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# **Gordon Institute of Business Science**

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## **Exploring The Role Of Consumer Brands In Shaping Employer Brand Attractiveness**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to explore if there is a role that consumer brands play in shaping the attractiveness of an employer brand. This qualitative study was conducted using the exploratory approach, because the prior insights of the proposed relationship were modest and inconclusive. The population constituted of all registered Masters of Business Administration students at the Gordon Institute of Business Science. The sampling frame constituted second year (2013/14) and full time (2014/15) students. The reason for this choice was that these individuals are knowledgeable on brand concepts, are mostly likely thinking about employment prospects, and have had the opportunity to evaluate employer attractiveness. A sample size of 15 was drawn; this number was chosen based on the likelihood that data saturation would be reached at that point because of the homogeneous nature of the population.

The outcome of this study revealed that consumer brands play a role in shaping employer brand attractiveness, with the main role being that consumer brands project employer brands. Potential employers utilise brands' dimensions such as quality, innovativeness, longevity and public perception, amongst others, as an indication of employer brand attractiveness. Also uncovered by the study was that the extent of consumer brand influence on an employer brand varies with profession, industry and maturity. Moreover, consumers play a role in attracting potential employees towards investigating employment prospects in a certain organisation, but contribute very little to retaining employees if employment expectations are not met.

**Keywords:** brands, consumer brand, employer brand, employer value proposition

## **Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Tekhaya Simelane

14 January 2015

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the research problem

### 1.1 Introduction

In today's business environment, brands are increasingly becoming the cornerstone of company relations, including customers, employees and other stakeholders. While the brand theory is a key concept in marketing thought and practice, companies have started applying branding values and practices in the field of human resources management (Almacik & Almacik, 2012; Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Thornbury & Brooks, 2010).

On a similar note, the employee is now seen as a fundamental pillar of the company on which ambassadorship of the brand largely depends. The true mechanisms of wealth creation nowadays are the knowledge, relationships and images produced by talented employees (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011). A company's skill to attract, recruit and retain a talented workforce is now a strategic element of company's triumph (Almacik & Almacik, 2012); and potentially those companies that make use of employer branding will have a competitive edge (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

This study aims to explore the role of consumer brands when potential employees are evaluating an employer brand and its attractiveness. The purpose is to establish if consumer brands play an influential role on employer attractiveness. If yes, which consumer branding cues become more influential when prospective employees make decisions on which company they'd like to work for or which is the best company to work for? Which brand do potential employees aspire to work for; the consumer brand or the employer brand? Do potential employees find unity between the two brands?



## 1.2 Problem in context

Botha, Bussin and De Swardt (2011, pp. 388) raised questions which are fundamental to this study, including: “At a time when talent is ever shrinking in the global pool, why would someone really good at their job want to join your company? And how will you keep them for more than a few years?” In the era of fast changing business environments, the survival and success of many organisations is largely dependent on the quality of their human capital (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014)

The labour market is getting constrained due to the insufficiency of talent, and as result highly skilled and driven employees have more bargaining power - especially in knowledge based and service driven organisations (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Gaddam, 2008). Further, as a result of changing demographics, globalisation, and pressure for speed and innovation, and as financial markets increasingly recognise human capital as a source of worth, the motivation to review employee relations strategies has never been more pressing (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

According to the 2013 Talent Shortage Survey by the Manpower Group, the effect of talent shortages on client-facing activities is most prominent in South Africa at a rate of 72%. It is argued in the survey with reference the Adcorp Labour Index released in May 2011; that applicant/job ratios reveal the deficiency or excess of skills in particular occupations, ranging from four applicants per vacancy in highly-skilled and specialised roles (such as gold dealers and credit derivatives traders) to 1,200 applicants per vacancy in common roles needing limited previous work experience (such as bank tellers and call centre agents).

The most problematic factors for doing business in South Africa include an inadequate educated workforce and restrictive labour regulations (Schwab & Sala-i-Martin, 2013). Out of 148 countries, cooperation in labour-employer relations, flexibility of wage determination, and hiring and firing practices, South Africa ranked 148, 144 and 147 respectively. On the contrary, the country's

capacity to attract and retain talent ranked 51 and 55 respectively, presenting a clear gap between reality and ability.

It was suggested by Arachchige and Robertson (2011) that in order to address this issue of “talent crisis”, organisations should continually ask the following questions:

- Are we pulling in the appropriate candidates at all levels of the organisation?
- Does our company culture foster the recognition and growth of the appropriate people?
- Do we give the rewards that build prospects for talent to develop within the organisation?

### **1.3 Definition of the problem**

“In order to bring the right people on board is not simply a matter of placing an advertisement in the newspaper and expecting to be inundated with applications”, (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011, pp. 26). Recent research proposed that potential employees take into account the extent to which working for a company would create a positive impression of themselves to others (Thornbury & Brooks, 2010). Bhatnagar and Srivastava (2008) believed that it is critical for an organisation to come up with a solid human capital strategy that can be employed as a key differentiator in the war for talent by ensuring a continuous supply of the appropriate skills.

In order to keep up with the changing labour market dynamics, many organisations are trying to place themselves in a unique position in the labour space (Gaddam, 2008). One of the major challenges companies face with regards to attracting the best pool of candidates is how to position themselves and be identified as a ‘best company to work for’ or an ‘employer of choice’. Being an ‘employer of choice’ not only guarantees that the employee comes the

company and stays with it, but they also relate with the company's vision and values, and give it loyalty, commitment and performance (Sehgal & Malati, 2013)

Although employer branding is a concept which is still evolving in practice (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), firms are cultivating employer branding to secure and retain the most sought after employees (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). However, since they wear several stakeholder hats, potential employees are exposed to various communications from the organisation, for example consumer, community, and so on. Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010) argued that when evaluating employment attractiveness, potential employees search directly for readily available or recognisable information, and/or make use of information substitutes.

It is apparent from this short introduction to employer brand management that there could be a link between consumer brands and/or other company brands and employer brands. Yet no research has fully explored this link or interaction, hence this contribution to both academia and practice in as far as this phenomenon is concerned. The purpose of this research is to find out if and how potential employees are influenced by consumer brand messages in evaluating an organisation as an employer.

Robertson and Khatibi (2012) argued that all organisations that hire staff have an identity as an employer, whether or not a conscious branding process is in place or if they realise it or not. What are the characteristics inherent in a consumer's brands that influence potential employees' understanding of the firm? This is a question that remains to be explored.

#### **1.4 Motivation for the study**

Research has been conducted on how employer branding can be an effective strategy towards attracting and retaining employees, as well as the employer brand attributes that could enhance employer attractiveness. Further research has also suggested that potential employees consider the extent to which

working for a particular company creates a positive perception of themselves to others. No study has looked into consumer branding's role on employer brands and how these are fundamentally interrelated in order to understand how a consistent corporate brand experience can be reinforced.

Without this basic understanding of the inter-relationship between consumer and employer brands, it is difficult to understand how a consistent corporate brand can be achieved. In order to fully benefit from employer brand efforts it is important that managers are aware of the factors that may impact the brand's perception, and find and correct any unintended opinions that may influence prospective employees. This would be a more successful process if managers were conscious of the factors that are most important in shaping the perceptions of potential employees (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011).

This research thus raises several important questions that have not been extensively explored in the field of employer branding. Are there significant outcomes of a consumer brand that could influence employer branding? If yes, what are they? Which brand is more powerful or most utilised by potential employees to evaluate prospective employers? To what extent do consumer brands contribute to retaining and attracting employees? This research is important because if an employer brand is affected by consumer brands, it is important for both marketers and human resource specialists to be aware of how their actions impact one another's branding objectives.

## **1.5 Problem Statement**

Research proposes that the global talent pool is shrinking (Botha et al., 2011) and that labour shortages for top talent are still to continue (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Collins, 2007). As such, the intensity of competition for talented individuals is growing (Wilden et al., 2010). Sehgal and Malati (2013) strongly argued that there is a huge probability that in the future, competition for talented employees will be as strong as competition for customers.

Evidence from a literature review clearly indicates that employer branding has gained popularity, as there is a positive correlation between the power of an employer brand with levels of recruitment and retention (App, Merk & Büttgen, 2014; Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Botha et al., 2011; Gaddam, 2008; Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Robertson & Khatibi, 2013). There are also factors outside employer brand attributes affecting employer attractiveness, for example product awareness, person/ organisation fit, corporate brand and consumer advertising, (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Collins, 2007; Maxwell & Knox, 2009; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014).

However, even with the many attraction and retention strategies, attracting suitable prospective employees and retaining good talent remain the biggest challenges in human resources (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Past research on human resource management found significance in investigating recruiting from a marketing viewpoint and employed the cognitive-psychology approach to brand equity (Wilden et al., 2010).

Against this background, there are still many unanswered questions regarding the marketing factors shaping employer brands, especially the role of consumer brands. There is a clear need for a coherent approach in the management of various company brands in order to deliver a consistent brand experience, hence the need to fully understand what factors are at play. Devising successful talent management decisions that could improve overall company performance requires developing a clearer picture of the interrelation of factors at work.

## **1.6 Research purpose and objectives**

The fundamental question this research aims to answer is: “Can consumer brands influence the perception of employer brands in evaluating employer effectiveness?”

The main objectives of the research will be:

Objective 1: To understand if consumer brands play a role in shaping an employer brand.

Objective 2: If they do play a role, what is the role?

Objective 3: To determine which of the two brands (consumer or employer) is the most influential in evaluating companies as employers.

Objective 4: To understand the spill over dimensions of consumer brands on employer brands.

This research aims to add to the current brand and HR literature by investigating perceived consumer brand influence on employer branding to better understand consumer behaviour in the labour market. This research aims to further contribute to the body of literature on consumer branding and the possible influence it could have on different stakeholders other than customers. It is envisaged that the outcome of this study will provide a better understanding of the interaction between consumer brand cues, talent attraction and retention efforts.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

Given the inevitable interaction of company brands and consequential equity of each brand, there are compelling reasons why both marketing and human resource practitioners should be interested in identifying which cues play a role and are perceived to be important for when potential employees evaluate a firm as an employer. The next chapter will review what previous research related to the study found.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The theory reviewed in this section examines some of the previous work done on the concept of employer branding and how these findings have led interest to this particular study. The literature review was selected for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of the current knowledge available on consumer and employer branding and how they relate to the research problem.

### 2.2 Branding

Brands are a central component in modern life; today they claim hundreds of thousands of Facebook friends, Twitter followers, online society members and YouTube fans (Fournier & Avery, 2011). The “my brand is better than your brand” strategy is probably the most common basis of competition used to win brand preference in the market (Aaker, 2012).

O’ Cass and McEwen (2006) argued that there is no one issue that rule the modern psyche as much as consumption of brands. Whether we like it or not, we are a brand consuming generation; at the basic level we use brands to differentiate ourselves and become unique individuals in our own minds (Laforet, 2010). One of the most prolific words in the business world, the word ‘brand’ is a critical construct in this paper and it is therefore deemed appropriate to provide a definition at this point.

A brand is defined as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, logo or a mixture of these that identifies a company’s product. A brand brings functional gains in addition to added values that some customers treasure enough to buy (Laforet, 2010).

## 2.3 Clarification of terminology

### **A. Employer brand**

Sehgal and Malati (2013, pp. 51) defined employer branding as the “unique aspects of the firm’s employment offering, or the image of the organisation as perceived by the employees and other stakeholders”. They further stated that an employer’s brand image expresses the intrinsic nature of a company in a manner that captures employees’ interest and distinguishes a firm from its competitors.

### **B. Employer attractiveness**

“Employer attractiveness is defined as the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organisation. It constitutes an important concept in knowledge-intensive contexts where attracting employees with superior skills and knowledge comprises a primary source of competitive advantage” (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005, pp. 155).

### **C. Consumer brand**

“A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers” (Wood, 2004, pp. 664). Consumer brand takes the same definition from the perspective of the consumer and/or from the brand owner's perspective.

### **D. Corporate brand**

A corporate brand is “the embodiment of company values and a promise of the value to be delivered, based on company strengths, corporate culture, corporate style and future direction” (Sutherland, Torricelli & Karg, 2002, pp. 14).



## 2.4 Changing labour dynamics

It was the view of Botha et al. (2011) that as a result of the movement from the industrial phase of life to the knowledge-based period, there has been a change in the employer–employee relationship paradigm. They further contended that the supply and demand curve for talent is becoming increasingly weighted towards the talented employee. Gone are the days when the employer prescribed the work environment (Browne, 2012).

According to Mandhanya and Shah (2010), the limited pool of talent has growing choices in terms of career opportunities, and on the contrary, employers are increasingly finding it difficult to attract and retain good talent. They further submitted that one reason for this scarcity is that the talent pool is very diverse, so to retain talented employees one ought to create challenging job profiles. Gaddam (2008) argued that the scarcity of talent can be attributed to the on-going worldwide demographic changes and the massive technical skills and expertise required to meet current job profiles.

“In today’s era of boundary-less, technology driven, rapidly changing business environment, one of the major corporate challenges is to meet the increasing demand for executive talent” (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014, pp. 49). They further emphasised that in order to survive and succeed, organisations depend upon the quality of its human capital to face such challenges.

As economies become more knowledge-based, the demand for vastly qualified and skilled individuals continues to rise (Wilden et al., 2010). Browne (2012) argued that employees now demand to have a better sense of their employment options and greater authority in how work is allocated, appraised and incentivised. He added that employees’ priorities and preferences influence what the workplace should look like, especially now that technology makes it effortless than ever to design an assortment of flexible arrangements.

The contention from the above literature is that the labour market is shifting from the conventional sellers’ market to a buyers’ market. Human resource

management is thus faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining a high quality workforce versus potential employees flocking to the company's door. The literature further suggests a paradigm shift in recruitment strategies within human resource management.

Employer branding is a concept borrowed from marketing and applied in human resource management, in which practitioners use marketing basics to create a unique image of the total employment relationship and convey the company's employment value proposition (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008). The notion of employer branding is concerned with attracting and retaining skilled human resources in the firm (Gaddam, 2008). Its fundamental nature is concerned with capturing the essence of a company in a way that engages employees and other stakeholders, and makes a firm different and desirable as an employer (Sehgal & Malati, 2013).

Apart from the known tangible rewards such as pay, employees also derive emotional connections from associating with companies (Thornbury & Brooks, 2010). An employer brand offers similar advantages to employees that a product brand offers to consumers, including "developmental, psychological, functional, economic as well and feelings such as belonging, direction and purpose" (Heilmann, Saarenketo & Liikkanen, 2013, pp. 285).

In highly competitive job markets, formulating strategies to become an employer of choice and to raise the pool of prospect per advertised job can aid the recruitment of fitting employees and provide a strategic advantage to a company (Wilden et al., 2010). Organisations seem to be spending a significant amount of resources on employer branding, which signals that the practice is value adding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The above literature leads to the conclusion that strategic human resource practitioners are looking beyond conventional HR philosophies for talent management answers. Marketing concepts are essentially becoming the foundation for strategies and activities that help shape the perceptions of a business as an employer of choice.

## 2.5 Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

EVP is the answer to the employee's questions: "What's in it for me?" and "What more can you offer?" (Browne, 2012). The EVP refers to the total financial and non-financial value that employees gain from working for an organisation, which is the total employment experience and distinct captivating offer (Corporate Leadership Council, 2007).

According to the 2012 Beacon Management Review in Browne (2012), the EVP framework has five attributes. He claimed that companies need to regard this framework as a guide, understand the preferences of their staff and the causes of any gaps between employees' and/or the organisation's aspirations and the actual EVP, and build their own value proposition.

These attributes are:

- Compensation, which is the money workers obtain for their labour and successful accomplishment;
- Benefits, which are an indirect compensation including health, retirement, time off, etc.;
- Work content, which is the fulfilment workers obtain from their work;
- Career, which is the long-term prospects workers have for growth and expansion; and
- Affiliation, which is the spirit of connection workers have towards their organisation.



**Figure 1 - EVP Framework**

Source: Beacon Management Review (2012)

EVP is a much broader concept than total reward structure; it is about the total experience of working for a company and the perception that the company has with relevant stakeholders. EVP has lately grown closely linked to the concept of employer branding, and the term EVP is being used to explain the essential 'offer' on which an organisation's employer brand marketing and management activities are based (Browne, 2012). Barrow and Mosley (2005) added that the term 'employer value proposition' is closely related to the theory of employer branding or people management practices, and denotes the balance of rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their successful accomplishment. An employer brand creates a distinct image of the company's total employment relationship and clearly conveys the EVP the company offers (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008).

Amstrong and Brown (2006) incorporated the following components in their description of an organisation's EVP:

- Culture;
- Organisational reputation and success;
- Organisational vision and values;
- Organisational product brand strength;
- Quality of relationships between peers and with the manager;
- Job security;
- Leadership visibility;
- Employee voice, empowerment and authority; and
- Approach to and success with transformation.

According to the Corporate Leadership Council (2007), building and managing an effective EVP offers the following benefits to the organisation:

- Access to a larger pool of candidates;
- Improvement of employee engagement and commitment levels of new hires; and
- Reduction of remuneration premiums demanded by new employees.

A positive perception of EVP for a particular employer thus reduces the demands of financial rewards from their employees, which has a positive effect on the bottom line. Browne (2012) argued that while customising elements to individual employees is not practical, knowing how different sections of the workforce perceive these elements can help organisations communicate their offerings for optimal impact.

## **2.6 Brand association**

People value and react differently to different brands and their corresponding activations. There are several theories that have attempted to explain people's varying attachment and engagement to brands. For the purpose of this research, the Social Identity Theory (SIT), Group Engagement Model (GEM)

and Theory of Affective Self-Affinity (ASA) were looked at to understand why people react differently to certain brands.

### **2.6.1 Social Identity Theory (STI)**

Social identity theory is a social mental analysis of the role of self invention in group membership, group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg, 2006). Social identification (ID) occurs when people think they belong to a particular group and the group stipulates how one should think and act in a particular social context (Donavan, Janda & Suh, 2006). This theory holds that people's self-image of themselves is derived from social categories within which they think they belong.

According to Donovan et al. (2006), the theoretical principles of SIT suggest that people want to uphold a positive social image; a positive self-identity happens when the group they belong in is viewed as superior to the other groups; and when the social identity becomes unappealing, the individual will either try to get new membership in another social group or work toward improving the existing group.

This theory suggests that individuals settle within social groups that are fascinating to them. It is argued in Fuller et al. (2014) that according to social identity theory, people make use of their associations with organisations to define their self-identity. It is further argued that because people are motivated by self-enhancement needs, they tend to identify with organisations that present good qualities upon them.

### **2.6.2 Group Engagement Model (GEM)**

The group engagement model by Tyler & Blader (2003) expands the insight of the social identity theory onto the organisational identification process by incorporating intra and inter-group dynamics. Fuller et al. (2014) investigated

three organisation-related variables which are thought to influence an individual's organisational attachment and behaviour within the organisation - prestige, respect and employee role identity.

Prestige is based upon the individual's evaluation of the extent to which people foreign to the organisation hold the firm in high regard and answered the question "What do people outside of the firm think of me because I belong to this firm?" They found that prestige is linked to stronger identification with the organisation. Respect pertained an individual's opinion of themselves within the organisation, they found that a perceived high status within the organisation meets the needs for self-enhancement; individuals are likely to identify with the organisation and be good organisational citizens. Lastly, employee role identity is the extent to which individuals perceive their role in the organisation.

### **2.6.3 Affective self-affinity (ASA)**

Affective self-affinity (ASA) is defined as the degree to which an individual perceives an optimistically affective similarity between something and their identity. This theory attempts to integrate various consumer theories that explain people's behaviours.

It is argued in Fuller et al. (2014) that if companies want to succeed, they must actively engage in fostering organisational identification for employees in order to direct their actions, especially driving high employee retention rates. While firms spend a huge amount of resources investigating more about the consumers' perceptions of the products and services, they do not invest as much in learning what makes their employees act the way they do (Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman & Sablynski, 2006).

## **2.7 Employer branding**

Employer branding is a concept which defines the personality of a company as an ideal employer so that people choose to join it instead of competitors

(Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008). It is about entrancing the essence of the fundamental nature of a company in a way that connects with employees and other stakeholders.

Employer brand is the image of the company as seen by employees and other stakeholders (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). Strong employer brands attract better applicants and shape their expectations about their employment (Collins & Stevens, 2002). It is argued in App et al. (2014) that quite a few employment elements must be incorporated in EVP because instrumental elements have become so similar that companies must add symbolic attributes to differentiate themselves in the labour market.

In identifying the characteristics of a successful brand, Moroko and Uncles (2008) made reference to the fulfilling of a psychological contract. More successful employer brands accurately portray themselves in their marketing communications.

According to Moroko and Uncles (2008), other characteristics of successful employer brands include being known and noticeable, differentiating from direct competitors, being seen as being relevant, and resonating with current and prospective employees. App et al. (2014) strongly argued that although the EVP has to be consistent for the whole period of employment, it must be flexible to accommodate a diverse workforce with varying needs and expectations.

## **2.8 Internal marketing and branding**

The role of employees is also changing from being merely company employees to being brand ambassadors. Closely related to employer branding are the internal marketing concepts which specify that an organisation's employees are its first market (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). "Internal marketing can be defined as working to attract, develop, motivate, and maintain high-quality staff by providing them with work products they need" (Yao, Chen & Cai, 2013, pp.



531). The objective of internal marketing, also known as internal branding, is to create employees who are devoted to the set of values and organisational goals created by the firm (Sehgal & Malati, 2013).

Employees comprise a crucial interface between a brand's internal and external environments (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Chang, Chiang and Han (2012) inferred that employees can grow a sense of possession over the brands they work for and that brand psychological ownership could generate positive brand-related attitudes and behaviours that add to the brand value, which is important for internal branding. According to Harris and Chernatony (2010), brand values cannot be communicated by advertising alone, but also through employees' interactions with various stakeholders.

Internal marketing suggests that employment is managed in the same way that products are, and that organisations should use marketing methods to invent jobs that both the workers' and the firm's needs, and express the advantages of employment to internal and external markets (Wilden et al., 2010). The essence of internal marketing is to view workers as internal customers and work as internal products that fulfil the needs and wants of internal customers. Employees are the most essential internal stakeholders as they carry out a critical role in the expansion and sustainability of a company (Sehgal & Malati, 2013).

Internal marketing has been suggested as a key mechanism for the accomplishment of successful internal brand building. Internal branding seeks to ensure that workers are able to convert brand messages into brand reality for customers and other stakeholders in the external market (Asha & Jyothi, 2013). Employees are core to the process of brand building as their behaviour can either strengthen a brand's communicated values or erode the credibility of the advertised messages (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

This literature led to the contention that the strength of the employer branding concept is closely connected to employee engagement, as it deals with the complex task of harmonising internal beliefs with external brand messages. Promoting employee conduct aligned to brand value has been the focal point of internal brand building (Chang et al., 2012).

## 2.9 The interrelatedness of company brands

In the view of Moroko and Uncles (2008), existing literature not only shows that employer branding shares theoretical basics with both consumer and corporate branding, but also influences the same circle of stakeholder groups. They further argued that employment experience can be imagined as a product and employees as the consumer, because human resources determine the nature and development of the product to attract and retain the staff required to maintain corporate growth.

Kapoor (2010) had the same argument that just as product branding is intended to create a lasting favourable image in the minds of consumers, employer branding wants the same in that it creates an image that makes people who identify with the firm's values want to work for it.

This notion that consumer and employer brands have the same roots was further reinforced by Chhabra and Sharma (2014), who added that available literature suggests that as with consumer branding, employer brand development adopts a three-step process. These steps are analysis of organisational values, ideologies and policies; developing a value proposition encompassing a message that embodies the brand; and communicating the value proposition to target markets (internal and external).

The employer branding concept calls for the application of marketing principles to the company's recruitment and retention strategy (Sutherland et al., 2002). These are:

- Segmentation of the market;
- The selection of the appropriate target market; and
- Design of the value proposition that is attractive to the target market.

Davies (2008) argued that four attributes of a brand are also applicable to an employer's brand. These attributes are the ability to differentiate, create loyalty, satisfy needs and develop an emotional attachment to brand.

Brands and human capital constitute some of the firm's most important assets (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The employer brand is influenced by, and may influence, all of the other brands of the firm, hence harmonising internal beliefs about the firm and external brand messages is of paramount importance (Wilden et al., 2010). Moroko and Uncles (2008) also found similarities between some facets of employer branding and other forms of branding, namely aligning a psychological contract and avoiding unintended appropriation of brand values.

Wilden et al. (2010) further asserted that companies that have little consumer awareness with their brands may find it difficult to pull in skilful human asserts because prospects may not be aware of the employer. He further pointed out that if consumer markets find brands to be unappealing, prospects may have negative perception of the company and be unenthusiastic to consider working for the company.

This literature establishes the notion that there is interrelatedness within the overall company's strategic branding. Problems may, however, occur when prospective employees shift perceptual experiences of the consumer or corporate brands that are not affirm by the employment experience (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Employer brands are build up to be consistent with the company's consumer and corporate brands (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

"Employer branding is all about marketing and the relationship of customers and employee; about culture and the need for fundamental vicissitude in the role of the HR function" (Kapoor, 2010, pp. 54).

## **2.10 Strategic view towards management of brands**

Robertson and Khatibi (2013) revealed that the current literature proves that employer branding was initially seen as a recruiting mechanism for organisations. In their view, the fundamental aim of employer branding is to persuade employees that their organisation is a good workplace, to retain them and to ensure their perception of the organisation's goals and commitment is aligned with the organisation's vision and mission (Sehgal & Malati, 2013).

Bhatnagar and Srivastava (2014) concurred that while in the past traditional selection processes concentrated on work related analyses to establish skill, knowledge and abilities, recent trends show that organisations now prioritise organisational-person fit. They inferred from recent research that companies seek to recruit individuals that have personalities, beliefs and values similar to their organisational cultures. This literature asserts that the employer branding concept has begun to take an integrated approach towards harvesting both long-term and short-term benefits.

Mosley (2007) recognised that while organisations are moving away from lip service about employee brand promises as it compromises the long term management of employee experience, they would benefit more from adopting an approach similar to consumer brand management. He further stated that just as consumer brand management requires consistency in every critical 'touch-point' with the customer, people management involves a wide range of prescribed processes and HR 'products' that can be described as employee touch-points. With this literature it is proposed that the holistic view towards employer branding demands insights into overall firm branding dynamics.

The core idea of employer branding is more than a recruitment tactic but seeks to achieve brand loyalty and organisational commitment. According to Chhabra and Sharma (2014), employer brand loyalty converts an employee from a mere employment contract to a psychological contract, where they choose to remain committed to the organisation even when certain conditions require them to search for other opportunities. Botha et al. (2011) strongly argued that one of the vital supportive blocks of a great employer brand is the consistent delivery on the portfolio of brand promises.

The literature further asserted that there is a shift towards the need for consistency and long term sustainability. "Unified brand experience at all points of contact; whether surfing the internet employment pages, reading through job ads, visiting an employment fair, going through an application process or working as a day to day professional life: every individual point of contact with potential or existing employer should express a unified attitude" (Pingle, Sudhakar & Sharma, 2013, pp. 81).

## 2.11 The relevance of effective employer brand management

Employer branding has a positive impact on the productivity and culture of an organisation (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Robertson and Khatibi's (2013) research findings revealed a positive correlation between the power of an employer brand and the levels of recruitment and factors related to employee productivity. Organisations with strong employer brand strategies had considerably higher levels of productivity outcomes than those with partially developed, weak or no strategies.

It is strongly argued in Robertson and Khatibi (2013) that in order to establish an employer brand, the organisation requires the capability to communicate its values and expectations to employees. Wilden et al. (2010) added that in order for firms to establish a credible position in the employment market, they must clearly communicate the employer brands and remove biases in brand signals.

According to Rosengren and Bondesson (2014), the high visibility of consumer advertising suggests that some of these positive outcomes might derive from effects on stakeholders other than consumers. Thornbury and Brooks (2010) found that the organisations that advertise heavily and are associated with quality goods and service are the most appealing to prospective employees, especially entry level job seekers.

Collins and Stevens (2002) found that if prospective employees are exposed to organisational information very early, their perception of the job's attributes is enhanced and they are more drawn to the company. Collins (2007) stated that job seekers may begin to form knowledge or opinion about an organisation prior to influence of recruitment practices because of exposure to other organisational information such as product knowledge.

Wilden et al. (2010) asserted that companies that have low consumer awareness of product brands or customers that perceive them as unattractive may have difficulty attracting highly skilled personnel. Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng (2010) advocated that it is critical for firms to align their internal branding, corporate branding and employer branding, as identities of stakeholders are increasingly multi-faceted. They further argued that potential

applicants may also be customers and that how external stakeholders identify with the brand largely depends on how employees behave, hence the importance of internal branding.

Mosley (2008) believed that the strength of the integration of employer and consumer brands depends on an organisation's capability to embed brand ethos and culture into the everyday working experience of employees. Although not conclusive, this literature has so far suggested a relationship with other organisational accomplishments, such as communication, advertising, internal branding, corporate branding etc. In order to differentiate the two concepts, Moroko and Uncles (2008) argued that the available literature has ignored the link between employer branding and its marketing counterpart (product/consumer).

Bhatnagar and Srivastava (2008) suggested that although the literature is sparse on this view, establishing an employer brand may or may not result in becoming an employer of choice. Kapoor (2010) raised an argument that although employer branding may portray an image of being a 'great place to work' or 'employer of choice', being one takes more than successful recruiting and retention, requiring commitment and performance.

A study conducted by Bhatnagar and Srivastava (2014) on an organisation that was failing to attract talent despite being a well-known corporate brand, showed that potential employees had very little or no information about the company they were applying to. The study uncovered a lack of an effective communication strategy indicating the employer brand message; recruitment agencies rarely shared information about the company as an employer; and the only source of information job seekers had was a company website that did not express an employee value proposition.

Moroko and Uncles (2008) found that due to poor communication, an organisation may have a desirable employer brand but not really be considered by its target candidates. Chhabra and Sharma (2014) argued that while internal promotion of a brand will lead to increased employee loyalty, external promotions make the employer visible and attractive to target candidates.

Rosengren and Bondesson (2014) identified a number of studies which were designed to find out how recruitment advertising strengthens an employer brand, and noted that very little research has been conducted on how consumer advertising plays a role in creating an employer's brand. Further, little work has been done to understand the influence of consumer branding on employer brands (Wilden et al., 2010).

Rosengren and Bondesson (2014) found that advertising meant for consumers also impacts potential employees' perceptions of a corporate brand as an employer; the manner in which the message is conveyed forms perceptions of what the brand is capable of and can offer. They further uncovered that advertising creativity is an essential contributor to perception building of employer attractiveness, that is, if the communication is not innovative, potential employees do not believe the job offered would be interesting.

Wilden et al. (2010) argued that an organisation's consumer and employer brands concurrently impact how existing and potential employees perceive the firm. They further argued that managing multiple brands and various stakeholders can be extremely hard for organisations.

Rosengren and Bondesson (2014) believed that although advertising research supports that advertising has a positive impact on consumer reaction and a firm's performance, the effect of a company's consumer advertising on its ability to attract employees is basically unmapped.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, advertising is the act of "Describing or drawing attention to (a product, service, or event) in a public medium in order to promote sales or attendance". Branding, on the other hand, involves "characterising, marking, labelling, indicating or grading a particular product to give a distinctive identity. Although interrelated, advertising and branding are two different concepts targeting different outcomes.

## 2.12 The underlying relevance of brand orientation and its impact on performance

Davis (2002) pointed out that while marketing and financial analysts have discovered how strong brands contribute to the success of organisations, powerful brands also resonate with the public and hold a special place with many consumers. The benefits of consumer brands have been widely broadcasted. In the view of Helm and Jones (2010, pp. 545) “it is now almost a cliché to say that for many organisations, especially those in mature industries, brands are their most valuable assets, whether at the corporate or product level.”

Besides being a lever for attracting best employees, it is often pointed out that strong brands embody essential points of differentiation, create superior value and competitive advantage, allow companies to charge premium prices, enable immediate credibility of new products, offer clarity within the organisation, and if well managed, can be a long term source of value (Davis, 2002; Helm & Jones, 2010). The employer brand is regarded as the driving power to increased market share, profitability of the brand and the market’s perception (consumer-based brand equity).

“There is growing realisation that corporate and product brands, are important intangible assets of organisations. Evidence of the importance of brands is apparent in the reported financial value of major brands and in the amounts that strong brands fetch when traded in the mergers and acquisitions markets” (M’zungu Simon, D, Bill, & Miller, 2010, pp. 606). Christodoulides and de Chernatony (2010) argued that the only tangible outcome of consumer response to a brand name is the financial value of brand equity. They based this on the observation that a brand name drives increased market share and profitability, which is based on the market’s perception.

The easier said than done task for any organisation is to guard the several brands it presents to its variety of stakeholders, such as its consumer brands, company brand and employer brand (Wilden et al., 2010).



## 2.13 Conclusion

The contention is that whilst there is rich data available on the dimensions that enhance an employer brand and how this concept contributes to recruiting good applicants in an organisation, there have been limited research studies on the relationship between consumer and employer brands. In conclusion, the literature review has demonstrated a particular gap in understanding the interrelationship between these brands and how an integrated brand strategy can be achieved.

## Chapter 3: Research Questions

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented an overview of the significant literature that relates to this research paper. The literature review suggests possibility of trait inferences on employer brand as a result of other company activities. Although several activities are undertaken by organisations, this research has a particular interest in consumer branding.

In this chapter, the precise purpose and specific research questions are defined. The main aim of this research was to explore the role of consumer brands when potential employees are evaluating an employer brand and its attractiveness. The following research questions were formulated to address the research problem.

### 3.2 Research questions

#### **Question 1:**

- a. Is there a role that consumer brands play an employer brand?
- b. If there is, what is that role?

**Question 2:** Do consumer brands contribute to attracting and retaining employees? If yes, what is it about consumer brands that attract and retain employees?

**Question 3:** Which of the two brands (consumer or employer) is the most influential in evaluating companies as an attractive employer?

**Question 4:** What are the dimensions of consumer brands that play a role in employer brand perception?

## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research design**

A research design is the plan that provides a roadmap for the entire research project (Myers, 2013). This research aimed to explore the interactions between consumer and employer brands, and to identify the consumer brand cues that have an impact on shaping the employer brand. This chapter identifies and justifies the methodology that was used in the research study, and points out the key limitations of the research.

#### **4.1.1 Research approach**

Qualitative studies are suitable for three key purposes: to explore, explain or describe (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). A qualitative approach was employed for this study as it aimed to explore the existence of the proposed relationship between consumer and employer brands, as well as to form a better understanding of people's attitudes towards employer branding.

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) qualitative business research is used to provide a critical and reflexive view about the world of business and its core processes, and is particularly relevant when prior insights about a phenomenon under scrutiny are modest. Since available literature on the research problem was inconclusive and fragmented, the study aimed to better understand the interactions between consumer and employer brands.

Myers (2013) stated that qualitative research methods are designed to assist researchers to understand the social contexts within which people live in and to understand people and what they say or do. A qualitative approach was best suited for this research because the background to the problem required an understanding of the brand perspective within which decisions and actions about employer attractiveness take place.

#### 4.1.2 Research method

Saunders, Lewis, & Adrian (2008) outlined three types of qualitative studies:

- Exploratory: a means of finding out what is taking place in order to get new insights or evaluate a subject in a new lens.
- Descriptive: attempts to formulate a clear picture of a phenomenon.
- Explanatory: seeks to establish causal relationships between variables.

According to Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel (2003) selecting the right research method depends upon the research question. They further proposed that when there is little theory available to guide predictions or the research question is discovery-oriented, exploratory research is the most appropriate. Marshal and Rossman (2010) stated that in order to look into a phenomenon that has not been thoroughly understood, to find out important groups of meanings and to generate hypotheses for further research, exploratory research is more appropriate.

The type of research questions for this particular study could best be answered by exploratory research, because information available on the research context is minimal as evidenced by the literature review. Although the literature review hinted at some company attributes that could influence an employer brand, consumer brands have not really been explored.

Future research could consider a descriptive study, however it is crucial to first establish what is happening regarding the proposed phenomenon before an accurate description can be formulated. The approach of exploratory research does not start with a specific problem; it rather finds a problem or hypothesis to be tested (Welman & Kruger, 2003).

In choosing research designs, there are always trade-offs and compromises that the research has to carry (Riley, Wood, Clark, Wilkie & Szivas, 2000). For this particular research, because a small group of people was selected the

results are not exactly representative and cannot be generalised beyond the subject studied.

#### 4.1.3 Data collection techniques

Myers (2013) argued that interviews are one of the most important data gathering techniques for qualitative research because they allow for the collection of rich data from people in various roles and situations. The collection technique that was chosen for this study was semi-structured interviews. Easterby-Smith et al. (1999) outlined when interviews are appropriate methods:

- When it is important to identify the constructs that the interviewee uses as a basis for their opinions and beliefs about a particular matter.
- When the goal is to grow an understanding of the respondent's perception so that the researcher may influence it.

The essence of exploratory research is the disposition to flexibility and change in direction as new insights occur (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). Although semi-structured interviews have pre-formulated questions that provide direction, they allow flexibility to change the flow and probably result in useful information that could enhance findings (Hair, Babin, Money and Samouel, 2003).

Semi-structured interviews were also most appropriate for this study because with the opportunity to probe, participants could explain further and build on their responses. This was important for a study that aimed to understand how respondents construct meanings and the perceptions they ascribe to. Semi-structured interviews also provide an added level of confidence to the responses which are not available on questionnaires, as respondents have to give a good deal of thought to their answers (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999).

Although interviewing is allegedly the most appropriate qualitative method of collecting information, its difficulty can sometimes be underestimated (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). Some of the challenges the researcher encountered was

that the interviews were time consuming, there was a varying level of comfort, the interviewer was not fully skilled, and the recording device broke down in the middle of two interviews. Moreover, the researcher may be subjective and prone to bias in data collection and interpretation.

#### ***4.1.3.1 Interview guide design***

The researcher reviewed existing literature to identify gaps in employer brand theory and designed an interview guide accordingly. The literature review suggested that an employer brand is a function of other organisational activities, such as consumer advertising, corporate brand, internal marketing etc., therefore at the beginning a deductive approach was applied in designing the questions. The researcher pre-tested the interview guide by conducting a mock interview with a candidate who fit the population profile. Based on the respondent's feedback and problems identified during the interview, the questions were revised to avoid ambiguity.

#### **4.1.4 Population and unit of analysis**

The population constituted of all registered Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). Approximately 300 people made up the total population. Most MBA students have at least three years' work experience and also have at a minimum a bachelor's degree, while some have honours and master's degrees in their respective fields.

The sampling frame constituted second year (2013/14) and full time (2014/15) GIBS MBA students. The reason for this choice was that these individuals were less than two months from completing their MBA, and as such may have been actively thinking about their employment prospects. In addition they were working and/or may have been working previously, which should have been given them an opportunity to evaluate the work environment and attractiveness of different employers.

For this reason they were considered a credible source of information in understanding the attributes that influence potential employees' perceptions of employer attractiveness. Moreover, GIBS students are aware of both the concepts of consumer and employer brands, as they are part of the core modular curriculum.

The unit of analysis from the consumer and employer brand perspective was guided by participants' opinions and experiences. The researcher did also probe using South Africa's top brands such as those released by The Sunday Times.

#### **4.1.5 Sampling technique and sample size**

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), in an exploratory study a non-probability sampling technique may be the most practical, although it does not allow the extent of the problem to be determined. Convenience sampling was chosen for this study mainly for the ease of obtaining participants, but also to save time. "Convenience sampling is most often used where the research objectives are inherently qualitative in nature and focus upon the elaboration of theoretical concepts and issues in micro-social contexts" (Riley et al., 2000, p. 87).

The limitation of this method of sampling is that the research results will not be inferred beyond the population studied. However although this method is prone to bias and generalisation would likely be flawed, this problem is not significant where there is little variation in the population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003).

A sample size of 15 was drawn; this number was chosen based on the likelihood that data saturation would be reached at that point because of the homogeneous nature of the population.

#### **4.1.6 Data analysis approach**

Tape recordings were done during the interviews and transcribed later. The researcher personally transcribed the interviews in order to familiarise herself with the data. The researcher also took notes when participants were reluctant to comment or when facial expressions were exaggerated, for the purposes of probing later. According to Welman and Kruger (2003) it is important for the interviewer to take note of the participants' recognised non-verbal communications, but note taking and recording should not hold back participants' spontaneous behaviours.

Myers (2013) claimed that a qualitative study which aims to be mainly exploratory and theory-building adopts a bottom up approach, meaning that concepts used to analyse the data come from the analysis of data. This is the approach that was adopted by this study. Since the data collection methodology was flexible which may have resulted in non-standardised data, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) suggested that non-standardised and complex data has to be classified into categories before they can be meaningfully analysed.

Data analysis in this study involved:

- Coding: this required assigning a label to the meaning of information collected during a study (Myers, 2013);
- Identifying themes and clustering them; and
- Formulating a theory: this required ascertaining how these themes, concepts and beliefs are linked to one another (Myers, 2013).

All interview transcripts were loaded onto Atlas.ti and the researcher carefully read them several times to identify frequently raised issues. Issues that recurred were used as the basis for themes (inductive coding). Once the data was coded, the researcher attempted to identify areas of similarity and difference connected to the data.

The researcher employed inductive reasoning, which began by collecting qualitative data on the topic, analysing it and gaining a better understanding of the research context. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), the outcome of data analysis is a better understanding of the nature of the problem and the formulation of a theory. They further argued that it is possible for one to



end up with the same theory suggested, however theory is formulated from data and not the other way round.

An inductive approach was chosen for this study because it allows for flexibility in methodology and explanations for what is taking place are not limited by the researcher's choice of theory. This choice was unique for this particular study because the researcher was less concerned about the need to generalise, but rather wanted to explore the proposed phenomena and formulate a theory that could be tested by future research.

## 4.2 The philosophy of research design

This section underpins the general nature and overall configuration in which the researcher envisions the development of knowledge relevant to the research problem. According to Easterby-Smith, Richard and Lowe (1999), there are three reasons why outlining a philosophical issue is very useful:

- To clarify research design, i.e. what kind of evidence is gathered from where and how it is interpreted;
- To identify which designs will work and which will not; and
- To discover and create designs that may be outside the researcher's past experience.

### 4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with what reality is by enquiring what type of knowledge is valid. Saunders, Lewis and Adrian (2003) outlined three views that a research process could use:

- **Positivism:** the principle is to work with observable social reality, whereby the researcher assumes the role of an objective analyst making detached interpretations about data collected in a value-free manner.

- Interpretivism: this view explores the subjective meanings motivating people's actions in order to understand the subjective reality of those they study.
- Realism: this view is based on the belief that a reality exists that is independent of human thoughts and beliefs.

The literature review for this study could not find research evidence directly related to the role of consumer brands on an employer brand, therefore the study attempted to understand what could be happening within these phenomenon and develop ideas through induction from the data.

The underlying philosophy for this study is therefore interpretivism, because the researcher's ontological view is that valid information with regards to this phenomenon is very vague. The ontological position the researcher took in this study was that there is no one reality, because she believes that reality is subjective and socially created during interaction with the environment, and is affected by the perceptions and experiences both the researcher and the participants hold (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003).

Saunders, Lewis and Adrain (2003) advocated for interpretivism in qualitative research as opposed to positivism, because the social world of business and management is too complex to be reduced entirely to the progressions of law-like generalisations. A qualitative approach was chosen for this study and will be discussed in detail in the sections to follow.

The interpretivism philosophy was also a perfect match to the researcher's thought process with regards to the direction of bridging the information gap. While the study focused specifically on consumer brands as a possible reality working behind an employer brand, the researcher proposes that an employer brand is a function of other branding cues (such as consumer brands). Myers (2013) stated that interpretive researchers need not predefine dependent and independent variables, but should rather focus on understanding phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. For instance, what are the inferences or interpretations derived from consumer experience that could spill over to employer brand image?

Saunders, Lewis and Adrain (2003) proposed that the strongest argument for interpretivism follows from constructivism views, which state that people interact with the environment and place different interpretations from it, which are likely to affect their actions as they make sense of them.

#### 4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with answering how reality can be known. The researcher's epistemological position was that since knowledge on the subject under study was not explicit, it was more appropriate to bridge the knowledge gap through subjective interaction with subjects. The researcher believed that as she was not independent of the unit of analysis she would rather interact with the research matter.

According to Myers (2013, pp. 41) the epistemological assumptions of the interpretivism are:

- “Subjective understanding is key as data cannot be separated from theory and facts have to be reconstructed in the light of interpretation.
- Theories are mimetic reconstructions of the facts themselves and the creation of a good theory is an understanding of meanings and intentions rather than deductive explanation.
- Language in the human sciences are irreducibly equivocal and continually adapt themselves to changing circumstances.
- Meanings are what constitute of the fact, intentional behaviour, social rules, human artefacts, etc., and these are inseparable from their meanings for agent.”

These are the assumptions that guided the researcher's epistemological position.

#### 4.2.3 Ethical considerations

The key ethical consideration relates to the participants. Being fellow classmates, it was critical not to force participation. To achieve this it was clearly communicated to the respondents that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. The interviews were conducted at venues and times convenient for the participants. The interviews were also conducted in a language that the participants were comfortable with.

The participants were informed beforehand that the interviews would be electronically recorded and that anonymity was guaranteed.

#### 4.2.4 Research limitations

The key limitations of the research methodology and scope are:

- According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), in an exploratory study non-probability sampling techniques may be the most practical, although they do not allow the extent of the problem to be determined.
- The study population was homogenous with very little variation.
- A convenience sampling method was chosen, and as such results cannot be inferred beyond the population studied. This method is also prone to bias and generalisation would likely be flawed. This problem is not significant where there is little variation in the population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003).
- Since a small group of people was selected, the results are not exactly representative and cannot be generalised beyond the subject studied.
- There was a varying level of comfort with the respondents.
- The interviewer was not fully skilled and was prone to bias in data collection and interpretation.
- The recording device broke down in the middle of two interviews.

#### 4.2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher identified the appropriate methods that would provide relevant information on the research question and do the job most efficiently. The main purpose of this chapter was to provide a roadmap of the whole research project and clear guidelines on how and what the researcher intended to do.

## Chapter 5: Results

### 5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this research was to explore if consumer brands play a role in shaping the perceptions of employer attractiveness, and if yes, what the role is. The fundamental question the researcher aimed to answer was: “Can consumer brands influence the perception of an employer brand in evaluating employer effectiveness?”

This chapter describes the results of the analyses conducted on the data that emerged from the one-on-one semi-structured interviews. A collation of the themes and meanings extracted from the interviews will be reported under the following subcategories: i) findings in relation to the research questions, and ii) general findings particular to the research questions. The analysis was guided by the opinions of the majority of the participants and the results are laid out using direct quotes from respondents.

Fifteen interviews were secured for the study. All the respondents were GIBS MBA students with various work experience in their respective industries. All respondents proved to be aware of the concept of consumer brands and employer brands, as the opening questions asked their understanding of these terms. Although all the interviews were guided, each conversation was unique as each respondent volunteered their experiences, observations and opinions with openness, trust and depth.

## 5.2 Description of participants

The characteristics and details of the participants are tabulated below. There was a good spread across work background and industry.

|              | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Work Background</b> | <b>Industry</b>       | <b>Years employed</b> |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Interview 1  | Female        | Indian      | Geology                | Mining                | 5                     |
| Interview 2  | Male          | Black       | Equity Finance         | Investment Banking    | 3                     |
| Interview 3  | Female        | Black       | Strategy               | Parastatal            | 10                    |
| Interview 4  | Female        | Black       | Sales                  | Life Insurance        | 7                     |
| Interview 5  | Male          | Black       | Customer Insights      | Retail                | 5                     |
| Interview 6  | Female        | Black       | Civil Engineering      | Construction          | 8                     |
| Interview 7  | Female        | Black       | Marketing Research     | FMCG                  | 7                     |
| Interview 8  | Male          | Black       | Finance                | Mining                | 10                    |
| Interview 9  | Male          | Indian      | External Auditing      | Professional Services | 3                     |
| Interview 10 | Female        | Indian      | Marketing              | FMCG                  | 9                     |

|              |        |        |                          |                  |   |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------------------------|------------------|---|
| Interview 11 | Female | Indian | Research and Development | FMCG             | 4 |
| Interview 12 | Male   | Black  | Public Sector            | Banking          | 6 |
| Interview 13 | Female | Black  | Long-term Planning       | Mining           | 9 |
| Interview 14 | Male   | Black  | Finance                  | Automotive       | 4 |
| Interview 15 | Female | Black  | Project Management       | Designer Theatre | 3 |

## 5.3 Presentation of results

### I) Findings pertinent to the research questions

#### 5.3.1 Research question 1

The first research question that was posed in chapter three was:

**a. Is there a role that consumers play on employer brands in shaping the attractiveness of an employer brand?**

**b. If there is, what is that role?**

13 out of 15 interviewees said that in their experience there is a role that consumer brands play on shaping the attractiveness of an employer brand. When asked what that role is, the below themes and comments emerged. Of the two respondents who did not reply in the affirmative, one said it depends on the size of the brand and the other said in their experience consumer brands do not contribute at all.

The comments were consolidated into similar themes to describe the role consumer brands play on shaping employer brand attractiveness.



## Theme 1: Brand association and desire to belong

“I think the role is linked basically in association. Everyone wants to be associated with a brand that is seen in a positive light. I don’t know which company I can give as an irresponsible company, people don’t necessarily want to work for irresponsible companies.”

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“...but companies that are doing good things in the community and so forth, people want to be associated with them because they like what the company stands for. So I think the link is just basically an association, people want to be associated with companies that are seen as being good.”

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“So I would imagine and I would also for myself, I would like to be associated with a bigger brand. And also, I mean, in your social circles and you tell your friends that you are working for this large consumer brand you kind of get some street credit if you will.”

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“And it’s like I find the entire brand attractive because I feel if I were to be employed at Vodacom I’d be part of that contribution of making things better. Because I think for an organisation is not just about selling a product but its more than that. What value are you proving to your customers?”

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“...because people initially get attracted because of that favourable brand image that you portray out there. And then they want to listen and when you say Vodacom is hiring you are interested in listening to what they have to tell you about the actual organisation and being part of the organisation. And I think it just helps in attracting the right kind of talent.”

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“Because at the end of the day everybody wants to work for the best, everybody wants to be part of an organisation that is going to provide you a platform to unleash your full potential and do your best.”

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“So in my loving the brand, we had a BMW at home my mother had one so in my loving the BMW brand, I loved speed, I loved the quality, I liked the ease of use, I liked the ergonomics of it and the street credit that it came with. Then from there as a young engineer I wanted to work for BMW so crazy but I was too far from East London and they told me they had to prioritise local students before they can take students from outside Pretoria. I was devastated but even after that I still would tell them, ‘listen guys just in case, I still want to work for you so yeah.’”

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“I was thinking I want to be part of the people that make this product.”

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“It’s loyalty and wanting to be part of this thing. It’s got a meaning to you; your favourite brand would mean more to you than someone else whereby it’s just an additional brand. So if you are talented in that respect, if you have the talent that would be part of that brand then you want to be part of it.”

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“Because I’m intimately connected to it, I want to be part of it. Some of the elements are not rational; it’s just emotional connections to that product that

would want you to go and work for the organisation. It's not something that you actually sit down and you think about why. It's here." *The participant put his hand on his heart.*

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"...I can associate my life and myself with this brand because of what the brand stands for."

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"Because I wouldn't want tell people like in my social circles that I'm working for a company and they would have had a bad relationship or a bad experience with that company because I would be a representative of that company."

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"Because like I said before I don't want be associated with a brand that has negative connotations whether they pay a lot or not."

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"Maybe being fascinated by this machine or part of this great iconic company called Apple. Because of the icon leader that was once there."

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"And I'd also look at what they produce. I want to work for a company that produces something that I use or something that I'm proud of, to be associated with."

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## **Theme 2: Signal/projection of employer brand**

"Because the thing is; the customer brand is a result of the employer brand. Because it determines the kind of employees that needs to get in the organisation. So the kind of employees they have or the kind of guys working behind that has to complement the customer brand. Because if it doesn't it will somehow change the customer brand. So basically for me I think the customer brand gives an idea of how the kind of organisation it is."

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"So the role they project, they, the consumer brand project what the corporate brand stands for, even you don't know, you automatically assume that this company must be a good company. And you know it must have a good working environment and things like that, just because they produce a quality product."

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"For example, I believe that BP provides quality. And I would expect that from the corporate office as well."

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"Purely because of loving the brand of the car. So it does, you get influenced."

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"...I'd still go back to what I said, like most of the times you find companies that offer good service or produce high quality products are normally good companies. So I think that link."

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"Yeah, so automatically it brushes off onto the corporate brand as well."

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"Because for example with Mac the consumer brand and what they say they stand for needs to be visible in their employees. And I think if you are selling Mac products and the people don't have the makeup on, they are wearing whatever colour they want to wear at work, they are not looking professional"

and all black and their hair is a mess, you don't necessarily believe that the consumer brand is effective. And also, you don't believe that the employer brand is effective because what it says is that it's a unhappy place to work for, or it's not a conducive environment to work for. And they don't have high enough standards people."

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"I think that is important, what the company is doing because I think you start as a consumer and you understand what the company represents."

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### **Theme 3: Alignment to personal values**

"So maybe I wouldn't want to work for a cigarette company, for example, because I don't smoke and I don't encourage anyone to smoke. So I wouldn't want to represent such a company because it's something that is against I believe for my values. I want a company where my values don't conflict a lot. So that one of the other reasons I'm not eager to work for SABMiller anymore, because its alcohol."

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"If the consumer brand appeals to me I'll be more inclined to work for that company as an employee. So it has a direct correlation in my mind."

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"And other issues I actually look at are, like when I read about the company in terms of its values and stuff like that. I try and figure out, do they resonate with me, with my values as well."

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"It's basically the image, people would say 'what does this brand stand for and in my value system do I want to be associated with it.'"

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"So that's one organisation where you can live your passion and get paid for it."

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"Their values need to align with mine and also consistency. Consistency in terms of the message that they send out regarding their values, their mandates, what they stand for. They can't be about HVI/AIDS prevention today and then tomorrow they are strictly corporate and they don't do any social stuff. So they have to be consistent, the values have to be the same or most of them have to align with mine."

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### **Theme 4: Consumer brand appeal as an employee benefit**

"I grew up liking BMW as a brand really wishing one day I'll own one. And in my wishing that I would own a BMW one day I wanted to work for them because I knew that would guarantee me owning a BMW."

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"And what I liked about them over time is the fact that their employees get to have BMWs, by virtue of being employed there you get to have a BMW as a benefit."

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“SAB attracts people because people would love to work for SAB and get two free cases of beer every single month. And because people love the consumer brand that SAB sells and beyond just getting paid well, that is a big pull. To say you know what I work at SAB, I get two cases of Castle Lite every, or any other brand, Hansa or Black Label every month. So that is one.”

### 5.3.2 Research Question 2

The second question that was posed in chapter three was:

***Do consumer brands contribute to attracting and retaining employees? If yes, what is it about consumer brands that attract and retain employees?***

The question was broken down into two sections as set out below:

**Question 2a:** *Do consumer brands contribute to attracting talented employees. If they do, what is it about consumer brands that attract employees?*

12 of the 15 interviewees believe that consumer brands do contribute to attracting talented employees to an organisation. When asked what it was about consumer brands that attract employees, the following themes and comments were solicited.

#### **Theme 1: Brand association**

“So I would imagine and I would also for myself that I would like to be associated with a bigger brand. And also I mean in your social circles and you tell your friends that you are working for this large consumer brand you kind of get some street credit if you will.”

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“And it’s like I find the entire brand attractive because I feel if I were to be employed at Vodacom I’d be part of that contribution of making things better. Because I think for an organisation is not just about selling a product but its more than that. What value are you providing to your customers?”

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“Because people initially get attracted because of that favourable brand image that you portray out there. And then they want to listen and when you say Vodacom is hiring you are interested in listening to what they have to tell you about the actual organisation and being part of the organisation. And I think it just helps in attracting the right kind of talent.”

---

“Because at the end of the day everybody wants to work for the best, everybody wants to be part of an organisation that is going to provide you a platform to unleash your full potential and do your best.”

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“As my background is mechanical engineering so I thought I would love to work for them and be a part of the people that make such a magnificent car, you know.”

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“So in my loving the brand, we had a BMW at home my mother had one so in my loving the BMW brand, I loved speed, I loved the quality, I liked the ease of use, I liked the ergonomics of it and the street credit that it came with. Then from there as a young engineer I wanted to work for BMW so crazy but I was too far from East London and they told me they had to prioritise local students before they can take students from outside Pretoria. I was devastated but even after that I still would tell them, ‘listen guys just in case, I still want to work for you so yeah.’”

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“I was thinking I want to be part of the people that make this product.”

---

“Its loyalty, its wanting to be part of this thing. It’s got a meaning to you, your favourite brand would mean more to you than someone else whereby it’s just an additional brand. So if you are talented in that respect, if you have the talent that would be part of that brand then you want to be part of it.”

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“Because the brand has a lot more equity, you know that you’ll be in a company that is actually promoting something that is doing so well. So automatically you realise that, wow, this is a good company to work for.”

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“Because I’m intimately connected to it, I want to be part of it. Why do you want to be part of it? I want to be part of producing those kind of cars. Some of the elements is not rational, it’s just emotional connections to that product that would want you to go and work for the organisation. It’s not something that you actually sit down and you think about why. It’s here.” *The participant put his hand on his heart.*

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“I think the role is linked basically in association. Everyone wants to be associated with a brand that is seen in a positive light. I don’t know which company I can give as an irresponsible company, people don’t necessarily want to work for irresponsible companies.”

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“But companies that are doing good things in the community and so forth, people want to be associated with them because they like what the company stands for. So I think the link is just basically an association, people want to be associated with companies that are seen as being good.”

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“The same way that employees get attracted is about the same way; I feel like I belong here, I can associate my life and myself with this brand because of what the brand stands for.”

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“Your association with the product. I mean you have had good experiences; you’ve bought stuff at Spar and what not. I mean that’s it.”

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“So for example, a product, let’s say this particular company produces and sells products, their products should be of high quality. A product that you yourself would buy. And if it’s a service it should be of high quality.”

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“I think if a young boy grew up loving BMW, and they then go and study mechanical engineering, and they qualify I would imagine that they would also want to work for BMW because of that love for the car that they may developed from a young age. So yes. And they would associate BMW with obviously quality and all those different characteristics. So again in that industry I would say yes.”

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“But I would imagine if I’m an aspiring designer I would want to work for an employer who already is producing quality products out there and then as an aspiring designer I would get inspired and feel that if I join them I’ll be challenged because you know you can see the quality of work they are producing.”

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## **Theme 2: Brand Image and security**

“It’s what the brand stands for, first of all.”

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“Its loyalty, its wanting to be part of this thing. It’s got a meaning to you, your favourite brand would mean more to you than someone else whereby it’s just an additional brand. So if you are talented in that respect, if you have the talent that would be part of that brand then you want to be part of it.”

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“The quality of the brand, the image of the brand, how it’s projected out there.”

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“So that’s image, whatever is projected in the media. So you judge whether it’s good image or not.”

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“If they are big enough I would think that they are stable so my employment in that company means stability for me.”

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“Because the stronger your brand and the familiar they are with that, I think again you’ll be a lot more comfortable working for a strong brand and for a brand that you know is doing well versus a no name brand for example.”

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“Well for me it would be the appeal of that brand to all consumers. What do they think of it? And how do they perceive it because that will determine my perception of the brand and working for that client to develop the brand.”

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“I also like the image that it portrays and it’s the kind of image I want to be associated with.”

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“It’s basically the image, people would say ‘what does this brand stand for and in my value system do I want to be associated with it?’ For instance, if the brand BP in my mind stands for a company that is against the environment, I’m not going to want to work for them.”

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“Because when you get there in a Mac shop you see the people that work there, they look a certain way, they are always dressed a certain way. They are always made up. And also they are very professional. Even when I came across them at fashion shows as a model, and they just look, they look the brand.”

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“It’s something about how they portray their brand that make one wants to know more.”

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“The look and the feel of the brand itself.”

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“So I’d be unlikely to go for a company that is not known. So my first options would be obviously those companies that are known. And most of the times those companies are the ones that produce these high quality consumer brands.”

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### **Theme 3: Familiarity**

“Because the stronger your brand and the familiar they are with that, I think again you’ll be a lot more comfortable working for a strong brand and for a brand that you know is doing well versus a no name brand for example.”

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“Brands that probably some I grew up being exposed to from my family, or from TV or just about anywhere.”

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“And also growing up being exposed and they admired that particular brand. They admired this BMW they want to work for BMW. Because of that, because of what BMW is releasing every other day.”

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“Consumer brands attract because they are the first point of contact that any person whether they want to be employee or whether they want to buy, that’s the first contact they have with the organisation as a consumer brand, why it’s important.”

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“I think something I would also seriously consider is if it’s a recognisable brand,”

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“Its loyalty, its wanting to be part of this thing. It’s got a meaning to you, your favourite brand would mean more to you than someone else whereby it’s just an additional brand. So if you are talented in that respect, if you have the talent that would be part of that brand then you want to be part of it.”

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## Theme 4: Longevity

“The longevity and how long they have been in the market for and them proving to be the best quality over and over again.”

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“No like I said for me it’s only if it’s like a large multinational.”

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“Because I think that and it’s again I’ve mentioned it before; if a brand is large, it sort of means the company is larger, they have larger financial base which in turn means that they provide a more secure environment for their employees.”

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In addition to asking if consumer brands contribute to attracting employees, participants were also asked which brand between the consumer and the employer contributes the most in attracting employees.

Although most respondents felt that consumer brands do contribute to a certain extent in attracting employees; nine of the 15 participants believed that the employer brand contributes the most in attracting employees.

**Question 2b:** *Do consumer brands contribute to retaining employees. If they do, what is it about consumer brands that retain employees?*

Nine of the 15 respondents believed that consumer brands do not contribute to retaining customers. Respondents were then asked to provide reasons why. The respondents’ direct comments were grouped into two categories: why consumer brands do or do not contribute to retaining employees.

### *5.3.2.1 Why consumer brands do not contribute to retaining employees*

“Because that is not the only thing a person would stay in a company for. Okay. And it has a lot to do with how the employee is treated. You know, like I’m saying for compensation and recognising talent and developing the individual.”

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“Retaining that’s when you are in the company, that is when other things kick. Once you are in the company consumer brands goes on the side. And then you start looking at other things because you are no longer viewing the company as a consumer but as an employee of the organisation. So other things like what? Like you growth, development, you are looking at the culture if you fit within the organisation. I think culture encompass everything on how things are done in the organisation and if you are the right fit. What is it about consumer brands that retain employees?”

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“In modern days, it’s all about the company. Once you are in, what the company has to offer, matters more than the products that you sell. The brand of your company will keep or chase away your employees. *Please elaborate.* You become part of the team. I know guys that worked for companies that make great brands but they left because the employer is not so great, even though the product is great. And it becomes the word around engineers that you know what, stay away from that company.”

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“I think retaining employees depends on your working environment. And because as I said before, you go through the different channels of whom you’re recruiting and what stage of the recruitment, of your employment you are actually at. So I think it’s there yes for attracting your potential talent but in terms of retaining a lot has to do with what you, a remuneration. A lot has to do with the working conditions, development, and agility.”

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“Well, in terms of retaining I’d say once you are in the business and you realise there are so many different brands that you can continuously move in and out of, getting a feel for it. Working in another company with a very similar portfolio of brands actually means the same thing. But what makes the difference is what the company is offering you to keep you there. So is it a better remuneration package, are they offering you more benefits. Because then you’ll quickly realise that hey, if I’m working at a Unilever and Beiersdorf wants me for a percentage, a huge percentage increase where you are going to be working for different brands. I’m actually going to go for the one giving me the better offering.”

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“Because people leave good or big companies all the time, even those that have the most high quality brands. So at the end of the day I think it’s about probably the culture now. Once you are in, then that when you really truly can know the culture and the working environment and whether it jells with your own values and so forth. And obviously no matter how, like, some big companies they don’t pay much, like the likes of Unilever and SABMiller. They don’t pay a lot but they get good people because of the image they have. But once people are in there, obviously everyone wants a good salary, everyone wants to also grow in terms of their career. Some companies don’t even have like a career path, when you get in there. And if it’s not there and you are someone who wants to grow you’ll certainly leave no matter what good brands or high quality brands they have.”

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“I don’t think it contributes to retaining them because it takes more than just a brand and output out there to retain someone. It takes, are they happy, are you providing them the right support from the onset. You know, the extrinsic values and intrinsic values, do they speak. The culture as well, is it fitting. Are they getting opportunities where they grow? It’s more than just a consumer brand.”

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“Because the consumer brand is the face of the company and it’s not really facing towards the employees. An employee brand focuses on its employees, if the company is not geared to focusing on its employees through benefits and all other mechanisms the attractiveness for attracting key players or key talent would be far less.”

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“Because I’m going to a place where I can derive maximum benefits. At that company I’m not the consumer. I’m the employee so I’d want the brand to focus on me.”

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“The reason I’m saying that is that when you are not employee yet, all you know about the company is what the consumer brand tells you and because of that you want to be associated with the company. But the moment you are in the company, now it’s about what the company stands for from within. So that is why I’m saying in terms of retaining, that would be the one.”

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“It’s important because you need to know how practically what you initially thought is going to work out. So testing the assumptions. Okay Coke is a great brand it’s about sharing joy, sharing smile, happiness, but is it happy in that organisation or is it stressful or not conducive. Are you miserable going to work?”

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“I think employees are retained by culture and money. If you are not going to pay employees it doesn’t matter what you sell, or how good it is they are going to leave.”

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“So if your company has got bad culture and lets your managers do as they please, employees will leave regardless of how great the consumer brands are. So that’s what, it becomes a peripheral between the brands and the people that govern that brand and the employees that you’ve got.”

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“Because the other thing that you need to take into account is remuneration is important in attracting and retaining. Remuneration is important. You cannot remunerate high if your consumer brand is not doing well in the market so there is a link. But over and above I just think you do need to take into account remuneration which may draw talent towards or against the employer.”

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### *5.3.2.2 Why consumer brands contribute to retaining employees*

“They do, due to the longevity of the brand. So a brand like Coca-Cola - it’s been around for many years and people see that as a, for certain people that stability in careers is important to them. And a brand that has been there for such a long time they see that stability in the brand.”

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“I think yes, from a personal selfish point of view, in the sense that if they can observe that the product is not doing well in the market, i.e., competition is killing the market or rather eating way the product’s position in the market, then yes. You know. Then someone within the organisation when they realise that the product is not doing well then they may decide applying to other companies. So the consumer brand does play a role in retaining employees. It’s certainly a factor but it depends on how, it depends on the competition essentially.”

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### 5.3.3 Research Question 3

The third research question that was proposed in chapter three was;

***Which of the two brands (consumer versus employer) is the most influential in evaluating companies as an attractive employer?***

There was an equal split on the brand that respondents believed to be the most influential. Seven respondents believed that a consumer brand is more influential, one believed they contributed equally, and the last seven believed the employer brand is more influential.

#### ***5.3.3.1 Why is the employer brand more influential?***

“Because, okay, if I’m looking at a number of companies as potential employers, I would initially go through the portfolios of the company. To see what they have done, what they have done in the past, what they are going to do in the future. And also people that have worked for them and are working for them. So and I would look at the media based on that. So I don’t, I don’t, but I mean in terms of making my decision as to which employer I go to. And if I have a difficult time with that, then I think consumer brands would play a part.”

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“It’s like the product gets your attention, but like I’m saying some things as you grow you make your decisions differently. The product gets your attention and you want to be part of this thing. But these days before you say, ‘you want to be part of it.’ You go and the information is accessible that’s the thing. So you go google them up and you check how are they doing, are they are these people making money or am I joining a sinking company. And then from there. So what else have they done. If you pick it up somewhere on Google even old news that these guys did something, for example, they build a school there and they did this. Then you start thinking you know what, even more reason for me to want to be part of these guys because they touch the values, your personal values. If the company’s acted out values resonate with your personal values as a person then you go there smiling saying I really want to be part of this. Your attitude to the interview is different..”

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“I think again it would be the employer brand because it is a bigger pie of the two. And that where you’ll look for or what you’d look for is how big is this player in the game. So if you have an entrenched employer brand, you almost always followed with successful consumer brands. So that again would attract me. I would definitely be the employer brand. *What do you mean the bigger pie of the two?* So consumer versus employer or employer, which is the bigger brand to look at. So talking about it from strictly a brand perspective, you know you can’t compare and Unilever brand and what it stands for and what it’s worth to Axe, because it’s one fifth of the pie.”

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“Because that’s the truth, the essence of the company. The consumer brand would be what the company would like me to believe, however, employer brand would be what it really is. So the most influential would be the employer brand for me.”

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#### *5.3.3.2 Why is the consumer brand more influential?*

“Yeah because they are the ones I probably have more information on than the corporate brand itself. The first thing I’d know about a company, it’s their, it’s through the products that they produce. I’ll know about Unilever because I used Lux or something like that. So I think the consumer brand would make my perception.”

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“Because it’s what you see every time. The employer brand is not well marketed. Let me give an example, with FNB for instance. They were extremely doing well like bringing the e-wallet and all those things. At some point I was like, I would love to work for FNB. But I didn’t know how exactly the employer brand was and didn’t have a clue how they actually operate and all. But I had, I wanted to work for them because of the products they actually make, because of the customer brands. So for me the customer brand is more stronger in that sense. And I think it connects back to the same thing that the consumer brands are more marketed than the employer brands. It’s in your face. So if a customer brand is doing well you will be attracted to it and it will be easier for you to actually also align yourself in that employer brand even though you don’t know the brand position or how they define themselves as an organisation.”

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“If you look at consumer brands vs. employer brands, a consumer brand is more publicised than employer brands so you most probably know more about the consumer brand than the employer brand. So most of the decision will be influenced by the information you have and you receive from the consumer brand.”

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“Because like I’ve already said, your first touch point with any brand is when you are buying something or when family member is buying something or they own that particular product. That’s what influences you the most. Over and above that in terms of the employer brand, the one thing that I know I’m a bit particular about now; is the manager. If I’m evaluating a company that’s one thing I’d like to know. I think that speaks to employer brand.”

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#### **5.3.4 Research Question 4**

The fourth research question that was posed in chapter three is:

***What are the dimensions of consumer brands that play a role in employer brand perception?***

The following matters emerged as the dimensions of a consumer brand that play a role in shaping employer brand perception.

### **Theme 1 - Customer service perception**

“But ah the main thing I would think is that maybe the way that the company treats its customers or interacts with customers, would be important to ah my perception of that company as an employer brand.”

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“I’d say definitely a company that represents diversity, a company that is transparent, a company that cares the environment, a company that cares about its community and its customers.”

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“So I think from just, so the customer service obviously would be number 1, the system, for example, is there an order to things?”

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“Because when I generally apply to a company, I don’t look at how they treat their customers, I look at how they treat communities that they are around and their employees. I don’t look at how they interact with customers.”

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### **Theme 2 - Performance**

“But in case for example if I was looking for a job, definitely I would like to go for like blue-chip companies that are known to perform very well.”

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“How they are doing financially is important as well.”

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“Because I want to get paid I don’t want to get fired tomorrow because there is no money in my company. And also money is one of the indicators of success, not the only, but one of. Well probably one of the most important, I don’t know if you can say a company is successful is they are bankrupt but ja.”

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“Obviously its satisfaction that I got out of using their product.”

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“I would be thinking stuff like brand presence. How much market share they got. How much is their reach. How much, I mean I would be thinking, how much of a difference can I make. How much, how many people am I reaching here?”

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“So I’d be unlikely to go for a company that is not known. So my first options would be obviously those companies that are known. And most of the times those companies are the ones that produce these high quality consumer brands.”

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### **Theme 3 – Community involvement**

“I think also because of the triple bottom line, you know, that is more popular these days, I think also and because it’s also close to my heart, social responsibility. So I also look for, sometimes there are campaigns running,

where there are social responsibility initiatives that involves consumer brands. And then I say, 'Wow that is a good employer to actually work for because they actually do something good.' They don't just take they give something back."

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"One thing that I can think of now, is how much contribution the company has in the community. So its things like the social responsibility of that company. So if I feel like a company actually engages with the consumer and sort of like I said earlier make a difference in consumer's life. A company that more than selling or delivering a product and looking at the profit margins and what not. They want to offer more than that for the consumer."

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"For me is the purpose of why does the company exist. Also keep in mind as you get older, some things, and as you become more experienced your judgement of different things also changes. So at this point now I'm very clear I prefer to work for companies that serve a purpose I can identify with. But for me the brand it must not be about just making money but it must be the type of brand that serves communities, in some way or the other. It has to have a bigger meaning than just revenue returns."

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"It's what the brand stands for, first of all. So if you have a brand like Axe, that is around youth so the 18-35 age group, age bracket. Those are the activations that you would be doing which would be very very exciting. So that is why I say it would attract you there. If you look at other sustainable projects like Lifebuoy runs, with the hand washing days and trying to cure children of diarrhoea, its things that would appeal to an employer. You know this is a brand that I want to work for because it's not only working for the brand, its making a difference to a community. So it's all about what the brand stands for."

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#### **Theme 4 – Consumer product quality**

"Like I have said, quality. The quality of the brand, the image of the brand, how it's projected out there."

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"Well for me it would be the appeal of that brand to all consumers. What do they think of it? And how do they perceive it because that will determine my perception of the brand and working for that client to develop the brand."

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"Well, the quality of the product that they are selling. So if quality of the product is poor and people's perception of it is poor I would not want to be associated with the company even though the employer brand is good."

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"That's all the brand presence if, Coca-Cola and Pepsi, you are South African, Coca-Cola is more prominent. Then you are going to go to Coca-Cola. Whereas if you are in India I think it's a different story."

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"The quality of the product or services that they present in the market. I think one more thing that I may add is perhaps reputation, in the sense that if a product has a bad reputation in the market. I think that would be a turn off for a

potential employee because who would want to join an organisation that is obviously in disrepute?”

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## II) General findings particular to the research subject

Respondents were asked if in their opinion there is consistency in the way companies promote their brands, that is, consumer versus employer brands. Seven respondents believed that there is consistency, whilst the rest of the respondents believed there was no consistency at all. Respondents were further asked if in their opinion, the consistency between consumer and employer brand is important. Eleven respondents agreed that it is important for companies to be consistent in the way they promote their consumer versus employer brands.

The respondents who were of the opinion that there is consistency provided the following comments:

“Well I’ll tell you from Unilever’s side, the basic consistent message that they always run is; ‘doing well and doing good business at the same time’. So where you are doing well for the communities that you serve but also doing well in good business as well. At the same time. So it’s getting that balance right. And every time you hear of an ad agenda it’s doing good business as well as serving the people. So I think that is a consistent message that would run across all the brands as well as would be part of the brand messaging that Unilever gives off.”

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“I think companies have now woken up to the reality of appointing brand custodians. People beyond just, when I say brand custodians, the marketing guys are not the only guys that look after the brand. Everyone in the company is a brand custodian, so you find that regardless of who you talk to, the message becomes consistent. And I think that is what now, is either making companies more competitive or its making hard for you to even make a difference to see which company is better than which. Because in the past the Chief Marketing Officer would be the one that would handle a brand and employees would just tell you what they tell you.”

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“...but if I look at the BP brand for example, and their whole idea about safety and going beyond and all of that. That very much comes through with their product branding as well as the brand as a company. So that I see there is a tie as well. But it’s the only example I can give right now where you are looking for an employer but I haven’t been actively seeking employment.”

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There were two main themes that emerged from the respondents who were of the opinion that there is no consistency in the way companies promote their consumer versus employer brands. They were that companies invest more resources in consumer brands and that employer brands are not promoted at all.

“Obviously they invest more in promoting their consumer brands because that’s where their money comes from. Like I said, I don’t think companies do a lot around promoting themselves as corporate, particularly to potential employees. But they, I think they do social, CSI, just to project a good image to the community, hopefully potential employees are part of that community, they are also assembled in that. But I think there are very few companies that particularly have any programme at all that is targeted to potential employees specifically.”

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“From an employer brand point of view, it’s not out there much. But a typical example would be FNB. Just last year or was it this year early, last year I think. We had the CEO of FNB at that particular time on TV thanking his employees. You see for me, that, I was like, wow. I was touched, it’s probably the only company that I’ve actually seen doing such. And felt he valued his, that sense of value that he put or he displayed towards his employees. It touched; I was like wow, who wouldn’t want to be part of that. For a kind of company where somebody forgets about all those things, ‘hey come and sign up and move your account, blah blah.’ Speak about the employers, I mean the employees and thank the employees. Because at the end of the day they are the ones that are actually providing these great products that we see or experience as consumers. But with other companies I don’t really see much of that. We don’t get to hear about it.”

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“I mean, you being the best employer and creating that brand, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you are going to produce the best products in the market. Really it doesn’t competition is very high. It doesn’t, people could be happy but does it mean your product is the best. Because you could be good as an employer in the sense that you are treating your people well.”

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“Yes, let’s look at who for instance. Let’s look at Mercedes, are they the best employer? They are not they don’t feature, from what I remember they don’t feature in the top ten, yet they have the best car still. So I’m not sure, to me, yet it’s one of the best products but it normally doesn’t feature in the top ten employers of the year.”

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“Like I was looking at banking for instance, like they go big when it comes to advertising their consumer brands or the products they offer but when it comes to the employer brand itself I don’t think they do enough. I don’t think they do enough. I mean companies like Investec and all the other guys they do that more than the banks themselves. Like promoting their employer brand? I think Investec does that well, RMB does that well but on the retail side they don’t.”

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“...the consumer brand the company would spend far amount of money and dedicate far more resources to promoting their brand, the consumer brands because that is what generates revenues and they do very little on the employee section. So I don't think they are aligned.”

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“Apple's products are expensive and from a consumer point of view they are sold as these best products, very innovative, front-runners. But if you look at their employee practices, they remove their manufacturing out of the USA because they know they'll be paying people a lot. And they take it to cheaper countries so that they can take advantage of those people. So as an employer, I think they've got a bad brand but as consumer brand they've got a strong brand. That's what I call a disconnect between the two. To give an example, I would use an Apple device but I wouldn't like to manufacture an Apple device. I don't know if I'm making sense.”

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“And what you Google about them, etc., it's a great marketing company, it does great work. But the working environment, because it's a marketing company they have to structure their remuneration and their projects in a certain way. That puts their employees under a lot of pressure because it's the nature of the game. Where when Tekhayalnco wants the company to do a certain project they will quote you but that quote has to include their own staff costs for the year, etc. you as a project leader in the company puts a lot of pressure on you because number 1, if I'm the project manager my goal is to keep costs low but if I'm in another department and I'm working on the same project my goal is to make the project a great success, which costs money. So often there can be a lot of tension within a company of how they motivate their people. So predominantly yes, it must align, they do align but there are obviously outliers.”

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“I think in the perfect world everything being equal is important. But in a robust world where there are certain targets to be met, there is sort of have to be a ratio. So how much of the employer brand do we promote and how much do we show of that vs. how much do we show as a consumer brand. I think so. And I think it also depends on the global company, most global companies are also listed companies. So they have to manage a lot of perception, they have to manage a lot of sentiment that give them more money because if your share price goes up you have to make more money, or you are valued more. So the split would be a 50/50 or it's, it's not gonna be a 100% match, it's not gonna be perfect because there is other things to think about.”

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“I think companies have now woken up to the reality of appointing brand custodians. People beyond just, when I say brand custodians, the marketing guys are not the only guys that look after the brand. Everyone in the company is a brand custodian, so you find that regardless of who you talk to, the message becomes consistent. And I think that is what now, is either making companies more competitive or its making hard for you to even make a difference to see which company is better than which. Because in the past the Chief Marketing Officer would be the one that would handle a brand and employees would just tell you what they tell you.”

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“I’m saying there has to be, one and two, brands that are serious about the business make sure that the employees get exactly what the consumer gets. Because that is the same people that sells those brands. So if you are not going to collaborate how your employees think and how they sell your brand you going to have a conflicting view in terms of how they. So I think they do spend a lot of time to make sure that what they say to the employees and what they say to the consumer is actually the same thing.”

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“Very few companies according to me do a good job of their, like for instance, I think Woolworths. I don’t know what their structuring in terms of packages are, but they pay well. That information has never been something that’s been in the public domain, I think. So I don’t think companies are doing that good of a job to say that, ‘we are a good employer.’ They always concentrate on the consumer brand.”

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“At the end of the day there is only one brand really. You are just breaking it down based on product versus attracting employees but behind the two, there is one name, there is one brand, so consistency is important from that point. “

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### 5.3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the results that were uncovered through semi-structured interviews with various respondents. These results have been presented in the context of the research questions proposed. A detailed discussion of the results follows in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: Discussion of results

The previous chapter set out the results outlining the narratives and emerging themes as supported by direct quotations pertinent to the research questions. This chapter consists of a deep discussion of the research questions posed in chapter 3 and attempts to link the findings to the literature that was employed to inform the research questions. This is done within the context of each research question.

### 6.1 Research question 1

The first research question that was proposed earlier in chapter three is as follows:

***Is there a role that consumer brands play on employer brand on shaping employer brand attractiveness? If there is, what is that role?***

The literature review in chapter 2 suggested that there is interrelatedness within a company's overall strategic branding. The employer brand is influenced by, and may influence, all of the other brands of the firm, hence harmonisation of internal beliefs about the firm and external brand messages is of paramount importance (Wilden et al., 2010).

Wilden et al., (2010) added that companies that have product brands with low consumer awareness may find it harder to attract highly skilled human capital, as potential recruits are less aware of the employer. Problems may, however, occur when prospective employees transfer perception of the consumer or corporate brands that are not supported by the employment experience (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Employer brands are build up to be consistent with the company's consumer and corporate brands (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

"Employer branding is all about marketing and the relationship of customers and employee; about culture and the need for fundamental vicissitude in the role of the HR function." (Kapoor, 2010, pp. 54). There has been awareness of the impact employees have on consumer-based strategy and management (Moroko & Uncles, 2008), however the concept of how this relationship between

consumer brands and employer brands could work in reverse has not yet been explored.

According to Collins (2007), researchers have rarely examined the effects of non-recruitment sources on employer brands, so it is unclear whether some recruitment practices are successful because of the likelihood that potential employees have already developed relationships through non-recruitment sources of information.

Question one dealt with the respondents' opinions about whether or not this interrelatedness of company brands exists, particularly between the consumer and employer levels. As set out in the previous chapter, 13 out of 15 interviewees said consumer brands play a role in shaping the attractiveness of an employer brand. The researcher grouped the respondents' comments into four themes that describe the roles that consumer brands play in shaping employer brands' attractiveness. These themes are: brand association and desire to belong, alignment to personal values, projection of the employer brand, and employer benefits.

All these themes tie in with the psychological theories of motivation and identification reviewed in chapter two, that is, social identity theory, the group engagement model and the theory of affective self-affinity. Fuller et al. (2014) argued that according to social identity theory, people make use of their associations with organisations to define their self-identity. He further argued that because people are motivated by self-enhancement needs, they tend to identify with organisations that present positive qualities upon them. It came out strongly from participants that individuals gravitate towards consumer brands that affirm their identity.

However the comments from the two respondents who did not agree cannot be ignored, as they give valuable insight into the varying relevance of the inferred relationship. One of these respondents is a civil engineer who has worked for construction companies. Somehow she failed to make sense of the question, citing that in her line of work a product is a document or pipeline; something that is not as attractive as commercial brands. Interestingly, the other respondent who was also not affirmative is a geologist who has worked in mining. She also

failed to resonate with the question, citing that the nature of the mining environment is purely extractive with no link to the consumer.

The fundamental discovery of these disconfirming views is that although consumer brands could play a critical role in the attractiveness of the employer, the extent of the influence could vary by industry and profession.

## 6.2 Research question 2

The second research question that was proposed earlier in chapter three is as follows:

***Do consumer brands contribute to attracting and retaining employees?  
What is it about consumer brands that could attract and retain  
employees?***

The literature review in chapter two suggested that potential employees draw information from both recruitment and non-recruitment activities from a company. Branding is a strategic decision and the company's end goal is unquestionably to maximise sales and profits, but the brand purpose is something else (Kapoor, 2010).

Collins (2007) found that there is a connection between general recruitment advertisement and product awareness, and stated that product awareness and sponsorship are strongly related to application plans and decisions. He further uncovered that low information recruitment practices are not significantly related to job seekers' application behaviours for companies with high product awareness. The core of employer branding is the need to recognise what it feels like to work for an organisation, what employees connect with, what drives employees' desires to keep working for that organisation, and their sense of commitment (Kapoor, 2010).

In the past, employer branding was weaved within consumer brands and companies that had strong product/service brands would be attractive to potential employers, however today companies need blended capabilities

(Kapoor, 2010). According to Sehgal and Malati (2013), potential employees generate employer brand associations based on data sources that are not employer controlled. They further inferred that a great employer brand has the ability to attract and retain talent as well as stand for quality for its customers, with the aim of attaining global appreciation in a sustainable manner.

To find out if consumer brands contribute to attracting and retaining employees, this question was divided into two sections.

#### **6.2.1 Q2a) Do consumer brands contribute to attracting employees? If yes, what is it about consumer brands that attract employees?**

Thirteen of the 15 interviewees believe that consumer brands do contribute to attracting talented employees to an organisation. When asked what it is about consumer brands that attract employees, four themes emerged: brand association, brand image and security, familiarity and longevity. These themes support the literature that describes some of the characteristics of successful employer brands (Collins, 2007; Gaddam, 2008; Kapoor, 2010; Sehgal & Malati, 2013)

The negative responses cannot be ignored, however. One respondent declined to give a decisive answer and sat on the fence with the below comment:

*“...if you are not going to treat your employees well or make or create brand ambassadors out of them. It doesn't matter what you sell, people will not want to come and work for you. How you treat those employees and how convert them from just being employees to being brand ambassadors that is key to actually determining. Because they are the guys that go out there and talk about working for Bokomo and everyone now wants to come and work there. But it doesn't matter how well or how great it tastes or how everyone likes to eat Weetabix every morning. If your employees are not or if your touch points between the brand and the employees do not convert them to brand ambassadors you are going to have a big problem.”*

The other negative respondent's answer was that consumer brands do really contribute to attracting employees:

*“It would build interest but I don’t think it would necessarily bring me a talented person or would make a difference in the company.”*

When you consider brands like Titan, Nike, IBM etc., they immediately bring to mind a product image and reputation; with some brands consumers create long-lasting relationships and strong feelings of reliability, trust and nostalgia (Gaddam, 2008)

### **6.2.2 Q2b) Do consumer brands contribute to retaining employees? If yes, what is it about consumer brands that retain employees?**

As set out in chapter 5, nine of the fifteen respondents believed that consumer brands do not contribute to retaining employees. The respondents were asked to elaborate why and the main theme that emerged related to the working environment. Respondents mentioned factors such as remuneration, compensation, career growth and development, culture, organisation-person fit, working conditions, work/life balance, company image and values. These comments confirmed that people seek to work for companies that portray beliefs, values and cultures similar to their own.

According to the 2012 Beacon Management Review (Browne, 2012), compensation, benefits, work content, career prospects and affiliation are important attributes to the employee value proposition framework. In a similar study to investigate strategies for improving employer attractiveness, Chhabra and Sharma (2014) identified similar preferred company attributes, including compensation, recognition, career prospects and growth, job profile, brand name, customer-orientation, culture, empowerment, innovative work practices, job security, and a company that gives back to the community.

Mandhanya and Shah (2010) strongly suggested that potential employees are attracted to a company based on the extent to which they believe that the company possesses the desired employee-related attributes and the relative importance they place on those attributes. Bhatnagar and Srivastava (2008) put forward a similar argument that prospective employees would rather work for

companies where their personalities are aligned to the company's attributes. They further claimed that while in the past traditional selection processes concentrated on work-related analysis to establish skills, knowledge and abilities, recent trends show that organisations now prioritise organisational-person fit. Laforet (2010) added that at the basic level, we use brands to differentiate ourselves and become unique individuals in our minds.

### 6.3 Research question 3

The third research question that was proposed in chapter three is as follows:

***Which of the two brands (consumer vs. employer) is the most influential in the evaluation of companies as an employer?***

Every company needs to make sure that the employer brand matches with the marketing brand (Pingle & Sharma, 2013). Wilden et al. (2010) found that potential employees associate clear brand signals with having to put in less effort into finding out more information about a prospective employer, leading to less uncertainty and search costs. They further uncovered that when it comes to the depth of employer brand information, companies generally provide modest information regarding their employment experience.

The literature revealed that both consumer and employer brands play a role in attracting potential employees. Question three attempted to find out which of employer or consumer brands is the most influential in the evaluation of companies as an employer. There was an equal split with regards to which brand respondents believed is the most influential; seven respondents believed a consumer brand is more influential, one believed that they contribute equally, and seven believed that an employer brand is more influential.



The reasons given by those whose opinion was that consumer brands are more influential are that consumer brands are better marketed and information on them is publicly available. They commented however, that companies do not make enough effort to publicly communicate about their employer brands.

All the conversations with the respondents echoed that consumer brands stimulate interest towards the organisation, however experienced workers dig more into employment conditions before making a final decision on which company to work for. Browne (2012) supported these findings in a statement declaring that employees now demand a better understanding of their employment options and a say in how work is allocated, appraised and incentivised. The respondents whose opinion was that employer brands are more influential stated that the employer brand is the truth and essence of the company.

Employer brands are developed to be consistent with a firm's product and corporate brand, as well as other brands such as consumer brands (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Mokina, 2014). Mokina (2014) further asserted that product and employer brands are related and mutually complementary; a strong product brand plays a crucial role in increasing the strength of an employer brand. In turn, an employer brand plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining employees who can add value to a company and its products, hence strengthening the product brand.

#### **6.4 Research Question 4**

The fourth question that was put forward in chapter three was:

***What are the dimensions of consumer brands that play a role in employer brand perception?***

Two main themes emerged as the dimensions of consumer brands that play a role in shaping employer brand perception - customer service/care and performance. More insight was gathered on these dimensions when respondents spoke about the role that consumer brands play in shaping the employer brand. Two of the biggest roles were that consumer brands project

the employer brand and that people desire to work or be associated with an iconic brand. The respondents envision consumer brands as a means of providing stakeholders information about an organisation. Put together these themes summarise the importance of positive brand associations as an aspect of organisational attraction, as they fulfil self-presentation needs.

The interviews also revealed that although certain consumer brand dimensions play a crucial part in shaping employer brand attractiveness, as workers mature and progress up the career ladder, they take a more integrated approach to evaluating brands. Whilst consumer brand cues are an important element in impression formation, perceived organisational purpose, person/organisation fit, alignment of values, career growth opportunities and company culture are also looked at.

Product identity is another ingredient of an organisational image that can affect its employer brand, as reflected in the product brand (Robertson & Khatibi, 2012). Moroko and Uncles (2009) tested whether the characteristics of successful consumer/corporate brands are the same as those of employer brands. They found three characteristics that were identical with consumer/corporate branding theory and practice - being known and noticeable, being seen as relevant and resonant, and being differentiated from direct competitors.

Thornbury and Brooks (2010) found that advertising intensity and product quality are associated with potential employees' perceptions of an employer as being impressive and respectable. They found that the companies that most appeal to job seekers are those which advertise heavily and provide goods and services that consumers view as being of high quality. An employer brand needs to be built around existing sources of employer brand identity, such as the corporate brand, organisational identity and product identity, to ensure consistency and clarity in image.

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the results relating to the research questions to explore the role of consumer brands on shaping the employer brand. The findings support the proposition that consumer brands contribute to shaping the attractiveness of a company as an employer. Consumer brands stimulate interest towards a company.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out if consumer brands play a role in shaping the employer brand attractiveness, and the nature of the interaction between the consumer and employer brands of a company. This chapter captures the main findings of the research as well as the main conclusions of analysis. Moreover, the business and academic implications of these research findings are discussed. Finally, this chapter gives recommendations regarding future research areas.

### 7.2 Highlights

a) This study supported the findings in the literature that consumer advertising intensity, product quality and being known and noticeable plays a part in building an employer brand (Moroko & Uncles, 2009; Robertson & Khatibi, 2012; Rosengren & Bondesson, 2014; Thornbury & Brooks, 2010).

b) The key finding of this study was that consumer brands play a role in shaping the attractiveness of a company as an employer. Their main role is attracting potential employees to an organisation, as the findings revealed that they contribute little to retaining them.

c) There is a strong indication that the same elements that attract consumers to certain brands are identical to those that attract potential employees to a company. Such elements include product quality, uniqueness, brand image and public perception.

d) Career maturity plays a factor in the selection of elements that potential employees utilise in forming a perception about an organisation as an employer. That is, while experienced workers may be attracted and influenced by consumer brands in forming a perception about an organisation, they also

employ other elements such as purpose, vision, community involvement, reward systems and so on.

e) The extent to which consumer brands influence employer brand attractiveness appears to vary by type of industry, job type and life stage. The extent appears to be greater in highly commercial sectors, such as fast moving consumer goods, banking and retail. The consumer to employer influence also appears to be stronger among graduates, junior managers and in central/support functions such as marketing, customer service and finance. In sectors such as mining and construction, the extent of the influence seems to decrease. As such, experienced managers and technical job types such as engineering and geology do not seem to be highly influenced by consumer brands when evaluating employer attractiveness.

### **7.3 Implications for business managers**

The findings of this study show that employer brand image is established through various organisational activities such as consumer advertising, customer-employer interactions, potential employee-current employee interaction and corporate social initiatives, amongst others. This has important managerial implications. First, it suggests that a closer relationship between human resources management, marketing and operations should in practice lead to a harmonised brand building effort. Such integration would lead to better clarity and a consistent brand image.

Given that consumer brand messages are typically highly visible in all stakeholder groups, this is an important perspective to consider when looking at the effect of consumer brand strategy on potential employees. Quality, innovation, uniqueness and longevity signal employee capability and in turn influence the perception and general attractiveness of a brand as an employer. This finding implies that consumer brand messages should be designed to evoke signals of employer attractiveness.

Business managers need to ensure that the consumer brand matches the employer brand and that messages delivered by the company are consistent with employee actions, behaviours and values. A unified brand experience at all points of contact, whether as a consumer, job seeker or current employee, is necessary to portray a consistent brand image to all stakeholders.

The results of this research are also important for marketing and human resource managers who are battling with increasing demands for accountability, as they can be used to emphasise the value of integrated communications. It would also be productive to measure how consumer brand positioning efforts contribute to attracting better applicants and reducing recruitment costs. One way would be to include employer attractiveness as a key performance indicator in the marketing scoreboard. This can be achieved by linking some human resource metrics to consumer marketing metrics.

The findings of this study suggest that the interrelationship between a consumer and employer brand is not significantly important in all situations, for example profession, industry and career lifecycle. A greater understanding of labour market segments and the factors that influence employment preferences for target markets is thus fundamental and necessary for attraction and retention. Another implication is understanding how consumer market segmentation blends with labour market segmentation and how synergy can be achieved.

Respondents generally expressed that information about an employer brand is not as readily available as with a consumer brand. Due to the importance of career decisions, people are prepared and willing to search for information which was found can be generic. Managers should strive to give as much information as possible about employment experience on company websites and advertisements. Managers need not bombard the market with information but paint a real picture, such as the identity and benefits of the organisation, to create emotional connectivity. The impact can thus be improved with a more strategic, inclusive approach to communications.

## 7.4 Implication for academics

The value these research findings bring for academics parallels the value it has for managers. Academics can use the managerial implications to integrate related consumer and employer brand constructs beneath one umbrella. The implications suggested in this study can be especially useful for organising a framework for both consumer and employer brand strategies.

To be more precise in demonstrating the nature and degree of the effect of an integrated approach to a brand management framework, a set of quantitative measures are required. As the available literature does not provide a definitive framework, the development of one is critical.

## 7.5 Recommendations for future research

The following topics are recommended for future research:

- A study of the same topic conducted on a larger sample using qualitative methods is necessary in order to achieve generalisable results.
- Exploring the process of integrating consumer branding with employer branding, that is, identifying the factors instrumental to the process.
- Exploring a definitive framework to measure the value of integrating consumer and employer brand strategies.
- Coming to a greater understanding of the different combinations of consumer and employer practices to determine the optimal combination of practices to affect potential employer's beliefs and actions.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 - Interview guide

1. What do you understand by the term consumer brand?
2. What do you understand by the term employer brand?
3. Do you have a favourite consumer brand? When you think about your favourite consumer brands what is it that you like about those particular brands?
4. Do you have a favourite employer brand? When you think about your favourite employer brands what is it that you like about those particular brands? Approach
5. What do you know about the employer brand of your favourite consumer brand manufacturer?
6. In your experience, is there a role consumer brands play in shaping the employer brand attractiveness?
  - B. When you think about applying in a company, what are the dimensions or elements of consumer brands that shape your perception of that company as an employer?
  - C. When you think about applying in a company, what are the dimensions or elements of the employer brand that shape your perception of that company as an employer?
7. When you think about consumer and employer brands; is there a consistency in the way companies promote these two brands?
8. In your opinion is the consistency important? Why?
9. Do you think consumer brands contribute to attracting talented employees? Please elaborate.
10. Do you think consumer brands contribute to retaining employees? Please elaborate?
11. In your experience, which of the brands contribute the most to attracting employees?
12. In your experience, which of the brands contribute the most to retaining talented employees?

13. In your experience which of the two brands (consumer or employer) is the most influential when potential employees are evaluating the attractiveness of a company as an employer?