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The influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement in a South African university

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

Johannesburg, 2019

ABSTRACT

Internal branding and stakeholder engagement studies have predominantly been done in the United States of America, Asia, the United Kingdom and Australian contexts, done in service industries and with the employee as the main stakeholder of consideration. There has been a dearth of studies in the African or South African higher education context, focusing not just on employees (academic and non-academic), but on students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and alumni, to which this study pertains.

Higher education institutions seem to grapple with the issue of low stakeholder brand engagement. The proposition of this research is that internal branding offers a plausible solution to the problem of low stakeholder brand engagement. Further, social identification, organisational identification and social exchange are thought to be, as per the literature, moderating factors that can impact positively on brand engagement.

The research methodology was a qualitative study based on a single case (Wits University) with study respondents selected through a combination of purposive and random (convenience) sampling. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method, with no secondary data sources used. A discussion document/interview guide was used during the audio recorded interviews which lasted, on average, between 30 and 60 minutes. Thirty respondents were interviewed (12 employees, 12 students and 6 alumni). Respondents were varied in terms of age, race, gender, tenure at the university or number of years as alumni.

Firstly, the study established the absence of a solid or structured internal branding programme in existence at Wits University, but this exhibited no effect on role engagement or brand engagement through loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution by employees, students and alumni; as well as no effect on institutional commitment by employees only. However, the absence of the internal branding practices at the case site negatively impacted upon other brand engagement aspects to varying levels for all three stakeholder groups i.e. on the aspects of institutional commitment, financial commitment, time

commitment and loyalty through wearing/displaying Wits-branded merchandise. Further, organisational identification was found to have a direct positive impact on brand engagement for all stakeholder groups, with social exchange aspects also impacting on brand engagement aspects. Social identity, though apparent through friends for undergraduate students and through department/school/faculty for employees and postgraduate students, did not seem to have a bearing on stakeholder brand engagement. There was no social identity for alumni.

University management and administrators have their work cut out for them - the main challenge is to manage the multiple university stakeholders and instil in them a single overarching identity, notwithstanding their various perceptions based on their roles within, and relationship with, the university. Internal branding, though with apparently no impact on role engagement, is the recommended panacea to enable the management of multiple university stakeholders and through that, enable positive brand engagement and the brand supporting behaviours that accrue.

DECLARATION

I, **O'BIDIE RUDO MAUNZE**, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Strategic Marketing in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed at JOHANNESBURG

On the 7th day of May 2019

DEDICATION

For Kaelo, *my nhanha*, my little trooper. On this journey with me from the time you were one, till now, at three years old and starting your own academic career no less. Here's to a better life for us, and to as many adventures as we can handle!

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- My parents, siblings, friends, family and all those that supported me spiritually and emotionally – thank you.
- Jenny Croll, my editor, for your professionalism and managing to meet very tight timelines.
- And last, but certainly not least, to Chido. My sister, chief motivator and cheer-leader, my editor and proof reader; my self-imposed deadlines time-keeper, my sounding board. Thank you for being by my side throughout this journey and for believing in me every step of the way, especially when it got a little hard.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to explore the influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement within a university or higher education institution (HEI) setting. HEI stakeholders referred to in this instance are employees, students and alumni. The research sought to determine the relationship between these two aspects – internal branding and HEI stakeholder engagement.

Literature on internal branding suggests the internal market as being the interface between an organisation and its stakeholders (Dean, Arroyo-Gamez, Punjaisri, & Pich, 2016). Piehler, Grace, and Burmann (2018) note the importance and relevance of brand management focused on internal stakeholders; the inside-out perspective (i.e. internal orientation: organisation and employees). Further, according to Di Chiro (2008), internal branding, which he also dubs 'branding from the inside out', may be the greatest unexploited marketing and communications opportunity for companies and their brands, with organisations designed to be outwards facing. Consequently, organisations may view the notion of internal branding as a cost or an investment, depending on its perceived value to them (Free, 1999). However, research on internal branding, which Khan (2009) and Di Chiro (2008) label as the stepchild of external branding, seems to be gaining popularity, with an extensive array of studies undertaken on the subject, albeit in a wide variety of contexts. Terms such as internal branding, employee branding, internal marketing and relationship marketing are regularly used in marketing literature – these terms pay attention to the engagement of internal stakeholders in organisation missions and planning (Sujchaphong, Nguyen, & Melewar, 2015).

Previous studies have pointed to a need for internal branding in attaining stakeholder engagement within universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) and called for more research in this field to explore fully all angles related to the topic. Examples include recent studies by Yu, Asaad, Yen, and Gupta (2018) who found that employing an internal market orientation (IMO) as an internal brand management tool has a positive effect on brand commitment and brand supportive behaviour by university employees. Dholakia (2017) explored the role of internal brand management in determining the brand promise by directly addressing internal university stakeholders,

while Nouri, Ebrahimpour, and Feizi (2017) concluded that internal branding has a positive significant impact on brand supportive attitudes and job satisfaction of university employees. Earlier studies by authors such as Hay and Van Gensen (2008) advocated for internal branding before external branding, also proposing a model for branding HEIs in South Africa. Guzmán, Abimbola, and Whisman (2009) attributed successful university brands and employee engagement to internal branding and proposed that internal branding is a university's most valuable intangible asset. Hemsley-Brown, Lowrie, and Chapleo (2010) noted how even those universities considered to be successful had internal brand management challenges, with emergent issues from their study showing a need for stakeholder engagement (buy-in/support). Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, and Gordon (2008) linked failures in internal branding to employees not living the brand due to a lack of engagement. Judson, Gorchels, and Aurand (2006) concluded that there was a need for internal branding within universities which have major athletic programmes in order to attain greater brand clarity which, in turn, would result in better recruiting efforts by coaching staff. In an increasingly competitive global higher education environment, Burmann, Zeplin, and Riley (2009) posit that internal brand management can help HEIs acquire a prolonged competitive advantage e.g. in terms of customer loyalty.

The plausible assertion is that internal branding practices will likely result in more engaged stakeholders - the general findings of the above-mentioned study examples support this notion. However, there is need for a deeper understanding of the influence or effects of internal branding practices within organisations, especially in developing country/emerging market HEIs. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to explore the influence of internal branding on stakeholder (employees, students and alumni) engagement within a university/HEI in a South African context.

1.2 Context of the study

The findings of a study by Du Preez, Bendixen, and Abratt (2017) were that internal brand management is contextual, with no universal instrument yet measuring internal brand management constructs. The context of this study was unique when compared to studies of a similar nature conducted in other parts of the world. Hay and Van Gensen (2008) condense the context of South African higher education by outlining several realities, which include a history plagued by inequalities and new policies directed towards eradicating those very same inequalities. Other realities include the

increase in private higher education; increased reliance on partnerships and alliances; the merging of HEIs, increasing competition between institutions; increased reliance on private funding for public higher education and an ever-growing pressure to find solutions to the mounting financial pressures faced by HEIs.

As alluded to above, one of the key aspects of the South African higher education institution sector is that of historical inequalities which continue to be apparent and play out within HEIs in the current era (Leibowitz, Bozalek, van Schalkwyk, & Winberg, 2015). Apartheid ideology shaped the composition, form, and size of the South African higher education system, with all education in the country divided along racial and ethnic lines and thereby effectively excluding the black population from quality academic education and technical training (Badsha & Harper, 2000). Bornman and Potgieter (2017) reported that during the apartheid era, languages were important markers of ethnic identities and a key mechanism for organising group relations (i.e. racial and ethnic identities are created and reified through processes of social engineering). Afrikaans was perceived as an instrument of oppression, as indicated by the 1976 Soweto uprisings against the compulsory use of Afrikaans in Black schools, leading to the death of 69 young students. Post-apartheid South Africa is still ethnically diverse, comprising four officially recognised ethnic groups: Black African (80%), White (8%), 'Coloured' (Mixed Race) (9%), Indian/Asian (3%), and with 11 official languages (Lee, 2017). Post-apartheid South Africa HEIs, through opening access to a diverse student population, are seen to be trying to move from being elitist or racially exclusive, to being more democratic and representative of the country's demographics resulting in increased participation of first-generation, low-income and mature students (Pather, Norodien-Fataar, Cupido, & Mkonto, 2017; Strydom & Loots, 2018). However, there are still major challenges to verifiable transformation within South African HEIs (Pather et al., 2017).

A complex layer that still exists in the South African education context in general, the HE sector in particular, is that of the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) in a country with 11 official languages (English, Afrikaans and nine ethnic languages, though only two languages (English and Afrikaans) enjoyed official status during apartheid) (Bornman & Potgieter, 2017). These authors go on to say how globalisation led, in many instances, to the decline of mother-tongue instruction and the stagnation of local languages, despite numerous studies demonstrating the benefits of mother-

tongue education. Unlike the anglicisation tendencies elsewhere, the 1996 South African Constitution held the potential of becoming a cornerstone for a culture of language equity, language pluralism, language tolerance, respect for diversity and encouraging the use of all these 11 languages in all societal domains – in various educational spheres. However, the promotion of multilingualism in the HEI domain posed overwhelming challenges. The phasing out of monolingual Afrikaans universities to break with past segregational practices, the promotion of transformation, and the anglicisation of higher education versus the use and promotion of local languages as the LOLT, are some issues still coming under intense academic and public scrutiny.

Leibowitz et al. (2015) further note how past apartheid policies, together with social, educational and economic inequalities, significantly impacted higher education in South Africa; with educational opportunities of the majority (80%) of black South Africans since 1994 (the dawn of democracy) having hardly improved, with only a slight improvement in enrolment numbers of Africans in HEIs in general. South Africa, a developing country with a population of over 50 million people, a total of 23 public HEIs and with over 20% of the national budget allocated to education is, as noted by the World Economic Global Competitiveness Forum of 2012, is rated amongst the least performing education systems in comparison to other countries (Leibowitz et al., 2015). With the fall of the apartheid regime and the advent of a new dispensation, most analysts believed that South Africans were a divided nation lacking a common sense of nationhood and an overarching national identity (Bornman & Potgieter, 2017). However, after the first democratic election in 1994, strides were taken to bridge this divide, with the post-apartheid South African society being referred to as the Rainbow Nation, a metaphor, symbolising multiculturalism, reconciliation, and nation building (Lee, 2017). Nevertheless, the realities on the ground – in society, the economy and the education sector, etc. – would point to a different reality altogether, with Behari-Leak and McKenna (2017) pointing out how significant injustices still permeate the post-colonial South African society. This context was, therefore, vastly dissimilar to the usual contexts in which research in the field of internal branding at HEIs has been conducted.

Cloete and Maassen (2015, p. 2) note how one of the world's leading social scientists, Manuel Castells, said regarding the role of universities:

> "… The university becomes a central actor of scientific and technological change, but also of other dimensions – of the capacity to train a labour force adequate to the new conditions of production and management. They also become the critical source of equalisation of chances and democratisation of society by making possible equal opportunities for people – it's not only a contribution to economic growth, it's a contribution to social equality or, at least, lesser inequality".

Castell's assertion was that universities are of critical importance to the building of a more equal society. However, this is a troubling contradiction since higher education in Africa, generally, is still an elite system (Cloete & Maassen, 2015). In South Africa, many HEI students carry the added burden of inadequate basic education systems, adding fuel to concerns about their lack of preparedness, their unresponsiveness to traditional teaching methods, the erosion of critical thinking skills and basic literacy (Strydom & Loots, 2018).

The above-noted, together with the slow pace and inadequate degree of transformation (decolonisation, de-racialisation, de-gendering and de-masculinisation), and inadequate financial resources within the HEI space, was likely the backdrop of the dramatic and explosive #FeesMustFall protests of 2015-16 (Badat, 2016). Badat (2016) maintained that the South African higher education crisis had an economic dimension, which included the HEI sector being inadequately funded by the government, the considerable decline of government subsidies/funding since 1994 and the inadequate level of funding for students who are academically eligible and meet the criteria of funding by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). NSFAS was set up in 1999 to give previously disadvantaged individuals access to university education by providing loans of which as much as 40% could be converted to a bursary, depending on academic performance (Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2013). However, NSFAS contributions seem to be inadequate to bridge the financial gap for students in dire need. Badat (2016) further suggested that the South African government's economic policies did not generate adequate economic growth and development capable of providing adequate resources to invest in higher education. This lack of financial resources and inability to invest in higher education was in stark contrast with the promises made to the South African youth at the 52nd National Conference of the African National Congress in December 2007; Resolution 44 under Education was to: "Progressively introduce free education for the poor until

undergraduate level" (ANC, 2007). This promise of free tertiary education was one of the catalysts of the #FeesMustFall movement, whose epicentre was the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Behari-Leak and McKenna (2017) asserted, quite rightly so, that the #FeesMustFall student protests invigorated a crucial engagement on access to higher learning in an unequal society.

Forming part of the South African higher education context is a, seemingly, uniquely South African phenomenon termed "black tax" which Magubane (2016) refers to profound levels of societal discrimination and the complex financial responsibilities that the black middle class have towards their extended family, all due to the continuing inequality from the apartheid era. Apartheid, together with the Natives Land Act of 1913, resulted in generations of black people being left destitute and needing to catch up with their peers from other race groups who were not subjected to the same inequalities (HuffPost, 2017). The study by Magubane (2016) established that at times "black tax" hinders individuals' personal development, savings and investment, and also suggested that "black tax" is facilitated by external and internal environments e.g. high inequality and unemployment levels, and broken family structures including death of a parent or divorce, respectively. According to a snap survey by HuffPost (2017), the answers to the question "why do you pay black tax?" elicited responses such as "I'm trying to break the cycle of poverty by giving them the education I never had", "it's just done that way, you haven't got *Ubuntu* if you don't", "I feel like I don't have a choice. I am in debt, but I cannot watch them suffer", and "I am the only educated adult that makes a decent income". The effects of "black tax" often mean that black South Africans start out their careers on the back foot, laden with student debt and no generational wealth to fall back on (HuffPost, 2017). The South African government has intervened in efforts to reduce societal inequalities, through, for example, policies such as Affirmative Action (AA) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) (Magubane, 2016).

Adding to this already complex context of the South African HEI sector is the increase in regional mobility resulting in a higher international student population within the country, primarily from Africa, with the largest migratory student population being from Zimbabwe (Lee, 2017). According to Lee (2017), this added on to an already tense situation within the country and HEI institutions, with ugly, unsavoury terms and

behaviours such as xenophobia, neo-racism and negative stereotyping rearing their heads.

Taking this South African HEI sector context into account, internal branding could present a way to deal with the uniquely South African challenges within these institutions – of course not in isolation, but in conjunction with government and various other interventions.

Marshall (2013) in a Forbes Magazine article contribution, notes how the old model of primarily focusing on the external message at best leaves teams feeling disconnected, or worse yet, pessimistic or dismissive. Furthermore, universities, as corporate brands, have more of a multi-stakeholder rather than a customer orientation thereby requiring a radical reappraisal of the traditional marketing framework (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

Against this backdrop, this research looked to explore the link between internal branding and key stakeholder engagement within universities and HEIs in a South African University. Stakeholders, in this instance, went beyond administrative employees, as is usually covered in most studies, and included academic and non-academic employees, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and alumni. This widened the scope of study when compared to previous studies of a similar nature and made it more relevant to universities and HEIs in a developing country context.

1.3 Problem statement

The importance of internal branding has been widely acknowledged by brand experts and researchers (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Piehler et al., 2018); the value of internal branding within organisations seems clear. The goal was, therefore, to probe if this same notion applies to HEIs, where more focus is placed on the business of imparting knowledge to students, or to external branding which helps them attract the “best brains and brawns/sports stars” to join their institutions. HEIs are unlike the typical corporate organisation, hence it would be fitting to establish how best to run them so that all key stakeholders produce or function at their best. Having engaged stakeholders would be a good starting point.

1.3.1 Main problem

Generally, educational institutions are seen as service organisations, though branding and marketing usually play a subdued role. Often, clarity around the need to communicate with external audiences (e.g. potential students and donors) exists, but the internal stakeholder role is not that clear (Dholakia, 2017); herein lies the problem.

A brief for an Employee Engagement Campaign developed for Wits University in 2013 was to *"Create an internal communications campaign that assists in transforming staff and students with low morale into proud Witsies and brand ambassadors".* This alludes to Wits being cognisant of overall low engagement levels of their staff and students.

The low stakeholder engagement levels being experienced by Wits University are highly unlikely to be unique to this institution; more likely, low stakeholder engagement levels are also being experienced by other HEIs in the country. Impacts of low levels of HEI stakeholder engagement include current students having a low sense of belonging, which further down the line makes them uninterested alumni; and a lack of a proud alumni network, which in turn, means less financial and other support from them. Low engagement levels also lead to the loss of dedicated and hardworking employees to other organisations; lowered administrator productivity and increased wastage within the workplace (financial, time, skills etc.), the existence of silos between departments and faculties, and a more volatile work/study environment. By considering a stakeholder engagement campaign, Wits was acknowledging the importance of having engaged stakeholders.

1.3.2 Sub-problems

Sub-problem 1: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution employees (academic and non-academic).

Sub-problem 2: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution students (undergraduate and postgraduate.

Sub-problem 3: To determine how internal branding affects higher education institution alumni engagement with, and financial or other support of, the brand

1.4 Significance of the study

The intention is that this research adds to the current literature and body of knowledge on the value of internal branding within universities and HEIs, which differ in characteristics from the usual corporate brands. The study endeavours to provide insights on the link between internal branding and stakeholder employees, student and alumni engagement; specifically, how the former influences the latter, particularly in a developing/emerging market context

The main focus of internal branding was noted as being the fostering of employee behaviour, which is consistent with an organisation's brand values (Chang, Chiang, & Han, 2012). Unsurprisingly, then, studies on internal branding within universities and HEIs have, predominantly, been done with respect to employees as the key stakeholder. These include studies by Judson et al. (2008), King and Grace (2008), Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) and Yu et al. (2018). As such, this study has added significance in that its focus goes beyond employees to include other stakeholders, giving a wider view of the impacts on internal branding. As McAlexander, Koenig, and Schouten (2006) assert, a university is an institution that offers a wide array of products and services to an equally wide range of consumers (stakeholders) through many outlets and service providers under the auspices of its brand. This study, therefore, helps fill a gap in the current literature on internal branding within a university or HEI by focusing on other key stakeholders, such as students and alumni, in addition to employees. One study by Dholakia (2017) did incorporate more internal stakeholders i.e. academic and administrative staff and students. However, there is a paucity of similar, multi-focus studies.

This research adds to studies carried out within an African/developing country/emerging market context. Studies on internal branding within universities and institutions of higher education have predominantly been done with respect to institutions in other, more developed parts of the world, with a different educational and historical context altogether e.g. America, the United Kingdom (UK), Australia and Asia. This research contributes to the minimal available literature on internal branding within a developing country university/HEI, and more specifically, in Africa, thereby covering a gap in the literature.

This study may also provide a basis on which to conduct further research in the field of internal branding within HEIs. These studies are of great significance and importance as their findings may steer these institutions towards better management systems which would result in well-run, adequately funded and supported organisations with high achieving and content stakeholders who are brand champions, actively living the brand. The research findings can assist universities and other HEIs to culture engaged stakeholders, and to adopt a more holistic approach to brand building, focusing on both internal and external branding.

This research was also a response to various recommendations for more research on the topic of internal branding in general. Chapleo (2010) and Chapleo (2015) maintain that internal branding literature has a degree of applicability though further studies are needed to advance this important field; and that appropriate models for managing brands in the higher education context are needed. Other calls for future research include those made by Burmann and Zeplin (2005), Balmer, Powell, Punjaisri, and Wilson (2011) and Sujchaphong et al. (2015). A recently published article by Piehler et al. (2018) also calls for more research to do with brand management in the internal stakeholder context as such research was limited. Piehler et al. (2018) suggested five directions for future research, and this research study will fulfil the first suggested research direction – that of validating the relevance of internal brand management for an organisation's success by hypothesising and empirically investigating internal brand management effects on organisational performance outcomes (in this case positive stakeholder engagement).

Sujchaphong, Nguyen, and Melewar (2017) and Burmann and Zeplin (2005) conclude the significance narrative of this research. The former authors note how, though recognised as being important to universities in an increasingly competitive playing field, more research on internal branding is being encouraged. The latter authors stress the relevance of the subject of internal brand management, which they deemed to be particularly urgent in the service industry of which HEIs and universities are part.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

- Respondents for this research study were directly affiliated with the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)
- Stakeholders for the study were limited to Wits staff, Wits students and Wits Alumni

- Only management and administrative staff at Wits with at least a Matric qualification were considered
- Only alumni that graduated from Wits not more than 20 years ago were included in the study
- Postgraduates who had a different alma mater to Wits were not included in the study
- External stakeholders such as employers, donors and sponsors, media, government, parents and feeder schools were not part of this study.

1.6 Definition of terms

Alumni – This term refers to individuals who have graduated from an institution of higher education, with membership in an alumni group not warranting any formal expectations or responsibilities and no behaviours beyond attending an institution being needed in order to maintain the role of being an alumnus or alumna (McDearmon, 2013)

Note: In this report, the term alumni is used to designate both alumnus and alumnae.

Brand – A cluster of functional and emotional values that promises a unique and welcome experience for its stakeholders (De Chernatony, Cottam, & Segal-Horn, 2006)

Branding – "the process of endowing products and services with the power of the brand. It is about creating differences between products" (Kotler & Keller, 2016 p. 323)

Engagement – A customer's behavioural expression towards a brand, product or an organisation consisting of cognitive and emotional aspects (Luoma-aho, 2015)

Internal branding – the definition, as proposed by Saleem and Iglesias (2016, p. 50) after an extensive review of literature on internal branding and noting various definitions that are fragmented and in some cases, divergent, is:

> "the process through which organisations make a company-wide effort within a supportive culture to integrate brand ideologies, leadership, human resource management, internal brand communications and internal brand communities as a strategy to enable employees to consistently co-create brand value with multiple stakeholders".

Stakeholder – a person who can claim ownership of a system and can affect, or in turn can be affected by, the achievements of an organisation (Marshall, 2018).

Stakeholder engagement – The level of interaction a stakeholder shows toward an organisation, with the interaction influencing the stakeholder's thoughts, actions and emotions toward the organisation (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011)

Note: The terms "University" and "Higher Education Institution (HEI)" are used interchangeably throughout this research report.

1.7 Assumptions

- The respondents were willing to give their views on issues related to the internal branding research at their university or alma mater
- The respondents were at liberty not to share any information if they were not comfortable enough to do so
- Interview responses were based on the different respondent experiences and association with the case site
- Personal variables such as age, gender, education level, race, length of time with the institution, length of time after graduating from the institution and background of respondents could have a bearing on the study

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The starting point of this chapter is a discussion of the themes of importance to the aspects of internal branding and stakeholder engagement, as well as the theories on which this research draws (Social Identity, Organisational Identity and the Social Exchange theories). This is followed by an analysis of the literature review of the main problem and the three sub-problems related to the influence of internal branding on employee, student and alumni engagement. Lastly, there is a conclusion of the literature review and a summary listing of the research questions.

2.2 Background to the study

2.2.1 The concept of branding

Papadimitriou and Ramírez (2018) note how branding is an age-old concept, having begun around 1500 B.C. when the ancient Greeks marked their cattle, with institutional enterprise branding having begun in 1931 – all with the purpose of differentiating one's products from other products. According to Kapferer (2008), the 1980s marked a turning point in the conception of brands as management came to realise that the principal asset of a company lay in its brand names.

There are several definitions and explanations of what a brand is. For example, a brand is defined as a cluster of functional and emotional values that promises a unique and welcome experience for its stakeholders (De Chernatony et al., 2006). A brand can also be defined as a unique value proposition differentiated in a way which makes it preferred by key audiences, resulting in loyalty (Brown, Ettenson, & Hyer, 2011); or a brand as a distinct identity or promise which differentiates one product from similar products (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). According to Langa and Zavale (2018), a brand is composed of a promise regarding what the offering will deliver, uniqueness – the attributes that differentiate it in the market; and its performance based on measurable tangibles. In addition, they note that a brand is different from the product or service itself, more the way in which a product is portrayed, the image of the product and all the associations that are linked to it. Branding is the process of transferring the power of a brand to products or services (Kotler & Keller, 2016) or the process of building the portrayed image (Langa & Zavale, 2018). The branding process involves four vital components i.e. relevance of the offering to key audiences, awareness of the offering,

positioning and differentiation and consistency of messages, ideas and interactions over time (Langa & Zavale, 2018).

As much as there is a slew of benefits to getting branding right, it must be noted that poor management of a brand, including that of non-profit organisations, may cause serious harm to its reputation and relationships with stakeholders (Peasley, Coleman, & Royne, 2018).

2.2.2 Branding in universities and HEIs

According to Toutoungi (2017), educational institutions are often established in perpetuity; meant to last for all time. Examples include Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard, established in 1096, 1209 and 1636 respectively, that are still standing and going strong today. A university's brand is an expression of an institution's features that differentiate it from others, reflect the institution's capacity to satisfy students' needs, bring about trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential students to make wise enrolment decisions (Khanna, Jacob, & Yadav, 2014). A university brand is also how an institution perceives itself and how it aspires to be perceived by others (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). In higher education, institutions brand themselves on a variety of aspects including their programmes, students, and alumni, rankings and league tables; to longevity, experience and tradition, expertise in a specialised area facilities/services, their pedagogical approach or association with prestigious personalities in the political and religious arena (Frandsen et al., 2018; Langa & Zavale, 2018; McLaughlin, McLaughlin, & McLaughlin, 2018; Ramírez, 2018). A good academic reputation, graduates getting good jobs, the social activities for the college, positioning, image and visibility, history and age, leading/first-class/world-class/premier institution excelling in one area or another, were also rated as being very important (Lam & Tang, 2018; McLaughlin et al., 2018).

Branding of universities presents a different set of challenges from corporate profit-making organisations (Frandsen et al., 2018). The issue of national and international competition within the HEI sector is well-documented in the literature, and is considered as a catalyst for HEI branding (Papadimitriou & Ramírez, 2018). Langa and Zavale (2018) contend that HEIs are in competition with each other because of the growth in student numbers, the introduction of performance-based government

funding and the opening up of higher education to private funding. This competition among HEIs includes that for financial and human resources, including the best students, professors, researchers and donors; and that because of this competition at a national or international level, HEIs need to successfully differentiate themselves in order to attract the best students, academics and other stakeholders key to their survival (Frandsen et al., 2018; Langa & Zavale, 2018). As such, branding, a practice no longer exclusive to corporate, for-profit sectors, becomes one of the strategies used by HEIs to differentiate themselves, to obtain the resources and capital needed to exist and survive in the increasingly competitive environment, to enhance reputation and to positively influence the university's rankings (Dixit & Sharma, 2018; Frandsen et al., 2018; Langa & Zavale, 2018). It is important to note that corporate branding is not only about differentiation, but also about belonging. In the university context, the awarding of a degree offers a life-long membership to the institution, and provides a student with a sense of brand identification even after the graduation (Dixit & Sharma, 2018).

Branding in HEIs includes denotative and connotative aspects i.e. elements that are clearly seen e.g. colours shapes, letters or names, and intangible elements which rely on associations, respectively (Ramírez, 2018). University branding is a perception management process in which a university consciously seeks to align the different types of identities (i.e. "desired identity", "actual identity", "communicated identity", "conceived identity" and "ideal identity") through centrally coordinated corporate communications to reiterate the institution's positive unique points of difference in order to stand out in the competition (Lam & Tang, 2018).

In order to remain as relevant social institutions, HEIs need to communicate their values to the public (Papadimitriou & Ramírez, 2018). Furthermore, decreasing state funding, increasing competition for students and steep competition for research grants require that HEIs relook the way they portray themselves to various stakeholders (Huisman & Mampaey, 2018). Through branding, HEIs are able to enhance their perceived value and competitive standing by providing a tool that helps them differentiate their offering and tell a compelling story to invested stakeholders (Frandsen et al., 2018). HEI branding also allows the creation of an advantage for their institutions at the national, regional, and international level (Papadimitriou & Ramírez, 2018).

The service-oriented nature of education has made branding more pertinent and is now considered to be one of the most valuable intangible assets of any institution (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). Williams and Omar (2014) summarise higher education as a service industry focused on people with mostly intangible actions; requiring a long, formal relationship of continuous delivery with the customer (student); dependent upon high levels of customisation and judgement; maintaining relatively narrow fluctuations of demand relative to supply; and operating within single or multiple sites of service delivery methods. They propose that the branding of HEIs ought to pay close attention to the intangibility and inseparability aspects of the services. Dixit and Sharma (2018) also note the challenges posed by the intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability aspects of service brands. Dunn and Davis (2004) lament this intangibility of service brands, unsurprised at how branding activities are mostly misunderstood or disregarded altogether, resulting in relegation of the brand to the marketing department where it is viewed as a discretionary item without the support of other disciplines such as HR, training, research and development, or customer service. Dixit and Sharma (2018) concur. They believe that nowadays, university branding has become a university-wide, rather than being a marketing department, effort. The time and costs associated with branding have, therefore, become an investment in the drive for HEIs to stay ahead of the competition by communicating their uniqueness from other institutions.

Differentiation, truthfulness, a promise of experience and consistency are key in order to achieve successful HEI brands (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). However, higher education branding has been described as a “sea of sameness” (Papadimitriou & Ramírez, 2018). This view is echoed by Lam and Tang (2018), whose study on Hong Kong universities found striking similarities in the structure of the vision statements, choice of words and geographical orientation and self-descriptions that share more commonalities among themselves. The study by Huisman and Mampaey (2018) also alluded to this “sea of sameness” as they found high levels of homogeneity of images across the universities under study and a lack of diversity in university activities and communications.

Curtis, Abratt, and Minor (2009) assert branding as one of the most important assets of any institution, with corporate brand management playing a critical role in the establishment of positive attitudes towards an institution. Branding is now considered

to be one of the most valuable intangible assets of any institution (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). Guzmán et al. (2009) support this assertion, noting how HEIs have realised that, just like for-profit entities within the corporate world, they too need to develop sustainable strategies and by so doing, becoming more accountable to their constituents. Guzmán et al. (2009) go on to note how several HEIs have turned to branding as a solution, pointing out how in the last years of the twentieth century, branding has become part of the higher education lexicon, with today most colleges and universities around the world having embraced a brand strategy of sorts. Temple (2006) and Chapleo (2015) also concur that higher education and branding go back a long way but point out how, until very recently, branding for most universities was traditionally seen as a visual identity which simply meant the crest on its headed notepaper, and driven by tertiary communications. Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) suggested how effective brand building is more than just implementing a new logo or a tagline but requires a comprehensive view of the institution in order to capitalise on its strengths and unique qualities. Although understanding has largely moved beyond branding being about visual identity to a more holistic view of brand, this holistic view does not always permeate throughout the organisation (Chapleo, 2015).

Every university needs a brand and an image that can be trusted and believed and that will differentiate it from others (Iqbal, Rasli, & Hassan, 2012). A university brand is, in fact, the perception and reputation developed in the minds of the people about the university or institution. The reaction appears in the minds of the people when they hear or see a name or symbol of some university or institute, with the brand identity being how various stakeholders including prospective students, alumni and the public should perceive the institution (Iqbal et al., 2012; Lawlor, 1998). For example, Princeton University has a strong brand name and image associated with academic excellence to such as extent that college students participating in a survey listed Princeton University among the top 10 Law Schools in the country. This would have been all well and good, except that Princeton University has never had a Law School (Iqbal et al., 2012). This is what a strong brand affords an institution – the public expects nothing less than excellence from it! Generally, strong brands are rare, unique and difficult to imitate, hence can help firms gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Iyer, Davari, & Paswan, 2018). As such, branding can be considered one of the processes that can strengthen universities by making them able to face

challenges during volatile periods and by making them able to utilise any opportunities arising (Iqbal et al., 2012).

External branding vs internal branding

As alluded to earlier, branding of universities and HEIs has, over the years, been viewed as being important, borrowing from corporate brand management approaches (Guzmán et al., 2009). However, this has mostly been in the context of external branding. According to Judson et al. (2006), branding has focused on external communication via advertising and sales promotional efforts. Hay and Van Gensen (2008), in their case study paper, take this view further, affirming how HEIs are much more concerned about external branding at the expense of internal branding processes. To some, it is about a prominent logo and or a catchy tagline (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). Guzmán et al. (2009) lament how brand-building efforts are concentrated on superficial solutions such as logo redesigns, catchy taglines and trendy advertising campaigns – the external aspects dubbed the "outside-in" approach – at the expense of internal branding aspects, which, they maintain, are of importance. These "outside-in" approaches are believed to offer short-term benefits and tend to fizzle out rather quickly, sometimes even causing more harm than good. To avoid having internal stakeholders feeling betrayed and frustrated, Guzmán et al. (2009) advocate that any brand strategies developed be supported internally first. If not, the institutional reputation suffers, and worse, the branding initiatives become a scapegoat for larger problems.

Williams and Omar (2014) and Papadimitriou and Ramírez (2018) summarise that due to numerous factors, the development of clear brand principles can be quite difficult because of the complexity of HEI brands. This complexity is because of diverse stakeholders; internal structures; institutional resistance to change; the wide range of academic programmes; sub-branding by schools/majors/faculties; information gap between choice factors identified by students and HEI publications; and the need for support by institutional leadership and formal communication mechanisms. Branding in higher education is a complex phenomenon also because of its experiential nature, and the fact that for one to experience it, they need to consume the educational offering, which therefore requires convincing a potential customer through secondary sources, such as images and brand promises provided by the higher education institution or through other clients' information (Langa & Zavale, 2018). Dholakia

(2017) adds to the list of complexities of educational institutions by noting how HEI internal stakeholders are much more difficult to define, categorise and motivate, the contribution to the student experience by administrative staff being seen as less critical than the classroom experience. In addition, she notes that students have multiple roles ranging from external prospective students, to co-creators of the educational experience when they enroll, to products of education on graduating. The same author goes on to note that not only do the student roles change, but so do their perspectives as they move from the status of applicant to enrolled student to graduated alumni.

2.2.3 Internal branding in general

The terms internal branding, internal brand management or internal marketing are used interchangeably in this report as these terms are used to refer to the same/similar construct (Aurand, Gorchels, & Bishop, 2005; Du Preez et al., 2017; Iyer et al., 2018; Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Porricelli, Yurova, Abratt, & Bendixen, 2014).

In an environment where change is the norm, internal branding requires the same attention as external branding (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Free (1999) asserts that branding for service companies should be about the internal workings of the company, primarily because that is the “heart and soul” of the company that the customer will see, each time they are exposed to the service being offered. Developing the brand from the inside out is particularly important for service organisations (such as HEIs) which normally face the challenge of developing the brand for an intangible and complex offering (Judson et al., 2006). It is said that the single most powerful asset of an organisation is its brand equity, with several internal company processes synchronised in order to create an external manifestation in the form of a brand – the stronger the synergy between the internal processes, the higher the chance of the brand getting stronger (Khan, 2009). Internal branding is entrenched in the need for meaningful engagement of all stakeholders requisite in creating sustainable futures, which requires a closer than arm’s length relationship that enables conversations and interactions that can influence company decisions (Matiatou, 2018). Internal branding also requires in-depth analysis to understand how organisations build their image internally before selling it externally – the brand must be meaningful to both the internal and external audience of an organisation (Langa & Zavale, 2018).

Internal activities seek to promote the brands inside an organisation for the purpose of ensuring that its internal audiences accept the value that the organisation's brand represents and transform it into a reality when serving customers (Liu, Chapleo, Ko, & Ngugi, 2015). Therefore, internal branding or internal brand management, also referred to by some authors as a sub-set of/tool for internal marketing, is a multi-disciplinary, holistic and barrier-breaking practice which harmonises bits into a whole and bridges business strategy and implementation. It is seen as a key factor to developing, strengthening and maintaining an organisation's brand and ensuring the business and brand success (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Du Preez et al., 2017; Mahnert & Torres, 2007; Porricelli et al., 2014; Raj & Jyothi, 2011).

Piehler (2018) sees internal brand management as the implementation of the brand, cognitively, affectively, and behaviourally. It is the organisation's effort to align their employees and brands with each other and forms the core execution process for developing and sustaining strong brands (together with brand orientation and strategic brand management) and creating symbolic associations with employees and brands through workshops, training, and communication (Iyer et al., 2018). Internal branding consists of activities and processes that help inform and inspire employees and other stakeholders about the brand and corporate culture and persuade them to buy into the organisation's brand values and to transform espoused brand messages into brand reality for customers and other stakeholders (Judson et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2015). Saleem and Iglesias (2016) include brand ideologies, brand leadership, brand-centred HRM, internal brand communication, and internal brand communities as components of internal branding.

Internal branding involves the dissemination of relevant, meaningful brand information to help employees in providing higher levels of customer service or as the alignment of a corporation and employees around a brand (Baker, Rapp, Meyer, & Mullins, 2014; Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013). Judson et al. (2006) argue that when internal branding efforts are implemented, employees (among other stakeholders) are more likely to understand and take ownership of the brand and provide evidence of the brand in their organisational responsibilities. Both internal and external stakeholders can benefit immensely by exposure to a consistent message cross-functionally delivered through various brand touch-points, resulting in a brand image that is consistent, relevant, and powerful (Aurand et al., 2005). Di Chiro (2008) maintains that internal branding is a

multi-departmental and multi-disciplinary function, which makes it important for the success of companies and brands. Nouri et al. (2017) refer to internal branding as those activities implemented to ensure that the brand promise is being implemented and the staff are appropriately connected to the customers (stakeholders).

Internal branding has often been considered as a means to create powerful corporate brands (Khan, 2009; Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Yet, it is seen as an extraordinarily slippery concept that is socially constructed and context-specific in nature - easy to visualise but with high potential of being frustratingly difficult to operationalise (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Organisations with successful internal branding efforts usually possess the following critical factors – internal brand clarity, the involvement of leadership and management as well as their alignment with the organisation's values, involvement of employees in the internal branding process and responsiveness to feedback given (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). They further note internal branding as being critical to an organisation's survival, thereby making any time and financial investments in the process worthwhile. Matiatou (2018) agrees with the sentiments of Tosti and Stotz (2001), noting how effective internal branding requires meaningful relationships of trust within the organisations, as well as clear communication lines across departments and hierarchy from top to bottom.

Because research on internal branding has mostly been done with the customer in mind, definitions of internal branding often have the employee in mind, as opposed to other stakeholders.
Mahnert and Torres (2007, p. 56), after an extensive literature review, offered the following definition:

> "Internal branding is the concerted, inter-departmental and multi-directional intercommunications effort carried out in order to create and maintain an internal brand. Internal branding attempts to achieve consistency with the external brand and encourage brand commitment and the propensity for brand championship among employees. To this end, internal branding is the reflection of the values and the realisation of the promise of the brand internally and externally."

In the university context, internal branding has been defined as a formal programme of engaging internal constituents in a dialogue about the brand-development process

resulting in their willingness to apply the practice of identity-building (Guzmán et al., 2009).

Saleem and Iglesias (2016, p. 50), after an extensive review of literature on internal branding and noting various definitions that are fragmented, and in some cases, divergent, offered their definition as:

> "the process through which organisations make a company-wide effort within a supportive culture to integrate brand ideologies, leadership, human resource management, internal brand communications and internal brand communities as a strategy to enable employees to consistently co-create brand value with multiple stakeholders".

This definition by Saleem and Iglesias (2016) is the one that is adopted in this research paper, even if it is from the point of view of employees. The word "employees" can be substituted with "internal stakeholders" to make it fully relevant to the context of this research.

Internal branding outcomes and benefits

King and Grace (2008) and Saleem and Iglesias (2016), from reviewing the literature, note several benefits of internal branding. These benefits include the recipient's active engagement in the brand experience, brand identification, brand citizenship behaviour (BCB), satisfaction which is linked to employee retention, positive word-of-mouth communication, behaviour that goes beyond that which is formally prescribed that organisations covet, exhibition of brand consistent intentions and actions which, ultimately, contribute to the organisation's overall effectiveness and success. Guzmán et al. (2009) note the benefits of internal branding as building life-long relationships with internal stakeholders. All the above-listed benefits are akin to engagement at both the role-specific and organisational levels.

Internal brand building facilitates delivery of the external brand experience and promise (Baker et al., 2014; Iyer et al., 2018; Matiatou, 2018; Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013). It aids the creation of brand ambassadors and enhances the top-down and bottom-up communication within the firm, resulting in more efficient brand development activities (Iyer et al., 2018). Internal branding also enables both the organisation and the individuals to achieve their goals in consistent ways (Matiatou, 2018). Internal branding results include exhibition of brand building behaviours and

perceived brand authenticity and brand value congruence (the brand's values as being consistent with their own values) by internal stakeholders, including employees (Baker et al., 2014). It also results in the increased probability of employees' support for the company's brand, improved employee loyalty, increased job satisfaction, increased engagement, as well as the reduction of the likelihood of their leaving the organisation (Iyer et al., 2018; Nouri et al., 2017)

In summary, internal branding is considered to be an important process for the success of brands in organisations through accelerating brand orientation operationalisation, implementation of brand building activities, and ensuring that employees are perfectly familiar with the objectives and characteristics of the brand, the actions that the firm is taking, and the mechanism of sharing relevant information (Iyer et al., 2018). It also brings stability to the employees in the face of high Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) and brand manager turnover, and gives rise to engaged employees, with employees being seen as possessing more credibility than top management (Iyer et al., 2018). In addition, internal branding nurtures the organisational identity and employee commitment, reinforces what an organisation stands for, drives organisational clarity through message communication and meaningful associations and allows for successful transformational processes through alignment across functions (Matiatou, 2018).

The effectiveness of internal branding programmes depend on both training programmes and internal communications, borne out of a well though-out strategy and full understanding of what is involved by those wanting to implement it, neither one of them by itself (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2008). Further, the research by Saleem and Iglesias (2016) and Dholakia (2017) highlight the company-wide and brand partner-wide effort required in internal branding, in addition to the necessity of supportive corporate culture processes, including human resource policies and practices that positively impact the work environment.

A critical and sceptical view of branding and internal branding

Critics and sceptics question the relevance of branding and internal branding in HEIs. For example, Temple (2006) argues that because of the complexity of HEIs, branding in these institutions would likely lead to chaos. Stephenson and Bell (2014) summarise more points from critics regarding the notion of branding in HEIs, including financial

obstacles, issues of complexity and buy-in from university employees, considerable time commitments and general unsuitability of the practice, the benefits of branding not manifesting immediately, factors of which the various authors say present the potential for moral contradictions of values and the endangerment of institutional integrity. Another aspect critics raise is with regard to where in the organisational function/departments internal branding falls. Internal branding, with its focus on internal constituents/has traditionally been seen as a stepchild in the marketing mix because it does not fall neatly into one area of the corporate structure – it connects various corporate departments, such as marketing, HR, training, corporate communications/PR, customer service, and operations. As such, as a function, internal branding frequently lacks an essential internal champion leading to confusion and ultimately inaction (Di Chiro, 2008).

What internal branding is not

Literature records that the process of internal brand management is not a "quick fix" but rather takes planning, commitment, resources and time – all precious commodities in any organisation; nor is it a series of one-way communication events without any follow-through action (Tosti & Stotz, 2001). Be that as it may, communication does play a major role in internal brand building because it disseminates relevant information about the brand identity to employees (Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013). Internal branding is not about simply providing employees with information – that alone is insufficient to realise positive employee behaviour and attitudes through internal branding processes, but should be supported by positive and consistent brand-related actions by management and the overall organisational culture (King & Grace, 2008).

Internal communication is not internal branding, the former merely facilitates the latter. Nor is internal branding synonymous with internal advertising which results in a focus on top-down information (e.g., staff magazine, intranet, brand book), which disregards other powerful tools of internal branding such as external brand communication, brand-oriented human resource management, and brand-oriented leadership (Iyer et al., 2018; Piehler, Hanisch, & Burmann, 2015). Furthermore, internal branding is not limited to internal communication and encompasses a much broader integrative framework including corporate marketing, corporate management, and corporate human resource management (Iyer et al., 2018).

2.2.4 Internal branding in universities and HEIs

The HEI brand, which is targeted at multiple stakeholders, is externally focused on positioning and marketing, and internally focused on the organisation, in order to promote organisational values, culture and vision (Williams & Omar, 2014). Although internal branding is noted as being of importance to HEIs, Yu et al. (2018) call attention to the paucity of studies in this context. Few studies on internal branding within HEIs have been carried out; and include that by Guzmán et al. (2009), which points to the separation/silos that exist between academic and administration units, resulting in a lack of communication and effective dialogue about the branding of the institutions internally, as well as the study by Yu et al. (2018) which noted internal market orientation to increase brand commitment by university staff. Guzmán et al. (2009) argue that internal branding can become HEI's most valuable intangible asset. They note dialogue as being of utmost importance, particularly because employees, students, alumni and other constituents are all accustomed to, and fond of, dialogue. Internal branding fosters a two-way conversation with HEIs that manage to establish a healthy dialogue and engage their internal stakeholders having a better chance of developing lifelong relationships with their stakeholders.

In the complex university realm, internal branding helps an institution overcome internal resistance to branding efforts, directing institutions towards an embedded cultural approach that guides everything from communications, fund-raising, marketing and personnel policies to enrolment management and programme development (Guzmán et al., 2009). They further stress the importance of adopting an inside-out approach to brand development i.e. to get buy-in by engaging all key stakeholders i.e. academic and non-academic staff, students, alumni and others – in the process.
To navigate this complexity effectively, the notion of internal branding has been presented as a plausible solution for HEIs.

2.2.5 Defining engagement

The contexts in which ‘’engagement’’ has been studied include in sociology as “civic engagement”, in psychology as “social engagement”, in organisational behaviour/management as “employee engagement”, in marketing as “customer engagement”, and in educational settings as “student engagement” (Kumar & Pansari, 2016; Pittaway, 2016). Because of the different internal stakeholders under consideration, to have the same frame of “engagement” for all stakeholders would be

quite problematic. However, an all-encompassing type of engagement would be organisational (institutional/brand) engagement, that which goes beyond role-specific engagement and has a broader focus on engagement with the organisation and organisational goals (Guest, 2014). On a general level, organisational engagement should be present over and above role-specific engagement.

However, it must be noted that there is a wealth of literature and research on employee engagement, much more than that of engagement in general, or engagement of other stakeholders. As such, even though most of the literature alludes to employee engagement, in this paper that also includes other stakeholders (students and alumni) as the principles should generally be the same.

According to Brodie et al. (2011), engagement is the level of interaction a stakeholder shows toward an organisation, and this interaction is believed to influence stakeholder thoughts, actions and emotions toward the organisation. Di Battista, Pivetti, and Berti (2014) also weigh in on the framing of engagement, especially in a group set-up. They propose engagement as being shaped by instrumental motivations and internally driven motivations, which mean attitudes toward, and values about, the group - people are internally motivated and engage in and co-operate with the group for personal reasons, not requiring rewards or punishments to be engaged and committed to the group.

Kumar and Pansari (2016, p. 498) define engagement as the attitude, behaviour and level of connectedness among and between customers, employees and the organisation, concluding that “the more positive the attitude and behaviour and the higher the level of connectedness, the higher the level of engagement”. Engagement represents co-creation, interaction and solution development, all of which depend on the attitude that drives the behaviour of customers and employees toward a firm (Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

The dimensions of engagement, as proposed by Kumar and Pansari (2014), comprise satisfaction, identification, commitment, loyalty and performance. In addition to these dimensions, we can include Brand Citizenship Behaviour (BCB) that is based on the theory of Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB), which is the view that “organisations need their employees to engage in discretionary behaviours beyond

formal job requirements" (Uçanok & Karabatı, 2013, p. 89). This ties in with the dimensions of commitment and loyalty outlined above. As such, BCB/OCB can also be added to the dimensions of engagement. Engagement is also said to be comprised of three sub-components, these being vigour (high levels of energy while working), dedication (a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge), and absorption (being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work) (Farr-Wharton, Charles, Keast, Woolcott, & Chamberlain, 2018).

In summary, based on the literature, engagement aspects are wide-ranging and include satisfaction, identification, commitment, absorption, loyalty, dedication, performance, vigour, brand citizenship behaviours and brand supportive behaviours.

The engagement agenda

Guest (2014) notes his misgivings about the notion of employee engagement and questions what exactly organisational engagement is; how it is measured and the implicit assumption that employees want to be engaged. However, based on his interest in the general topic and the anxieties about an engagement deficit, the author believes organisational engagement to be a subject worthy of pursuing, going on to propose a multi-level approach engagement agenda which is meant to promote a more effective form of organisational engagement.

The engagement agenda, as proposed by Guest (2014), comprises the 10 listed points:

i. Recruiting staff with a propensity for engagement
ii. Training staff for engagement
iii. Investing in human capital and employability
iv. Redesigning jobs to maximise employee autonomy, challenge, variety, skill utilisation and scope for learning and development
v. Providing strong organisational support
vi. Rewarding and promoting managers using their ability to engage employees as a key criterion
vii. Ensuring trust in management and their fairness of treatment
viii. Ensuring effective two-way communication
ix. Creating a context that reinforces job security and flexible working
x. Adopting a strategic human resource strategy that reflects the values of engagement

It is interesting to note that the suggested engagement agenda has aspects similar to those proposed for internal brand management by other researchers e.g. Ahmed and Rafiq (2003), Dholakia (2017), Guzmán et al. (2009), Kumar and Pansari (2015), Lee, Kim, and Kim (2014), Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, and Wilson (2009), Punjaisri et al. (2008), Saleem and Iglesias (2016), and supports the notion of combining input from HR, Marketing, and top leadership.

2.2.6 Stakeholders and stakeholder engagement

A stakeholder is a person who can claim ownership of a system and can affect, or in turn can be affected, by the achievements of an organisation and can be internal or external depending on the role they play (Marshall, 2018).

In higher education, stakeholders include students; alumni; donors; parents; other institutions or providers; accrediting agencies; vendors and suppliers; employers; taxpayers; non-government organisations; government; academic faculty, business and industry, administrators and policy makers (Huisman & Mampaey, 2018; Marshall, 2018; Ramírez, 2018). Internal stakeholders are involved in the daily life of institutions and include academic staff/faculty and non-academic (or professional or general) staff, managers, students and the institution itself as an entity expressed through its leadership and formal governance. External stakeholders are those groups or individuals with an interest in higher education but are not internal stakeholders and include employers, parents, the government, the society at large, as well as organisations/groups representing these stakeholders, nationally and internationally (Marshall, 2018).

In the context of stakeholder engagement in HEIs, most research undertaken has been with employees in mind, with less research on alumni engagement, and scant research on student engagement, especially in a non-academic context. This could allude to the extremely valuable roles that employees play, or to a simple disregard of other stakeholders who are sometimes not viewed through the same lens of importance as employees. Almost needless to say, a HEI ought to be interested in building relationships with a range of internal and external stakeholders, including university staff, graduates, local community, local and regional authorities, business environment, government, founding boards, research councils, entrepreneurs and donors (Drapińska, 2012). Sebola (2017) notes that within HEIs, there are many

activities over and above the primary business of academia that may ultimately determine the success of academia if not well managed through the stakeholder engagement process. These internal stakeholders, which include management, trade unions, students, student leaders, and staff, pursue different missions which can even result in conflict. As such, Sebola (2017) argued for a common ground for understanding of individual stakeholder engagement within HEIs, with Iqbal et al. (2012) stressing the necessity for every university to know what makes them able to develop better linkages with stakeholders and the community.

Within organisations, it is expected to see stakeholders exhibiting strong emotions ranging from hate to love and even passion, with stakeholders today seemingly expecting greater engagement than before (Luoma-aho, 2015). This author makes a number of relevant notes regarding stakeholder engagement. These include how outdated the view of stakeholders are resources to be utilised is, in favour of seeing them as long-term assets to be protected and cultivated; and how stakeholder engagement cannot be forced but should rather attract stakeholders into a relationship through providing extra value and contributing to issues pertinent to them. Also, how the value of engagement lies in its understanding of dialogue dynamics and enabled participation, as opposed to bombarding stakeholders with information; and how engagement is now no longer just a positive phenomenon but also encompasses negative engagement which results in negative attitudes which in turn, can contribute to negative behaviours.

Luoma-aho (2015) distinguishes between the following three stakeholder relationships. There are the positively engaged (faith-holders) who trust and like the organisation or brand and support it through their beliefs, emotions and behaviours. Then there are the negatively engaged (hate-holders) who dislike or hate the brand or the organisation and harm it through their behaviours. Lastly are the unauthentic persona produced by astroturf and algorithms (fake-holders) which are opinions, socio-bots and stakeholders artificially generated by either individuals or persona-creating software and algorithms to either oppose or support an issue – these fake-holders do not exist in reality, and their influence appears larger than it is in practice.

Luoma-aho (2015) also states that all stakeholders may move from positive to negative engagement or from negative to positive engagement unexpectedly, thereby

requiring dynamic, real-time understanding of how stakeholders feel. Pittaway (2016) agrees with this notion, arguing that engagement is not a permanent state, rather sits upon a continuum which can change on any given day dependent on a variety of factors, both positive and negative. Factors affecting engagement may include various issues and agendas driving the stakeholders, emotions, health, relationships, money worries, enjoyment of a particular topic, or their responsiveness to a particular teacher's style (in the case of students) (Luoma-aho, 2015; Pittaway, 2016).

An important aspect to note when speaking of stakeholders and stakeholder engagement is the changing landscape which requires that organisational reputations be managed online and via social media (Q. N. Nguyen & Sidorova, 2018; Ramírez, 2018). From the organisational perspective, social media serves as an enabler of interpersonal communication among organisational stakeholders. Social media enables individual stakeholders to talk directly to one another, increasing the importance of interpersonal stakeholder communications and placing it outside of firms' direct control (Q. N. Nguyen & Sidorova, 2018).

2.2.7 Internal branding and stakeholder engagement

As mentioned earlier, in the environment of increasing stakeholder power and emotion, stakeholder engagement can be distinguished as being positive or negative (Luoma-aho, 2015). In the context of this study, stakeholder engagement alludes to positive engagement that is important for organisational legitimacy to prevail. The literature regarding internal branding and engagement for HEI employees, students and alumni will be explored separately in sections 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 respectively, after the general overview below.

Some studies undertaken in the past have shown the positive influence of internal branding on stakeholders such as employees and alumni. This positive influence would be in terms of job satisfaction and performance, attitude, loyalty, engagement and brand ambassadorship/championship. For example, Raj and Jyothi (2011) observed a positive impact on employees' attitudinal and behavioural aspects in the delivery of the brand promise, also noting that employees interface with other stakeholders hence are integral in the brand building process. Other studies, which covered different angles within the same broad topic of internal branding and stakeholder engagement, include the following: Aurand et al. (2005), who explored the

value of HR involvement in the delivery of the brand promise by employees; Judson et al. (2006) whose study was on the impact of internal branding to coaching staffs' recruiting efforts at universities with major athletics programmes; the role of internal branding in the delivery of the brand promise (Dholakia, 2017; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007); and employee's perspectives to internal brand management (Judson et al., 2008; King & Grace, 2008); Foster, Punjaisri, and Cheng (2011) who empirically explored the relationship between corporate, employer and internal branding; internal branding as a driver of employee engagement (LePla, 2013); and Itam and Singh (2017) who delved into engaging the hearts and minds of service employees through internal branding.

Stakeholder engagement is an important outcome of internal branding practices. In their study, Guzmán et al. (2009) concluded that successful universities employed corporate strategies in order to get engaged stakeholders/constituents. They further suggested that an understanding by universities that employees were their most valuable tangible asset would mean that internal branding is their most valuable intangible asset as it allowed them to engage with the employee in the brand building process of the institution. Judson et al. (2008) attributed internal branding failures to employees not living the brand due to a lack of engagement. However, Temple (2006) argued against the concept of branding in universities, labelling it an illusion and pointing out how universities are different organisations that cannot use the same branding concepts borrowed from the corporate world. Hay and Van Gensen (2008) concurred with the later part of his argument, calling instead for an internal branding model specific to HEIs and proposing their own HEI branding model. Sujchaphong et al. (2015) have a similar view and recommend that more practices relevant to HEIs be adapted and implemented, instead of relying solely on internal branding and employee brand support knowledge imported from the business sector.

There are various drivers of engagement, as well as different meanings to different stakeholders. However, the similarities lie in the positive effects that come out of having engaged stakeholders. In developing a conceptual framework for the impact of internal branding on stakeholder engagement, the researcher integrated three different theories of relevance to these two constructs: the social identity theory, organisational identification theory and the social exchange theory.

2.2.8 The Social Identity, Organisational Identification and Social Exchange Theories

Identity is a central concept in education research and specifically in the study of higher education and is explored at all points within an individual's life course in the college process (Drezner, 2018b). This research draws on social identity, organisational identification and social exchange theories, all of which are reviewed in this section.

2.2.9 The Social Identity Theory

Identification refers to the degree to which people merge their sense of self within the group, think of themselves and the group in similar terms, and define themselves in terms of group membership (Di Battista et al., 2014). The concept of social identity consists of those aspects of an individual's self-image that emanate from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging, with people tending to classify themselves into various social categories e.g. organisational membership (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), social identity is the perception of being one or belonging to some human aggregate or group of persons; social identification leads to activities compatible with the identity, support for organisations embodying that identity, stereotypical perceptions of self and others, and outcomes that are, traditionally, associated with group formation. Tajfel and Turner (2004) conceptualise a group as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, sharing some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieving a degree of social accord about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it. Tajfel and Turner (2004) go on to note how social categorisations provide a system of orientation for self-reference – creating and defining an individual's place in society. As such, social groups can provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms.

MacDonald (2013) takes the notion of social categorisation further, noting it as a desire to enhance self-esteem using social comparative processes by which individuals differentiate themselves through in-group and out-group affiliations. Tajfel and Turner (2004) also suggested social identity development as involving a creation of a sense of self through intergroup identity comparisons and value statements, positing that identity is a function of categorisation, identification, comparison and psychological distinctiveness. In this regard, MacDonald (2013) points out how

university members are not averse to using this kind of identity language e.g. ‘‘We’re an elite private’’; ‘‘We’re a teaching institution’’, with each comment understood to be followed by an unspoken ‘‘and they are not’’. This creation of group identities involves the categorisation of one’s “in-group” with regard to an “out-group” and the tendency to view one’s own group with a positive bias vis-à-vis the out-group (Islam, 2014). By defining ourselves as part of an in-group, MacDonald (2013) says it means we are more likely to assess ourselves with other similar perceived in-groups, such alignment leading to self-stereotyping and reifying that social identity. Islam (2014) concurs with these views, adding that such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity. Bornman and Potgieter (2017) also weigh in on this theory of social identity, suggesting that it functions as a mediating factor between societal forces and an individual’s behaviour, hence social identities serving to legitimise or undermine forms of authority.

Myers, Davis, Schreuder, and Seibold (2016) note the overall implications of an individual’s social identity for the organisation with which they develop identification i.e. a development of organisational identification due to an alignment with the values and mission of the organisation as well as their feelings of similarity and belongingness. Ashforth and Mael (1989) determine that social identity theory literature suggests two consequences relevant to organisations i.e. how individuals tend to choose activities aligned with prominent aspects of their identities, and how individuals support institutions embodying those same identities. As such, Ashforth and Mael (1989) posit how likely it is that identification with an organisation enhances support for, and commitment to it, with reasonable expectations that identification would be associated with loyalty to, and pride in, the group and its activities. Similarly, Asha and Jyothi (2013) note that identification results in individuals taking pride in the group membership, which in turn, may trigger behaviours that enhance an external image of the brand and drive brand commitment. In addition, when people identify with a group, they are willing to act co-operatively (Di Battista et al., 2014).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) summarise key points regarding social identification as follows:

a) Identification is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to a group classification, involving direct or vicarious experience of its successes and failures (i.e. view the successes or failures of the group as their own).

b) The individual perceives themselves as an actual or symbolic member of the group e.g. 'I am a man'.
c) Identification induces the individual to engage in, and derive satisfaction from, activities congruent with the identity, to view themselves as an exemplar of the group, and to reinforce factors conventionally associated with group formation (e.g., cohesion, interaction, co-operation, altruism and positive evaluations of the group).
d) To identify, an individual need not expend effort toward the group's goals; rather, they only perceive themselves as psychologically intertwined with the fate of the group or sharing a common destiny with the group.

2.2.10 The Organisational Identification Theory

A specific form of social identity is that of organisational identity, where individuals define themselves in terms of their membership in a particular organisation and have a feeling of belonging and oneness with it – there is a perceived oneness with an organisation and the experience of the organisation's successes and failures as one's own (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). They further argue that organisational identification is a specific form of social identification since the individual's organisation may provide one answer to the question, “Who am I”? Myers et al. (2016) note organisational identification as an outcome of organisational socialisation, and define it as a process that involves social construction whereby individuals define themselves with recourse to the organisation in which they are members, pointing out how a strong attachment, or oneness with an institution is reflective of organisational identification. Bornman and Potgieter (2017) also note how institutional or organisational identification is recognised as another form of social identification i.e. in addition to ethnic, racial and cultural identities – all of which are believed to play an important role in people’s well-being and sense of identity.

‘Identification’ is a measure of the extent to which an employee believes to be part of a brand or firm (Burmann et al., 2009). Hatch and Schultz (1997) define organisational identity simply as what members perceive, feel and think about their organisations, and go on to note how it is assumed to be a collective, commonly-shared understanding of the organisation’s distinctive values and characteristics. As such, the ongoing interactions between organisational members, as well as top management influence, cause organisational identity to develop.

Organisational identification results from membership in a collective with shared values and an emotional response based on similarities with other group members, with organisational identification little affected by quid pro quo interactions (Borden, Shaker, & Kienker, 2014). They go on to state that challenges to identity do occur where there are multiple, crosscutting identities and overlapping identities that are independent of each other, hence possibly resulting in conflict. MacDonald (2013) further notes that identity images are uniquely and collectively held by each member of the organisation, thereby suggesting some sort of interdependence between individuals' social identities and their perceptions of their organisational identity. Individuals identify with an organisation primarily because of the need for self-enhancement, hence will identify with more prestigious groups (Peasley et al., 2018). Furthermore, Peasley et al. (2018) posit that the more satisfied a person is with an organisation's offerings, the greater their sense of identification with it.

Organisational Identification within universities, specifically

Generally, universities have a unique identity as a university, different from other entities like a business or a church. Further, within this university space, they can align with other universities whom they perceive to be similar e.g. in the Ivy league; with this social categorisation being both comparative and competitive in nature i.e. better or worse than members of other groups (MacDonald, 2013). University identity is defined as "the central and ongoing representations of a university that suggest shared beliefs, values, and its organisational culture, which over time create metaphors for its unique qualities" (MacDonald, 2013, p. 154). Because of the various stakeholders that form university organisations, disagreements regarding where the centre of identity lies, are common. MacDonald (2013) notes how faculty are more likely to identify more with their academic disciplines and accrediting agencies than with the institution, and administrators/non-academic staff, on the other hand, perceiving themselves as those representing the full identity of the university i.e. considering the whole more than the parts. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to find what MacDonald (2013) terms ''the mother-ship'' (main brand) attempting to gain control of entities which fall under it, with those entities trying to pull away and wishing to be set free, but still needing support from the parent (mothership). Without the mother-ship/parent brand, these entities do not exist, yet they want the identity of the parent brand to be minimised, and their own identity magnified. In a space where there are different stakeholders - undergraduates, graduate students, academic and non-academic staff and alumni – the university

image or how it is perceived and defined by the various stakeholders, would be different (MacDonald, 2013). The challenge is then to manage all these multiple identities so that all university stakeholders have the same overarching identity, regardless of their various perceptions resulting from the roles within/relationship with the university. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), this institutional identity is ideational, answering the question of one's identity in relation to an organisation and containing the collected and shared members' beliefs. These shared beliefs would therefore, form part of the collective/overall identity of the university (organisation). MacDonald (2013) concludes that, as per the postmodern perspective, identity is a dynamic construct, as opposed to enduring over time.

Temple (2006) questioned what brand (organisational) identity meant for a university or college, in relation to a variety of characteristics of these institutions, including the teaching of 'a bewildering range of subjects', how the institutions 'have thousands of students from all around the world', and the variety of research, consultancy and technology transfers carried out. A couple of authors weigh in on this topic of brand/organisational identity, specifically regarding the positive implications. For example, MacDonald (2013) summarised that universities differentiate themselves through organisational identification in order to achieve or maintain dominance over other universities, and affirmed that universities benefit when its members (academic and non-academic staff, students, alumni etc.) identify with the university through supporting these institutions in various ways. Stephenson and Yerger (2014a) note how feelings of belonging instil, in alumni, a sense of identification with the university thereby creating a strong emotional attachment to the university – resulting in brand supporting behaviours. Myers et al. (2016) point out how identifying with their university (through, for example, historical traditions, uniqueness, and the overall value of membership) results in students' willingness to be involved in the future of the university. They go on to say how strong organisational identity has been associated with citizenship behaviours, such as speaking highly of the organisation (akin to positive word of mouth), having good working relationships with co-workers and making sacrifices that benefit the organisation. Other implications of organisational identification include positive correlations with job performance, involvement, and going above and beyond job requirements (akin to commitment and/or engagement) (Borden et al., 2014). However, Ashforth and Mael (1989) stress that organisational identification ought not to be confused with the constructs of organisational

commitment, internalisation and with affect and behaviours which are rather more appropriately viewed as antecedents and/or consequences of identification.

2.2.11 The Social Exchange Theory

The relationship between an employee and their organisation and direct supervisor, also known as social exchange relationships, are the most dominant in any employee's professional life. The social exchange theory offers a plausible way of understanding workplace relationships and employee attitudes (Karanges, 2014). According to this theory, high levels of mutual trust, respect, and loyalty between an organisation and its employees leads to good social exchange relationships (Chang, Chiang, & Han, 2015). This alludes to a transactional relationship between employees and their organisation, whereby if the organisation satisfies the employee, they in turn (reciprocally) develop positive feelings and behaviours, and a general sense of responsibility towards the organisation (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009), akin to a give-and-take relationship.

Social exchange theory and internal branding

In order to achieve organisational and stakeholder goals and objectives, favourable social exchange relationships need to exist - each individual and/or group is mutually dependent on the other (Karanges, 2014). Because employees are, in essence, a symbol of a corporate brand, Chang et al. (2015) infer the critical nature of internal branding, with the social exchange theory pinpointed as being suitable for exploring the relationship between an organisation and its employees (Chang et al., 2012)**.** Exchange relationships between the organisation and its employees are of extreme importance, primarily because organisational goals are achievable through motivated employees i.e. mutual relationships between the employee and organisation can be established as positive, long-term, and interactive relationships that contribute to organisational performance (Chang et al., 2012). When employees' needs are satisfied by an exchange relationship with the organisation, they may reciprocate through a better brand attitude, brand psychological ownership and altruistic behaviour (Chang et al., 2012) or through the adoption of pro-brand attitudes and behaviours (Chang et al., 2015). These pro-brand attitudes and behaviours are the overall desired outcome of any internal branding process.

Social exchange theory and engagement

According to Guest (2014), one of the problems with the general approach to organisational engagement is the implied assumption that employees want to be engaged. He argues that some employees will work diligently as expected and receive a fair wage for their work but feel no obligation to be engaged and are not looking for any further involvement with the organisation. He further contends that the different approaches to organisational engagement mostly focus on the benefits accrued to the organisation through having engaged employees, yet offer employees nothing in return. Guest (2014) then posits that employees would feel differently about becoming engaged if there was something in it for them, some benefit for them if they were engaged. He goes on to note how the social exchange theory, which is based on the norm of reciprocity (i.e. offering an employee something positive makes them obliged to reciprocate) is central to organisational behaviour and gives context to how an organisational engagement policy could be developed. He concludes his views by stressing that a unitarist standpoint whereby employee goals are automatically assumed synonymous with those of the organisation be cast away in favour of those that encourage mutual exchanges. The social exchange theory explains this mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its employees (or other stakeholders in general). Although reciprocity motivates a wide range of co-operative behaviours, it is often assumed that, after a reciprocal relationship is initiated, reciprocal motives remain constant as time goes on. However, the study findings by Chuan, Kessler, and Milkman (2018) dispute this assumption, showing instead that reciprocity decays rapidly over time.

2.3 First sub-problem: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution (HEI) employees (academic and non-academic)

2.3.1 The role of employees in general, and that of HEI employees in particular

Employees are internal stakeholders and considered to be potential brand ambassadors whose actions are pivotal for the execution of an organisation's brand strategies (Iyer et al., 2018). Employees are strategically important to brand management success since they are responsible for fulfilling the brand promise directly through their behaviour toward external stakeholders or indirectly through their behaviour toward internal stakeholders, though of greater importance is the understanding and acceptance by employees that they are indeed responsible for the brand's perception and success (Piehler, 2018).

Employees play a critical role to the success of any organisation, such that an organisation's intangible assets, for instance reputation and stakeholder relationships, are affected by the employee-organisation relationship (Men, 2014). As the interface between the organisation and customers, employees are considered the most important factor to the overall success of corporate brand management (Foster et al., 2011). They form a substantial part of the link between business strategy and its implementation and are a crucial relationship-building connection with all stakeholders (Raj & Jyothi, 2011). By interacting with customers at every touch-point and creating lasting brand impressions, employees are the face of the business and sources of innovation and organisational knowledge (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). Du Preez et al. (2017) also note how employees are of value to an organisation through the skills and knowledge they possess. Furthermore, they are required to convey the significance of the brand to other stakeholders and customers, to act as brand ambassadors (Raj & Jyothi, 2011) and to personify the company's service philosophy and live by its culture and values (Kumar & Pansari, 2015).

Koech and Cheboi (2018) view human resources (employees) as an important constituent of any organisation because they add value to organisations through their knowledge, skills and capabilities. They see them as resources that cannot be

duplicated or imitated by competitors, hence considered an organisation's most valuable asset, especially if managed and engaged properly.

HEI academic (faculty) and non-Academic (administrative/professional) employees

Effective teaching and research within universities is supposed to be a collective mission for all internal stakeholders, and not managements' sole mission mandate (Sebola, 2017). In fact, management requires employees to achieve the various goals of the university. To achieve the academic goals of a university, two distinctively different groups of people are employed – administrative support staff and academics (Sebola, 2017), or simply known as non-academic and academic staff, respectively (Dean et al., 2016). Academic staff is also referred to as faculty (Guzmán et al., 2009; MacDonald, 2013).

Morris (2018) labels faculty as being at the core of the academic enterprise, with Frandsen et al. (2018) stating them as the major stakeholder in higher education institutions who make decisions about the operational and pedagogical structure of teaching. Marshall (2018) concurs, pointing out how academic work underpins much of what is perceived as the value and purpose of a university – academic staff is responsible for they determine whether students have demonstrated the qualities expected of graduates and are substantially responsible for the ability of graduating students to meet the expectations of society in general. They embody the university brand through their research, teaching and wider engagement activities and are therefore expected to incorporate the university's brand values in their everyday work, deliver on the brand promise to students and other stakeholders (Frandsen et al., 2018).

Academic staff has a mandate to provide a superior academic experience to its students (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014), even though they greatly resist treating students as "customers" but rather as co-creators (Dholakia, 2017). Academic staff often views non-academic staff as low-status members of the university community who direct institutional resources away from the core mission of imparting knowledge to students (Borden et al., 2014). In addition, academic staff is also less accepting of marketing and branding activities, with any financial investment in these being seen as taking away from the main purpose of a university or HEI (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014).

Administrative staff, which is made up of accomplished professionals, is mostly responsible for the university's enrolment and communication tasks (Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014), and are therefore well-placed to convey the university's brand promise to outside constituencies (Dholakia, 2017; Judson et al., 2008). Baltaru (2018) makes note of a 'managerial revolution', so called because of the increase in the number of non-academic professionals working in managerial and service-oriented areas of university administration. The proliferation of professional managers and administrators in HEIs is due to a shift to the mass model of higher education reflecting the demonstrated compliance with externally imposed mainstream management ideologies and accountability systems (Marshall, 2018). Baltaru (2018) further notes how research impact, new learning technologies, equality and diversity standards in student admissions and staff recruitment have necessitated an increasingly professionalised constituent of non-academic staff within HEIs. HEI managers and administrators work towards maintaining the academic reputation and quality of the institution, negotiating the competing interests of different academic groups as well as assisting an institution to operate efficiently in financial terms and responding to the extensive demands of government and other external stakeholders (Marshall, 2018). Non-academic/professional employees are acknowledged as being strategic in enabling HEIs to cater to the student body and external stakeholders, and are increasingly engaged in the delivery of educational activities and research (Baltaru, 2018). However, the role of non-academic staff is not highly evident in the literature, with their impact described as 'invisible' (Marshall, 2018). Marshall (2018) further notes the existence of silos within the non-academic space; silos based on functional roles and professions. Silos or different groups may be, for example, library staff, information technology specialists, marketing, legal compliance and student recruitment – all of whom see the university from a range of different perspectives and hold different values and priorities.

Both academic and non-academic staff has relationships with their institutions as employers, the nature of which has consequences which include employee longevity on the job, and productivity, among other institutional concerns (Borden et al., 2014). The literature to follow seeks to explore the relationship between internal branding and the engagement of HEI employees.

2.3.2 Employee engagement

Studies of engagement in various contexts have been conducted over the years – civic, social, customer and employee engagement, among other contexts. Of interest to this research are studies on employee engagement, a term which could be interchangeably used by other similar terms such as work engagement, job engagement, role engagement, or personal engagement (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2015). According to Mohanty (2018, p. 197) employee engagement refers to:

> "a condition where employees are fully engaged in their work and are emotionally attached to their organisation. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus will act in a way that furthers his/her organisation's interests and productivity".

However, in addition to the above, there are various meanings/definitions attributed to employee engagement, with no universal definition or measurement scale. The literature is peppered with various definitions of this construct, although there are similarities between the various proposed definitions. Shuck and Wollard (2010, p. 103) define employee engagement as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes", while Bakker, Albrecht, and Leiter (2011) perceive it as a multidimensional construct that captures an employee's positive emotions and behaviours toward their work. Employee engagement is also defined as being psychologically present when occupying and performing organisational roles (Men, 2012), and involves a physical, cognitive and emotional expression of the individual during role performance (Cain, Tanford, & Shulga, 2018; Men, 2012; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011). Or, employee engagement simply is a connection between an organisation and its workforce (Itam & Singh, 2017). Lastly, Cain et al. (2018) present three dimensions of employee engagement as dedication, absorption and energy.

Spurred by the lack of consensus regarding what employee engagement involved, (Kumar & Pansari, 2014) conducted qualitative research spanning five continents (North America, South America, Asia, Africa and Europe), interviewing more than 200 HR and marketing managers from 52 companies across five industries (hotel, telecommunications, airline, retail and banking). The findings led them to offer their definition of employee engagement as "a multidimensional construct which comprises of all the different facets of the attitudes and behaviours of employees towards the

organisation" (Kumar & Pansari, 2014, p. 9). They went on to present five dimensions of employee engagement as employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty and employee performance. Each of these five dimensions are summarised as follows: *Employee satisfaction* is defined as the positive reaction employees have to their overall job circumstances, including their supervisors, pay and co-workers and results in work commitment and less absenteeism, both of which positively influence the quality of the goods they produce, and services delivered. In addition, satisfied employees also connect with the organisation's values and goals and perceive themselves to be a part of the organisation. *Employee identification* is defined as the emotional state in which employees identify as part of the organisation, with those identifying with the organisation seeing themselves as intertwined with the success/failure of the company's brand, or prone to view positive words about the organisation as a personal compliment. *Employee commitment* induces employees to do more than what is in their job descriptions, perform better, work for the best interests of the organisation and has them as less likely to leave the organisation. Furthermore, employee commitment is much higher for the employees who identify with the organisation than for those who do not, develops over time, is an outcome of shared experiences and is often an antecedent of loyalty. *Employee loyalty* creates a positive attitude about the organisation, which can motivate employees to do more than expected and which can trickle down to have positive effects on the employees' work and, ultimately, on customer satisfaction. Finally, *employee performance* manifests in the quality of goods and services the company produces and in customer interactions and feedback.

O'Neill, Hodgson, and Al Mazrouei (2015), Cain et al. (2018) and Yu et al. (2018) concur with the five dimensions of employee engagement proposed by Kumar and Pansari (2014) though they add more dimensions to the list. There are many definitions of employee engagement; researchers generally do concur that it is not just about having enthusiastic, happy workers. It involves an emotional connection to the organisation, with other characteristics of employee engagement that researchers seem to agree on, including advocacy and trust (O'Neill et al., 2015). Xu and Cooper Thomas (2011) note how some researchers propose that psychological concepts connecting employees with their work are also part of engagement, including motivation, proactive behaviours, and organisational citizenship behaviours. However, Cain et al. (2018) posit that engagement differs from organisational commitment,

organisational citizenship behaviour, and constructs of job involvement and flow as it also encompasses emotions and behaviours. They further note that employee engagement represents motivation and positive attitudes, being passionate about their jobs' involvement, being energetic and willing to help, enthusiasm for work, responsiveness to challenging service encounters, commitment to their job duties, proactive behaviours, a willingness to go beyond their formal in-role requirements and adaptability in specific situations.

The literature on employee engagement is plentiful - there has been a surfeit of studies conducted on employee engagement, the bulk of which alludes to positive benefits that accrue from having engaged employees. As such, organisations aspire to have engaged employees and spend substantial resources to measure and improve employee engagement (Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011). Employee engagement is important for organisations since employees are those who deal with and give meaning to the brand (the brand which can be described in terms of personality, character, attitudes, motivations and even emotions) on a day-to-day basis and represent it to the other stakeholders, including customers (Mahnert & Torres, 2007). When employees engage with their organisation, they are captivated. They have something in common that brought them together. Engagement is characterised by employees being committed to the organisation, being motivated with their work and being involved with organisational activity in order to deliver outstanding performance to the organisation (Adnjani & Prianti, 2018). Committed employees identify with an organisation, take ownership of its fate, integrate the core values of the brand into their personal value systems and show brand-supporting behaviour, stemming from the moral and emotional bonds they have with the organisation (Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013).

Having an engaged workforce has been linked to positive benefits that include higher productivity, lower attrition, and improved organisational reputations (Karanges, 2014) or loyalty, high productivity and excitement about their work (Adnjani & Prianti, 2018). Cain et al. (2018) echo these sentiments, suggesting an intricate link between employee engagement and business results, noting how the positive outcomes of employee engagement manifest for both the individual and organisation (what Xu and Cooper Thomas (2011) call the humanistic and commercial incentives for pursuing engagement). Cain et al. (2018), Koech and Cheboi (2018) and Mohanty (2018) also

note a strong correlation with business performance metrics, including customer satisfaction, loyalty, profitability, productivity, and employee turnover (less likely to leave). Engaged employees also exhibit affective and continuance commitment, organisational citizenship behaviours, have a positive impact on the overall work environment, drive a culture of innovation, are an organisation's greatest brand ambassador and ultimately lead to organisational success (Koech & Cheboi, 2018; Mohanty, 2018). Although evidence suggests that employee engagement correlates to corporate performance, most engagement strategies are done hurriedly and carelessly and lack linkages between business issues and people issues (Mohanty, 2018). The literature review by Koech and Cheboi (2018) further reflected study results which established that engaged employees are more receptive to new experiences, thus tend to explore their environments leading to more innovation and creativity at work, portrayed a deep positive emotional connection with their work and outperform their disengaged counterparts.

The aspect of employee engagement is more likely appreciated when viewed from the reverse side – what having non-engaged employees is associated with. As noted in Cain et al. (2018), most organisations have a greater chance of having non-engaged/disengaged employees, with senior executives the most likely to be engaged and least likely to be disengaged, and hourly employees having the lowest levels of engagement. Despite the apparent value of employee engagement to organisations, global engagement levels remain appallingly low, with employees who are ranked as 'disengaged' in the range of 70%, with 15-17% of them being actively disengaged (Mohanty, 2018). Disengaged employees cost organisations billions of dollars (USD) annually, hence present as a serious financial liability to the organisations as a result of underperformance on crucial tasks, and further leading to customer dissatisfaction (Koech & Cheboi, 2018; Mohanty, 2018). According to Adnjani and Prianti (2018), within a university setting, non-engagement manifests in the following ways, for example - delays of the university programme, low meeting attendance and participation, reluctance to participate in university programmes, absenteeism or lack of punctuality, or breaking of university rules. Some reasons for disengagement include the absence of a mutual understanding about the university's goal between management and employee, an ineffective internal communication strategy, different treatment in managing the university faculties and the university being void of a general standard to evaluate employee performance (Adnjani & Prianti, 2018).

Numerous drivers of employee engagement have been proposed, including the following (Kumar & Pansari, 2015; Mohanty, 2018; O'Neill et al., 2015; Scott-Jackson & Mayo, 2018):

- Work-life balance
- A relationship with one's immediate supervisor and co-workers
- Belief in leadership and pride in working for the company
- Encouragement and recognition from superiors
- A sense of concern for employee well-being
- Adequate pay and benefits
- Well-defined job expectations
- Belief in the mission and vision of the organisation
- Career advancement opportunities to help them reach their potential
- Job enrichment/the challenge of work and the opportunity to use skills
- Empowering employees to make decisions that benefit the company and its customers
- Regular training to enhance employee knowledge and skill sets/professional growth
- Internal communication (which is borne out of an internal branding strategy)
- A sense of belonging (akin to social and organisational identification)
- Job security

LePla (2013) proposes internal branding as a key driver of employee engagement, while findings by Karanges (2014) point to internal communication as a significant driver in optimising employee engagement. In addition, Karanges (2014) notes that in order for employees to become engaged, they need to develop knowledge of their group membership to which they attach value and emotional significance.

Important as the aspect of employee engagement seems to be, Guest (2014) questions whether it is too soon to tell whether it will eventually come to be viewed as a passing management fad or an established part of management practice.

2.3.3 Internal branding and employee engagement

One of the drivers of engagement, according to an article by LePla (2013), is internal branding which he suggests appreciates the fact that business cannot be separated from people's inborn nature to look for meaning and build relationships. This ties in

with the social and organisational identity theories which allude to the feelings of belonging and oneness with an organisation. More than a decade before the assertion by LePla (2013), Tosti and Stotz (2001) had stressed the importance of employee enrolment into the internal branding process, pointing out the need for employees to have a connection with the process and voluntarily become part of it, over and above acquiring information and education about it.

According to Raj and Jyothi (2011), the internal branding process enables employees to know the values of the brand, to develop a positive attitude towards the values and to develop the skills to deliver on the values of the brand and by so doing, create enthusiastic, engaged employees. Saleem and Iglesias (2016, p. 50) define internal branding as:

> "the process through which organisations make a company-wide effort within a supportive culture to integrate brand ideologies, leadership, human resource management, internal brand communications and internal brand communities as a strategy to enable employees to consistently co-create brand value with multiple stakeholders".

Personnel (employees) play a critical role in transmitting the brand's values and as such, bring them to the heart of the corporate branding process (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Internal branding is viewed as the bridge between employees who interact directly with customers and the rest of the organisation (Kang, 2016). At the heart of internal branding is the concept of being "employee focused", also referred to as the "branding from the inside out" approach (Di Chiro, 2008), an approach which has benefits, including a sustainable competitive advantage stemming from a core body of committed employees who are less likely to leave and join another organisation (Free, 1999). Internal branding requires that internal stakeholders, such as employees, fulfil the brand promise through the delivery of the communicated benefits – directly through their behaviour towards external stakeholders (e.g. customers), or indirectly through their behaviour towards other internal stakeholders (Piehler et al., 2018). Internal branding necessitates the educating of employees about the brand, promoting the brand to employees and by so doing, transforming their perceptions and behaviours (Chang et al., 2012).

Service brands, which include HEI brands, need to have a greater emphasis on internal marketing since all employees become consumer touch points and help reduce the risk of intangibility, which is common in service brands (Williams & Omar, 2014). As touchpoints with customers and other stakeholders, employees have a major influence on brand perceptions, hence need to deliver services at the quality level outlined in the brand promise. The challenge comes through the unpredictability that results from human interactions. The strategic concept of internal branding is, therefore, proposed as a conduit through which employees successfully and consistently deliver the brand promise to customers (Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010; Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007; Punjaisri et al., 2008; Raj & Jyothi, 2011). However, the employees themselves need to first understand the connection between the brand promise and brand delivery (Raj & Jyothi, 2011).

Companies have to apply internal branding to ensure consistency and thus to achieve brand credibility, satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and equity (Piehler et al., 2015), with satisfaction and loyalty being linked with employee engagement. Internal branding processes are important to an organisation because they help in creating committed employees and a favourable psychological climate within the organisation, which in turn, helps in building employee brand commitment and psychological ownership in the organisation. Internal branding processes also increase the congruency of employee and organisational values, thus increasing the employee satisfaction and building citizenship behaviour among the employees (Asha & Jyothi, 2013), characteristics synonymous with employee engagement. Brand commitment in particular, is the extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand's goals (Burmann et al., 2009), a characteristic also synonymous with engagement. The internal marketing (also referred to as internal branding) concept was premised on the proposition that employees are internal customers who needed to be satisfied (Porricelli et al., 2014). As such, if during the internal branding process, employees' needs are satisfied through exchange relations, the employees can attain a better brand attitude, brand psychological ownership and altruistic behaviour, which also contributes positively to customer satisfaction (Chang et al., 2012). Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) agree with these sentiments, noting how the impact of internal branding

on employees' attitudes and behaviour are heightened when they are satisfied with their workplace.

The chief executive, in whom brand ownership lies, together with senior management must rely on their staff to consistently and uniformly act and behave in a way synonymous with the brand promise without them being present or able to influence them directly (Free, 1999). As such, Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) referred to employees as a company's most tenuous and vulnerable asset - service organisations remain vulnerable to variability because of their reliance on their employees. Miles and Mangold (2005) argue that internal branding enables clear positioning of an organisation's brand in the minds of employees and facilitates employee internalisation of brand values. A couple of authors agree with their sentiments, adding that internal branding, with its focus on internal constituents/stakeholders, presents a plausible solution to ensuring the consistent delivery of the brand promise through both customer-facing and back office staff across the organisation, understanding of the corporate brand values, and ensuring that employees behave in ways that support the brand promise (Foster et al., 2010; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). Du Preez et al. (2017) go on to stress that internal branding activities can only succeed within a supportive corporate culture, where leaders and employees work together to translate the brand ideologies into brand reality for all stakeholders. LePla (2013) opines that internal branding possesses motivational power and if done well, builds employee commitment by offering clarity, reinforced through culture and a company's strategic direction. As suggested earlier, commitment is one of the indicators of engagement. LePla (2013) also notes how, generally, people want to work at organisations where their jobs resonate deeply with their beliefs and goals.

Although the literature has pointed towards the positive benefits accrued through internal branding, it has also highlighted some important points. For example, it should not be assumed that all employees respond in the same manner to internal branding. A study by King (2010) suggested that in responding to internal brand management initiatives, employees are not a homogenous group. Front line and management employees each have a different relationship with the brand, based on their unique responsibilities within the organisation. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) concur, noting how management needs to be aware that the impact of internal branding would not be constant across all employees within an organisation, further suggesting that personal

variables such as age, educational background, and length of service with the brand should also be taken into account.

Another important note is how internal branding does not work in isolation. Aurand et al. (2005) proposed a HR-Marketing link when it comes to internal branding, noting how these two departments feed into each other's "weaknesses" when dealing with employees and teaching them about corporate brand values and requesting that these values are incorporated in their work. HR policies normally focus on the internal workings of a company while neglecting the interconnectedness of these activities with external constituencies. In addition, HR may be the experts at working with employees, but not necessarily in the context of fostering brand values. On the other hand, marketing and brand managers may be highly skilled at communicating brand messages externally, but not in projecting the same messages internally. Aurand et al. (2005) suggest the need for adequate models for the co-ordinated marketing-HR involvement in internal brand building. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) concur, suggesting that internal branding requires a broader integrative framework across corporate marketing, corporate management and corporate human resource management, over and above internal brand communication. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011, p. 1531) also agree with both these sentiments, and call attention to the view that "internal branding cannot be looked at in isolation and is unlikely to be successful if the work environment is not conducive to the employees and the brand values". This means that internal branding needs to work together with other corporate marketing elements such as corporate communications, corporate culture, corporate identity, and corporate image and reputation; as well as other disciplinary frameworks i.e. management and human resources. Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) go on to note that corporate service brands need co-ordinated internal branding activity in order to enhance their employees' identification with, commitment to, and loyalty to, the brand – all aspects of which are synonymous with employee engagement.

Internal branding and employee engagement within the HEI sector

Important as it might be, branding is a particularly difficult activity to initiate and consistently maintain in higher education, due to the multiple stakeholders, each set with their unique motivations and allegiances (Jevons, 2006). HEI institutions focus primarily on two internal stakeholders i.e. employees (academic and non-academic staff) and students, with internal branding at the interface between an organisation and

stakeholders (Dean et al., 2016). Employees are considered the first market of any business (Jevons, 2006), with brand identity building starting within the organisation and requiring co-ordinated branding communication efforts (internal branding) (Judson et al., 2008). Employees should be the first to understand the brand values before they can deliver on them, or share them with other stakeholders (Dean et al., 2016). Universities are seen to increasingly implement internal branding initiatives in order to endorse brand commitment and also to aid stakeholder (faculty) understanding of the brand, therefore allowing them to take ownership of the brand (Frandsen et al., 2018).

As alluded to earlier, institutions of higher education are unlike the typical organisation and are much more complex in nature, though internal and external branding have been strongly proposed as being worthwhile for these institutions. Internal branding is believed to encourage social interactions between various sets of internal stakeholders (e.g. management and employees, and between employees), and to enable a shared understanding of what the brand represents within the internal market (Dean et al., 2016). However, Jevons (2006) notes how it is not uncommon for staff to associate more with an entity smaller than the university itself and makes an impassioned plea regarding the importance of internal marketing/branding communications, citing the importance of clarity of purpose. However, when it comes to branding within HEIs, the level of buy-in from internal stakeholders such as employees is a major challenge (Stephenson & Bell, 2014). MacDonald (2013) suggests that university faculty may even feel disrespected by conversations around branding. Faculty typically associates branding with bad advertising and look at it as just another marketing exercise. As such, they fail to see the relevance and are unsupportive of any branding initiatives (Guzmán et al., 2009). Despite the misgivings about the value of internal branding within HEIs, the overall proposition points to its importance. In Yu et al. (2018), internal branding is believed to be of particular importance because HEI employees are the face of the institutions to the external world through top quality teaching and research output and staff reputation. Furthermore, academic and non-academic employees are, over long periods (years), in direct and close contact with students and as such, are well positioned and have the credibility to influence their student experience (Dean et al., 2016; Judson et al., 2008; Yu et al., 2018). It is also noted in Yu et al. (2018) that the literature reveals how internal branding could stimulate positive outcomes including brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand supportive behaviours. Internal branding also fosters two-way conversation that allows colleges

and universities to establish healthy dialogue and engage their constituents, thereby increasing the chances of developing lifelong relationships with their stakeholders (Guzmán et al., 2009).

Internal branding challenges within organisations

Two decades ago, Di Chiro (2008) concluded that internal branding was, in many ways, the greatest untapped marketing and communications opportunity for companies and their brands. There could be merit to those sentiments as seen by the acknowledgment that as much as research is showing the positive reported benefits achieved from implementing internal branding within organisations, organisations are, mostly, not taking heed. This could be due to a number of challenges in actually implementing internal branding programmes within organisations. Regardless of the promoted benefits and the competitive necessity for the application of internal brand management, many organisations are yet to adopt such practices because of the perceived inability to measure these internal efforts (King & Grace, 2008). Organisations also need to understand and accept that any real branding efforts, internal or external, are not a quick win, but more a long and drawn out process. As such, there is a need to understand that internal branding is a continuous change management task, and not a once-off event (Piehler et al., 2015). Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) recommended that branding efforts should be viewed as an investment for at least five years before questions regarding the return on investment are asked, or any measurements attempted. In some cases, internal branding is overlooked as a management concept since it does not enhance short-term performance, and requires organisational change e.g. a change in structures, processes, management, leadership, and communication, resulting in resistance to change at all organisational levels (Piehler et al., 2015).

Furthermore, internal branding is often not assigned exclusively to one department or individual and in fact has overlapping authorities e.g. Marketing and HR, which gives rise to blurred lines of responsibilities which ultimately affect clarity and delivery of internal branding messages (Matiatou, 2018). According to Frandsen et al. (2018), one of the challenges of internal branding within HEIs has been that of engaging faculty, with studies proposing that a limited understanding of what branding entails, their seeing branding as a promotional activity, and a branding logic that seemingly challenges the authority of academics, makes them hesitant to accept the whole

notion of branding, making the articulation of a single brand identity extremely challenging.

2.3.4 Previous research on internal branding and employee engagement within service organisations

Overall, the literature reviewed pointed to the proposition that internal branding leads to more engaged stakeholders. Examples of internal branding research, spanning over a decade, include the following research. Of all the studies cited below, five were within a HEI context, and two within a developing country context (Iran and Kenya):

Findings of a study by Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) were that internal branding directly influences the extent to which employees perform their role in relation to the brand promise, and influences their attitudes towards the brand, which in turn, affects employee performance positively.

King and Grace (2008) conducted a study on employees in the service industry, which revealed that there are tangible benefits that accrue to an organisation that effectively adopts an internal brand management philosophy. Such tangible benefits, as noted from the study results, included staff that were more committed to the job and organisation, and had a strong allegiance to the organisation.

The findings by Punjaisri et al. (2008) suggested that internal branding affected employees both attitudinally and behaviourally. Attitudinal effects included brand identification in terms of their sense of belonging, brand commitment or emotional attachment and brand loyalty expressed as their intention to stay. Another study by these same authors provided empirical evidence supporting that employee brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty were positively impacted on by internal branding that co-ordinated training and internal communications (Punjaisri et al., 2009). Further, Punjaisri et al. (2009) observed steady growth of internal branding's popularity among corporate giants including Southwest Airlines, Sears, BASF, IBM and Ernst and Young – mainly due to the power of an informed workforce committed to delivering the brand promise.

A study by King (2010) provided empirical validation that brand knowledge dissemination has a significant positive effect on an employee's role clarity and brand commitment, resulting in brand supportive behaviour – akin to engagement.

The study by Punjaisri and Wilson (2011, p. 1531) revealed attitudinal outcomes of internal branding, namely brand identification, brand commitment, and brand loyalty, where all respondents expressed their sense of belonging to the brand. They were able to provide empirical evidence showing the relationship between internal branding and employees' brand-supporting behaviours. They also found that internal branding directly impacts on employees' brand performance and ability to deliver the brand promise. They concluded their paper by saying that "internal branding, which engenders employees' cognitive and emotional engagement with the brand, is key to the success of coherent corporate-level marketing"

The study by Raj and Jyothi (2011) observed that internal branding has a positive impact on attitudinal and behavioural aspects of employees in their delivery of the brand promise. Internal branding was noted as a process dependent on organisational factors such as OCTAPACE culture (OCATPACE stands for Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Authenticity, Proaction, Autonomy, Collaboration and Experimentation), communication and information, management support, leadership, teamwork, HR processes, engagement, citizenship behaviour and employer brand equity. What is interesting to note is that they find internal branding as a process dependent on many factors including employee engagement, whereas other authors find internal branding as a determiner or influencer of engagement.

The research findings by Foster et al. (2011) gave an empirically validated example of what a lack of internal branding results in – confusion and differing cultures and agenda – overall, no unity of purpose, thought or action. The research found that although all senior managers shared a similar view of a school's brand values, many employees were unfamiliar with all the core brand values of the faculty, were unable to describe these values, and some expressed that the values were not communicated to them consistently or explicitly. Additionally, they found that different divisions of the school had various priorities, agendas and cultures, which caused confusion amongst the existing employees in relation to the school's brand values.

According to the study findings by Asha and Jyothi (2013), internal branding factors act as key determinants of employees' commitment and citizenship behaviour in the organisation, and lead to the creation of an engaged workforce.

For their research entitled *Branding a State university: doing it right*, Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) undertook to implement a branding strategy at the University of Rhode Island (URI). Five years after implementation of the branding strategy, a post-campaign quantitative research study through an external agency was conducted to specifically answer the question of whether the campaign had shifted stakeholder perceptions. The research results were very positive, showing that the image of URI had improved across all stakeholder groups, and was predominantly manifest among internal stakeholders, faculty and staff, who were more negative in the pre-campaign survey and tended to be more sceptical, in general, of branding efforts.

The research by Karanges (2014) provided empirical evidence that internal communication has a significant role to play in optimising employee engagement i.e. it influences employees' ability to identify with their organisation which then has an expositive impact on employee engagement. Their findings also support the social identity theory, which has been used to gain an informed perspective on the perceived oneness between the individual and the organisation. They go on to propose that management take advantage of identification, namely perceptions of value and pride, in influencing employee engagement through internal communication.

Studies by Kumar and Pansari (2014) showed that an organisation's overall employee engagement level is directly influenced by employee satisfaction, employee identification, employee commitment, employee loyalty and employee performance; and that companies with higher levels of employee engagement showed higher levels of profits. They also noted how eight companies that moved from having disengaged employees (i.e. a low level of employee engagement) in one year to having somewhat engaged employees in the following year showed a 19% average increase in earnings per share. In addition, two companies that moved from a moderate level of employee engagement in the first year to the highest level of engagement the following year showed a 132% average increase in earnings per share.

The study by Lee et al. (2014) provided empirical evidence that internal branding which incorporates training, communication, and reward pay-off has a positive effect on employee engagement, findings consistent with the social exchange theory that posits that service employees who receive job-related support from the organisation will strive to reciprocate by engaging themselves in the job and the organisation. The study also supported that engaged employees tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and loyalty toward the organisation.

The findings by Baker et al. (2014) were according to their expectations, and indicated that internal branding activities can enhance perceptions of brand authenticity which, in turn, leads employees to engage in more brand citizenship behaviours and demonstrate higher levels of service ability. Furthermore, from a managerial perspective, their research highlighted the fact that the success of internal branding programmes may be more complex than initially thought. Findings were that communications are more effective when employees perceive the brand as being more authentic and consistent with their own values

Kang (2016), in their research paper, list some successes in internal branding practice and employee engagement that have been noted in the literature, including Starbucks and Chipotle, where internal branding practices have been stretched into external communication.

Saleem and Iglesias (2016), after an extensive review of literature on internal branding, are in support of the notion of looking beyond employees when talking of internal branding, noting how there is an increasing number of stakeholders and brand touch points that need consideration.

The study by Itam and Singh (2017) revealed that internal brand management was imperative to the development of employee engagement, and that engaged employees exhibited positive attitudes and behaviours in terms of loyalty and performance – findings they noted as being consistent with the social exchange theory.

The research by Du Preez et al. (2017) provides more evidence of the strong impact of internal brand management on employee brand commitment and brand citizenship

behaviours (BCB). Brand commitment is an indicator of engagement, with BCB synonymous with brand supporting behaviours, an indicator of engagement.

The study results by Nouri et al. (2017) show internal branding to have a positive significant impact on brand supportive attitudes and job satisfaction. Specifically, the results showed that internal branding improves supportive attitudes towards branding and lead to university employees' job satisfaction.
Research findings by Yu et al. (2018) confirmed that internal market orientation (IMO), as an internal branding management tool, increases university staff brand commitment and brand supportive behaviour, though these positive results were usually dependent on the demographic characteristics of the employees

The study findings by Koech and Cheboi (2018) showed a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and employee performance.

2.3.5 Sub-problem 1: Research question

Sub-problem 1: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution employees (academic and non-academic).

Research Question 1: How is higher education institution employee engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

2.4 Second sub-problem: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution (HEI) students (undergraduate and postgraduate)

The HEI student as customer and implications thereof

According to Drapińska (2012), students are, no doubt, the most important university stakeholders. Students are the most obvious and direct stakeholders in a HEI, dependent on the educational system to deliver significant personal benefits after making substantial personal investment into that system (Marshall, 2018). Students form a unique relationship with their educational institution as they perform multiple roles i.e. they are consumers of the educational service, are customers through their monetary transactions with the institution and may go on to support the institution financially or non-financially after they graduate (Yang, Alessandri, & Kinsey, 2008). Education is an experiential service (higher education as experienced goods), requiring the active involvement of both the unique service provider (higher education brand/university) and the consumer (student), with continuous contact between them and the awarding of a degree to the student as the successful outcome of the service encounter (Iskhakova, Hoffmann, & Hilbert, 2017; Khanna et al., 2014). As such, students can be viewed as both consumers (customers) and products of education.

It is generally agreed that nurturing students to realise their full potential comprises the mission and values of institutions of higher education (Siller, 2016). However, one debate remains, that of referring to students as customers. There seems to be a general reluctance to consider students as consumers due to the perception that considering them as customers causes academic rigour to disappear (Guilbault, 2016). Further, Guilbault (2018) notes that the student as customer controversy may stem from the view of what being a customer means and a seeming contradiction between academic integrity and providing high quality customer service. In their research study, Guilbault (2016) found that faculty/academic staff had the lowest customer mind-set of the HEI employees surveyed. Faculty is said to be strongly opposed to branding and have trouble considering students as customers (Dholakia, 2017; Dholakia & Acciardo, 2014; Guilbault, 2016). Faculty seems to be more receptive if students are defined as co-creators since they have a responsibility and must contribute towards the final academic achievement (Dholakia, 2017; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Strydom & Loots, 2018; Wilkins, Butt, Kratochvil, & Balakrishnan, 2016). Despite this terminology debate, there are some researchers who already refer to the

student as a customer or client (Bowden, 2011; Guilbault, 2018; Iqbal et al., 2012; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Judson et al., 2008; Khanna et al., 2014; Shah & Richardson, 2016; Wilkins et al., 2016). Guilbault (2018) strongly proposes the way forward, advocating that instead of continuing to debate whether students are customers or not, perhaps what needs to be considered is how to best treat them as customers but still maintain academic integrity.

According to Guilbault (2018) and Guilbault (2016), it is important to recognise students as customers as that determines the service the university gives them and has a bearing on success in the competitive higher education marketplace. Bowden (2011) concurs with the fact that students ought to be conceptualised as customers because of the importance of building a two-way interactive, dialogue-based relationship between the institution and its student body. Not viewing students as a customer would therefore indicate a lack of a customer orientation which in itself, has some implications on holistic student engagement (Guilbault, 2018).

2.4.1 Student engagement

HEIs are facing urgent calls for increasing student success and a high-quality educational experience (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017). Student engagement takes many forms and operates on multiple levels (cognitive, affective, and behavioural), both in and out of the classroom (Groccia, 2018). Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017) state that HEIs in developing countries typically have passive students and non-existent student engagement practices and note that student engagement educational policies, traditions and experiences in developing countries are influenced by those from developed countries, particularly North America, Australasia and the United Kingdom.

Student engagement may be looked at from an academic/learning perspective. Academic student engagement refers to students' active participation and taking responsibility for their own learning, and includes the effort they invest in their studies, the time they spend studying, the degree of interest in their courses and the adoption of good study habits (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017). For example, Dean and Jolly (2012) suggest that student engagement occurs when students accept a level of identity-based risk and are willing to experience the positive or negative emotional outcomes associated with learning. They go on to note that students undertake a risk-versus-reward assessment when making decisions about learning and engagement

since there is an involvement of emotional energy. Wilkins et al. (2016) also consider student engagement from an academic perspective, noting a few key points e.g. how learning is intertwined with social identification with students arriving at university with an academic self-concept (perception of their own academic competence); and how student commitment, achievement and satisfaction are generally interlinked. These three aspects are akin to student engagement.

Student engagement is a broad concept with multiple definitions, with many meanings of the term student engagement, depending on who is describing it. The term is often poorly defined, vague or used to cover a multitude of meanings; the different expectations and definitions often result in people talking at cross-purposes (Pittaway, 2016). Carey (2018) concurs, noting how this lack of conceptual clarity results in the term engagement meaning all things to all people. Ranges of definitions of student engagement have been found in the literature. These definitions vary in their depth and may be academic and non-academic in nature. A few of the definitions and meanings of student engagement are discussed below.

Student engagement is a multidimensional concept that is typically used to refer to students' degree of involvement, connectedness and commitment to school as well as their motivation to learn (Rangvid, 2018). Student engagement is also used to refer to so many different things that it is difficult to know what people actually mean by the term – it comes out as being ambiguous (Groccia, 2018). One definition of student engagement is that of a complex multi-dimensional construct incorporating three aspects i.e. behavioural engagement, affective/emotional engagement and cognitive engagement (Di Battista et al., 2014; Groccia, 2018; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Nguyen, Cannata & Miller, 2018; Rangvid, 2018). Behavioural engagement encompasses participation and respect for rules, involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular activities and the level of persistence in the learning process. Affective/emotional engagement refers to positive and negative reactions influencing a student's interest in and feelings toward the educational context e.g. having a sense or feeling of belonging and well-being while at the institution. It is also concerned with possessing of a level of interest in the experience that results in improved motivation and enjoyment, thus establishing a level of commitment. Cognitive engagement relates to the student's internal investment in the learning process including motivation, effort and strategy, and beliefs relating to academic ability, or by displaying a degree of mental activity that

allows for the processing of the experience and establishment of linkages to previous experiences.

Student engagement is also defined as the time and effort students devote to activities linked to desired outcomes of undergraduate education with increases in student engagement believed to contribute to greater student success (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017). Student engagement has also been defined as the attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students exhibit during learning or being taught, as well as the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Groccia, 2018).

A more simplified definition of student engagement suggested by The Higher Education Academy (UK) is that of a relationship in which all parties are actively involved in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together (Pittaway, 2016). Strydom and Loots (2018) define student engagement as the time and effort students spend on academic activities and other educationally purposeful activities.

Why student engagement is important

Despite the cloud surrounding the meaning of student engagement, it is thought to solve various issues confronting universities. Evidence suggests that engagement increases student retention, encourages successful transition, enhances performance, refines curricula, enriches the student and the staff experience, meets equality objectives, establishes civic engagement, and improves the way that universities operate (Carey, 2018; Di Battista et al., 2014; Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Furthermore, engaged students demonstrate more effort, feel more positive emotions, and show more interest in their classrooms compared with their less engaged peers (Di Battista et al., 2014)**.**

Student engagement is an important and essential factor in measuring the quality of higher education and is also important for the development of quality teaching and learning (Tadesse, Manathunga, & Gillies, 2018). Engagement manifests itself in different ways at different stages of the student experience within each learning environment (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017). Student engagement has also been identified as the single best predictor of learning and personal development (Groccia,

2018). There is general consensus that engagement in learning is important for success in school, with research showing that students who are engaged and connected to their schools have increased academic achievement, higher attendance rates, lower drop-out rates and fewer anti-social behaviours (Rangvid, 2018). Furthermore, effective social integration into student life can be an important precursor to a student's academic progression and achievement (Jones, 2017). Therefore, becoming engaged and developing a sense of academic and social belonging early in the first year of study has a positive spin-off on other forms of engagement that enhance student learning in that year and facilitate persistence to completion in the years that follow (Tinto, 2017). Tinto (2017) further contends that in order to ensure that students to succeed at university and persist right through to completion, the students need to become engaged and consider themselves as a member of a community of other students, academics, and professional staff who value their membership – the students need to feel that they matter and that they belong. As such, the development of a sense of belonging (identification) in the students becomes imperative.

Student engagement in academic and social activities is believed to positively affect students' development, results in intellectual and interpersonal benefits, and has positive effects on their achievements, though this is from a developed country context (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017). Positive student engagement and retention is impacted upon by a learner-centred tertiary study experience i.e. one in which student interests are at the heart of teaching and institutional processes (Farr-Wharton et al., 2018). Kahu and Nelson (2018) surmise that success and student engagement are inextricably inter-twined, with students engaged with their studies are more likely to be successful. Strydom and Loots (2018) concur, noting that the extent to which students engage with their academic programmes and environment is also a significant predictor of success, benefiting underprepared students, in particular, and enhancing their chances of graduating.

In contrast, a student's sense of not belonging and feeling out of place causes them to withdraw from interacting with others and this can have negative results on the motivation to persist and ultimately undermines their academic performance (Tinto, 2017). This speaks to the importance of student engagement and their having a sense of belonging while at the HEI.

Antecedents and indicators of student engagement

Farr-Wharton et al. (2018) lament the lack of consensus regarding the antecedents of student engagement and retention in higher education. Student engagement antecedents or factors necessary to encourage student engagement include active and interactive learning in an environment rich with co-curricular and extracurricular activities (from sport to student politics); academic and non-academic staff involvement and encouragement, and the creation of an inclusive environment (Almarghani & Mijatovic, 2017). Importantly, student engagement and a sense of belonging is most directly shaped by the broader campus climate and students' daily interactions with other students, academics, professional staff and administrators and through extra-curricular activities (Tinto, 2017).

There are various indicators of student engagement that are noted in the literature, fitting in with the various definitions of student engagement offered above. These indicators include behavioural, emotive/affective, cognitive and psychological aspects, as well as relationship and learning aspects. These aspects result in positive results for both the student and HEI. Overall, HEIs strive to grow students holistically through academic, social, and emotional interactions during their studies, and by so doing, hope to connect with students and build a lasting emotional connection or affiliation i.e. beyond the student years and into the alumni years (Siller, 2016). That emotional connection or affiliation is akin to student engagement with the brand. Myers et al. (2016) note how students' attitudes toward their universities affect retention and graduation rates, and their willingness to contribute to the success of the HEI in the short- or long-term. Positive attitudes towards the HEI are also synonymous with student engagement. Student loyalty is viewed as another indicator of student engagement. Drapińska (2012) notes that loyalty is important in the competitive marketplace, requires relationship building, making it a time-consuming process. Typically, an education service extends over several years, giving HEIs an opportunity to earn students' loyalty through appropriate activities (Drapińska, 2012).

In summary, indicators of engagement include academic commitment, satisfaction with the student experience, participation in social and extra-curricular activities, time commitment through volunteerism and a sense of belonging. Ideally, student engagement should be looked at holistically, to include both academic and non-

academic aspects, the latter including the aspect of the student experience during the time they are at the HEI.

2.4.2 The Student Experience

Student engagement has also been identified as the single best predictor of learning and personal development, with the value of the student experience having been identified as one of the key ideologies for institutes, together with academic integrity and future employability (Dixit & Sharma, 2018). Those institutions having that added value of the student experience are considered the most educationally effective institutions (Groccia, 2018).

The student experience is defined as an enriched learning experience which includes students' transition from school/work to university, engagement with staff, teaching methods, curriculum content and learning resources, assessments, technology use, peers, campus life, the involvement of learning and personal development, student's total interaction with an institution (including extra-curricular activity and interaction with other students) and the value-add of their qualification after graduation (Jones, 2017; Shah & Richardson, 2016). Within HEIs, the student experience is of great importance as it has a bearing on the relationship students have with their institution, with far reaching implications. Shah and Richardson (2016) remark how the student experience is at the heart of higher education and argue that a good student experience increases the likelihood of students completing their studies and are more likely to return to study (postgraduate) if they previously had a positive experience. However, Jones (2017) is of the view that students arrive at university with pre-set expectations about their student experience that are shaped by background socio-economic factors and tacit messages from the institutions, showing how the pre-university phase can influence the undergraduate student experience.

To show the perceived importance of student experience within Australian universities, Shah and Richardson (2016) mention how the government reinstated a previously scrapped amenities fee that enables the provision of non-academic services aimed at enhancing the campus life experience e.g. sport and recreational facilities, bars, coffee shops and bookshops. UK universities are also showing the importance of the student experience aspect, using it as a selling point. For example, Times Higher Education, the UK's leading publication on higher education and a world university rankings

authority, has been running the Student Experience Survey since 2009. The views of around 20,000 students from across UK institutions on 22 core aspects of student life are surveyed, ranging from student wellbeing and support to social life and teaching quality (THE, 2018).

Universities the world over employ the use of student engagement surveys in order to gauge the level of engagement of the students, and make improvements as needed. Examples of these surveys include South Africa's Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE) and the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) (Strydom & Loots, 2018), as well as the US National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Jones, 2017; Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017) and the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) (Shah & Richardson, 2016; Tadesse et al., 2018). These surveys are useful in that they provide a reliable source of evidence about issues relevant to student success, with the NSSE noted as having provided more than 1,600 institutions with a measure of student engagement in practices that matter for learning and success since its inception in 2001 (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017). However, student engagement surveys do not always have one common purpose, with surveys carried out for a variety of reasons including an understanding by institutions of the holistic student experience in order to enhance the quality of learning and teaching on the one hand, and the quality of student experience and engagement on the other (Strydom & Loots, 2018).

The literature has suggested the student experience as a significant antecedent to engagement, strengthening of organisational identity, positive attitudes and loyalty towards the HEI. The suggestion is that student engagement, through the student experience, is possible through the implementation of robust internal branding strategies and activities that lead to strong relationships between the university and student and further down the line, will likely result in alumni involvement with their alma mater.

2.4.3 Internal branding and student engagement

It is important to note that student engagement is distinct from listening to, consulting with, students – it involves dialogue (Pittaway, 2016). Dialogue gives way to relationship building, which is achieved through relationship marketing. However, the relationship-marketing paradigm as a HEI student engagement method has not been

employed despite its primary goal being to develop a customer base with a strong relationship with an organisation and deep commitment to that brand, resulting in customer retention, positive referrals/word of mouth and customer loyalty (Bowden, 2011). Further, strong and engaging relationships in the higher education sector seem to be driven more by the quality of psychological and emotional bonds (Bowden, 2011). Drapińska (2012) proposes three phases for the process of building student relationship by a university i.e. pre-sales, sales and after-sales. The pre-sales stage begins with taking decisions on future studies by prospective students and lasts until students enrol in a university. The sales phase, which also lasts the longest, runs from the moment of students' enrolment until their graduation – these are the university attendance years. The post-sales phase occurs after graduation when students become alumni. Drapińska (2012) further posits that the university's task during the university attendance years is that of reducing the sense of alienation and disorientation of new students as well as facilitating student interactions and offering help in preparing students for further education, and by so doing, help generate positive emotions and raise satisfaction levels. Overall, the quality of the student-university relationship is impacted by the extent to which students are integrated into a university's environment and involved in its life (Drapińska, 2012). Guilbault (2016) advocates for relationship marketing since it emphasises customer retention and satisfaction, and focuses on customer loyalty and long-term customer (student) engagement. Schlesinger, Cervera, and Pérez-Cabañero (2017) conclude that relationship marketing can be useful in the student engagement context since it encompasses marketing activities directed at establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges.

Pittaway (2016) raises another important point. She argues that there is no such thing as an engaged student since this way of thinking defines engagement as a permanent state, suggesting that each student is either engaged or disengaged. She argues that in practice, student engagement sits upon a continuum dependent on various factors (positive or negative) e.g. their health, relationships, money worries or their enjoyment of a particular topic. Groccia (2018) concurs, noting how this continuum may include authentic engagement (participation in activities with a clear meaning), ritual engagement (participation associated with extrinsic results), passive compliance (participation in order to avoid negative results), retreatant engagement (disengaged and expend little effort in a task) and the rebellious (refuse to participate in activities,

may disrupt others and/or tries to substitute other activities for the assigned task). Nevertheless, Pittaway (2016) suggests that it is possible to create favourable conditions in which students have the opportunity to engage with the HEI. The suggestion is that internal branding can create those favourable conditions for student engagement. Adding to the complexity of student engagement is the fact that it is possible for one to be positively engaged along one or more dimensions while also engaging negatively along others (Groccia, 2018).

As alluded to earlier, loyalty is an indicator of student engagement. However, earning students' loyalty is not a simple task and requires the deployment of a range of marketing activities different from those applied by commercial service providers (Drapińska, 2012). Internal branding is proposed as one such marketing activity.

2.4.4 Previous research on internal branding and student engagement within HEIs

There is scant research on student engagement within HEIs, and even less research on the influence of internal branding on HEI student engagement. In fact, for this literature review, no articles on the link between internal branding and student engagement were found. However, research has been conducted on indicators of student engagement in HEIs, e.g. student loyalty, the role of the student experience, social and organisational identity and the associated positive benefits thereof. Some of the research conducted is outlined below.

The results of a study by Bowden (2011) indicated that student loyalty was most strongly determined by psychological attachment, and a sense of belonging to the brand, both of which are indicators of engagement. These findings strongly suggest that HEIs ought to invest in service development programmes that target the development of affective bonds.

Then, the study findings by Di Battista et al. (2014), which were in line with the social identity theory, found that the more students identified with the in-group, the more they were involved in extra-role behaviours, voluntarily participating in academic and social university life (in other words, were engaged). The study by Myers et al. (2016) had similarities with that of Di Battista et al. (2014), though from an organisational identification perspective. They found that significant and positive relationships exist

between students' organisational identification and construed external image of the university, trust in the university, and satisfaction with the university. Of particular interest is the report by students that their attachment to the university was positively affected by sporting and social events i.e. the student experience. These findings give implications for understanding the relationship between students and their university i.e. if strong, the bond could yield benefits for the student as well as for the vitality and sustainability of the institution. This strong bond/attachment is an indicator of student engagement. Interestingly, the study by Wilkins et al. (2016) found organisational identification to be a stronger predictor of student commitment, achievement and satisfaction than social identification. The key contribution of their research was in providing support for the hypothesis that organisational identification influences the attitudes and behaviour of higher education students, as it has been shown to do with employees and consumers. The results also indicated that student-organisational identification perceptions are strongly linked with student commitment and satisfaction, and can lead to other benefits for institutions, such as positive word of mouth.

The study by Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017) showed that the availability and active usage of the university's ICT resources, the good reputation of the university, and the lecturers'/academic staffs' deliberate activating influence and active learning techniques predicted and positively affect student engagement in HEIs in Libya. They also expected similar results should the same study be replicated in other developing countries in the region.

The results from a study by Pather et al. (2017) also conducted from a developing country context (South Africa) were similar to the above-noted finding by Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017). They found that there were many complexities around student-lecturer engagement but that when the lecturer created an enabling environment, it brought about a positive student-lecturer engagement experience. The same study by Pather et al. (2017) found that students' pre-university non-academic factors play a significant role in how students engage with institutional support initiatives and can be used to enhance institutional support programmes to cater for a more diverse student population. Their study also showed that students prioritised academic engagement over social engagement, mainly due to the students' disadvantaged backgrounds which made them regard academic involvement more highly than extracurricular and other social support services offered by the university. Yet another finding from the

same study was that the First Year Experience mentorship programme was critical for peer engagement, enhanced students' sense of belonging and deepened commitment to their own academic goals, aspirations and academic success.

The findings reported in the NSSE Annual Results 2013 – 2015, as noted in Kinzie and Hurtado (2017) were that exposing students to diverse ideas and opportunities to engage with others with different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs resulted in engagements in deeper, more complex learning activities. In addition, these students perceived a more supportive campus environment, had more positive interactions with other students, faculty, and staff, and had more involvement in campus activities and leadership roles/activities. Furthermore, student involvement in out-of-class activities enhanced cognitive and affective development, promoted student retention and contributed to a sense of community.

Another study in a developing country context (Ethiopia), conducted by Tadesse et al. (2018), found student engagement to be a multidimensional construct mostly represented by the student and teaching-related factors, and that student demographics and the type of engagement measure used do influence perceived levels of engagement.

A study in the developed world context (Australia) by Farr-Wharton et al. (2018) also found that lecturer-student exchanges were of pivotal importance in student engagement and retention, with lecturer-student exchange relationships being suggested as a significant predictor of student engagement, course satisfaction, and intention to leave university prematurely.

2.4.5 Sub-problem 2: Research question

Sub-problem 2: To explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution students.

Research Question 2: How is HEI student engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

2.5 Third sub-problem: To determine how internal branding affects higher education institution alumni engagement with, and financial or other support of, the brand

To cover their costs, Universities and HEIs rely on fees paid by students, donations, government subsidies and third-stream income. However, because of declining government subsidies and increasing competition, these institutions are gravitating towards business practices, such as branding (Stephenson & Bell, 2014). The third sub-problem seeks to determine how alumni engagement, through internal branding, influences alumni's level of financial support to the university, and support of other university endeavours.

Students remain HEI stakeholders after graduating, and become known then as alumni, and are still invested and interested in maintaining and protecting the value of the qualifications they have achieved (Marshall, 2018). Alumni are former students of a university or HEI. Alumni are also referred to as transformed external stakeholders (Dholakia, 2017). However, for the purposes of this research, alumni are referred to as internal stakeholders since they were born out of HEI institutions, and the relationship, ideally, should continue and never be severed.

2.5.1 The importance of alumni to a university/higher education institution

Due to continually decreasing funding and the need to expand affordable access to more students, there is need for alumni support (Drezner, 2018a). Alumni are extremely valuable to a HEIs, primarily because of the support they give to these institutions – be they privately or publicly funded. Alumni support for HEIs may be material or non-material. Material support includes alumni giving e.g. financial/charitable donations (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Chen & Murphy, 2018; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Marshall, 2018; Myers et al., 2016; Schlesinger et al., 2017). Material support also extends to repurchase behaviour (through continuing education), and alumni association membership (which may be automatic or by choice, depending on the country/institution) (Iskhakova et al., 2017; Marshall, 2018). Non-material support includes volunteering time with campus programmes or events (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Myers et al., 2016), speaking highly of the school to others (Myers et al., 2016), mentoring students and assisting them with job placement/internship opportunities (Carranza &

Wiecheteck, 2017; Chen & Murphy, 2018; Dam, 2016; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Alumni expand the university's network of friends, supporters and strategic contacts, experience sharing in the classroom or at university events (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Iskhakova et al., 2017), and serve in university board of advisors (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017). Alumni also serve as references for prospective students through positive word of mouth, thereby reducing student recruitment costs (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Schlesinger et al., 2017).

For student recruitment in particular, the costs can be excessive. According to an article by West (2012), having an engaged alumni network can assist HEIs with student recruitment, local or international. Involving international alumni in recruitment drives can be mutually beneficial for the institution, alumni and prospective student. To the institution, they extend the staffing footprint in international locations, helping to provide a face for the university when they cannot be there. For the alumni, there is personal satisfaction knowing they were part of the recruitment process, offers mentoring opportunities and gives them a unique opportunity to remain connected with their alma mater. The student gets a personalised service, with first-hand information of what to expect, helping them dispel any fears and information on how to navigate the application and relocation processes. Furthermore, for international students, alumni are an extremely trusted source of information. However, in order to achieve all this, there is a need to build and maintain strong relationships with alumni, even long before they become alumni, but while they are still students (West, 2012).

Toutoungi (2017) has a different view altogether regarding the need for donations to ensure the sustainability of educational institutions, calling the need for donations unproductive. Instead, Toutoungi (2017) asserts the need for endowment funds managed through an investments office whose sole mandate is the preservation and growth of the fund over the lifetime of the institution. An endowment is defined as a gift of money or income producing property to a public organisation (such as a hospital or university) for a specific purpose (such as research or scholarships); generally, the endowed asset is kept intact and only the income generated by it is consumed (BusinessDictionary, 2018). Toutoungi (2017) paints a doom and gloom, almost apocalyptic picture, of how HEIs would "wither and die spiritually" if endowment funds were not available to sustain them. Toutoungi (2017) gives examples of endowment

funds of the US Ivy League (top 5) Universities as follows: Harvard - $34 billion, Stanford - $22 Billion, Yale - $25 Billion, Princeton - $22 Billion and MIT $15 Billion. These funds are managed by the brightest minds in the investment management industry with annual returns of up to 14% per year having been recorded in some instances. Toutoungi (2017) also believes that educational institutions, through their endowment fund investments office, can tailor their sustainability in harmony with their needs, instead of pleading for donations for operations and capital expenditure.

2.5.1 Predictors of/factors influencing alumni or charitable giving in general

Alumni involvement with the school subsequent to graduation is a critical factor affecting the decision by alumni to contribute and the amount of the contribution (Tsao & Coll, 2005). HEIs want their alumni to support their programmes and institutions by directing any charitable and altruistic efforts towards their alma mater, and have become accustomed to the idea that simply educating them automatically translates to support for the institution once they are alumni (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017). However, alumni giving is quite different and more complex in reality, since alumni have alternative outlets for charitable contributions (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2015). It is important to keep in mind that alumni giving, which is a form of charitable giving, needs to top the list of potential givers. Alumni need to feel more compelled to make a financial gift to their alma mater, over other charities/organisations. To better the chances of receiving donations and other support from alumni, HEIs ought to ask themselves some pertinent questions. For example, Freeland et al. (2015) questions why some recent graduates choose to donate to their alma mater yet there are many other options for charitable giving available. Carranza and Wiecheteck (2017) advocate for HEIs to ask what would be in it for the alumni, while the pertinent questions from Dam (2016) are on what alumni want from the institution, or what they value. Literature offers some plausible answers on what alumni may value, including intellectual stimulation, prestige, identity stability by continued affiliation with an alma mater (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), satisfaction with their college (Freeland et al., 2015) or being recognised as successful alumni through the confering of honorary degrees (Marshall, 2018). Alumni also expect alumni networks to provide information about employment opportunities, bursaries and postgraduate study, current research projects at the institution, alumni achievements, general campus activities, cultural activities, fund-raising projects, and sport activity and to keep alumni in touch with each other (Chen & Murphy, 2018).

Drezner (2018b) is of the view that voluntary contributions to higher education means that donors acknowledge that the education of others and the production of knowledge is important and worth sustaining. However, non-profit organisations, regardless of their sector, are ultimately in competition for the same donor dollar. In order to stay relevant in a crowded landscape, non-profits, including HEIs, need to actively and repeatedly justify their survival (Peasley et al., 2018). The literature offers some insight into factors influencing/predicting alumni giving and participation, some of which is discussed below.

According to Peasley et al. (2018), two constructs were found to be important in inducing donor action: prestige and identification. Overall, it has been found that when institutions engaged donors' social identity, giving increased, mainly because a shared identity creates a sense of a collective, interdependence drives prosocial behaviours and because people are more sympathetic toward those who are closer to them (Drezner, 2018b). Once built, a prestigious reputation can be an important asset for an organisation, aiding in attracting new partners and building identification. Individuals exhibiting high organisational identification engage in activities which preserve, support and improve an organisation, and are more likely to show prosocial behaviours such as positive word of mouth and donation intentions (Peasley et al., 2018). Furthermore, building pride within an institution's alumni base e.g. through the sharing of good news, accomplishments, high rankings and using relationship marketing techniques, impacts positively on alumni organisational identity and relationship with their alma mater (Drezner, 2018a). Organisational prestige, social identification, years since graduation, and respect for alumni leaders, are also predictors of alumni that are most likely to support their institutions (Chen & Murphy, 2018). McDearmon (2010) notes how much of the research on alumni giving suggests that the way alumni interpret their student experience can affect their willingness to become donors in the future. Also, alumni who feel attached to, or identify with, their alma mater are more likely to make financial contributions to the alma mater (Wang & Ashcraft, 2014). Graduating from a university might offer a life-long membership to the institution, together with a sense of identification towards that institution, which might enable them to support it when they become alumni (Curtis et al., 2009). However, a sense of identification – social or organisational - does not simply happen, it needs to be developed. Wilkins et al. (2016) advocate that the process of building student-university identification begin as soon as students start their programmes of study,

then sufficient attention should be put towards the building of the identification before attempting to reap the benefits of the student-university identification.

Altruism and self-interest are seen as other major factors behind philanthropy and prosocial behaviours, regardless of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds (Abbasov & Drezner, 2018). Past research indicates positive reciprocity as another major driver of generosity i.e. when one receives a service, they may feel inclined to behave reciprocally (e.g., perhaps by donating to the provider of the service in the form of a tip) (Chuan et al., 2018), particularly for those who received scholarships or grants that do not require repayment (Freeland et al., 2015; McDearmon, 2013). This aspect of reciprocity ties in with that of the social exchange theory from a philanthropy viewpoint. This theory describes some donor motivations to include the desire to elevate the common good and receive some form of private good in return and by so doing, underscoring the importance of the mutual benefit (Abbasov & Drezner, 2018). Konrath and Handy (2018) concur with these assertions by Abbasov and Drezner (2018), arguing that charitable behaviour is influenced by the benefits that the donor receives in exchange for making the donation. The exchange relationship between a person and a non-profit, such as a HEI, is categorised as a social exchange (Drezner, 2018a).

One major trigger for making charitable donations, is simply being asked (Konrath & Handy, 2018; Wastyn, 2009).

Empathy also affects the likelihood of donating money to charitable causes with donors who empathise with recipients making contributions, and also contributing more frequently (Drezner, 2018b). Voluntary giving is often tied to beliefs and values, as well as other factors including the level of disposable income at hand and how the cause ranks in relation to other causes that the person considers supporting.

Successful athletic/sporting programmes are also generally believed to serve as a unique university image enhancement tool (since sporting activities are highly visible) and have been shown to positively impact alumni giving (Judson et al., 2006). Then, Wastyn (2009) summarises that the relationship alumni retain with the school after graduation influences subsequent giving, and that alumni who stay satisfied with their undergraduate experiences are more likely to donate than the non-satisfied. They note

that there are three identified triggers to alumni giving and participation – being asked, the availability of tax benefits, and a sense of duty.

Further, the literature cites a host of characteristics as influencing alumni charitable giving, including demographics/sociodemographic, psychographic and behavioural factors. Demographics/sociodemographic factors include age (older alumni are more likely to give than younger alumni), ethnicity, number of years after graduation, income (higher rates of giving for wealthier alumni), gender and marital status (results are inconsistent) (Freeland et al., 2015; Newman & Petrosko, 2011; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014b; Tsao & Coll, 2005). Behavioural variables include satisfaction with the alma mater and the university experience, and alumni involvement/participation with their alma mater after graduation (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014b; Tsao & Coll, 2005). Of particular importance are the behavioural attributes since they denote personal contact with alumni, which give HEIs an opportunity to garner positive attitudes towards the institution through public relations and relationship building efforts (Tsao & Coll, 2005). With regard to alumni age, young alumni are often overlooked because of a lower participation rate or giving capacity compared with older donors. However, the proposition is to cultivate giving patterns at an early stage, while they are still students, as this would likely increase their propensity to give at a later stage (as young or older alumni) (Freeland et al., 2015). Freeland et al. (2015) also say that prior instances of giving are the strongest predictor of giving, with the affective quality of student experiences representing the next strongest predictor of alumni giving.

2.5.2 Alumni engagement and measurement/indicators

Based on the definition of stakeholder engagement by Brodie et al. (2011)**,** alumni engagement can therefore be defined as the level of interaction alumni show towards an institution of higher education, with the interaction influencing the alumni's thoughts, actions and emotions toward the institution. University representatives believe alumni engagement to be important for fundraising, increasing the university brand, and for career development for current students and alumni (Abbasov & Drezner, 2018). Drezner (2018b) further posits that alumni support is not only given out by individuals, but can also be cultivated, encouraged or discouraged by institutions' engagement with different donors' identities. Ultimately, though, the pinnacle of engagement for a non-profit such as a HEI is a donation (Peasley et al., 2018).

Measurement of the construct of alumni engagement is quite complex. There is no single universally accepted measure, with its measurement seemingly grounded in various activities and characteristics. As alluded to earlier, some of the key predictors/indicators of alumni giving and participation include identification with the institution and a strong relationship between the university and alumni, both aspects of which are akin to engagement. Dam (2016) introduces other aspects i.e. commitment and loyalty, which can have a bearing on alumni pledging/giving of time and other resources to their alma mater. Dam (2016) defines loyalty as the customer's attitude to the product manifested by rebuying, with Iskhakova et al. (2017, p. 302) defining loyalty as:

> "…the faithfulness or devotion of alumni based on two interrelated components: attitudinal (intention to alumni loyalty) and behavioural (action loyalty). The intention to alumni loyalty is expressed non-materially as volunteer assistance to the alma mater and materially as a desire to implement financial support, a desire to keep in touch with the university, interest in obtaining university news, and a willingness to be a member of the alumni association. Action loyalty includes nonmaterial aspects such as volunteer assistance to the alma mater and material aspects such as providing financial support, keeping in touch with the university, obtaining university news, and being a member of the alumni association".

Schlesinger et al. (2017) stress the importance of HEIs fostering loyalty by focusing on antecedents of loyalty and by so doing, aligning their strategic planning, organisational structure, and procedures to enhance relationships with alumni. Student loyalty, the benefits of which endure long after students have graduated, is also indicative of alumni engagement. The study by Schlesinger et al. (2017) showed that graduate satisfaction, trust, shared values, and image, determined student loyalty, highlighting the contribution of variables from the marketing relationship approach in alumni's perceptions and behaviours.

Branded merchandise buying, wearing or displaying are other clear signs of alumni loyalty (McAlexander et al., 2006).

Measurements/indicators of alumni engagement lie in brand/organisation supportive behaviours and encompass aspects of loyalty, commitment, identification and an overall strong relationship between the alumni and institution.

2.5.3 Identification, exchange relationships, communication and alumni engagement

Usually, universities have a dedicated alumni department that deals with alumni communications and related issues (Chen & Murphy, 2018). The importance of HEI alumni to these institutions is clearly apparent. Hunter, Jones, and Boger (1999) added that colleges and universities are kept financially sound by contributions from graduates, with McAlexander et al. (2006) remarked how the mainstay of financial support for many universities lies in loyal alumni. Carranza and Wiecheteck (2017) concur, adding that alumni represent a powerful potential support engine for their alma matter, but go on to note that the support is given only if alumni have a reason for it.

Historically, colleges and universities were very open to alumni support, though the onus was on the graduates themselves to initiate involvement. The need for alumni support is still apparent amongst HEIs today, though there has been a major shift in terms of initiation of contact – involvement needs to start with the institutions (McDearmon, 2013). However, for institutions to initiate contact that results in alumni getting involved and supporting institution endeavours, a strong positive relationship/connection needs to be in place. Memories arising at graduation (the last stage of the sales phase of relationship building between a HEI and student) and the overall student experience, for example, often sway decisions to continue or sever the relationship with the institution (Drapińska, 2012). Furthermore, alumni need a good reason to give support to their alma mater. Developing that reason is a combination of academic and non-academic experiences between enrolment and graduation – these experiences shape the future desire of the student to give back, with continued communication and engagement after graduation yielding the ultimate support of the alumni (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017). Alumni communication is, therefore, vital in sustaining the relationship between alumni and their alma maters (Chen & Murphy, 2018).

Siller (2016) identified that the aspect of connection, specifically an emotional connection, was highly important to alumni involvement, with experiences attained as students and alumni key in developing a connection to the institution. This emotional connection is synonymous with student engagement. Siller (2016) and Drapińska (2012) suggest that this connection/emotional bond is cultivated during the student years, and fortifies the alumni's willingness to be involved with or continue a relationship with the university after they have graduated from the institution.

To be sustainable and successful, universities and colleges need to engage in mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders, including alumni (Chen & Murphy, 2018). Relationships are known to evolve and endure even when the initial conditions and reasons for the relationship change, which rings true for alumni relationships with their alma mater – the relationships were initially built between the student as learner and the institution as provider of knowledge, before evolving to alumni as knowledge benefactor and university as alma mater (Drezner, 2018a). Relationship marketing is an important and appropriate tool for higher education considering that institutions are seeking to build long-term regular donors as opposed to ad hoc, one-time givers. Ideally, the relationship between the alumni and alma mater ought to be built and in place before they graduate, and if well nurtured, can last a lifetime. This works to the advantage of the institution due to the sustained support as well as the reduced costs of renewing donors (Drezner, 2018a).

Various study findings (e.g. by Curtis et al. (2009); Freeland et al. (2015); McDearmon (2010); Stephenson and Yerger (2014b); Wang and Ashcraft (2014); Wastyn (2009)) indicate a satisfying undergraduate experience or an attachment to, and identifying with, their alma mater as a positive indicator of future intention to give/participate. Because alumni are, according to Dholakia (2017), transformed external stakeholders, they can no longer be directly impacted or influenced by internal branding practices hence the importance of building relationships while they are still students, within reach. Satisfying experiences are often crafted and delivered through internal branding activities during the university-going days. At the point when they are alumni, the strength of the relationship built during the university years is tested. What alumni associations and departments can do is reach out to the alumni through various modes of communication, and should the alumni be already engaged from the student years, the communications may bear fruit. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to expect

to build a relationship with alumni when they are no longer at the institution as they are less likely to identify with the institution. Such identification can be strengthened through an emphasis on brand distinctiveness, competition, charismatic leadership, individual mentorships and a strong culture with its own distinctive rituals and symbols (Kumar & Pansari, 2014). Martin, Moriuchi, Smith, Moeder, and Nichols (2015) propose traditions and rituals, which are a characteristic of brand communities, as one of the tools at the disposal of HEIs in an effort to increase alumni support. These traditions and rituals can serve as a means by which students engage on campus and participate in a university's brand community and, in turn, become active and giving alumni of a university after graduation. The proposition is that the greater the perception of alumni that a university has valued, well-established traditions and rituals, the greater their brand community relationships and intended behaviours associated with loyalty. Myers et al. (2016) concur with these propositions, noting that students' attachment is positively affected when they are unified by traditions and university-sponsored sporting events or concerts which are a big source of pride and distinction from outsiders. Traditions, in particular, make it possible for current students to feel connected with the school's past, and may increase feelings of identification.

In order to increase the likelihood of alumni engagement, the proposition is to implement internal branding practices during the university-going days in order to build strong relationships with students, and to maintain those relationships once they are alumni. Alumni programmes, through alumni associations, can be instituted in order to build and strengthen relations with students and alumni, to engage alumni and provide a connection to and from the alma mater (Newman & Petrosko, 2011).

Tasked with maximising resource decisions regarding alumni engagement are alumni relations professionals, with alumni relations officers responsible for developing and building life-long relationships with graduates and encouraging commitment to the educational institution (Dam, 2016; Newman & Petrosko, 2011). This involves relationship marketing, the aim of which is to build, develop and maintain successful, enduring relationships with alumni, through marketing activities (Schlesinger et al., 2017). Newman and Petrosko (2011) also note that alumni relations officers help to facilitate two-way communication between the institution and alumni, leverage a powerful alumni voice on behalf of the institution, help to maintain history and traditions, and help secure a bright future for the institution.

2.5.4 Previous research on alumni engagement and giving

Overall, there is a paucity of studies on the concept of alumni giving or how the depth of their relationship, and emotional connection, with the university brand affects their level of giving. Furthermore, studies on alumni giving within a developing country/emerging market context, or the South African context, in particular, is scant, if not a rarity. The reviewed literature explores alumni giving, examining personal characteristics and demographics, experiences and engagement, both as a student and as alumni, triggering events, and motivations to predict or explain an inclination to give to one's alma mater (Borden et al., 2014). It is important for both public and private institutions to possess a strong understanding of what impacts alumni of all ages to give, and to know the factors that may cause alumni not to give back (McDearmon, 2010).

Previous studies on why alumni give

After reviewing various literature on the subject, one of the earliest studies on the subject, by Mael and Ashforth (1992), found that alumni who identified with the organisation and were sentimental towards it (including through rituals and traditions) were apt to support it in various ways, including financially, or recommending the institution to their children or other people they know. Later studies e.g. by Bass, Gordon, and Kim (2012); Borden et al. (2014); Freeland et al. (2015); McDearmon (2013); Stephenson and Bell (2014); Stephenson and Yerger (2014a); Wang and Ashcraft (2014) and Myers et al. (2016), support these findings on the role of identification by Mael and Ashforth (1992). The findings of Peasley et al. (2018) indicate that identification can be strengthened by improving the prestige of the focal organisation and enabling those interacting with the organisation to have a fulfilling and enjoyable experience - an increase in identification (through enhancing prestige), combined with positive experiences and associations, positively influences the potential donors' attitude toward the donation requestor. The results also showed that the attitude of the requestor also impacts the willingness or intentions to donate.

The findings by Hunter et al. (1999) were that alumni were favourably inclined to institutions that had clear policies, realistic goals, an effective information network, and a qualified management team – all of which are results of a successful internal branding strategy. Furthermore, a study by Tsao and Coll (2005), suggested that successful fund-raising at HEIs requires cultivation of a positive, long-term relationship

with individual alumni. McAlexander et al. (2006) found that loyalty-related behaviours, such as future donations to the university and the purchase and display of university logo merchandise, were explained by integration within a university brand community. Another important observation from their research was to begin forming alumni relationships at student stage through a worthwhile academic and non-academic student experience e.g. through sponsoring events, offering student life-related activities and facilitating interaction with faculty. The motivation for this being quite simple – post-graduation efforts, by themselves, are unlikely to be well received without the early effort to establish a relationship while the students are on campus. A comprehensive literature review supports this suggestion, noting alumni giving and alumni membership as behavioural outcomes that assume a level of commitment and positive regard for the alma mater, with positive experiences and undergraduate student involvement within non-academic campus groups translating to greater probability of alumni giving (Newman & Petrosko, 2011).

The results of the study by Wang and Ashcraft (2014) show that organisational commitment and involvement significantly influence members' propensity to give to associations (including alumni associations), noting that alumni who feel attached to or identify with their alma mater, will be more likely to make financial contributions to the alma mater. Bass et al. (2012) concluded that those alumni with high levels of university/organisational identification serve as excellent pro bono recruiters for the university, participate in more university functions and give higher levels of monetary donations. McDearmon (2013) got similar results, with the outcome of his study suggesting that alumni with increased role identity may be more likely to support their institution through attending events, volunteering, joining alumni associations and making financial contributions. Borden et al. (2014) found that alumni exhibiting university identification were more likely to give; further hypothesising that academic or non-academic employees who are also alumni, have an additional basis for institutional identification and as such, would be prone to identify more strongly with their employer (the university), than non-alumni. The findings by Stephenson and Bell (2014) concur with the above-mentioned findings regarding identification – their study found that the number of expected donations increased with the increase in identification with the university, resulting in supportive behaviours. In all instances, identification and a relationship between the university and alumni are akin to engagement.

The research by Stephenson and Yerger (2014b) provided empirical evidence that alumni with a strong brand identification choose to donate money, donate more money, and have more donation occurrences. A different study by Stephenson and Yerger (2014a) highlighted that brand identification, distinctiveness and attractiveness of the university brand positively influenced alumni supportive/advocate behaviours such as promotion, competition, and maintaining contact with the institution. Alumni brand supportive/advocate behaviours are synonymous with engagement. According to Freeland et al. (2015), school identification, group participation, and subjective evaluation increased the likelihood of student contributions i.e. students are more likely to give to an organisation that they identify with, though their student experiences ought to be positive. Freeland et al. (2015) further note that giving to the senior gift campaign is highly indicative of giving among young alumni. The research conducted by Dam (2016) argued for building long-term relationships with alumni of a case company, as opposed to the traditional, transactional way which is impersonal i.e. after getting an education, students leave and do not make further contact with the programme. Emphasis would be placed on maintaining and enhancing relationships, which would influence more involvement from the alumni (without incentives like payment). The study by Myers et al. (2016) suggests that building university students' organisational identification can result in pro-organisational behaviours and may help to ensure that students continue to be involved with the university financially and instrumentally after they graduate and are alumni. Their findings may also help HEIs understand the high stakes at play when it comes to developing strong relationships with their students and alumni.

The findings by Abbasov and Drezner (2018) were two-fold. Firstly, they found that alumni have positive perceptions of philanthropy that supports educational institutions and causes (the two most important reasons to give were to help student and to support faculty research). Secondly, they found that there is no strong willingness to give financially, with alumni attaching more value to time (volunteering) donations in comparison with monetary donations.

Konrath and Handy (2018) uncovered five psychological motives for donating to charities, top of which were for altruistic reasons, because they trust the organisations, and because others they know care about donating. The private-benefit reasons were less important to participants (i.e., egoism, and tax credits).

The findings by Drezner (2018b) showed that alumni giving is affected by donor characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, and political ideology and by how the donation solicitation was framed.
Chuan et al. (2018) found that positive reciprocity does not remain constant but decays/diminishes rapidly over time, pointing to a need to quickly capitalise on the reciprocal donation motives that they induce in others.

Previous studies on why alumni do not give

Most research on alumni giving explores the reasons why alumni give – a few of them go into reasons of why alumni do not give. Some of these studies are listed below.

The study by Wastyn (2009) concluded that non-donors have college experiences and values in which giving does not fit, for example, they tell themselves that the college is too expensive for them or their children today, that other charities are more in need, or that they have already paid for the education they received. As such, they do not feel compelled to contribute, especially financially. The findings of the study by Wastyn (2009) also contradict other study findings in that even with positive feeling towards their alma mater and remaining engaged with them, alumni had other reasons for not giving. Non-donors consider college a commodity not a charity, they do not believe the college needs their money, they have misperceptions and uncertainties about giving and they do not make their giving decisions logically. However, they go on to note how these non-donors can be effectively engaged to give to their alma mater by creating narratives that tell the story of the college's needs in a way that resonates with the personal narratives developed by non-donors.

McDearmon (2010) notes the parallel plans and differing points of view of alumni and the alma mater after graduation, with the former going off to get a job and house, get married, possibly start a family, and the latter making plans to have the alumni stay connected with, and give back to them. Furthermore, the alumni would ask questions pertaining to whether the institution needs the additional support; whether their gift will make a difference in the lives of students; and what personal benefits accrue to the alumni should they make a contribution (what is in it for them). This study by McDearmon (2010) also identified several keys themes, including young alumni's attitudes regarding career services, how incentives may motivate them to make gifts and the desire that they specify how their donation will be used.

Abbasov and Drezner (2018) found that a low likelihood to give was influenced by the recentness of membership and a low ability to give due to affordability issues (earning slightly higher average income).

Lastly, the findings by Konrath and Handy (2018) were that alumni do not give because of financial constraints. They simply cannot afford it as there is no money to spare, giving would interfere with the meeting of their own financial obligations or donating would cause too much of a financial strain on them.

2.5.5 Sub-problem 3: Research question

Sub-problem 3: To determine how much internal branding affects HEI alumni engagement with, and financial or non-financial support of, the brand

Research Question 3: How is HEI alumni engagement with the brand, and their financial or other support of the brand, influenced by internal branding practices?

2.6 Conclusion of the literature review

To date, there has been a dearth of studies or articles on internal branding, with Sujchaphong et al. (2017) remarking that internal branding is still considered a new phenomenon and going on to call for more research in this field. Sujchaphong et al. (2015) made a more specific research recommendation, i.e. on what exactly would be needed to implement internal branding in HEIs.

The dearth of studies/articles on internal branding which can definitively link or give a strong argument for internal branding positively influencing stakeholder engagement, especially in the emerging market or South African context are particularly rare. An earlier study is by Hay and Van Gensen (2008), who advocate for internal branding before external branding, the culturing of brand champions and the involvement of top management in the internal branding process. The literature has pointed to a major focus on external branding within HEIs, at the expense of/to the exclusion of internal branding. The extent of this external focus is also summarised in studies by Judson et al. (2006) and Guzmán et al. (2009). Further, results from more recent studies by Nouri et al. (2017) and Yu et al. (2018) showed that internal branding had a positive effect on brand supportive attitudes or increased university staffs' brand commitment and brand supportive behaviours, respectively.

With the exception of Temple (2006), the literature reviewed showed an inclination towards the direct, positive relationship between internal branding and stakeholder engagement. Temple (2006) challenged the notion of branding models in higher education which borrow from the corporate world, positing that it would lead to chaos simply because of their uniqueness in terms of the university "customer"; universities and HEIs are clearly not like the typical organisation. Wæraas and Solbakk (2009) also note that HEIs are quite complex, with Temple (2006, p. 18) further remarking how unique and unusual they are in that "'customers' do most of the work, and end up, if it all works out, as different people from the ones who first came through the door". As such, any branding strategies (internal or external) which borrow from the corporate world might be lacking if simply copy-pasted to the HEI sector. The resultant logic points to a need for tailor-made branding strategies that would meet the needs of universities/HEIs and their stakeholders.

There seems to be merit and clear logic in the sentiments of Temple (2006). Approaching HEI branding differently because of the uniqueness of the institutions is a plausible point of consideration, which also points to a gap that needs to be filled in this area. Proper models for branding HEIs need to be developed and tested, passed and implemented, an aspect with which Hay and Van Gensen (2008) fully agree. They proposed a model for branding HEIs in South Africa, a model that incorporates aspects of internal branding and stakeholder engagement and the CEO as the institutional advocate. Their proposed model incorporates some internal branding aspects such as internal communication, internalisation aspects of branding, corporate citizenship and Human Resources and branding.

The research on internal branding and engagement in relation to non-academic/administrative employees is, overall, quite plentiful. The reviewed literature can be summarised by a few points, as follows. Employees, as the first customers (internal customers) of any organisation, should be treated in the same manner as how the organisation wishes their customers to be treated, and that a systematic internal branding approach can align the employee perform with the brand values (Raj & Jyothi, 2011). Further, branding in service companies rests with the employees and how they behave and the only way to ensure behaviour that fulfils the brand's promise is through developing competent committed employees out of the internal brand (Free, 1999). And, through internal branding efforts, academic and non-academic employees within HEIs can, and should, be an institution’s greatest admirers and supporters (Guzmán et al., 2009). Guest (2014) provided a sceptical view of engagement, questioning the implied assumption that employees want to be engaged, or what is in it for them. However, he does propose an engagement agenda which has aspects similar to those proposed for internal brand management.

In sharp contrast to the plentiful amount of literature on employees in relation to internal branding and engagement, there is a paucity of studies on the aspect of student engagement, or on the influence of internal branding on student engagement. As such, more studies on these aspects are imperative. The available literature, generally, showed that positively engaged students have a good narrative to pass down (through positive word-of-mouth), unlike the negatively engaged. It therefore stands to reason that the reputation of universities and institutions of higher education can only benefit through having positively engaged students. The literature also

indicated that the student experience is important because a positive experience is an antecedent to engagement. The research by Khanna et al. (2014) proposed a Brand Touchpoint Wheel with 13 influencing touchpoints during the various experiential service stages of a student's educational journey and experience i.e. from pre-admission stage right through to the alumnus stage. These touchpoints are soft and hard infrastructure, alumni and student recommendations, media influence, placement opportunities, fees, location of the institution, learning resources, co-curricular activities, industry interface, knowledge enhancement, career growth and alumni involvement, innovativeness and resonance of the higher education institute, and stakeholder perception. The proposition was that student engagement, through internal branding, can be influenced through these 13 touchpoints. According to Pather et al. (2017) pre-university, non-academic, non-institutional actors influence student engagement e.g. background contextual differences, culture, ethnicity, age, gender, socio-economic status, family support (parental encouragement and mother's emotional support) and life circumstances, and further emphasise that engagement does not begin when one enters university, but rather starts even before one enrols and truly starts university life. For students to be fully engaged in educational practices at university, they need to feel a strong sense of belonging. For example, socially disadvantaged students who gain admission to university often experience a crisis of confidence and self-esteem which influences their sense of belonging in the new environment (Pather et al., 2017).

A key component of student engagement is the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that lead to student success (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017). Student-faculty interaction is believed to have a positive influence on students' cognitive growth, personal development, retention, and overall academic achievement (Kinzie & Hurtado, 2017). If an HEI wants to engage its students or alumni, it ought not to focus solely on academics or on one-size-fits-all strategies but also should include aspects of personal development and engagement at a personal and emotional level (Jones, 2017; Siller, 2016), as well as a sense of identity or belonging (Drezner, 2018b; Tinto, 2017).

The relationship between an HEI and their alumni is quite crucial, as noted in the literature, primarily because of the support, financial and non-financial, that alumni give to them. It is interesting to note that some HEI employees also have relationships with

their employing institutions as alumni themselves; they are products of an educational environment in which they must also execute its mission. In Mael and Ashforth (1992), alumni are noted as the financial backbone of educational organisations. However, these alumni relationships, important as they are to HEIs, may be under duress, a condition which also has consequences for institutions that depend on alumni for financial support (Borden et al., 2014). Academic philanthropy and private giving are no longer the preserve of private institutions, but also for public institutions in order for them to meet their financial obligations (Drezner, 2018a). It has also been noted that the student experience during university-going days has a huge bearing on the HEI-alumni relationship, with a positive relationship stemming from a good, worthwhile experience. Martin et al. (2015) and Pather et al. (2017) acknowledge that many universities have placed a priority on the First Year Experience programme in an effort to increase student retention, but stress that the overall student experience should not be neglected. Martin et al. (2015) recommend a holistic approach to the facet of the student experience and for institutions to invest resources and time to enhancing the student experience as that will bear fruit years later when students are alumni. Further, alumni associations exist as strategic assets capable of safeguarding traditions and rituals which encourage meaningful participation of the alumni (Martin et al., 2015).

From the literature reviewed, the general consensus is that internal branding, though not a silver bullet, can go a long way into cultivating the engagement of various stakeholders within HEIs. The results of engagement (depth of the relationship and emotional connection) for each stakeholder group would, therefore, be different. For example, according to Punjaisri and Wilson (2007), motivated hotel staff were more loyal and gave a better service to customers, while Stephenson and Bell (2014) note how engaged alumni tend to give more to their alma mater than non-engaged alumni. Generally, though, the overarching result of stakeholder engagement seems to be positive behaviour which, in turn, impacts positively on an organisation and other stakeholders (brand supportive behaviours). However, the literature has also pointed to a gap in the current available literature, calling for more research on the importance of internal branding and engagement in HEI settings, specifically for studies set within developing country contexts, such as South Africa, studies specific to HEI institutions and not the service industry in general, and taking into account other stakeholders over and above employees (the literature for which is quite plentiful).

This current research uncovers important aspects related to the influence of internal branding on HEI stakeholder engagement, the stakeholders under consideration being academic and non-academic employees, students and alumni. Uncovered aspects can then be used as part of a holistic branding model for universities and other higher education institutions.

2.7 Summary of the research questions

Table 1: Summary of Research Questions

Research Questions
Research Question 1: How is higher education institution employee (academic and non-academic) engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?
Research Question 2: How is higher education institution student (undergraduate and postgraduate) engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?
Research Question 3: How is higher education institution alumni engagement with the brand and their financial or other support of the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the method by which the study was conducted, including the research strategy, research design and motivations for a qualitative study. The research sample and sampling method were also discussed, as were the respondent/participant profiles, the discussion document/interview guide and issues regarding research ethics. Following that was an outline of the procedure for data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the data. A check of the trustworthiness of the research followed, with the aspects of validity and reliability of the methodology being delved into. Lastly, was a look into the limitations of the research methodology.

3.1 Research methodology/paradigm

A qualitative method of data analysis was employed, where perceptions were explored. A case study was used. The study was based on multiple objects of analysis, all with the intention of showing the link, if any, between internal branding and stakeholder engagement.

Because the concept of branding is quite new to the higher education context, it is viewed with a certain level of scepticism, and with internal branding lacking a consistent theoretical framework or measurement scales, this study was exploratory in nature, following a qualitative research approach in order to highlight discovery over confirmation, and to further the understanding of the constructs under research (Dean et al., 2016; Dholakia, 2017; O'Neill et al., 2015; Punjaisri et al., 2008). In addition, the complex phenomena (educational philanthropy [alumni giving], alumni, academic and student perceptions of internal branding) and the complicated relationship between internal branding and stakeholder engagement require more nuanced exploration through qualitative methods (Abbasov & Drezner, 2018; Chapleo, 2010; Foster et al., 2011; Saurombe, Barkhuizen, & Schutte, 2017). Chapleo (2015) also notes a qualitative study as being suited to this exploratory type of research since it allows one to gain a deeper understanding of factors under research and to get a richer sense of that information.

3.2 Research design

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a research design outlines the general plan of how the research questions will be answered and includes objectives derived from the research questions, the intended sources of data (who or what will be studied), the strategies of enquiry that will be used, how the data will be collected and analysed, and ethical considerations. The research design for this study is outlined in the sections below. The research strategy or plan of how the research questions will be answered is through a case study, specifically, a single case study research method. Saunders et al. (2016, p. 711) define a case study as a “research strategy that involves empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence”. Also, according to Yin (2014), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. As such, case studies allow us to get insight into the world around us in its natural context (Rowley, 2002).

For this research, the investigation was into the influence of internal branding on HEI stakeholder engagement, as well as into the perceptions of top HEI management regarding the link and importance between these two constructs. When compared with other social research methods, case studies as a research methodology have traditionally been viewed as lacking rigour and objectivity. However, despite this scepticism about case study research, case studies do offer insights which other approaches may not achieve (Rowley, 2002). Rowley (2002) also notes that case studies can be used where there are ”how?” and “why?” questions, and the research questions for this study pertain to the former (the “how?”).

The study of the effects on internal branding on stakeholder engagement requires some in-depth probing e.g. by exploring people’s feelings and perceptions. This makes case study research fitting, as supported by Yin (2014, p. 4), who notes that “the distinctive need for case study research arises out of a desire to understand complex social phenomena”, to which this study pertains.

Merriam (2002, p. 8) notes a case study as:

> "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community… By concentrating upon a single phenomenon or entity (the case) this approach seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth. The unit if analysis, not the topic of investigation, characterises a case study".

As per this definition, the unit of analysis for the current research was employees, students and alumni.

Because statistical models cannot uncover the underlying motivations for any phenomenon, this study used a case study approach (Wastyn, 2009), with in-depth interviews that followed a prepared interview guide – semi-structured open-ended questions which allowed for a deviation from the script in order to further explore any issues arising.

3.2.1 Case site

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 341), a case is "an instance, incident, or unit of something and can be anything – a person, an organisation, an event, a decision, an action, a location like a neighbourhood, or a nation-state." The case site for this research was the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa. This university was selected, based on convenience and proximity (de Heer & Tandoh-Offin, 2015); the researcher works at Wits University. Furthermore, the researcher had access to employees, students and Wits alumni and also had insights into the university culture which could be useful during data interpretation (Schmidt & Baumgarth, 2018).

Wits is a public university in South Africa, having been established in 1922 (celebrating 100 years in 2022). Wits is quite highly ranked internationally. For example, it is ranked 230 globally, and second in South Africa, by the Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR, 2018). In South Africa, rankings for Wits alternate between first and second position with University of Cape Town. As per the latest published facts and figures, Wits has 38 353 students, 64% of whom are undergraduates, 35% postgraduates and 1% occasional students; over 4500 staff (25% academic, 75%

administrative/non-academic); and over 160,000 alumni since 1922 (Wits, 2018). The top management structure of Wits comprises the management/senior executive team, as well as the Deans of the different Faculties. Wits is spread over 400 acres, in Braamfontein (Braamfontein East and West Campuses) and Parktown (Education Campus, Management Campus and Medical School).

This case site was ideal for the study as it had all the various stakeholder subgroups being analysed in this study – employees, students, and alumni. More importantly, the researcher had access to all these stakeholders.

3.3 Qualitative study

The purpose of this research was to explore the influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement within a university or higher education institution (HEI) setting. A qualitative approach allows complex issues such as branding to be investigated comprehensively, allows for the capturing of rich information or in-depth understanding concerning the emerging issues regarding internal branding and stakeholder engagement thereby enabling respondents to share their stories and express their views (Curtis et al., 2009; de Heer & Tandoh-Offin, 2015; Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013). As such, a qualitative approach was used to obtain a first-hand description of stakeholder experiences, and glean insights and understanding from their experiences and not simply from the direction of theories, laws and concepts (King & Grace, 2008).

Overall, qualitative research looks to discover and describe peoples' everyday lives and meaning in their lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It seeks to gain a deeper understanding into the experiences lived and shared among individuals, with the researcher being the main instrument of data collection (through interviews) and analysis of the collected data (Siller, 2016). Qualitative research, also known as normative research, is an approach to research with the notion of searching for meaning and understanding of experiences from the participants' perspective. All qualitative research has the following four characteristics - the search for meaning and understanding; the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; an inductive investigation strategy/process; and the end product being a rich thick description of the phenomena (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002). (Creswell, 2009) further adds a few more characteristics of qualitative research i.e. takes place in

natural setting, there can be multiple sources of data, it is interpretive based on what the researcher hears, sees and understands and also gives a holistic account of the issue under study.

This qualitative study followed the inductive approach which, as noted in Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012), has the starting point as data collection, before exploring the data to identify emerging themes and issues. Saunders et al. (2012) go on to note that, regardless of the approach used initially, the research study is most likely to combine elements of both inductive and deductive approaches. With the inductive approach, questions, insights, propositions, and pictures emerge from the data collected, the respondent's point of view gives the depth of information that researchers use to gain insight into the phenomena, experience, or occurrence being studied (Rowley, 2002; Siller, 2016). Simply put, a researcher attempts to describe the categories that emerge from the data during the analytical process (Brenner, 2006).

In summary, this research used a qualitative method of data analysis as it was conducted in a natural setting (the case site) where participants experienced the issue, with face-to-face interaction; the researcher was in charge of collecting the data; and paying close attention to participants' meaning of the issue being researched, as opposed to using the researcher's meaning (Creswell, 2003). Usually for qualitative research, there are multiple sources of data including interviews, observations and documents and not relying on a single source of information. However, for this exploratory research, a single method for gathering data through interviews sufficed (King & Grace, 2008).

3.3.1 Sample and sampling method

Sampling is a crucial step which should be carefully thought out and rigorous, since qualitative research requires a researcher to work closely with small numbers of people and therefore requires that participants be chosen for good analytic reasons (Saunders et al., 2016). Because it was impractical to collect data from the entire population at the case site (Wits University), a representative sample was used (Saunders et al., 2016). The sample population was selected using non-probability sampling, more specifically, purposive sampling, also referred to as judgemental sampling, and random sampling. Purposive sampling is where selection is based on a particular criteria – ideal for small sample sizes and where respondents need to be

very informative (Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, Creswell (2009) notes how qualitative research allows for the purposeful selection of participants that best help the researcher to understand the problem and the research question.

Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants who would give the best qualitative data i.e. the best informants (O'Neill et al., 2015). Because qualitative inquiry is concerned with obtaining the perspectives of respondents, the sample from which the most can be learned needs to be selected (Merriam, 2002). For this sampling method, the researcher chose the sample based on who she thought would be appropriate for the study, could provide the best quality data and contribute to building an understanding on the link between internal branding and stakeholder engagement (De Chernatony et al., 2006; Dean et al., 2016). In this case, the criterion for sample population selection was Wits University employees, students and alumni. As the stakeholders considered in this research, this study looked to get their views and perceptions on the aspect of internal branding and how it impacted on their engagement levels with their roles and with the brand. The sample population, therefore, encompassed persons who were physically at Wits (employees and students), and those that might not be physically at Wits, but still have an affiliation with it (alumni).

After defining the sample criteria purposefully for employees, students and alumni by taking factors such as race, gender, faculty, educational qualifications, tenure with Wits, or length of time as alumni, the final respondents were selected using random sampling i.e. a conveniently selected sample. With random sampling, each person within the population has an equal chance of being selected (Creswell, 2009). As such, the first person who fit the purposed criteria who was available for the interview was selected.

According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 283), the recommended minimum sample size for an interview is between five and 25. As such, for this research, the subgroup sample size for employees and students consisted of 12 respondents each, with that of Wits alumni consisting of 6 respondents, not 12 as the other subgroups, as it proved quite difficult to pin down alumni for interviews due to time constraints and being geographically located outside of Johannesburg. This sample size for each subgroup

was decided upon based on the need to get as much representative data as possible within a limited time span.

3.3.2 Respondent Profiles

Respondents for this study comprised employees, students and alumni, all of whom had lived experiences with the case site, Wits University. The respondent subgroups took into account demographic factors including age, gender, and race. To have a cross-section of views and to provide enough depth and richness to the unique experiences of the phenomena, certain criteria were used to select the participants. For example, only non-academic staff with at least a Matriculation qualification were selected and academic interviewees were drawn from various disciplines (with one from at least each of the five faculties at Wits), striving to cover an equal number of men and women, and at both junior and senior levels - both new and long-serving academics were also included in the sample of interviewees. Students ranged from undergraduate to postgraduate levels from different faculties, both genders and from different race groups with alumni of varying demographics and varying length of time as alumni (between two and 17 years).

Table 2 shows the sample summary of respondents in the three subgroups being researched.

Table 2: Profile of Research Sample

SUBGROUP	NOTES	SAMPLE SIZE
Students	Full-time students who are a mix of races; undergraduate (UG) studying towards a bachelor's degree; postgraduate (PG) - graduated with a bachelor's or master's degree and have Wits as their alma mater. Respondents were 6 UG (3 males, 3 females) and 6 PG students (3 males, 3 females) with at least one from each of the five Faculties at Wits	12
Staff	Administrative/professional staff (three males, three females) from different departments within the university. Six academic staff (three males, three females), with at least one from each of the five Faculties at Wits	12
Alumni	Those who graduated from Wits within the past 20 years; three females and three males – a mix of races.	6
	TOTAL SAMPLE SIZE	30

3.4 The discussion document/interview guide

The research instrument was a discussion guide. This study used a semi-structured open-ended interview format which Saunders et al. (2012) give as being exploratory and explanatory in nature and give an opportunity to probe any given answers further in order to a gain deeper understanding. A discussion document, also known as an interview guide, was used to steer the interviews in order to avoid imposing preconceptions upon respondents and obtaining their views within their own beliefs and understanding (De Chernatony et al., 2006).

Considering the exploratory nature of this research, a real danger lies in the researcher imposing their pre-conceived notions upon respondents; using an interview guide guards against this from happening as it makes it easier to obtain respondents' views within their own frames of reference (De Chernatony et al., 2006; Dean et al., 2016). The interview guide, also used to ensure that the research questions were answered, was based on the review of the literature and included umbrella and probing questions to aid in the collection of data (King & Grace, 2008). Although the

interview guide was used to direct the discussion, respondents were also requested to expand upon ideas and concepts as they deemed fitting (Chapleo, 2010).

The interview guide divided the interview into topics that would be covered, with some initial wording of questions and a list of areas to be explored with each informant (Brenner, 2006). Questions at the beginning of the interview were broad and general and as the interview progressed, questions began telescoping to become more focused on the research questions. The opening questions were descriptive, focusing on demographics such as age, gender, academic qualifications and tenure with the organisation. The second set of questions sought to elicit information regarding the level of engagement of the stakeholders by focusing on the indicators of engagement for the different stakeholders, as directed by the literature. The third set of questions were meant to find out the satisfaction, attitudes and social exchange perspectives of the stakeholders regarding the institution. The fourth and final set of questions intended to find out the existence or non-existence of internal branding practices at the case site (O'Neill et al., 2015). The answers to these sets of questions would then be used to infer the influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement.

Respondents could talk as much as they wished, with intervention only to obtain further clarification of comments when required. However, the respondents were also probed for more information if they gave short answers. The questions explored in the context of the interviews linked back to the research questions; the questions concerned informants' experience and opinions about their engagement levels in relation to the presence (or absence) of internal branding practices at Wits University.

The interview guide was based on questions gleaned from previous studies on internal branding and stakeholder engagement, with some of the questions developed by the researcher (these are identified in the interview guide appendices).

Appendix A shows the cover letter to respondents, with Appendix B showing the interview guides used for the research participants.

One interview guide was used for all three participant sub-groups though the demographic data obtained for the different groups was obviously slightly different.

Topics explored were drawn from the literature review and included the outcomes of internal branding in relation to stakeholder engagement aspects.

3.5 Ethics

Research ethics refer to the researcher's behavioural standards in relation to the rights of participants of a research project, or those who are affected by it (Saunders et al., 2016). Ethics approval is required in order to protect the human rights of the research participants (Siller, 2016). According to Brenner (2006, p. 361), research participants have "the right to make an informed decision about whether to participate in a particular project, to receive considerate treatment during the research process, and to have their personal responses and identity kept confidential throughout".

Ethics approval for this research was obtained from Wits University (Registrar Division and the Wits Business School Research Ethics Committee) prior to conducting the qualitative research (interviews). Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were upheld to the strictest standards throughout the duration of the study. Number codes were used to ensure anonymity of participant responses. Overall, the researcher was the only person to know the identity of each participant and his/her responses. Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were given all the information pertaining to the study and had to sign consent forms which Brenner (2006) notes as containing the nature of the research, how the respondent is expected to participate, how participant confidentiality/anonymity would be protected, contact persons to direct any queries or complaints and a description of the risks and benefits of the research. The cover letter and consent form for this research also indicated the need to audio record the sessions; and informed participants of their right to withdraw from the process at any time.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

Research data was collected through face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews, in what Saunders et al. (2016) label a mono-method qualitative study, with Denzin and Lincoln (2018) commenting how the interview has grown to become one of the most popular ways of producing knowledge in the social sciences. An interview is defined as a verbal exchange, conducted face-to-face, whereby the interviewer seeks to elicit information from the interviewee (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, Denzin and

Lincoln (2018) note that semi-structured qualitative interviews have a purpose of producing knowledge (unlike everyday conversations); seek descriptions concerning lived experiences pertaining to how interviewees experience their world, its episodes and events, and involves the interpretation of meaning on the interviewees' experiences and actions.

The qualitative interview allows for the gathering of information regarding the research topic (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011). In-depth interviews were the most effective method of data collection to address the research questions because, through them, large amounts of data could be obtained quickly, they allowed for follow-up and clarification and could be the single primary method for gathering data. Furthermore, previously, researchers in this area of study (branding and internal branding) have extensively used in-depth interviews; including research by academics working in the field of branding (Abbasov & Drezner, 2018; Chapleo, 2010, 2015; De Chernatony et al., 2006; de Heer & Tandoh-Offin, 2015; Frandsen et al., 2018; King & Grace, 2008; O'Neill et al., 2015; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007, 2011; Punjaisri et al., 2008; Saurombe et al., 2017; Siller, 2016; Vallaster & Lindgreen, 2013; Wastyn, 2009).

Since this study was exploratory in nature and sought to uncover and gain insight into participants' perspectives, use of in-depth interviews as the sole way of data gathering was considered an appropriate and sufficient methodology (King & Grace, 2008). Semi-structured interviews included a highly structured section with specific information required from all participants, with the largest part of the interview guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, the order and wording of which could change from participant to participant (Merriam, 2002). In addition, Brenner (2006) notes one of the advantages of semi-structured interviews being that of asking all participants the same core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received, and he also notes the strength of an open-ended interview is the chance it gives the interviewer to extend and clarify an informant's responses through probing.

Interviews make it possible to gather information where direct observations cannot be made, yet can also allow for the provision of historical information, and they also allow the researcher control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2009). Other advantages of the interview format to gather qualitative data include the provision of social cues such as body language, hand gestures and voice tone which give a richer meaning to

communication, emotional and intellectual involvement of the participants, the ability to give in-depth data discreetness that supports psychological safety for participants, as well as flexibility in questioning and of time (O'Neill et al., 2015). However, the approach also had disadvantages which included the possibility of having differences between interviews (though this was mitigated through the use of a discussion document/interview guide), limiting relevant information from emerging due to over-structuring of the interview, lack of generalisability of studies and selection bias (O'Neill et al., 2015). Creswell (2009) adds to the list of disadvantages of interviews by noting how the information provided is filtered through the views of interviewees, information not gathered in a natural field setting, how the very presence of the researcher can result in biased responses and the fact that people are not equally articulate and perceptive. To gain access to the respondents, permission was sought, and granted, from the University through a letter of request, prior to collection of the data.

To ensure that respondents felt safe and comfortable, and to maintain confidentiality, the interviews were held in spaces they preferred. Interviews with employees, students and alumni were either held in the researcher's office, while interviews with alumni were held at their office, in the researcher's office or at the respondent's preferred location off Wits premises – whichever was more convenient and comfortable for them. Initial contact to make the participation request, introduce the topic and provide the background and purpose of the intended research was through email, telephone or in person. All respondents were informed of the average expected time for each interview i.e. between 30 – 60 minutes. Lastly, permissions for an audio recording were requested. The requisite consent forms for participation in the study and granting permission for an audio recording were signed before the start of the interview.

During the interviews, the researcher initiated discussion of issues from the literature review, and also allowed informants sufficient latitude to report on their own experience and perspectives on aspects on internal branding and engagement.

Brenner (2006) stresses the wisdom of carefully piloting new interviews, thereby enabling the interviewer to become comfortable with the questions and to be sure that the planned questions are appropriate for the targeted participants. As such, before the interview questions were finalised, the question phrasing and how to get the most

useful information during interviews was reflected upon, with two mock (pilot) interviews per subgroup conducted (total of six pilot interviews). The responses from these interviews were then used to refine the interview guide.

Data collection

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, semi-structured questions under a broad list of topics were used to question participants, and to probe any other issues arising during the interview. Questions centred on the stakeholders' perceived relevant mechanisms of internal branding and to describe how internal branding affected their levels of engagement with the brand. Because the construct of internal branding could have been unfamiliar to the participants, the questioning did not directly focus on internal branding, but more on the known outcomes of internal branding in relation to how engagement manifests for the different stakeholder groups, as identified in the literature.

Thirty interviews were conducted. Recording of the interviews was done using a cell phone. An audio recording allowed the interviewer to focus on the conversation with a participant and had the added advantage of carrying the complete record of the informant's actual words (Brenner, 2006), and is also less intrusive than note-taking (De Chernatony et al., 2006). Be that as it may, notes were also taken during each interview.

Before each interview, a few minutes were allowed to establish trust and rapport so that participants felt free and comfortable enough to speak honestly and openly (Baillie, 2015).

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative procedures rely of text and/or image data, with the qualitative data analysis process involving making sense out of that text and/data (Creswell, 2009). This research relied on text data obtained through interviews. All interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded then transcribed verbatim before they could be analysed. The qualitative data was then quantified through the creation of codes and themes qualitatively, then by noting when they appeared in the text data of the different respondents. Continually reviewing and merging categories assured their mutual exclusivity (Wastyn, 2009).

The themes explored in the interviews were related to the outcomes of internal branding and engaged stakeholders (staff, students and alumni) – and any links between the two constructs, as well as any emerging themes based on the perception of top management with references to the importance of internal branding and links, if any, to stakeholder engagement.

Maintaining participant anonymity made the designation of direct quotes challenging. However, this was mitigated by the use of number codes for the participants (Chapleo, 2010).

3.8 Validity and reliability (Transferability, credibility, and dependability)

In short, qualitative validity is concerned with checking the accuracy of the research findings (Creswell, 2009). According to Baillie (2015), qualitative research ought to be conducted to a high standard with integrity and a careful and thoughtful approach in order to ensure that the findings are trustworthy, meaningful, relevant and as such, can be confidently applied to practice. This would translate to trustworthiness and research quality, both of which need to be upheld, even in a qualitative study.

Trustworthiness encompasses rigour of the research process (research conducted systematically and to a high standard, thereby demonstrating integrity and competence) and the relevance of research (Baillie, 2015). In Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002), rigour is noted as relating to making research data public and as replicable as possible. Validity, reliability and generalisability are criteria and principles used to evaluate traditional or quantitative research quality, with alternative trustworthiness criteria for naturalistic (qualitative) research proposed.

Table 3 gives an outline of the research trustworthiness criteria for both quantitative and qualitative research as well as examples of techniques for promoting research rigour (Baillie, 2015).

Table 3: Criteria to evaluate trustworthiness in qualitative research

Traditional/quantitative term or research criteria	Naturalistic/qualitative term or research criteria	Strategy/techniques to promote research vigour
Internal validity	Credibility	• Member checking • Prolonged time in the field • Triangulation • Peer debriefing • Negative case analysis • Time sampling
External validity/ Generalisability	Transferability	• Rich description of the setting and the participants • Purposive sampling
Reliability	Dependability	• Audit trail of decision making throughout the research process • Code-recode strategy • Triangulation • Peer examination
Objectivity	Confirmability	• Triangulation • Reflexivity
Adapted from Anfara et al. (2002) and Baillie (2015)		

According to Rowley (2002), generalisability, validity and reliability establish the basis on which other researchers should regard a piece of research as knowledge that is trustworthy and can be drawn into the knowledge-base of a particular field of study. Some of the trustworthiness techniques relevant to this study are explored in the sections below.

Table 3 noted verification procedures that could be employed to increase the credibility of qualitative research. For this research, two quality standards were uses i.e. rich descriptions and member checking. Thick rich descriptions ensured that the participants' answers were rich in detail pertaining to their experiences in participating with their alma mater, while member checks or respondent validations enabled participants to review their interview transcripts and determine whether the researcher captured the essence of their responses accurately.

3.8.1 External validity (Generalisability or Transferability)

External validity, also known as generalisability or transferability, relates to how well a study's research findings can be generalised to other relevant groups or to a larger population (Anfara et al., 2002; Saunders et al., 2012), based on replication logic (Rowley, 2002), while Denzin and Lincoln (2018) note generality/generalisability as the extent of application of research findings. Rowley (2002) goes on to note the importance of generalisation i.e. so that a case study contributes to theory; also that generalisation for case studies is analytical generalisation, and not statistical generalisation, where prior developed theory is used as a comparison template for the empirical results of the case study – replication is claimed where two or more cases are shown to support the same theory. It is important to note that results of a single case study cannot be generalised. Because the current research is based on a single case study, further research is needed to test the validity of the research findings by using other higher education institutions as samples (Curtis et al., 2009). Further, for other researchers to determine whether this study would be transferable to their setting, provision of rich descriptions of the data was imperative (Baillie, 2015).

3.8.2 Internal validity (Credibility)

Internal validity exists when a causal relationship between two variables can be established (Saunders et al., 2012). For this study, this causal relationship would be between internal branding and stakeholder engagement, how the former influences the latter. Steps to reduce threats to internal validity, as noted in Saunders et al. (2012), which were done for this research, included communicating the importance of respondents' participation in order to reduce incidences of withdrawing from the study for flimsy reasons, using the same unmodified research instrument (interview guide) on all respondents to allow for comparison of responses, and ensuring clarity about cause and effect from the very beginning of the study.

Internal validity also relates to the trustworthiness of the conclusions that are drawn from the data, and how the conclusions match reality (Anfara et al., 2002). A technique called 'member checking' is deemed extremely crucial (the most crucial) for confirming credibility (Baillie, 2015), and was used in this research. It is a process that can confirm the researcher's interpretation of meaning with the informant's perceptions (Brenner, 2006). Examples of member checking include checking participant responses when their interviews are played back to them (Baillie, 2015), or sharing

transcripts with informants to confirm that the interview was accurately portrayed (Brenner, 2006).

3.8.3 Reliability (Dependability)

Reliability relates to the consistency and repeatability of the research procedures used in a case study (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2014), i.e. whether data collection techniques and analytical procedures would produce consistent findings if they were repeated on another occasion or if replicated by a different researcher (Rowley, 2002; Saunders et al., 2012). Reliability can be achieved through thorough documentation of procedures and appropriate recording keeping (Rowley, 2002), both of which were done in this study. In addition to the need for transparency when reporting each part of the work, steps that were taken to ensure reliability of the study included guarding against participant error and bias, as well as guarding against researcher error and bias.

3.9 Limitations of the study

Research limitations are those aspects that may adversely affect the result and which the researcher does not have control over. All studies have limitations – as does this study. The limitations of this study can be summarised thus:

- This was a single case study based on one university, hence results cannot be generalised (Curtis et al., 2009; Freeland et al., 2015; Wastyn, 2009). This study was confined to internal branding and stakeholder aspects of one university in Johannesburg, South Africa, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings. However, to augment the research findings of this study, the study recommends a replication study to explore these findings in different environments and cultures (Koech & Cheboi, 2018).
- As this was a single case study, further research is needed to test the validity of the research findings by using other higher education institutions as samples (Curtis et al., 2009).
- The study was not longitudinal in nature but focused at one point in time. A longitudinal study would provide more insights on these variables or help in improving the model's ability to make causal inferences (Koech & Cheboi, 2018). Furthermore, a longitudinal study may also improve the understanding of the influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement (Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011).

- With regard to alumni, donors' motives may depend on the context in which donations are being made, and not necessarily out of the feeling of connectedness or engagement with the brand (Konrath & Handy, 2018).
- Purposive sampling may have affected the research output as the sample selected may not have been fully representative of the total population (Magubane, 2016). However, the respondent profile made considerable efforts to include as representative a sample as possible, considering the relatively small sample size used.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Table 4 outlines the profile of each respondent in the employee sample.

Table 4: Employee (Staff) Respondent Profile

CODE NAME	JOB TITLE	AGE RANGE	RACE	GENDER	HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	YEARS @WITS
NAS1	Deputy Director	50 - 55	Coloured	Female	Matric	30
NAS2	Project Manager	45 - 50	White	Female	Masters	9
NAS3	Analyst	25 - 30	Black	Female	Masters	1
NAS4	Manager	40 - 45	Asian	Male	Undergraduate	14
NAS5	Manager	35 - 40	Black	Male	Masters	5
NAS6	Advisor	30 - 35	White	Male	Undergraduate	7
AS1	Lecturer	25 - 30	Black	Female	Masters	6 months
AS2	Associate Professor	60 - 65	White	Female	PhD	30
AS3	Lecturer	35 - 40	Indian	Female	Masters	15
AS4	Lecturer	35 - 40	Black	Male	PhD	2 years
AS5	Associate Professor	45 - 50	Indian	Male	PhD	20
AS6	Lecturer	35 - 40	White	Male	PhD	3

The staff sample consists of twelve staff members. It has six non-academic staff members, also known as administrative or professional staff; three males and three females of mixed races and ages, from various administrative sections of Wits University. The lowest academic qualification allowable for the sample is Matriculation. The sample of twelve also includes six academic staff, also known as faculty; three males and three females of mixed-race groups and ages from at least one of the five faculties at Wits University. Tenure at the university ranged from six months to thirty years.

Table 5 outlines the profile of each respondent in the student sample.

Table 5: Student Respondent Profile

CODE NAME	DEGREE PROGRAMME	FACULTY	YEAR OF STUDY	TOTAL YEARS @WITS	AGE RANGE	GENDER	RACE	RES OR NON-RES STUDENT
Undergraduate Students								
UG1	BSc Aeronautical Engineering	Engineering	1	1	18 - 20	M	Indian	Residence
UG2	BA General	Humanities	2	3	20 - 25	M	Black	Non-residence
UG3	MBBCh	Health Sciences	5	5	20 - 25	M	White	Non-residence
UG4	BSc Actuarial Science	Science	2	2	20 - 25	F	Black	Residence
UG5	Law (LLB) Honours	Commerce, Law & Management	2	5	20 - 25	F	Coloured	Non-residence
UG6	BA PPE	Humanities	2	2	20 - 25	F	White	Residence
Postgraduate Students								
PG1	PhD in Condensed Matter Physics	Science	2	9	25 - 30	M	Coloured	Non-residence
PG2	Master's in chemical Eng.	Engineering	2	9	25 - 30	M	White	Non-residence
PG3	MSc in Clinical Microbiology	Health Sciences	4	10	25 - 30	M	Black	Non-residence
PG4	Master's in commerce	Commerce, Law & Management	1	5	20 - 25	F	White	Non-residence
PG5	Master's in international Relations	Humanities	2	6	25 - 30	F	Black	Non-residence
PG6	Masters in Geosciences	Science	2	6	20 - 25	F	Black	Residence

The student sample consists of twelve students. It has six undergraduate students, three males and three females of mixed-race groups and representing at least one of the five faculties at Wits University. The same profile mix applies for postgraduate students i.e. six postgraduate students, three males and three females of mixed-race groups and representing at least one of the five faculties at Wits University. The sample had students that had been at Wits for a time ranging from one year to ten years.

Table 6 outlines the profile of each respondent in the alumni sample.

Table 6: Alumni Respondent Profile

CODE NAME	COMPANY TYPE & JOB TITLE	HIGHEST EDU. QUAL.	AGE RANGE & YEARS AS ALUMNI	RACE AND GENDER	PART OF WITS ALUMNI ASSOC.	DONATE TO WITS	DONATE TO WITS AS A STUDENT	DONATE TO OTHER ORGS	VOLUNTEER AT WITS	VOLUNTEER ELSE WHERE
ALUM1	Business Incubator Training: Manager	Honours (Wits)	35 – 40 17	Indian Female	Yes - subscribed	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
ALUM2	Private Higher Education Institution: Editor	Honours (Wits)	25 – 30 6	Coloured Female	No. Membership Lapsed	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
ALUM3	Law Firm: Legal Assistant	Honours (Wits)	30 – 35 2	Black Female	Yes - subscribed	No	No	No. Help at home	No	Yes
ALUM4	Research Company: Manager	Honours (Wits)	30 – 35 8	White Male	Yes - subscribed	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
ALUM5	State Owned Enteprise: Engineer in Training	Undergrad (Wits)	25 -30 4	Black Male	No, not for lack of trying	No	No	No.	Yes	Yes
ALUM6	Retail Wholesaler: Brand and Promotions Manager	Honours (Wits)	25 – 30 6	Indian Male	Yes - subscribed	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

The alumni sample consists of six people, three males and three females, of mixed-race groups, with years as alumni ranging from four years to seventeen years, and

ranging in age from 25 – 30 to 35 – 40. The lowest educational level is undergraduate, with the highest being Honours, all obtained from Wits University.

4.2 How is higher education institution employee engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

In order to answer research question 1, responses to the following themes are presented:

a) Existence of internal branding practices at the case site
b) Employee engagement indicators
c) Employee identification – organisational and social
d) Social exchange

Existence of internal branding practices at the case site

Firstly, it is imperative to establish whether internal branding practices at the case site exist. For this study, nine indicators of internal branding were analysed, as follows:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values
ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions
iii. Receiving brand-related training
iv. Receiving brand-related information
v. The communication content to Wits employees/staff
vi. Communication and feedback by staff to Wits
vii. The content of the employee induction programme
viii. Relationship building with employees
ix. Employees' feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits.

The results of these indicators are outlined in more detail below:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values

None of the 12 academic and non-academic staff knew the Wits values. Half of the sample population, six respondents, offered guesses as to what the Wits values could be. These speculations included academic excellence; integrity, leadership, transformation, ethics, African university, world class institution, quality, perseverance, hard work ethic, excellence, academic growth, honesty, trustworthiness and academic commitment. Respondent AS1 remarked that "We just

came up with values for the school. We could have referred to the Wits values had we known about them".

A complete lack of knowledge of the Wits values by all employee respondents is an indication of the absence of internal branding practices at the University.

ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions

Seven respondents (four non-academic and three academic staff) knew or participated in Wits traditions, with five respondents not knowing any traditions at all. Examples of the traditions mentioned include Nelson Mandela Day, Staff Wellness Day/Week (x3), Orientation week (x2); pride week, Engineering Breakfast (x3), Lenn Smith Race (x2), Kudu Run, Men's res traditions (mischiefs), brother and sister res traditions and RAG (Receive and Give).

Some knowledge or participation in traditions is an indicator of a level of internal branding practices at Wits University.

iii. Receiving brand-related training

All 12 respondents, academic and non-academic staff, reported receiving no brand-related training during their time at Wits. The standard short answer by all of them was "No".

The absence of brand-related training is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

iv. Receiving brand-related information on Wits history, traditions, vision, mission, etc.

Seven of the respondents, i.e. five non-academic and two academics, reported that they had received brand-related information from Wits, with the remaining five respondents (one non-academic and four academics) reporting that they had not. The information received was mainly on the vision, mission, research drive, strategic goals and plans, as well as on milestone Wits birthdays i.e. 60th, 90th and the upcoming 100th (centenary). Also, respondents noted getting information from the website. A sample of some of the responses is outlined below:

NAS1: *The Wits mission and whatever I do know I mean I have we always see it you read about it you get told about it at strat plans it gets presented to us with regards to the students what its mission is and vison is for 2022 you know those kinds of things*
NAS2: *Yah, I think there I have there is a lot of information on the Wits website and when Wits had their 90-year celebration there was a lot of information thrown around learning a bit more of the history and there was that competition and then you had to go look for information on the website to answer the question. So, it was quite nice because you then have to find information on the history of Wits*
AS2: *So this goes back to when I was …first part of the 30 years there was a lot of work. So, the 60th anniversary of Wits took place in that period of time so there was a lot of information about how Wits started from a shanty mining hut into what it had developed now and I have what's the guy's name who wrote Wits history.*
AS3: *No, definitely not. We get our HR contracts and then we get…that's it we start. So, anything that's not in the contract which is these things no we haven't heard*
AS5: *No. There was no information given but of course if it's on the web and you start digging more and more about the history you start learning and I am still learning.*

The results above are mixed, indicating some level of internal branding at the case site.

v. The communication content to Wits students

The communication received by all 12 respondents, primarily through email, did not contain brand-related information. Three of the respondents mentioned not reading their emails all the time.

Below is a sample of some of the communication received by the respondents:
NAS1: *Emails hey. So there are 2 kinds of emails one I read and one I don't. So there is one that's called the Wits news I think it is the one that's come in bullet point things so those I just scroll through and then there is the other one I think that's the Wits clips or something like that I just delete and then if it's something that comes directly from Claire or from somebody then I will bother to read it I think because the rest of it is just like crap. … It's Adam writing something or somebody wins some*

award which is of no importance to us so I don't bother to read that. That's why I say it depends on what the headline is which will cause me to delete or read.

NAS5: *Via your email. It's mostly what's happening in terms of research from the academic side they do advertise it you know on the intranet, workshops that are available or conferences that type of information. Maybe internal moves, career moves, what's been happening those type of engagements. Sometimes the VC would say if someone is coming in or leaving*

AS1: *Wits News emails - I love that. What's happening, where yeah events? Ok there's Wits news and there is like three of them and there is like a broader one and then the one that I am interested in and then I think there is a third one. There's a broad one telling you what's happening and its pictures, it's got more pictures than the one I am interested in that the one. The second one that is the one I am interested in Wits News and there is another one which has got less information than Wits news I think. And I think that's it and the other stuff in mainly faculty, departmental, work related. The weekly one is what has happened…it's like current affairs updates something happens on the university, you hear about it there, notable things you will see it there. Yeah that type of thing. It keeps you up to date with what's happening.*

AS6: *Normally the information I get emails, posters around the campus. The administrative emails, book launches, conferences are still events… We receive as you know tonnes of emails and you just check quickly and maybe you find something which isn't interesting that you would like to discuss with other colleagues if they know the speaker then we engage the discussion and finally decide to go or not to go*

The absence of brand-related content in Wits communication to stakeholders is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

vi. Communication and feedback by staff to Wits

Seven of the respondents, four non-academic staff and three academic staff, gave feedback to Wits. Non-academic staff feedback is mostly to do with making improvements where the processes are not going well, while academic staff feedback has to with academic reporting. None of the feedback and communication to Wits was dialogue-centric. NAS3 stopped trying to engage with Wits on social

media when they were non-responsive to the conversation they wanted them to be part of. Three of the respondents, all of them academic staff members, indicated a willingness to feedback at a higher Wits level if it was ever solicited.

A sample of the responses regarding feedback to the University is listed below:

NAS1: *I love airing my views. I don't know but I have become very vocal this year. I air my views to the union or at whoever like marketing or the registrar I will say to her why don't you do things this way for a change or this SMS thing I have already spoken about it I have addressed it you know the way Wits communicates*

NAS3: *Well if I attend events at Wits I tend to tweet about them and I will tag Wits. I think I have gotten to the point where I just…its only at business school where I will tag business school coz I know they engage but like Wits itself…but I don't complain or anything its usually about events*

NAS6: *Yes, through formal channels e.g. to the registrar's office. Though it's a fine line with my job role*

AS2: *Nothing spontaneously only if I am asked to provide information like on our PGD and then we have got that we have got the first students. I think that the deans PA has to send forward highlights from the various faculties for the Wits report that gets done once a year. So that kind of thing but its only on request I don't spontaneously just do it.*

AS3: *Yeah it will be at school level. No top-level no. I wish there was a forum for that but I have never ever heard of that.*

The absence of different dialogue forums is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices at Wits.

vii. The content and effectiveness of the staff induction programme

Eight of the respondents (three non-academic and five academic staff) reported not having gone through an induction programme and just getting on with it (sink or swim). The remaining four respondents went through induction but three of them thought it was a waste of time and saw little value in it, with one respondent finding value in it through getting study information. Sample responses regarding the presence or effectiveness of a staff induction programme are presented below:

NAS2: *it was at that point, it was a half-day orientation. So, it wasn't great just being half day but…you know. Not much they did like a bit of what Wits does how many academics, how many professional staff, all of that stuff and the unions coming in to talk to us and research office. There was no meeting anybody else or anything. So I think now its 2 days isn't it?*

NAS5: *I think it showed what opportunities are there for staff. In terms of studying, those types of opportunities and some of the benefits being within the institution so I have tried to capitalise and use some of those opportunities as much as I can. I think it gave me an overview of the institution from academic support side you know, how things sort of work. Although it leans more on a professional side staff. I think the career there is more structured than within the professional space I would say.*

AS1: *That's only happening for me on Friday, like two days from today. I haven't had an induction (six months after joining the University). I think maybe linking into the Wits experience, I think oh yah so I think that is very crucial for me. I think also in the space that we play in engineering especially industrial engineering it's a very fluid space you don't know where what is or how what works and you need to navigate yourself through a maze that you don't know what the maze looks like. So that has been a bit of a dampener or something that can be improved. In terms of induction that should have happened much earlier maybe even my school like this is what we do, these are the procedures this is how you grow, this is what growth means coz as I said as much as I love the '"oh its open you can do whatever you want" there should be a bit of standardisation. You figure it out as you go, badly so and sometimes you only learn by doing the wrong thing which is awful.*

AS6: *No, not as far as I can remember. Yes, I had a couple of meetings but not really also because due to the familiar environment I found here we didn't have the necessity of doing formal discussions so everyone is here you know to help each other so if I had any problem I could have knocked on a door and find someone who would be very helpful. So I didn't need an induction.*

The absence or ineffectiveness of orientation or FYE programmes is an indicator of the absence of a solid or structured internal branding practice at the University.

viii. Relationship building with employees

Nine of the respondents, including all six of the academic staff, reported seeing no relationship building efforts by Wits. The remaining three respondents, non-academic staff, reckoned that there were community as opposed to personal relationship building efforts through events such as the Nelson Mandela Day activations, staff wellness and sports day and the Lenn Smith Race.

Below is a summary of sample responses on relationship building efforts by the University:

NAS4: *No not really. To be honest. Besides the general stuff that they say. Not specific like… Like the staff wellness days where they ask all the staff to go and participate besides that general aspect but not on a personal basis where the VC will send me an email saying come for a cup coffee you know that type of thing. Not that. But yeah in term of a community, Wits community sort of day or event then yeah there has been for example the staff wellness day or the Len Smith run which is one of the traditions which you can add I guess. But things like that, yeah.*

NAS6: *So I have seen recently there have been efforts and for me Staff wellness day which was never really a thing that seems to me to be an effort to build a bit of a relationship also the blood testing and diabetes assessments that seems to be a bit of an effort which I didn't really notice before when I started here. It's actually amazing resources here and problem is that you could work here for 20 years and not actually know what's out there. So there should be…there could be a lot more staff activities.*

AS1: *It's very abstract I don't associate with Wits organisation. It's very mainly from where I work perspective. Unless my line manager as a representative of the greater employer that would be the only capacity I would see it in. because I get it they would usually represent the employer. I think we relate more faculty, department. I am saying they would represent the organisation and the conversation I would say it's not necessarily about Wits cares about you. It would be more from we care about you, your faculty cares but not as representing the organisation. Who is the face of the institution - I just know his name I think I know his face but I don't relate to him…*

AS3: *No I don't think so especially not the top levels. You talking about you know being part of the community? (Yes) I would say* no.

The perceived absence of relationship building efforts with stakeholders (students) is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

ix. Employees' feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits

Nine respondents, five undergraduates and four postgraduates, do not feel valued or appreciated by Wits. Three of them mention the issue of Wits having many people which would make it difficult to feel valued, with one of them stating that they do not expect to be valued or appreciated. Some of the responses given are presented below:

NAS1: *Wits loses a lot of key people a lot of I have seen staff good staff come and go over the years because they don't know how to value you*

NAS4: *Obviously from my department because there would be a very solid yes. University I do feel valued but I think in the grand scheme of things I am small fly in the whole university so I don't expect the VC to be sending me thank you emails or whatever. I don't expect that but yes to answer your question generally do I feel valued, yeah*

AS1: *I don't think that Wits knows me so its hard for me to…and also, I don't operate on a Wits level so why would they know me but I think from a school level I think I do think so – I do feel received. I do receive comments or affirmations or whatever you may call it like feeling like I am seen like I am not just a number, like finally part of a team.*

AS5: *I guess the value is the promotions. I mean how do you… there is all this measurement lines for the different positions and you have to produce. You have to produce to get promoted in terms of the three legs there is no other way. They don't care how much other things you do it doesn't matter. You have to have that paperwork prepared properly. You understand what I am saying. In terms of university I don't know I mean how do you read from upstairs.*

The overall lack of feeling valued or appreciated at a Wits level (not departmental level) is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices (or of ineffective internal branding practices).

Summary of internal branding indicators for employees

All 12 respondents did not know Wits values, seven of the 12 knew Wits traditions, none of them received brand related training or brand-related communication content via email. Seven of the respondents say they received some sort of brand information, while seven of the respondents say they received feedback in some way to the University. Eight of the staff respondents did not go through an induction programme for new staff, with the other four noting the staff induction programme they undertook as being ineffective and a waste of time in instances. Only three of the staff respondents felt any relationship building efforts by the University, with the remaining nine getting no sense of relationship building efforts with them by Wits. Nine of the respondents do not feel valued or appreciated by Wits, with only three of the staff respondents feeling any sort of value or appreciation by the University.

Based on the results of the internal branding indicators outlined above, it is quite apparent that there is no structured (or effective) internal branding practices that have been, or are currently, taking place at Wit University. A solid internal branding programme does not seem to exist at Wits University, or if it exists, is ad hoc and ineffective at best.

Employee engagement indicators

For this research, the indicators of employee engagement are:

i. Job (role) commitment
ii. The overall Wits experience by the stakeholders (employees)
iii. Satisfaction with the Wits experience
iv. Institutional commitment
v. Financial commitment to Wits
vi. Volunteerism behaviours
vii. Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties
viii. Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

The results of these indicators are outlined below:

i) Job (role) commitment

There is a very high level of job commitment by all employee respondents, both academic and non-academic staff. Some of the responses to the question of how committed they are to their studies are shown below.

NAS1: *200%. Listen so I always say even in the fees office I used to say I work 200% Monday to Thursday and Friday is my day. Fridays used to be my day of socialising you know like I am just gonna go here but then it would take me like 2 hours to go back to the office.*

NAS4: *I would give it a 12 but there is not 12. I am overly committed unfortunately. I would easily work extra hours just to get things done. If I know that there is a deadline and what needs to be done, then I will not gladly but I will do it.*

AS2: *I think I am very committed. My mother in law said to me last weekend at this stage in your life you should be going to work at 09:00 and leaving at 14:00, I am still here before 7 and leaving around 8.*

AS6: *I can say my hierarchy of things is my job my family and everything comes later. So I can say my…I would love to think that my involvement in the job is highest possible but I am a fulltime staff member so that would be strange if it was different. I have been lucky enough to do exactly what I wanted to do so and I have to prove it that every day to myself, my colleagues and to the institution which hired me.*

The results show role commitment by all respondents, which is an indicator of role engagement.

ii) The Wits experience by the stakeholders (employees)

All respondents reported a good to brilliant Wits experience, overall, even though they noted a fair share of bad experiences.

Eight of the respondents – four non-academic and four academic staff, noted time challenges to do much else beyond the job requirements.

Eight of the respondents – a 50/50 split between academic and non-academic staff, reported having no social experience while at Wits. Two of the respondents, one academic and one non-academic staff, have a social experience through attending

Wits events on palaeontology and archaeology and exhibits at WAM (NAS6) or events, museums and panel discussions (AS1). The remaining two respondents had a social experience through socialising with colleagues.

Ten of the respondents, a 50/50 split between academic and non-academic staff, do not participate in clubs, societies or social groups. The common reasons why not being time challenges or not knowing of anything of interest to them.

The issue of departmental silos came out as a negative regarding the Wits experience, with respondent NAS3 making note of this by saying "*But people tend to work in silos, people don't always want to collaborate. Sometimes it's a challenge to get buy-in by other stakeholders and colleagues".*

Respondent AS6 noted the difference between European universities and Wits, with the former taking university students as customers, while Wits considered them co-creators of knowledge. Respondent AS6 also noted mental health challenges faced by this generation of students.

Below are some sample responses regarding the overall Wits experience:
NAS1: *Great - I loved it! I love Wits. "Getting hold of the president is easier than getting hold of me at Wits because I am busy" especially when you get to management level coz meetings overtake your life. I work extremely hard on Monday to Thursday then Friday is my day to relax and socialise a bit (with colleagues). No time for clubs, sport (used to be part of the gym, squash and swimming)*
NAS5: *My plate is full so can't do much more outside of job requirements. Good/positive experience overall - it has been very good. Nothing much socially, except maybe the year-end lunch. Participate in running events*
AS1: *Great! Positive experience. I loved the autonomy and flexibility to create as I saw fit. Social experience - Love it! The events, museums and panel discussions - they connect you with what's happening here out there and to visiting people, conversations in the public domain. I am only six months old as staff, I am still finding my feet* (regarding joining social clubs or groups)

AS6: *I have family commitments. Extraordinary experience - very profitable academically and socially (human side). Love the autonomy to do what I want to do. Socialise with colleagues e.g. at the PIG. I prefer formal settings. Unlike American and European universities who consider students as customers, I feel like here the approach is of considering students as part of the dialogue through engagement and discussions which give either party fresh perspectives. (But) I am concerned about the mental health and physical health of my students. I can assure you when I was a student I didn't feel on my shoulders the kind of stress your generation is dealing with*

Overall, taking the good and bad into account, there is a report of a good Wits experience by all employee respondents, indicating role engagement.

iii) Satisfaction with the Wits experience by employees

The overall satisfaction ratings were generally positive; with none of the respondents indicating dissatisfaction with their Wits experience. All 12 respondents indicated that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the Wits experience. Four of the respondents, two non-academic and two academics, credited Wits with personal growth. Three of the non-academic staff reported the divide that exists between academic and non-academic staff, in terms of perceived importance/non-importance within the university.

A few sample population responses to the issue of satisfaction with the Wits experience are listed below.

NAS2: *I think it's generally good. If I take it over the last 8-9 years whatever it generally been a good experience with little pockets of unhappiness if I can call it that as well as some people and some departments are not maybe professional to work with. Management is more focused on AS and don't appreciate what NAS do. But, AS wouldn't be much without NAS support. I have grown a lot since I have been here.*

NAS3: *I would say I am satisfied, yeah. Well I think its my personal drive to doing my work because I have dealt with people with no energy to do work for their own reasons I don't know. I am satisfied like 6-7/10.*

AS3: *I think 8/10 as I said the stuff that I mentioned earlier the space to be…to express you are not restricted you can still create it's a malleable space to be in so that gives satisfaction to me because I mean you see opportunities outside you can bring them in. it's very fluid and I like that.*

AS6: *I am totally happy. Maybe because it's three years but at the moment it's fantastic!*

Overall, all respondents were satisfied with their Wits experience, even though they noted several issues that they would like addressed, indicating role engagement.

iv) Institutional commitment

All respondents reported a high to extremely high level of commitment to Wits. Examples of the responses to institutional commitment are noted below:

NAS2: *I believe I have Wits' best interests. I generally try and help for example like if I see something wrong with the marketing the logos whatever I try and draw it to whoever the relevant person is and I am good marketer if I can call it that with the Wits brand in social circles things like that.*

NAS3: *I am very committed my work entails…its basically work for the university but I guess everybody's job is for the university, but I really feel like I have an important role in the university and what I am doing impacts the university and says a lot about the university.*

AS3: *I would give that a 10. You know what it's because I studied here that I really am attached to the Wits name. For me to move to another university it really has to be a good reason because I would rather choose it's about the brand right and the name and knowing that feeling of belonging definitely here than other universities.*

AS6: *The highest possible. So I feel like I am part of this institution even if I also when I am out here if I am invited somewhere in a formal way I always wear the Wits tie because in that moment every moment of my life except when I am with my family, I somehow represent this institution so I have to be very committed in the social environment where I am engaged in*

The high level of institutional/organisational commitment is an indication of brand engagement.

v) Financial commitment (donations) to Wits versus financial commitment to other organisations

None of the employees in the sample donate financially to Wits i.e. on a sustained, deliberate long-term basis. However, eight respondents indicated that they do donate or contribute to ad hoc food/money/sanitary towel drives. One respondent (AS6) indicated that they did not know that they could donate to Wits. AS2 indicated that they do not donate to Wits because they cannot afford to since they are preparing for retirement.

Whereas all 12 respondents do not donate to Wits, nine of the same respondents indicated that they donate to other organisations. Organisations they donate to include Friends in Reality who look after the aged; Abraham Krill and Sparrow orphanages (by NAS1), home for the mentally challenged "it is quite close to my heart" (by NAS2), the church (by NAS5, AS1 and AS2), and Unconditional Giving and Empowering Foundation who support various orphanages and old age homes (by AS3).

All respondents also reported that they do not receive donation solicitations from Wits. However, regarding donation intention, eight of the respondents, three non-academic staff and five academic staff, indicated a willingness to donate, with four of these respondents stating clearly what they would donate to, and also what they would not donate to. For example, NAS1 indicated "*yes, for paediatric wing building, no to FMF or towards students",* while AS3 said "*Yes for students in need esp. females; No if for new construction, they can get that from business*". AS1 indicated a willingness to donate to the School only.

Three of the respondents, two non-academic staff and one academic staff, said they would not donate, with NAS 4 remarking that *"Wits has money. They can take that money from the VC's salary. Or maybe I will when I become the CEO of a really big company".* NAS6 and AS2 indicated that they could not afford because they are not yet established in their career and that they need to prepare for retirement, respectively. NAS5 indicated that maybe they would but *"it depends on the cause*".

Overall, based on actual actions, respondents would rather donate to other institutions and not to Wits; there is more financial commitment elsewhere but no financial commitment to Wits University. Furthermore, non-academic staff students showed a higher tendency to donate towards non-Wits causes than academic staff. However, based on intentions, more of the respondents would seriously consider giving to Wits but with terms and conditions applied.

The lack of financial commitment through donations to the University indicates a lack of brand engagement by all the respondents.

vi) Volunteerism behaviours towards Wits versus other organisations

Five of the 12 respondents, three non-academic and two academic staff members, do volunteer work at Wits while seven do not. Respondent NAS6 responded to say they did not know they could volunteer for anything at Wits. Six of the 12 respondents volunteer outside of Wits, i.e. four non-academic and two academic staff members.

Overall, there is not much difference between volunteerism within and outside of Wits by Wits employees, though there is a slight inclination towards volunteerism elsewhere than to Wits, with non-academic staff exhibiting a slightly higher level of volunteerism than academic staff. Results regarding brand engagement are, therefore, mixed.

vii) Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties

All 12 respondents indicated a willingness to maintain ties with Wits, at least in the foreseeable future, though four of the respondents indicated leaving Wits for reasons of natural career progression should it so happen in the future. Some of the responses are listed below:

NAS2: *I am very happy in my job here and I like the Wits environment. I come from a corporate environment and its… I didn't enjoy it at all. It's very cutthroat I am not that kind of a person. So I like the working environment the campus so many of the people I have dealt with are really nice that to work with. So, I do intend prolonging my working relationship with Wits*.

NAS6: *Well I would like to still be employed I think that's a good starting point in respect of the relationship but I don't really irrespective of I was employed here or not I would still want some kind of involvement in the institution or if not being involved at least to be aware and to follow and to be aware of what's going on at the institution*.

AS3: *Yah as long as I am happy to be here. So, I am definitely planning to be around*.

AS4: *I intend on staying. I think even in the next seven years I will still be here. I don't see myself working at corporate world. I don't see myself working for somebody. I think university there is some flexibility, yes, the money is not good but…yeah*

All respondents exhibit a sense of loyalty to Wits through an intention to stay with and be associated with the University – an indication of brand engagement.

viii) Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

Nine of the respondents, four non-academic staff and five academic staff, wear (use or display) Wits branded merchandise, with three of them, two non-academics and one academic, noting that they do not. However, even those that do not wear the merchandise are not averse to the idea and would wear Wits branded merchandise. Three of the respondents remarked at how expensive the Wits shop merchandise is. Some of the responses pertaining to wearing/displaying Wits branded merchandise are noted below.

NAS3*: Wits Shop stuff is too expensive. But would wear it if given…*

NAS5*: Yes, have bought one. I have a sense of belonging to Wits*

AS3: *No, but only because they don't have a super extra small size. Not averse to the idea*

AS6: *Yes! I represent Wits in formal settings where I always wear a Wits tie, or social settings. Also buy for friends and family in my home country*

Overall, the majority of the respondents would wear (or use and display) Wits branded merchandise. The ones that currently do not are not averse to the idea and would wear/display Wits-branded merchandise. The results are mixed.

Summary on employee engagement

All 12 employee respondents indicate a very high level of job (role) commitment, high institutional commitment, loyalty through maintaining ties with the University, had an overall good Wits experience and were satisfied by the Wits experience. None of the respondents showed financial commitment to the institution, with none of them making donations to Wits University. However, eight of the 12 respondents indicated donating to other organisations outside of Wits. Further, all respondents noted that Wits did not solicit (ask) for financial donations from them. However, eight of the respondents would donate if solicited, three would not and one was unsure (maybe).

In terms of time commitment, five of the respondents volunteer at Wits, while six of the respondents volunteer outside of Wits.

Nine of the respondents show loyalty through Wits branded merchandise while three do not.

Overall, the results on engagement are mixed, showing role engagement through job commitment as well as a good Wits experience and satisfaction with that Wits experience. The results also show both brand engagement through institutional/organisational commitment and loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution, as well as a lack of brand engagement through a lack of donations towards the institution. Furthermore, results on the brand engagement indicators of loyalty through wearing/displaying branded merchandise and through volunteerism at Wits are mixed.

Employee identification

Results of two aspects of identity are presented i.e. organisational identification and social identity.

i) Organisational identification

Gauging stakeholder identification was achieved through determining the extent of a sense of belonging the stakeholders felt. Ten of the respondents – five academic and five non-academic, felt a high to very high sense of belonging to Wits. The remaining two respondents – an academic and non-academic, felt no sense of belonging to

Wits. Of the 10 respondents who felt a sense of belonging to Wits, five of them indicated that they had done their undergraduate studies at Wits.

Some of the sample responses on the issue of identification are noted below:

NAS3: *Not very connected. Well I don't really feel that sense of community within the organisation well I mean in certain parts there is but I think for the first couple of months that I started working here I just felt like everything was sort of all over the place there wasn't really a connection.*

NAS4: *Well as I have told you already I have studied here and I started working here straight after so it is kind of like my 2nd home if not almost like my first because I spend more time here than even at home. So, yah I feel very much a Witsie at heart.*

AS1: *None. I relate to the organisation more from my department. For me belonging is about camaraderie and meeting people and the people I have attachments with are my colleagues. The concept of Wits is too abstract, I don't associate with the organisation, I don't think Wits knows me*

AS5: *I think its family. I spend more time…majority of my time is spent here at Wits rather than with my own family and I guess the reason is I am committed to all the responsibilities and beyond. So, I feel lost sometimes when I am not here or when I am not doing any work related to the university nationally or internationally.*

Overall, there is more a sense of belonging than not belonging to Wits by both academic and non-academic staff. Only two of the 12 staff respondents reported having no sense of belonging to Wits.

ii) Social identification

Study respondents identified themselves with particular groups, department or faculties, over and above any organisational identification aspects. Eleven of the respondents identified more with their department/faculty/school. Eight of the 11 respondents attribute their sense of identification with their department (including school and faculty) because they feel appreciated by their line manager.

One respondent, an academic staff member, has mixed feelings driven by the recognition of her efforts but dampened by the unpleasant personnel issues over the years.

A few of the response are listed below:

NAS1: I now feel appreciated by my current department

NAS5: I feel valued by my line manager. It goes a long way if your immediate manager appreciates your skills and says thank you.

AS1: I feel received, like I am not just a number and like finally part of the team

AS6: The School is part of my family, we try and cherish each other

Overall, there is more a sense of social identification with the respondents' department than any other social entity at Wits University.

Summary on identification indicators of employees

Ten of the staff respondents showed a very high sense of belonging to Wits (organisational identifications), while two had no sense of belonging at all. Eleven of the respondents showed a sense of identification with their department (faculty or school), while one had mixed feelings.

Employee Social exchange

Social exchange was measured through stakeholder attitudes towards Wits University.

Eleven of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the University and go on to note the reciprocal nature of their positive attitudes. Only one respondent, an academic staff member, reported being neutral (neither negative nor positive) towards the university, citing that 50% of the Wits lecturers do not have PhDs and do not publish as per international standards.

The responses related to the respondent attitudes towards Wits are laid out below.

NAS1: *Positive. I can't work for a company and then run it down it doesn't work that doesn't stand down with me*

NAS2: *Positive, mostly because of the faculty I am part of. Wits has looked after me and my family. I've had a staff bursary for my daughter and that made a big difference. And, in 3 years' time my son will be coming to Wits - that's part of being part of the family*

AS1: *Positive - I don't speak about it with malice. It's a positive space, I don't have any reason to speak ill of it*

AS2: *Overall positive. I do moan a lot about Wits but I am very defensive about it - Wits gave me my education, my degrees are well recognised and regarded so I feel privileged in that respect. Also If I had been unhappy I would have left and gone elsewhere but there is room for improvement*

Summary of social exchange by Wits employees

Eleven of the staff respondents exhibit a positive attitude, based on reciprocity, towards Wits, with one respondent being neutral (neither positive or negative). There are no negative attitudes towards the institution by the employee sample respondents.

Conclusion of the employee results

The results presented above show that the absence of a solid or structured internal branding programme does not impact negatively on role engagement (associated with job responsibilities) for both academic and non-academic staff, as evidenced by overall high ratings for job commitment, the overall Wits experience and satisfaction. Nor does it seem to have a conclusive impact on brand engagement, as evidenced by the mixed results. There were unanimous ratings on institutional commitment (high), an intention to donate and loyalty through ties but with unanimous results on a lack of financial commitment (through donations to the institution) and mixed results for volunteerism behaviours and loyalty through branded merchandise wearing/displaying,

It can therefore be concluded that internal branding practices have no influence on job (role) engagement of the Wits employees in the sample population (academic and non-academic) but may have some influence on brand engagement of both academic and non-academic employees, namely financial commitment, volunteerism and loyalty through branded wear.

It can also be concluded that organisational identification has an influence on brand engagement, evidenced by the corresponding high ratings on institutional

commitment for both academic and non-academic staff. In addition, social identification is related mostly to the department (or school/faculty) and not to the broader organisation.

Furthermore, social exchange based on reciprocity also seems to have an impact on role engagement as evidenced by the overall positive attitudes exhibited towards the institution.

4.3 How is higher education institution student engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

In order to answer research question 2, responses to the following themes are presented:

a) Existence of internal branding practices at the case site
b) Student engagement indicators
c) Student identification – organisational and social
d) Social exchange (reciprocity)

Existence of internal branding practices at the case site

To answer this research question, it is imperative to establish whether internal branding practices at the case site exist. For this research, ten indicators of internal branding were analysed. These are as follows:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values
ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions
iii. Receiving brand-related training
iv. Receiving brand-related information
v. The communication content to Wits students
vi. Communication and feedback by students to Wits
vii. The content of the orientation or the First Year Experience Programme
viii. The existence of a postgraduate orientation programme
ix. Relationship building with students
x. Students' feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits.

The results of these indicators are outlined in more detail below:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values

All 12 undergraduate and postgraduate student respondents were oblivious of the Wits values, with five offering guesses as to what the Wits values could be. Suppositions of the Wits values included non-discriminatory, welcoming, strive for excellence, integrity equality, conscientious learning, community, transformation,

success and academic leadership. While most of the respondents simply said “no” to the knowledge of the Wits values, **UG5** responded to say *“I can tell you the values of the constitution… The only thing I know about Wits (in this context) is that ‘Wits gives you the edge’”,* and ***UG6*** said *“I had no idea Wits had values”.*

A lack of knowledge of the Wits values is an indication of the absence of internal branding practices at the University.

ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions

Eight of the 12 students (four are undergraduates and four postgraduates) knew or participated in Wits traditions, with four of the respondents having no knowledge of them. Of those who knew the traditions, four of them credited residence life to knowing or participating in these traditions. Some of the traditions mentioned include the vodka party (x2), Engineering Breakfast (x2), Silly Buggers (x2), marriage ceremony in residences, inter-residence events, O-week parties, fresher’s parties, pillow fight, trolley dash and alleyway parties.

Knowledge and/or participation in traditions is an indicator of the existence of some internal branding, and based on the results above, credited to residence life and orientation parties.

iii. Receiving brand-related training

All of the respondents, undergraduate and postgraduate students, reported receiving no brand-related training during their time at Wits, with a standard response of “No”. Only three of the respondents, two undergraduates, and one postgraduate expanded on their responses as follows:

UG3 surmised that they received some information “*maybe in 1st year but nothing impactful that I can recall”.*

UG6 remarked that “*No, not even in res and that would be the one place where they would probably tell you”*

PG5 responded to say “*No. I know that ‘Wits gives you the edge’”.*

The lack of brand-related training is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

iv. Receiving brand-related information on Wits history, traditions, vision, mission, etc.

Eleven of the respondents, i.e. all six undergraduates and five postgraduates, reported that they had not received any brand-related information from Wits, with one respondent, a postgraduate student, reporting that they had received some info though from non-official sources. Some of the responses received includes the following:

UG1: *That I have heard about from other students, senior students who actually spoke to us about it. It was only from senior students and CCDU because they actually come to our res in the beginning of the year and spoke about the stuff. …talked to us about Wits itself and students what we should do, what we shouldn't be doing, how we can improve and how to handle exam stress.*

UG5: *Like I am honestly not aware that Wits has said ok this this this this…the only thing I know about Wits is that they are Wits gives you the edge.*

PG3: *Its first year and then also over the years like it will come from different people also from either your seniors (senior students) or just lecturers or even some of these…not inaugural lectures… it will come through the Wits space even through that at least that much comes in.*

PG6: *No, the only thing I see or things that I catch when I go into the Wits website but to be honest with you the time I used to see these things the most was when the Wits email used to be on Zimbra so you need to access the Wits website to access your emails. So, to me that's when everything popped up to say this is what Wits is about so now I hardly access my self-service which is what I go to main set for. So, I will never see what's happening in and around Wits on the main site. So, in terms of what's happening I am never up to date with that*

Overall, the non-sharing of brand related information indicates a lack of internal branding at the case site.

v. The communication content to Wits students

From the results, the communication received by all 12 respondents, predominantly through email, did not contain brand-related information. Furthermore, six of the respondents (three undergraduates and three postgraduates) reported how they did not always read their emails. Below is a sample of responses regarding the communication content from Wits:

UG2: *General things? I knew that the…Prof X was on a sabbatical so that much I knew as a consequence of Wits and that a black lady was elected Chancellor. That came in through emails which I seldom read. Which would contribute to the fact that I am not informed about Wits and it's not as a consequence of Wits not doing their part but just not me reading my emails. So, yah that's about it – notices and announcements.*

UG4: *How not to do things, where I am wrong, mostly*

PG3: *Through emails it will be they have some inaugural lectures; guest lectures or just research stuff. And then the part where you owe them they will remind you to pay your fees and then if someone at Wits did well in something like they won something/ achieved something then they also send. It's mostly emails and those are the kind of things they send. Or if there are incidents or bad things or security issues and stuff and the rest…*

PG4: *I don't know like maybe updates if something is happening in school or a letter from the chancellor, but I have to say like if I am stressed or busy I am not gonna read that. Meeting requests, if there's like things happening in the school, collections…quite a lot of food drives and donations stuff like that happening in the schools*

PG5: *Through email. I do get workshops, debates, the talks also they have nice talks to attend, open table discussions, also sometimes they post-employment opportunities.*

The absence of brand-related content in Wits communication to stakeholders is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

vi. Communication and feedback by students to Wits

Five of the respondents, two undergraduates and three postgraduates, indicated feeding back and communication with Wits through surveys. The other seven of the respondents, four undergraduates and three postgraduates, indicated not communicating with Wits, with two of these undergraduate respondents indicating their perceived futility of such an exercise. Some examples of the responses regarding student feedback to Wits include the below:

UG2: *I once did a survey. 1st or 2nd year I think. About my experience and how I was finding Wits. But me and Wits aren't as close*

UG3: *I do actually. I make a specific point to try feedback on appraising courses and how things work just because I suppose it's the right thing to do. At the time you can arguably be heard. And I believe you can…it's kind of like voting to sort of bypass the bystander effect. We think I am not gonna do it but I am sure someone else will do it and the next person is like I don't know…and then no one does it. Then they think the course is run well when it's not. Now I do make an effort to feedback. I haven't really received any other feedbacks related to Wits on a bigger level outside of my faculty but if there was something that I feel I could respond to honestly, I would.*

UG5: *Through the Law Student's Council but I think that the university doesn't really take these student councils seriously. I think a lot of the time we find that we don't know which platform to voice out our opinions, problems, criticisms or…even if its positive feedback we don't know maybe we can go here and discuss or we can email such and such a person or you know… So more often than not I think that myself and a lot of students are like when we get a problem what's the point if we go tell the council because we know we are not going to get any results, it's just like no there is no point basically.*

PG1: *There are surveys that come out on how things can be bettered I always participate. I guess things like with IBM, Wits, how the CCDU is working all of those things I always participate in those. Other than that the most I participate is through school of physics PG3: No i haven't…ok let me say no. If they had sort of an open line or channel where people could voice their concerns or…whether good or bad, then also maybe being anonymous helps. Like the same things I am discussing with you there is some where you say Wits needs to improve on this this and this. Like let's say this your study but if it was in a more open platform then you could just get*

there and see what people are…like a forum online there is a lot of ways they can try reach out to people to get reviews and stuff.

PG5: *Yes, the surveys, yes I do. Only the surveys through the email*

The presence of some form of dialogue forums (e.g. surveys and the Law Students Council) are an indicator of some internal branding practices taking place at Wits.

vii. The content and effectiveness of the orientation or First Year Experience Programme (FYE)

Three of the 12 respondents (two of them undergraduates) were not exposed to an orientation or the FYE programme. The other nine respondents exposed to the programmes found little value to them except for helping you find your way around campus; or found it overwhelming with too much information shared. As such, the FYE or orientation programmes were quite ineffective for all respondents. Sample responses on the FYE or orientation programmes are presented below:

UG2*: I wouldn't say it did. Showed me where the computer labs are. I can't say it did much for me I would be lying. There isn't a significant thing I can point to you and say okay Wits First year experience did that for me.*

UG5: *When I started I don't recall that it was in place so I only found out about it in my second year and that wasn't because it was like made known by the university, it was because I heard other students speak about it and a few students said that they had volunteered to be ambassadors for the first year experience programme so I was like ok that's cool. So, I said it would have been nice to know that there is someone there to help you like to guide you because I think your first year is most probably the most difficult year in terms of adapting, finding your feet and Wits is big so you can get lost…which happened to me…so that's that. I don't recall if it was in place when I started… it was only orientation week. I think it just helped me see faces and people like that's how I met a lot of people. I wouldn't say it wasn't an introduction to Wits' culture because its like students on a vibe to party and stuff coz that's what O-week has become about now.*

UG6: *I don't understand FYE as much as I should. I did join at one point it was during orientation week. What I do think the role is kinda just walk around and have a*

t-shirt that says FYE and to ask them questions, which I did and they were helpful and maybe it helps with people who are a bit awkward who do want to just ask anyone questions.

PG4: *I wouldn't say so. I think the programme actually it was a bit overwhelming. So I think it is a great thing to do because it does…like I went on tours and stuff through Wits and it does help you a little bit. But that first week is going to be overwhelming no matter what I don't think there is anything that Wits could do to better that. That was part of orientation week? It did not particularly help integrate me into Wits at all*

PG5: *Yes, I think. I only went to one meeting so I think I got a summary they even showed us how to used the computers. They also told us about the res parties. They told us that we should express ourselves, be who you are. Yes and that we are going to face some challenges and if you want a mentor you can have one. So I just went for the first meeting and after that I think I understood that now I know where I can get my study resources, if I need proofreading I must go to the writing centre.*

The absence or ineffectiveness of orientation or FYE programmes are an indicator of the absence of solid or structured internal branding practices.

viii. The existence of a postgraduate orientation programme

All six postgraduate student respondents reported Wits as not having a postgraduate orientation programme. Some of their responses to the existence of a postgraduate orientation programme are listed below.

PG1: *No, nothing like that. And I feel like…I have seen it now being a postgrad for some time it's absolutely necessary especially in terms of at least research. Telling masters students once you are starting out what is required. I mean the only go to they have is the Wits website but they don't have any real experience with dealing with supervisors, managing their time, lots of things you learn. I learnt this by trial and error and it's not really…I feel it's not really not necessary for students to go through such hardship when there are many people around that can help*

PG3: *No, with postgrad I don't know, you see for me it's easier because I was here the whole time but I think if you not from here you sort of just thrown in like you are made to fend for yourself like as an adult make your own friends or go meet your own lecturers and stuff. So, it's also completely different from undergrad. Undergrad*

you have support but postgrad you sort of… it's like you here you have been here before wherever you came from or if you already from here it's like you already know so just hit the ball running, so nah, postgrad doesn't have any set orientation programme at all. You just fend for yourself unless you have been here and all that so you familiar with coz I think the only thing they give you is like the map…

PG6: *Yes, our department we did. It was different from other years but we still had an induction of what it means to be there and some expectations even things as simple as writing CVs we also had that to equip us for when we were looking for work so that was also good. So we got basically how to handle yourself professionally in the work place and even as a student because our department usually has a lot of interactions with students and professionals. So it was just a way of how do you behave in certain situations and things like that so yah.*

The non-existence of a postgraduate orientation programme is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices at the case site.

ix. Relationship building with students

Only two respondents, both undergraduate students, reported some sort of relationship building efforts, though they credited those to residence life. The remaining 10 respondents reported no relationship building efforts at all by Wits University.

A sample of their responses regarding relationship building efforts by Wits are shown below:

UG1: *Outside of res I think its mostly with our tutors and our lecturers. Like our maths tutors I think they are postgraduate students they get to us on a personal basis like teaching us in class they actually give us their numbers and communicate with us if we ever have a problem we contact them directly. So it goes beyond academics. And also some of the lecturers they communicate with us via email about exams or stuff on like.*

UG2: *I wanna say yes I really want to say yes… But I can't point to a specific incident where you know what Wits went above and beyond to me to establish a rapport or something but no, I can't*

UG5: *No. the only people I feel are actually trying to build that kind of relationship in terms of my friends, people who know me. Other than that, I don't… ok Wits has emailed that they are having a programme for such and such giving students an opportunity to network and stuff. No. I have actually never seen the chancellor in my life never ever. They must come down from their offices so a lot of times that it's us on the ground and them above us so that's also how students view themselves in relation to university*

PG3: *No, I don't think it's there. I also don't personally know a lot of people outside let's say my school then my faculty then yeah its everyone is just sort of doing their own thing I think. As far as management, no. There isn't a lot of reaching out to that level unless you are in trouble or you are doing well. Yeah those are the only times you hear from some of these people.*

The general absence of relationship building efforts with students is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices at the University.

x. Students' feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits

Nine of the respondents, five undergraduates and four postgraduates, did not feel valued or appreciated by Wits. Furthermore, three of these respondents, one an undergraduate and two at postgraduate level, indicated that they were not expecting to be valued or appreciated by Wits. Four of the respondents – two undergraduates and two postgraduates, brought up the issue of there being many people at Wits University which would make them feel valued or appreciated improbable. The remaining three students, one undergraduate and two postgraduates, felt some sort of value or appreciation of them by Wits.

Some of the responses to the question of whether they feel valued or appreciated by Wits are presented below:

UG1: *I don't really think so. Because like there's many students here as well you don't actually feel important or valued from the rest of them. You don't feel like you are any more important than or you are valued more than the others*

UG2: *When I was doing well yah I felt very much valued and then… I think funding was more accessible, like I said first year I was a research assistant and I primarily*

got that because I was doing well they were like you know what we can't let you go so let's give you some funds. Well now it's like… yah. So now I feel not as valued it is linked with my performance

UG6: *I would not say that because I honest don't think Wits knows who I am and I don't think there is any structures in place to help even those that are a little bit shy or just can't just walk into the lecture room and start conversation coz to build relationships with the faculty because that's how we like…something I did mention when I was in our last interview something I was struggling with starting new relations the right to take students to faculties find what she wants. So, with that thought I don't feel noticed by the university.*

PG1: *No. I honestly have no idea. But it's not that I don't want it I don't expect it.*

PG5: *No. Ah… yes I don't feel the value on the admin of it all especially when you are applying for certain things you still need to…they can see your requests and everything but you still have to cry and convince them please put me in this I will be…yes its still a process. But it's a good thing in a way, you know for you to do something you have to earn it, you have to try hard and work hard to earn it I guess in a part its good but in a way it can be irritating that you still being treated like a stranger and you have been loyal for many years and you give so much knowledge so…*

The general lack of feeling valued or appreciated by Wits is an indicator of the absence of a solid or structured internal branding practice, or of ineffective internal branding practices.

Summary of internal branding indicators for students

All 12 student respondents did not know the Wits values, did not receive brand-related training or email communication that was brand-related. All six of the postgraduate students reported that they did not have a postgraduate orientation programme.

Eight of the respondents knew Wits traditions, while 11 said they had never received brand-related information. Five of the respondents fed back and communicated with the institution. Three of the respondents were not exposed to an orientation or FYE programme, with the nine who did, commenting that it was ineffective.

Ten of the respondents reported the lack of relationship building efforts with them by the University, while two of them reported relationship building efforts through residence life.

Of the 12 student respondents, three reported feeling valued or appreciated by Wits, while the remaining nine did not.

Based on the results of the internal branding indicators outlined above, it is clearly apparent that there are no structured (or effective) internal branding practices that have been, or are currently, taking place at Wit University.

The level of student engagement at Wits University

For this research, the indicators of student engagement are:

i. Academic commitment
ii. The overall Wits experience by the stakeholders (students)
iii. Satisfaction with the Wits experience
iv. Institutional commitment
v. Financial commitment to Wits
vi. Volunteerism behaviours
vii. Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties
viii. Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

The results of these indicators are outlined below:

i) Academic (role) commitment

With the exception of one undergraduate student who has a low commitment level to their studies, the other 11 respondents showed a very high commitment level to their studies. Sample responses to the question of how committed they are to their studies are outlined below:

UG2: *As committed as can be. I spend significant chunk of my time on my studies and they are number one on my list of priorities.*

UG4: *On a scale of 1-10 I would say a 5 and only because I have been forced into exam period but over the year I would say a 3 or 4. Really bad but like I said before that's attached to the fact that I didn't like what I was doing I only discovered in August what I really want to do – the same degree but restructured with certain courses and not other courses.*

PG1: *Very committed. I spend a minimum of 8 hours a day working*

PG5: *I am very committed - that's the only thing I have. Mostly I get to school, study and go. I am there to study, learn and go. Most of the time I am in the library*

Overall, there is a high level of academic commitment by the students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, with one outlier (an undergraduate student) who has low academic commitment based on the wrong programme choice. A high level of academic commitment indicates role engagement.

ii) The Wits experience by the stakeholders (students)

For this research, the Wits experience was analysed through a summary of the overall Wits experience, which included a variety of experience aspects. Nine of the respondents (five postgraduates and four undergraduates) reported a good Wits experience overall, with three respondents (two undergraduates and one postgraduate) reporting a fair experience. Summaries of the respondent experiences with Wits University are presented here.

Academically, all respondents reported a challenging and/or stressful experience (not plain sailing).

Regarding the social experience, five respondents reported a good social experience. Four of the respondents were residence students, three of whom are undergraduates and credited the good social experience to residence life, further listing a mix of positives associated with residence life, with the 4th respondent, a postgraduate student, reporting a good social life through friends, the non-residence student, a postgraduate, credited a good social experience to Wits' proximity to Braamfontein. The remaining seven respondents who are non-resident students (three undergraduates and four postgraduate) reported a lack of a social life.

The majority of respondents, nine respondents – five undergraduates and four postgraduates), noted that they were part of a club, sport or society, with three respondents – one undergraduate and two postgraduates) noting that they were not.

Five respondents reported high school to varsity transition challenges – two undergraduates and three postgraduates. These transition challenges included a more challenging academic life, the sheer number of people at the university or trying to strike a balance while in first year.

The issue of mental health challenges was also reported, with four respondents raising the issue regarding their Wits experience. Three of the students were directly affected by mental health issues (two undergraduates and one postgraduate), with one respondent, an undergraduate, acknowledging the mental health struggles of their fellow students. All respondents who mentioned suffering from mental health issues also indicated that the CCDU, the unit that was meant to help them, did not do that and they had to get help elsewhere.

Another aspect of the Wits experience that was reported by seven of the respondents (three undergraduates, four postgraduates) was that of time challenges/constraints to participate in non-academic activities.

The issue of departmental silos came out as a negative regarding the Wits experience, with two respondents, both of them postgraduates, making note of this. **PG2** said *"But it doesn't happen often enough to see what other faculties are doing -*

you kinda stick to your own faculty and there is no real coalition with anyone else" while **PG6** said "*There is a lot of high walls of people sticking to their own. For example, we don't know what is happening in mining engineering, yet we should be working closely together".*

Another key finding from the research study was of how the Wits experience at first year showed respondents a different picture of who they thought they were – akin to being "humbled" by the experience e.g. through not feeling special or not feeling as smart as they thought they were. Seven of the respondents (four in undergraduate and three in postgraduate) had a view regarding this aspect of "being humbled" by Wits University.

Regarding the overall Wits experience, nine respondents, four undergraduates and five postgraduates reported a good experience (good to brilliant), with three respondents, two undergraduates and one postgraduate) reporting a fair/middle ground experience rating.

There were no reports of an overall bad experience by any of the student respondents.
Below are some excerpt responses regarding the Wits experience.

UG1: *Varsity not easy like high school, a lot more to do and more academically challenging. Wits will show you that there is stuff out there more powerful than you. You don't feel more important or more valued than the others. No free time when studying engineering. No time to be part of any social clubs or societies because of school and socialising with friends. There is a lot of academic work to be done in a short time. Social experience through res life and friends. Academic help, social events, assistance during exams for stress relief and relaxation through res life. Overall experience was good. I have definitely enjoyed it.*
UG4: *Wits is just a system producing people going out as graduates - there doesn't seem to be any value placed on me being here. Academically I had such a terrible journey, I struggled a bit, socially great through res life - met some wonderful (and not so wonderful) people. Attended events, exposed to other Wits bodies and*

management, info received, networking, growth, socialising. I had mental health challenges - diagnosed with severe depression. Most of the experiences I heard of the CCDU were very negative so I didn't go there - went to a private institution. I am part of a tutor programme through the WCCO. Overall brilliant experience

PG1: *I tell people that you will not be special at Wits, you will just be a number and you need to appreciate that coz Wits is not just for one person. The jump from high school to varsity was huge... I have problems, mental issues for which there is little support. The CCDU failed me in the pursuit of better mental health) - I don't have time for extra curricula activities or even the time to read my emails but joined the gym. Academically extremely challenging - the academics is very difficult and there are high volumes of work. Socially very good because of the proximity to Braam. Overall experience - fair. (Non-resident).*

PG3: *Once school life starts there's just no time for anything else (social). Good in undergrad both socially and academically, except for financial challenges. Also good at postgrad level with no financial challenges. Social experience through res life - it helped build a foundation of friendship at UG level. Nothing much socially currently as PG. When in res I had tutors to help and a social life - stuff that non-res students had no access to. I credit my first-year experience to res life. Overall, it is difficult for health sciences people to be involved in campus activities. Overall experience good. (Residence student at UG, not at PG).*

Overall, the results of this role engagement indicator are mixed. There is a report of a mostly good experience by the students, but also with reports of a fair experience. More postgraduate students reported a better, more positive student experience than undergraduate students. There were no reports of an overall bad Wits experience.

iii) Satisfaction with the Wits experience by students

The overall satisfaction ratings were generally positive. Nine respondents, five of them undergraduates and four of them postgraduates indicated that they were satisfied or highly satisfied, with the remaining three respondents – one undergraduate and two postgraduates, scoring their satisfaction as fair/middle ground. One of the prevailing reasons for satisfaction with the Wits experience was

that of growth and independence while at the institution, with eight respondents, five of them undergraduates and three postgraduates, noting this aspect.

A few of the sample population responses to the issue of satisfaction with the Wits experience are listed below.

UG1*: I'm happy with it. You face a lot more challenges and new challenges and being able to overcome that makes you feel good about yourself*

UG5*: Middle ground. Not bad but not great either. It's just another experience like high school was. I guess it (the experience) built my character*

PG1*: Mixed – yes for academic preparation and excellence; no for admin issues (financial aid office). Wits has made me grow up - it is where I grew from a teenager to a young adult and dealt with life's issues at. Also Wits toughens and that I appreciate*

PG5*: I am satisfiedish. I think there is a lot to be done especially for postgrads, Humanities especially. But I am happy, I am okay. Wits teaches you to be independent, to make decisions, think critically. I got in here at UG I wasn't clever and Wits fixed me now I am interested in learning and becoming independent.*

Overall, the results of this role engagement indicator are mixed. More of the respondents reported being satisfied with their Wits experience, but with some reports of a fair satisfaction level. None of the respondents indicated dissatisfaction with their Wits experience.

iv) Institutional commitment

Of the sample, eight respondents, five undergraduates and three postgraduates, are not committed to the institution, with four respondents, one undergraduate and three postgraduates being committed. Furthermore, those not committed to the institution note their commitment as being towards to their school or res, or to the ultimate goal of getting their degree (to their studies).

A sample of the response to the question of how committed they are to the institution are listed below:

UG1: *To Wits as in to the university? Yes. Or to just getting my degree? To the university. I think quite committed too. I came here for a degree and I am not going to leave without it.*

UG4: *6/10. Once again res life that had a huge impact on my commitment to Wits and the programme and the people and just helping other people predominantly first years.*

UG5: *Not very committed I am just here to get my degree and go if I am being honest. I think it's…when I say that I go to Wits it's not like you are going home and you feel that you are welcome there or you are wanted there. Wits is Wits and then there is you. So it's like Wits versus the world. So I think that's why I am not extremely committed to Wits. I am proud to be a Witsie but in the sense that have I been integrated into the culture… or do I associate myself with it outside of my studies? No.*

PG1: *No. For me Wits is a place where you work and unfortunately being at Wits for this long I had to become like this. One of my supervisors said when you study Physics it's like a cancer it kills you before you can beat it. So unfortunately, when I asked him and said that's impossible and I have to think about myself, haven't I changed and I think I can't be committed to Wits. If I think about Wits it's just a place where I work and I get my work done.*

PG3: *I have been here 10 years so I am pretty committed to Wits. But from how you phrasing it and what I am studying that could be limited to locally as in, in South Africa then I would not be committed or be anywhere else that here but if I was to compare to other institutions like globally then me and Wits might need to sort of you know but yeah but at the moment for what I am doing and what Wits is offering me I think it's a good programme and they have a good structure so yeah I am pretty happy and committed to both.*

PG4: *I would say a 7. So obviously I think I am more concerned with my…so I will give you an example…. So, at the moment we've been asked to help on data capturing. So it was hard for me because I also want to finish my masters, so it kinda feels like a way out between should I help with the Wits work or should I do my work on my own masters. I would say that's why maybe thinking about such stuff and I think even maybe in my undergrad and post grad I was very committed to my own*

like to passing every year and to my studies but I wouldn't say I was actively involved in Wits.

Overall, the results denoting brand engagement through institutional commitment are mixed. The respondents showed both high commitment levels as well as no commitment towards the institution, although the majority of respondents exhibited the latter. Institutional/organisational commitment is linked to aspects of Wits such as the desire to get a degree, residence life, medical school, or as a result of the university rankings.

v) Financial commitment (donations) to Wits versus financial commitment to other organisations

Regarding a financial commitment to Wits, the entire sample of 12 indicated that they do not donate to the institution (Wits). However, when it comes to donating to other institutions, five respondents, one undergraduate and four postgraduates, indicated that they do, with seven respondents, five undergraduates and two postgraduates, indicating that they do not donate to other institutions. The entire sample of 12 also indicated that no donation request had been received from Wits, with one respondent (PG6) indicating an indirect mention on graduation day. The organisations which received donations from the students include Wildlife Foundation, Green Peace and Four Paws (by PG2), HIV/AIDS and Children's Homes; clinics and homeless shelters (by PG4) or "*to organisations that match my beliefs"* (by **PG1**).

All student respondents reported that they do not receive donation solicitations from Wits. However, regarding donation intentions, 10 of them, four undergraduates and all six postgraduates, indicated a willingness to donate to Wits. Three of the undergraduates noted that they would donate if they were in a position to, with the 4th undergraduate (**UG6**) noting that they would donate "*if to help other students; no if for infrastructure*". The six postgraduate students would donate to student causes, with **PG1** adding "*but through my own bursary scheme"*, **PG5** saying "*in the future when I can afford. Give to a child without the opportunity",* and **PG6** saying they would "*donate directly to a student or a people-facing organisation".*

UG3 will not donate to Wits because of affordability issues, while **UG4** said "*No. I don't like Wits because it's a symbol of my academic struggles".*

Overall, based on actual actions, there is an inclination to donate to other institutions rather than to donate to Wits – indicating a lack of brand engagement. Furthermore, postgraduate students showed a higher inclination to donate towards non-Wits causes than undergraduate students who generally did not donate either way. However, based on intentions to donate, the majority of the students, including all postgraduates, would donate to Wits towards student causes.

vi) Volunteerism behaviours towards Wits versus other organisations

Regarding volunteerism behaviours, it was a 50/50 split between those who volunteer at Wits and those who do not. It was another 50/50 split in terms of the undergraduate/postgraduate mix of those who volunteer, do not volunteer. One of the respondents, a postgraduate student, indicated that they were not aware of any volunteerism opportunities at Wits. When it comes to volunteering outside of Wits, seven respondents, i.e. three undergraduates and four postgraduates, indicated that they do, five respondents indicating that they do not.

Overall, the results regarding this brand engagement indicator are mixed, with only half the respondents committing their time through volunteerism to Wits. There is no difference between volunteerism within and outside of Wits by undergraduate students, with a slight inclination towards volunteerism elsewhere than to Wits by postgraduate students.

vii) Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties

Eleven of the 12 respondents indicated their loyalty to Wits through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution in one way or the other, with one respondent, a postgraduate student, indicating that it was time to leave. One respondent – an undergraduate student would like to maintain ties but feel it is time for change of scenery when the time to do a master's degree comes.

Below are a few samples of respondent responses regarding maintaining ties to Wits:

UG2: *I want to further my education still. Probably honours here and then masters abroad for change of environment.*

UG5: *Yes. Once my career is established I'd like to come back to Wits to start a programme that assists female students*

UG6: *No, I don't have any. To make me leave would have to be something personal to me like the equity issue coz like the political situation is what I came here for I wouldn't study politics anywhere else. I don't think like any family situations or stuff I would drop my studies for; if my parents were leaving the country I would just say bye*

PG1: *I will leave I think in this period in my life it's like a Stockholm syndrome. So, I feel like I am ready to leave because I have had (excuse my tone) enough of this place! It's been 9years. It's been a long 9 years.*

PG4: *I am interested in academia so I think this year I have enjoyed so many aspects well obviously not all aspects but a lot of aspects of academia. So I can see myself returning and becoming a lecturer here but it is obviously dependant because I haven't really experienced corporate. It's dependant on my experience next year.*

PG6: *I still love Wits resources in terms of the library so I will probably get the alumni card and just having access to it even if I have to volunteer as well I would still speak to people about how great Wits is to be at and offer a variety of courses things like that. Also, I more likely to do my PhD here than at another university*

All the respondents, bar one, indicate loyalty to the University through a willingness to maintain ties – an indicator of brand engagement.

viii) Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

Eight of the respondents, a 50/50 split between undergraduate and postgraduate students, wear Wits branded merchandise. Two of the respondents mentioned the expensive nature of the merchandise in the Wits Shop. The remaining four do not – two of them are not averse to the idea of wearing Wits branded merchandise but the other two would rather not wear it. Below are examples of responses from some of the respondents regarding wearing/displaying Wits branded merchandise:

UG2: *No. The thing is when I am wearing a Wits let's say tie and it's like "aah he is from Wits" you know, I don't like that I like to maintain a certain level of mystic about myself. Ask me where I am attending varsity then I will tell you but… And to a certain extent I feel like it's a bit of showing off even though like people who buy Wits merchandise they don't…might not do it for the sense of showing off but the horror surrounding Wits like it's that place where kids get chowed. It's a place where a 3-year degree might take you twice as long as opposed to other institutions of learning.*

UG5: *I have only got my student card. Only this year for the first time I have bought the law school jacket. I think that it's expensive …its more for people who are employed so because the prices are not exactly suitable to students if that makes sense.*

UG6: *Yes. I bought quite a few when I got accepted here I was really excited. I have the hoodie and I have the t-shirt and I have a mug that's it I think. I was just very excited to be a student and I had of pride in the fact that I got in and this was the only place that I wanted to go study.*

PG1: *I bought my father a Wits tie when he graduated but that's it. It was more of an irony because I graduated before him. I did it as a tradition where I pass it down to him. In undergrad I would but now I wouldn't. I don't know I think I am just older.*

PG3: *Yeah. I haven't bought anything in a few years but also, I have so many and there are some that I still like from the old ones that I hold. I bought stuff for people like home and I have actually bought a bag for my grandmother. At first it used to be that when you are here you get a sense of pride in being here so you would then get something like a symbol of…so I would have like my residence thing coz I had a sense of pride in belonging to that place and I would have the Wits ones and then I would have the either the school or faculty ones also coz it gives you a sense of pride and belonging to a certain organisation and also like I have like it also speaks a lot just the name, the logo alone just it represents you also so that was one and you look cool moving around Braam in a Wits regalia.*

PG5: *Yes I do wear my Wits jersey only when I go to school because outside people ask you questions which I am not in the mood to answer most of the time. So I know at least when I am close to Wits everybody knows I am going to school or yes I am studying. But in other places…no. I would not wear it. Coz I don't like being*

interrogated. It attracts a lot of attention and it makes me…I don't mind, I like the attention but there are days I just don't.

Overall, the results pertaining to brand engagement of the respondents are mixed, though there is an inclination by more of the respondents to wear Wits branded merchandise than not to wear it.

Summary on student engagement

Eleven of the 12 respondents showed a very high level of academic commitment, with one respondent showing low academic commitment. All respondents also showed loyalty through intention to maintain Wits ties. Eight of the respondents showed loyalty through wearing Wits branded merchandise. Four of the respondents showed institutional commitment, while the remaining eight did not. None of the respondents showed financial commitment to Wits (none made a financial donation) though five of them donated to other charitable organisations. All respondents noted that they did not get financial solicitations from Wits. However, 10 of the respondents indicated an intention to donate should they receive donation requests. With regard to time commitment, six of the 12 respondents volunteered at Wits, while seven of the respondents volunteered outside of Wits. Nine of the respondents reported an overall good Wits experience, with the other three noting it as fair. Similarly, nine of the respondents reported satisfaction with the Wits experience, with three of them noting it as fair.

Overall, the results pertaining to student engagement are mixed. They show role engagement through academic commitment, but with mixed results regarding the overall Wits experience and satisfaction with the Wits experience. The results relating to the majority of brand engagement indicators are also mixed i.e. for institutional/organisational commitment, loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution, loyalty through wearing/displaying branded merchandise and time commitment through volunteerism. Further, there was an absence of brand engagement through a unanimous lack of donations towards the institution.

Student identification

Results of two aspects of identity are presented i.e. organisational identification and social identity.

iii) Organisational identification

Gauging stakeholder identification was achieved through determining the extent of a sense of belonging the stakeholders felt. Five of the respondents indicated a lack of a sense of belonging to Wits, three of them being undergraduates, and two postgraduates. Five respondents, one undergraduate and four postgraduates, indicated a high sense of belonging to the institution. One undergraduate student indicated that they were on the fence, with yet another undergraduate respondent giving mixed results i.e. no sense of belonging to Wits but attached a very high sense of belonging to their residence. Of the six undergraduates in the sample, three indicated no sense of belonging at all to Wits, with only one undergraduate respondent having a high sense of belonging. Of the postgraduates' sample of six, four indicated a high sense of belonging, with the remaining two having no sense of belonging at all.

Samples of some of the responses regarding the extent of the sense of belonging they feel to Wits are presented below:

UG3: *I am very much on the fence, so neither. I think for me it's definitely got to more with the by-product of the degree I am studying than the culture at Wits. Just because medical school is very busy to the point there is not much time I would suppose... I don't know if you look at other universities it's kind of like people wanna buy the jerseys and they want to attend all the sporting events and there is like a student life. Maybe a student life makes you feel like you are there. And I think studying medicine I haven't had much of a student life, at least not at Wits. I have heard some of my colleagues studying other degrees here they are not as strict in time. They seem to have a nicer student life and I imagine if you asked them they might feel more at home.*

UG4: *This place is working on my nerves; I don't like this institution. I just don't like it because it's just a symbol of my struggles, my academic struggles. But On a scale of 1-10 I would say 8 and that is based on my experience with the house comm. and*

just res life as well as my ARC appointments. So highly connected in terms of what happens where, which bodies exist, who to contact for what information I think it's quite good so I do have a high sense of belonging (based on res life).

UG6: *To a large extent Wits is exactly where I need to be in terms of a career path and my degree if I look at people from other universities who are studying similar stuff and where I am I definitely feel that I made the right choice of university and socially I enjoy my time here. A lot of my friends are here…*

PG1: *Not that much. I think when I think about Wits I associate it with struggles, academic struggles, mental issues a lot while I was at Wits. I have got big issues. So, I don't see it as home I see it as a place to get work done. It's not the safe haven for me. It's just a place where I get my work done. I cannot be committed to Wits.*

PG2: *I am proud of Wits and my experience here. It's been yah like its…I like Wits, it's a good university. Especially the engineering side is very good. Yeah so, I do feel connected to it. But I would have liked to…like we have all the other universities have traditions that run through and things that they do but Wits the tradition side is not as strong so maybe little more…yearly traditions or students stuff like that events will be better and at times to be encouraged but it's not always the case*

PG6: *Yeah I do feel like Wits is home. It's pretty comfortable I just think it's a familiar environment in the sense that I have seen what it used to be a student and transitioning into being a researcher because I am doing it by dissertation so it's strictly so it's strictly by dissertation. So I have seen both aspects of Wits in terms of research and exams and tests so I feel like I am more comfortable and more likely to do my PhD here than at another university.*

Overall, there is a more a sense of a feeling of belonging to Wits by postgraduate students, with undergraduate students having less of a sense of belonging to the institution or feeling disconnected from it.

iv) Social identification

Study respondents identified themselves with particular groups, department or faculties, over and above any organisational identification aspects. Five of the respondents, four of them undergraduates, indicated an inclination towards hanging out with friends, with six respondents identifying with their residence, school or

faculty. One respondent, a postgraduate student, did not show any inclination towards any group.

Overall, undergraduate students had a sense of belonging more to their friends or residence, with postgraduate students having more of a belonging to their School/Faculty.

Some of the responses recorded include the below:

UG1: *Socially, there's a lot of different people you meet and some of them like…ok all of them are like really friendly and a lot of them you can make good friends with them because they are experiencing the same problems you have. Weekends I am always with friends*

UG5: *the only people I feel are actually trying to build that kind of relationship in terms of my friends, people who know me. Friends and family provided a good support system*

PG1: *The most I participate is through school of physics. . I think physics was luckily the only one that was a bit more human in their approach (certain departments because of the large number of students they are cold)*

PG3: *I credit most of the first-year experience mostly to like res than…maybe for mine because there was no first-year experience. I mean it was more house comm that would help you make more friends*

Summary of identification indicators for students

The results regarding organisational identification were, overall, mixed. Five of the respondents showed no sense of belonging or organisational identification while another five exhibited a very high sense of belonging to the institution. One respondent showed both a high sense of belonging to their residence, but no sense of the belonging to the institution. The twelfth respondent was neutral.

The results regarding social identification were also mixed. Six of the respondents, all of them undergraduates, identified more with their friends, two respondents identified with their residence and three identified with their School (Department). Only one respondent did not exhibit any social identification.

Student Social exchange

The social exchange aspect, was measured through stakeholder attitudes towards Wits University. Eight respondents – three undergraduates and five postgraduates – indicated a positive attitude towards the University, noting the reciprocal nature of their positive attitudes. Three of the respondents – one postgraduate and two undergraduates, indicated that they were of mixed views, noting where they were positive or negative towards the University. One respondent, (an undergraduate student) indicated a negative attitude towards the University because of the way they struggle academically, noting how should they be exempt of their academic struggles they would exhibit a positive attitude towards Wits University. Some of the responses relating to attitudes towards Wits are laid out below.

UG1: *Overall, its positive coz the good stuff outweighs the bad stuff. If it was easy getting this degree then everybody would have one. See the previous question how I described Wits (as being hell), even though I consider it to be like that I still enjoy it.*

UG4: *Negative, overall. Because I struggle here. I don't like Wits but can't ignore the weight it carries to be a Wits graduate; it's a good institution, there is purpose in the struggles. If I were to exempt my academic struggles I would display a positive attitude towards Wits*

PG1: *Academically Wits is very good I am I guess in that regard proud of its inputs when I go to conferences or overseas I am proud. As a studying experience I think it's tough. I think it's a learning curve that could be too difficult for many students. There are underlying issues poverty and helping out students, Wits is trying their best I can't comment on that because as I said before with my personal issues I have not been helped. I don't know if that's anything different.*

PG3: *For me it's positive. It goes also with the time I have spent here like its…you have to be positive towards something to like stay in this relationship that I have had with Wits for all this time. So it's quite positive*

PG4: *I would say positive I definitely have like a love for the school and I wanna see Wits succeed in the future. So, yah I think going into the future I am only gonna become speak highly of it and promote it. As I say like it hasn't been perfect but I think that I really enjoyed it. I think because I can see how many opportunities the degree I have done does give people in the work place. I feel a sense of appreciation for Wits for that. For allowing me the opportunity to study here, for accepting me, for*

helping me get the degree that I think is gonna open so many doors in my life. So I am very grateful. I think it's like such a stepping stone of my life. I think it will be a stage of my life that I will always remember and as I say I could even come back to academia for a while so… So I can see myself returning and becoming a lecturer here but it is obviously dependant because I haven't really experienced corporate. It's dependant on my experience next year.

Summary of the attitude towards Wits by students

Results for social exchange were mixed. Eight of the student respondents exhibited a positive attitude, based on reciprocity, towards Wits University, one has a negative attitude, and three have mixed attitudes (both negative and positive).

Conclusion of the student results

The results presented above show that a lack of solid internal branding practices does not negatively impact on role engagement (academic studies) for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, as evidenced by overall high ratings for academic commitment. There were mixed results for role engagement indicators of the overall Wits experience and satisfaction with the Wits experience - good/fair or satisfied/fair, respectively. The absence of solid internal branding also seems to have no negative impact on the intention to donate, especially amongst postgraduate students. However, it seems to have some negative impact on brand engagement, as evidenced by the lack of financial commitment (through donations to the institution) as well as the mixed results on institutional commitment, and volunteerism behaviours, particularly for undergraduate students. It can therefore be concluded that the absence of solid or structured internal branding practices have no influence on academic (role) engagement of the Wits students in the sample population but has some influence on brand engagement by the students, particularly for undergraduate students.

It can also be concluded that a lack of a sense of belonging/organisational identification has some influence on brand engagement, evidenced by the corresponding low ratings on institutional commitment, especially for undergraduate students. In addition, social identification is related mostly to friends (or residence) by

undergraduate students, or the school/faculty by postgraduate students, and not to the broader organisation.

Furthermore, social exchange based on reciprocity seems to have an impact on brand engagement as evidenced by some negative or mixed attitudes exhibited towards the institution and how they correspond with low institutional commitment. Postgraduate students show a more positive attitude towards the university than undergraduate students, overall.

4.4 How is higher education institution alumni engagement with the brand, and their financial or other support of the brand, influenced by internal branding practices?

In order to answer research question 3, responses to the following themes are presented:

a) Existence of internal branding practices at the case site (during undergraduate years)
b) Alumni engagement indicators
c) Alumni identification – organisational and social
d) Social exchange

Existence of internal branding practices at the case site (alumni perspective)

To answer this research question, it is important to, first, establish the existence of internal branding practices at the case site. For this research, ten indicators of internal branding were analysed, as follows:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values
ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions
iii. Receiving brand-related training
iv. Receiving brand-related information
v. The communication content to Wits alumni
vi. Communication and feedback by alumni to Wits
vii. The content of the orientation or First Year Experience (FYE) Programme
viii. The existence of an alumni connection programme
ix. Relationship building with alumni
x. Alumni feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits.

The results of these indicators are outlined in more detail below:

i. Knowledge of the Wits values

All six alumni respondents did not know the Wits values, with ALUM6 supposing that they could include diversity and perseverance.

Lack of knowledge of the Wits values is an indication of the absence of internal branding practices at the University.

ii. Knowledge and/or participation in Wits traditions

Only one of the six respondents, ALUM6, was aware of any Wits traditions, noting residences initiation practices and the Engineering Breakfast. **ALUM2** remarked that they "*would think such an old institution would have plenty of traditions".*

Some knowledge of the Wits traditions by alumni is an indicator of the absence of some level of internal branding practice at the University.

iii. Receiving brand-related training

None of the six alumni recalled receiving any brand-related training when they were at the University. **ALUM3** noted that "*I just know Wits gives you the edge*".

The lack of brand-related training is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

iv. Receiving brand-related information

None of the six alumni respondents recall receiving much brand-related information. **ALUM1** said "*Nothing on values but recall a bit at graduation when they talk of the history of Wits etc.",* while **ALUM3** said "*I am sure they did at orientation but I don't recall. I remember the "locate the people in your class - from 400 there will be 50 of you left" talk at orientation".* **ALUM5** said *"No, I searched for some info on the history of Wits on the website. Maybe something at graduation but it was too late".*

The non-dissemination of brand-related information is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

v. The communication content to Wits students

From the results, the communication received by five out of the six respondents, predominantly through email, did not contain brand-related information. One of the respondents, ALUM5, did not receive any communication from the alumni office, despite efforts spanning over three years to be signed up. Of the five respondents who received email communication, four of them reported that they did not always read their emails.

Below are sample responses regarding the communication received from Wits:

ALUM2: *I suppose I get the alumni newsletter by email. And how often is that? I have no idea maybe it's once a month. I am honestly not sure. And what sort of information is in that newsletter? I can't tell you exactly what they talk to you about or what they share but what I do remember is when they indicate for example that they have got certain people coming to speak at the university; and maybe certain notable achievements like someone discovering something ground-breaking in the course of their research other than that not much. I would say communication needs to be improved and definitely needs to be memorable. Wits newsletters arriving in my inbox tends to just pass me by. You know and one thinks of the number of emails one gets every single day and then I have got work and personal accounts so it really needs to sort of standout*

ALUM3: *About the convocation and how many people we need to vote for. People you don't even know you need to vote for these people. So, yah I think that's the information we get. When I open the emails, that's the one I see. Maybe I just skim and scan through them. And an email on my birthday.*

ALUM4: *is email which I half the time read if I am being honest. Maybe about guest speakers, mostly guest speakers or what's happening. Event mostly. I haven't had any other connection and again I wouldn't count on reading it.*

ALUM6: *It's mainly email - if there is talks happening at the university or if there's special guests coming through if I am not mistaken. They come Gmail which is not a priority of mine unless I am expecting something the rest of them I assume to be spam so mainly because of that I don't look at my personal Gmail. Had it been something that comes to my work email I would have perhaps paid more attention.*

The absence of brand-related content in Wits communication to their alumni is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices.

vi. Communication and feedback by alumni to Wits

Of the six respondents, only one indicated giving back any real feedback to Wits through a Faculty of Engineering research group they are part. Two of the respondents indicated that feedback had never been solicited from them.

The responses regarding alumni feedback to Wits were as follows:

ALUM1: *No. Well I did tell them that they spelt something wrong on Facebook*
ALUM2: *You know I don't think I have ever been asked. I don't think I have ever gotten any sort of request, email telephone to say please may we have some feedback so…I have never just because I have never been asked. This is literally the first time I am being asked about my experience since graduating.*
ALUM3: *No, I don't even on the different platforms.*
ALUM4: *I am very inactive*
ALUM5: *I guess it's through the workshop coz we will be discussing our experiences outside hence…and research opportunities as well. Gaps that you recognise outside and the you bring them here at Wits.*
ALUM6: *No, there hasn't been an opportunity to do so. I haven't looked and I haven't seen that come to me.*

The absence of dialogue forums with alumni is an indicator of the absence of internal branding practices at Wits University.

vii. The content of the orientation or First Year Experience (FYE) Programme

Three of the respondents were not exposed to an orientation or FYE programme, with the other three respondents finding value in the programmes only in terms of library information, way-finding around campus or making friends.

Three of the responses received regarding the FYE and undergraduate orientation programmes (when the alumni were still in varsity) are listed below:
ALUM1: *The people that helped me figure it out were the people that I knew outside of Wits. So, it was…I mean when I started here I was dating a guy who had been here for about a year for 2 years so I automatically sort of fell in with his friends, so that was where I sort of learned to figure it out. But I didn't have it as bad as my poor best friend in first year whose name was Ingrid and was from Piet Retief so she has to start to deal with just the nature of Joburg but I mean I know that the tutoring system for example is meant to help us but I just sort of already had other people so…*
ALUM2: *No, not at all. I think I only heard the term (First Year Experience) after I was no longer 1st year.*

ALUM6: *So, I did do the whole induction thing in first year they set you up first day or first week, but I wasn't aware of any other programme. Orientation week helped on a social level coz you got meet other people on campus. Most important for me from orientation week for was it was seminar they have at the great hall where they tell you to look to your left and to your right and in 4 years these people are not going to be here that is like no jokes at all. It was fun but what was… You have already made friends based on orientation week, but you would soon find out that those friends are studying different things being in West/East campus you would never see each other. So, it helped with the social part but because it wasn't specific to your field it was kind of a waste of time.*

The absence or ineffectiveness of orientation or FYE programmes is an indicator of the absence of a solid and structured internal branding practice.

viii. The existence of an alumni connection programme

Five respondents reported that there was no programme meant to kept them connected to Wits, more just email communication, if that. One responded mentioned that something of this nature could be in existence.

The responses regarding the existence of an alumni connection programme are listed below:

ALUM1: *Again, I do read the newsletters, so I know that these things exist. There is a get together of like the alumni society and there is a lot of things I look at not just there but on the Facebook page, but I just never take advantage of it. For example, I know that there is an alumni mentorship programme and again based on what I do for a living it would be great to be involved be it as a mentor or mentee from other alumni that was ahead of me. Again, it's one of those things you think to yourself I will sign up, I will get to it but it just doesn't really happen and then you forget. And it's when one asks you a question about it and then you go oh yes that's what I was gonna do.*

ALUM2: *No, I mean I know one can register officially as an alumnus and one of the reasons I did for example was just to have access to the library because I thought that I would need it and I thought I was going to try and continue my studies and so*

on. And I thought that would be useful but other than that…I mean other than the actual alumni programme, no.

ALUM3: *Not that I know off but it's not that I am also going out looking you know. Yah but I don't know of anything*
ALUM4: *Currently. Mine is purely through email. That is the only contact that I have had at Wits alumni. And I haven't actually reached out but from an outreach point of view the only thing is email which I half the time read if I am being honest.*
ALUM5: *No, I would say zero.*
ALUM6: *Not anything that comes to mind I mean I can check my inbox in my Gmail, which is not a priority of mine*

The report by the majority of the respondents of a lack of programme to keep alumni connected with their alma mater is an indicator of the absence of a solid and structured internal branding programme at Wits.

ix. Relationship building with alumni

All six respondents reported that they did not feel any relationship building efforts from Wits, with one of the respondents getting no communication from Wits at all.

Some of the responses to the issue of relationship building by Wits are shown below:
ALUM1: *I don't think so. Honestly, I don't feel like it. It's weird because it almost feels like I have become a number in the mass of alumni you know which is interesting because like I said I got here, and it was overwhelming, you were a number because you are defined by your student number. Through the years you become a person and you become more relevant and you become more real. And then I graduated, and I became a number again. So, I don't think there is a…you know understandably Wits must have thousands if not millions of alumni. So, you do become a number because there is an alumni programme that's formal but there hasn't been anything that I felt was for me or spoke to me in a big way like kinda felt like this is what it is if that makes sense.*

ALUM3: *No but as I said I feel as a person you can't just put the blame game you know. I think it's also about the person. Did I make an effort to do that? I just think for me its always a two-way street. It's never one way*
ALUM4: *I think there has been an effort but it has kind of fallen on deaf ears. Just the emails. Never felt anything personal.*

The lack of relationship building efforts by the University is an indication of the absence of a solid and structured internal branding programme.

x. Alumni feelings of being valued or appreciated by Wits

Only one respondent, ALUM3, felt valued and appreciated by Wits through the small gesture of personalised emails, with the other five respondents not feeling valued or appreciated by the institution. Two of these five respondents did not expect to be valued. Further, two of the five respondents note how the size of Wits and the number of people there would likely make it difficult to make stakeholders feel special or valued.

Some of the responses regarding this point are presented below:
ALUM1: *No, not really. It was a mutual breakup you know. I don't feel like there is a huge amount of effort to reach me specifically but also I am not doing to reach I am going to say him specifically. I mean we had a mutual breakup and now its over. Coming to varsity in UG I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of people and the magnitude of the place. Then as alumni I became a number in the mass of alumni*
ALUM3: *I think it goes back to the email thing you know where I was like I feel like the emails are very personal. The fact that they send you that email even if you don't know convocation what it is. But just to get that email from them to notify you of what is happening at your school I think for me that is value. I think some might value level 1 kind of being said I am just appreciating small things but I just think a personalised email and get a happy birthday honestly makes it I feel like…maybe they could do more but for me that's enough*
ALUM4: *I did not have a bad Wits experience but I am in a different space and stage in my life and don't feel like that's what I want or need from Wits. I've been indifferent I haven't been in much contact so I wouldn't say I felt much appreciated because*

there hasn't been an act of outreach or anything like so I am really neutral because of that. I am not really concerned about Wits. The sheer size of Wits could be its downfall… Wits is so big you don't get a personal touch as you would at a smaller more intimate university

ALUM6: *To be honest, no. I haven't had a reason to believe instead of being valued it's almost like part of the process you get into the university and soon get out that's how it is to me. I am not satisfied with my alumni experience but I was not expecting to have a relationship with the university as alumni hence it doesn't affect overall perspective of Wits - hence I can still recommend Wits*

A general lack of feeling valued or appreciated by Wits is an indicator of the absence of solid and structured internal branding programme.

Summary of internal branding indicators for alumni

All six alumni do not know the Wits values, do not receive brand-related training, information or brand related email communication. Half of the alumni respondents (three) noted that they were not exposed to an orientation or FYE programme when in varsity, with the other half noting that they found the programmes ineffective and not of value. None of the respondents felt any relationship building efforts with them by Wits. Five of the respondents do not feel valued or appreciated by Wits, with one of the respondents noting that they do feel valued by Wits because of the personalised emails. Also, five of the six respondents do not know the Wits traditions, do not feedback or communicate with the University and noted that there was no programme designed to keep alumni connected with their alma mater.

The results above make it clearly apparent that there is no solid or structured internal branding programme currently in place at Wit University.

Alumni engagement indicators

For this research, the indicators of engagement are:

i. Academic commitment (during undergraduate years)
ii. The Wits experience by the alumni when at varsity
iii. The alumni experience

iv. Satisfaction with the alumni experience
v. Institutional commitment
vi. Financial commitment (to Wits versus other organisations)
vii. Volunteerism behaviours (towards Wits versus other organisations)
viii. Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties
ix. Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

The results of these indicators are outlined in more detail below:

i. Academic commitment (during undergraduate years)

All six alumni responded indicated that they had a very high level of academic commitment when they were at university. Sample responses are noted below:

ALUM2: *I found myself working you much harder than say one did in high school or in a short course. The level of study has to increase, its your final undergraduate year and I definitely found that I was having to put in extra effort, having to consult my lecturers more and more often having to do plenty of additional work, having to ask for help more than I ever thought I needed to… I mean in the end of course it all turned out to be worth it. You know my marks stayed where they needed to be*

ALUM5: *You almost always behind the class content so you literally don't have time to have a social life if you want to keep up with the syllabus or whatever*

ALUM6: *When you are at Wits there is no time for yourself you would study on weekend and even on evenings.*

Overall, all alumni respondents exhibited role engagement while at university.

ii. The Wits experience by the alumni

Summaries of the respondent experiences at Wits University are presented here. Academically, four respondents reported a challenging and/or stressful experience, one respondent just noted it as good and for yet another respondent nothing stuck out for them from a classroom perspective.

Regarding the social experience, four of the six respondents reported that they did not have a social experience at all.

The majority of respondents, five out of the six, noted that they were not part of a club, sport or society as alumni, with just one respondent noting that they currently are part of a faculty research group at Wits

Two respondents reported high school to varsity transition challenges, which included a more challenging academic life, the sheer number of people at the university or trying to find your place in first year.

Another aspect of the Wits experience that was reported by three of the was that of time challenges/constraints to participate in non-academic activities.

Only one respondent (ALUM1) indicated that had a humbling experience at Wits through not feeling as smart as they thought they were.

Regarding the overall Wits experience, five respondents reported a good experience (good to brilliant), with one respondent (**ALUM5**) noting that *"Overall it was tough - didn't really enjoy varsity. I had academic challenges and stresses*".

Below are two sample summaries regarding the Wits experience of alumni while they were still at varsity:

ALUM1: *Being overwhelmed by the huge numbers of people and size of the place and having to find your place in there. You get to know that you might have been the smartest kid at your school but now you are not... Also, the amount of work you were expected to go through was easily double that for other universities or colleges. However, the common factor was you all stress about school and exams - no one was untouched in this regard. Overall experience Great! There is this strong sense of achievement in overcoming the Wits challenges.*

ALUM4: *I loved it. I loved varsity but it was also situational for me - I worked (part-time) and studied at the same time. I was kind of what they call a ten past 2 warrior - finish at 14:10 and you go home. You don't do anything kin of extramural. Socially, nothing really stuck out for me. From the classroom nothing really stuck out for me*

Overall, the majority of the respondents reported a good Wits experience, indicating role engagement.

iii. The alumni experience

Five of the respondents report having no alumni experience to speak of, with interactions being mostly through email, or with no interaction at all. Only one respondent seems happy with their Wits experience.

Responses by the alumni regarding this point are noted below:

ALUM1: *You see again that is a difficult question because I am very aware that I haven't contributed to the experience so I would have to kind of go midstream I would have to literally go for a 2.5 on one hand I don't think there has been anything that's ridiculously enticing that I can't pass it up but at the same time there have been things that I have imagined had I put an effort into would have been beneficial for me and the university as well. So, I would have to say two and a half I would quantify it as "it's not all you, it's me too" you know. It's that relationship where it's better for the both of us that we admit we are in a difficult place right now.*

ALUM2: *Maybe not very satisfied there could be better communication about things happening at Wits. It just seems like Wits advertising itself and patting itself on the back. No offense*

ALUM3: *I'll say I am happy, looking at it in terms of the email at least you feel like you are still part of the institution. You get to be informed about what's going on well it's only really about you voting and the mentorship I don't really know much about*

ALUM4: *I would say it's low if you say 1-10 I would say 3 the reason I would say three is I have had some contact from alumni. I can't help but feel this is something I have never really thought about and whether it's a brand thing or it's something I am not drawing myself to you know what I mean.*

ALUM5: *Judging by the fact that I don't even receive newsletters to a certain point I thought like the alumni is almost useless. You don't get any benefits from it. I would give them a 2 at standing*

ALUM6: *There is no experience. So, zero on a scale of 1-10*

For the majority of the respondents there is not much of an alumni experience to speak of, thereby indicating a lack of role engagement.

iv. Satisfaction with the alumni experiences

There is very low to zero satisfaction with the alumni experience by five of the respondents, mainly because there is not much of an alumni experience to speak of. Only one respondent (**ALUM3**) indicated that they were satisfied because "*of the personalised emails*". Although there is a low satisfaction level amongst alumni, three of them note the growth and grooming that come with passing through the Wits system.

The results are mixed. Non-satisfaction, overall, with the Wits experience is an indicator of a lack of role engagement for the majority of the respondents.

v. Institutional commitment

Four respondents indicated institutional commitment as being low to none, with the remaining two indicating high committed levels to Wits. Some of the feedback given regarding is listed below:

ALUM1: *Look I wouldn't stop a moving bullet. It's like do you know the story of how committed are you to breakfast? So, if you think about who is most committed to making you your breakfast which is the most important meal of the day right, if you're having bacon and eggs the chicken is involved but the pig is committed. I am not your bacon, I am your eggs*

ALUM2: *Probably not that committed I mean there is a little bit of a sense of nostalgia going back or receiving updates from Wits and so on. But say if I have to pick somewhere to do my masters I am not going to consider Wits just because that's where I studied before. I am not…Wits doesn't tend to be my first port of call for anything if I can put it like that.*

ALUM4: *there is a connection, the connection was built while I was there the connection hasn't grown since I have left if that makes any sense or that because I haven't been there it has kind of decreased. Put it this way if it's a recommendation on telling someone they should go to Wits I am for it but if it's a recommendation on whether I think I am connected to Wits, me personally it's not.*

ALUM5: *I would say 7/10. Look, for the fact that I told my boss that I am going to Wits today it was like what I am gonna do is more beneficial that what I was gonna do at work. The commitment level like I would rather be here than be at work.*

The results concerning this brand engagement indicator are mixed, though the majority of respondents show brand engagement through institutional/organisational commitment.

vi. Financial commitment (to Wits versus other organisations)

All six respondents reported not donating financially to Wits, with two of them indicating that they did not know that they could donate to Wits. **ALUM3** added that they do not donate to Wits because *"I can't afford. Have other responsibilities; financial strain at home with my brother not working so helping out at home*". In contrast, five of the six respondents noted that they do donate to other organisations including the church (ALUM3 and ALUM4), orphanages (ALUM1 and ALUM4), Girls and Boys Town, SPCA, homeless shelters and literacy programmes (ALUM2) and Doctors Without Borders (ALUM6). Only one of the respondents indicated receiving a donation solicitation from Wits, through the alumni office, with the other five respondents noting that they did not receive any donation requests from Wits.

All six respondents noted that they did not donate when they were students because they could not afford to.

All respondents also reported that they do not receive donation solicitations from Wits. However, regarding donation intention, five of the alumni respondents noted that they would donate, with three (ALUM2, ALUM5 and ALUM6) saying they would donate towards student causes, and the other two saying they would donate if it was a cause worthy of their money (ALUM3) or a cause they were passionate about (ALUM4). Only one respondent, **ALUM1** had no intention to donate towards Wits, noting that "*I have other things to spend my money on. I would prefer donating to smaller organisations who need the money more than Wits".*

Overall, based on actions, there seems to be an inclination towards donating towards non-Wits causes by Wits alumni, rather than donating to Wits itself. These results indicate a lack of brand engagement by the alumni respondents. However, based on intentions, there is a strong sentiment towards donating towards Wits should the cause resonate with the alumni respondents.

vii. Volunteerism behaviours (towards Wits versus other organisations)

Only one respondent (ALUM2) indicated that they volunteer at Wits, although on an informal basis. The rest do not volunteer at Wits, with two respondents (ALUM1 and ALUM3) indicating that they would love to volunteer but do not know how to go about it.

Four of the respondents' volunteer at other organisations, while the remaining two do not volunteer to other organisations.

Overall, the respondents are more inclined to volunteer at other organisations than at Wits, indicating a lack of brand engagement.

viii. Loyalty through maintaining Wits ties

None of the respondents would like to sever ties with Wits. Some of the sample responses are listed below:

ALUM2: *No, I don't think so. Like I said Wits might not be my first port of call say when I am looking at my masters, short course or looking for a job but from a strategic point of view I have to keep my views open.*

ALUM3: *Yah I think that's where my allegiance lies I don't see myself studying with Unisa. But Wits fees are very beautiful, and they require you to do proper planning.*

ALUM4: *To sever that's not where I am mine is not about I am not interested or I had a bad experience mine is just that I am in a different space in life that I don't feel that's necessarily what I want or what I need out of Wits currently. So again, saying like I would back the university but it doesn't mean I wanna be there every week or something. I believe in the brand Wits but I don't believe I have to necessarily be there.*

ALUM5: *No, I haven't thought about severing ties, I don't think there are any intentions. I guess you will always be linked to the university whether you like it or not.*

All of respondents would like to maintain ties with Wits, indicating brand engagement.

ix. Loyalty through Wits-branded merchandise

None of the six alumni respondents wear any Wits branded merchandise. Some of the responses received include the one listed below:

ALUM1: *I want to. I just haven't gotten around to it. I wanted a hoodie for PJs but I just haven't gotten around to it.*

ALUM2: *I don't think so, no. I remember it being quite pricey and I didn't feel sort of like I needed to buy this. There was no…I guess I just didn't have a reason to spend my hard-earned money on such things.*

ALUM4: *I think graduation we got a cardholder, I still got that but it sits in my laptop bag after 8 years. I never got anything after graduating but I know that there is a shop.*

ALUM6: *When I was at campus there were items that I bought I did find them expensive at the time considering I had limited spending money but since then because I haven't been to Wits, I haven't purchased anything but I am not opposed to if it's a Wits hoodie.*

None of the alumni respondents show loyalty through wearing/displaying Wits branded merchandise, indicating a lack of brand engagement. However, all of them not averse to the idea of wearing it.

Summary on alumni engagement

All alumni showed a very high level of academic commitment while at university. Five of the six alumni respondents reported a good undergraduate experience, but also noted not having any alumni experience at all and hence could not rate satisfaction of an experience they never had. The role engagement results are, therefore, mixed.

Results pertaining to brand engagement were also mixed. Two of the respondents exhibit institutional commitment while the other four do not. None of the alumni respondents donate to Wits though five of them donate to other charitable organisations. All six respondents did not donate when they were students because they could not afford to. Further, all respondents indicated that Wits did not solicit any donations from them, with five of the respondents indicating an intention to donate if solicited. Only one of the respondents' volunteers at Wits, with the other five not volunteering. Four of these respondents volunteer outside of Wits.

None of the respondents show loyalty through wearing Wits branded merchandise, yet all of them show loyalty through an intention to maintain ties with Wits.

Overall, academic commitment, loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties and an intention to donate if solicited are the only engagement indicators which scored very high with the alumni. Low to very low overall ratings were recorded for institutional commitment, financial commitment, volunteerism towards Wits, the alumni experience and satisfaction with the alumni experience, indicating both brand engagement and brand non-engagement.

Alumni identification

Results of two aspects of identity are presented i.e. organisational identification and social identity.

i. Organisational identification

The extent of stakeholder identification was achieved through determining the extent of a sense of belonging the stakeholders felt.

Four of the respondents noted that they were disconnected from Wits, with two of the respondents noting a high sense of belonging to the institution.

Summaries of their responses regarding a sense of belonging to Wits are listed below:

ALUM1: *I am very proudly a Witsie, if you were to give me a scale of 1-5 I would say 4. It's not my siblings family, it's my very close cousin's family.*

ALUM2: I am just think I guess I am probably a little bit disconnected at this point. Maybe a couple of years ago I still maintained a connection but because I was working in some Wits departments but since I no longer work there yah the connection is a bit off.

ALUM3: *I do feel connected I think the whole point of Wits alumni is still…you know that it's personal when they send you a message "hi RM" and the fact that they remembered you on your birthday. I feel I still belong to Wits. I still have a strong connection to Wits. I really feel like oh that's my home.*

ALUM4: *Currently not so much so I would say I didn't feel the same kind of connection with the university that I would have had with my school. So, I would say*

in terms of benchmarking it wouldn't be a close connection currently. Yah, very disconnected. I feel very disconnected from these questions like was I here at Wits? I am really not concerned about Wits

ALUM5: *I don't view it as family. I guess even during the studies it was all about get marks, pass and leave. And you wanted to leave as fast as possible. I am disconnected from Wits. I struggle with the concept of who Wits is*

ALUM6: *Not any longer as earlier when I left the campus I could to some certain extent recall memories which associated me to the campus but considering the timespan and length of time I haven't been to campus I don't feel I belong there any longer and even something as simple as vising campus coz things have changed from what I know it to be that sort of thing. I no longer feel I know where I am so there is no sense of belonging.*

Only two of respondents indicate a sense of belonging to Wits, akin to organisational identification.

ii. Social identification

Study respondents did not identify with any particular groups, except for ALUM5 who identified with the Faculty of Engineering where they are currently attending research workshops.

Summary of identification indicators for alumni

Four alumni respondents showed no sense of belonging/organisational identification with Wits, while two of them had a high sense of belonging to the institution. There was no social identification exhibited by five of the alumni respondents, with one of them identifying with their Faculty.

a) Social exchange

Social exchange is measured through stakeholder attitudes towards Wits University.

Four of the respondents have a positive attitude towards the University and go on to note the reciprocal nature of their positive attitudes. One respondent (ALUM2) is negative about Wits, citing that Wits as the big and powerful institution that it is, can

do better. Another respondent (ALUM4) is neutral towards Wits. Some examples of some of the responses are noted below:

ALUM1: *Definitely positive. I am a big cheerleader of the university. I tend to be a very strong ambassador as well. I think that it's the fact that I credit a lot of positive experiences that I had here with helping me become the person that I have become.*
ALUM2: *Probably not positive. Wits is a very powerful institution and very well established, this incredible reputation. People come from all over the country, all over the world to study there. So what I am trying to say is Wits can do better. (Would be positive if things start improving)*
ALUM5: *At the end of the day they gave me a qualification and I gained a lot of information through Wits so by default you do have… I mean, if someone gives you a positive boost you tend to respect them....*

Summary of the attitude/social exchange by Wits alumni
Four of alumni respondents exhibit a positive attitude towards Wits, based on reciprocity; one exhibits a negative attitude and yet another one is neutral.

Conclusion of alumni results

The results presented above show that a lack of a solid and structured internal branding practices did not affect academic (role) engagement of the alumni when they were university students, as evidenced by unanimously high ratings for academic commitment, as well as the overall good ratings regarding the university experience. Loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution was also unaffected and the intention to donate to Wits also does not seem to be affected by a lack of structured internal branding practices.
However, a lack of a solid internal branding programme seems to have a negative impact on brand engagement, as evidenced by lower overall ratings on institutional commitment, financial commitment (through donations to the institution), loyalty through wearing/displaying Wits-branded merchandise and volunteerism behaviours. It can therefore be concluded that internal branding practices have no influence on academic engagement of the alumni respondents in the sample population, but has some influence on their brand engagement.

There is no alumni experience to speak of hence satisfaction with the alumni experience cannot be gauged.

It can be concluded that a lack of organisational identification has an influence on brand engagement, evidenced by the corresponding low ratings and institutional commitment. In addition, social identification is quite non-existent among alumni. Furthermore, social exchange based on reciprocity also seems to have an impact on brand engagement as evidenced by the attitudes exhibited towards the institution, with a general exhibition of a positive attitude towards Wits.

4.5 Summary of the combined research results

Existence of Internal Branding Practices at Wits University (overall)

None of the 30 study respondents knew the Wits values.

Just over half of the study respondents (16), seven staff, eight students and one alumni knew or participated in Wits traditions.

All 30 study respondents reported not receiving any brand-related training from Wits. However, eight of the respondents – seven staff and one student, reported receiving some sort of brand-related information.

All study respondents reported that the communication to them from Wits, which was predominantly via email, did not contain brand-related content.

Thirteen of the respondents – seven staff, five students and one alumnus, indicated that they gave feedback to Wits in one way or the other (e.g. surveys).

Fourteen of the respondents, eight staff, three students and three alumni, reported that they had not received an induction or orientation/first year experience programme, while the remaining 16, four staff, nine students and three alumni, who had been part of the programmes reported them as being ineffective. All six postgraduate respondents reported the absence of a postgraduate orientation programme. Then, five of the six alumni respondents reported the absence of a programme designed to keep alumni connected to Wits, with one alumnus indicating knowledge of the existence of such activities.

Only five of the 30 respondents reported some sort of relationship building effort with them by Wits i.e. three staff members and two residence students. The remaining 23 respondents, nine staff, four students and all six alumni) reported seeing no relationship building efforts with them by Wits.

Of the 30 study respondents, only seven (three staff, three students and one alumnus) reported feeling valued or appreciated by Wits. Five of the 23 study participants (one staff, three students and two alumni) did not feel valued or appreciated by Wits and reported that they were not expecting Wits to value or appreciate them.

Overall, the results regarding the existence of internal branding practices for employees, students and alumni are similar – there is no evidence of a solid and structured internal branding practices taking place at Wits University, or at best, internal branding happening at an ad hoc and ineffective level.

Overall stakeholder engagement (employees, students and alumni) results

Twenty-nine of the 30 study respondents (all 12 staff, 11 students and all six alumni) exhibited a very high level of role (academic or job) commitment, with one undergraduate student exhibiting low role (academic) commitment because of the wrong choice of programme of study.

Twenty study respondents, i.e. all 12 staff, four students and four alumni, reported high institutional commitment. Of the remaining 10 study respondents, eight students and two alumni, showed no institutional commitment.

All stakeholder groups show no financial commitment to Wits (did not make any donations to Wits). However, 19 of these study respondents (nine staff, five students and five alumni) indicated that they donated to other charitable organisations. Further all of the 30 study respondents noted that they did not received donation solicitations (asks) from Wits. Be that as it may, 23 of the study respondents, eight staff, 10 students and five alumni indicated that they would donate if they received a donation solicitation from Wits. Also, all alumni indicated that they did not donate as students as they could not afford to do so, and they also did not know that it was a possibility.

Twelve of the 30 study respondents (five staff, six students and one alumni) volunteer at Wits while the remaining 18 do not. Seventeen of the study respondents volunteer at other organisations outside of Wits.

All thirty of the study respondents i.e. all 12 staff, all 12 students and all six alumni respondents, show loyalty through an intention to maintain ties with the institution, while seventeen of the study respondents (nine staff and eight students) show loyalty through branded merchandise wearing (or using and displaying). All six alumni do not show loyalty through wearing or displaying Wits branded merchandise.

Of the 30 study respondents, 26 (all 12 staff, nine students and five alumni) reported a good to brilliant Wits experience; three respondents (all of them students) reported a fair overall experience. There was one report of an overall bad experience by one respondent, an alumnus, who apportioned the negative rating to academic challenges and stresses.

Twenty-nine of the study respondents i.e. all 12 staff, nine students and five alumni, reported an overall good Wits experience and were satisfied with the experience. Of the 30 study respondents, 11 (four staff, five students and two alumni) indicated having a good social experience while at Wits, with the remaining 19 respondents (eight staff, seven students and four alumni) indicating that they had no social experience while at the institution. Three of the respondents, all of them undergraduate students, reported that their good social experience was through residence life. Fifteen of the respondents (four staff, eight students and three alumni) indicated growth, independence and grooming that come with passing through the Wits system as a big positive in their Wits experience.

Regarding the alumni experience, five alumni noted having received no real alumni experience to speak of, and hence could not be satisfied by a non-existent experience. Only one alumnus registered being happy and satisfied with their alumni experience even though it was only email-based.

Twelve of the study respondents (two staff, nine students and one alumnus) indicated that they are part of a club or society within Wits. The remaining 18 respondents (10 staff, three students and five alumni) are not.

Seven of the 18 student and alumni respondents (five students and two alumni) indicated encountering high school to university transition challenges i.e. a more challenging academic life, the sheer number of people at the university or trying to strike a balance or find your place while in first year.

Three students are affected by mental health issues, with a fourth student, though not affected themselves, acknowledging the mental health struggles of their fellow

students. Also, one staff member also noted and commented on mental health challenges faced by this generation of students saying, "*I can assure you when I was a student I didn't feel on my shoulders the kind of stress your generation is dealing with".*

Time challenges were noted by all study stakeholders. Eighteen of the 30 study respondents (eight staff, seven students and three alumni) brought up the issue of time challenges to do much else beyond the job requirements.

The issue of departmental silos and no working synergies came out as a negative regarding the Wits experience i.e. for three of the study respondents (one staff and two students).

Eight of the 18 student and alumni respondents (seven students and one alumni) reported a unique experience of being humbled and shown-up by the Wits academic experience i.e. through not feeling special or not feeling as smart as they thought they were. Further, 16 of the 18 student and alumni respondents (12 students and four alumni) reported a challenging and/or stressful experience (not plain sailing).

Respondent AS6 noted the difference between European universities and Wits, with the former taking university students as customers, while Wits considered them co-creators of knowledge.

Overall stakeholder identification results

Seventeen respondents i.e. 10 staff, five students and two alumni, indicated that they had a high sense of organisational identification to Wits, with 11 indicating that they did not. One of the respondents, an undergraduate student, indicated that they had neither a sense of belonging or not belonging to Wits, with another undergraduate student indicating both a sense of belonging and no sense of belonging (to residence and to Wits, respectively).

Socially, 15 study respondents (11 staff, three students and one alumni) identified with their departments (including school and faculty); six respondents, all of them

students, identified with friends; two respondents, both of them students, identified with their residence; and six respondents (one student and five alumni) had no social identification. One respondent, a staff member, reported mixed feelings.

Overall social exchange results

Twenty-three of the 30 study respondents (11 staff, eight students and four alumni) exhibited a positive attitude towards Wits University, based on reciprocity. Two of the respondents (one staff and one alumnus) were neutral towards the institution. Three of the respondents, all of them students, exhibited mixed feelings (both positive and negative feelings) towards the institution. There were two respondents (one student and one alumnus) who exhibited negative attitudes towards the institution.

Overall results conclusion

The results presented above show that a lack of solid or structured internal branding practices does not affect role engagement (associated with job responsibilities or academic studies) for employees, students and alumni, as evidenced by overall high ratings for job/academic commitment. However, a lack of internal branding seems to have a negative impact on brand engagement for all stakeholder groups (i.e. institutional or organisational engagement which goes beyond role specific engagement, is all encompassing and has a broader focus on engagement with the organisation and organisational goals) especially for students (particularly undergraduates) and alumni, as evidenced by low overall ratings on institutional commitment, financial commitment (through donations to the institution) and volunteerism behaviours.

Generally, there were mixed results for brand engagement indicators, showing how the lack of a solid internal branding programme may have an impact on brand engagement. Of all the stakeholder groups, employees exhibit the highest engagement levels, followed by postgraduate students, then undergraduate students and lastly, alumni as the most negatively affected. It can therefore be concluded that internal branding practices have no influence on academic or job engagement of Wits employees, students and alumni, but has some influence on brand engagement by these stakeholders.

It can also be concluded that organisational identification has some influence on brand engagement, evidenced by the corresponding high ratings on institutional commitment for employees and postgraduate students, with corresponding low ratings on institutional commitment for undergraduate students and alumni.

Social identification for postgraduate students and employees is related to their department, while for undergraduate students it is with their friends. Alumni do not seem to have any social identification with Wits.

Lastly, social exchange based on reciprocity also seems to have an impact on brand engagement, as evidenced by the overall positive attitudes exhibited towards the institution, particularly by employees and postgraduate students.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The findings relating to the demographics of the sample are discussed and explained, followed by discussions relating to the three research questions pertaining to the influence of internal branding on employee/staff, student and alumni engagement. The chapter ends with an overall conclusion pertaining to the study research questions.

5.2 Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents encompassed age, race, gender, faculty/department and years at Wits or as alumni. Overall, the demographics did not seem to have a bearing on the study results, with no distinct patterns in the results relating to the demographics. At a very low level, demographics could be related to two aspects i.e. feedback to the university and attitude towards the university. The older generation – those 40 to 65 were more likely to feedback to the University unlike those under the age of 40. All four respondents over the age of 40 reported that they gave feedback to the university while there were mixed results for those under the age of 40. Then, a weak argument could be made that females were likely to have a negative attitude towards Wits since the only two respondents who reported a negative attitude towards the institution were both female.

The results relating to demographics were, overall, as expected. Age, gender, race, faculty/department or time at Wits/as alumni was not expected to, and did not seem to have, a bearing on the study.

5.3 The existence or non-existence of internal branding practices at Wits University

This section combines results for the three stakeholder groups under consideration as the same internal branding indicators will be under review.

When it comes to internal branding research, it was usually done with employees in mind. However, this research includes other stakeholders, namely students and

alumni. Saleem and Iglesias (2016) support the notion of looking beyond employees for internal branding research, noting how there is an increasing number of stakeholders and brand touch points to consider.

The existence or non-existence of internal branding practices at the case site was concluded by taking into account various indicators of internal branding as noted in the literature. These indicators include the knowledge of values and traditions, receiving brand training, information or communication, communication or feedback by the stakeholders back to the University - akin to dialogue, the presence of an induction, postgraduate or alumni connection programme, relationship building efforts or feeling valued and appreciated by the University.

The most obvious indicator of the absence of a solid or structured internal branding programme is the unanimous lack of knowledge of the Wits values by the study respondents. One of the most important activities/processes of internal branding, according to Judson et al. (2006) and Liu et al. (2015), is informing and inspiring stakeholders about the brand and corporate culture and helping them to buy into an organisation's brand values. Further, Raj and Jyothi (2011) note internal branding as a process that enables stakeholders (employees) to know the brand values and to develop a positive attitude towards them. Therefore, if all the respondents do not know these values, the conclusion that internal branding is not in existence at the University would be plausible.

Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) and Punjaisri et al. (2008) found brand training and internal communications to be requisite for the effectiveness of internal branding programmes. As such, since all study respondents reported that they did not receive brand training or information, it can also be concluded that internal branding efforts are non-existent or ineffective at best. Furthermore, staff induction, postgraduate and alumni connection programmes, which are a perfect opportunity to share brand related information, were either non-existent or ineffective.

One of the indicators of a lack of internal branding practices at the case site was the absence of an alumni programme for keeping connected with alumni once they had graduated. Internal branding practices during university-going days are important in

that they build strong relationships with students. However, of greater importance is to maintain these relationships once the students become alumni. Newman and Petrosko (2011) mention how alumni programmes, which are usually run through alumni associations, are used to build and strengthen relationships with students and alumni as well as to engage and provide a connection to and from the alma mater. Then, the study by Pather et al. (2017) found that the First Year Experience programme was critical for peer engagement, enhanced students' sense of belonging and deepened commitment to their own academic goals, aspirations and academic success. Both alumni and undergraduate programmes advocated for by Newman Newman and Petrosko (2011) and Pather et al. (2017), which are usually part of internal branding programmes, were not in place at the case site or weakly managed, resulting in the intended benefits not accruing to the stakeholders or the institution.

Traditions are noted as existing at Wits University, with just over half of the study participants knowing or participating in them. Martin et al. (2015) note the importance of traditions and rituals, particularly for students and alumni. They say that traditions can serve as a means by which students engage on campus, participate in a university's brand community, and later can become active and giving alumni. Further, according to Myers et al. (2016), traditions make it possible for current students to feel connected with a school's past and may increase feelings of identification with an organisation – students' attachment with the institution is positively affected when they are unified by traditions and university sponsored sporting events. Alumni relations officers are identified by Newman and Petrosko (2011) as being responsible for maintaining the history and traditions of an institution. The knowledge of Wits traditions by just over half of the study respondents indicates some level of internal branding practice since some of the study participants are aware of their existence. However, the fact that almost half of the study participants are unaware of any traditions at all would point to the ineffectiveness of any internal branding practices that may be in existence at the case site.

Baker et al. (2014) and Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) maintain that internal branding involves the dissemination of meaningful and relevant brand information so

the fact that no study respondents received brand related communication, training or communication alludes to the lack of solid internal branding practices.

Another indicator of the lack of solid internal branding practices at the case site was the high number of respondents (25 out of 30) who noted no relationship building efforts with them by the University. Drapińska (2012) stresses the importance of HEIs building relationships with a range of stakeholders including staff, graduates and donors. Then, according to Matiatou (2018), internal branding requires a close relationship with stakeholders as well as dialogue, with Tosti and Stotz (2001) noting how effective internal branding requires meaningful relationships of trust within the organisation and Guzmán et al. (2009) noting lifelong relationships as a key benefit of internal branding. Guzmán et al. (2009) further stress the importance of dialogue, which various stakeholders, including employees, students and alumni are accustomed to, and fond of, with internal branding fostering that two-way communication which makes it possible to engage an institution's stakeholders. In addition, LePla (2013) asserts how internal branding appreciated the fact that it is inborn in people to look for meaning and relationships even in businesses or organisations – relationship aspects of which are absent in 25 of the 30 study respondents. Luoma-aho (2015) then adds how stakeholders ought to be attracted into relationships through providing extra value and contributing to issues pertinent to them, something the stakeholders did not feel was taking place at Wits. Relationship building and dialogue would likely result in feelings of being valued and appreciated, aspects only evident in seven of the 30 respondents.

After taking the above indicators into account, it was concluded that no internal branding or effective internal branding efforts were at play at the case site. As such, the influence of internal branding on stakeholder (employee/staff) engagement, after ascertaining that no internal branding is taking place at the case site, can now be explored. However, it must be noted that some of the respondents were not expecting to be engaged, valued or appreciated by the institution, matching the misgivings of Guest (2014) who questions the whole notion of engagement or the implicit assumption that stakeholders (employees in particular) want to be engaged. Guest (2014) further argues that some employees will do the work they need to do

as expected, but then feel no obligation to be engaged and are not looking for any further involvement with the organisation. Such aspects would need to be kept in mind when discussing the issue of stakeholder engagement.

5.4 How is higher education institution employee engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

A lack of internal branding does not seem to have an influence or negative impact on role engagement, in this case being work/job engagement, of both academic and non-academic staff at the case site. Mohanty (2018, p. 197) defines employee engagement as “a condition where employees are fully engaged in their work and are emotionally attached to their organisation”. According to this definition, 11 of the 12 Wits employee respondents showed full engagement with their work roles, as evidenced by the very high levels of job commitment. However, an addition to the definition of an engaged employee by Mohanty (2018, p. 197) is that “they will act in a way that furthers his/her organisations’ interests and productivity”, which does not synchronise with the study results. For example, none of the employees donated financially to the organisation, with only some of them volunteering their time to the organisation. Then, the current study results showed that employees were fully engaged with their roles even in the absence of solid internal branding practices. These results do not match those of the study by King and Grace (2008), which showed how internal branding resulted in staff being more committed to their jobs. The main driver for commitment, according to the King and Grace (2008) study, was internal branding, yet the current study showed job commitment even in the absence of internal branding practice.

For this study, satisfaction with the employee experience was noted as an indicator of (role) engagement. The study by Nouri et al. (2017) showed how internal branding improves supportive attitudes and lead to employee job satisfaction. However, these results do not align with the current study results which showed how satisfaction was exhibited even in the absence of internal branding, though brand supportive behaviours e.g. donations and volunteerism were not exhibited even in the light of satisfaction with the Wits experience.

As alluded to earlier, the current study findings are that a lack of internal branding (encompassing a lack of training and communication) has no influence on role engagement but has an influence on some aspects of brand/organisational engagement. The current study findings are similar, with reference to role engagement but dissimilar regarding brand engagement, to the results of the study by Lee et al. (2014) who found that internal branding which incorporates training and communication has a positive effect on employee engagement (both role and organisational/brand).

Regarding brand engagement, the results were mixed, indicating some negative impact that can be apportioned to the lack of solid internal branding practices. Brand engagement, which, according to Guest (2014), is institutional or organisational engagement that goes beyond role specific engagement, is all-encompassing and has a broader focus on engagement with the organisation and organisational goals. In this study, brand engagement encompassed ratings on institutional commitment, financial commitment through donations, time commitment through volunteerism and loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with Wits or through wearing Wits branded merchandise. The results show a high level of institutional (brand) commitment and loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution, of which brand commitment, according to Piehler et al. (2015) is usually because of internal branding efforts. However, for this study, the same results were evident even in the absence of solid internal branding practices. Further, Yu et al. (2018) note how internal branding has a positive effect on brand identification, brand commitment, brand loyalty and brand supporting behaviours. Although the results show a high level of role (job) commitment, they also show no financial commitment towards the institution in terms of donation behaviours, yet donating elsewhere, with only half of the respondents volunteering their time to Wits. These behaviours cannot be classified as being brand supportive and go against the expected behaviour of what, according to Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) and LePla (2013), committed employees are supposed to exhibit. Be that as it may, a lack of time commitment could be attributed to the general lack of time to do much else other than the job requirements – as reported by the study participants.

Brand supportive behaviours seem to be a common outcome based on various studies on internal branding. The literature notes the results of internal branding as including the exhibition of brand building and supporting behaviours by internal stakeholders e.g. increased probability of organisational support, increased loyalty, increased engagement and the reduced likelihood of leaving the organisations (Baker et al., 2014; Iyer et al., 2018; Nouri et al., 2017). Commitment, which results in brand supporting behaviours, was one of the study indicators of engagement. There were mixed results in terms of commitment, with all employee respondents showing high levels of institutional commitment, but no financial commitment at all, and only half of them showing time commitment through volunteerism at the University. These results are contrary to the definitions of engagement by Adnjani and Prianti (2018) and Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013), i.e. commitment and involvement with the organisation's activities and brand supporting behaviours. Further, the current study findings are somewhat contrary to the findings of the study by Du Preez et al. (2017) who found that internal branding strongly impacted on employee brand commitment, brand citizenship and brand-supporting behaviours. In the current study, an impact on brand commitment and brand supporting behaviours was apparent even in the absence of internal branding practices. Furthermore, the current study results only partially mirror the results of the study by Yu et al. (2018) which showed that internal market orientation (internal branding) increased brand commitment by university staff although the positive results were usually dependent on the demographic profile of the employees. Only some aspects of brand commitment were positively rated by the university staff respondents in the current study to indicate brand commitment (e.g. institutional commitment and loyalty), with other aspects not being reflective of brand commitment (e.g. lack of financial commitment). In addition, the current study showed no impact of the demographic profile of the respondents (age, race and gender).

Also, the current study results are contrary to the assertion's by LePla (2013), who notes how internal branding, if done well, builds employee commitment through reinforcing the company culture and strategic direction. In this study, the results show that employee role commitment/engagement as well as some aspects of brand

engagement exist even in the absence of any tangible internal branding or brand communication efforts.

Loyalty towards the University was another indicator of engagement for this study. Then the results of the study by Itam and Singh (2017) were that internal branding resulted in the development of employee engagement and the exhibition of positive attitudes and behaviours in terms of loyalty and performance. The current study results show that a lack of a solid internal branding practice does not seem to have an impact on loyalty through maintaining ties with the organisation – aspects said to be a result of internal branding practice. This indicates that there may be factors other than internal branding that could be attributed to employee loyalty.

This study concluded that no solid or structured internal branding programme was in place at Wits University. Although this lack of internal branding did not affect role engagement and only seemed to affect some parts of brand engagement, it did show no unity of purpose, thought or action, with all respondents unfamiliar with the University's values. The study results are quite similar to those by Foster et al. (2011) whose study showed how a lack of internal branding resulted in no unity of purpose, thought or action through different cultures and agendas.

Itam and Singh (2017) and O'Neill et al. (2015) note employee engagement as a connection between an organisation and its workforce. According to this definition, the majority of the study respondents (10 out of 12) were engaged with the University since they exhibited a very high sense of belonging and emotional attachment/organisational identification to the organisation, as well as a high level of satisfaction with the organisation. These results match the declarations of Peasley et al. (2018) who note how a sense of organisational identification is more apparent where a person is more satisfied with an organisation. However, these results are contrary to the views of Myers et al. (2016) who note how organisational identification develops due to an alignment with the mission and values of an organisation. In this study, organisational identification by employees seems to exist even with a complete lack of knowledge of brand values or brand training. Furthermore, the current study results are also contrary to those by Punjaisri et al. (2008) and Punjaisri

and Wilson (2011) that showed how internal branding resulted in an emotional connection and a sense of belonging to that organisation as well as the intention to stay. The current study results indicated the same but in the proven absence of internal branding practices.

According to Karanges (2014), employees need to develop knowledge of their group membership to which they attach value and emotional significance in order for them to become engaged. The current study results indicate a distinct, almost unanimous (11 out of 12) association and attachment of value to participants' department (school or faculty) for which they showed distinct loyalty and engagement with (when compared to Wits as the institution). This result ties in with the assertions by Jevons (2006), who notes how it is quite common for employees to associate with an entity smaller than the university itself, such as the department. Case in point is one of the staff respondents who noted how the notion of Wits is quite abstract to them and how they feel more attached to their school as opposed to Wits in a greater sense. This merges with what Tajfel and Turner (2004) note as being social categorisations which provide a system of orientation for self-reference, creating and defining an individual's place in society and providing members with an identification of themselves.

According to Di Battista et al. (2014), when individuals identify with a group, they are likely to act co-operatively, a factor proven by the willingness of the respondents to act co-operatively when it involved the department. However in this study, even with the overall high levels of organisational identification, which Myers et al. (2016) define as a process of social construction whereby individuals define themselves with recourse to the organisation in which they are members and are strongly attached to it, the staff respondents did not show co-operative behaviour e.g. through volunteerism or donations. In addition, the study by Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos (2014) offered important insights into how internal branding can foster organisational identification (OID). However, the current study results do not relate OID to internal branding. High levels of organisational identification were still apparent even where the non-existence of a solid internal branding programme at the University was proven.

An interesting aspect coming out from the study was the report by half (3) of the non-academic staff in the study sample regarding the rift that exists between academic and non-academic staff, in terms of perceived importance of non-academic staff within the university. Non-academic staff note how both management and academic staff seem to view them as being less important to the University – as aspect which slightly dampened their satisfaction with the Wits experience though not bad enough to give it a negative score or result in disengagement. This echoes the sentiments of Borden et al. (2014) who noted how academic staff are prone to viewing non-academic staff members as low-status members of the university community, with Marshall (2018) noting the role of non-academic staff as not being highly evident in the literature, and their impact being described as “invisible”.

The aspect of social exchange is quite apparent, based on the study results. Eleven of the twelve staff respondents noted a positive attitude towards Wits, based on reciprocity. For example, all eleven respondents with a positive attitude noted how they would defend Wits and speak positively of it. Chang et al. (2012) posit how meeting employee needs through exchange relationships results in reciprocation through better brand attitude, brand psychological ownership and altruistic behaviours, while Chang et al. (2015) note reciprocation as being through the adoption of pro-brand behaviours and attitudes; results which are the overall desired outcome of any internal branding process. However, although the study revealed that significant exchange relationships do exist between staff and the University, pro-brand behaviours which required action e.g. donations and volunteerism were not evident. The pro-brand behaviours exhibited were more linked to the benefits that the respondents would get, based on the association with Wits giving an impression that the respondents are more interested in aspects that are of benefit to them more than those that would only benefit the institution.

In conclusion, internal branding does not seem to have any influence on role (academic or job) commitment, but has some influence on brand engagement, of the employees (both academic and non-academic) in the study sample.

5.5 How is higher education institution student engagement with the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

The concept of student engagement was found to be quite broad with multiple definitions in the literature, definitions varying in depth; academic and non-academic in nature. Academic engagement of students, as proposed by Kinzie and Hurtado (2017), refers to the time and effort students devote to activities linked to desired outcomes of undergraduate education. Then, according to Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017), student engagement includes aspects of investing effort in studies, good study habits, the degree of interest in their course and the time they actually spend studying. Both these definitions are in reference to role engagement. The study findings show that a lack of internal branding does not impact negatively on role (academic) engagement of the students in the study sample – both undergraduate and postgraduate. Eleven out of the 12 student participants exhibited these traits related to academic engagement, with one undergraduate student noting that they did not enjoy their programme of choice, a factor which added to the academic struggles and challenges and the low rating towards academic commitment. However, overall, the majority of the students exhibited a very high level of academic commitment as per the definitions given by Almarghani and Mijatovic (2017) and Kinzie and Hurtado (2017).

Even in cases where students arrived at the case site with their own self-concept of how smart and clever they were and were quickly “humbled” by Wits University which showed them just how no-so-clever they were, students generally did have high levels of academic commitment. Wilkins et al. (2016) note student academic engagement as being intertwined with social identification, with students arriving for undergraduate studies at university with an academic self-concept (i.e. a perception of their own academic competence). In such instances, internal branding is proposed as a way to successfully incorporate students from a high school environment into a university system.

The student experience is a factor in the engagement of students. Overall, the majority of students (nine) reported a good to brilliant experience, with three saying it

was fair. There were no overall negative ratings on the Wits experience by students. The Wits experience of students had them score highly on academic engagement but lower on brand engagement aspects, showing how the Wits experience impacted on these two types of engagement. According to Tinto (2017), student engagement and a sense of belonging are shaped by the overall experience (including the broader campus climate, interactions with other students, academics and non-academics and extracurricular activities). Shah and Richardson (2016) note the student experience as being an enriched learning experience which includes the student's transition from school to university, campus life, engagement with staff, interaction with other students and extracurricular activities. These aspects were apparent in the descriptions of the student experience by the respondents. Cases in point, five of the respondents noted huge high school to university transition challenges that impacted negatively on their Wits experience; nine indicated participation in extracurricular activities, with seven indicating the time constraints they faced in order to attend non-academic activities. Mental health challenges dampened the experience of three of the participants, especially considering the lack of support by the department meant to help them through the mental health challenges. Regarding campus life, only five respondents had a social life worth noting (three of them crediting it to residence life) with most of their time being taken by academics. Two of the respondents noted dissatisfaction with the silos that existed between departments. Be that as it may, there were no overall reports of a negative experience, with an overall good to fair experience prevailing.

The study results indicated a stark absence of relationship building efforts with the students, attributed to the absence of solid internal branding practices, and this likely accounts for the diminished levels of brand engagement by the majority of the student respondents. The literature notes the importance of relationships and dialogue with students. Guilbault (2016) advocates for relationship marketing since it emphasises customer retention and satisfaction, and focuses on customer loyalty and long-term customer (student) engagement, with Schlesinger et al. (2017) concluding how relationship marketing can be useful in the student engagement context since it encompasses marketing activities directed at establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges. Then, Guzmán et al.

(2009) note how internal branding is meant to engage internal constituents in dialogue about the brand development process, resulting in their willingness to apply the practice of identity-building – organisational identity being an aspect, which does not exist for some of the students in the sample population. Pittaway (2016) notes that student engagement is distinct from listening to, consulting with, students, stressing that it involves dialogue, which gives way to relationship building.

Although some aspects of brand engagement were negative in light of the absence of solid internal branding practices, the results for some of the aspects were still positive. For example, all students, bar one, indicated their loyalty to Wits through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution in one way or the other. The results of this study are contrary to those by Bowden (2011) who found that student loyalty was most strongly determined by psychological attachment and a sense of belonging to the brand. However, the study results show that loyalty was not affected by a sense of belonging because seven of the eight students who showed no sense of belonging to Wits still showed loyalty towards it. Only one student exhibited both no sense of belonging and no loyalty to Wits but had an intention to maintain ties with the institution.

According to McAlexander et al. (2006) branded merchandise wearing, buying or displaying is a clear sign of loyalty. However, only eight of the 12 respondents showed loyalty through branded wear, giving mixed results in terms of brand engagement.

Students are a key, if not the main, stakeholder in the HEI space, with debates still on-going regarding whether or not to treat them as customers. One of the Wits academic staff member respondents made an interesting observation regarding the difference between European universities and Wits, with the former taking university students as customers, while Wits considered them co-creators of knowledge. This lines up with what Dholakia (2017) said about how faculty is more accepting of students if they are defined as co-creators towards the final achievement. However, some authors insist that students be considered customers as that would have far reaching effects on engagement. They may have a point since, based on the study results, brand engagement of students is very low as evidenced by low institutional

commitment (especially among undergraduate students), no financial commitment through donations, and a questionable volunteerism level. This fits in with what Guilbault (2018) asserts i.e. not recognising students as customers would have implications on student engagement because of a lack of a customer orientation.

The study findings for students were dissimilar for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The study findings show that a lack of internal branding may have a negative impact on brand engagement by mostly undergraduate students in the sample population, with five out of six showing no institutional commitment or a sense of belonging to Wits. However, results for postgraduate students showed that the majority – four out of six - showed both a high sense of institutional commitment and sense of belonging to Wits. Brand engagement by students, particularly undergraduate students, may be low because of a reported low sense of belonging to the institution. Tinto (2017) notes how development of a sense of academic and social belonging early on in first year has positive spin-offs on other forms of engagement. Therefore, a low sense of belonging could explain the lack of brand engagement by the students (particularly undergraduates). Then, according to Myers et al. (2016), positive attitudes towards an institution are synonymous with engagement. Based on attitudes exhibited towards the case institution by the study respondents, it is quite clear that undergraduates are not as engaged as their postgraduate counterparts. Half (3) of the undergraduates exhibited positive attitudes, with one exhibiting a negative attitude and two with mixed feelings of both positive and negative attitudes. In comparison, five of the postgraduates exhibit positive attitudes with one exhibiting mixed feelings of both negative and positive attitudes. The differing results between postgraduate and undergraduate students could be that postgraduates, by virtue of having selected to study at the institution again would be less likely to have a lowered sense of belonging as undergraduates would and thereby likely to have a more positive attitude regarding the institution.
Students, particularly undergraduate students, seemed to attach social identity and sense of belonging to their friends and the people they associated with in residence more than to the institution. Tajfel and Turner (2004) note how social identity consists of aspects of an individual's self-image emanating from the social categories to which they perceive themselves as belonging. An emerging theme from the study was the

better student experience that residence students seemed to enjoy, when compared to non-residence students. This matched the study findings by Di Battista et al. (2014), which were in line with the social identity theory, which found that the more students identified with the in-group, the more they were involved in extra-role behaviours, voluntarily participating in academic and social university life (in other words, were engaged). Study respondents who identified more with their residence participated more in extra-role activities, which positively impacted on their overall student experience.

The students seem to be engaged is some parts (e.g. academics and loyalty) while engaging negatively in other parts (e.g. institutional commitment and financial commitment (donations) – a student engagement complexity noted by Groccia (2018). According to Groccia (2018), it is quite possible for one to be positively engaged along one or more dimensions, but negatively engaged along others.

Drapińska (2012) posits that a university should endeavour to reduce the sense of alienation and disorientation of new students as well as facilitating student interactions in order to generate positive emotions and raise satisfaction levels. Drapińska (2012) goes on to assert that the level of student integration into the university space and involvement in its life affects the quality of the student-university relationship. Further, Bowden (2011) notes how strong and engaging relationships in the higher-education industry seem to be driven more by the quality of psychological and emotional bonds. These assertions apply to the majority of the undergraduate student respondents – the lack of a sense of belonging to the institution could be attributed to weak emotional bonds and to a failure by the University to reduce undergraduate students' sense of alienation and disorientation. Furthermore, Pather et al. (2017) found that the First Year Experience programme was critical for peer engagement and enhanced students' sense of belonging. The current study results showed that there was either no FYE programme or it was ineffective at best, which could have also contributed to the lack of a sense of belonging, especially by undergraduate students for which the FYE programme is intended to benefit.

The study by Wilkins et al. (2016) supported the hypothesis that organisational identification influences the attitudes and behaviour of higher education students, as it has been shown to do with employees and consumers. Their study results align with the current study results since the low organisational identification especially by undergraduate students seemed to influence their attitude towards the university, with some negative or mixed (both negative and positive) attitudes being exhibited.
Social exchange relationships seem to exist between students and the University. The study revealed the many issues and dissatisfactions they had with the institution, but over and above those, the majority of the students still exhibited positive attitudes towards the institution – akin to an acknowledgement of needing each other. The students were willing to overlook what they were not happy about and focus instead on what they gained from the institution (an excellent education) and by so doing, exhibited positive attitudes. Karanges (2014) notes how favourable social exchange relationships need to exist in order to achieve organisational and stakeholder goals, with Guest (2014) adding how the unitarist standpoint which automatically assumes that stakeholder goals are synonymous with those of the organisation be cast away in favour of those that encourage mutual exchanges. Four of the students had negative, or both negative and positive attitude, yet they still gave credit to the institution for a great education, acknowledging the growth they underwent and the doors and opportunities that would be opened to them because of it.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that student engagement (brand engagement), through the student experience, is possible through the implementation of robust internal branding strategies and activities that lead to strong relationships between the university and the student. This would be applicable to undergraduate students as they are exhibiting more dissatisfaction with their experience in parts as well as exhibiting low organisational identification levels.

The lack of solid and structured internal branding practices at the case site had no impact on role (academic) engagement but had mixed results when it came to brand engagement i.e. both brand engagement and non-engagement/disengagement. The study findings by Pather et al. (2017) could account for the role engagement even without internal branding practices. Their study showed that students prioritised

academic engagement over social engagement, though in their study, it was mainly because of the students' disadvantaged backgrounds, which made them regard academic involvement over extracurricular and other social support services offered by the university.

5.6 How is higher education institution alumni engagement with the brand and their financial or other support of the brand influenced by internal branding practices?

Alumni are known to be very valuable to an institution in various ways, including financial and charitable donations (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Chen & Murphy, 2018; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Marshall, 2018; Myers et al., 2016; Schlesinger et al., 2017), and volunteering time with campus programmes or events (Carranza & Wiecheteck, 2017; Iskhakova et al., 2017; Myers et al., 2016). Peasley et al. (2018) declare how the pinnacle of engagement for non-profits, such as a higher education institution, is the making of a donation – referred to in this study as financial commitment. However, based on the study results, the alumni who participated in this study showed high levels of non-engagement with their alma mater by not contributing financially to the institution. None of the six alumni respondents make financial donations to the University, yet five out of the six indicated that they do make financial donations to charitable organisations and institutions. Freeland et al. (2015) note the complexities attached to alumni giving since alumni do have alternative outlets for charitable giving, with Peasley et al. (2018) adding how organisations, which are ultimately in competition for the same donor dollar, need to actively and repeatedly justify their survival in order to stay relevant in a crowded non-profit landscape. Furthermore, Carranza and Wiecheteck (2017) reckon that alumni need a good reason to support their alma mater, reasons that are often a combination of academic and non-academic experiences between enrolment and graduation. Alumni giving, which is in itself a form of charitable giving, needs to top the list of potential givers. Tsao and Coll (2005) suggest how successful fundraising efforts at HEIs require positive long-term relationships with individual alumni. Based on the study results, there does not appear to be a strong relationship between alumni and their alma mater - alumni do not seem to have a good reason to

support their alma mater. Wits is evidently not at the top of the list of organisations that the alumni are willing to give financial support to, with organisations topping the list including churches, orphanages, literacy programmes, international medical organisations and homeless shelters.

The literature notes how alumni need to feel compelled to make a financial donation to their alma mater, and proposes that institutions know what their alumni want from the institution in return. Plausible answers on what alumni may value include intellectual stimulation and prestige (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), being recognised as successful alumni through the confering of honorary degrees (Marshall, 2018). Also, information about employment opportunities, bursaries and postgraduate study, current research projects at the institution, alumni achievements, general campus activities, cultural activities, fund-raising projects, sports activities and to keep alumni in touch with each other (Chen & Murphy, 2018). The literature assertions ring true for the study respondents who noted what would make them feel satisfied with their alumni experience. Examples of what study respondents noted they would like from the institution included alumni events at a time that makes sense to them, connections and networking with other alumni from the same programme, social connections, better communication from the alumni office, opportunities for alumni to help out at the University, mentorship programmes, more involvement through business and sports, events exclusive to alumni only, discounts on branded merchandise and invitations to participate in events and lectures. A solid internal branding programme would be able to make this a reality for the alumni.

Although the alumni respondents do not donate to the University, five of them indicated that they would donate if solicited. They therefore exhibit what Iskhakova et al. (2017) notes as intention to alumni loyalty, but do not actually follow through with by actually making a donation, what is noted as action loyalty.

Although alumni non-giving is seen as an indicator of non-engagement with the brand, it can also be attributed to the University not making a donation request to its alumni. According to Konrath and Handy (2018) and Wastyn (2009), a major trigger for making charitable donations is simply being asked. Based on the results, there is an extremely low tendency for Wits University to solicit financial donations from their

alumni, with only one of the six respondents noting that they do receive donation requests. The other five respondents indicated that they had never received a donation solicitation, but further indicated that they would donate if asked. Interestingly though, the respondent who has been solicited indicated that they would not donate to Wits since they had better things to do with their money. Making donation solicitations would be part of an internal branding programme through a brand-related communication content.

Results of this study indicated that demographic factors such as age, race, number of years after graduating and gender, did not have an influence on alumni giving behaviours. All respondents of varying ages between 25 and 40, of different races (Black, White, Coloured, Indian), both males and females, and varying from two to 17 years as alumni, did not donate to Wits. These results are contrary to the literature, which notes how charitable giving by alumni is influenced by demographic factors. According to Freeland et al. (2015), Newman and Petrosko (2011), Stephenson and Yerger (2014b), Tsao and Coll (2005) and Drezner (2018b), age, ethnicity (race), number of years after graduating and gender may have an impact on alumni giving behaviours; for example, older alumni are more likely to give than younger alumni. Furthermore, this current study recorded how none of the respondents donated to Wits while they were still students, an aspect which Freeland et al. (2015) notes as one of the strongest predictors of alumni giving, with their study showing how giving to the senior gift campaign is highly indicative of giving among young alumni. Internal branding through brand related communication and dialogue would be a plausible tool to enable conversations and requests around giving back to the University.

Communication and a strong relationship between the study respondents and Wits University, based on the study results, was lacking and non-existent, respectively. These aspects, which should be part of an internal branding programme, likely explain the lack of engagement with the Wits brand by these alumni. From the literature, various authors note communication and a strong relationship between alumni and their alma mater as being requisite to brand engagement, which results in pro-brand behaviours (including giving and volunteerism). Schlesinger et al. (2017) propose relationship marketing as a tool to build successful and enduring

relationships with alumni, with Dam (2016) and Newman and Petrosko (2011) identifying alumni relations officers as being responsible for developing and building lifelong relationships with graduates and encouraging commitment to the educational institution. Drezner (2018a) notes the importance of relationship marketing to higher education, ideally a relationship that is built and is in place before the students graduate and can then be nurtured after graduation – factors which can increase alumni support of the institution. Carranza and Wiecheteck (2017) express how continued communication and engagement with alumni after graduation would yield the ultimate support of the alumni, with Chen and Murphy (2018) adding how alumni communication is vital in sustaining the relationship between alumni and their alma mater. The lack of this sustained communication and the non-existence of strong alumni-alma mater relationship could account for the lack of brand engagement of the respondents.

As mentioned earlier, four of the six alumni respondents indicate no sense of belonging or emotional connection with their alma mater. Alumni involvement with their alma mater is said to be dependent on a strong emotional connection between the two, a connection facilitated by both student and alumni experiences (Siller, 2016). Siller (2016) and Drapińska (2012) suggest that this emotional connection is cultivated during the student years and may compel alumni to be involved with or to continue a relationship with the institution. This emotional connection is synonymous with organisational identification and is an indicator of alumni engagement. Based on the study results, there is no involvement with the institution after graduation, be it for those that graduated 17 years earlier or just two years earlier – there is no real alumni experience to speak of. This could explain, largely, the lack of identification with the institution as supported by the views of Dholakia (2017) who notes the futility of trying to build a relationship with alumni after they have graduated and are no longer at the institution as they are less likely to identify with the institution. According to Siller (2016), universities should strive to grow students holistically through academic, social, and emotional interactions during their studies so that they can connect with them and build a lasting emotional connection or affiliation which extends beyond the student years and well into the alumni years. Internal branding is proposed as a tool that can enable this.

The alumni respondents exhibit a lack of brand engagement by not giving back to their alma mater likely also because of non-satisfaction with their alumni experience and lack of involvement with their alma mater after graduation, resulting in non-pro-brand behaviours. Stephenson and Yerger (2014b) and Tsao and Coll (2005) note the importance of personal contact with the alumni, personal contact which can help garner positive attitudes towards the institution through public relations and relationship building efforts. As already alluded to earlier, relationship building is a major aspect of internal branding practices. Hence, a lack of internal branding impacts negatively on brand engagement through non-satisfaction and exhibits through not giving, which was already noted earlier as being the pinnacle of alumni engagement.

The study results indicated that alumni had no brand identification or commitment and did not donate to the institution, relating in an opposite way to the study results of Stephenson and Yerger (2014b) which empirically showed that alumni with a strong brand identity donated to the University, donated more money and donated more often. The assumption would be that the opposite of these findings would stand true i.e. those without a strong brand identity did not donate – similar to the current study results.

Drezner (2018b) notes how voluntary giving is often tied to factors such as beliefs, values and level of disposable income at hand, while Abbasov and Drezner (2018) apportion a low likelihood to give to affordability issues. This ties in with one of the reasons given for not donating to Wits - non-affordability. Further, the study findings by Konrath and Handy (2018) were that alumni do not give because they simply cannot afford to as there is no money to spare. This is reflective of the current study results as one respondent notes how they cannot afford to give to Wits as they have other responsibilities at home where they need to support the family in light of their brother not working. Their particular lack of affordability is akin to the notion of “black tax” which Magubane (2016) refers to as profound levels of societal discrimination and the complex financial responsibilities that the black middle class have towards their extended family. With non-affordability being cited as a reason for not donating

to Wits, any internal branding efforts are unlikely to be effective in turning the situation around as the reason is financial constraints.

Besides the reason of financial constraints, the other reasons why alumni do not donate to their alma mater as noted in the literature do not seem to apply to the current study findings. For example, the findings by Wastyn (2009) were that alumni had college experiences and values where giving did not fit; or the study findings by McDearmon (2010) where that alumni do not donate because of parallel plans with their alma mater, did not think their donation would make much of a difference or questioned what was in it for them. None of these reasons were given for why study respondents did not donate.

The current study results show that of the six alumni that do not donate to their alma mater, four of them exhibit no sense of organisational identification. These results match the study results by other authors noted in the literature. Peasley et al. (2018) note how persons exhibiting a high sense of organisational identification are more likely to engage in activities that preserve, support and improve the organisation and to show prosocial behaviours and donation intentions. In addition, Wang and Ashcraft (2014) also assert that alumni who identify with their alma mater (organisational identity) are more likely to make financial contributions to the alma mater, with Curtis et al. (2009) adding that the lifelong membership that graduating affords a university student, together with a sense of belonging might enable them to support the institution when they become alumni. In addition, various studies spanning well over two decades, including those by Mael and Ashforth (1992), Wang and Ashcraft (2014) and Myers et al. (2016), found that alumni who identified with their institution were apt to support it in various ways, including financially. All these study results match the current study results, i.e. a lack of organisational identification corresponds with a lack of donation action.

Further, the alumni also had, mostly, no sense of organisational identification with the University, with only two of the six respondents noting a high sense of belonging towards Wits. This sense of belonging, however, did not translate to brand supportive behaviours such as donations or volunteerism, as would have been expected. The study results therefore are contrary to the past study findings by, for example,

Stephenson and Yerger (2014a) who note that a high sense of belonging and organisational identification would result in alumni willingness to be involved in the future of the university. The study results, though, show even those respondents with a high sense of belonging also did not exhibit brand supportive behaviours. This could imply that other factors other than a sense of belonging could be the reason for not being brand supportive.

Unlike staff and students whose sense of social identity was linked with their department or friends, respectively, alumni had no sense of social identity to speak of. According to Di Battista et al. (2014), individuals, when they identify with a group, are likely to act co-operatively. Alumni mostly showed no social identification characteristics, and this translated to non-co-operative behaviours e.g. no volunteering, no donations etc. It has already been reported that five of the alumni respondents have no social identification related to their alma mater, with four of them not donating towards the institution. These results match the study results by Peasley et al. (2018), who note that social identification is an important construct in inducing donor action through creating a sense of a collective and driving prosocial behaviours. The study results support this assertion as there is a distinct lack of social identification except for one respondent who recently started associating with their Faculty through a research programme. The lack of social identification may also explain the lack of donations towards the case site by the alumni respondents.

In addition to identification and strong relationships, commitment and loyalty are also noted as indicators of alumni engagement. The aspect of financial commitment through donations has already been discussed above. However, another aspect of commitment is that of time commitment through volunteerism. Iskhakova et al. (2017), in their definition of loyalty, also includes acts of volunteerism i.e. faithfulness or devotion of alumni based on intention and action loyalty which is expressed non-materially as volunteerism, or materially through financial support. From the study results, there is generally a lack of time commitment or volunteerism, with five of the six respondents not giving any of their time to Wits, indicating alumni disengagement. The study results by Abbasov and Drezner (2018) indicated that alumni attached more value to volunteerism activities (time commitment) as opposed to financial

donations. The current study results match those by Abbasov and Drezner (2018) in terms of an unwillingness to donate financially, but were not in alignment regarding a willingness to volunteer – the current study showed an equal unwillingness to volunteer towards the institution. Schlesinger et al. (2017) are of the view that loyalty can be fostered through enhancing relationships with alumni. As alluded to earlier, there is no solid internal branding practice or relationship building efforts with Wits alumni hence supporting the literature that notes the influence of internal branding on some aspects of alumni engagement.

Alumni loyalty, hence engagement, is also gauged through a willingness to maintain ties with an institution. The definition of loyalty, according to Dam (2016), is that of customers' attitude towards a product which is manifested in rebuying (akin to a willingness to maintaining ties with the institution). The study results show absolute loyalty, with all of the six respondents showing a willingness to maintain ties (are loyal to the University). As such, it can be concluded that a lack of solid internal branding practices has no impact on brand engagement through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution. Loyalty can further be gauged through the propensity to wear Wits branded merchandise. The study results show that none of the respondents wear Wits branded merchandise, something which McAlexander et al. (2006) notes as a clear sign of alumni loyalty. As such, according to this literature, the Wits alumni study participants are not engaged enough with the brand to buy and wear or display the branded merchandise. Successful internal branding implementation can result in a relationship and connection between the alumni and institution, making them feel compelled to wear and display university-branded merchandise.

There are mixed results regarding social exchange motivations by the alumni respondents. The majority exhibit positive attitudes towards the University based on the qualification they received, and the positive spin-offs associated with that. However, such positive attitudes did not translate into brand supporting behaviours, such as donating to the institution. Past research indicates positive reciprocity as a major driver of generosity i.e. when one receives a service, they may feel inclined to behave reciprocally (Chuan et al., 2018). This social exchange motivation does not

seem to exist with this set of alumni respondents though – with the four respondents who exhibited a positive attitude towards Wits based on reciprocity, still not making a donation towards it. The non-exhibition of financial commitment towards the University could also be explained by the rapidly diminishing effects of positive reciprocity as discovered by Chuan et al. (2018). Their study found that positive reciprocity does not remain constant but rapidly decays over time. As such, a lack of action early on, e.g. not soliciting for donations, communicating or building relationships would likely result in a diminished sense of responding positively towards the University.

Overall, a lack of giving to one's alma mater, which is noted as the pinnacle of alumni engagement, be it by the above explained reasons such as Wits not being top of mind for charitable giving yet other organisations are, not asking or soliciting for donations, alumni not exhibiting giving behaviours while they were still students, are factors thought to be impacted on positively through internal branding which fosters relationship building that eventually leads to pro-brand behaviours.

5.7 Discussion Conclusion

It can be concluded that there is currently no solid or structured internal branding practice or programme at the University. This though, did not impact negatively on role engagement of the employees, students or alumni when they were still students. There was also no impact on loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution, nor an impact on institutional commitment by employees only. However, there was some impact on brand engagement for all stakeholder groups in the study – particularly through the lack of donation commitment to the institution - none of the employees, students or alumni donate to the University. However, relating to financial commitment, although the non-donation towards Wits was common in all 30 study respondents, the simple fact that Wits did not solicit for donations could have also been a factor. There was an intention to donate by the majority of the respondents should they have received a donation request. However, it would still be prudent to note that intention and action are worlds apart. As such, the non-giving to Wits can still be attributed to a lack of brand engagement.

The absence of a solid internal branding programme also had some impact on time commitment (volunteerism) and loyalty through branded merchandise for all stakeholder groups, as well as an impact on institutional commitment by students (particularly undergraduates) and alumni. In conclusion, the mixed results relating to the effect of internal branding on stakeholder engagement within HEIs seem to support the assertions by Temple (2006) who stressed the importance of adopting branding concepts developed specifically for universities as opposed to borrowing branding concepts from the corporate world. His assertions are supported by Hay and Van Gensen (2008) and Sujchaphong, Nguyen and Melewar (2015).

Many prior studies found that internal branding fostered organisational identification and a sense of belonging, results contrary to the current study findings. It could therefore be questioned whether emotional connection or organisational identification can be attributed to internal branding, or could other factors be at play?

All employee respondents had a high sense of belonging (institutional/organisational identification) though this did not translate to full brand engagement and included a lack of financial commitment. Students and alumni exhibited a similar level of institutional identification with mixed results though, with more respondents showing no sense of belonging towards the institution, both students and alumni also showed no financial commitment towards the University, with mixed brand engagement results. As such, it can be concluded that organisational identification is not a key factor in the exhibition of pro-brand behaviours.

Socially, employees and postgraduate students identified with their departments, undergraduate students identified with their friends and alumni had no sense of social identification. However, social identification did not seem to moderate for brand supporting behaviours.

According to MacDonald (2013) in an institution where there are diverse stakeholders - undergraduates, graduate students, academic and non-academic staff and alumni – the university image or how it is perceived and defined by the various stakeholders, would be different. The challenge is then to manage all these multiple identities so that all university stakeholders have the same overarching identity,

regardless of their various perceptions resulting from the roles within/relationship with the university. Internal branding could be the tool to manage the multiple identities of multiple university stakeholders and through that, enable brand engagement.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The main problem in this study was to explore and identify the influence in internal branding on stakeholder engagement within higher education institutions (HEI), namely employees, students and alumni and ultimately to locate the role of internal branding in getting fully engaged stakeholders – all within a South African/emerging market context.

A single case study was adopted in order to first establish the existence (or non-existence) of internal branding practices, and after that to determine the influence of internal branding on employee, student and alumni engagement, with the possibility of creating a framework that could be used by university administrators in the pursuit of engaged stakeholders. This framework would show the internal branding aspects of importance to stakeholder engagement. The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) was the ideal institution selected for the purposes of the study. This study was exploratory in nature, seeking discovery over confirmation, and to further the understanding of constructs under research (Dean et al., 2016; Dholakia, 2017; O'Neill et al., 2015; Punjaisri et al., 2008). Ultimately, the aim was to combine theory and research regarding internal branding and stakeholder engagement within a South African context and offer practical solutions to university management and administrators regarding the issue of stakeholder engagement.

In this chapter, conclusions of the study findings are presented, then recommendations relating to internal branding and to HEI employee, student and alumni engagement are offered. The chapter then concludes with suggestions for further research that could augment the theory and practice regarding internal brand management and how it relates to stakeholder engagement within a South African context, as opposed to relying on research and findings pertaining to other contexts (mostly USA, UK, Asia and Australia).

6.2 Conclusions of the study

As part of the conclusion, it would be prudent to return to the stated research questions and to confirm their resolution.

The first sub-problem was to explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution employees (academic and non-academic). Firstly, the research concluded that there was no solid or structured internal branding practice or programme at the case institution, but that this had no influence on job (role) engagement (including the overall experience and satisfaction with the experience) or brand engagement through institutional commitment of the Wits employees, both academic and non-academic. Both job and institutional commitment were unaffected by this apparent absence of solid internal branding practices. However, it was found that internal branding may have a bearing on brand engagement of the academic and non-academic employee respondents, particularly on the aspects of financial commitment, volunteerism and loyalty through branded wear – these aspects were negatively affected by the absence of a solid or structured internal branding programme.

Of much importance in the realm of stakeholder engagement is the issue of organisational identity, shown in the study to be positively linked with brand engagement. Though the results indicate that an absence of solid and structured internal branding practices did not affect employees' sense of belonging to the organisation, that sense of belonging can be attributed to the high level of institutional engagement (commitment). Social identity, which was found to be related to one's department (or school/faculty) and not to the broader organisation, did not have a bearing on engagement though it can be used to culture organisational identification.
Social identification with social exchange based on reciprocity seems to have a positive impact on role engagement, but not so much for brand engagement.

As much as role engagement is unperturbed by the absence of a solid or structured internal branding practice, the fact that brand-related engagement is affected should

be of concern to University management and administrators. Employees of a higher education institution are extremely important, and their level of engagement also alludes to the brand health of the organisation. Employee brand engagement has many benefits and positive spin-offs which are glaringly lacking or affected at the University, benefits which include financial support through donations, volunteerism, a sense of loyalty and pride which is reflected through the wearing of branded clothing, the latter aspect also reflecting loyalty to the brand. Internal branding has been proposed as a means of aiding brand engagement in employees. Frandsen et al. (2018) note how universities seem to be adopting internal branding as a means to elicit stakeholder brand commitment, brand understanding and brand ownership of the brand. Wits University management and administrators are, therefore, well-placed to implement any changes or consolidate any practices that would aid brand engagement and organisational identity within higher education institution employees, through solid and structured internal branding programmes.

The second sub-problem sought to explore how internal branding affects the levels of engagement with the brand by higher education institution students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. As with the employees, the research concluded that there were no solid or structured internal branding practices in existence at the case site. This though, had no influence on academic (role) engagement of the student respondents, and hardly any impact on their willingness to maintain ties with the institution. However, there is a negative impact on brand engagement, predominantly for undergraduate students, possibly due to the lack of a sense of belonging/organisational identification, again exhibited more in undergraduate rather than postgraduate students. In addition, social identification is related mostly to friends (or their residence) by undergraduate students, or the school/faculty by postgraduate students, and not to the institution. Lastly, social exchange based on reciprocity also had an impact on brand engagement, as observed in some negative or mixed attitudes exhibited towards the institution and how they correspond with low institutional commitment. Postgraduate students show a more positive attitude towards the university than undergraduate students who gravitated towards being negative, though the reciprocal nature of the relationship prevented attitudes from being overly negative.

Although role engagement is unaffected by the absence of a solid and structured internal branding programme, the depressed brand engagement levels by Wits students, particularly undergraduate students, should be worrying to university management and administrators. Students are noted as the most important university stakeholder by Drapińska (2012), with Marshall (2018) labelling them the most obvious and direct stakeholders in a higher education institution. The relationship between students and their university ought to be developed from the time they enrol in first year and nurtured until they graduate. A positive student experience is noted in the literature as a significant antecedent to engagement, to the development and strengthening of organisational identity, and to the development of loyalty and positive attitudes towards the higher education institutions. Student engagement, through the student experience, which ultimately leads to brand engagement, would therefore be possible through the implementation of well-structured internal branding strategies and activities that lead to strong relationships between the university and student. Done correctly, further down the line as alumni, engaged students would likely be willing to be involved with their alma mater.

The third sub-problem was to determine how internal branding affects higher education institution alumni engagement with, and financial or other support of, the brand. For these stakeholders as well, the study revealed that there was no solid or structured internal branding programme in existence at the case site, though role (academic) engagement when the alumni were still students and loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution were unaffected by this. The rest of the brand engagement indicators, though, were negatively affected i.e. institutional and financial commitment, loyalty through wearing/displaying Wits branded merchandise and volunteerism.

The respondents reported no alumni experience worth mentioning, hence satisfaction with the alumni experience could not be determined.

It can be concluded that internal branding practices have no influence on academic engagement of the alumni respondents but have an influence on brand engagement.

The low ratings and institutional commitment give credence to the conclusion that a lack of organisational identification has a negative influence on brand engagement. In addition, social identification is basically non-existent among alumni.

Furthermore, social exchange based on reciprocity has a positive impact on brand engagement, as indicated by the generally positive attitudes exhibited towards the institution. Alumni are a very important stakeholder to any higher education institution, potentially benefiting the institution in a myriad ways including, material/financial support as well as non-material support (including volunteerism, mentorship, internships, positive word of mouth and reduction in recruitment costs). University management and alumni office administrators are well positioned to nurture relationships with alumni, though the literature has indicated the importance of starting the relationship building while they are still students, noting how it will be almost impossible to start building a relationship with them after they have graduated. The results of the study allude to the lack of a relationship, never mind a strong relationship, between the alumni and their alma mater, which in turn, results in low brand engagement levels being exhibited.

Overall research conclusion

Overall, there was no solid or structured internal branding programme in existence at Wits University, with no effect on role engagement or brand engagement through loyalty through a willingness to maintain ties with the institution by employees, students and alumni, and no effect on institutional commitment by employees only. However, brand engagement was affected to varying levels for all three stakeholder groups on the aspects of institutional commitment, financial commitment, time commitment and loyalty through wearing/displaying Wits-branded merchandise. The results also indicated that the three stakeholder groups showed different aspects of what was important to them, regarding engagement i.e. relationship building and an experience over and above the job role for employees; the student experience and successfully incorporating them into the University by removing the sense of alienation, for students, and relationship building, communication and involvement for alumni. The challenge, therefore, becomes the management of the multiple identities in order that all university stakeholders have the same overarching identity,

notwithstanding their various perceptions based on their roles within, and relationship with, the university. Internal branding could be the tool to manage the multiple identities of multiple university stakeholders and through that, enable brand engagement.

This study adds onto existing knowledge by also factoring in students and alumni, in addition to employees who are the usual stakeholder considered in studies relating to internal branding and stakeholder engagement; furthermore, in a South African context. Currently there is a dearth of studies similar to this one. A good number of past research findings did not match the findings of the current study, probably because of the different contexts within which the studies were conducted. For example, it was expected that results for the different demographic groups would differ based on the “Rainbow Nation” which had racial and social inequalities that permeated into higher education institutions and were a remnant of the apartheid era, be different in order to mirror the different experiences and realities for the different race groups. However, the research found the demographics, including race/ethnicity and social standing, did not have a bearing on the results, alluding to overarching realities that pertained to all respondents. In addition, as reported in the discussion section, several other results from the current study did not match previous study findings. This points to the importance of more studies within the same context as the current study in order to compare and contrast between similar contexts and, eventually, craft strategies and frameworks that would apply to the South African higher education institution context.

6.3 Implications and Recommendations

With brand sentiments like “I wouldn't stop a moving bullet for Wits”, “Wits is just an institution of learning and not as a place I fit in or find significant relationships. I got into this place to further myself intellectually and that's it” and “My relationship with Wits is abstract. I don't know how to engage with the organisation” by respondents ALUM1, UG2 and AS1, respectively, brand engagement challenges at Wits University are quite apparent. The current study findings are of managerial relevance as they can aid understanding into how internal branding, social and organisational identification can be utilised to enhance engagement and any brand supporting

behaviours that accrue from it. Furthermore, internal branding could present a way to deal with the uniquely South African challenges within South Africa higher education institutions as noted in the context section.

As a heritage brand on its way to celebrating its centenary in 2022, it is in the interests of University management and administrators to focus on brand management issues so that the perception of the brand strength internally matches that of external perceptions. Further, engaged internal stakeholders can assist in the fundraising and volunteer activities that are often synonymous with centenary campaigns. Listed below are some recommendations from the study pertaining to the three stakeholder groups; recommendations that can improve on current brand engagement levels, or culture brand engagement where is it currently lacking. All-encompassing recommendations (applicable to employees, students and alumni) are also presented.

Recommendations for employee engagement

Of the three stakeholder groups in the study, employees exhibited the highest levels of brand engagement in comparison to students and alumni. Some recommendations for employees, in particular, are listed below.

- For all staff, it is recommended that a more structured and tailored induction programme be instituted, as opposed to employees being thrown into the deep end and having to figure it out for themselves. Such an induction programme would also present the perfect opportunity to introduce Wits and the Wits brand to new employees, an opportunity to show them what Wits is, its values, traditions and strategic goals, and their place and role as employees within the institution. This would also be an opportune time to start building a sense of belonging to the organisation.

- For non-academic staff, it is recommended that management recognise their roles and contributions to the University, as done for academic staff, especially in terms of career progression and recognition through awards. The divide between academic and non-academic staff is well-documented in the literature, with non-academics often not being afforded the same recognition as academic staff, the

latter being considered more important to the business of teaching students. However, the sentiments of the non-academic staff bring the issue home clearly. For example, non-academic staff respondent NAS2 remarked “Management is more focussed on academic staff and don't appreciate what non-academic staff do. But academic staff wouldn't be much without non-academic support”, with NAS4 saying “Academic staff seem to think the university won't function without them, which is true; but similarly, it won't function without non-academic staff. Both academic and non-academic staff should be on equal footing”.

Recommendations for student engagement

- For students, especially, undergraduates, the recommendation is that they be exposed to an excellent student experience. The student experience, which Shah and Richardson (2016) denote as being at the core of higher education, is extremely important because it impacts on the relationship between the student and the institution and has far reaching implications. Should the experience be positive, students are more likely to complete their studies, return to do their postgraduate studies and to be involved alumni after they graduate. The student experience is noted in the literature as a significant antecedent to engagement, organisational identity, positive attitudes and loyalty towards higher education institutions. To enable undergraduates to have a good, positive university experience, it is prudent to be mindful of a couple of aspects as discovered in the study:
    - High school to university transition challenges, including the reduction of their sense of alienation (which could account for their low levels of identification with the organisation and the associated negative brand engagement) and have a sustained programme to ease students into university life. Drapińska (2012) stresses the need to reduce the sense of alienation and disorientation of new students and facilitating student interactions in order to help generate positive emotions.

    - In order to enhance the experience for non-residence students, a programme similar to what is experienced in residences is recommended. The study results alluded to residence students having a better student

experience to non-residence students who attended lectures then went home. As such, with a similar programme for non-residence students, the sense of belonging would increase, as would the positive experience levels.

- It is recommended that students receive better mental health support and are confident in the options through which they can access this help. The study results alluded to students suffering from mental health issues as not having been helped and feeling let down by the institution or preferring from the onset to seek help off campus. Addressing mental health issues would result in a better student experience

- It is recommended that there be a more structured and solid First Year Experience programme that is part of the curriculum, based on the fact that the majority of the students found the current programme ineffective. The programme could be used to enable better student experiences for both academic and brand engagement aspects. In addition, the study by Pather et al. (2017) listed the benefits of the First Year Experience mentorship programme to include peer engagement, a heightened sense of belonging and deeper commitment to their studies and academic success.

A positive student experience would be possible through the implementation of robust internal branding strategies and activities.

- For postgraduates, an orientation programme which is all-encompassing for all postgraduates and not just at school or faculty level is recommended. Generally, the assumption seems to be that postgraduates originate from that particular institution (i.e. were undergraduates at the institution) but the reality is that some postgraduates also originate from a different institution. As such, a programme akin to the First Year Experience for undergraduates would be highly recommended for postgraduate students. This would be an opportune time to induct postgraduates into a different level of university life, to orientate those that

are from other institutions and to start brand-related communications and activities important in building identification and eventually, brand engagement.

- A sense of alienation affects organisational identification. Wits University is a massive university, with different campuses. The main campus is the Braamfontein Campus, and it is the hub of all activities. As such, employees and students based on other campuses, such as Medical School, often get left out of activities happening on the main campus, which could result in a sense of alienation and ultimately, a reduced sense of organisational identification. An internal branding programme that addresses this quandary would therefore be a consideration

Recommendations for alumni engagement

- The study revealed the absence of an alumni experience, hence it is highly recommended that Wits University put in place activities and communication that would enable such an experience. To enable a positive alumni experience, and by so doing increase the perceived value of the alumni office, the following are recommended:
    - Provide alumni with what they value most, for example, intellectual stimulation (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), the ability to keep in touch with other alumni, provision of information about employment opportunities, alumni achievements, bursaries and postgraduate study, sharing of good news, accomplishments and high rankings of the institution, sport activities and general campus activities (Chen & Murphy, 2018; Drezner, 2018a). This would result in building pride for the institution and alumni organisational identification (Drezner, 2018a).
    - Based on the study results, alumni indicated the need for more recognition of their alumni status through preferential treatment e.g. exclusive events, events that are not done in a rush but proper sit-down events, being invited to be guest speakers and getting discounts on Wits branded wear.

- A programme to keep alumni connected with their alma mater is highly recommended. McDearmon (2013) highlighted how in years past, alumni-initiated

involvement with their university, though there has been a major shift to the onus being on institutions to initiate contact with their alumni. Such a programme would enable alumni to keep connected to their alumni thereby maintaining a sense of still belonging and ultimately making it easier for them to exhibit brand supporting behaviours towards their alma mater.

- It is highly recommended that there be relationship-building efforts with students before they graduate. Drapińska (2012) highlights the student memories at graduation and the overall student experience are key determinants in the decision to sever or maintain ties with the institution, with advocating for relationship marketing which, if done well, can develop and nurture life-long relationships, starting from university-going years. Memories arising at graduation (the last stage of the sales phase of relationship building between a HEI and student) and the overall student experience, for example, often sway decisions to continue or sever the relationship with the institution

All-encompassing recommendations

Over and above recommendations specific to the individual stakeholder groups, there are recommendations that apply to all stakeholder groups. These are discussed below.

- It is recommended to incorporate social media for internal brand management and stakeholder engagement in an increasingly digital world. This is because of the changing landscape which authors (Q. N. Nguyen & Sidorova, 2018; Ramírez, 2018) note as requiring online and social media organisational reputation management. It would thus be fitting for Wits University to incorporate social media brand engagement exercises in order to utilise all brand touchpoints.

- Capitalise on social identification in order to enhance the stakeholder experience. The study revealed the type of social identity that matters to the stakeholders i.e. friends for undergraduate students, department/faculty/school for employees and postgraduate students, with alumni, though showing no sense of social identification currently, indicating the need to identify with like-minded alumni.

These social groups are a collection of people who view themselves as similar and sharing a common emotional involvement and thus can provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Having a sense of social identification reduces feelings of alienation and can encourage organisational identification

- Develop organisational identification and reap the brand engagement benefits associated with it. This would be through developing a sense of belonging or an emotional connection to the organisation.

- Encouragement of mutual exchanges, akin to win-win situations
  When it comes to brand engagement, the assumption is that stakeholders are ready and willing to be engaged in a way that benefits the organisation. However, consideration is not given to what the stakeholders benefit in return, the automatic assumption being that their goals are synonymous with those of the organisation. Guest (2014) proposes offering stakeholders something positive in the hope that they reciprocate and be positively engaged in a way that also benefits the organisation. This explains the social exchange theory, which is based on the rule of reciprocity (*quid pro quo*) and explains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. Social exchange relationships can facilitate internal branding efforts, as all parties would be getting something out of the exercise.

- The study findings were that there is no brand-related training, communication or dialogue. The recommendation, therefore, is that these be instituted as part of an internal branding programme in order to foster identification, dialogue with stakeholders and better the chances of developing lifelong relationships with their stakeholders. It is important to note, though, that internal communication is not internal branding but facilitates internal branding. Further, internal branding that combines communication and training is thought to be more effective as opposed to having either one of them on their own (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Punjaisri et al., 2008)

Overall, relationship marketing with all stakeholders is highly recommended, as through this, the antecedents to brand engagement would come to life e.g. feeling valued and appreciated, emotional connection, loyalty, satisfaction and commitment. Implementation of an internal branding programme is the all-encompassing recommendation for this research. The absence of internal branding at the case site may have had no negative impact on role engagement, but it had a profound impact on some very important aspects of brand (institutional) engagement. Further, based on previous positive results of implementing internal branding strategies, it is likely that the same positives would accrue to Wits should there be a similar programme implemented. That being said, it should be kept in mind that, as recorded in the literature, internal brand management is not a “quick fix” but rather a long-drawn out process (of up to five years) and takes planning, commitment, resources and time – all of which are extremely priceless commodities in any organisation (Tosti & Stotz, 2001).

6.4 Proposed internal branding and engagement framework

The concept of branding is quite new to the higher education context, and as such, is viewed with a certain level of uncertainty, and with internal branding devoid of a consistent theoretical framework. Though this study was exploratory in nature, a framework, outlined below, for university administrators to draw from when considering implementing an internal branding programme is proposed.

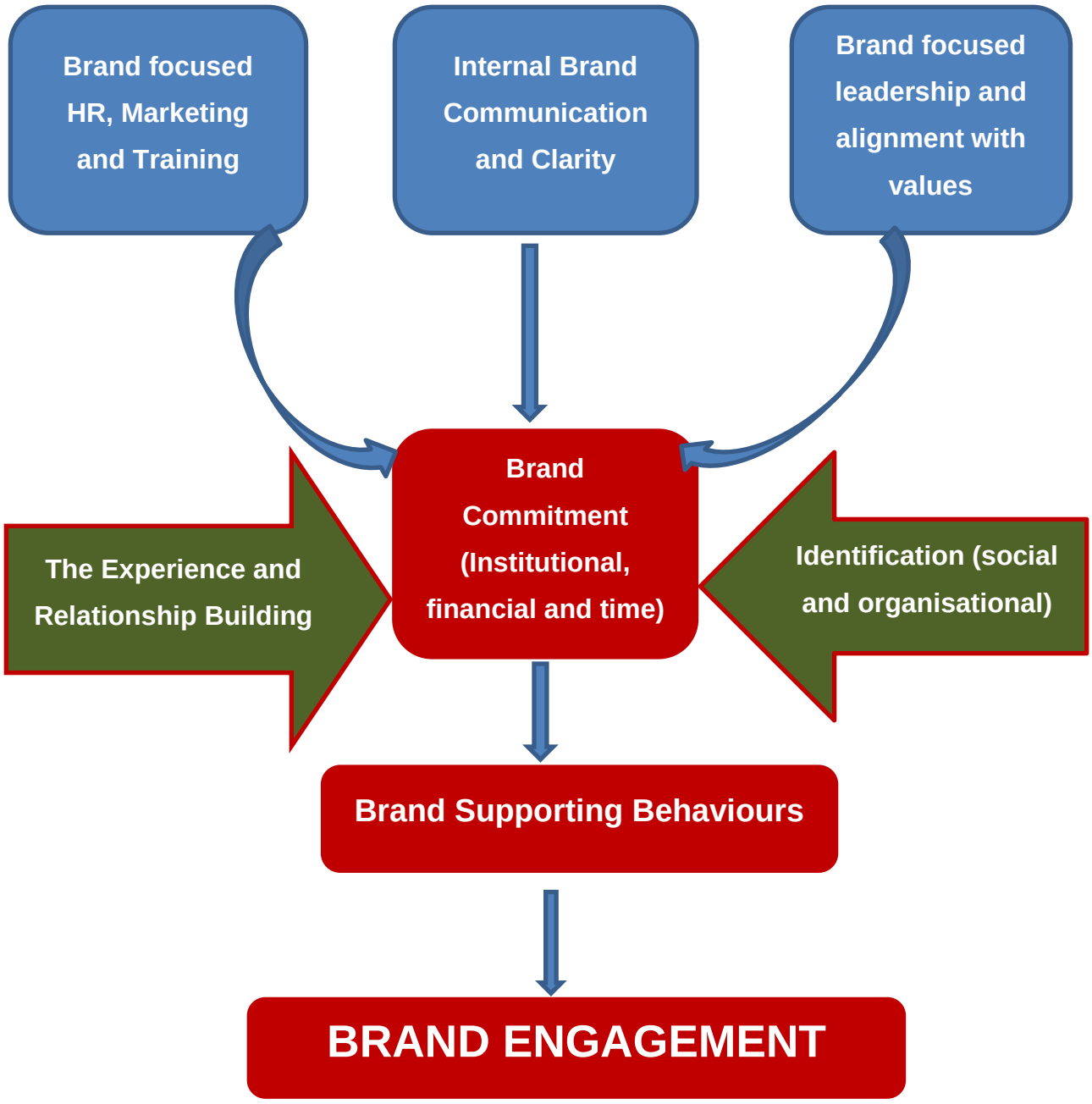


Figure 1: Proposed internal branding and engagement framework for university management and administrators. Adapted from Burmann et al. (2009).

The framework suggests that stakeholder brand engagement, the ultimate desired result of any internal brand management programme, is reflected through brand supporting behaviours towards the institution, behaviours which are usually as a result of brand commitment (institutional, financial and time). For brand commitment to be exhibited, three key aspects ought to be in place i.e. brand-focused HR, Marketing and training, internal communication which is brand-related and to all stakeholders, as well as leadership buy-in which is shown through brand-focused leadership and their alignment with the institution's values. In addition, strong relationships with the stakeholders, good experiences and feelings of identifying with the institution also have an impact on brand commitment hence, have to be factored in as well.

The ultimate goal for internal branding would be to have stakeholders who are referred to by Luoma-aho (2015) as the faith-holders; stakeholders who are positively engaged, like and trust the brand and ultimately support it through their beliefs, emotions and behaviours.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

In this section, seven suggestions are proposed for further research, as follows:

- This study proved the absence of internal branding practices at the case site. However, it would be prudent to know the impact of an actual internal brand management programme on engagement without inferences and suppositions as made in this current research since internal branding was not in existence at the case site. As such, research where there is a known internal branding programme in existence would be called for, then gauging how this impacts on both role and brand engagement. Ideally, this future study would be done at the same case site as the current study, and with the same profile of respondents.

- Taking cognisance of the high levels of brand non-engagement/disengagement by undergraduate student respondents, more studies that delve into pre-university conditions that affect brand engagement would be in order. For example, a similar study would be that by Pather et al. (2017) which found that

students pre-university non-academic factors play a significant role in how students engage with institutional support initiatives. However, the studies being advocated for in this instance would be the effect of pre-university non-academic factors on the sense of belonging and ultimately brand engagement.

- One of the study limitations was that it is a single case study which hinders the generalisability of the research findings. The time is nigh to put more research effort into branding, internal branding and stakeholder engagement within an African/emerging market context so that we can build literature that is relevant to our context, and not borrowed from other contexts. Comparative studies within higher education institutions in South Africa and Africa in order to promote reliability of the study findings would therefore be encouraged, especially because of the dearth of similar studies within the same context.

- Findings of this future proposed research would add to the minimal literature on internal branding and stakeholder engagement within a context similar to this university, possibly paving the way for the development of tried and tested tools and frameworks for a unique, complex industry and context. In addition, there is need for research specific to higher education institutions, which is not borrowed from business or other services – this is what Temple (2006), Guest (2014) and Hay and Van Gensen (2008) advocate. Furthermore, universities have more multiple stakeholders than realised, thereby requiring a radical re-evaluation of the traditional marketing framework (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

- Brand ambassadorship is synonymous with extremely high levels of brand engagement. Iyer et al. (2018) and Asha and Jyothi (2013) note one of the objectives of internal branding as the creation of brand ambassadors within an organisation. As such, it would be interesting to have future studies that show the correlation, if any, between internal branding and brand ambassadorship.

- Future studies on the role of HEI management in internal branding are recommended. The existing literature notes the imperative of management not just being involved but leading all internal branding efforts i.e. management buy-

in, clear leadership and being at the forefront of brand related issues. For example, Tosti and Stotz (2001) note how internal branding success is achieved when management understands, supports, and demonstrates commitment to the process; Vallaster and Lindgreen (2013) note how management give legitimacy to the internal branding process, while Matiatou (2018) note how leadership involvement is the essential condition of successful brand indoctrination.

- This current study was not longitudinal in nature, focusing instead at one point in time (the time of the interview where respondent views were gathered). A longitudinal study on internal branding is, therefore, recommended as a future study in order to track changing perceptions and get a better understanding of on-going and long-term influences and attitudes towards the institution, and brand engagement. A longitudinal study also provides more insights on study variables (Koech & Cheboi, 2018). Furthermore, Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) note how the understanding of the influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement can be improved through a longitudinal study.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW COVER LETTER

My name is O'bidie Rudo Maunze. I am currently studying towards a Masters of Management degree in the field of Strategic Marketing (MMSM) at the Wits Business School. I am also the Brand Manager for Wits University. For the successful completion of this MMSM degree, I need to submit a research report on a relevant topic of interest. My research is titled *"The influence of internal branding on stakeholder engagement in a South African university.* I will be using Wits University as a case study. For the successful completion of this study, there is need for participation by key stakeholders such as students, of which you are one.

I am requesting 30 - 60 minutes of your time for the purposes of conducting an interview on the above-mentioned topic. Please note that the interview will need to be audio recorded in order to allow for transcribing at a later stage. Your personal information will be kept anonymous and confidential. You as an individual will not be identified from the results of the study. I will not be using your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a number code to represent your participation in my final research report.

Participation is, of course, voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any point, or not answer any question if you do not want to. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume another time. You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating.

Ultimately, as this a Wits case study, the research findings will be made available to you. These research findings may go a long way towards improving the Wits brand, in addition to being useful to the South Africa higher education sector in general.

If you have any questions about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the Wits Business School Research Office on 011 717 3932.

Regards,



O'bidie Rudo Maunze
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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE/DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Student Participant Profile Information

- Gender: …… • Race: …… • Age range: ……
- Degree programme: ……
- Level of study: …… • Years @ Wits: ……
- Family history of attending university: ……
- Paying student or on a loan/grant/bursary: ……
- Experience of financial hardships while studying: ……

Staff Participant Profile Information

- Gender: …… • Race: …… • Age range: ……
- Job title: ……
- Years @ Wits: ……
- Total years of professional experience: ……..
- Highest level of education and when attained: ……
- Number of organisations worked for before coming to Wits: ……..

Alumni Participant Profile Information

- Gender: …… • Race: …… • Age range: ……
- Current occupation: ……..
- Years since graduation: ……
- Family history of attending university: ……
- Highest Wits qualifications:

  ……
- Marital status: …
- Children: …
- Children at Wits: ….

INTERNAL BRANDING OUTCOMES (INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT)

IDENTIFICATION (ORGANISATIONAL/SOCIAL)

1. To what extent do you feel a sense belonging to Wits, or feel involved, connected to it or view it like family to you?
2. Do you buy, wear, use or display Wits branded merchandise? Why/why not?
3. Are there any Wits traditions, social group or clubs that you are part of? Why/why not?

   What does being part of/participating in these mean to you?

ENGAGEMENT/DISENGAGEMENT

The employee/student/alumni experience

1. Tell me about your Wits student/staff/alumni experience in as much detail as possible.
2. How did the First Year Experience programme/Staff induction programme/Postgraduate induction programme to help integrate you into Wits and the "Wits way"
3. **For alumni only -** Is there any programme in place to keep you connected with Wits, now that you are alumni?)

Brand and work commitment/dedication

1. How committed are you to your job/studies, and to Wits?
2. Do you donate financially/volunteer your time/skills to Wits? What of donations/volunteering to any other charitable organisations?
3. Has Wits ever solicited a financial donation from you? Would you donate if they asked?

Brand loyalty

4. What is your intention to sever/maintain ties with Wits and what drives that intention?
5. Do you buy, wear or display Wits branded merchandise? Why/why not?

STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION, ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your student/student/alumni experience at Wits?
2. What would need to be in place or you to be totally satisfied with your employee/student/alumni experience?
3. Do you exhibit positive attitudes or behaviours towards Wits? Give examples
4. Based on your experiences, what does Wits mean to you? How would you describe Wits?
5. How do you talk about Wits? Are you positive about it, endorse the brand, encourage others to donate or recommend the university brand to family and friends? Why/Why not?
6. Do you defend the Wits brand when others criticise it? Give examples

ESTABLISHING THE EXISTENCE OF INTERNAL BRANDING

1. May you list the Wits brand values?
2. Is and training provided to help you know, understand, buy-into and live the Wits brand?
3. Have you received information on Wits, the history, traditions, vision, and mission; and on your role as a Wistie?
4. What type of information do you receive from Wits and how?
5. And what info/feedback do you give back to Wits, if at all?
6. Have there been any personal relationship building efforts with you by Wits? Please give details.
7. Do you feel valued or appreciated as a Wits employee/student/alumni member?

The End: Do you have any comments you would to make regarding this subject of stakeholder engagement?