et al. (2016) found that through brand awareness tactics, institution use their own unique heritage to market themselves to appeal to prospective students. Dewar et al, (2012) note that communication of a heritage is important for a institutions to build their brand, while in other contexts, brand heritage was found to mediate the relationship between brand identity and brand awareness (Michelson & Paadam, 2016). Lastly, Homburg, et al. (2012) argue that a brand's symbols are important for the creation of brand awareness to differentiate them from those of their competitors. These examples show how brand awareness is influenced by an organisation's brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism. Yet no literature is available on Google Scholar, Emerald searches and EBScoHost on these relationships or empirical findings.

Concerning the relationship between brand image and brand reputation, in the higher education context constructs such as institutional image and institutional reputation are recognised as a positioning strategy (Nguyen & LeBlanc, 2001). While brand reputation and brand image are constructs that have been explored in the higher education context (Khanna, et al., 2014; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006), they have not been explored in a conceptual model or studied together to assess if they have a relationship with each other. More so, Nguyen and LaBlanc (2001) argue that there is little evidence to support the relationship between an institution's image and reputation.

Brand prestige is also established in the higher education branding literature as a student and university identification strategy to attract students (Hemsley-Brown, et al., 2016). Prestige and reputation are also key influencers in the building of a university brand image model (Sung & Yang, 2008).

Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) acknowledged brand reputation is less significant when considering a range of distinct elements that influence a student's decision. This study is arguing that brand reputation influences the institution's distinct offering to prospective students. As argued by Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), a company's brand reputation is important for its success. This relationship needs empirical evident to support the hypothesised relationship, which has not been established in existing literature.

The extent of the relationship between brand image and brand symbolism is not clear. For example, Hakala, et al. (2011) recognise brand heritage as encompassing brand image. In fact, no literature is identified to support this relationship. There is a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between brand image and brand awareness. Hammerl et al. (2016) identified that brand image should also be understood from the relevance of a symbolic view of a brand.

Another relationship proposed in this study is that of brand heritage and brand distinctiveness. The implication is that brand heritage brings about distinctiveness to any organisation (Dion & Borraz, 2015). Innovation is often included in the discussion of distinctiveness; for example, the findings from the study conducted by Moussa and De Barnier (2017) reveal a substantial relationship between brand heritage and brand perceived innovativeness.

However, brand distinctiveness has not been investigated in the higher education literature, although most institutions are striving for reputation and trying to establish what make them different compared to their competitors. While heritage is becoming more important, this field is still developing with limited research having been done on higher education heritage and its impact on students' intentions to choose an institution (Rose, Rose & Merchant, 2017). As there is limited research that has looked at how heritage and distinctiveness influence any brand, this study plans to contribute to filling this gap and adding to the existing literature which provides some foundation for this relationship to be explored.

According to Bernritter, Verlegh and Smit, (2016), higher levels of brand symbolism enhance customers' intention to publicly engage brands, and is utilised to distinguish oneself from another (Souiden & M'saad (2011). It is evident that there is some connection between brand symbolism and creating a distinct brand. This warrants

further inquiry in the literature, which has not established a solid relationship or empirical support for this relationship. This study intends to close this gap in literature.

Lastly, in order to engage grade 12 learners in the prospect of attending TVET colleges, it is important to understand their perceptions regarding the distinctiveness of the brand and their behavioural intentions towards studying at these higher education institutions. While Triandewi and Tjiptono (2013) state that a sense of distinctiveness and exclusiveness translates into customers' intention to perform behaviour, the literature has not established the importance of brand distinctiveness as a factor that drives students' intentions to apply at an institution. Although, Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) found distinct institutional brand from a prospective student could influence their intention to apply, what is evident from the literature is the importance of teaching quality and institutional reputation (Kusumawati, 2010), class and race (Sianou-Kyrgiou & Tsiplakides, 2011).

It is through addressing these gaps in the understandings of how these hypothesised relationships will manifest in the higher education context that this study is able to provide some empirical findings and contributes to current literature. It will also offer an opportunity to scholars to close this gap in other contexts.

4.15 Summary of the chapter

This study proposes ten hypotheses to measure the impact of branding on students' behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. As discussed in this chapter through the guidance of existing literature, key relationships are evident: brand awareness has an influence on brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism respectively, while brand image has an influence on brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism respectively. Furthermore, brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism respectively have an impact on brand distinctiveness. Lastly, brand distinctiveness has an influence on behavioural intention to study.

These relationships have been empirically tested in the literature, and found to be significant; as such, the same is expected in this study. The next chapter details how this study has tested these relationships through a carefully selected sample of grade 12 learners.

Chapter 5:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1   Introduction

A higher education institution's brand strategy must be strongly supported by methodical research evidence (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014). Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) pointed to a critical gap between the brand perceptions of both external and internal stakeholders which, in this case, would comprise differences between current and potential students. In general, potential students would have negative views of TVET colleges as this is the view commonly held in South African society.

This chapter presents the research paradigm and research approach used in this study. A review of research designs and sample methods is presented and the research instrument, questionnaire design and the pilot test are explained. An overview of the data analysis method is discussed. The chapter ends by reviewing the reliability, validity and model fit of this study and reports on the ethical considerations that have been met.

5.2   Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the development and nature of knowledge (Collins, 2010); the theory of the philosophy is crucial to any research procedure (Mangan, Lalwani & Gardner, 2004). There are three types of research philosophy typically considered in research on marketing: pragmatic, constructivist and post-positivist.

The pragmatic approach focuses on integrating perspectives and approaches and is widely used in a mixed method approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner (2007) while the constructivist approach assumes that each person decides on his or her own meaning (O'Connor, 2015). Post-positivism is the research philosophy that has been used in this study, however, as it investigates the relationship between predictors, mediators and output variables. Post-positivist scholars examine the causes that impact on the outcome, to further divide ideas into smaller ideas such as the concepts that inform the hypothesis development (Creswell, 2013). Following a critical analysis of the literature, this study then developed a conceptual research

model which included developing ten research hypotheses to test the relationships between variables.

In keeping with Creswell's (2013) assertion that knowledge using a post-positivist philosophy is developed using a quantitative research approach, this approach has been selected, for this study.

5.3   Research methods

A research method is a procedure to undertake social research (Bryman, 2012). Neuman (2014) describes it as designing and developing a study to guide a researcher during the research process, while Creswell (2012) defines it as the procedures and the actions describing methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Researchers have three research methods at their disposal namely, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research is non-numerical, such that the data collected cannot be quantified or measured in numbers (Youssef, Giaccardi & Pellicelli, 2016; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), while the data collected in a quantitative research is numerical and can be assessed in quantitative measures (Youssef, Giaccardi & Pellicelli, 2016, Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009).

The debate between qualitative and quantitative researchers is built upon the differences in expectations about what reality is, and if it is measurable (Newman & Ridenour, 1998); there are differences of opinion about how researchers can best understand what they "know," whether via subjective or objective methods. Scholars such as Fremeth, Holburn and Richter (2013) and Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki (2008) have debated the relative evidence of quantitative and qualitative empirical research methodologies when measuring causal relationships between phenomena of interest. That being said, while qualitative research allows in-depth examination of relationships that quantitative research cannot accomplish, the findings are not easily modified to an estimation of the extent or direction of a phenomenon's influences (Fremeth, Holburn & Richter, 2016). As a result, most scholars in higher education branding have employed a more quantitative research approach; hence this study has also done so, as outlined in the next section

As already noted, this study used the quantitative research method to examine the relationship between branding and behavioural intention, with brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand distinctiveness as mediating variables.

5.3.1 Quantitative research

Marketing has adopted a post-positivist philosophy to research and theory development (Murshed & Zhang, 2016) It uses a quantitative approach to seek explanatory findings that emphasise impartiality, generalisability and reliability (Murshed & Zhang, 2016). Most quantitative research methods, irrespective of their theoretical differences, stress that there is a shared reality on which individuals can agree (Newman & Ridenour, 1998).

Quantitative research is numerically inclined, needs exact measurements of constructs, and frequently comprises statistical analyses to measure pre-specified hypotheses (Reiss, 2011). Reiss (2011) added that statistical methods describe patterns and connections, structural research models that describe relationships between constructs in data, and experimental studies that test causal effects.

The advantage of a quantitative research strategy is that its results can generate scientific, reliable data that can often be generalised to a larger population (Bein, 2009). Quantitative research plays a vital role in progressing research, allowing scholars to test and improve theoretically-motivated relationships, and to go beyond modest connections towards causal inferences (Fremeth et al., 2016).

5.3.2 Relevance of quantitative research in higher education branding research

Bryman et al. (2014) noted that quantitative research is critical for testing theories. As such, quantitative approach starts with a theory (or hypothesis) and tests for acceptance or rejection of hypotheses. This approach was therefore suitable for this study given that it seeks to test ten hyphotheses as a way to understand and examine the relationship between marketing literature on branding and research on higher education, with an emphasis on TVET.

5.4   Research design

There are numerous definitions of research design – summed up as being the process by which data is gathered to develop and address the research problem. Bryman (2012) stated that a research design reflects decisions about the preferences given to the scope of the research process - while Makhitha, Kant and Theron (2016) proposed that a research design is the framework for directing a research project, as it specifies the actions necessary for obtaining the knowledge required to develop the research problem. Similarly, Malhotra & Peterson (2006) regarded research design as the arrangement for conducting a research undertaking, describing the process needed to gather the data to explain the research problem.

Bryman (2012) proposed five types of research design techniques: cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study, comparative, and experimental – all of which fall within the broader categories of descriptive, exploratory and causal research design. Malhotra (2010) described the purpose of a descriptive research design as being to describe key market characteristics or functions; it seeks to accurately portray and reflect the findings obtained in the measuring of the target population being observed (Winch et al., 2014). Causal research design describes the qualities of a conclusive research design as it uses a quantitative approach of data analysis (Malhotra, 2010).

This study has used a descriptive research design as it is suitable to identify patterns (in behaviour in the higher education market) and the main purpose of this study is to gather insights into branding affecting behaviourial intention (higher education choice) among grade 12 learners. By using a descriptive design, it has been able to make specific predictions about how grade 12 learners feel towards TVETs by understanding their perceptions in the broader context of higher education using the ten hypotheses developed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the study has also used a causal research design to test a cause-and-effect relationship. This study did not employ an experimental construct which could change the perceptions of customers over time (Malhotra, 2010) as changing perceptions was not its aim.

Given that this study was not interested in altering behaviour over time, and given the time constraints in undertaking this study, a descriptive, cross-sectional research design was used.

5.4.1 Cross-sectional research design

Descriptive research can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Malhotra (2010) described cross-sectional research design as involving the collection of data from a given sample of the targeted population only once, while longitudinal research design uses repeated measurements from a fixed sample over a considerable amount of time. Levin (2006) and Mann (2003) indicated that a cross-sectional study is useful when testing the link or relationship between constructs; Malhotra (2010) added that one of the advantages of using a cross-sectional research design is that it is inexpensive and quite quick to perform.

A cross-sectional design was used in this study as it is the descriptive research design which is frequently used in marketing research, particularly when data is collected only once from a target sample population (Malhotra, 2010).

5.5   Research sampling procedures

Malhotra (2010) and Green (1979) mentioned that the research procedure consists of key components that add to an appropriate sampling procedure. These components comprise defining the target population, sample size, sampling method, and sampling frame to be used in this research, each of which are dicussed in the next sub-sections.

5.5.1 Target population

When defining a target population, a researcher should clearly indicate the characteristics of the target population that apply directly to the study. The description of the study population is essential for the preparation and running of any test (Klein & Meyskens, 2001). Neuman (2014) and Babbie (2015) said that a large target population is the basis from which a sample is to be selected and results generalised. Malhotra (2010) added that the population is defined as the consolidation of elements or subjects which are of interest to the researcher.

All registered grade 12 learners from high schools in Gauteng formed the population for this study. The relevance of these learners within a TVET and branding context is that the study wanted respondents who were at a point in their education/academic career where they may be looking at options in higher education studies, as this

increased the likelihood that they might have been exposed to TVET knowledge - or planned to be so in the future. As the study was conducted in June/July of their final year at school, the assumption was that, they would be making their choices within the next few months in order to submit applications early enough for the following year. They would be doing so in the particularly rich context of higher education which reflects the complexities and pressures of the South African education system.

5.5.2 Sample size

The sample size is described as the exact basis of a population which were selected to take part in the study (Malhotra, 2010); it refers to the subjects used in a study (Yang et al., 2006).

Malhotra (2010) postulated that an appropriate sample size should be larger than 200 respondents and must be between the common range of 300 and 500 respondents. Wong, Tong & Wong (2017) supported the earlier suggestion by Larson et al. (2004) however, who indicated that a sample size should be 10 times more than the number of measurement items of the most intricate construct in a questionnaire.

A study by Koenig-Lewis et al. (2016) on brand identification in higher education used a sample of 791 respondents – while Dennis et al. (2017) used a sample of 605 respondents in a study on brand attachment in higher education. Lock (2017) used a sample of 230 to examine the impact of brand knowledge in higher education. While Wong, Tong & Wong (2017) sent 2000 questionnaires to students, 1,170 useable questionnaires were received to measure the relationship of higher education institution brand in relation to teacher quality and student satisfaction. Similarly, a study on brand alliance in higher education had an initial sample frame of 779 learners and a response of 437, of which only 256 were usable questionnaires (Naidoo & Hollebeek, 2016).

In contrast to the large sample size numbers above, some studies have looked at a smaller sample sizes; for instance, Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007) used 30 respondents for their study on brand harmonisation in the higher education sector.

The sample for this study was drawn from all registered grade 12 learners in Gauteng in 2018 which the Gauteng Department of Education (2018) reported to be 103 065. An allowance of a 95% confidence level was allowed, using a 5% confidence interval.

The estimated sample size of 383 was based on the Raosoft sample size calculator. The basis of the calculation included a 5% margin of error, 95% confidence level and 50% response distribution. The sample interval was calculated by dividing population/sample size: therefore, 103 065 / 383 equals 269. To decrease possible bias and sampling errors, a sample of 467 participants was targeted – which is also large enough to prevent an error of inaccurate representation of the grade 12 target population. Of the 467 questionnaires distributed, 336 were completed (71.95%) freom which 35 were removed due to a high selection of a neutral response. The final sample size was 301.

The sample was drawn from an existing database. Starting from one and repeatedly adding 269 intervals, the 269th schools from a list of 616 public high schools were selected. Three high schools which were selected from the list in this way – and the 467 research respondents were all grade 12 learners attending these schools as seen in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1: Sampled schools

District	Emis number	Institution name	Number of Grade 12 Learners
Ekurhuleni North	700160184	Bedfordview High School	70
Johannesburg East	700130070	Kensington Secondary School	184
Tshwane South	700220962	Phateng Secondary School	213
		TOTAL	**467**

Source: Author's own (2018)

Interestingly, Phateng Seconday School is adjacent to the Tshwane TVET College – while the others are not near a TVET college.

5.5.3 Sample and sampling method

A sampling method should be simple and efficient to implement and should cover various approaches to measure the sample to be generally applicable (Grafström, 2010). Researchers can use probability or non-probability as a method of sampling.

Probability sampling consists of a random procedure with which every person in the target population has the same chance of being selected (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). Five probability sampling methods used for quantitative research are simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and multi-stage sampling. This study used a systematic random sampling, which is defined as the researcher selecting the nth item on a list. According to Malhotra and Birks (2012), systematic sampling involves the selection of research respondents from a reliable sampling frame, making use of a skip interval. To calculate the sample, the population must be divided by the number of respondents needed for the sample.

As noted above, the systemic approach used in this study entailed selecting every 269th subject from a reliable sampling frame of 616 subjects.

5.6 Questionnaire design

A research instrument is a tool containing questions or statements designed to obtain information suitable for analysis (Babbie, 2015). An important part of a quantitative research methodology is creating the appropriate research instrument and measurement scales to precisely collect the relevant information and capture the vital data from the target sample.

Visser, Krosnick and Lavrakas (2000) described a questionnaire as an organised set of questions given to individuals within the target market while Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) identified three distinct characteristics of questionnaires: firstly, their purpose is to yield quantitative accounts of some parts of the studied population. Secondly, the common form of collecting data is by asking individuals structured and predefined questions; and thirdly, data is usually collected through a sample of a study population in a way as to generalise the results to the population. Questionnaires can be cross-sectional or longitudinal research instruments, with the goal of generalising from a small sample to a large population (Creswell, 2013).

A self-administered questionnaire was used in this study; it aimed to expose and convey meaning regarding the perceptions, feelings and attitudes that grade 12 learners', as prospective TVET students, have towards the relationship between branding and TVET colleges. The questionnaire was designed and testedfor the sole purpose of this study.

5.6.1 Structure and content

The questionnaire – given in Appendix A – was divided into two sections: section A recorded the demographic profile of the respondents and section B measured the respective constructs used in this study, using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (5) 'strongly agree'.

The structure of the questionnaire was based on the seven constructs in the conceptual model being tested, the measures for several of these having come from the literature. These included the following:

* four measurement items for brand awareness were adapted from a study by Loureiro (2013), which had a composite reliability score of 0.87;
* five measurement items for brand image were adapted from a study by Lien et al. (2015), which was found to have a composite reliability score of 0.89;
* five measurement items for brand reputation were adapted from a study by Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), which had a Cronbach alpha score of 0.90;
* eight measurement items for brand heritage were adapted from a study by Wiedmann et al. (2011), which was found to have a composite reliability score of 0.96 and Cronbach alpha score of 0.95;
* four measurement items for brand symbolism were adapted from a study by Bhat and Reddy (1998) and was found to have a Cronbach alpha score of 0.89;
* seven measurement items for brand distinctiveness were adapted from a study by Yasin, Noor and Mohamad (2007), which had a reliability coefficient score of 0.95; and lastly,
* four measurement items for behavioural intention to study were adapted from a study by Lin (2006) and was found to have a Cronbach alpha score of 0.97.

These measurement scales clearly indicate a high level of internal consistency of reliability above the recommended threshold of 0.7.

5.6.2 Questionnaire pilot test

Pre-testing is defined by Malhotra (2010) as the examining of a questionnaire on a minor group of respondents to find and eliminate potential problems in the research instrument; to detect and remove potential mistakes in order to improve the questionnaire.

Forty respondents who were familiar with TVET were selected from the sampled respondents to pre-test the questionnaire. This pilot test was conducted to find out if the scale items were well understood, to ensure there was minimal jargon and to see if it was correctly used by these particular respondents.

The researcher observed the respondents completing the questionnaire, after which each respondent was asked to give feedback on the questionnaire and on the overall experience. Modifications were made to the questions until the corrected questionnaires were administered These answers were discarded in the final data set.

5.7   Data collection procedure

The three selected high schools who were approached to obtain consent for their respective students to participate all agreed. (See their letters of permission in Appendices B to D). Thereafte 500 copies of the questionnaire, along with a range of accompanying documents, were hand delivered to the schools and given to a designated school representative selected by the school principal. The accompanying documents – given in Appendices E to I – comprised a consent form, and for learners under the age of 18 years, an assent form and a parent/guardian consent letter. In addition, copies of the ethical clearance certificate from the University of Witwatersrand and approval letter from the Gauteng Department of Education were included.

The participants (learners) were asked to carefully read the consent/ assent form to ensure that they understood the study as well as their role and rights. These also briefly described what a TVET college is, but gave no other substantive information about the contents of the study. The questionnaires were completed anonymously, and confidentiality was assured. The researcher was not present when they completed the questionnaires, to avoid interviewer bias. He phoned the principals to

ensure the procedures were duly followed, however and collected the completed questionnaires from each school.

5.8   Data analysis

Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012) identified two types of analysis used to interpret quantitative data, namely descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis condenses data by means of frequency distributions and percentage distribution (Zikmund, 2004); it enables the researcher to interpret and understand the data. Inferential analysis, on the other hand, enables the researcher to make generalisations about the population based on the sample (Holcomb, 2016).

In this study, descriptive analyses were produced, and inferential analysis tests completed.

This study also used structural equation model (SEM) – which is one of the most influential types of research data analyses.

5.8.1   Structural equation model (SEM)

Richter et al. (2016) reported that SEM has been commonly used to study complex research models in marketing research – although it has become a respected statistical technique to test theory in several fields of knowledge (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Nusair & Hua, 2010).

Various scholars have defined and described SEM. Qureshi and Kang (2015) defined SEM as a multivariate statistical technique, mostly used when studying relationships between latent variables and observed variables that constitute a model. According to Suhr (2006), it is a statistical method for the depiction, approximation and testing of relationships between constructs; it tests hypotheses against measured constructs. SEM is said to assists researchers to understand patterns of correlations between measured constructs (Suhr, 2006); it enables them to test complete theories and concepts (Hair et al., 2012), and is a tool for analysing multivariate data that has long been known in marketing to be particularly fitting for theory testing (Bentler, 2010).

SEM goes past the usual regression models to include multiple dependent and independent variables as well as hypothetical latent variables that groups of observed variables might represent (Bentler, 2010). It also provides a method to test the identified set of relationships between observed and latent variables. Furthermore, Violato and Hecker (2007) stated that one of the major advantages of SEM over other methods is that it is a confirmatory approach that tests hypothesised relationships between constructs and is a multivariate technique.

Within the higher education branding context, Dennis et al. (2017) used SEM to measure brand characteristics and brand relationships to measure brand attachment strength among students.

SEM primarily follows one of two measures: covariance-based SEM and composite-based partial least SEM (Hair et al., 2017). A strong theoretical foundation is the basis of covariance-based SEM, which scholars use for model development (Richter et al., 2016). While the covariance-based SEM approach is most frequently used Richter et al. (2016) argued that the field's complex nature and the early stage of theory development, require a partial least squares SEM approach. In contrast to covariance-based SEM, partial least squares SEM emphasises prediction and exploration, can handle intricate models, and concurrently reduces the demands on data as well as the requirement of relationships. The partial least squares method has been acknowledged as the most suitable for SEM studies (Hubona, 2009).

The analysis in this study was based on a partial least squares (PLS) grounded SEM; it used Smart PLS software to analyse the data.

5.8.2 PLS-SEM

PLS is a variance-based SEM that has gained popularity among researchers. Nitzl, Roldan and Cepeda (2016) posited that PLS-SEM enables researchers to measure hypotheses in complex models; that while most research can test hypotheses, most neglect the mediating effect. This bias ignores the fact that a direct relationship is mediated by another relationship (Nitzl, Roldan & Cepeda, 2016).

Hair et al. (2017) argued that PLS has a higher statistical influence and has gained momentum compared to factor-based SEM.

SEM involves two phases: the first phase is the measurement model consisting of reliability and validity; and the second phase is path modelling which consists of model fit, path co-efficient and significance.

5.9   Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are important in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013); they ensure that the constructs measured are in line with the theoretical concepts.

5.9.1   Convergent and discriminant validity

A measurement item must measure what it is supposed to measure. One of the commonly used validity measures for SEM are convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity proves that a measurement instrument is highly correlated with instruments measuring connected constructs (Heale & Twycross, 2015) – while discriminant validity has become a generally accepted precondition for the analysis of latent variables relationships (Henseler et al., 2015).

By and large, as all measurement items are different from one another, there is convergent and discriminant validity when the co-efficient scores are below 0.85 (Chinomona, 2013). Discriminant and convergent validity of the measurement items was assessed by comparing each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell-Larcker Criterion, Cross-Loadings and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015).

Richter et al. (2016) identified guidelines and compliances of both convergent and discriminant validity, provided in the context of international research from a SEM perspective.

Table 5. 2: Guidelines and compliances with SEM

Assessment	Guideline
Convergent validity	<u>Guideline:</u> report AVE; acceptable scores: ⩾0.5 <u>Compliance:</u> 33 studies using SEM in international research reported information; all AVEs were reported and met the acceptable score of 0.5
Discriminant validity	<u>Guideline:</u> report Fornell and Larcker (1981); principle that each variable's AVE should be greater than its squared correlation with any other variable. Each indicator must load highest on the variable it is envisioned to measure to report cross-loadings. <u>Future guideline:</u> Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations to measure discriminant validity in SEM with acceptable scores <0.85

Source: Richter et al. (2016).

5.9.2 Reliability

Heale and Twycross (2015) defined reliability as the accurate measure of a research instrument; that it consistently has the same results to prior studies. Furthermore, Rogelberg et al. (2002) acknowledged that reliability is concerned with measurement error.

Before contracting the formulated hypothesis, reliability is calculated using Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. A composite reliability score should be above 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As the recommended threshold of 0.7 was suggested by Nunnally (1978), this study must meet Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7.

The Cronbach alpha score and composite reliability score is measured using Smart PLS. However, as Loureiro (2013) proposed that composite reliability is regarded as being a more precise reliability measurement than the Cronbach's alpha, this study has used both to obtain a more conclusive measure.

5.10 Model fit

Nusair and Hua (2010) asserted that model fit is the degree to which the projected hypothetical model was genuine as shown by the collected data. The model fit assessment reflects on how well the sample data fits previous models (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008).

A model fit analysis was performed using Smart PLS 3 as well as SPSS Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS) 25 to access the measurement model. The first part of the model fit analysis performed the R Square and f Square tests, as well as the estimated fit indices such as Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). The second part of the model fit analysis was performed using AMOS 25.

The categories and values that are acceptable for model fit testing are as follows:
- Chi-square value <0.3;
- Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) <0.08;
- Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) >0.90;
- Incremental fit index (IFI) >0.90;
- Tucker Lewis index (TLI) <0.90;
- Normed-fit index (NFI) >0.90 and
- Comparative fit index (CFI) >0.90.

5.11 Mediating effect

According to Nitzl, Roldan and Cepeda, 2016 (2016) the mediating effect is considered as a third party that acts as a connecting variable between the independent and dependent variable. The basis of the mediation effect test is the order of direct relationships in which a predictor variable influences a mediating variable and consequently influences the dependent variable (Nitzl, Roldan & Cepeda, 2016). Mediation assists with the development of a process and prediction (Shmueli et al., 2016).

This study followed the mediator analysis procedure as set by Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010) illustrated in Figure 5.1.
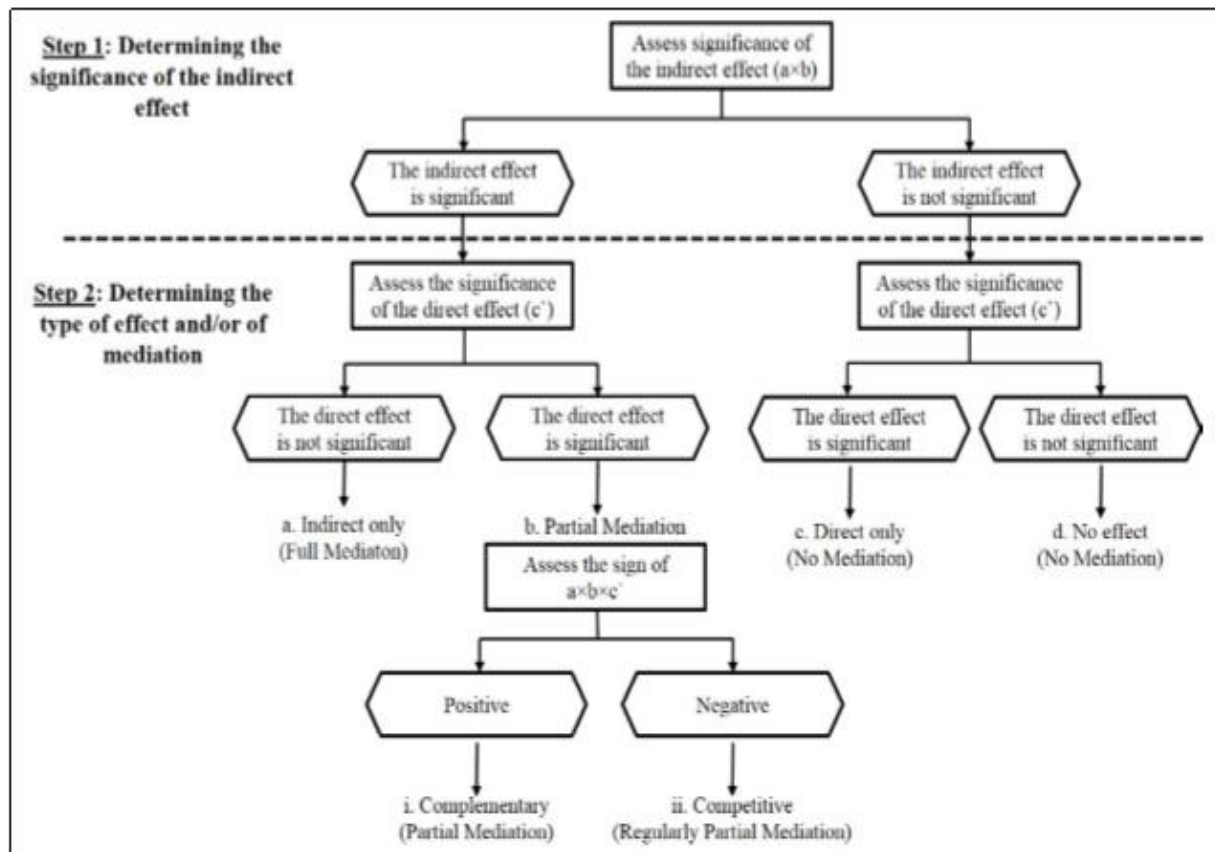
Figure 5. 1: Mediation analysis procedure

Source: Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010)

5.12 Ethical considerations

Permission was requested from – and granted by - the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct research with grade 12 learners at the three schools (Approval letter given in appendix I). Each school was then contacted to obtain consent and to make the necessary arrangements for data collection.

In cases where learners were under the age of 18 – considered to be a vulnerable category for research purposes – they were required to obtain written consent from their parents (appendix G) and sign an assent form (appendix F) to be a participant in the study. None of the respondents in this study were under the age of 18, however.

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Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from the University of Witwatersrand (certificate given in appendix H). The study was required to ensure that participation was voluntary, and that no respondent was harmed or threatened to participate in the study. The study assured respondents that their data would be anonymous and confidential; as such the self-administrated questionnaire which they completed did not require any personal or identifiable information from the participants.

5.13 Summary of the chapter

This study intended to determine that there is a positive relationship between branding and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college among grade 12 learners. TVET in higher education is an area that lacks decisive and empirical research in terms of isolating brand dimensions to analyse and understand the impact of each individual dimension on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. This brand specific relationship is based on the various aspects of branding, namely, brand image, brand awareness, brand reputation, brand heritage as well as brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention.

This chapter identified post-positivism as a suitable research philosophy, and a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional, descriptive research design.

A sample size of 383 grade 12 learners was obtained based on the Raosoft sample size calculator - although 467 participants were ultimately targeted. They were required to complete self-administered questionnaires, designed to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity.

A systematic random probability sample in turn, influenced the data collection procedure and decision.

PLS SEM was applied to empirically measure the ten hypotheses proposed in the conceptual model using smart PLS 3.

Chapter 6:
PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

6.1   Introduction

The primary objective of the study was to examine the relationship between brand awareness and brand image, as well as brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness of TVET and, ultimately, behavioural intentions to study there. It specifically examined the path through which brand knowledge structure held by prospective grade 12 learners of TVET colleges influence their intentions to study at the colleges. To prove these relationships, which were the basis of the twelve hypotheses, data were collected from 301 learners at three high schools in Gauteng by using the systematic random sampling method.

Following the initial presentation of the the descriptive results, the second part of this chapter presents the reliability and validity results while the last part presents the results of the model fit, path modelling and hypothesis test.

6.2   Descriptive results

This section presents the demographic gender and race profiles of the respondents and where they intend to study after matriculating, reporting any plans they might have to apply at a higher education institution, and a TVET college. It presents their understandings of TVET colleges as well as any links to TVET colleges they might have had through parents, siblings or friends. Overall, the data should give a picture of the extent to which TVETs are a preferred higher education choice among the respondents.

Lastly, descriptive statistics present the measurement scale results.

6.2.1 Gender

The total sample was 301. More than half of the respondents were females – acounting for 53.16% of all respondents, while 46.84% were males.
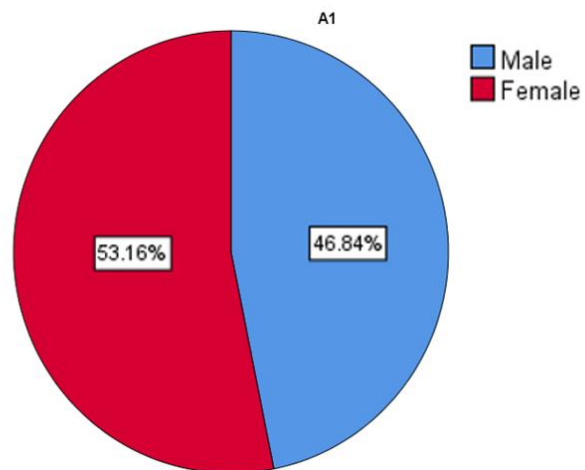
Figure 6. 1: Gender of the respondents

6.2.2 Race

The sampling method used to select the respondents was skewed towards a Black African demographic, resulting in 95.68% of the respondents being Black African. Whites and Coloureds represented 1.33% and 1.00% of the respondents respectively, while 1.99% of the respondents were Indian. Powell and McGarth (2013) note that since 2002, the student population in the TVET college sector has largely been Black African (85%). In light of this, it was particularly important to get data from Black African students.
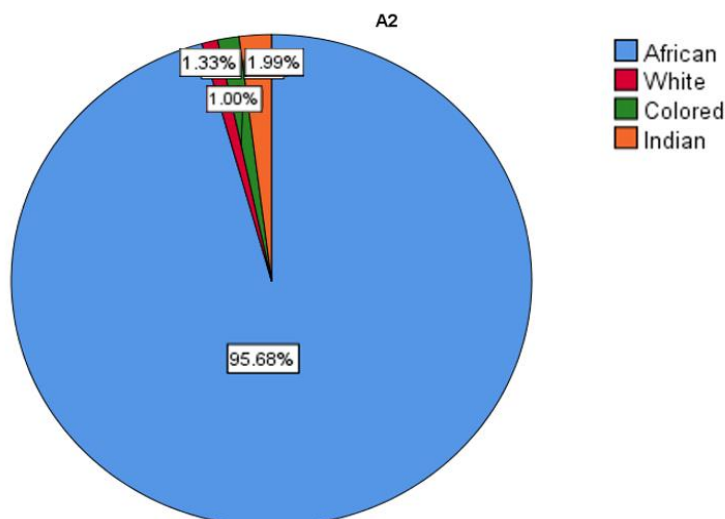
Figure 6. 2: Race of the respondents

6.2.3 High schools

The majority of the respondents – 45.51% – were from Kensington Secondary School, while 38.87% and 15.61% respondents were from Phateng Secondary School and Bedfordview High School respectively.
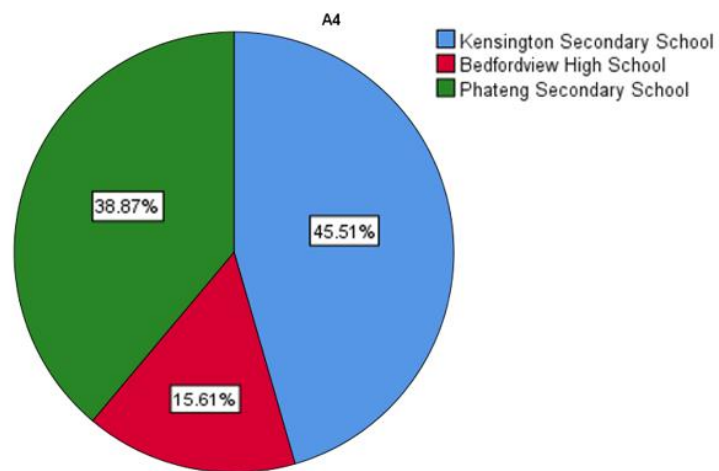
Figure 6. 3: High schools attended by the respondents

6.2.4 Intentions to apply at a higher education institution

Nearly two thirds (62.46%) of the respondents intended to apply at a university. This is consistent with the literature that posits that socially, universities are seen as an esteemed higher education institution and are the most desirable choice. 18.94% of the respondents indicated that they intended to apply at a university of technology, while 12.62% selected a TVET college. 5.98% of the respondents indicated that they were not planning to study at any higher education institution.
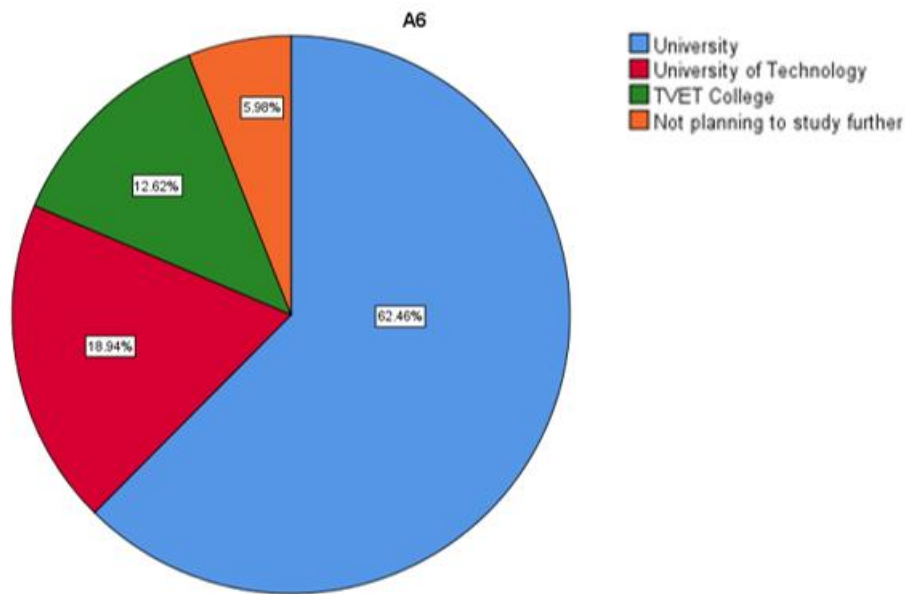
Figure 6. 4: Intentions to apply at a higher education institution

6.2.5 Did any of your parents, siblings or friends attend a TVET college?

Nearly a quarter (24.58%) of the respondents indicated that a parent, sibling or friend had attended a TVET college – while 75.42% indicated they had not.
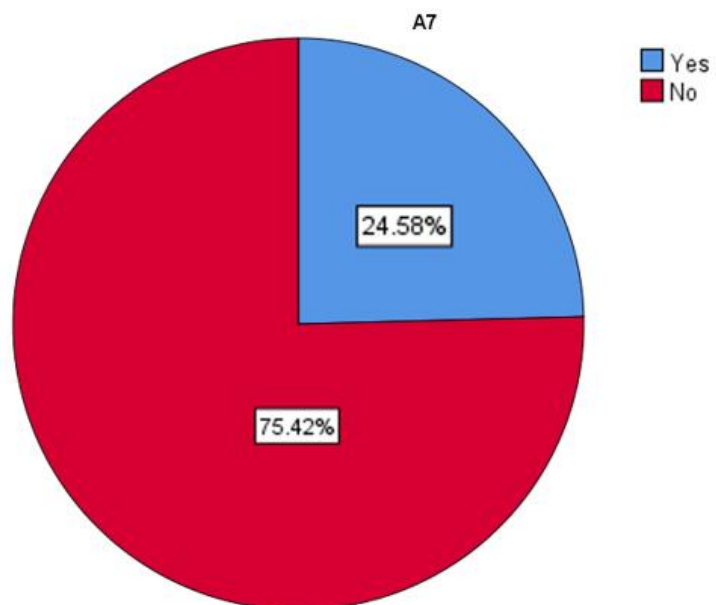
Figure 6. 5: Whether repondents had parents, siblings or friends who had attended a TVET college

6.2.6 Would you tell your friends to apply at a TVET college?

In contrast to the results in Figure 6.6 – in which only 12.62% of the respondents said they intended applying to a TVET college – 71.43% of the respondents indicated that they would tell their friends to apply to a TVET college. The rest (28.57%) said they would not do so.
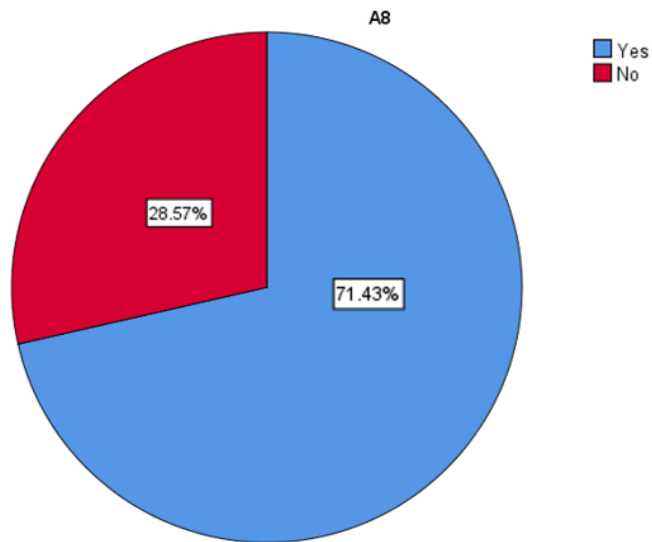
Figure 6. 6: Whether repondents would tell their friends to apply at a TVET college

6.3 Reliability assessments

Reliability establishes the correctness of data (Pažėraitė & Repovien, 2016). The reliability assessments of this study are presented from the following tests - Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. This section presents these results, as seen in Table 6.1.

Table 6. 1: Reliability assessments

	Cronbach's Alpha	**Composite Reliability**
Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET College	0.926	0.948
Brand Awareness	0.589	0.784
Brand Distinctiveness	0.918	0.934
Brand Heritage	0.876	0.903
Brand Image	0.894	0.922
Brand Reputation	0.860	0.900
Brand Symbolism	0.698	0.815

Source: Author's own (2020)

6.3.1 Cronbach alpha

The Cronbach's alpha is a measure used to test internal consistency of the measurement scales (Wen, Chen, Sun, Cao, Geng & Wang, 2017). Nunnally (1978) and Cassia, Cobelli and Ugolini (2017) recommended a 0.70 threshold. As most constructs reported higher than 0.7 alpha values which ranged from 0.860 – 0.926, they were found to display greater internal consistency.

Brand awareness and brand symbolism reported 0.589 and 0.698 alpha values respectively, however, which is contradictory to existing literature which strongly suggests a 0.7 Cronbach alpha value as the benchmark. Nonetheless Somashekhar, Raju and Patil (2016) suggest that Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.5 can be deemed acceptable. More so, some scholars recommended a threshold of 0,6 (Barakat, Ramsey, Lorenz & Gosling, 2015). As noted above, various scholars made different recommendations for Cronbach values. Despite this, the study met all recommended thresholds.

6.3.2 Composite reliability

Composite reliability (CR) is the degree to which a measurement of scale indicates a degree of consistency (Anees-ur-Rehman, Saraniemi, Ulkuniemi & Hurmelinna-laukkanen, 2017). CR estimates for each construct meet the acceptable limits of 0.70 respectively (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Most of the constructs also meet the 0.8 threshold as identified by Chin (1998). As seen in Table 6.1 above, the CR estimates range between 0.784 and 0.948. These estimates therefore prove that the results meet the internal consistency criteria.

6.4   Discriminant and convergent validity assessment

To mitigate against validity threats, this study employed discriminant and convergent validity. Discriminant and convergent validity of the measurement items was assessed by comparing each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). The results are presented below.

6.4.1 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The AVE denotes the average level of variance that a construct describes in its indicator variables in relation to the total variance of its indicators (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 6.2, the scores ranged between 0.524 and 0.820. AVE was therefore higher than 0.5 for each construct (Cassie, 2017) indicating that convergent validity was supported for the scales.

The equation for calculating AVE is also given in the Table 6.2.

Table 6. 2: AVE assessments

Construct	AVE Formula	AVE
Behavioural Intention to study at a TVET college		0.820
Brand awareness		0.548
Brand distinctiveness		0.671
Brand heritage	$$AVE\xi_j = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{K_j} \lambda_{jk}^2}{\sum_{k=1}^{K_j} \lambda_{jk}^2 + \Theta_{jk}},$$	0.538
Brand image		0.704
Brand reputation		0.645
Brand symbolism		0.525

Source: Author's own (2020)

6.4.2 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Henseler et al. (2015) note that discriminant validity is a commonly used assessment for analysing relationships between latent variables – and that Fornell-Larcker Criterion is an essential method for assessing discriminant validity. Each variable should be strongest against its own latent variable when compared to other variables. Considering the above, the study meets the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, thus indicating the successful measure of discriminant validity.

Table 6. 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion assessment

	Behavioural intention to study at a TVET college	Brand awareness	Brand distinctive-ness	Brand heritage	Brand image	Brand reputation	Brand symbolism
Behavioural intention to study at a TVET College	**0.905**						
Brand awareness	0.254	**0.740**					
Brand distinctiveness	0.515	0.415	**0.819**				
Brand heritage	0.477	0.520	0.660	**0.733**			
Brand image	0.465	0.419	0.556	0.672	**0.839**		
Brand reputation	0.488	0.494	0.661	0.784	0.759	**0.803**	
Brand symbolism	0.342	0.263	0.623	0.474	0.429	0.514	**0.725**

Source: Author's own (2020)

6.4.3 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio assessment

According to Henseler et al. (2015), Fornell-Larcker Criterion and cross loadings fall short in detecting discriminant validity in common research contexts. They therefore proposed an alternative for assessing discriminant validity namely the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio. To ensure discriminant validity, Henseler et al. (2015) recommend a ratio value below 0.90 for each construct.

As seen in Table 6.4, the results from this study presented ratio values between 0.352 and 0.904. Therefore, based on the recommended work of Henseler et al. (2015), the discriminant validity of this study has been recognised between two reflective constructs.

Table 6. 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio assessment

	Behavioural Intention to study	Brand awareness	Brand distinctive-ness	Brand heritage	Brand image	Brand reputation	Brand symbolism
Behavioural intention to study							
Brand awareness	0.352						
Brand distinctiveness	0.550	0.560					
Brand heritage	0.531	0.711	0.730				
Brand image	0.511	0.566	0.609	0.758			
Brand reputation	0.545	0.687	0.736	0.904	0.863		
Brand symbolism	0.428	0.410	0.775	0.606	0.542	0.663	

Source: Author's own (2019)

6.4.4 Model fit

The first part of the model fit analysis performed the R Square and f Square tests, as well as the estimated fit indices such as Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) findings which are presented below.

6.4.4.1 R Square

The R square value, also referred to as the coefficient of determination, represents all the exogenous latent variables' combined effects on the endogenous latent variable, as well as the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by all the exogenous constructs linked to it (Owusu, Agbemabiasie, Abdurrahaman & Soladoye, 2017). Some researchers maintain that the R square is a direct assessor of efficiency, while others claim that the R square is an indirect assessor of efficiency (Bramante, Petrella & Zappa, 2015). The table below presents the figures.

Table 6. 5: R Square

	R Square	R Squate Adjusted
Behavioural Intention to Study at A TVET College	0.311	0.305
Brand Distinctiveness	0.580	0.576
Brand Heritage	0.520	0.517
Brand Reputation	0.614	0.611
Brand Symbolism	0.193	0.187

Source: Author's own (2020)

Behavioural intention to study at a TVET college and brand symbolism showed a weak model fit with these constructs indicating an R square of 0.311 and 0.193 respectively. Brand distinctiveness, brand heritage and brand reputation showed a strong model fit, with each construct recording an R square value of 0.580, 0.520 and 0.614 respectively, thus, indicating a strong model fit.

This indicated that all the exogenous latent variables explain more than 60% of the variance of the endogenous construct (behavioural intention to study at a TVET college).

6.4.4.2   f Square

Yen, Wang, Shi, Xu, Soeung, Sohail and Juma (2017) acknowledged that to assess the structural model, researchers must establish the values of R square, f square effect size and path coefficients (t-value). The effect size, signified by f square, is an assessment employed to measure an exogenous construct's influence on an endogenous latent variable's R-square value. f square is another commonly used measure of model fit (Owusu et al., 2017). Thus, for this study, the f square is measured for model fit effect. f square does not report on the dependent variable (behaviourial intention to study at a TVET college)

As seen in Table 6.6, the brand image has the biggest effect size on brand reputation (0.959), while brand awareness has the no effect size on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (0.000).

Table 6. 6: f square assessment

	Behavioural intention to study	Brand awareness	Brand distinctive-ness	Brand heritage	Brand image	Brand reputation	Brand symbolism
Behavioural Intention to study							
Brand awareness	0.000			0.143		0.096	0.010
Brand distinctiveness	0.132						
Brand heritage			0.083				
Brand image	0.065			0.522		0.959	0.153
Brand reputation			0.049				
Brand symbolism			0.219				

Source: Author's own (2020)

6.4.4.3 *Model fit indices*

Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is defined as the variance among the observed correlation and the model implied correlation matrix (Nitzl et al., 2016). The average magnitude of the differences is measured between observed and anticipated correlations as a complete assessment of model fit criterion.

NFI is the initial first measure of model fit proposed in the extant literature (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). It is defined as 1 less the Chi² value of the conceptual model, divided by the Chi² values of the null model (Nitzl et al., 2016). NFI values should range between 0 and 1; the closer the NFI value is to 1, the greater the fit. For the estimated fit indices of SRMR and NFI, a certain threshold is recommended such as SRMR < 0.08 and NFI > 0.90 (Nitzl et al., 2016).

As seen in Table 6.7 below, for this study, the SRMR value was 0.073 and for NFI 0.695. On the other hand, the Chi-square (CMIN/DF) was 2.566, below the acceptable threshold of below 3 (Chinomona, 2013). This indicated that the conceptual model of this study had a good fit, although it could have been stronger at 0.9 for NFI. Nonetheless, prior studies acknowledge a 0.7 NFI value (Liu, Li, Zhao & Mao, 2017).

Table 6. 7: Smart PLS Fit summaryable

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.073	0.090
Chi-Square	2.566	2.636
NFI	0.695	0.700

Source: Author's own (2020)

6.4.4.4   Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To further ensure a significant model fit, this study included a second part to the measurement fit model assessment, performed using AMOS 25. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to establish if all model fit estimations met the acceptable standard. CFA was conducted using the below fit index: Chi-square value; RMSEA; GFI; IFI; TLI; NFI and CFI. The model is recursive.
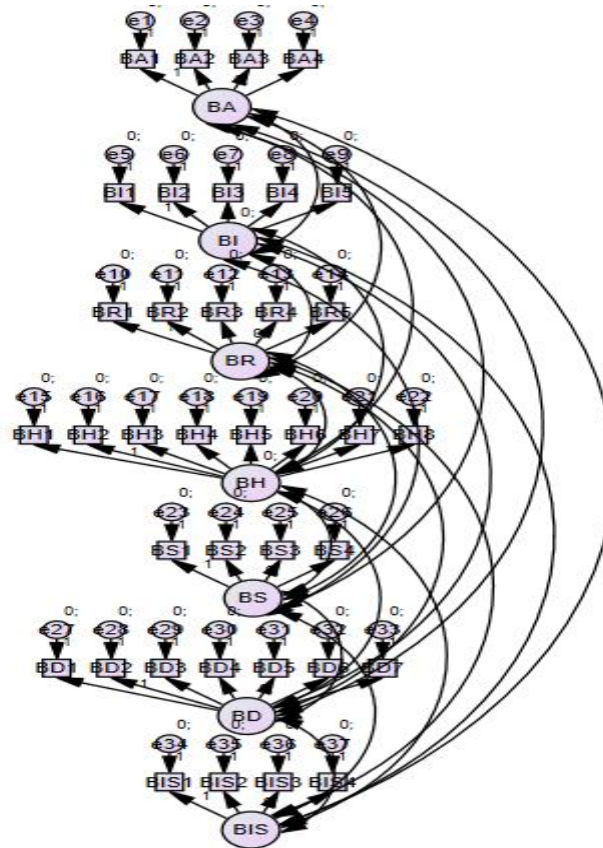
Figure 6. 7: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model

Source: AMOS (2019)

Table 6.8 below illustrates the results obtained from this analysis. The thresholds are recommended by McNeish, An and Hancock (2018). All the models' indices reached an acceptable fit.

Table 6. 8: SPSS AMOS Fit summary

Indices	Results	Threshold
Chi-square	2.044	<3.00
RMSEA	0.075	<0.08
RFI	0.908	>0.90
IFI	0.885	>0.90
TLI	0.963	>0.90
CFI	0.884	>0.90
NFI	0.734	>0.90

Source: Author's own (2019)

6.5 Path coefficients and hypotheses testing

As the second process, the PLS-SEM was conducted. to assess causal relationships between latent variables (Nusair & Hua, 2010). Figure 6.8 is an illustration of the path model. The circles signify the latent and observed variables, while the arrows indicate the effect of one variable on another.
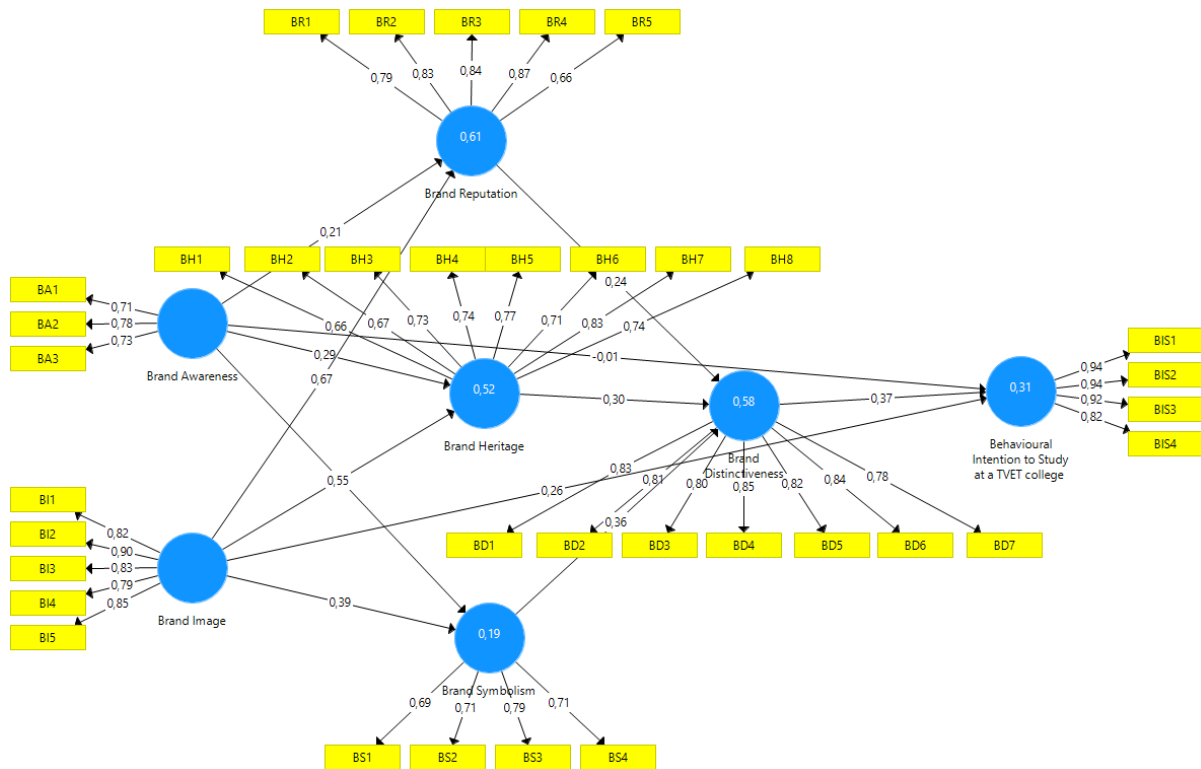
Figure 6. 8: Path model

6.5.1 Hypotheses testing

As the path model has been measured and confirmed, the next key step was to inspect causal relationships between latent variables by path analysis and t-statistic test (Nusair & Hua, 2010). According to Byrne and Van de Vijver (2001), SEM states that latent variables indirectly or directly impact some latent variables with the path model, resulting in approximation findings that represent how these latent variables are connected.

In this study, estimation findings prompted through hypothesis testing are given in Table 19. This shows the proposed hypotheses relationships, t-statistics, P values, path coefficients, and indicates whether a hypothesis was accepted or rejected. Prior literature posits that t >1.96 are gauges of relationship effect and that higher path coefficients show strong causal relationships among latent variables (Salehzadeh & Pool, 2017).

The hypotheses tests relied on a PLS approach to SEM, with Smart PLS 3 software (Bucic & Robinson, 2017). A nonparametric bootstrapping process was conducted to measure the significance of the path coefficients and significance levels. The results of both analyses are presented in Table 6.9, which reveals the path coefficients with t-tests, with respect to significance levels.

Table 6. 9: Hypotheses test results

Hypotheses	Relationship	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Path Coefficient
H1	**Brand Awareness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET College**	0.174	0.862	-0.011
H2	**Brand Image -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET College**	3.498	0.001	0.263
H3	**Brand Awareness -> Brand Reputation**	5.412	0.000	0.213
H4	**Brand Awareness -> Brand Heritage**	5.766	0.000	0.289
H5	**Brand Awareness -> Brand Symbolism**	1.732	0.084	0.101
H6	**Brand Image -> Brand Reputation**	20.520	0.000	0.670
H7	**Brand Image -> Brand Heritage**	12.828	0.000	0.551
H8	**Brand Image -> Brand Symbolism**	6.688	0.000	0.387
H9	**Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness**	2.472	0.014	0.239
H10	**Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness**	3.536	0.000	0.303
H11	**Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness**	7.481	0.000	0.356
H12	**Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET College**	6.003	0.000	0.373

Source; Author's own (2020)

In summation, the t-statistics in Table 6.9 above are significant as they are more than 1.65 and 1.96 as prescribed by Krommenhoek and Galpin (2013). Grounded on 0.05 and 0.09 significance levels, the t-test must be higher than 1.65 and 1.96, to test for statistical significance and support of each path coefficient - (Krommenhoek & Galpin, 2013; Salehzadeh & Pool, 2017) - and this is achieved. However, with (t=0.174, p-value=0.862), H1 was not significant for the brand awareness-intentions relationship. Thus, 11 out of the 12 proposed hypotheses in Chapter 4 are significant as predicted.

6.5.2 Mediating effect test

Previous testing of mediating effects was dependent on the Sobel test (1985). This test measured the direct relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable with the indirect relationship among the two variables, which includes a mediating variable (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016).

For this study, a consistent bootstrapping was conducted on Smart PLS 3. This was done to look at the mediating effect of the variables used in this study, the mediators being brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. The intention was to compare the strengths of each mediating effect. For instance, Nitzl et al. (2016) argue that a researcher must extend to test the significance between specific mediating effects. They add that, regardless of the growing interest and use of mediation effects, very few studies analyse and explain the mediating effect in their research path model. This study contributes to this gap and the results are presented in Table 6.10.

Table 6. 10: Specific indirect effects

	Specific Indirect Effects	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand Awareness -> Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.033	2.712	0.007
Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.113	3.043	0.002

	Specific Indirect Effects	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Brand Image -> Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.062	2.764	0.006
Brand Awareness -> Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.019	2.211	0.027
Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.089	2.163	0.031
Brand Image -> Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.060	2.076	0.038
Brand Awareness -> Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.013	1.664	0.097
Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.133	5.054	0.000
Brand Image -> Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness -> Behavioural Intention to Study at a TVET college	0.051	3.897	0.000
Brand Awareness -> Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.088	2.894	0.004
Brand Image -> Brand Heritage -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.167	3.220	0.001
Brand Awareness -> Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.051	2.442	0.015
Brand Image -> Brand Reputation -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.160	2.385	0.017
Brand Awareness -> Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.036	1.663	0.097
Brand Image -> Brand Symbolism -> Brand Distinctiveness	0.138	5.126	0.000

Source; Author's own (2020)

From Table 6.10, it can be established that even though brand awareness did not directly impact the grade 12 learners' intentions to study at the TVET colleges, the brand awareness can do so through brand heritage, symbolism, heritage and distinctiveness. This is seen from all T-values greater than the Krommenhoek and Galpin's (2013) recommended 1.65.

For instance, there is a direct effect between brand awareness and brand heritage, which then influences brand distinctiveness. These direct relationships are mediated by brand heritage, which provides evidence that brand distinctiveness is predicted by brand awareness, which is mediated by brand heritage, thus indicating that there is a partial mediation between both variables. More so, when brand distinctiveness is predicated by brand image, brand heritage still has an indirect effect and therefore partially mediates the relationship between brand image and brand distinctiveness. The t-test was significant for both partial mediations (t=2.894; p-value=0.004 and t=3.220; p-value=0.001) respectively.

Upon further investigation, when brand reputation mediation is explored, it is evident that when brand distinctiveness is predicted by brand awareness, brand reputation has an indirect effect on this relationship, meaning that brand reputation has a significant partial mediation effect between brand awareness and brand distinctiveness, as represented by the (t=2.242; p-value=0.015). On the other hand, when brand distinctiveness is predicted by brand image, brand reputation has an indirect mediating effect. This means that brand reputation has a partial mediation effect on this relationship (t=2.385; p-value= 0.017).

The indirect effect through brand symbolism is significant in relation to brand image and brand distinctiveness, which provides evidence that the relationship between brand image and brand distinctiveness is partially mediated through brand symbolism. When compared to the other mediators, namely, brand reputation and brand heritage, brand symbolism appears to have the strongest indirect effect. That shows that brand symbolism has a significant mediating effect in relation to brand distinctiveness being predicted by brand awareness and brand image. The significant indirect effect is presented by (t=5.126; p-value=0.000).

This study infers that the direct relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college occurs through the indirect effect of brand heritage and brand distinctiveness. The predicting relationship between behavioural intention to study at a TVET college and brand awareness is mediated by brand heritage and brand distinctiveness at (t=2.712; p-value=0.007). When brand image predicts behavioural intention to study at a TVET college, the relationship also happens through the indirect effect of brand heritage and brand distinctiveness and is displayed with (t=2.764; p-value=0.006). Therefore, it can be observed that in order for a relationship to occur between brand image and brand awareness as independent variables, and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college as the dependent variable, there is an indirect effect that goes through this relationship. The mediating effect is more significant and strongest when brand image is the predictor of behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

The specific indirect effect between brand awareness -> brand reputation -> brand distinctivenesss -> behavioural intention to study at a TVET college found that brand reputation and brand distinctiveness mediates the relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention to study to study at a TVET college. This mediating effect was significant at (t=2.211; p-value=0.027). This indicated that the predicting effect of behavioural intention to study at a TVET college goes through the indirect effect of brand reputation and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. While the specific indirect effect between brand image -> brand reputation -> brand distinctivenesss -> behavioural intention to study at a TVET college was also found to be significant (t-test = 2.076; p-value = 0.038), this indicated that there was partial mediation between the independent and dependent variable that was mediated through brand reputation and brand distinctiveness. Both mediators are strongest when behavioural intention to study at a TVET college is predicted by brand image.

According to Table 6.10, brand image did have an impact on brand symbolism, and then had an impact on brand distinctiveness. Therefore, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness did mediate the relationship between brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. This partial mediation was significant at (t=3.897; p-value=0.000).

Based on these mediating effect findings, the conclusion is that brand reputation functions as a partial mediator of four links: brand awareness-brand distinctiveness, brand image-brand distinctiveness, brand awareness-behavioural intention to study at a TVET college, and brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. Brand heritage also partially mediated four links: brand awareness-brand distinctiveness, brand image-brand distinctiveness, brand awareness-behavioural intention to study, and brand image and behavioural intention to study.

While brand symbolism partially mediated two links – brand image-brand distinctiveness and brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college – it failed to mediate links between brand awareness -> brand distinctiveness and brand awareness -> brand symbolism -> brand distinctiveness -> behavioural ntention to study at a TVET college.

Overall, 10 meaningful relations among the links are higher than 1.96 (Seyyed Amiri et al., 2016).

6.5.3 Summary of hypotheses tests

H1: Brand awareness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college

H1 hypothesised a positive relationship between the brand awareness of TVET colleges and the student's behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. However, as this study found that there was a negative and insignificant relationship (t=0.174; p-value=0.862 and path coefficient=-0.011), H1 is rejected and not supported.

H2: Brand image has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college

As seen in Table 19, H2 (t=3.498; p-values=0.001 and path coefficient=0.263) is supported. This shows that a TVET college's brand image has a positive impact on a student's behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

H3: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector

The results of the test on H3 (t=5.412; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.213), show that this hypothesis is accepted and supported. This shows that a positive relationship is present between brand awareness and brand reputation, which means that brand awareness has a positive impact on brand reputation.

In other words, the more aware prospective students are of TVET colleges, the more likely they are to perceive the TVET college as having a positive brand reputation.

H4: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector

Having measured the relationship between the brand awareness of TVET colleges and their brand heritage, a positive and strong relationship was found between these variables. This indicated that H4 is supported and accepted based on the anticipated hypothesis (t=5.766; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.289). This reveals that the brand awareness of TVET colleges has a greater impact on their brand heritage narrative among prospective students.

H5: Brand awareness has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector

The relationship between brand awareness and brand symbolism was proven to be significant at 90% confidence level or with a t-value of above 1.65 as recommended by Krommenhoek and Galpin (2013) with (t=1.732; p-value=0.084 and path coefficient=0.101. This means that the brand awareness of TVET colleges has an impact on the colleges' brand symbolism and what they stands for in the eyes of the stakeholders. This shows that if the awareness of the professional usefulness of TVET colleges is continually created, prospective students will start indentifying themselves with it.

H6: Brand image has a positive impact on brand reputation in the TVET sector

The results for H6 show that there is a positive and strong relationship between brand image and brand reputation. This means that prospective students who identify with the TVETs' brand image and are satisfied, are more likely than not to perceive a positive brand reputation of TVET colleges. In addition, (t=20.520; p-value= 0.000 and path coefficient=0.670) indicates a strong relationship between brand image and brand reputation.

Of all the ten hypotheses, this was strongest and most significant relationship.

H7: Brand image has a positive impact on brand heritage in the TVET sector

The findings for H7 show that there was indeed a positive relationship and therefore accepted the recommended hypothesis that a TVET college's brand image has a positive and significant impact on its brand heritage with a (t=12.828; p-value=0.000 and path coeffiecient=0.551).

H8: Brand image has a positive impact on brand symbolism in the TVET sector

The eighth hypothesis was also proven to be significant which means that the stated hypothesis was accepted and supported (t=6.688; p-value=0.000 and path coeffiecient=0.387). This indicates that brand image has an impact on brand symbolism. As such, if prospective students have a positive brand image of TVET colleges, they are likely to perceive a more positive brand symbolism about them.

H9: Brand reputation has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector

The findings achieved of H9 established that there is a connection between brand reputation and brand distinctiveness (t=2.472; p-value=0.014 and path coefficient=0.239). In other words, a TVET college's brand reputation is associated with its brand distinctiveness. Furthermore, the results show that there is a significant relationship between brand reputation and brand distinctiveness.

H10: *Brand heritage has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector*

H10 hypothesised a positive and strong relationship between the brand heritage of TVET colleges and their brand distinctiveness in the higher education sector. As there was a positive and significant relationship (t=3.536; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.303), H8 is accepted and supported.

H11: *Brand symbolism has a positive impact on brand distinctiveness in the TVET sector*

Drawing on the results presented in Table 6.9, H11 (t=7.481; p-values=0.000 and path coefficient=0.356) is supported. This indicates that a TVET college's brand symbolism has a positive impact on its brand distinctiveness. For the students to perceive the TVET college brand to be distinctive, they ought to have symbols that inspire uniqueness.

H12: *Brand distinctiveness has a positive impact on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college*

H12 was found to be significant and supported (t=6.003; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.373). In measuring the relationship between the brand distinctiveness of TVET colleges and the prospective student's behavioural intention to study at a TVET college, the findings indicate that brand distinctiveness has a significant and positive relationship with prospective students' behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

6.5.4 Overall analysis of hypotheses testing results

The path coefficients given in Table 6.9 show that brand awareness and brand image have a strong impact on brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism; and that subsequent mediating variables have an impact on brand distinctiveness, which directly impacts on the behavioural intention of prospective students to study at a TVET college.

Drawing from these findings, a TVET's brand image and the mediating variables have a strong influence on a student's behavioural intention to study at a TVET College. Besides the varying levels of significance among relationships, only 11 hypotheses are accepted and supported, while H1 is not supported.

6.6   Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented the descriptive statistical analysis and outcomes from the data collected from grade 12 learners from three high schools in Gauteng regarding how branding influences their intentions to study at a TVET college. The research measurement instruments assessed internal consistency through reliability as measured by Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. Based on the literature presented, all scales meet the recommended thresholds.

The measurement instrument validity was measured through convergent and discriminant validity. Discriminant and convergent validity of the measurement items was assessed by comparing each construct's AVE, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio.

To check the model fit of the study, a model fit analysis was performed using Smart PLS 3 as well as SPSS AMOS 25 to access the measurement model. The first part of the model fit analysis performed the R Square and f Square test, as well SRMR and NFI. The second part of the model fit analysis checked the Chi-square value; RMSEA; GFI; IFI; TLI and CFI. It was then followed with path coefficient and hypotheses tests, subject to the study's research conceptual model. As outlined in Table 6.9, 11 of the 12 hypotheses were supported and significant.

This chapter further performed mediating tests to assess the extent to which the mediators influence the independent and dependent variables. The following chapter discusses these results with aid from supported literature.

Chapter 7:
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

7.1   Introduction

This chapter is primarily concerned with the interpretation and discussion of the results of an investigation into, and the path through which, brand knowledge structure (brand awareness and brand image) impact an intention to study at a TVET college by grade 12 prospective students. An overview of the results as described by the 12 hypotheses is presented, followed by a detailed analysis of previous findings and contradictions. Lastly, the chapter ends with a summary of the results in relation to the literature, with key insights being drawn from the literature in higher education branding and some linkages to the TVET sector.

7.2   Is there a direct relationship between brand awareness and brand image on the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college?

7.2.1   The relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (H1)

This study found that there is an indirect relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. In fact, the results (t=0.174; p-value=0.862 and path coefficient= -0.011) found no direct or positive impact between this relationship. Through the mediation test, it was established that brand heritage and brand distinctiveness mediated the relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. This shows the importance of enabling TVET colleges to build distinct brands that are grounded on a heritage that resonates with prospective students. These findings can also be read alongside those presented in Figure 6.4, which shows that nearly two thirds (62.46%) of the respondents intended to apply at a university. This highlights the problem of a lack of brand awareness of the TVET colleges by prospective students.

However, given the extant literature on brand awareness and behavioural intention, some contradictions are noted.   For instance, some studies have found a relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention (Mason &

Nassivera, 2013; Kim et al., 2009; Yuan, & Jang, 2008; Al-khasoneh & Sweeney, 2006) - although, these studies were in the wine, festivals, and advertising contexts.

Given the current higher education brand context, the findings from this study are consistent with a study by Brewer and Zhao (2010), who found that brand awareness does not influence a student's intentions to apply at a college. Further research is required to find more empirical research between brand awareness and behavioural intention. In this regard, Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) acknowledge the need to build brand awareness in the hearts and minds of the customergiven the intensely competitive landscape of high education. Naidoo et al. (2014) argue that a higher education brand should build brand awareness and distinctiveness to inform student preferences, as well as increase its competitiveness (Lomer et al., 2016).

7.2.2 The relationship between brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (H2)

The results show that there is a significant relationship between brand image and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (t=3.498; p-value=0.001 and path coefficient=0.263). These findings are consistent with those found in earlier studies by Mokhtar et al. (2017) and Jiang et al. (2017), who found that brand image influences behavioural intention. Likewise, Hwang and Choi (2019) note the relationship between brand awareness and behavioural intention.

In the higher education brand context, Chen (2016) states that students are likely to study at an institution with a superior brand image. Unfortunately, the TVET brand image is an undesirable one, as has been acknowledged by scholars and global bodies. As the TVET brand image is mostly unknown and vague (Seng, 2012), there is an urgency to improve this poor image to attract more students to TVET colleges. This also highlights the urgent call to build a better brand image that is currently perceived to offer substandard qualifications, low paying jobs, and no relevance to the job market (Sharma & Nagendra, 2016; Essel et al., 2014). The rebranding of TVET will assist with changing these negative associations and perceptions, and will shift the mindsets of society, parents, and students (Awang, 2012).

Brand image has been documented as an imperative factor that attracts prospective students (Casidy, 2014) – and ensures that all marketing efforts are focused on the desired outcome. The institution's brand relies on consistency and harmony in its

brand and creates a specific brand image. Within this context, it was proposed that when grade 12 learners choose a higher education institution, their choices depend on the institution's image. That means that if students do not have a favourable brand image about TVET colleges, they are unlikely to consider them. That is consistent with findings of this study, which found that brand image influences a student's intention to study at a TVET college. With the growing demand for higher education qualifications, it is no surprise that prospective students undertake a brand image decision-making process to choose their preferred institution (Casidy, 2014). While building a positive TVET brand image will take much effort given it current negative image, establishing a brand image which attracts new students is important (Chen, 2016); for TVET colleges, their brand image is critical. Institutions of higher education should devote more attention to their brand image (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2020).

7.3 How do brand awareness and brand image impact the brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism of TVET colleges?

7.3.1 The relationship between brand awareness and brand reputation (H3)

The results from this research question demonstrated that a positive relationship exists between brand awareness and brand reputation, which means that brand awareness has a positive impact on brand reputation (t=5.412; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.213). Although the relationship is significant and supported, the literature contradicts the results in that reputation predicted brand awareness in the higher education context (Brewer & Zhao, 2010). Interestingly, preference for the college and the opinion of the college brand was driven by reputation in Sydney, Australia. This study found brand awareness as a pathway for a TVET college's brand reputation.

The importance of brand awareness is significant in considering the consumer decision making process of choosing a higher education institution. As such, brand awareness influences consumer decision making by persuading which brands are considered by customers (Kwun & Oh, 2007). Customers must think of the brand when they think about higher education institutions. The higher education institution's brand awareness is about how the institution represents itself and the information it

portrays favourably for the students' opinion in the interests of promoting the brand and reputation of the institution (Balaji et al., 2016). This is critical for any TVET brand building initiatives and the kind of information it communicates to future students since they want to connect with higher education institutional brands that have a good reputation.

In a different context within corporate reputation, a study by Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty (2006) explores reputation as a foundation of awareness. As far as a college's reputation is concerned interesting findings by MacLeod, Riehl, Saavedra and Urquiola (2017) are that the college reputation communicates information regarding student's ability to be in the labor market. If prospective students are aware that by studying at a TVET college they could potentially be more desirable in the labour market, this may well influence a TVET's reputation regarding developing graduates that are ready for the job market.

The results suggest that a TVET college's brand awareness accounts for some of its effect on brand reputation. This complements research from other industries, that brand awareness has an impact on brand reputation (Malik et al., 2013; Brewer & Zhao., 2010; Balaji et al., 2016). Thus, the contribution of the results from this study explicitly measured a TVET college's brand awareness and brand reputation and relates it to intention.

7.3.2 The relationship between brand awareness and brand heritage (H4)

The results of this study found the relationship between the brand awareness of TVET colleges and brand heritage is significant at (t=5.766; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.289). There are some contradictory findings from a previous study by Moussa and De Barnier (2017) who found a direct significant relationship between brand heritage on brand equity. This study found the opposite to be true in the TVET context. Brand equity is a multidisciplinary construct with brand awareness as a key dimension. It is therefore assumed that brand heritage has an impact on brand awareness. Thus, the results of this study prove that brand awareness has an impact on brand heritage.

A study by Wiedmann et al. (2011) found that brand heritage positively influenced the dimensions of brand strength, demonstrating that customers who acknowledge a

strong heritage of a brand displayed a higher product quality perception, higher price acceptance as well as a higher trust toward the given brand. Another study by Wuestefeld et al. (2012) discovered a positive relationship between brand heritage and customer perceived value dimensions. Cultural meaning, familiarity, and identity meaning were also revealed to be influential drivers of brand heritage. An empirical study by Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt and Wüstefeld (2012) found a positive effect between brand heritage and brand luxury, as well as prestige and credibility.

In sum, based on the empirical studies shown above, there is a positive overall perceptual and behavioural impact of brand heritage on appropriate performance drivers of brand management. This largely provides evidence that brand heritage is an untapped asset for the organisation.

The suggestion is that brand heritage could be a key performance indicator of the brand awareness of TVET colleges. In the higher education branding context, Lomer et al. (2016) found that institutions market themselves through brand awareness activities in terms of their distinct heritage. However, no hypothesised relationship was tested for brand awareness and brand heritage. A profound empirical understanding of associated influences of brand heritage is needed. To the researcher's knowledge, no existing relationship has been found between brand awareness and brand heritage – making this study a theoretical contribution which also provides an empirical basis for scholars to explore this relationship in other sectors.

7.3.3 The relationship between brand awareness and brand symbolism (H5)

The relationship between brand awareness and brand symbolism was proven to be significant (t=1.732; p-value=0.084 and path coefficient=0.101). According to McAlister and Cornwell (2010), high school students displayed awareness of the social significance of symbolism of brands. This elevated the awareness of how brands can be used as symbols in a social world (e.g. to represent status, popularity, quality). As argued earlier, universities are seen as a higher social status symbol than TVET colleges – but other studies by Klink (2000) and Aaker (1991) have found that an effective brand name can increase awareness and make a favorable image for the product. Earlier work on this relationship by Kotler, Rackham and Krishnaswamy (1997) found that to create awareness, a brand must have a name,

sign, symbol, or design to create an advantage over competitors. More recently, Ene and Özkaya (2016) advocated that making a bond with customers through mottos and converting logos into a symbol are some of several awareness raising tactics. This encourages customers to be more aware of the brand, particularly their brand symbol. Similarly, Nyaga (2017) maintains that higher education branding and the employment of symbols are about the clear synergy between existing and potential students' behaviour with brand values.

While the contexts may have varied, it is noted that within the TVET context, brand awareness does have a relationship with brand symbolism. Nyaga (2017) maintains that higher education branding and the employment of symbols are about clear synergy between existing and potential students' behaviour with brand values.

7.3.4 The relationship between brand image and brand reputation (H6)

The results confirm that there is a positive and strong relationship between brand image and brand reputation (t=20.520; p-value= 0.000 and path coefficient=0.670). A review of previous studies in the field found few empirical results regarding the relationship between brand image and brand reputation, apart from some general statements.

Nguyen and LaBlanc (2001) argue that in a higher education context, there is little evidence to support the relationship between institutional image and institutional reputation. Consequently, Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) found that the crucial role of an institutional image and institutional reputation is utilised as a positioning asset to impact a business school student's choice of a higher education institution, while Hemsley-Brown et al. (2017) identified that when students choose to pursue their studies at university, the brand performance and brand image factors play key roles; strangely, brand reputation is less important. This study argues and found that both brand image and brand reputation are important in the TVET context. This implies that scholars need to look at this relationship within the university context.

Reputation is an important factor that influences students' choice of institution (Van Gensen, 2005). Thus, According to Vukasovič (2015), a higher education's brand image and reputation improve the brand equity of the institution from a prospective student's perspective. On the other hand, Cretu and Brodie (2007) suggest that

brand image and company reputation are presumed to have a mediating impact on each other, while the current study found that brand awareness predicts brand reputation. Both brand image and brand reputation are managed externally, in the mind of the customer, while building some degree of trust (or distrust) to meet and manage customers' expectations. On the other hand, Hay and Van Gensen (2008) argue that internal practices should drive the institutions' overall reputation and image in South Africa.

The influence of institutional image and institutional reputation on consumer behaviour is acknowledged, despite the limited empirical evidence of Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001). Hemsley-Brown et al. (2016) note that a better understanding of brand image and reputation influences are vital for strategic decision making and Chaploe (2010) adds that brand image and brand reputation of a higher education institution are equally important alongside teaching quality.

This study contributes to filling this gap in the literature and provides empirical results that show that brand image influences brand reputation.

7.3.5 The relationship between brand image and brand heritage (H7)

The results show that there is indeed a positive relationship between brand image and brand heritage (t=12.828; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.551). Although limited studies exist that empirically test the relationship between brand image and brand heritage, a study by Wuestefeld et al. (2012) found that a favourable image does not influence brand heritage (t=1.336). On the contrary, it was found by Wiedmann et al. (2011) that brand heritage has a positive impact on brand image.

Likewise, brand image has been mentioned in the operationalisation of brand heritage as a construct. For example, Hakala et al. (2011) identify that the emotional and symbolic connection between a brand and a customer is possible with brands that associate heritage with their image, eventually assisting brands to develop a distinct image for the organisation through their brand image. The study by Hakala et al. makes pertinent points that prompted this study to empirically test whether brand image does have an impact on brand heritage. By so doing, the results from this study can contribute to the emergence of brand heritage literature.

Other literature highlights brand heritage as that of a brand associated with images of success (Wuestefeld et al., 2012), while Rindell et al. (2015) adopted an exploratory study to connect corporate brand heritage to corporate image heritage. Thus, the literature tends to point to the heritage influencing image, further justifying the acknowledgement that brand image can influence brand heritage.

Further analysis in the framework of corporate services brands is seen in a study by Iglesias et al., (2017) which found that brand heritage negatively moderates the effect of customer perceived ethicality (CPE) on brand image. This implies that the stronger the brand heritage, the smaller the significant effect of CPE on brand image. Scholars have recognised, however, that heritage is an important resource to build brand image and an everlasting brand reputation (Urde et al., 2007; Balmer, 2011; Iglesias et al., 2017).

When high school learners choose a TVET college, their selection depends on the institutions' brand images. Drawing from the descriptive results of the brand image measurement scales it was evident that students did not understand the TVET college brand image, which is seen inthe moderately high numbers of neutral choice (3 on the 5-point scale). The respondents simply did not know what the TVET brand image is. This creates vast opportunities for marketers and policy makers as the empirical results draw some significance to the brand image having an impact on brand heritage. In the same way, learners are also likely to choose a TVET college based on its brand image and brand heritage. This implies a direct relationship between brand image and brand heritage to be credible and trustworthy. This means that brand heritage has an impact on brand image. Therefore, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, this study is the first to confirm that, in the context of higher education brand, the opposite is true. This means that brand image influences brand heritage.

Much of the literature on brand heritage in the higher education branding context is still emerging, with limited research on university brand heritage and its influence on student choice (Rose et al., 2017). This study contributes to the limited research in this area and further provides evidence that research TVET college brand heritage is crucial.

7.3.6 The relationship between brand image and brand symbolism (H8)

This study further indicates that brand image has an impact on brand symbolism (t=6.688; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.387). Some literature in the higher education context presents discussions on brand image and brand symbolism. As seen in the example below, the synthesis has not empirically proposed any hypotheses tests but provided enough discussion to warrant such a test.

For example, studies by Adejumo, Ogungbade and Akinbode (2014) and Nyaga (2017) found that a good brand image formed by the institution's symbols contribute to its success. The brand image has an impact on symbols; according to Adejumo et al. (2014), and a higher education institution's survival and profitability is influenced by having a strong brand image. Similarly, Hay and Van Gensen (2008) found that in the brand development of higher education institutions in South Africa, visual identity - an institution's logo, building signage, customer information, typeface, stationery, marketing literature, vehicles and all promotional pieces - plays a role in the overall institutional image (Hay & Van Gensen, 2008).

In presenting some nuances in the relationship, Tsai (2005) is helpful in the empirical testing of perceived image and symbolic value, which found that perceived image is positively connected to symbolic values. This means image and symbols are necessary and important in the marketing literature. In other contexts, Paasovaara and Luomala (2012) conducted an experiment to control for brand symbolism and asked the respondents to evaluate the brand images. This experiment did not directly measure brand image and symbolism, but rather looked at the influences of brand symbolism on congruency that is related to familiar brands.

In the catering sector, the strength of the brand image and product value, enhance customers' symbolism towards the brand (Lin, 2013). As argued in Chapter 3, brand image ties with an individual's self-image. The extensive involvement of higher education choice enables the increase of self-esteem through a brand choice.

The symbolic use of TVET colleges is a consequence of functional information given to a prospective student. Thus, TVET colleges can have a symbolic meaning which can be ascribed to the brand of the TVET with regards to the social status and popularity within society. Symbolic cues are important to aspirational learners.

However, in the brand symbolism literature self-image is well documented (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010; Paasovaara, 2012). Against this backdrop this study seeks to provide evidence that brand image and brand symbolism are related and important in the higher education context. This implies that it has been able to contribute to the literature in this regard and inform further discussions and tests by other scholars in the TVET or university setting. To the researcher's knowledge such a relationship has not been explored in the higher education branding literature, nor has it been pursued in the emerging brand symbolism literature.

7.4 Does the brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism of TVET colleges influence their brand distinctiveness?

7.4.1 The relationship between brand reputation and brand distinctiveness (H9)

The results show that there is a significant relationship between brand reputation and brand distinctiveness (t=2.472; p-value=0.014 and path coefficient=0.239). Such a relationship does not appear in the extant literature and this study provides empirical findings that begin to address this.

The importance of brand reputation and brand distinctiveness is well documented in the literature, however. For instance, a study by Sujchaphong, Nguyen and Melewar (2017) found that creating an institution's brand encourages students to associate with the institution's prestige, reputation and heritage as a process in developing distinctiveness. The study makes no mention of the relationship between brand reputation and brand distinctiveness, however. The researchers note that corporate brand identification is the driver of a university's distinct brand.

Another study by Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) acknowledges the relationship between corporate visual identity and corporate branding. As a means of effective integrated marketing communication messaging, the researchers note visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency and consistency as the five dimensions of reputation building. The dimensions are interlinked. Yet, again it is clear that reputation and distinctiveness are intertwined and require some further empirical testing. This study found the relationship to be significant and thus contributes to branding literature.

Regarding the empirical research on brand reputation, several relationships have been explored such as implicit and explicit corporate brand reputation and its effect on brand attachment (Wiedmann et al., 2017), customer care impacts on brand reputation (Barnes et al., 2009), brand reputation and the impact on brand relationship (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2008), social media and its influence on brand reputation (Boman, 2012), and brand reputation as positively connected to the customer's trust in the brand There is a lack of research that investigates brand reputation and brand distinctiveness, however.

In the higher education context, brand reputation is seen as a tool for building a competitive advantage and for a prospective student to know what a brand name signifies (Curtis et al., 2009). While there are some objections to using corporate branding principles in higher education, this requires the repositioning of TVET colleges as brands that require strategic building and managing. With this focus, a TVET brand development process is required.

In the South African higher education context, Beneke (2011) states that branding is not necessary when an institution has a solid reputation and lasting heritage. This reinforces the notion that top universities in South Africa may not need branding strategies due to their established reputation. However, this is unlikely to be the case with TVET colleges, as they require substantial attention to be paid to building their distinct brand overtime. As brand reputation is important in the recruitment of prospective students, it is seen as a critical factor in their choice of where to study (Beneke, 2011).

In the South African higher education context, Hay and Van Gensen (2008) proposed a brand management model that has three pillars, namely relevance, experienced economy, and external branding. This study focuses on the external branding strategy that focuses on the perceptions of grade 12 learners. As any institutional brand is linked to its reputation, this study is arguing that to build a distinctive brand, an institution must have a strong brand reputation.

7.4.2 The relationship between brand heritage and brand distinctiveness (H10)

In the higher education sector, the current study found that there was a positive and significant relationship between brand heritage and brand distinctiveness (t=3.536; p-

value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.303). Brand heritage affects brand perceived innovativeness and is mediated by brand trust in an SEM model (Moussa & De Barnier, 2017). The quantitative investigation of brand heritage and its influences is not addressed, however (Rose et al., 2016). It is through this gap in the literature that this study can provide a quantitative finding of a relationship between brand heritage and brand distinctiveness.

The study by Rose et al. (2016) explored the relationship between brand heritage and purchase intention but didn't address how a distinctive brand can influence intention and behaviour in a broader marketing context. In the food and beverage sector, Martino and Lovari (2016) adapted a multi-method approach to investigating media relations and brand heritage while in the apparel sector, Akbari et al. (2015) investigated how brand heritage influences brand personality, as well as how brand heritage influences brand personality in the Adidas brand. In the fast-moving consumer goods sector, Hakala et al. (2011) used a case study analysis to investigate the relationship between brand heritage and cultural heritage. Merchant and Rose (2013) found that emotions impact the perception of brand heritage while, in turn, brand heritage impacts brand attachment.

The extant literature draws on various methodological undertakings and highlights how further empirical research is needed with respect to brand literature – particularly regarding the empirical relationship between brand heritage and brand distinctiveness.

It is surprising that extant literature has not investigated this relationship. Various studies have pre-empted the notion that heritage and distinctiveness are somewhat intertwined. For example, Phau (2017) found that brands can mitigate the lack of heritage by strengthening their distinctiveness. According to De Angelis et al. (2017), superior brands can create more value through their heritage and distinctiveness. An earlier study by Dion and Borra (2015) further explored a relationship between these two constructs and found that brand heritage underpins distinctiveness, adding a level of authenticity to a company. Likewise, results from a study conducted by Moussa and De Barnier (2017) found a positive relationship between brand heritage and brand perceived innovativeness. Brand distinctiveness and brand innovativeness are used interchangeably in the literature.

In the higher education sector, Khanna et al. (2014) state that an institution's brand ought to have a distinct position to communicate to potential students regarding what and who they are and what they stand for, which is founded on their heritage. Furthermore, Merchant et al. (2015) investigated the impact of university brand heritage and reputation on the attitudes of prospective students, while looked at university heritage to promote and build its brand name. As such, it is evident that there is some literature pertaining to brand heritage in the higher education sector.

This study argues that while heritage is important for any institution, its distinctiveness must be explored in the broader marketing literature. Very few studies have looked at brand heritage and brand distinctiveness, which makes this study novel and contributes to existing literature.

7.4.3 The relationship between brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness (H11)

There was a positive and significant relationship between brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness (t=7.481; p-values=0.000 and path coefficient=0.356). The syntheses of the literature, for example, have proved some support to warrant further investigation. For instance, earlier literature suggests that symbolic brands can use their prestige and desire as possible positioning strategies (Bhat & Reddy, 1998). Previous studies acknowledge the importance that youth place on brand symbolism as a form of communicating their identities (Bernritter et al., 2016, Souiden & M'saad, 2011; Grant & Stephen, 2006; Chaplin & John, 2005). Lastly, Souiden and M'saad (2011), found that symbols portray the distinctiveness of a brand.

It is clear from the literature that there ought to be some methodological inquiry into the relationship between brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. Considering that brand symbolism is not extensively researched in marketing, much of the literature is about symbolic concepts and not brand symbolism as a construct. Furthermore, the brand symbolism of higher education institutions is not evident, even though symbols such as names, logos and slogans are important for any institution. This implies symbols inform how prospective students perceive the institution's distinct brand.

On the other end of the spectrum, the literature recognises product distinctiveness (Ghosh & Morita, 2011), a sense of distinctiveness (place identity) (Wang & Xu,

2014), distinctiveness of the European management approach (Chia, 2014), shaping distinctiveness of spaces (Wang, 2009) and brand distinctiveness as a driver of design innovation (Fadzline et al., 22014). Much of the extant literature on brand distinctiveness has not looked at its effects with brand symbolism, however, such that this study fills this gap in the broader marketing literature and higher education branding. This finding contributes to the existing gap in the literature that has mostly identified some association between brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. Such discussions have led to little or no empirical testing of this significant relationship

7.5 How does the distinctiveness of the TVET college brand influence a learner's intention to study at a TVET college?

7.5.1 The relationship between brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (H12)

The findings indicate that brand distinctiveness has a significant and positive relationship with prospective students' behavioural intention to study at a TVET college (t=6.003; p-value=0.000 and path coefficient=0.373).

The literature also identifies some link between brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention. For example, Triandewi and Tjiptono (2013) found that the distinctiveness of a brand results in a customer's intention to perform a behaviour. As far as making a higher education choice, Kusumawati (2010) found that the quality of teaching and academic reputation of the college are some of the factors that inform the students' choices to enrol at a college. The internet or print media are the most important sources of information about colleges (Gray, Shyan Fam & Llanes, 2003).

Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) found that positive responses to a distinct institutional brand from a prospective student could influence their intention to apply. Furthermore, Reay, Davies, David and Ball (2001), Sianou-Kyrgiou (2010), Sianou-Kyrgiou and Tsiplakides (2011) note that higher education choice is largely influenced by class and race in inequalities.

While, literature does include some significant discussions on distinctiveness and behavioural intention, little is known about the empirical findings of these

relationships. Thus, it is through this gap that this study is able to provide some empirical findings that contribute to current literature.

The higher education processing choice is one of the most involved and important decisions made by a prospective student. As seen from the above-mentioned studies, various factors inform this choice, which is why this study deliberately looked at branding as one of the factors. However, it is important to note that university and TVET prospective students are not the same and have different needs.

This study argues that TVET colleges do not enjoy the same prestige and status that is largely associated with universities. The TVET college should focus most of its marketing planning on building a brand management strategy as this will assist in identifying a clear, distinct brand for TVET colleges. This brand distinctiveness offers companies a marketing advantage to perform against competitors (Wong & Merrilees, 2008). The higher the brand distinctiveness strategy, the greater the performance of a TVET's brand, the more likely students are to study at a TVET college.

7.6   Summary of the chapter

The results presented in this chapter alongside the literature demonstrated that very few studies have explored the relationships hypothesised in this study, making these theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge little research exists in the following relationships: between brand awareness and brand image on brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism; between brand reputation, brand heritage and brand symbolism on brand distinctiveness; and lastly between brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college.

To study at a TVET college is one of the important choices a young person must make. As confirmed by Doña-Toledo et al. (2017), countless students regard their decision to study at any higher education institution as an opportunity of a lifetime, especially given the economic and social benefits that a university qualification supposedly confers over a TVET qualification. It is therefore important that both policy makers and practitioners make strategic choices to attract students to these institutions.

This chapter highlighted key findings that have implications, both theoretically and managerially, as well as for reimagining a TVET brand in a high-involvement decision for students. The final chapter makes recommendations and outlines their implications which can help improve the perception of TVET colleges.

Chapter 8:
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The main question that this study intended to answer was whether the branding of TVET colleges influences a student's intention to study there, and to assess the role of brand constructs in predicting behaviour. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the research questions presented in Chapter 1, followed by theoretical and managerial implications, as well as limitations and future research.

8.2 Conclusion

The preceding chapter examined the research questions based on the research problems identified in Chapter 1, and how the conceptual model empirically provided answers.

To explore the first research question – 'How does the branding of TVET colleges influence a learner's intention to study at a TVET college?' – the gap in the higher education branding literature was established, and factors influencing a learner's choice of higher education institutions were discussed.

The answer to the second research question – 'What are the branding constructs that could influence a learner's decision to study at a TVET college?' - was based on a structural equation model that was conceptualised by the researcher. This model considered the branding factors in higher education literature, explicitly factors that were consistent (well researched) and new (never been researched in higher education literature).

The third research question – 'How can TVET colleges move towards a branding framework?' – sought to locate branding frameworks that can be adapted to a TVET context. As the models that exist are more concerned with universities, a TVET branding framework can be proposed by the findings of this study.

8.2.1 Conclusion of the primary research question

The increase in competition in the higher education sector has led to branding as one of the management strategies that can assists institutions build their image and identity, as a basis of how stakeholders evaluate and perceive their institutions (Curtis et al, 2009). Much of the literature on higher education branding is focused on understanding universities as brands, however.

This study was interested in evaluating the TVET colleges as brands from the perspective of school learners. As their marketing efforts are targeted at recruiting students for their institutions, learners are an important stakeholder for higher education institutions.

Although a few studies have been conducted on how to improve the image, reputation and attractiveness of TVET colleges (Khan, Hasan & Rabbani, 2017; Ratnata, 2013), there is very little knowledge on the use of marketing practices, especially branding for the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage in public TVET colleges in South Africa (Fadahunsi & Pelser, 2013). Even in the higher education literature of how students make choices, branding has not been focused on.

Little is known about why students choose TVET colleges in South Africa (Powell & McGrath, 2013). A synthesis of higher education choice by Obermeit, (2012) identified numerous factors that affect prospectvie students' choices across the USA and Europe, namely teachers, high school and college counsellors, parents, siblings, friends, type of institution, the curriculum offered, distance from home, financial factors (cost of tuition, scholarships, grants or loans), and the academic reputation of the institution. This study asks how the branding of TVET colleges might be a factor in influencing a learner's intention to study at a TVET college.

The findings of this study clearly show that the branding of TVET colleges does influence the intention of a prospective learner to study at a TVET college. These results must be read alongside the small proportion (12.62%) of participants who indicated they would like to study at a TVET college, while the majority of the respondents (62.46%) indicated that they intended studying at a university.

This research problem necessitated the examination of how branding influences a student's intention to study at a TVET college.

To conclude, branding is a powerful marketing asset that assists higher education institutions in conveying their distinct image and brand to students and influences their choices. If TVET colleges can develop distinct brands with which prospective students can identify, they are likely to attract these prospective students. As universities nationwide make concerted efforts to develop a distinct brand identity, TVET colleges should make similar efforts in order to compete effectively in the dynamic higher education sector. As it does not seem that a distinct TVET brand is in place, it may require the development of TVET brand framework for government, managers, and marketers in the sector.

8.2.2 Conclusion of the secondary research question 1

The first of the secondary research questions was interested in measuring branding concepts in the study of TVET colleges. The branding constructs were used to investigate the interrelationship between model constructs.

Based on the existing literature that was reviewed, the study proposed a new holistic conceptual model that better measures and predicts intention in the higher education branding context. The proposed model was measured using ten hypotheses and identified seven key branding constructs. While the chosen constructs are based on previous higher education branding studies, few studies have looked at multiple complex conceptual models. The investigation of 42 higher education studies by Ledden, Kalafatis and Protopapa (2019) found that 35 brand constructs were identified of which brand reputation appeared in 12 studies, brand image in 10 studies, brand loyalty in nine studies, brand identification in eight studies, brand prestige in five studies, as well as brand equity and brand trust in four studies respectively. It is important to note that most of these studies were within the university context.

According to Ledden et al. (2019) the branding constructs studied in higher education research are: brand alliance attitudes, brand association, brand attachment, brand attitude, brand attributes, **brand awareness**, brand commitment, brand competence, brand consciousness, brand credibility, brand emotions, brand engagement, brand environment, brand equity, brand familiarity, brand fit, brand

identification, brand identity, **brand image,** brand interpretation, brand knowledge, brand loyalty, brand meaning, brand orientation, brand perceptions, brand performance, brand personality, brand prestige, brand quality, brand relationship, brand relevance, **brand reputation,** brand strength, brand support and brand trust.

Based on the above, the study focused on investigating brand awareness, brand image and brand reputation as the most widely used brand constructs in higher education branding. The premise is that to fully understand the TVET brand, it is necessary that prospective students have some brand awareness and perceived understanding of the brand image of a TVET college. Extant literature has identified that brand awareness and brand image are important constructs in the higher education context, with Royo-Vela and Hünermund (2016) revealing how an institution can increase brand awareness and brand image in the hearts and minds of the customer. Casidy (2014) acknowledged that brand image has been recognised as one factor that attracts prospective students to institutions, while the institution's brand is its reputation and image (Wong et al., 2017).

This study introduced more brand constructs in higher education brand literature, for instance, the inclusion of brand heritage emanates from an argument by Merchant et al. (2015) that found that an institution's heritage influences its reputation, prospective students' attitudes, intentions and willingness to recommend the institution. The importance of brand symbolism in higher education is revealed to be necessary to show the strategic intent of an institution (Gioia et al., 1994).

The third brand construct introduced in this study was brand distinctiveness. Watkins and Gonzenbach (2013) proposed using brand personality to measure the brand distinctiveness of a higher education institution to allow it to create differentiation from other institutions. Brand personality is well documented in higher education literature, however, but no studies have looked at brand distinctiveness.

Given the need to further explore more brand constructs in the higher education sector, the study makes new contributions by including brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness.

8.2.3 Conclusion of the secondary research question 2

The branding processes and framework in higher education are still largely focused at a university level. For example, a study by Curtis et al. (2009) proposed a corporate branding process using a private American university as a case study. The proposed model illustrated in Figure 8.1 describes six phases as being of use to all higher education institutions, but its applicability to the TVET context would need to be checked, given that they are different to universities
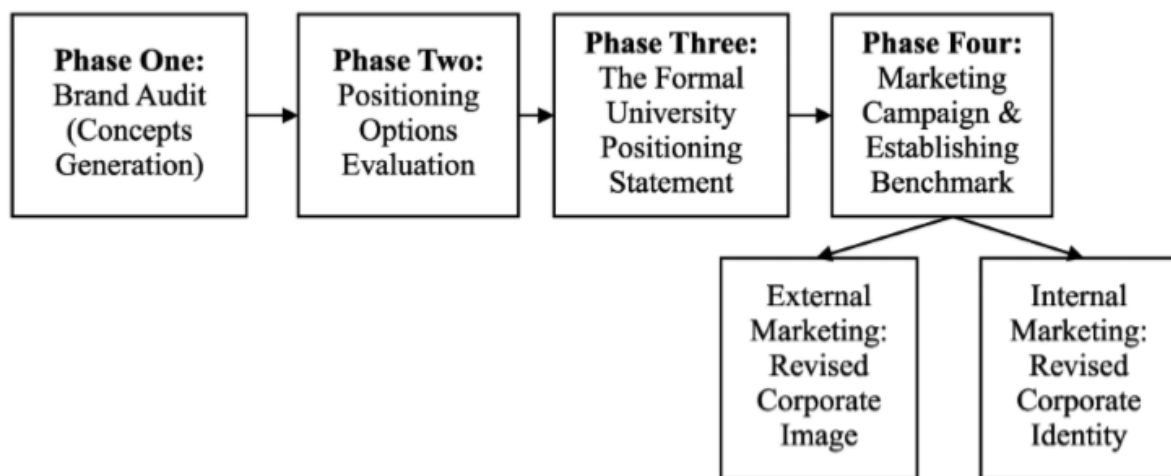
Figure 8. 1: Brand positioning process in higher education

Source: Curtis et al. (2009)

Hay and Gensen (2009) proposed a branding model for South African higher education which identified the internal practices of an institution's reputation and image. The model has a strong internal focus and, as seen in Figure 8.2, is grounded on three pillars, namely, relevance, experience economy, and external branding.
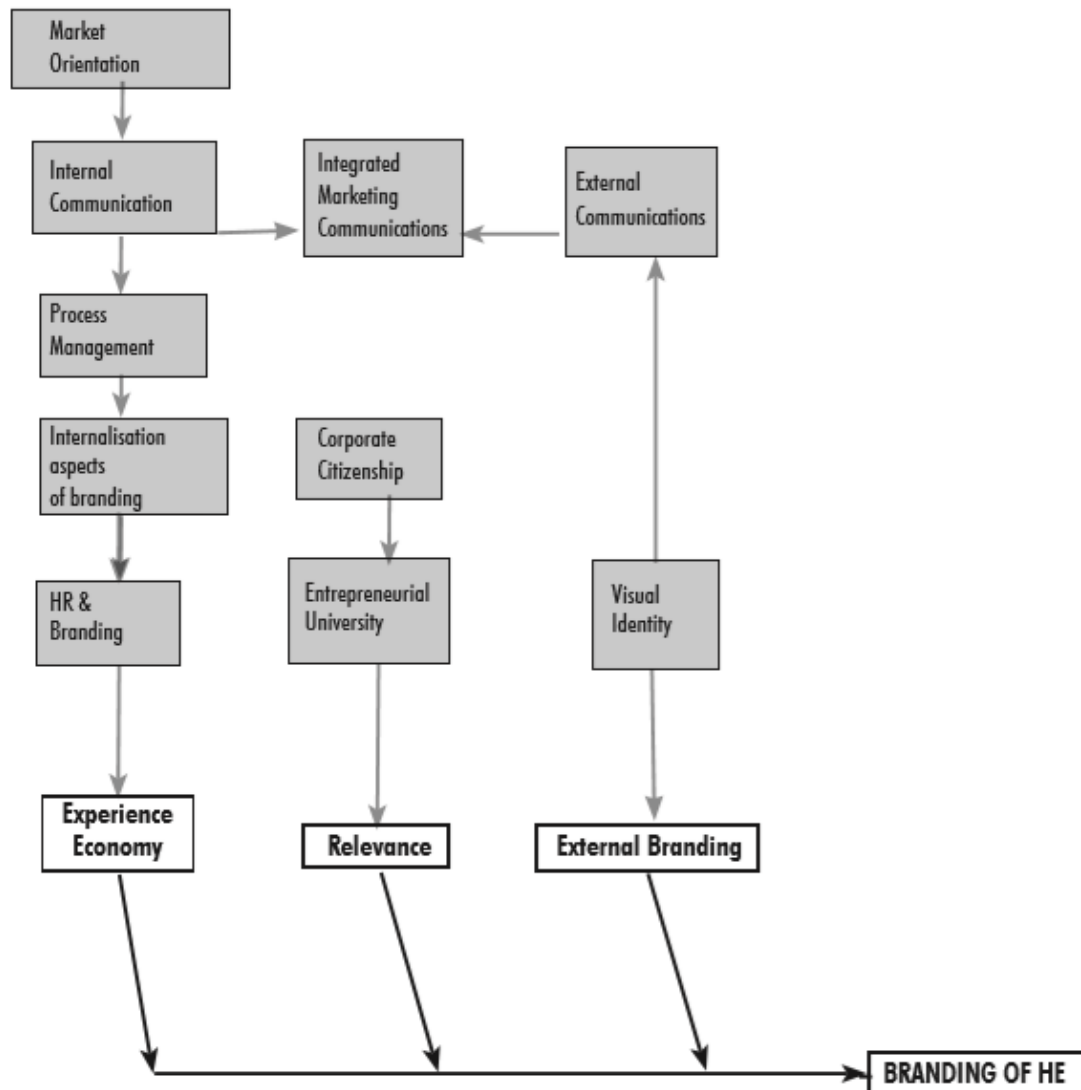
Figure 8. 2: Branding model of South African higher education institutions

Source: Hay and Gensen (2009)

Both models have a strong focus on building university brands, further highlighting the need to have a TVET branding framework. The TVET brand is unique and, when it performs well, provides a holistic vocational and technical education that is extensively recognised for its relevance, quality and values in economic growth (Seng, 2011). Branding a TVET requires a strong effort to communicate an image, followed by a comprehensive marketing and rebranding strategy (Seng, 2011).

In identifying how TVET colleges can move towards a branding framework, this study found that the focus should be on strengthening the brand awareness and brand image by communicating the reputation, heritage, and symbolism of TVET colleges as distinct brands that influence a learner's intent to study at a TVET college.

8.2.4 The consistency matrix: research problem, research questions, and the findings

The consistency matrix below links the research problem with the research questions and the findings

Table 8. 1: Consistency matrix

Research problem	References	Research question	Findings
There is very little knowledge on the use of branding practices in public TVET colleges in South Africa. In the higher education decision making processes of prospective students, branding is rarely considered as a factor that influences a prospective learner's decision. Lastly, much of the literature tends to focus on understanding universities as distinct brands.	Khan et al., 2017; Ratnata, 2013; Fadahunsi & Pelser, 2013; Obermeit, 2012; Powell & McGrath, 2013.	How does the branding of TVET colleges influence a learner's intention to study at a TVET college?	Branding of TVET colleges is a combination of six constructs; namely brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness.

Research problem	References	Research question	Findings
Several branding constructs have been explored in the higher education branding literature, yet no holistic model exists that tests several constructs in a single study. Furthermore, of the 35 brand constructs identified in the higher education literature, not a single one has included brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness.	Ledden et al., 2019; Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016; Casidy, 2014; Wong et al., 2017; Merchant et al., 2015.	What are the branding constructs that could influence a learner's decision to study at a TVET college?	This study found that brand awareness and brand image influences brand reputation and brand heritage.

It was found that brand reputation, brand heritage, and brand symbolism have an impact on brand distinctiveness.

The results show that brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness are new branding constructs that can be included in higher education literature |

Research problem	References	Research question	Findings
There is a clear branding framework that exists within the university sector. TVET colleges require their unique branding framework to demonstrate their uniqueness and competitiveness in the higher education section.	Curtis et al., 2009; Hay & Van Gensen, 2008.	How can TVET colleges move towards a branding framework?	The study shows that the implementation of a TVET branding framework will assist TVET collegesby the focus being on: 1) strengthening brand awareness and brand image. 2) communicating the reputation, heritage, and symbolism of TVET colleges as distinct brands that influence a learner's intent to study at a TVET college.

8.3 Recommendations

The recommendations emanating from this study are discussed in two parts, namely the development and implementation of a branding framework for TVET colleges and other strategic priorities.

8.3.1 The development and implementation of a branding framework for TVET colleges

The framework can be useful for TVET colleges and can be checkpoints necessary for the development and implantation of brand strategy relevant to TVET colleges in developing economies.
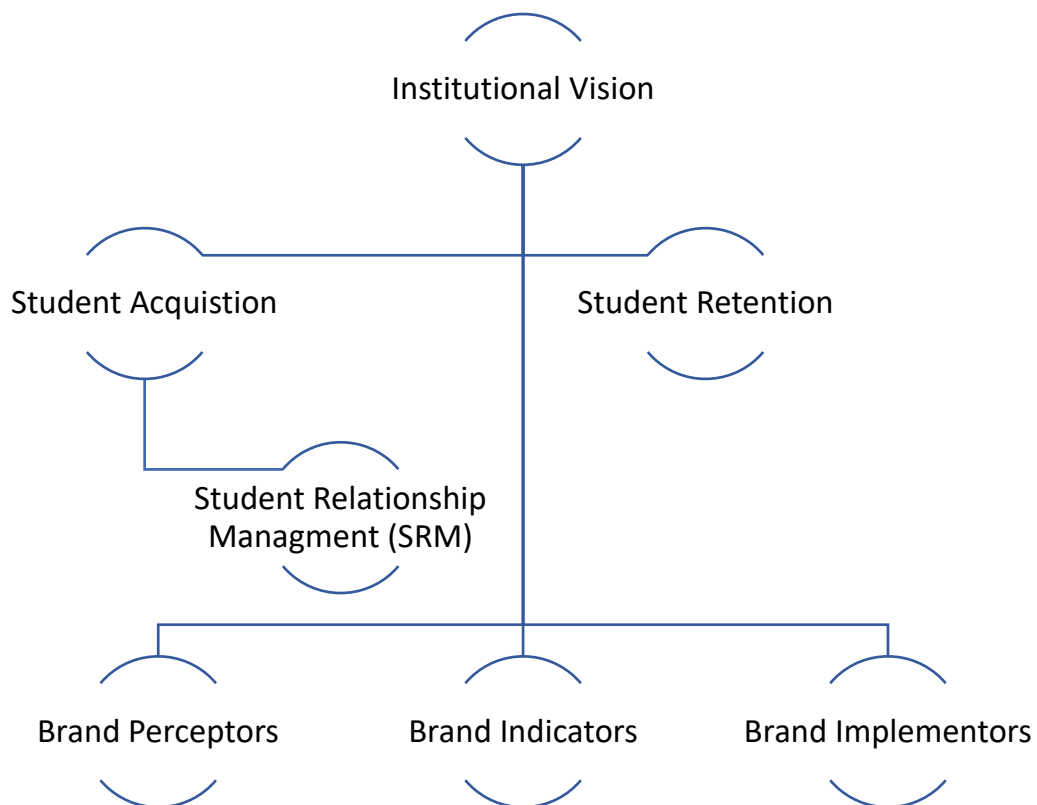
Figure 8. 3: Summary of the TVET branding framework

Source: Author's own (2019)

The TVET brand framework is made up of seven stages – as follows.

Stage 1: **Institutional vision** is the starting point of the framework. It is to ensure TVET colleges have a well-defined vision that will ensure that it speaks to the direction of the institution. The vision is important to ensure that the correct students are attracted to the institution. More importantly, the vision serves the institution with better communication of their brand to all stakeholders.

Stage 2 and 3: **Student acquisition** serves as a **student relationship management tool** to collect data from the prospective students and determine potential future students for the brand. It focuses on awareness and key attributes relating to geographical areas and segments of prospective students.

Stage 4: **Brand perceptors** elicit how potential students relate to the brand; they focus on the perception of brand awareness and brand image attributes.

Stage 5: **Brand indicators** are based on the perceptions of students as their feedback helps institutions establish their external brand strategy. It focuses on building a clear identity that speaks to the institution's heritage, reputation, and symbols.

Stage 6: **Brand implementors** communicate the TVET brand's distinct offering, creating a brand focused campaign based on the distinct TVET brand. The brand implementors should focus on identifying student touchpoints, the college brand's points of student contact, from start (the student being aware of a TVET college and its offering) to finish (to them applying at the college, as their preferred education choice).

Stage 7: **Student retention** focuses on retaining existing students within TVET colleges by creating an internal brand strategy.

The success of this strategy must be based on an organisational structure that can support the implementation of the framework. Buy-in from the executives and academic board members of the college is important. More significantly, a chief marketing officer should be appointed to oversee the development and implementation of the TVET strategy.

Table 8. 2: TVET branding framework

	Institutional vision				
Descriptor	**Measure**	**Task**	**Duration**	**Lead**	**Check list**
Customer Acquisition	**Customer Relationship Management**	Identify multiple data sources for data collection; namely, surveys, call centres, websites, interviews, and other student-facing communication touchpoints.	Continuous	SIM[1]	
		Source a data repository tool for data storage and management.	Once off	SIM	
		Use data analytics software to analyse the data into actionable strategies.	Quarterly	SIM	
	Brand Preceptors	Undertake potential student surveys, interviews and focus groups (to assess interest in TVET colleges).	Quarterly	MR	
		Obtain Social Media sentiment feedback (through Facebook and Twitter).	3 months	SMM	
		Identify various student touchpoints for effective communication.	4 months	MM	
		Design an identity (logo, colours, and slogans) for the college that resonates with students and other key stakeholders.	6 months	CMO & MM	
		Create a student journey map to ensure effective communication with them.	3 months	MM	
		Identify images that represent the college and select the most representative/attractive	3 months	CMO & MM	

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[1] Key: SIM: Student insights manager; MR: marketing researcher; SMM: social media manager; CMO: chief marketing officer; CEO: chief executive officer; MM: marketing manager; DCA: Deputy CEO: academic.

Institutional vision					
Descriptor	**Measure**	**Task**	**Duration**	**Lead**	**Check list**
		institutional image.			
		Describe the TVET student (who are the students and what motivates them to choose TVET colleges?)	3 months	CMO & MM	
	Brand Indicators	Identify brand stories that are focused on the heritage of TVET colleges.	bimonthly	CMO	
		Describe the positioning statement (perceived uniqueness over other institution).	Continuous	CMO	
		Create stakeholder engagements with industry professional bodies to accredit qualifications and ensure content is relevant and trustworthy for the future world of work.	Ongoing	DCA	
	Brand Implementors	Develop a brand and phased rebranding strategy after the creation of a TVET college framework.	Ongoing	CMO	
		identify pre-brand exposure touchpoints: • Website • Word of mouth • Advertising • Open day (campus visits) • Testimonials	Ongoing	MM	
		Identify brand exposure touchpoints: • College/campus • Brochures • Reception • Student support staff • Academic staff • Website • Application forms	Ongoing	MM	
		Identify post brand	Ongoing	MM	

Institutional vision					
Descriptor	**Measure**	**Task**	**Duration**	**Lead**	**Check list**
		exposure touchpoints: • Acceptance letter • SMS notifications • Marketing emails • Follow-ups • Service and support • Contact centre			
Customer Retention	**Internal branding**	Identify student ambassadors/ influencers to create and tell positive stories about TVET colleges and their experiences. Student alumni and current students should be selected.	6 months	MM	
		Create events on campus to communicate new branding to existing staff, students and executives.	Once a year	CEO	

Key: SIM: Student insights manager; MR: marketing researcher; SMM: social media manager; CMO: chief marketing officer; CEO: chief executive officer; MM: marketing manager; DCA: Deputy CEO: academic.

Source: Author's own (2019)

8.3.2 Other strategic priorities

The strategic priorities below are recommended to build the image and reputation of TVET colleges to build credibility and trust amongst prospective students.

8.3.2.1 Internal branding programme

The success of a strong brand starts with the support and buy-in from all internal stakeholders at college level, such as staff, current students and management.

Developing and implementing an internal branding programme can ensure that all staff members can be brand advocates of TVET college. By so doing, they are more likely to support the mission and vision of the institution, embody the brand and advocate it outside the institution. It may also encourage employees to become aligned to the institution and importantly, create a trust and commitment to the TVET brand. Therefore, an internal branding programme is recommended at all TVET colleges.

Developing a student brand orientation programme, directed to current students within the institution, is also important for institutions. The idea is to build behaviour that would see students being influencers in their communities. These students could be the storytellers of the colleges through their various testimonies to garner support from society and industry; and they could create word-of-mouth opportunities, which will be targeted at attracting students to these institutions. The intention would be to get their high school classmates and other students from their communities eager to study at TVET colleges.

Thus, it is recommended that institutions conduct thorough research with their students to monitor and evaluate their level of satisfaction and perceived value with the TVET brand. Their insights will help develop a student brand orientation programme to address misconceptions of, and lack of trust in the brand, which would otherwise negatively affect what they say about TVET colleges.

8.3.2.2 *Industry engagement*

The marketplace is a key catalyst for TVET brand development. Partnering with various industries and businesses will ensure that companies increasingly create opportunities for graduates of TVET colleges and not focus solely on university graduates. In addition, the TVET sector must meet the skills requirements of the economy. It is recommended to target big multinational companies to open their graduate programmes to include TVET graduates and also to use appropriate language in advertised position to inform prospective TVET graduates that they are open to apply.

While the government has made great strides in creating job opportunities for TVET graduates, little effort has been made within the private sector. So, the buy-in from industry is important in creating successful brand image and brand awareness initiatives.

Greater collaboration and alignment with industry to improve skills development, employability and entrepreneurship are necessary for closing the skills gap within Africa. To this end, the African Union (2015) suggests strengthening TVET through increasing investments and the creation of several high quality TVET institutions across Africa.

8.3.2.3   Free tuition

The DHET plays an important role in developing a positive TVET brand as seen, for example, in the opening of access to these colleges by fully subsidising fees for young people from households whose incomes are under R350 000 per annum, through the country's National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This is a great opportunity to attract more students to TVET colleges to enroll at these institutions. Fees are often seen as a barrier to access higher education institutions.

8.3.2.4   Doctoral prioritisation of the CEO of the college

The move towards appointing chartered accountants (CA) as chief financial officers at TVET colleges has helped with creating financial stabilities. As a further strategic shift, this study also recommends a move towards appointing principals (CEO) with a doctoral qualification to further build the credibility of the leadership.

8.3.2.5   Professional bodies engagement

Professional bodies should be considered in the development of qualifications. Professional body engagement will ensure all qualifications are relevant and appropriate for the job market. This implies that students will engage with appropriate content that will develop their graduate and entrepreneurial skills once they graduate from TVET colleges.

Professional bodies should act as quality assurers of the content taught in colleges. Since TVET colleges focus on skills and artisan development, professional bodies would include, but not be limited to, the South African Institute of Mechanical Engineering, the Institute of Commercial and Financial Accountants of Southern Africa, the Democratic Nursing Association of South Africa and the South African Marketing Association.

8.4 Implications of the study

The implications of this study are five-fold: managerial, theoretical, conceptual, managerial, policy and societal.

8.4.1 Managerial implications

It can be concluded from this study that although universities and TVET colleges function within the higher education context, there are clear differences between the two. Marketers interested in understanding branding in higher education should be conscious of it.

The study examined six main branding constructs: brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness, an understanding of which would assist TVET colleges to implement brand strategies. Given the negative perceptions of TVET colleges generally, a branding framework is critical and would assist managers in TVET colleges to increasingly focus on their marketing practices to assist with building a brand that is relevant for their context.

This study has closed this gap and provided a model and framework for building a TVET college brand. Having an appropriate model and framework that suits their unique context and focuses on aligning the institutional vision with attracting and retaining students will greatly assist management. It proposes three brand management measures of TVET colleges; namely brand preceptors (what they (students) know about us), brand indicators (what we would like to be) and brand implementors (what they should know about us). The branding framework includes 19 checkpoints in places that give TVET colleges a set of detailed tasks to develop and build their brand. This includes having TVET colleges identify their strengths, threats, and opportunities as part of their brand development and implementation.

By implementing this model in a higher education context, colleges and the government may well see an improvement and growth of the TVET brand, which should contribute to TVET colleges becoming a preferred choice by prospective

This is in the context in which, according to Lolwana (2016), the TVET sector in several sub-Saharan countries is associated with lacking relevance and responsiveness to industry needs, insufficient resources. and low pass rates. Unless the brand is continually renewed and developed, the impact of TVETs as a preferred higher education choice will not improve, given the challenges mentioned by Lolwana. TVET colleges in developing countries may find this study valuable and appropriate to their contexts.

8.4.2 Theoretical implications

The increased competition and adoption of marketing practices in higher education has led to transformative marketing thought. Branding is the one concept that has attracted huge interest within higher education, enabling institutions to develop their image and identity as a management strategy (Ledden et al., 2019).

Higher education branding points to several constructs that are commonly investigated across the spectrum. Prior studies conducted in investigated variables like brand identification in relation to brand loyalty and brand support (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016), brand attachment and brand equity (Dennis et al., 2017), brand meaning (Wilson & Elliot, 2016), brand personality (Rauschnabel et al., 2016), brand alliance, brand trust, brand familiarity and brand fit (Naidoo & Hollebeek, 2016; Kalafatis et al., 2016), brand knowledge (Lock, 2017), and brand alliance, brand engagement and brand image (Naidoo & Hollebeek, 2016). Brand reputation, brand image, and brand personality are some of the constructs measured in higher education (Ledden et al.,2019). However, the path through which brand knowledge structure (BKS) affect the intention to choose a higher education institution through some of these studied constructs needed examination.

This study theoretically contributes by examining the explanatory power of BKS (brand image and brand awareness) which, according to Keller (1993 and 2020), holds the power of a brand. The study revealed that BKS, particularly brand image, does not only directly impact behavioural intentions to study at TVET colleges, but also does so through the mediating effects of brand heritage, brand reputation, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness. While this enriches the literature in brand management, especially in the higher education sector, the developed and tested model can also be used for other service sectors.

Studies have investigated drivers of students' choices of higher education institutions. Among the most important choice factors influencing students' choices of higher institutions provided by previous studies are the college's website and geographic location of the institution (Simões & Soares, 2010); future job prospects, staff expertise, parents' opinions, teaching quality,course content (important for Vietnamese students) (Robinson & Dobele, 2019); information supplied by universities and fees of undergraduate qualifications (Briggs & Wilson, 2007). In Scotland, the top three factors were academic reputation, location, and distance from home (Briggs, 2006).

In the TVET sector, Powell and McGrath (2013) identified important factors as providing financial support to the family, selecting between school and college, between enrolling at college and staying at home and choosing to leave work to study at a college. This study contributes by exposing brand-related factors and how they interact to drive intentions to study at a higher education institution.

This study borrowed ideas from four theories to explain how BKS (brand awareness and brand image) influences grade 12learners' behavioural intention to study at TVET colleges through brand heritage, brand symbolism, brand reputation and brand distinctiveness. The four theories were customer-based brand equity (CBBE), self-congruity theory, social identity theory (SIT) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Given the lack of research in applying the CBBE theory in higher education branding literature, this study makes notable contributions by revealing the strong explanatory power of BKS of intentions to study in the higher education sector.

In the CBBE literature, BKS is at the heart of what drives the differential and positive responses to the marketing of the brand (Keller, 2020). This study proves the value of BKS in the higher education sector, thus enriching the brand management literature. Thus, to build and manage CBBE in the higher education sector generally, and TVET colleges particular, it is necessary to start with a strong BKS, from which look brand reputation, heritage, and symbolism will be developed and which all are strong drivers of brand distinctiveness, a predictor of behavioural intention.

Consistent with the self-congruity and self-identity theories, students would want to associate with brands, including higher educational brands that reflect their self-concept and aspirations and for which they can identify with. This study contributes

to the theories by revealing that investments made in creating brand awareness and developing brand image can drive prospective students to identify themselves (brand symbolism) and be proud (brand reputation) of studying in TVET colleges.

The study further revealed that when the brand symbolism and reputation together with heritage are achieved, brand distinctiveness is secured. In addition to brand distinctiveness being a driver of intentions to study at TVET colleges, as found in this study, Panda et al. (2019) also suggest it is a driver of competitive advantage and students' satisfaction. While the TPB suggests that behavioural intentions are influenced by social norms, perceived behaviour control, and attitudes, this study enriches existing research by revealing that brand-related factors also drive behavioural intentions. Therefore, this study theoretically contributes by integrating four theories to develop a conceptual model that can holistically explain how students develop intentions to study at a higher institution like TVET colleges. It starts with developing and an institution's brand knowledge structure in the minds of students.

8.4.3 Conceptual implications

Brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness are mediators while behavioural intention to study is an outcome variable. By examining the impact of branding on the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college, this study offers a new contribution to the marketing and higher education literature, offering a multi-disciplinary approach to branding and higher education. Furthermore, within the higher education branding setting, the findings further contribute to the development of relationships between brand awareness and brand reputation; brand awareness and brand heritage; brand awareness and brand symbolism; brand image and brand reputation; brand image and brand heritage; brand image and brand symbolism; brand reputation and brand distinctiveness; brand heritage and brand distinctiveness; brand symbolism and brand distinctiveness; and brand distinctiveness and behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. To the knowledge of the researcher, no studies have provided a holistic conceptual model in higher education literature. In addition, the relationships identified in this study are the first to be empirically tested, thus providing new insights into the branding and higher education literature.

8.4.4 Policy implications

Globally, the higher education sector is based on substantive policy and regulations commissioned to monitor and control the activities of these institutions of higher education. Lowrie (2007) thus asserts that the branding of higher education is located within the larger context of government policy.

This study has provided an important branding framework and findings that will assist policy makers develop and implement an efficient branding framework. In this cause, the DHET's longstanding policy for making TVET colleges attractive can be leveraged as the foundation of economic growth. In the policy changes, an inclusive policy formulation approach should be established involving industry, students, college management, lecturers, global agents and government, as this. will not only encourage a sound TVET policy but also enhance the brand reputation of TVET colleges. For instance, one of the objectives in the South African National Development Plan's [NDP] (2030) is to rapidly expand and make TVET colleges the preferred institutions of higher education. With the increasing demand for technical and vocational education and skills development in developing countries (Allais & Asmah, 2012), this study makes important policy contributions.

8.4.5 Societal implications

Skills development, poverty reduction and unemployment have been well documented in relation to the TVET education system and scholars place great emphasis on their societal and economic roles (Puckett, Davidson & Lee, 2012; Ananiadou, 2013; Shamim & Raihan, 2016; Lamichhane, 2016; Mulongo, Kitururu & Irira, 2016). This study provides evidence that creating a strong TVET brand will increase a student's intention to study at a TVET college as opposed to a university or any other institution of higher learning.

Currently, there are low student enrolment rates at TVET colleges, thus, an improved brand perception might influence students' uptake of TVET education and might influence students' stakeholders' (students) perception about TVETs, resulting in higher student enrolments at TVET colleges. Attracting high quality prospective students will increase the TVET participation and graduation rate, which means more

young people will become skilled. Developing skilled youths is an important aspect of the growth of emerging markets.

StatsSA (2019) reported that the general unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2019 amongst South African youth aged 15–24 years was 55,2% while the unemployment rate of graduates in this age groupwas 31,0%. This proves the critical role TVETs can play in reducing unemployment among the young and positions TVETs as being part of the solution to the skills and unemployment gaps in the country. Furthermore, this will change the negative association between prospective students and TVET colleges. The absorption of more students at TVET colleges will significantly change TVET education, improve communities and accelerate economic growth.

However, there are other factors such as curriculum reform, adequate resources, qualifications and employability which are required to improve brand perceptions. The curriculum should address industry needs and skills, while also increasing the quality of teaching. To build on the impact that TVET colleges have in society, it is imperative that the relationships between industry and TVET colleges are prioritised. Continuous evaluation of these factors is important to develop societies and have a meaningful impact on people's lives.

8.5   Limitations and future research

Although this study has made significant contributions to literature, managers and policy makers, some limitations are evident and have several implications for future research.

Firstly, as the research was only undertaken in Gauteng, South Africa, at three of the over 600 public high schools in the province., the findings cannot apply to all high schools in South Africa. Future studies need to explore the broader network of high schools in Gauteng as well as high schools in the other eight provinces to increase the generalisability of the study. Also, the study was only at public high schools and did not include private high schools; this could provide interesting insights that future studies can explore further.

As the study was restricted to grade 12 learners, the results cannot be generalised to all high school students, as students' opinions differ across the grades. It would be

beneficial to gather the opinions of grade 9 learners as they have already chosen their subjects based on the careers they would like to pursue. Engaging with students earlier in their high school career can provide insights that management and policy makers can utilise in building brand and marketing strategies. It would be ideal for researchers to look specifically at grade 9 as a research interest.

In addition, there are other key stakeholders in TVET colleges – and in the higher education sector more generally - whose influences can impact on an institution's brand and could be a focus of further research.

Another limitation with focusing on grade 12 learners is that the study gives an external perspective from people who have not experienced or studied at a TVET college. While this is the viewpoint that this student was particularly wanting, studying current students who are registered at TVET colleges would give a different – and qually valid – set of findings as they would be able to offer a perspective of their lived experience within TVET colleges, with notable insights for the renewal and redevelopment of the TVET brand. Therefore, future studies can look at the 50 colleges across the country to understand the TVET brand among its existing students. This emergence of branding within a public TVET college requires critical analysis.

A further limitation is the quantitative research approach this study has employed which undoubtedly has provided valuable contributions theoretically, conceptually and managerially. There are further insights that would have uncovered further opinions and insights if a qualitative approach was included, however, whether in the form of interviews or focus groups with a sample of the learners (bearing in mind that such opinions would not be representative to all grade 12 learners). future researchers might use a mixed methods approach to provide both a quantitative and qualitative information. In the case of this study, using a mixed method approach would have helped address the high neutral responses in the survey.

Theoretically, this study has limitations. For instance, while various branding variables have been measured – namely brand awareness, brand image, brand reputation, brand heritage, brand symbolism, and brand distinctiveness – it is recommended that the various branding constructs should each be measured in other industries across developing and developed countries. The explorations of

these variables would contribute immensely to brand management and marketing literature.

Furthermore, researchers should assess the impact of social media on the continual development of higher education brands (Khanna, Jacob & Yadav, 2014). Research should also be undertaken on the influence of brand experience, brand performance, brand love, brand faith, brand satisfaction, brand trust and brand commitment on the higher education brand. To add to the existing knowledge of brand management, various brand variables should be measured by future scholars.

Overall, the study deliberately only focused on TVET colleges, excluding other institutions of higher education from the study. This means that the findings might not be generalisable to the South African higher education sector more broadly, given its diversity and various models of these institutions. The study recommended that future research might be conducted for the whole higher education sector, involving all stakeholders.

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APPENDIX A.
QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions by marking the appropriate answer(s) with an X. Please note that TVET is an acronym for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET colleges are higher education institutions involving general education for gaining of practical skills, understanding and knowledge linked with jobs in various areas of the economic. Higher education institutions are universities, universities of technology and/or TVET colleges

SECTION A: General information

Please indicate your answer by mark (X) on the appropriate item.

A1   Please indicate your gender

Male	1
Female	2

A2   Please indicate your race

African	1
White	2
Coloured	3
Indian	4

A3   Are you over the age of 18?

Yes	1
No*	2

*If you selected no please make sure your parent/guardian has signed the consent letter to give you permission to participate in this research

A4   Please write down the name of your high school

A5   Do you have any information and understanding on TVET colleges?

Yes	1
No	2

A6   Are you planning to apply at a university, university of technology or TVET college in the future?

(Mark **one** option only)

Yes, a university	1
Yes, a university of technology	2
Yes, a TVET college	3
No, I am not planning to study at a university, university of technology or TVET college	4

A7   Did any of your parents, siblings or friends attend at a TVET college

Yes	1
No	2

A8   Would you tell your friends to apply at a TVET college?

Yes	1
No	2

A9   Please write down the name of the university, university of technology or TVET college that you would like to study at

SECTION B

Brand awareness

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BA1	I can identify TVET colleges among other higher education institutions	1	2	3	4	5
BA2	I am aware of TVET colleges	1	2	3	4	5
BA3	I can quickly remember the logo of a TVET college	1	2	3	4	5
BA4	I have trouble picturing a TVET college in my mind.	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Loureiro (2013)

Brand image

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BI1	The TVET brand is reliable	1	2	3	4	5
BI2	The TVET brand is attractive	1	2	3	4	5
BI3	The TVET brand is pleasing	1	2	3	4	5
BI4	The TVET brand is a social status symbol	1	2	3	4	5
BI5	The TVET brand has a good image	1	2	3	4	5

Source: *Lien et al. (2015)*

Brand reputation

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BR1	The TVET brand is trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5
BR2	The TVET brand is reputable	1	2	3	4	5
BR3	The TVET brand makes honest claims	1	2	3	4	5
BR4	The TVET brand has a long-lasting reputation	1	2	3	4	5
BR5	The values behind the TVET brand will not change	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009)

Brand heritage

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BH1	The TVET brand is connected to definitions of success	1	2	3	4	5
BH2	The TVET brand sets the assessment standard for other higher education institutions	1	2	3	4	5
BH3	I have an absolutely clear image of the TVET brand	1	2	3	4	5
BH4	My awareness with the TVET brand is very high	1	2	3	4	5
BH5	The TVET brand represents honesty	1	2	3	4	5
BH6	The TVET brand is highly known in the society	1	2	3	4	5
BH7	The TVET brand has a strong brand identity	1	2	3	4	5
BH8	The TVET brand is unique compared to other higher education institutions	1	2	3	4	5

Source: *Wiedmann et al. (2011)*

Brand symbolism

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BS1	People study at a TVET college as a way of expressing their personality	1	2	3	4	5
BS2	A TVET college is for people who want to succeed	1	2	3	4	5
BS3	A TVET student stands out in a crowd	1	2	3	4	5
BS4	Studying at a TVET college says something about the kind of person you are	1	2	3	4	5

Source: *Bhat and Reddy (1998)*

Brand distinctiveness

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BD1	I associate TVET with strength	1	2	3	4	5
BD2	I associate TVET with high technology	1	2	3	4	5
BD3	I associate TVET with creativity	1	2	3	4	5
BD4	I associate TVET with superiority	1	2	3	4	5
BD5	I associate TVET with distinctiveness	1	2	3	4	5
BD6	I associate TVET with excellence	1	2	3	4	5
BD7	I associate TVET with status	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Yasin, Noor and Mohamad (2007)

Behavioural intention to study

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

BIS1	I plan to apply at a TVET college in the future	1	2	3	4	5
BIS2	I intend to apply at a TVET college in the future	1	2	3	4	5
BIS3	I expect to apply at a TVET college in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
BIS4	I would be able to apply at a TVET college in the future	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Lin (2006)

The End

APPENDIX B.
PHATENG SECONDARY SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTER

| | PHATENG SECONDARY SCHOOL
P.O.BOX 77176
MAMELODI WEST
0101
20202 SERAPENG STREET
BUFFER ZONE
MAMELODI EAST
0122
TEL 012-8018400 FAX 012-8013608
CELL: 082 556 2170 | |
| education
Department Education
GAUTENG PROVINCE | | |

EMIS: 700220962   21 June 2017

<u>TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN</u>

This is to confirm that Phateng high school has given permission to

Name : Simphiwe Dlamini
I.D.no :
Student no : 1257142
University : WITS

To conduct a research at our school , to the current grade 12 learners.

I , The Principal , am free to be contacted , should you need any further information regarding this.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours in education

....

Mr MM Mohlala

APPENDIX C.
BEDFORDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTER

Bedfordview **High School**

Private Bag X2, Bedfordview 2008, Tel: (011) 616-5220, Fax: (011) 615-5120
bedfordviewhigh@webmail.co.za

01 June 2017

CONSENT LETTER

This letter serves to confirm that Bedfordview High is giving Siphiwe Dlamini from WITS UNIVERSITY a permission to conduct a research with the grade 12 learners.

Should you require any assistant please contact the undersigned person.

Yours in Tirisano.

Tshisudi MC

Principal

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BEDFORDVIEW HIGH SCHOOL

2017 -06- 01

APPENDIX D.
KENSINGTON SECONDARY SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTER

Kensington Secondary School

Cnr New York & Protea Streets
P.O. Box 59055, Kengray 2100
Tel: 011 616 4128 fax: 011 616 4127

FROM   : Mr MH Gill
           The Principal

DATE   : 01 JUNE 2017
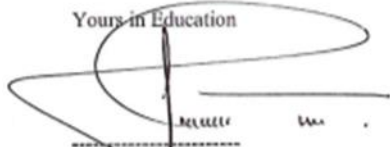
RE   : Confirmation letter

To whom it may concern

This serves to confirm that **Siphiwe Dlamini**, ID No. ███████████████ ,Student No
,1257142 has been granted the permission to conduct his research at Kensington Sec
School.

Feel free to contact the school should you need any further information

Thanking you in anticipation.

Kind regards

Yours in Education

M H Gill
The Principal

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
**KENSINGTON
SECONDARY SCHOOL**
ADMIN OFFICE
Cnr Protea And New York Streets, Kensington
P.O.Box 59055, Kengray, 2100
Tel: 011 616 4128
Email: admin@kensec.co.za

APPENDIX E.
CONSENT FORM

Consent form

Title: The impact of branding on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college: A South African grade 12 learner perspective

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of branding on the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. TVET is an acronym for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET colleges are higher education institutions involving general education for gaining of practical skills, understanding and knowledge linked with jobs in various areas of the economic.

I have read and understood what this research involves and what is expected of me.

I understand that:

- I may refuse to answer any question that I feel uncomfortable answering.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time and it will not be held against me in any way.
- Participation for this questionnaire is entirely voluntary
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research thesis and academic publications
- Data collected from me will be kept confidential
- Participation in this research study is completely anonymous.
- Any personal information shared in the consent form will also be kept confidential by the researcher.
- I will not receive payment of any form and information I share will be used in the research thesis
- The research will be written into a PhD thesis in the School of Economic and Business Sciences and will be available through the university's website.

I hereby consent to participate in this research. I give Siphiwe Dlamini. Permission for my results to be used in the write up of the study.

I confirm that I am over 18 years.

Date:_____ Signature_____

APPENDIX F.
ASSENT FORM

Assent form

Title: The impact of branding on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college: A South African grade 12 learner perspective

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of branding on the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. TVET is an abbreviation for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET colleges are higher education institutions involving general education for gaining of practical skills, understanding and knowledge linked with jobs in various areas of the economic.

I have read and understood what this research involves and what is expected of me. I understand that:

- I may refuse to answer any question that I feel uncomfortable answering.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time and it will not be held against me in any way.
- Participation for this questionnaire is entirely voluntary
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research thesis and academic publications
- Data collected from me will be kept confidential
- Participation in this research study is completely anonymous.
- Any personal information shared in the consent form will also be kept confidential by the researcher.
- I will not receive payment of any form and information I share will be used in the research thesis
- The research will be written into a PhD thesis in the School of Economic and Business Sciences and will be available through the university's website.

I hereby consent to participate in this research. I give Siphiwe Dlamini permission for my results to be used in the write up of the research.

I confirm that I am under the age 18 years and my parent/guardian has signed the consent form for me to participant in this research.

Date:_____ Signature_____

APPENDIX G.
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child is invited to participate in a PhD research being conducted by Siphiwe Dlamini, a student, in the Department of Marketing, at the University of The Witwatersrand. The title of my research is **"The impact of branding on behavioural intention to study at a TVET college: A South African grade 12 learner perspective".** The purpose of this study is to examine the role of branding on the behavioural intention to study at a TVET college. TVET is an abbreviation for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. TVET colleges are higher education institutions involving general education for gaining of practical skills, understanding and knowledge linked with jobs in various areas of the economic. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participation in this study, but his/her participation may help us better understand how they perceive the TVET brand. The findings of this study will contribute to the literature on branding in a higher education context. I am inviting your child to be a participant in my research. Your child will be required to complete a questionnaire, which will take between 20-25 minutes by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements provided by marking (X) on the respective number in the 5 point scale.

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary and I can guarantee that their personal details will remain anonymous throughout this research as well as in the final research thesis and academic publications. Your child may refuse to answer any question which their feel uncomfortable with and may also feel free to withdraw from this study at any time. By being a participant in this research he/she will not receive payment of any form and information they disclose will be used in the research thesis.

This research will be written into a PhD thesis in the School of Economic and Business Sciences and will be available through the university's website. Should you require a summary of the research, I can make it available to you.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact the following people,

PhD Student: Siphiwe Dlamini at 1257142@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Prof. Richard Chinomona at Richard.Chinomona@wits.ac.za

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and give permission for my child to participate in abovementioned research.

Date _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

APPENDIX H.
WITS ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Dlamini

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: H17/05/06

PROJECT TITLE

The impact of branding on behavioural intention to study at TVET college: A South African grade 12 learner perspective

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Mr S Dlamini

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT

Economic and Business Sciences/

DATE CONSIDERED

19 May 2017

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved

EXPIRY DATE

10 July 2020

DATE   11 July 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor R Chinomona

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

APPENDIX I.
GAUTENG DEPT OF EDUCATION
RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	09 March 2017
Validity of Research Approval:	06 March 2017 – 29 September 2017 2017/26
Name of Researcher:	Dlamini S
Address of Researcher:	
	Willowdale
	Vosloorus, 1475
Telephone Number:	
Email address:	1257142@students.wits.ac.za
Research Topic:	The impact of branding on behavioural intention to study at a TVET colleges: A South African grade 12 learner perspective
Number and type of schools:	Three Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni North, Johannesburg East and Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

09/03/2017

Making education a societal priority