RESEARCH REPORT

Building brand equity in the non-governmental sector- lessons learnt from successful international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for South African NGO brands.

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ABSTRACT

Lack of funding is one of the biggest challenges that South African NGOs currently face. In an attempt to win over international donors and inevitably earn donations, South African NGOs are starting to differentiate themselves through creating brands for their organisations. The purpose of this research project was to determine the lessons or tools used by successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and then to determine the extent to which these lessons could be applied to local NGO's. This objective was achieved first through a content analysis, which uncovered particular lessons or tools used by successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands. It then used a series of semi-structured interviews with a selection of NGO's operating within the Western Cape to determine the extent to which these lessons could be applied to South African NGOs. From this research it was found that whilst local NGOs can definitely take inspiration, advice and tactics from more successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and equity, it is important for these organisations to alter and implement these strategies to fit into the unique South African NGO context. This implies that whilst local NGOs could definitely share and use the key underlying ideas of international NGOs branding strategies, how and when they use them differs according to their local and specific needs.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Contextualisation/Background

Academics like Nderitu (2012:4) define a non-governmental organisation (NGO) as a not-for-profit group, principally independent from government, which is organised on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of public good. NGOs play a crucial role in alleviating humanitarian, social and educational problems and are thus indispensable in our modern-day world.

Murillo-Acuña and Oubiña-Barbolla (2013:68) argue that the current global third sector-consisting of nonprofit organisations (NPOs) and nongovernmental organisations including charities, voluntary and community groups and cooperatives- is becoming increasingly over saturated and competitive due to the amplified necessity for organisations to respond to citizens' needs at a human level, and to contribute to society in some way. The authors are of the view that, as a result of this increase in the development of nonprofit and nongovernmental organisations worldwide, these organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to earn funding and volunteers from governments and corporate organisations that are now spoilt for choice. Non-profit organisations are thus faced with the issue of having to differentiate themselves in order to create a strong brand identity, image and personality, which will win over donors and inevitably ensure the survival of their organisation.

This research project set out to determine the lessons that South African NGOs could take away from successful international NGOs when it came to building their brands, their brand equity and inevitably earning funding and donations to ensure survival. This was achieved by first analysing the brand building strategies used by successful international NGOs - through content analysis of various sources - and then through evaluating the extent to which these strategies could be applied within a South African context through the use of semi-structured interviews with a selection of local NGOs.

1.2. Rationale

Makoba (2002) argues that the fact that NGOs are non-governmental organisations means that they are largely dependent on the publics support for funding. However, due to the increase in the number of third sector organisations, along with the serious financial and capacity challenges most countries are facing, many NGOs have already been forced to close down or have had to scale back their activities.

He argues that international donor agencies increasingly have to support NGOs operating in African countries like South Africa, where the markets are inaccessible and where governments lack capacity or resources to reach the poor. This weakening financial situation, resulting from a combination of external debts, corruption and the effects of structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has ensued the failure of both markets and governments in Africa to deliver economic development, resulting in the rapid expansion of NGOs to fill the gap. This increase in the number of NGOs, coupled with the failure of the state to provide for basic services, has led to many local NGOs having to turn to international rather than local states to provide funding and services.

In addition to this, Makoba (2002) notes that NGOs are particularly imperative in African countries like South Africa where there are numerous social challenges such as poor education, health issues and epidemics such as HIV/Aids as well as poverty, that without the assistance of NGOs addressing these issues, are encouraged to grow in magnitude. These NGOs help respond to local needs and increase community morale and therefore play an important role in pushing for sustainable development on an international level.

In order for NGOs to ensure that they resonate with international donors and therefore secure funding as well as to contribute to the sustainability of a country, they need to create a brand for their NGO that clearly communicates their uniqueness, value and mission. This research project was vital to this process, as it aimed to provide local NGOs with the tools or lessons that could be learnt from more successful international NGOs like the *World Wildlife Fund* (*WWF)* and *The Red Cross* when it came to building brand equity and securing international donors. These lessons provided local NGOs with the necessary strategies to be used to build their brand and ensure that they break through the competing NGO clutter and ensure their long-term survival.

1.2.1. Why was the problem worth investigating?

This problem was therefore worth investigating in that it not only determined what strategies, tools or lessons successful international NGO's are using to build their non-profit brands and equity but it also determined the extent to which these lessons and tools could be applied within a South African NGO context.

These insights now provide local NGO's with the necessary tools, strategies and lessons for building their brands that before may not have been known or available to them. Inevitably, these lessons could assist local NGOs in the future through them now knowing how to differentiate themselves, secure funding and ultimately ensure long-term survival in a highly saturated market. Through ensuring their survival, these local NGOs are then able to continue playing a role in pushing for sustainable development and tackling the numerous social challenges that we as a country face.

1.3.   Problem statement

It has been noted that in the last decade, the third sector has experienced considerable growth resulting in non-profit and non-governmental organisations having to create new brand models as a means of differentiating themselves and building their brand equity to compete for private and public funding, as well as trying to recruit volunteers.

Nderitu (2012:4) argues that whilst major international NGOs such as *Amnesty International*, *Red Cross* and *WWF* are succeeding in their efforts to build brand equity and earn donations, the extent to which these strategies have been applied to NGOs in developing countries like South Africa is far less. He notes that the problem herein lies in the fact that developing countries, like South Africa, have in the past not considered brand building in the non-profit sector to be of importance for running their organisations. Consequently, these NGOs do not have separate branding departments, structured branding strategies or dedicated teams that build up these non-profit brands, resulting in South African NGOs being considered to have less experience in the fields of building brand equity than their international counterparts.

1.4.   Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research project therefore was to determine the particular lessons or tools used by successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and their brand equity and then to determine the extent to which these lessons could be applied to NGO's operating within South Africa. Ultimately, this research project aimed to provide local NGOs with the necessary tools and framework for building their brands and brand equity that could inevitably help them earn more funding and donations to ensure their long-term survival.

1.5. Research Question

The primary research question for this study were stated as follows: 'What lessons can South African NGOs take away from successful international NGOs when it comes to building brand equity and to what extent can these lessons be applied within the South African NGO context?'

The secondary research questions for this study were:

1. What, if any, brand strategies are currently being used by South African NGOs?
2. What lessons or key success factors can be learnt from international NGOs for building brand equity in the non-profit sector?
3. Can these strategies for building brand equity be applied in the South African context?

1.6. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To identify, if any, the current brand strategies being used by South African NGO's.
2. To identify the key success factors or lessons that South African NGO's can take away from successful international NGO's when it comes to building brand equity.
3. To determine the extent to which the lesson learnt by successful international NGO's can be applied within the South African NGO context.

1.7. Theoretical Foundation

In order to fully understand the nature of brand building and brand equity within the nonprofit sector, a theoretical basis of knowledge regarding these topics was required. This research project focused primarily on the key theories of brand equity models. In particular, it studied the brand equity models established by Aaker (1991), Keller (2013), Faircloth (2005) and Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2009).

Murillo-Acuña and Oubiña-Barbolla (2013:68) argue that brand equity represents the value of the brand that is expressed in financial, strategic and management advantages for the organisation. According to Keller (2013:477), brand equity is positively related to the benefits of being perceived differently, enjoying greater loyalty and less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions, commanding larger margins, receiving greater trade cooperation and support, increasing marketing communication effectiveness, yielding licensing opportunities and gaining better support of brand extensions. These critical business benefits reflect why it is so important for organisations to measure and maintain their brand equity.

Keller (2013:477) notes that for decades brand equity has been defined and measured by experts from both academia and for-profit companies. As a result of these studies, marketers and academics have formulated and produced various brand equity models which seek to break down the concept of brand equity into various dimensions through which organisations can actively build and manage their brand and brand equity. He argues that many researchers have developed their own brand equity models and that although the details of these different approaches to conceptualise brand equity may differ, that they all tend to share a common core; that they all aim to build an organisations brand in the minds of its consumers and stakeholders.

Aaker's (1991:9) model of brand equity identifies five major asset dimensions that make up brand equity. The first dimension is brand awareness, which refers to the strength of a brand's presence in the consumer's mind. Second, is brand loyalty, which refers to the willingness of customers to repurchase the same brand. Third, is perceived quality implying a reason to buy for customers. Then brand associations, which are the attributes consumers associate with the brand and lastly other proprietary brand assets, which refer to assets such as channel relationships, and patents that can help build a competitive advantage for a brand.

Keller (2013) proposed an alternative view on brand equity, developing the concept of customer-based brand equity (CBBE). According to Keller (2013) brand equity depends on the customer's experiences over time and their perceptions of the marketing activity of the firm. He notes that it is a bias to behave toward the brand, which often results in enhanced brand choice probability and willingness of consumers to pay premium prices.

Keller's (2013) model of brand equity thus is driven by brand knowledge, which is dependent on brand awareness and brand image.

Faircloth (2005:2) argues that for nonprofits, the traditional firm based approach which examines the financial consequences of brand equity may not be as useful as Keller's customers based approach discussed above, which focuses on how antecedents to brand equity can create biased support among volunteers and donors. He argues that if nonprofits manage marketing efforts that convey brand equity antecedents such as positive images and personalities and greater awareness and familiarity to potential resource providers, they are more likely to gain volunteers and donors, making Keller's model more suited when applying it to organisations within the nonprofit sector.

Klopper and North (2011:40) argue that Aaker (1991) and Keller's (2013) models are similar in that they both recognise that brand equity represents the 'added value' endowed to a product as a result of past investments in marketing of a brand. They believe that they also both rely on an associative network of memory whereby the ease of recalling a brand is a prime determinant of brand equity. However, they argue that these models differ in that Aaker (1991) focuses on the benefits of brand equity to the organisation, whereas Keller focuses on the consumer benefits, which may be more suited to the nonprofit sector in that these consumers are the potential volunteers and donors that the organisations are hoping to win over.

Faircloth (2005:3) suggests that, whilst much attention and time has been devoted to formulating these types of models and the components of brand equity in relation to profit-organisations, very little research has been conducted on non-profit brand equity, which suggests that there may be a gap in literature. Drawing from his knowledge of for-profit branding literature, Faircloth (2005) thus set out to fill a small portion of that gap by creating a nonprofit brand equity conceptual model. Through various studies, he concluded that nonprofit brand equity was a combination of three dimensions. The first dimension being brand personality, which according to Faircloth provides uniqueness that can allow consumers to distinguish a nonprofit brand from competitors. He argues that respondents tend to be more interested in providing resources to nonprofits when they have respect for the nonprofit.

The second dimension is brand image, which without which a firm is unlikely to create consumer purchase intentions or biased behaviour. Faircloth contends that respondents tend to be more interested in providing resources to nonprofits when they believe the nonprofit has a good brand image and character. Lastly, similar to Aaker (1991), Faircloth argues that brand awareness, the consumer's capability for recalling or recognising from memory the subject brand in the product category, is a vital construct of brand equity. He argues that respondents tend to be more interested in providing resources to nonprofits when they have first recall of the nonprofit in the product category.

Like Faircloth, Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2009:63) noticed a gap in research regarding brand equity models for nonprofits. They also set out to close this gap in research by developing a formal model of brand equity specifically relating to international non-profit organisations. Their brand equity model arising from a series of focus groups concluded that brand equity within the non-profit sector is composed of four key variables; consistency, which implies that brands considered to be stable, integrated and coherent over time are the hallmark of a great brand; focus, relating to both a strong external brand position as well as increased operational effectiveness and efficiency; trust, in not only the brand but also the organisation and finally, partnerships, as the more and the higher calibre of the partnerships a brand attracts, the more relevant a nonprofit organisation appears to be.

Aaker (1991) and Kellers (2013) models are considered to be seminal sources and thus were a good theoretical base to use when considering how organisations should go about building their brand equity. However, whilst Aaker (1991) and Keller's (2013) brand equity models are widely used and practical, their application is specifically related to profit organisations meaning they had little relevance to this research project as this project focused primarily on building brand equity within the nonprofit sector. Faircloth (2005) and Laidler-Kylander and Simonin's (2009) models however, which are based on Aaker (1991) and Keller's (2013) findings, were more useful in relation to this research project as they provided a good indication of which factors lay the foundation for building and managing brand equity within the nonprofit sector. The fact that these models are also based off seminal, and highly regarded models of Aaker and Keller, means that their antecedents can be trusted as a measure of brand equity.

Having a firm theoretical foundation on the topics of brand equity and brand equity models in both the profit and nonprofit sector was important to this research study as it provided the researcher with a basic understanding of the dimensions that make up brand equity. Having an understanding of these dimensions enabled the researcher to determine the strategies or tools that are currently being used by international NGOs when it comes to addressing these dimensions and in the process building their brand equity. It also provided a base to determine which dimensions of brand equity local NGOs are currently addressing and neglecting in their efforts to build their brand equity. Ultimately, having a theoretical basis of knowledge on these topics assisted the researcher in being able to identity which strategies and tools are currently been used by successful international NGOs to address these dimensions and in the process build their brand equity and to determine the extent to which these strategies could be applied within the South African NGO sector.

1.8.   Structure of the paper

Now that a basic understanding of the research problem as well as the objective of this research project has been outlined, a detailed analysis of this research can be performed. The next chapter, chapter 2, of this research report focuses on a review of literature dealing with topics like the rise of NGO's in South Africa, NGO brands as differentiators, brand building and brand equity as well as the necessity for future research. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology including the research paradigm, population and sampling as well as the data collection and analysis methods used. Chapter 4 covers the findings and the interpretation of those findings and finally chapter 5 concludes the findings by answering the research questions whilst discussing the implication of findings for future practices.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

Existing literature on research theme

2.1. Rise in NGOs in South Africa

An article by Stuart (2013) states that at present South Africa has an extensive and lively non-governmental sector consisting of around 100 000 registered NGOs and an estimated 50 000 unregistered ones. Stuart accredits this prevalence of NGOs in South Africa to three motivations. Firstly he argues that often nonprofit provision of collective goods is larger in societies that have a history of high levels of inequity amongst individuals. Given South Africa's history of years of racial segregation and oppression, inequality is prevalent and thus so is the need for nonprofit organisations in an attempt to rectify this imbalance. Secondly he argues that the prevalence of NGOs is motivated by the South African state continuing to perform less of the functions than it should, resulting in the rise of civil society organisations trying to fill the gap and lastly he motivates that the increase is due to the fact that there is a need in South Africa for organisations that respond to society and citizens needs at a human level.

Stuart (2013) argues that given this dramatic rise in NGOs within South Africa, beside the global economic crisis from which South Africa was not spared, as well as the dramatic reduction in Corporate Social Investment (CSI) budgets been reduced, local NGOs are experiencing intense funding issues as donations, particularly from individual and private donors have diminished substantially. He notes that, as a result of this drop in private and corporate donor funding, many NGOs have sought more support from international governments and donors, ultimately creating increased competition between NGOs for these funds. Ressel (2012) supports this argument noting that most of South African NGOs funds are now coming from overseas donors, resulting in NGOs having to become increasingly proactive and creative with their fundraising methods if they want to maintain their programmes at their current levels.

2.2. NGO brands as differentiators

Paço, Rodrigues and Rodrigues (2014:11) argue that often as a way of competing for international funds, nonprofit organisations try to differentiate themselves through moving away from an amateur approach to marketing towards a more professional system.

This system involves the organisation creating a unique brand that reflects the company's core values, beliefs and intentions. The authors suggest that a unique and solid brand offering provides potential donors with important guarantees concerning the organisations' efficiency, level of familiarity and credibility and thus increases the chances of securing donations. They argue that creating and developing a strong global brand is essential for the survival of most NGOs, especially in countries like South Africa where the competition for funding is increasing.

Kylander and Stone (2012:3) support these ideas arguing that nonprofit branding is important in that it differentiates an organisation from the many other nonprofit organisations fighting for funding, widens its audience, creates a positive brand image and personality which can be leveraged off to gain support and inevitably helps to strengthen trust with donors and volunteers.

These articles highlight the fact that funding for nonprofit organisations is becoming increasing difficult, particularly in developing countries like South Africa where the nonprofit market is highly saturated. With these issues grounded as the basis for the struggles local NGOs are facing, it can be seen why creating a unique brand to differentiate your organisation and to compete for funding is so important. This literature relates to this research project, as this study aimed to address this funding issue through finding out ways in which local NGOs could build a strong brand and inevitably build their brand equity to ensure their survival in the long-term. This research project thus aimed to find ways in which NGOs can go about building a differentiated brand, which could then help the organisation stand out and inevitably survive in the long-term.

2.3.   Brand building

Kylander and Stone (2012:37) agree that branding in the nonprofit sector appears to be at an inflection point in its development, where organisations are moving away from using brands merely as a communication tool, towards using them more as a strategic and fundraising instrument. Whilst these authors acknowledge that there is growing interest in building brands within the nonprofit sector, they also argue that the strategic frameworks and management tools available to these nonprofit organisations regarding brand building have not kept up. This has resulted in nonprofit organsations having to borrow the models and terminology from for profit organisations.

Paço, Rodrigues and Rodrigues (2014:13) take these ideas further in their article arguing that whilst commercial branding and marketing techniques are vital for non-profit organisations in their quest for funds and attracting new donors and volunteers, these brand building activities cannot be directly imported from corporate companies to the third sector and that rather NGOs need to adapt these techniques to their own reality, focusing on the needs of their main users and donors.

2.4.   Brand equity:

Klopper and North (2011:33) argue that it is through the brand building techniques mentioned above that organisations aim to improve and build their brand equity. Brand equity is defined by Klopper and North (2011:33) as the inherent value of a brand and as a market-based intangible asset, which can be leveraged to improve the performance of an organisation. Aaker (1991:7) defines brand equity as a set of assets linked to a brand's name and a symbol, which either adds or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service. Brand equity can thus be seen as a guarantee to consumers of the brands value and worth, and thus is a desirable construct for organisations to work towards.

In the seminal source- *Managing Brand Equity*- Aaker (1991) argues that brand equity creates value for both the customer and the firm. Looking at customers in particular, brand equity either adds or subtracts value by allowing the customers to interpret, process and store huge quantities of information about the products and brands that confront them. He notes that brand equity affects a customer's confidence in the purchase decision as an organisation with high brand equity is more likely to be perceived by its customers as good quality and less risk than organisations with a lower brand equity. Furthermore, he argues that brand equity has the potential to add value to the firm by generating marginal cash flow in numerous ways. Firstly, it can enhance programs to attract new customers or recapture old ones, it can enhance brand loyalty and lastly it can offer a competitive advantage that often presents a real barrier to competitors.

It can therefore be seen that the matter of building a nonprofit brand and understanding that it leads to brand equity is a critical issue for nonprofit organisations to address if they want to succeed within this highly competitive market. The concept of brand equity and how to go about building it therefore needs to be understood and managed effectively if nonprofit organisations want to maximise their success.

These studies thus reflect the importance of research projects such as this that aim to work towards increasing nonprofits understanding of brand equity and the benefits it can have on earning the organisation funding, donors and inevitably prolonging its survival. It can therefore be seen from above that there is a definite need for research regarding these brand building and brand equity management techniques when looking specifically at organisations within the nonprofit sector.

2.5.   Necessity for further research

It can be argued that whilst there is growing interest in building brands within the nonprofit sector, not enough research on the strategic frameworks and management tools to assist these nonprofit organisations has been conducted, resulting in many nonprofit organisations having to borrow the models, strategies and terminology from the corporate and profit sector. It can therefore be seen that there is a gap in the available literature and knowledge relating specifically to the brand building techniques and frameworks of the nonprofit sector. There is a necessity for future research on these topics, which could inevitably assist nonprofit organisations in building their brands and consequently their equity to ensure their long-term survival. Furthermore, although brand equity models for nonprofit organisations are not unheard of, it can be seen from the articles above that there is still a definite need for further research addressing the issue of building brand equity and the creation of suitable brand equity models to assist these organisations in their quest for brand equity.

2.6.   Conclusion

Through the studying of texts focusing on the subject of nongovernmental organisations within the South African nonprofit sector, it can be seen that given the dramatic drop in private and corporate donor funding, along with the intense rise in NGO formations, that South African NGOs are finding it increasingly difficult to earn funding, donors and volunteers, resulting in these organisations seeking funds from international governments and donors. Through the analysis of literature regarding the subjects of brands as a differentiator in the nonprofit sector as well as information on brand building, brand equity, as well as the various brand equity models- it can be concluded that often as a means of differentiating themselves and competing for these international funds, these NGOs are creating unique brands for their organisations.

These brands reflect the company's core values, beliefs and intentions in an attempt to win over such donors. With this been said, it can furthermore be seen that although research regarding brand building and brand equity within the nonprofit sector is not untouched, there is still a substantial gap in research and literature on the topic which requires attention.

3. Chapter 3: Research Design and Methdology

3.1. Research Paradigm

This research project was situated within the *interpretivist* paradigm. According to Patterson and Williams (2002:5), the *interpretivist* paradigm was developed as a critique to positivism and contends that reality cannot be separate from one's knowledge of it. The *interpretivist* approach thus views reality as something subjective and based on various meanings and understandings. They argue that for an *interpretivist* paradigm, the researcher's values are inherent and fundamental to all stages of the research process and consequently the findings and knowledge claims that emerge as the investigation proceeds. They continue that in this paradigm, it is important for the researcher, as a social actor to acknowledge and appreciate differences between people and that often as a means of uncovering these differences, interviews and observations are used.

This paradigm was best suited for this particular research project, as it allowed the researcher to be an active participant in the analysis and the formation of knowledge. The paradigm was necessary as the researcher needed to fully immerse themselves within two particular samples of NGOs. Firstly, within the local South African NGO sector through the use of semi-structured interviews to uncover their personal views relating to building brands and brand equity within the third sector. And secondly, through the analysis of case studies and texts about international NGOs to draw personal conclusions and assumptions based on those findings.

This paradigm resulted in the researcher uncovering subjective yet in-depth, rich and complex qualitative data relating to the specific brand perceptions and individual opinions of various South African NGOs as well as the ways in which international NGOs go about building their brand equity based on the researchers own interpretations and understandings of the information found.

This research paradigm was therefore best suited for this research project, as it allowed the researcher to study the issue of branding and brand equity in a great level of depth and to uncover unbiased and accurate qualitative data.

3.2.   Research Approach

This research project focused on various NGOs operating both locally as well as internationally. In order to gain insight into the brand building techniques and strategies used by both parties, the motivations, thoughts, perceptions and attitudes towards these issues, interpreted by the subjects was required. Consequently, this study used a qualitative research approach whereby the thoughts, feelings and reactions of the participants towards brand building methods was gathered.

The topic of building brands and brand equity within nonprofit organisations is one that is dynamic and highly dependent on the individual organisation and their specific modus operandi. Researching the strategies used by particular NGOs when it came to building their brand equity thus resulted in highly subjective and rich research, which would have been difficult to obtain using quantitative methods. Qualitative research was thus best suited to this research project, as it enabled the researcher to obtain rich, in-depth and individual insight from each specific organisation into the phenomena of building brand equity within the nonprofit sector.

3.3.   Research Design

This research paper was designed to explore two separate topics relating to nonprofit branding, which were then later combined and related. The first part of this paper was designed to explore various sources relating to the strategies or lessons learnt by successful international NGO's when it came to building their brand equity. This information was collected through a content analysis of various sources including company websites, journal articles and case studies relating to successful international NGOs. The second part of this paper was then designed to explore the extent to which these lessons learnt by successful international NGOs for building brand equity could be applied to the South African NGO context. This was achieved through conducting various semi-structured interviews with local NGOs where the topic of brand building and brand equity was discussed.

This research paper therefore used an exploratory research design so that rich, qualitative data relating to these two separate topics could be explored. According to Cuthill (2002:80), an exploratory research design is conducted when there is little previously conducted research to refer to or rely upon to predict the outcome of a research project. Whilst building brand equity within the nonprofit sector is a subject that has not being ignored entirely by researchers, there is still not a high enough quantity of research regarding these issues thereby requiring further attention from researchers. Exploratory design was thus appropriate for this research project in that it aims to gain insights and familiarity when research problems are still in a preliminary stage of investigation to establish an understanding of how best to proceed in studying an issue or to develop theories or hypotheses.

This research design provided the researcher with a background into brand building within the nonprofit sector, which before was widely unavailable. It also allowed the researcher to generate formal hypotheses in the form of branding strategies or lessons learnt by international NGOs, which could then be applied to the South African NGO context. This research approach, in conjunction with the *interpretivist* paradigm mentioned above enabled the researcher to gather qualitative, in-depth and rich data on the topic of building brand equity within the nonprofit sector in order to advance the available research on the matter.

3.4. Population

Since this research paper first aimed to analyse successful international NGOs and their brand building strategies, and then to discuss whether these strategies could be applied to local NGOs, two target populations needed to be considered. The first target population consisted of NGOs operating outside of South Africa, that were considered to be financially stable and successful. These included International NGOs that had a constant supply of donations, volunteers and funding as well as ample awareness and recognition from the public. These NGOs also needed to have been established for at least a year to be considered part of the population. The second target population consisted of NGOs operating within South Africa. Due to time constraints however, only a particular segment within the South African NGO population was researched- particularly, it focused on NGOs operating within the Western Cape that had been established for longer than five years. With this outline of the target population, it is then possible for a sample to be chosen.

3.5. Sampling

Due to time and resource constraints, the sampling technique that was used for this research project was purposive sampling. Saunders and others (2012:288) suggest that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method whereby elements selected for a sample are chosen by the judgment and knowledge of the researcher. He argues that it is a sampling method where participants are selected according to the needs of the study and that applicants who do not meet the profile are rejected.

In relation to this research project, this required that the researcher pick a sample of local NGOs based on their own judgment of whether they fit the brief or not. This required that the researcher carefully accessed whether the NGO did in fact operate within the Western Cape, if they had been established for more then 5 years and whether they would be a good candidate to answer questions relating to building brand equity within their organisation. It was then up to the researchers' own judgment to reject any NGOs from the sample that did not fit in with this brief.

This sampling technique is appropriate for projects like this where the sample being investigated was relatively small and where the sample needed to be reached relatively quickly. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to focus on specific characteristics of the population that were of interest and that would best enable them to answer the research question without the complications and expenses of using a more carefully selected sample. Keeping in mind the time and resources constraint as well as the need for this information to be considered representative of the broader population, a sample of at least 5 local NGOs was required by the researcher. This sample would ensure a vast array of responses whilst not being too time and resource consuming.

3.6. Data collection

This research project was composed of two separate questions and consequently utilised two different data collection methods. In order to gather information on the brand building strategies used by successful international NGOs, a content analysis was required.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1280) state that a content analysis is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. They argue that it requires that a researcher systematically evaluate texts such as documents, case studies, oral communication, graphics and websites to uncover patterns that can be converted into useful data.

A content analysis was valuable to this research project, as it enabled the researcher to examine the brand building strategies or procedures used by more successful international NGOs. Through analysing various textual materials relating to these organisations, including their company websites, case studies written about them or company documents, the researcher was able to uncover patterns, trends or 'lessons' that these international organisations use when it comes to building their non-profit brands which then could be applied to the South African NGO context. This data collection method enabled the researcher to analyse nuances of organisational behaviours in a way that uncovered the qualitative patterns that traditional quantitative methods are unable to obtain.

The second part of this research project then aimed to relate this information and insight to a local context to determine whether these 'lessons' or strategies could be applied to South African NGOs. This process thus required a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with a selected sample of Western Cape NGOs that have been established for longer than 5 years. These interviews aimed to discuss questions such as 'What, if any, brand strategies are currently being used by local NGOs?' and the extent to which these NGOs believe that they could benefit or learn from the lessons learnt by more established and successful international NGOs.

Qualitative interviews were best suited for this research project in that they allowed the researcher to observe and record the subject's unique perspective or experience as it related to the particular issue at hand. Due to the interviews being open-ended and conversational in nature, it allowed the subject to offer a more in-depth, firsthand and first-person account of the matter that was greatly beneficial to the study. It is through these interviews that the researcher was able to conclude whether the lessons or patterns used by successful international NGOs could actually be applied within the South African nonprofit sector.

3.7.   Data Analysis

Looking first at the analysis of the data obtained from the various international NGO texts, a content analysis method outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1280) was used. Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1280) contend that the process of content analysis begins when the researcher starts reading over all the available data repeatedly to achieve immersion and to get a sense of the whole. In relation to this research project, this required that the researcher read over various international NGO websites, case studies that have been written about branding strategies used by international NGOs or the importance of it, read over branding documents or strategies used by international NGOs and any other form of text that could help uncover the key strategies used by international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and their equity.

Next, they argue that the researcher is required to reread the texts now highlighting key words, concepts or strategies that capture key thoughts or concepts within the texts. This required that the researcher reread the company websites, case studies or organisational documents, highlighting the key patterns or lessons that these international NGOs have learnt or used when it came to building their brands and their brand equity.

Thereafter the researcher is required to approach the text once again, now making notes of his or her first impressions, thoughts and initial analysis. The authors note that through this process of continual analysis, common themes that could be used as labels for codes should emerge. In relation to this research project, these codes represented the common 'lessons' or strategies that are used by successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands.

And finally, the researcher will then sort these various codes into categories, which organise or group them into more meaningful and confined clusters. Placing this information into clusters ensures that the data is reduced to smaller fragments, which makes it easier to interpret and analyse the information. In this research project, these clusters represented the general trends, patterns or lessons that successful NGOs use to build their brands and their equity, which can then hopefully be applied within the South African NGO context.

This same procedure was then applied to the analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted with the local Western Cape NGOs. These interviews were recorded using a recording device, which was later transcribed into written responses. Once transcribed, the replies from these interviews were analysed using the same content analysis process mentioned above whereby the common themes, responses or trends within these interviews was uncovered. These trends gave the researcher a fair indication whether the lessons learnt by international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and their equity, could actually be applied or be appreciated by local NGOs.

3.8. Validity, reliability and/or trustworthiness

Academics like Bryman and others (2011:43) argue that for quantitative studies the quality, precision and wider potential of a research project is determined by the reliability and validity of the data collection methods, sample and research instruments used. He notes however, that for qualitative studies this quality is more obscure since the researchers are not using instruments with established metrics about validity and reliability. Therefore, whilst reliability and validity are sound constructs for evaluating the quality of quantitative research, Bryman (2011:43) argues that for qualitative studies, a measure of trustworthiness needs to be performed. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:400), the trustworthiness of a research project is made up of four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985:400) contend that the first criterion credibility, which refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings, is often achieved through the process of Member Checking. Member Checking ensures credibility in a research project through testing the data, interpretations and conclusions of the project with the members of the groups from which the data was originally obtained. Member checking and therefore credibility was achieved in this research assignment through the researcher firstly emailing the transcribed interviews back to the respondents after the interview was conducted to ensure that they were an accurate reflection of what was said during the interviews. In addition to this, the final research document was also sent to all the respondents before the study was officially published to ensure that all the respondents were happy with the way their insights and opinions had been presented within the study.

The second criterion of trustworthiness is transferability, which according to Lincoln and Guba (1985:400) refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied in other contexts. The authors argue that transferability can be achieved through the process of thick descriptions, which refers to providing enough context to the study so that even people outside of the culture are able to derive meaning of the behaviour. This research assignment made use of thick descriptions through the researcher describing the NGOs and brand building findings in extensive detail. This detail ensured that any person reading this study, whether inside or outside the culture of branding and the operations of NGOs was able to understand the findings and access for themselves the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations and people.

Dependability is the third criterion of trustworthiness and refers to showing that the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Lincoln and Guba 1985:400). Dependability was achieved in this research project through the use of an external audit. External audits involve having a researcher not involved in the research process check both the process and product of the research study to access the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and deliver similar results. In the case of this research study, an external audit was conducted by my research supervisor- Hendrik Conradie- who monitored the research process throughout. Conradie ensured that the entire research process and consequently the findings of the study were dependable in that they could be applied to a comparable situation and deliver similar results.

Lastly, Lincoln and Guba (1985:400) note that trustworthiness is achieved through conformability, which refers to the degree of neutrality or lack of bias present in the study. Whilst objectivity is considered very difficult to achieve in a qualitative study, this research project aimed to maintain conformability and minimise the risk of bias through the creation of an audit trail. This audit trail involved the researcher providing transparent descriptions in a research notepad of each of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and reporting of the findings. Through providing transparent descriptions of each step taken throughout the research process, the researcher was able to ensure that all records, adjustments and findings were recorded in an attempt to minimise any trace of bias that may have emerged.

4. Chapter 4: Findings and interpretation of findings

4.1. Presentation of international NGO findings

The first part of this research project aimed to uncover important lessons or tools that South African NGO's can take away from more sucessful international NGO's when it comes to building their brand equity. To uncover these lessons, a content analysis of various sources relating to international NGO's was required. Below is a summary of the findings that were uncovered from these various sources.

Key findings from sources relating to how sucessful international NGO's build brand equity:

1. Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2009): *How International nonprofits build brand equity*:

This research assignment focused on the key theory of brand equity models- particularly the nonprofit brand equity models of Faircloth (2005) and Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2009). These models provided the researcher with a basic theoretical foundation of the elements or dimensions that make up brand equity. Now having established this theoretical base and thus having gained an understanding of the components that make up brand equity, it was then necessary to identify the strategies or tools used by international NGOs to address these dimensions and ultimately increase their brand equity.

Through extensive research, Laidler-Kylander and Simonin (2009) were not only able to develop their own model of brand equity within the nonprofit sector- made up of four key variables namely consistency, focus, trust and partnerships- but they were also able to offer nonprofit managers suggestions on how to go about addressing these key variables and ultimately managing their brands. Their recommendations are based on extensive research including (1) field research using focus groups of 4-6 nonprofit managers, (2) grounded theory development through case studies on Care Oxfam and World Vision, (3) a system dynamics approach and (4) constant comparison analysis. A summary of these recommendations is included below.

For consistency	How this can be achieved	Examples
1. Increase internal coordination in order to enhance consistency throughout the organisation and between operations and messaging.	- Employ individuals whose responsibility is to drive coordination throughout the organisation. - Increase the number of internal coordination meetings, activities, and objectives. - Expand the scope of internal coordination by establishing cross-functional teams to address specific challenges.	*Oxfam* has recently created a marketing coordination position at the international secretariat office to coordinate the marketing activities of the different geographical offices. *Care* has successfully used cross-functional teams composed of marketing, finance and program managers to develop a new organisational structure.
2. Concentrate external messaging efforts to increase communication consistency.	- Make logos and taglines more homogenous throughout the organisation. - Make messaging more consolidated and concentrated.	

For focus	How this can be achieved	Examples
1. Strive for operational focus despite pressures of growth and fundraising.	Try to limit the scope of your organisation by not focusing on too many social issues and needs.	*Mèdecins Sans Frontières* is considered to be a strong competitor brand that draws substantial brand equity through its operational focus on medical emergency and relief operations.
2. Stick closely to the mission	- Do not stray from your original mission or adapt your programming to meet the requirements of donors. - Establish boundaries.	

For Trust	How this can be achieved	Examples
1. Endeavor to differentiate the organisation through strong brand positioning	Ensure the brand positioning provides a clear fit with perceived needs and differentiates the organisation relative to the competition.	
2. Raise visibility and recognition through messaging and presence in the field.	- Do not rely simply on messaging. - Leverage an extensive field presence through the media.	*Habitat for Humanity* has both a domestic (US) presence as well as international operations. *Mèdecins Sans Frontières* has leveraged its activity of 'temoignage' (the witnessing and shaming of humanitarian law abuses).

3. Promote organisational integrity.	• Hold workshops. • Implement standards and best practices.	• *IFRC* have implemented a Self Assessment and Peer review program that stimulates the sharing of best practices and enhances organisational integrity by providing goals for governance and operations.

For partnerships	How this can be achieved	Examples
1. Select partners that provide the best fit with organisational values and activities.		
2. Proactively manage relationships and the portfolio of relationships.		• *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)* has a sophisticated approach to its portfolio of for-profit partners, which it manages through senior account managers.

Internal branding	How this can be achieved	Examples
1. Recognise and embrace the powerful internal role of the brand and promote the brand to internal audiences.	• Promote an understanding of the brand. • Internally communicate the importance of the brand. • Ensure that internal and external perceptions of the brand are in alignment.	
2. Encourage internal brand ambassadors.	• Use external celebrity brand ambassadors.	• Danny Kaye for *Unicef.* • Princess Anne for *Save the Children.*

2. Kylander and Stone (2012): *The Role Of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector*:

In this article, Kylander and Stone (2012) argue that a key factor to the success of many international NGO's is their acceptance of their organisations as a brand. They argue that a growing number of organisations are moving beyond a narrow approach to brand management to explore the wider, strategic roles that their organisations as a brand can play. This strategic approach can be seen through organisations like *The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* who recently appointed Tom Scott as director of global brand and innovation, through *Oxfam International* who recently embarked on a confederation wide 'global identity project' and through *GBCHealth* who recently completed a rebranding process.

Kylander and Stone (2012) argue that in NGO's treating their organisations as brands they can drive broad, long-term social goals while strengthening internal identity, cohesion and capacity. Thus, they argue that the first step towards NGO's building their brand equity and overall organisations is for them to recognise that their organisations are and should be treated as a brand.

The authors then go on to describe a conceptual framework that they designed to help nonprofit organisations build their brands and their brand equity. Their 'Nonprofit Brand IDEA' framework comes as a result of an 18-month research project that they led with colleagues at Harvard University's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organisations and collaborators at the Rockefeller Foundation. In this project, they conducted a series of structured interviews with 73 nonprofit executives; communication directors, consultants and donors in 41 organisations to uncover how these leaders are currently thinking about nonprofit brands and their evolution. They concluded that in order for organisations to succeed in their efforts to build their nonprofit brands they should;

- See NGO branding as going beyond simply the name, logo and graphic design used by an organisation- the NGO brand should be present in every step of the organisations strategy and at each juncture.
- Internally, develop a brand that embodies the identity of the organisation, encapsulating its mission, values and distinctive activities. All stakeholders should know where the organisation is going and why it its relevant.
- Ensure that all employees and volunteers embrace a common brand identity in order to create organisational cohesion, create focus and reinforce shared values.

Furthermore, they concluded that in order for nonprofit organisations to succeed in building their brands, they would need to address the four criteria found in their IDEA framework.

1. Brand integrity	How this can be achieved	Examples
- Brand integrity means that the nonprofit organisation's internal identity is aligned with its external image and that both are aligned with the	- Internally, a brand with a high structural integrity connects the mission to the identity of the organisation. It gives its members, staff, volunteers and trustees a common sense of why	- WWF has a tightly aligned mission and strategy, which allows them to establish a kind of parity between themselves and the companies they want to work with.

overall mission of the organisation.	the organisation does what it does and why it matters. • Externally, a brand with high structural integrity captures the mission in its public image and deploys that image in service of its mission at every step of a clearly articulated strategy.	

2. Brand democracy	How this can be achieved	Examples
• Brand democracy means that the organisation trusts its members, staff, participants and volunteers to communicate their own understanding of the organisations core identity. • It basically removes the need for organisations to tightly control how the brand is presented and portrayed. • However, in saying this, in order for brand democracy to produce a consistent image, strong organisational cohesion supported by a strong internal brand identity with established parameters needs to be established.	• Do not police your brands or try to suppress unauthorised graphics or other representations of the organisation. • Implement a participatory form of brand management. • Provide resources such as sample text and online templates to staff to access and adapt to communicate the mission, strategy work and values of the organisation.	• In an effort to strengthen the brand at *WWF* US, they began an internal competition amoung staff to craft a single 'elevator speech' that encouraged the employees to personalise the brand. The competition revealed the greater power of personal statements over uniform corporate slogans.

3. Brand ethics	How this can be achieved	Examples
• Brand ethics means that the brand itself and the way it is deployed reflect the core values of the organisation. • It aligns the organisations internal identity and its external image with its	• Be mindful of any individual expression of the brand that offends or contradicts organisational values and culture. • Have clear value statements that provide a benchmark of what is acceptable within the organisation.	• When *Amnesty International* developed a video game designed to engage young people in the movement to abolish the death penalty, many in the organisation felt uncomfortable. Using the organisations value statements, a robust discussion was had and

4. Brand affinity	How this can be achieved	Examples
• Brand affinity means that the brand is a good team player, working well alongside other brands, sharing space and credit generously and promoting collective over individual interests.	• Lend value to partnerships without exploiting them. • Become a partner of choice. • Promote the brands of your partners as much as or more than you promote your own brands.	• The TckTckTck campaign allowed the brands of individual members to remain prominent. In this coalition, each organisation retained its own identity and logo whilst still addressing the coalition identity.

3. Barry Segal (2014): *Brand-building Tips for Grassroots NGO's*:

In this post, Segal (2014)- the founder of *Segal Family Foundation*- offers suggestions from his own experience as the Communication Manager of his nonprofit brand on how similar organisations can go about building their brand equity. He suggests the following three ways for nonprofit organisations to strengthen their brand equity;

1. **Craft a strong mission statement and perfect your elevator pitch:**
   • Organisations should strive to craft a clear and concise mission statement that clearly conveys the who, what, where and why of the organisation.
   • You do not want your organisation to sound redundant.

2. **Define your organisations values:**
   • Defining your organisations external presence often sheds light on your internal values and culture.
   • Your organisation should know how you want outsiders to perceive your work and your core values.
   • These core values should be woven into every way your organisation expresses itself to key audiences.

3. **Determine what success looks like to your organisation and leverage the right communications tools:**
   • An NGO should first define their success and then pick a tool that best tells this success story.

4.2.   Interpretation of international NGO findings:

It can be seen through the above sources, that many authors suggestions overlap or correlate with one another. Using these overlaps, a summarised and more consise list of lessons or tools that can be learnt from sucessful international NGO's could be developed. The lessons that South African NGO's can take away from more sucessful international NGO's when it comes to building brand equity are therefore:

1. Recognise that your organisation is and should be treated as a brand.
2. Develop a brand for the organisation that embodies its identity and that encapsulate its mission, values and distinctive activities.
3. See NGO branding as more than simply a name, logo and design but rather something that is present and carried throughout every step of the organisations strategy.
4. Have procedures in place that increase internal organisation consistency and cohesion amongst employees. Ensure all employees embrace a common brand identity.
5. Make sure all external communication- logos, taglines and messages are consistent and homogenous.
6. Try to limit the scope of your organisation by not focusing on too many social issues and needs.
7. Do not stray away from your original mission- know and stick closely to it.
8. Find a brand position that not only meets the needs of stakeholders but that also differentiates the organisation from competition.
9. Do not rely solely on messaging- raise visibility and recognition in the field through various sources of media.
10. Find, build and maintain partnerships with people or organisations that fit your organisational values and activities.
11. Develop and promote and internal understanding of the brand to ensure that all internal stakeholders know where the organisation is going and why it is relevant.
12. Ensure that the internal organisational identity is aligned with its external image and that both are aligned with the overall mission of the organisation.

4.3. Presentation of local NGO findings

The second part of this research assignment aimed to uncover the extent to which the lessons or tools used by successful international NGO's (discovered in the first part of this research project) could be applied to the South African NGO context. In order to for this to be achieved, a series of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 5 NGOs operating within the Western Cape was performed. Below is a summary of the findings from the following 5 NGO's; *Subz Pads, Oscar's Arc*, *Rise Against Hunger, Operation Smile* and *Greenpop*.

4.3.1. Research Question 1 findings and analysis:

Do you consider your non-governmental organisation (NGO) to be a brand or to have some sort of branding component to it?

All of the NGO's mentioned above commented that they believe that their organisation is a brand or at least has some sort of branding component to it. Whether it was creating posters, designs, videos, copy and media that is identifiable across the board like *Operation Smile* and *Greenpop* or creating a specific logo and way of taking photographs like *Oscar's Arc,* all the NGO's proved that being 'brand conscious' and projecting an image of themselves that speaks to who they are and what they do, is important to them.

The fact that these NGO's acknowledge and treat themselves as a brand implies that they already recognise the value that branding can play to their organisations' long-term success. It also suggests that these NGO's would be more likely to listen and supplement the lessons learnt by successful international NGO's with their already established brand building methods, making this research study very useful to them.

4.3.2. Research Question 2 findings and analysis:

Does your NGO make use of any branding strategies, tactics or tools to build your brand/organisation within the nonprofit sector?

The responses to this question were not unanimous but rather were tailored to each organisation.

Three of the organisations interviewed, namely *Operation Smile, Oscar's Arc and Subz Pads,* argued that whilst they acknowledge that their organisations are and should be treated as a brand, that they did not have any formalised branding structures, tactics or tools that they used to build their brands. *Operation Smile* argued that they tailor their branding according to what they think is required to their specific South African audience whilst *Oscar's Arc* commented that, 'we just feel our way through it; we know what works and what doesn't'. *Oscar's Arc* added that they recognise that they need to develop a proper branding strategy but that they are still too new to find the right person and tools to do so. *Subz Pads* on the other hand argued that they make use of basic branding tools like social media, Euromonitor and Philanthropy to build their brand within the NGO sector.

Rise Against Hunger and *Greenpop* however were the only two organisations interviewed that actually had some sort of branding guidelines laid out in their organisations. *Rise Against Hunger* uses a Brand Style Guide Book, which they argue, acts as a set of guidelines for all employees as to the expected graphic and branding standards required for creative synergy and success. This guide book is made up of *Rise Against Hungers* brand pillars, strategy, vision, positioning, all of their logo details including their logo marks, typefaces, colours, identifiers, sizing as well as all other important indicators of their brand such as the use of photography and email signatures. *Greenpop* have a similar set of guidelines that they use to set out the voice of the organisation, the types of words their employees should and should not use, their colour schemes and other basic branding elements.

Therefore, whilst all the organisations agreed that their NGOs were brands or had some sort of branding component to them, only two of the organisations actually had some sort of formalised branding strategy or tools that they used to create synergy throughout the company. This finding reflects the fact that whilst many organisations realise the importance of branding to their NGO's, that many of them have not actually devoted the time or are well equipped enough to set out formalised branding strategies to be used throughout their organisations. This alluding to the idea that these organisations could in fact gain a lot of value from the already established tactics, tools, strategies and lessons learnt and established by more successful international NGO's when it comes to building their brands and their brand equity.

4.3.3. Research Question 3 findings and analysis:

Do you feel that building a brand for your organisation is necessary to survive within the nonprofit sector?

Four out of the five interviewed NGO's argued that building a brand for their organisation is necessary to survive within the nonprofit sector. Both *Operation Smile* and *Rise Against Hunger* argue that creating a brand for their organisation is important in that it allows their organisation to be identified and stand out in a highly saturated NGO space. *Greenpop* commented that they are able to partner with individuals and companies through creating a brand that people want to associate themselves with. They note that, 'branding is so important because people see us and they get excited by what we are doing and get inspired. So they see that we are young, dynamic and are doing good things and then they want their brand to be associated with ours.'

Subz Pads share a slightly altered view on this question arguing that whilst branding is not necessary to their survival as an organisation, it definitely is necessary to establish themselves within the NGO sector. Therefore, one can argue that all the interviewed organisations agree that creating a brand for themselves helps them survive within the highly saturated NGO environment through the fact that it enables them establish their offering whilst differentiating it from competition. The fact that these organisations agree that branding is key to the survival of their company reflects the importance that good branding can have on an organisations long-term success. This just proves, once again, that these organisations could benefit immensely from branding tactics or tools used by successful international NGOs to ensure their survival in the long-term.

4.3.4. Research Question 4 findings and analysis:

Do you have any skepticism towards creating a brand for your organisation?

All five of the interviewed NGOs showed no skepticism towards creating a brand for their organisation. *Operation Smile* and *Rise Against Hunger* elaborated saying that they have no skepticism because they recognise the value that branding plays to the success of their organisation. *Operation Smile* commented that 'creating a brand a having a brand allows an organisation to be accountable for their actions.

It allows the brand to be true to their message that they want to portray. It also provides consistency within the organisation.' These views were shared by *Rise Against Hunger* who noted that 'building a brand is an important component of what we do, why we do it and how we do it.'

Therefore, once again, it can be seen that the interviewed organisations recognise the value that branding can play within their organisations. The fact that none of the organisations show skepticism towards building a brand again reflects that they would be quite willing to learn and take away the important lessons and tools used by more successful international NGOs when it comes to building a brand and their equity.

4.3.5. Research Question 5 findings and analysis:

Do you feel overwhelmed or confused by the procedures, tactics and tools of building a brand for your organisation?

Rise Against Hunger, *Subz Pads* and *Operation Smile* all argued that no; they do not feel overwhelmed by branding procedures and tactics. *Rise Against Hunger* noted that they come from the corporate sector so therefore understand what strong brands can do for an organisation whilst *Operation Smile* noted that most of their branding is done in a uniform manner through a small team at Head Office which makes the branding procedure easier for them.

Organisations that did not come from a branding or marketing background however argued that they did find branding strategies and tactics to be quite overwhelming. *Greenpop* comment that, 'everything changes so quickly and keeping up with all of the marketing strategies and branding strategies can be a bit overwhelming.' Whilst *Oscar's Arc* notes that, 'the challenge isn't that we are confused or that its complicated, its just that great things are happening here and we haven't had the time to find the right people to drive our aspects further. So even though we've grown really fast, we could've grown even faster if we had had those people.

Therefore, it can be seen that organisations that do have some sort of marketing or branding background or have some sort of formalised procedure in place when it comes to their branding, do not find the process of building a brand to be confusing or complicated.

The organisations that do not come from a marketing or branding background however, do find this process to be quite time consuming and complicated. Because not every NGO is going to have a team of employees with some sort of marketing or branding background implies that these organisations could in fact benefit from a set of tactics, procedures and strategies to build their brands. These tactics would not only minimise the confusion felt with regards to branding tools and tactics but it could also help equip these inexperienced organisations with the guidelines to build their brands.

4.3.6. Research Question 6 findings and analysis:

Do you believe that your organisation could benefit or learn from lessons or tools used by more established and successful international NGO's when it comes to building your brand? Or do you think that when it comes to branding, international NGO's operate differently to South African NGO's?

Subz Pads and *Oscar's Arc* argued that South African NGO's could in fact benefit from the lessons learnt by more established and successful international NGOs. *Subz Pads* commented that 'international NGO's definitely have more access to funding than South African NGOs which in turn enables them to operate differently. We believe we can always benefit from learning from others.' *Oscar's Arc* likewise noted that they believe its not even a case of international or local NGO's but rather that anyone would be a fool not to emulate an NGO that is doing something correctly. They add that, 'some of these concepts are based on an organisation called Best Friends in Utah- they've done it, they've tested it and they know it works. Anything else we think can be emulated- we do it'.

Rise Against Hunger, *Operation Smile* and *Greenpop* all argued that whilst they can appreciate and take inspiration from the work done by international NGO's, that it is always important to implement their strategies, tactics and tools within their own local context. *Rise Against Hunger* states that, 'I don't believe people outside of African can actually dictate what Africa needs. That comes from the country/continent itself. So whilst we share a global underlying strategy, the way we implement and how we implement depends on the region it is being undertaken in.' These viewpoints are shared by *Operation Smile* who note that '*Operation Smile* South Africa has always tailored their branding to fit and appeal to the audience here without losing the message' and *Greenpop* who argues that their 'branding is a bit different because we are here and we are more integrated within our communities.'

Therefore, whilst all the interviewed NGOs agreed that South African NGOs can definitely take inspiration and advice from the lessons learnt by more successful international NGO's, three out of the five organisations argued that it was still important for NGOs to implement these strategies to fit into the unique South African context. This implies that whilst local NGOs could definitely share and use the key underlying ideas of international NGOs branding strategies, how and when they use them will differ according to their specific needs.

5. Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Concluding answers to the research questions

This research paper asked three secondary research questions and one primary research question. The secondary research questions were used as a base to answer the overarching primary research question, the answers to which are included below.

1. What, if any, brand strategies are currently being used by South African NGOs?

From the local NGO responses gathered above, it can be concluded that whilst some organisations did have a basic branding strategy made up of branding guidebooks and guidelines, the majority of the organisations interviewed did not actually have any formalised branding strategies and were rather just 'feeling' their way through the NGO landscape. Whilst all of the organisations interviewed argued that they realise the importance of branding for their organisation, many argued that they simply do not have the time, skills or funds to properly implement branding strategies that they can work from.

2. What lessons or key success factors can be learnt from international NGOs for building brand equity in the non-profit sector?

As stated above, through a content analysis of various sources, a concise list of the lessons that South African NGO's can take away from more successful international NGO's when it comes to building brand equity are:

1. Recognise that your organisation is and should be treated as a brand.
2. Develop a brand for the organisation that embodies its identity and that encapsulates its mission, values and distinctive activities.
3. See NGO branding as more than simply a name, logo and design but rather something that is present and carried throughout every step of the organisations strategy.
4. Have procedures in place that increase internal organisation consistency and cohesion amongst employees. Ensure all employees embrace a common brand identity.
5. Make sure all external communication- logos, taglines and messages are consistent and homogenous.
6. Try to limit the scope of your organisation by not focusing on too many social issues and needs.
7. Do not stray away from your original mission- know and stick closely to it.
8. Find a brand position that not only meets the needs of stakeholders but that also differentiates the organisation from competition.
9. Do not rely solely on messaging- raise visibility and recognition in the field through various sources of media.
10. Find, build and maintain partnerships with people or organisations that fit your organisational values and activities.
11. Develop and promote and internal understanding of the brand to ensure that all internal stakeholders know where the organisation is going and why it is relevant.
12. Ensure that the internal organisational identity is aligned with its external image and that both are aligned with the overall mission of the organisation.

3. Can these strategies for building brand equity be applied in the South African context?

From the insight gained above, it can be concluded that whilst local NGOs can definitely take inspiration, advice, tools and tactics from more established and successful international NGOs when it comes to building their brands and brand equity, it is important for these organisations to impliment these strategies to fit into the unique South African context. This implies that whilst local NGOs could definitely share and use the key underlying ideas of international NGOs branding strategies, how and when they utilise them will differ according to their local and specific needs.

One can therefore conclude that whilst South African NGOs can take away important lessons from successful international NGOs when it comes to brand building, these lessons can only be applied within the South African context to a certain extent because they need to be tailored to fit into the South African NGO landscape.

5.2. Implications of findings for future practices

These findings are useful not only to local NGOs but to all NGOs in general that take the advice, lessons, tools and strategies from more sucessful nonprofit organisations. It is important for any NGO taking inspiration from more sucessful organisations when it comes to building their brands and their equity, to do so in a way that fits in with the context and envrionment that one is operating it. If an organisation wishes to resonate not only with international but also local funders and donors, they need to ensure that the build up their brand with their local context and needs in mind. Therefore, one can argue then that going forward it is important for local NGOs to recognise that whilst they can learn much from the lessons and advice learnt from more sucessful international NGOs, that it is equally important for them to apply these lessons within the South African context.

5.3. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations play a vital role in the quality of research. This has resulted in many professional associations and agencies adopting codes and policies that outline ethical research behaviour to guide researchers through the research process in an ethical manner. This research project applied the University of Pretoria's code of ethics (2017) whilst also considering the ethical concerns outlined by the Human Science Research Council (2017).

The first ethical concern that was considered in this research project was related to benevolence. Benevolence, according to the University of Pretoria, relates to the fact that all parties involved should not only be protected from harm but that all efforts are made to ensure their well being. The Human Science Research Council (2017) expand on these ideas in saying that benevolence should include factors such as protecting the participant's identity, honouring trust, anticipating harm, avoiding undue intrusion, negotiating consent and respecting their rights to confidentiality and anonymity.

Due to the fact that this research study explored specific texts such as websites and case studies on international nonprofit organisations as well as the opinions of various local NGOs within the Western Cape, these organisations and subjects did not remain anonymous. This lack of privacy could be seen as a lack of benevolence as the participant's identities and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were not respected.

In an attempt to not only protect the subject's rights to privacy but also maintain benevolence, the researcher first ensured that before any interviews were conducted, that all participants involved filled out a written consent form detailing that they are voluntarily taking part in the study. In this way, the researcher was able to negotiate consent and respect the rights of the subjects. Secondly, the researcher reduced the risk of undue intrusion through ensuring that they conducted the research and presented the findings in a way that did not cause harm to the participants but rather increased the possible benefits for the them.

Another ethical concern that needed to be considered was related to the quality and accuracy of the results. Bias had the potential to be exerted onto this research project through the fact that it made use of purposive sampling methods and through the fact that it was a qualitative study thus requiring the personal thoughts, feelings and motivations of the participants involved as well as the subjective interpretation of those findings by the researcher. To minimise the level of bias exerted onto this research project, the University of Pretoria's code on the professionalism of the researcher, looking specifically at the integrity, quality and accountability of the researcher was applied.

This research project maintained integrity by ensuring that the researcher was irreproachable at all times through producing results that were truthful and reliable. It ensured quality findings by applying the highest standards of excellence with regard to the planning, implementation and reporting of the research. Lastly, this research project maintained accountability by the researcher being held accountable for the originality of their work –from the planning process right down to the findings and conclusions.

5.4. Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations:

The fact that this research paper needed to be conducted within a set time period of less than 12 months meant that there was a substantial time constraint that limited this study. The time constraint limited the researcher to not being able to use a representative sample of NGOs and therefore not being able to generalise the results to a broader population. Although this time constraint could not be completely eased, the researcher alleviated this limitation through aiming to interview as many local NGOs as possible within the given time frame in order to generalise the results as far as possible. The researcher also made sure to stipulate that the results may not be generalisable to a broad population but rather to a smaller, niche segment.

Along with this, gaining access to local NGOs to interview as well as texts on brand building techniques used by successful international NGOs was limited. Some local NGOs did not want to be involved in a research project or did not have the time to answer the amount of questions I had. Additionally, it was difficult to access company documents, or case studies that were highly confidential relating to international NGOs, which made the process of content analysis particularly difficult. Not having premium access to these resources limited this research project to a smaller group of participants, which in turn may have affected the accuracy of the results.

In an attempt to alleviate the limited access to local NGOs to interview, the researcher used word of mouth suggestions or a snowball sampling effect. By using word of mouth suggestions, the researcher was able to gain access to local NGOs that did not have websites or social media presences, which made getting into contact with them without the aid of a common connection very difficult. Additionally, the researcher was able to gain greater access to local NGOs through a snowballing effect whereby the researcher found and interviewed one local NGO who then in turn suggested another local NGO similar to it to interview. In this way, the researcher was able to connect and gain access to local NGOs through means of a networking system, which made the process easier than simply contacting the NGOs themselves.

In an attempt to improve the limited access to texts relating to international NGOs and their brand building activities, the researcher contacted local libraries and Universities such as the Vega School of Branding library, which has greater access to international texts or documents in an attempt to gain greater access to the necessary information.

Delimitations:

Although this research paper focused on how to build brand equity within the nonprofit sector, it is important to delimit what was not studied in this research paper. Although this research paper studied the tactics and lessons learnt from successful international NGO's for building brand equity, due to time constraints these lessons were pulled from a carefully selected sample of sources. These sources included websites, case studies and journal articles that were made available to the researcher and did not include detailed accounts from individual NGO's or organisations which would have cost a great deal of money. The findings in the form of lessons or strategies therefore only reflect the insight from this simple sample of sources and are not considered to be representative of the entire international NGO sector.

Additionally, although this research paper focused on interviewing local NGO's to determine the extent to which these lessons could be applied to the South African NGO context, these NGO's were also limited to a select sample. Again, due to time and money constraints this research paper focused only on a select sample of 5 local NGO's operating within the Western Cape to interview and base findings off of. It must be reiterated then that these findings only reflect the opinions of a sample of NGOs operating within the Western Cape and not of all NGOs within the broader South African context.

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