

**What is the impact of social activist movements like Fees Must Fall on the brand health of the University of Cape Town?**

**By**

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**Declaration**

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the \_\_\_\_\_ degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes

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## **Abstract**

Much has been written about the Fees Must Fall Movement that took place in South Africa over last two years. These written pieces were often through the lenses of the media, opinion pieces and social media commentary. These articles often focus on the institutional damage, the violence, the widespread protests and the governmental effect and involvement – the core issue at hand - the ever increasing higher education Fees in South African.

These written pieces have focused on many sides of the debate, with media and thought leaders choosing to look at the impact on the students itself, or the impact of governments' way of addressing the issue, or how the institutions themselves are dealing with the issue and who are what forces are at play in this rising issue. As a result, based on the aforementioned information, an opportunity to explore the impact that Fees Must Fall has had on, in particular, the University of Cape Town (UCT) has been identified.

This research report focusses on the impact of a movement like Fees Must Fall has had on UCT and seeks to explore the brand health impact. The research thus is considered an exploratory study that uses in-depth interviews using qualitative research. The data from the research was analysed in depth by the researcher.

**Key Words:** Brand activism, social activism, brand health, activism, brand, brand identity. Brand equity, brand health.

## **Introduction**

Brand activism has entered a new era and is increasingly becoming more visible in our world. No longer are people standing back and accepting the status quo, but instead they are actively taking brands to account by forming protest movements in an effort to address pertinent issues.

In South Africa in particular, a student activist movement known as Fees Must Fall was formed. This movement saw students from all over the country come together to protest against the issue of ever increasing higher education fees. The Fees Must Fall movement received widespread media attention and became a major issue in the South African landscape so much so, that it attracted international attention.

Whilst many South African universities were affected, the University of Cape Town (UCT) was one of the universities that were highly impacted by this national protest. In one particular instance, the situation on the campus became so hostile that an immediate university shutdown was implemented in an effort to keep university students and staff safe. Responding to the shutdown, in a letter to students and staff, the Communications Director of UCT, Gerda Kruger said “The situation on campus is reaching a point where we are at risk of serious conflict and escalating violence and we will not be able to contain the situation without a very large increase in security and intervention by the South African Police Service. This would only serve to make matters worse and may lead to injury and even lives being at risk.” UCT soon became the centre of media’ attention and many articles were written about the financial, emotional and violent impact that these protests had on the university. This prompted the researcher to identify a gap in the available written works – the impact the Fees Must Fall has had on the brand health of UCT. This research report seeks to explore the impact of a movement like Fees Must Fall on the brand health of the university by looking at key concepts and using qualitative research to determine the findings.

This research report will attempt to understand, analyse and explore the impact of Fees Must Fall on the brand health of UCT using an in-depth qualitative research approach.

## **Rationale**

### **Personal Rationale**

Activism and social activism in general are phenomena that the researcher finds intriguing. She's particularly fascinated by the power and the impact that movements have on brands, communities and society as a whole. With the birth of social media and its ever increasing accessibility, one can now at the click of a button start a movement and within minutes have the whole world support you. Social media has allowed us to connect with like-minded people all over the globe in an effort to combat society's injustices.

In addition, the researcher was fortunate enough to be part of what she believes is and will forever be remembered as a pertinent time in our country's history by first witnessing the international impact and magnitude that the Rhodes Must Fall movement had on UCT and other higher education institutions in the world, and later Fees Must Fall. Typically, her view is that the success of Rhodes Must Fall was so impactful that Fees Must Fall was a logical and natural step in the direction of addressing the issue increasing higher education fees in South Africa. During her capacity as Marketing and Online Communications Manager at the university she had the privilege of being part of the core team that dealt with these issues from a communications perspective. It is there that she witnessed the profound impact that these issues had on the university, but also observed the lack of interest or insight into the overall impact that these issues had on brand UCT. As a marketing and communicating professional, she believes that it's crucial to keep consistent tabs on the health of your brand and to ensure that it stays meaningful in the space within it operates.

### **Academic Rationale**

Social media and the digital landscape are changing the ways in which activists collaborate, demonstrate and communicate. In an excerpt from the book Digital Activism Decoded (2010), author Mary Joyce defines the various types of activism that exist in the social media and digital space. Digital activism, cyber-activism, online organising, online-activism, e-activism are all terms which Joyce uses to define activism. It is important to understand these types of activism because all

though Fees Must Fall was a social activism movement, the previous mentioned types of activism played a crucial role in propelling the issue into receiving international attention.

Broadly defined, 'activism' is the actions of a group of like-minded individuals coming together to change the status quo, advocating for a cause, whether local or global, and whether progressive or not (Cammaerts, 2007; Kahn and Kellner, 2004; Lomicky and Hogg, 2010). As mentioned, the digital age has thrust activism into the limelight by making it so much more accessible to these like-minded groups of people across the globe. Sandor Vegh's (2003) classification of online activism includes: (a) awareness/advocacy, and (b) organisation/mobilisation. First, when it comes to awareness and advocacy, the World Wide Web allows a social movement to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. For example, anti-neo-liberal activists created a network of Independent Media Centres to provide alternative news coverage of the World Trade Organization protests in 1999 (Atton, 2003). Postmes and Brunsting (2002) also found that 'alternative' news disseminated via the internet influenced mobilisation. (Postmes and Brunsting in Harlow, 2011).

Social activism is the promotion and guidance used to cultivate changes in business practices, business policies or the government to influence social change. The duties of a social activist include communicating with policy makers, researching for the cause, and organizing responses for the media. Social activism is commonly focused on the conditions that directly impact the standards of living for those in society who are exposed to it. A social activist is required to talk to a wide variety of people both within the group and those they oppose. (Reference.com, 2017)

Many academic literature works have been written about activism and its types and it's important to understand this in the context of Fees Must Fall. This study will explore and aim to draw parallels between the UCT as a brand and brand Fees Must Fall (as a social activist's movement) in an effort to explore what the impact was on the brand health of

## **Problem Statement**

The issue of university fees in South Africa is not a new one and people are continuously being affected by increasing fees. The newness exists in the fact that students and the public have now taken action by holding UCT to account for this issue. This has a massive impact on the university as a brand and therefore the problem is worth investigating in order to determine the true impact that this movement has had on the brand. The opportunities exists in unearthing how the issue impacted UCT's brand health as most literature that exists is more around the institutional impact as opposed to the brand impact.

## **Research purpose**

This purpose of this proposed study is to assess and explore the impact that social activist movement, Fees Must Fall has had on the brand health of UCT.

## **Research Question**

What is the impact of social activist movements like Fees Must Fall on the brand health of the University of Cape Town?

## **Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The era of movements and activism has fast become a norm and standing up for what you believe in is no longer uncommon. No longer are people standing back and allowing brands, governments and institutions to dictate and even eradicate the moral fibre that countries are built on, but instead, people are now more than ever challenging and disrupting the status quo. In various parts of the world one sees examples of how groups of people are taking brands and institutions to account and standing up for what they believe is right.

Movements like Fees Must Fall, saw students and communities come together to take a stand against the rising fee of education in higher education institutions in South Africa. For the purpose of this study focus and reference will be on the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Though a movement, Fees Must Fall can be recognised as a brand in itself as what it stood for started to spread across higher education institutions in South Africa. In this context, it is important to understand what a brand is. "A brand is a social construct. This means that brands are formed by society in all of its spheres." (Klopper and North, 2013). A brand is built around a particular identity, it knows what it stands for and it's able to clearly define its role and existence within its category. It connects far beyond a superficial connection with its stakeholders and provides meaning and value to those who come into contact with it. Activist brands are concerned with the wellbeing and the standard of living of those which their movements represent and vary in the causes that they fight for. They address the issues and social ills that they stand for and are passionate about. Common international activist brands include, but are not limited to, Greenpeace, Now.org, AWID and WWF.

UCT students, staff and academics were deeply affected by the Fees Must Fall movement as they bore the financial brunt that came with the protests. This particular literature review seeks to explore the impact that Fees Must Fall has had on the brand health of UCT.

## **Outline of paradigm and justification**

For the purpose of this research in-depth qualitative research methodologies will be used. The qualitative research will through interviews and observations help explore and unpack the social constructivism of the research question. By interviewing various people, one would be able ascertain an informed outcome of the impact of Fees Must Fall on the brand health of UCT.

A lot of the written material available is based on the actual issue and little is written on the impact that the issue has had on the brand health of UCT. In order to explore the research more, interviewing students, staff and academics affected by the issue would further help clarify the impact from a brand perspective. Interviewing those who participated and/or were affected by Fees Must Fall will enable the research to be guided in a natural and authentic manner, aiding in exploring the question in more detail. It is important throughout this process to understand and investigate the issue by speaking to those directly involved. They would have far deeper insight into the issue and would be better equipped to guide the research.

This approach is particularly relevant in that it seeks to unpack the issue in an organic and systemic manner.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

### **Brand as a Practice**

According to AMA, a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate them from those of the competition” (Committee of Definitions, 1960:8)

As part of the theory, it is important to look at brand as a construct and how this has bearing on the question at hand. Brands are all around us and we engage with them on a daily basis. Brands are unique in the sense that they are rooted in their own identity, values and meaning. Professor David Aaker describes brand equity as a set of five categories of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers. These categories of brand assets are:

1. Brand loyalty
2. Brand awareness
3. Perceived quality
4. Brand associations
5. Other proprietary assets such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships.

According to Aaker, a particularly important concept for building brand equity is brand identity— the unique set of brand associations that represent what the brand stands for and promises to customers.

Back in 1991, Aaker further defined brand equity as “A set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers.”

In relation to the research question (What the impact of social activist movements is like fees Must Fall on the brand health of the University of Cape Town?), UCT is a brand in itself as it provides value and meaning to those who interact with it. Its existence is rooted in the fact that it provides long term value in the form of higher education to its students. . In a dissertation about “What defines successful

university brands (done in the United Kingdom)” it was found that even among those brands considered ‘successful’, challenges such as lack of internal brand engagement and limited international resonance may be apparent. There is a clear wish for universities in the United Kingdom to embrace branding as a concept and articulate their brands in the best possible manner. (Chapleo, 2017)

Likewise with protests movements such as Fees Must Fall – it is a brand deeply rooted in purpose. the movement exists to address the financial exclusion and fee increases in the South African Higher education sector.

Brand as a concept is relevant to the question in that UCT is a brand as it has all of the elements that according to Aaker define a brand. By understanding brand as a theory, one can further understand UCT and how they position themselves in the market and industry.

### **Brand Health as a Theory**

”According to Cook et al (2010), the concept of a healthy brand is one that considers the notion of identity, value, sustainability and communication authenticity as well as being able to move away from being solely profit-focused and business driven. (Sustainable Insight, 2010).”

A healthy brand, as defined by Cook et al has the following characteristics:

- A meaningful purpose – A brand purpose is in its reason to exist that is clearly defined by its value set;
- The brand purpose is served in all that it does – the brand lives through its purpose rather than its form;
- It has a distinct identity – it is unique and consistently delivers on its promise;
- It is engaging and authentic – it communicates effectively with its stakeholders and creates shared meaning;
- It adds value to the lives of people – it satisfies people’s wants and needs by adding value and meaning to people’s lives and society as a whole. It’s less about profit making but more about truly adding value to its consumers;
- It builds sustainable relationships – it consistently demonstrates and participates in acts that will benefit future generations;

- Profit is not a driver but merely a consequence of the above mentioned characteristics – it understands that it needs to deliver on the above promises in a consistent and meaningful way in order to provide true value. People are at the centre of all that they do.

The brand health of UCT is important to explore as it will help determine the relevance of the question.

### **Activism as a Theory**

A tools and knowledge, website called Permanent Culture Now defines activism as “... quite simply taking action to effect social change; this can occur in a myriad ways and in a variety of forms. Often it is concerned with ‘how to change the world’ through social, political, economic or environmental change. This can be led by individuals but is often done collectively through social movements.”

### **Sub-title:**

### **Activist brands**

Activism movements have become brands in themselves like Fees Must Fall). For centuries people have taken to the streets or formed movements that address social justice or political issues all in an effort to change, challenge or redirect the status quo. Activism dates back as far as 2000 years ago, to a time when Greek Athenian, Solon who used activism to legislate against political, moral and economic decline in Athens (Permanent Culture Now, 2017). Due to the fact that Fees Must Fall is an activist brand, looking at activism bears particular relevance and is appropriate in exploring the question even further.

## **Link between research problem and current literature**

Much has been documented about Fees Must Fall as an issue and the effect it had on students during this time. The articles documented are mostly in the form of news articles and opinion pieces as opposed to academic literature. For this purpose a focus will be on the opinion pieces and news articles.

Fees Must Fall was predominantly student-led and though the issue they were raising was and is very clear, questions around who or what was inspiring these students to act were starting to surface. Among the works which are fuelling the students ideas are the anti-colonialism writings of Frantz Fanon – originally from the Caribbean island of Martinique but who began writing scathing critiques from France in the 1950s. The celebrated Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko was also a huge inspiration and driving force in the students thinking. Writers such as Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie whose 2013 novel *Americanah* – a novel about a black women’s hair serves as a symbol to illustrate the central character’s struggle against racism.

Researcher at the Centre for International Teacher Education, Tarryn de Kock, states in Times Live that “There is a broad range of literature that South African students are using to inform their perspectives, both locally and from abroad, and spanning at least the last century or two.” Authors who wrote on the experiences of black people such as Steve Biko, WEB du Boir and Marcus Garvey to name but a few were often quoted amongst students who were part of the movement as their work was highly rated. Some may even say that these authors’ works were the catalysts to the movement. Biko wrote that “it seems sometimes that it is a crime for the Black students to think for themselves”. Students carried out his political philosophy during the Fees Must Fall Movement and at UCT, graffiti “Biko Lives” can be seen on some of the buildings and the words are affectionately carried out in song when students protest.

A protest movement at South African universities is not a new phenomenon. Students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Fort Hare University and the Tshwane University of Technology have been protesting against rising fees and the cost of higher education since 1994. These institutions cater almost exclusively

to black students and have been doing so for years. Interestingly Fees Must Fall and the previous mentioned protests were both treated differently in the media. Fees Must Fall received wide spread media coverage even sparking media interest overseas. Universities in London and the U.S. stood in solidarity with the students in South Africa yet the issue, as previously mentioned, was routinely raised at poorer South African universities since the nineties. In her opinion piece that was published in *The Conversation*, Dr Nuraan Davids writes “The two very different responses – little media attention given to earlier protests at historically black universities versus widespread coverage and international solidarity for protests at historically white universities – are a stark reminder of post-apartheid South Africa’s embedded inequalities.”

Fees Must Fall consisted of students who came from previously disadvantaged backgrounds as well as students from more established backgrounds. Some may argue that the media attention was because of the fact that traditionally white South African universities were now being challenged by what was traditionally seen as an issue that only black university faced. This notion has a huge impact on the perception of these white universities and the issue can be seen as being highly racialised in some cases.

The Fees Must Fall movement led to a lot of conflict and discourse between students and UCT. Students felt that the university was obligated to address the issue of increasing tuition fees and provide free education for all. What was once a place of learning and fulfilling ones dreams, through Fees Must Fall UCT quickly became a space where violence and conflict brewed as students clashed with university leaders. “When social systems are unresponsive to fundamental human needs like identity, autonomy, participation and security, frustration is inevitable. Frustration leads to aggression and feelings of relative deprivation. This creates the potential for collective violence and the precursor for revolution in society – particularly one that has a history of intractable, deep-rooted conflict and remains deeply unequal.” (*The Conversation*, Associate Professor Snodgrass, 2015).

Conflict at universities soon turned to violence in 2016 when the Minister of Higher Education announced that there would be a 10% fee in higher education.

Universities across South Africa started to see crowds of students and community members participate in acts of violence over the rage of fee increases. Burning tyres, rocks being thrown and petrol bombs became the order of the day and UCT was left with no choice but to shut down. This led to outrage by those students who wanted to and were willing to study and complete their tuition but they were at the mercy of the masses who were demanding immediate free education for all. The university was not prepared for the impact as it had to shut down for weeks on end.

The shutdown of UCT was testament to the existing anger and frustration that students felt towards the university. To them their indignation was justified by the increasing fees and further escalated when the Minister of Higher Education announced that fees would in fact increase in 2016 and the students were determined to hold UCT to account for all the anguish and inequalities that existed within the education system.

The impact of the Fees Must Fall protests on those involved has been far reaching. Students and staff have both reportedly expressed feelings of fatigue, anxiety, depression and anger – all directed back at UCT for not doing enough. Some students felt that the protests were causing more harm than good and that they were taking a racial and political turn, which further added to the chaos. A student at the UCT who does not want to be named, was quoted as saying that she feared for her life and that the protests had created anxiety and depression as she could no longer cope with the disarray. A Hillcrest High matriculant pupil, who also wished to remain anonymous, expressed concern about how this campaign will impact on her future as she is currently applying to universities for admission in 2017. (News24, 2016)

Statement letters from concerned students, staff and parents were posted to the UCT website. In particular, a page was dedicated to student letters who raised concerns about the protests and shutdown. The letters ranged from needing to write their exams as they were in their final year to students pleading for the university to get military intervention in an effort to get the protests to stop.

In summary students were being inspired by the works anti-colonialism writers, protest movements at universities was not a new phenomenon, conflict and discourse was evident amongst students and UCT and the emotional impact on students and those involved in the issue was far reaching. All of the above identified

themes further highlight the fact that little attention was focussed on the brand health of UCT. The methodology will seek to explore this further.

## **Methodology**

The research method is a strategy of enquiry, which moves from the underlying assumptions to research design, and data collection (Myers, 2009). Qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting; it is particularly useful to study educational settings and processes. "...qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). According to Domegan and Fleming (2007), "Qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem. There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of problem. It is with this in mind that qualitative methodology will be used to explore this research.

## **Research Question**

What is the impact of social activist movements like fees Must Fall on the brand health of the University of Cape Town?

## **Sub-Questions**

- What impact do protest movements have on UCT?
- What are the characteristics of the brand UCT?
- Is UCT considered a brand?
- Is Fees Must Fall considered a brand?

## **Research objectives**

To explore the impact that movements like Fees Must fall has had on the brand health of UCT.

## **Research Design**

Research design can be thought of as a roadmap that highlights how the study will be conducted. It shows how all of the major parts of the research study work together in an attempt to address the research questions. Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research design. (Creswell 2014).

According to Mouton (1996, p. 175) the research design serves to "plan, structure and execute" the research to maximise the "validity of the findings". It gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design, and data collection. Yin (2003) adds further that "colloquially a research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and 'there' is some set of (conclusions) answers" (p. 19).

For the purpose of this research an in-depth qualitative research approach will be used. In-depth interviews with key stakeholders will be held in order to explore the issue more. By interviewing various sources one would be able ascertain an informed outcome. A set of clear and defined questions will be utilised during the interview process. The questions will be a combination of relational and causal questions. The combination of these two types of questions will help determine the relationship between activism brand Fees Must Fall and brand UCT in an effort to explore the issue of UCT's brand health.

## **Research Approach**

This study will be a qualitative approach in order to explore the issue in detail. The questions will investigate the relationships between UCT as a brand and Fees Must Fall as an activist brand. In order to find and determine the right questions, research will be conducted using various instruments and materials such as surveys, interviews and desktop research with the intent to define a clear research plan.

All data will be recorded and analysed in an attempt to uncover the deeper meaning and implications and impact that Fees Must Fall has had on UCT. A closer look into the experiences, behaviours and emotions of those involved will help paint a better picture of the relationship between the two brands.

Whilst the approach is methodical, a degree of flexibility will be needed in order to allow for the research to develop. All data will be collected in textual form on the basis of observation and interaction with the participants using in-depth interviews, surveys and focus groups. The data will be collected at various stages over a period of time. For example, some interviewees may lead the research into other schools of thought, resulting in different groups of people being interviewed and different sources being explored to further address the impact that Fees Must Fall has had on UCT's brand health.

### **Population and Sampling**

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014:135), define a sample as a subset of a population that is considered to be representative of the population. For this paper, a specific population comprising of UCT students, staff, academics and Fees Must Fall members will be used. Ideally, this sample group will be interviewed at the university or in a space that allows for a constructive conversation.

In an interview with 702 Radio, student activist at UCT Khanyisile Mbongwa, said that students have long been mobilising against the oppression of black and other identities. She was of the opinion that there have been various forms of oppression, from the curriculum to conversations with lecturers, within campus spaces. She further describes how challenging it's been to function as a student and engage in campus spaces where certain bodies have been made invisible, particularly black bodies and other marginalised groups. Through the research question posed, it is this type of insight that will help delve deeper into the relationship that Fees Must Fall protesters had with UCT and to further explore the impact that this has had on the brand health of UCT.

Stratified and Snowball sampling will be used as sampling tools. With stratified sampling, a subset of the population that share at least one common characteristic will be identified. For example, marketing and communication staff at UCT and

students in relation to their actual representation in the population. Once this is concluded, random sampling will be used to select a sufficient number of subjects from each stratum. "Sufficient" refers to a sample size large enough for us to be reasonably confident that the stratum represents the population. (statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm; 2017) For this study ten to 15 people should be sufficient.

Snowball sampling will aid in referrals from initial subjects in order to help generate additional subjects. This method would be best suited to the research as they provide a good mix of speaking to professionals, academics and students.

### **Data Collection Methods**

As previously mentioned, data will be collected via in-depth interviews. The benefit of the interviews will be that information will be sourced directly from people who either partook in protests and from people who work or study at UCT.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the interviews will be analysed meticulously in order to ascertain any themes or direction. Once this is done, a closer look will be taken at any potential relationship that could possibly exist in the data. Analysing the relationship that exists within the data will further help explore the research question and help determine the impact.

## **Ethical Concerns**

Possible ethical considerations include the protection of people's identity when interviewing them. Some may feel that they do not want to be identified in any way and it would therefore be crucial to ensure that they are not. This will be done by referring to their roles as opposed to referring to them by name if they so prefer.

The use of consent forms is also important to ensure that participants understand the type of research that they're participating in, that they grant permission to be interviewed and that they also give consent for the information to be shared and published. All participants will therefore be asked to sign a consent form. This will further ensure that participants are fully protected and are aware of the depth of the research being conducted.

## **Research findings**

In this section, the researcher aims to offer a detailed reflection of the interviews that were conducted. This section paints a picture of how the questions asked reflect on what brand health and branding is in terms of UCT and Fees Must Fall.

The questions were specifically asked to students who participated in Fees Must Fall as well as staff who work at the university. An analysis of each question was conducted in order to interpret the answers across all of the respondents.

## **Section 1 – Student Interviews - active participants of Fees Must Fall**

### **Question 1**

As an active participant of the Fees Must Fall movement, what in your own words is the movement about?

This question was completed by active and inactive members of Fees must fall. Inactive members did not elaborate but they made it clear that they supported the cause despite not having an opinion on what the movement is about. The active members of Fees Must Fall believe that the movement is about affordable quality education for the masses. Some felt that it was subsidised education for black students and decolonisation of education in south Africa.

### **Question 2**

Do you consider the movement to be a brand? If so, then please explain why. If not, please clarify why not.

There were two schools of thought when it came to this particular question. Those respondents who believed that it was indeed a brand, believed so because some felt that it represented white monopoly, which some brands do and that it represented and addressed the needs state of the majority. Respondents, who felt that it was not a brand, shared this view because they do not believe that the movement should be reduced to a brand. To them it's an ideology and an articulated reality that is far more powerful and greater than a brand.

### **Question 3**

What impact has the movement had on UCT as a brand?

Respondents felt that Fees Must Fall made the university more tolerant of the issues that students face. One respondent felt that this tolerance and inclusiveness was a false sense and that it was not actually what the university was about. Some felt that Fees Must Fall exposed the reality of what sits behind the ivory tower (respondents own words) that is the university. Overall the sense is that Fees Must Fall impacted the UCT brand in a fundamental way.

#### **Question 4**

What does Fees Must Fall stand for?

Similarly to question one, respondents felt that Fees Must Fall stands for equal opportunities and decolonisation of the higher education system in South Africa. Free education, academic and financial exclusion, and being the voices of those minority students also came through clearly as positions that fees Must Fall stands for.

#### **Question 5**

What makes this movement different?

Respondents felt that I think in a South African context, it is part of the evolution of our democracy which is rooted in inequality. Respondents said that it is a cause that has been relatively well-received by most South Africans as people understand the principles and values that the movement stands for.

#### **Question 6**

How did Fees Must Fall achieve success through branding?

In this question, respondents felt that the unity of the students and public protest action helped Fees Must fall achieve success through branding. They felt that Fees Must fall helped mobilise people to act in end effort to achieve their goal.

#### **Question 7**

What is effective and ineffective about the brand Fees Must Fall?

Respondents felt that Fees Must Fall was effective because it opened the door for more dialogue and engagement around pertinent issues. It was effective in that it united not only students at UCT, but across the country and their unified message and values were unambiguous and visible for all to see.

#### **Question 8**

How did the movement challenge the brand UCT?

Respondents expressed that Fees Must Fall challenged the legitimacy and authority of the university.

Though they managed to do that, respondents still felt that it's hard to topple as UCT has wealth and backing and Fees Must Fall still has to do more to challenge the university. Respondents also felt that UCT's elitism and institutional reputation was challenged as grave issues were brought to the fore. One respondent felt that Fees Must Fall did not necessarily challenge the brand but instead exposed the inconsistencies of the brand. This resulted in the exposure of the fact that UCT was not representative of all the students who were part the institution.

### **Question 9**

Do you think that the movement has had a negative or positive impact on UCT?  
Please clarify your answer by explaining your answer in detail

In this particular question, some respondents felt that there was no real impact on UCT as it's still viewed as the number one university in Africa. Some respondents expressed that Fees Must Fall had a positive impact in that it opened up a space for dialogue which wasn't originally there. Conversations around privilege, race relations and income inequality all became regular dialogue as safe spaces for engagement were created. It also allowed for the interrogation of course content which presented an opportunity for the contextual reality of students to be reflected.

### **Question 10**

From a brand perspective, what do you think the movement did exceptionally well whilst taking on UCT?

Some respondents found this question redundant but those that answered it felt that Fees Must Fall did well in terms of engaging with institutional management and government. It used appropriate social media channels to adequately articulate its narrative and disseminate it efficiently across South Africa.

## **Section 2 – Staff Interviews**

### **Question 1**

Do you consider UCT to be a brand?

Respondents consider the university to be a brand.

### **Question 2**

If so, what makes it a brand? If not, why?

Respondents defined UCT as a brand as it addresses the needs of its students and it provides a service and offering in a competitive industry.

### **Question 3**

Have your opinions about UCT as a brand changed, since Fees Must Fall?

### **Question 4**

In your opinion, how do you think Fees Must Fall affected UCT from a brand perspective?

The respondent felt that the university had been affected on multiple levels. One particular respondent expressed that because the university still remains the number one university in Africa that based on this fact it had hardly been affected in a negative way. Points around the fact that amongst white elitist there could be a misconception that the brand is no longer as premium as it used to but that equally the less privileged may view the university in a more positive light as it's now seen as more inclusive.

### **Question 5**

What was the brand impact of Fees Must Fall on UCT?

The respondent argues that the impact was more on the brand South Africa and higher education as opposed to just UCT.

### **Question 6**

What could, UCT have done differently in dealing with the impact of the movement on the university?

The respondent explains that the university executive should have taken a tougher stance when it came to disruptions and reacted quicker to issues raised thereby avoiding a university shutdown. A comprehensive crisis plan detailing how to deal with this issue would also have been more helpful considering that the university was experiencing Fees Must Fall of the back of Rhodes Must Fall.

### **Question 7**

What image do you think students have of the brand post Fees Must Fall?

### **Question 8**

What improvements could be made to the brand to further meet the needs of your students?

Respondents felt that a new inclusive and dynamic brand identity was needed - one that showcases transformation at the university whilst maintaining its quality and excellence.

### **Question 9**

What is the single most important benefit your brand should be seen to be offering - and why should students believe this to be true?

In this question, respondents argued that the university offers quality education more so than their competitors and that they produce the most qualified employable graduates in the country.

### **Question 10**

How can you best communicate that benefit to the students that you're interested in attracting after a crisis like Fees Must fall?

Respondents explained that because the university has offers the top teaching and learning and has the best A-rated research facilities in Africa, that these points are

what are important to communicate. It is for these reasons that the university produces top quality and highly employable graduates.

### **Question 11**

Do you think that Fees Must Fall has influenced UCT's brand identity? If so, please explain how.

In this question, respondents expressed that the university now communicates has a more conscious approach to how it communicates the brand. It makes more of an effort to highlight and showcase transformation in effort to communicate an identity that is more transformed than ever and is continuing to transform.

### **Question 12**

Do you think that there is work to be done around the impact that Fees Must Fall has had on the brand? If so, then, what would this work look like? If not, then please clarify why not.

Respondents felt that the institutional culture, policies and procedures need to be looked at as they continue to isolate some students and staff. A sense of belonging needs to be instilled in all who work at the institution as they all contribute to the success of the brand.

## **Insights**

The interviews were conducted across two very different types of people yet interestingly similarities between the two are evident. The majority of the students felt that Fees Must Fall was a brand as it's values and what it stood for, were most apparent. The UCT respondent felt that the university was brand in that it provided a service in a competitive space. It's evident that both Fees Must Fall and UCT are meaningful and provide purpose in the spaces in which they operate.

Fees Must Fall challenged UCT and had an impact on the brand as the university now makes a conscious effort to address issues in an attempt to show how they are transforming and to make the university a more inclusive space for all.

## **Conclusion**

Brand as a practice is important to note as both UCT and Fees Must Fall are brands. By better understanding brand as a concept one can then view UCT and Fees Must Fall as brands. A brand is rooted in values, purpose and meaning and are unique in the sense that they have they are rooted in their own identity, values and meaning. A healthy brand has purpose and serves this purpose in all that it does, it has a distinct identity and is always engaging and authentic. Furthermore, and very importantly, it adds value to the lives of the people consuming it, continuously builds sustainable relationships and views profit as a consequence of the above and consistently delivers on its promise. Activism as a theory allows us to dig deeper into the thinking behind the movement Fees Must Fall and guides the thinking of the research. By understanding activism as a theory, one can better understand and explore Fees Must Fall and its impact in relation to UCT.

The researcher set out to explore the impact that fees Must Fall had on the brand health of UCT and through interviews discovered though one may assume that the impact was negative, it was in fact positive. This is seen in the research questions where respondents explain that the university is still the number one university in Africa despite the protest issues that happened. Student respondents felt that there was no real brand impact but expressed that the real impact how the university has started to create spaces for dialogue around pertinent issues. It however cannot be ignored that Fees Must Fall impacted the UCT brand in a sense that the university now makes a conscious effort to communicate and market the brand in a more inclusive way while addressing the issue of transformation. It's safe to say that Fees Must Fall has given UCT a lot of food for thought.

The research was limited in that respondents were mostly students. Staff interviews were hard to get as many staff members felt that they did not want to relive Fees Must Fall as they were focussing on the fact that it had died don for now. This meant that the research was skewed more towards Fees Must Fall insights. Though this was the case, insights gleaned from Fees Must Fall students were valid, authentic and insightful. The students were very honest in their responses and did not hold back.

Most articles available are around how the issue of Fees Must Fall affected UCT from a financial, race and inclusivity and violence perspective. Very little is written on the brand health impact and what or how UCT has been influenced a a brand. Therefore this remains an opportunity to further explore and bridge this gap from a research perspective.

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