

**“To compare the intended brand identity and the perceived and experienced brand image of South African National Parks (SANparks) brand by conducting a comparative thematic content analysis amongst SANparks’ employees as well as a select group of SANparks’ consumers. ”**

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## **CONTENTS:**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	Page 4
1.1 Introduction	Page 4
1.2 Research Problem	Page 5
1.3 Research Questions	Page 5
1.4 Research Aims	Page 6
1.5 Theoretical Statements	Page 6
1.6 Methodology	Page 6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	Page 7
2.1 Introduction	Page 7
2.2 What is a brand defined as?	Page 7
2.2.1 Brand building process	Page 8
2.2.2 Brand Strategy	Page 9
2.2.3 Brand Experiences	Page 9
2.2.4 Understanding the consumer	Page 10
2.3 Brand Identity	Page 11
2.4 Brand Image	Page 13
2.4.1 Influencing Brand Image	Page 13
2.4.2 Achieving a Positive Brand Image	Page 14
2.4.3 Communication campaigns as brand identity tool	Page 15
2.5 Brand Identity – Brand Image Link	Page 16
2.6 The Framework	Page 17
2.7 SANparks and Nature-Based ecotourism branding	Page 19
2.8 Conclusion	Page 21
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	Page 21
3.1 Introduction	Page 21
3.2 Methodological Orientation	Page 21
3.3 Population and Sample	Page 22
3.4 Research Method	Page 24
3.5 Data Analysis	Page 25
3.6 Reliability and Validity	Page 26

3.6.1 Trustworthiness	Page 27
3.7 Ethical Considerations	Page 28
3.8 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study	Page 29
3.9 Conclusion	Page 30
CHAPTER 4: Findings	Page 30
4.1 Brand Challenges	Page 31
4.1.1 Poaching	Page 31
4.1.2 Connecting with an older target audience and not appealing to a younger audience	Page 32
4.1.3 Kruger Park as a stronger brand than SANparks	Page 33
4.1.4 Interpretation	Page 33
4.2 Brand Image	Page 34
4.2.1 Element of conservation	Page 35
4.2.2 The Affordability of the brands facilities	Page 36
4.2.3 Brand culture of Holiday	Page 36
4.2.4 Accommodation offered by the brand and its' parks	Page 37
4.2.5 Interpretation	Page 38
4.3 Brand Identity	Page 38
4.3.1 The SANparks Kudu Logo	Page 39
4.3.2 The SANparks website as communication means	Page 41
4.3.3 The view of SANparks as a male brand	Page 41
4.3.4 Interpretation	Page 41
4.4 Answering the research questions	Page 42
4.5 Conclusion	Page 45
4.5.1 Recommendations for the future	Page 45
REFERENCES	Page 47
APPENDIX A	Page 51
APPENDIX B	Page 54
APPENDIX C	Page 55
APPENDIX D	Page 60
APPENDIX E	Page 63
APPENDIX F	Page 66
Signed Informed consent forms of participants	Pages 67-70

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Brands are a shorthand for a customer-facing entity that is designed to be understandable according to (Karjalainen, n.d:2), This means that a brand is an entity that is designed to be understood by its target audience. Brands have been described by Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:33) as the heart of the business strategy, therefore the heart of the business. Branding practices such as the designing and implementing of the brand identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:40), creating consumer loyalty (Keller, 2009:141) and Communication strategies (Jevons, Blackshaw & Christodoulides, 2011:107) lead to an increased brand equity and resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Resonance is described by Keller (2009:141) as establishing the brand in the memory of the consumer and creating a lasting brand image.

In the context of building a brand, the communication between the company and it's consumers can be examined in terms of brand identity and brand image (Nandan, 2005:265). The two concepts are connected and Konecnik & Go (2007:177) describe the two concepts as "intrinsically intertwined". The brand identity is an entity of the brand that has been designed and packaged by the company and needs to be unwrapped by the consumer according to Nandan (2005:268). This is the brand strategy that has been designed by the brand leaders (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:40).

Brand image can be best described as an external perspective in terms of the brand experience of consumers (Christmann, Alexander, & Wood, 2015:7). Le Roux and Du Plessis (2014:121) concur with this statement and describe brand image as the perceptions that stakeholders form about a brand according to the benefits of the brand to the consumer.

This research project has aimed to determine whether there is a gap between the intended brand identity of the SANparks brand and the experienced brand image of the brand by consumers. This paper was based on the research of SANparks as this is a brand that the researcher feels can integrate more marketing and communication campaigns that are aimed at the consumers.

The reason that the researcher feels that this study should have been conducted is because the corporate brand identity and image are considered fundamental in enhancing the visibility and credibility of a business (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:119). Therefore, as the researcher believes that there is a way in which SANparks can increase the number of

visitors to their parks annually, they will need to first ensure that their vision and their identity are fully aligned, as identity and image are “intrinsically intertwined” according to Konecnik & Go (2007:177). This therefore means that any communications campaigns they may develop going forward will appeal directly to the SANparks consumers, encouraging them to visit the parks on a more regular basis. The researcher understands that the desired positioning of an organisation in the minds of stakeholder groups is one of the most important strategic decisions that top management has to make (Varadarajan, Defanti & Busch, 2006:195). This is therefore what the research was conducted on: to ensure that the identity is being perceived by the target audience in the correct manner and that their feelings and emotions towards the brand are such that they will help build the brand and increase consumers, rather than one that will not enhance the brand at all.

This research was important as the SANparks plays a major role in the conservation and ecotourism sectors within South Africa, ecotourism is a phrase that has been used to describe a genuine interest in nature that contributes to conservation respect and the conservation of local culture, creating a tourist’s awareness of conservation (De Witt, Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2011:1140). If SANparks increase the number of visitors to their parks, they will be able to generate more revenue, therefore allowing them to extend their research projects and conservation initiatives while simultaneously uplifting communities. These parks are well- established brands that generate millions of Rands per annum (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2011:1118).

The researcher believes that the findings for this research are able to be applied to other game parks and conservation spaces in South Africa, thereby improving their communications and attracting new and current consumers to their brand.

## 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM:

To compare the intended brand identity with the perceived and experienced brand image of South African National Parks (SANparks) brand by conducting a comparative thematic content analysis amongst SANparks’ employees as well as a select group of SANparks’ consumers.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What is the intended corporate identity of SANparks according to SANparks employees?
2. What is the perceived corporate image of SANparks amongst SANparks consumers?
3. Is there a discrepancy in the corporate identity and corporate image of the SANparks brand?

#### 1.4 RESEARCH AIMS:

1. To determine the intended brand identity of SANparks according to SANparks' employees.
2. To determine the perceived brand image of SANparks amongst SANparks consumers.
3. To determine whether there is a discrepancy in the brand identity and brand image of the SANparks brand.

#### 1.5 THEORETICAL STATEMENTS:

1. Brand Identity clearly specifies what the brand aspires to stand for and has multiple roles (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179).
2. External perspective in terms of the brand experience of consumers (Christmann et al, 2015:) relating to brand image.
3. Brand building process usually focuses on creating and enhancing the visibility of the brand as well as associations that the brand may have and finally a brand building process can be used to enhance customer relationships with the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009:41)
4. Brand identity (how a brand would like to be perceived in the mind of the consumer) and brand image (the consumers perception of the brand) enhances brand loyalty (Nandan, 2005:271).

#### 1.6 METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an important tool when conducting research, as Du Plooy- Celliers & Cronje (2014:147) state. This study was of an exploratory nature and was set out to determine the brand identity intended by SANparks as a brand has designed for consumers and the brand image perceived by consumers. The study was of a qualitative orientation as the paper aimed to gather in- depth information and emotions of the participants and as Strydom & Bezuidenhout (2014:173) state, qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated. The information was gathered in the form of an obtrusive semi-structured interview process. The sample for the study was chosen from the entire population of 28 546 (SANparks, n.d) of the SANparks online forum, a platform that allows consumers that follow the brand to converse about the brand and the parks that they manage, of this platform, three volunteer participants were chosen to take part in the study. The volunteers were chosen based on a non-probability sampling method as they were volunteers. Non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to

determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population (Pascoe, 2014:137). A SANparks employee was also chosen according to the depth of knowledge they have about the brand in the form of non-probability, purposive sampling. The interview questions that were asked to the SANparks employee were based on the Aaker Brand identity model (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44) whereas the questions that have been asked to the three volunteers was based on the 'Consumer Pillars' model discussed in section 2.7 of this paper.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to firstly discuss the concepts of a brand and how a brand is designed and developed, as well as what constitutes a strong brand. Secondly the paper will discuss the elements of brand identity and brand image and what the meaning of each concept is, and the link between the two as well as the differences between the two concepts. The study will then discuss the brand of SANparks, who they are, what they stand for and what the brand's mission is. Finally the paper will discuss the framework that will be used for the research which is the Aaker model of brand identity. The study is hoping to ascertain the brand image and brand identity of the SANparks brand. This means that the study is hoping to investigate if there is a potential difference between how the brand wants to be seen and experienced by consumers and the way in which the consumers actually view and experience the brand. Through this study, the paper is hoping to determine the intended brand identity of SANparks according to SANparks' employees, as well as determine the perceived brand image of SANparks amongst SANparks consumers and finally to determine whether there is a discrepancy in the brand identity and brand image of the SANparks brand.

### 2.2. WHAT IS A BRAND DEFINED AS?

As the context of this study is branding, it is vital to develop a deeper understanding of what a brand is. Le Roux & Du Plessis (2014:120) define a brand as a "multidisciplinary concept" incorporating strategy, organisational structure, communication and corporate culture. They continue by saying that a brand's purpose is to demonstrate the advantages of the business and in turn the way in which consumers will then perceive the business as a brand (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:119). Karjalainen (n.d:2) concurs with this as states that "Brand is a shorthand for a customer-facing entity that is designed to be understandable". It has also

been stated by Nandan (2005:264), that a brand is an intangible asset that can build shareholder value.

Brands are among the most important intangible assets possessed by firms, contributing to greater value and market success. (Saaksjarvi & Samiee, 2011:169). A brand is an asset that does not have a physical existence and the value of which cannot be determined exactly unless it becomes the subject of a specific business transaction of sale and acquisition (Nandan, 2005:264 ). When talking about a brand it is very important to keep in mind the stakeholders. Stakeholders can be described as, publics who have a 'stake' and are in certain relationships with the business or have a common interest or value in the business (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:120). It is important to build a strong brand as a strong brand will attract consumers (who can also be described as stakeholders of the brand) and create loyalty to a specific firm or company, this is because a strong brand provides consumer trust (Kathman, 2002:25). Trust can be described as, "when one party has confidence in an exchange partners reliability or integrity" (Mortimer & Danbury, N.D:1) A brand is built by brand leaders, and it is the brand's leadership task to develop a strategy for the key brands that includes a motivating brand identity as well as a position that differentiates the brand and resonates with the consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:40). From the brand identity, consumers draw their own judgements about the brand, according to Keller (2009:146) and he states that the most important relationship within the brand building process, is between the consumer and the brand, based on the experienced brand image by consumers.

Therefore it can be deduced that a brand is an asset which a company creates for its stakeholders in order to offer increased understanding and recognition for the consumer and adds value to the brand in the mind of the consumer.

### 2.2.1 BRAND BUILDING PROCESS

According to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:262) the brand building process usually focuses on creating and enhancing the visibility of the brand as well as associations that the brand may have and finally a brand building process can be used to enhance customer relationships with the brand. Central to brand building is the visibility of the brand. Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:262) Visibility in the context of brand can be achieved by ensuring that the brand is firstly recognised by the consumer, meaning that they have heard of the particular brand, secondly it can be recalled by the consumer. This refers to which brands they know within that particular industry or sector, the brand leaders need to ensure that the brand is recalled by the consumer and finally the brand needs to hold top of mind status in

the consumers' mind. Meaning that the brand should be the first brand that the consumer thinks of when they think about that particular industry or sector.

By ensuring that these steps have been completed in the brand building process, the brand leaders are ensuring that the brand resonates with the consumer and thereby developing brand equity. Brand equity can be defined as, but not limited to, the subjective perceptions that consumers associate with brands (Sonnier & Ainslie, 2011:518). Brand equity can also include the resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumer. The consumer is an active participant in the creation of equity, we might even say that the consumer is the 'equity partner' in the brand. (Jevons, Blackshaw & Christodoulides, 2011:106).

There is a framework that was developed by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009:44) that ensures all of the above steps have been achieved when building a brand. This is the Brand Identity model. The model comprises of three central factors and surrounded by four core elements, each with sub-elements. These three central factors are: the brand essence, the core identity and the extended identity (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44).

### 2.2.2 BRAND STRATEGY

When developing a strategy for a brand, the brand leaders need to bear in mind that the brand strategy is the face of a business strategy, as stated by Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:33). The brand strategy is the heart of the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009:40) and a strong brand should have a rich, clear brand identity. The consumers and competitors are key when designing a brand strategy, as Carpenter (1989:1029) states; "buyer perceptions of brand positions and competitive reaction are important determinants of optimal competitive brand strategy". Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:40) concur with this statement and agree that these are important aspects when creating a brand strategy. They therefore suggest conducting a strategic brand analysis when designing a brand strategy. According to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:40) the strategic brand analysis helps brands understand their consumer and is made up of the customer, competitor and self-analysis. Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:40) state that this means that the brand needs to segment the brand consumers and understand each segment's wants and needs, they then need to analyse current and potential competitors of the brand and lastly decide whether the brand has sufficient resources and capabilities to build the brand.

### 2.2.3 BRAND EXPERIENCES

A strong brand should offer three benefits to consumers according to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:43). These three benefits are referred to as, functional, emotional and

self – expressive benefits. Functional benefits are the services or products that the company offers that serve a purpose. Emotional benefits relate to the ability of the brand to make the buyer or user of the brand feel something during the purchase process or user experience. Finally, the self-expressive benefits of a strong brand identity is the brand provides a vehicle by which a person can proclaim a particular self-image (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:43). These elements help the brand create a relationship with it's customer that may resemble a personal relationship. This can be said because individuals may define themselves in terms of the organisational membership as stated by Powell (2007:44) and may, in turn, feel as if they share a set of common morals and values with the organisation.

Brands are an important concept to understand for the sake of this research because the brand that is developed by brand leaders within a firm or company may not always be perceived in the way that the brand leaders would like or had designed the brand to be perceived by consumers. This is because a brand is made up of two important components: brand identity and brand image. With brand identity and brand image treated as intertwined concepts according to Konecnik & Go (2007:178) it is important that the two are aligned. In the context of building a brand, the communication between the company and its consumers can be examined in terms of brand identity and brand image (Nandan, 2005:264 ).

When building a brand, the brand leaders need to keep in mind that the corporate brand identity and image are considered fundamental in enhancing visibility and credibility of a business, (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:119). The two concepts need to be aligned and consistent when the brand is being created or maintained. It then is imperative to delineate the constructs of brand identity and brand image, for the purpose of comparing the two, so as to address the research questions.

#### 2.2.4 UNDERSTANDING THE CONSUMER

A strong brand needs to have a full and in-depth understanding of their target audiences which, according to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:41), can be gained through the process of a 'customer analysis'. This is going beyond what the consumers say, to gain understanding of what lies beneath what they do. So that they may create an identity that resonates with consumers and that consumers can gain a meaningful 'membership' and shared values with the organisation in order to build on the brand equity that the organisation desires. Brand equity can be defined as but not limited to, the subjective perceptions that consumers associate with brands (Sonnier & Ainslie, 2011:518). Brand equity can also include the resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumer. The consumer is an active participant in the creation of equity, we might even say that the consumer is the 'equity partner' in the brand. (Jevons, Blackshaw & Christodoulides, 2011:16). Therefore an identity plays a big

role in this formation of resonance because identity aims to build awareness, to foster recognition and to strive for distinctive offerings, companies are stressing activities of strategic brand building (Karjalainen, N.D:2).

## 2.3 BRAND IDENTITY

Brand identity is a concept that emanates from the organisation and is based on the perception and view that the brand is trying to create for consumers, it is the way that the brand wants to be perceived in the eyes of the consumer. Coleman, De Charnatony & Christodoulides (2011:1063), state that a brand identity is essentially how the brand should be perceived by the target audience. Therefore it can be said that brand identity is the identity that the company is hoping to portray to consumers and hope that the consumers will understand and unpack the identity in the intended way and with the intended purpose. Brand identity is multidimensional, and it is important for a brand to have a strong brand identity as this is what will create relevance for the brand in the market place, it clearly specifies what the brand aspires to stand for and has multiple roles (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179). Balmer (2001: 257) states that there are two types of brand identity, firstly organisational identity, which are the subcultures transcending an organisation and secondly visual identity which can be described as, the symbols and system of identification of an organisation. According to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:66) the roles of a strong brand identity are threefold. Firstly, it reduces the ambiguity of the brand due to the fact that it adds interpretation for the consumers, making the brand easier to define. Secondly, it assesses the capacity of the brand and its ability to resonate in the mind of the consumer. Finally, the elaboration of identity may lead the brand to produce on-target, effective brand building campaigns. Keller (2009:140) adds to these roles, stating that a strong brand also creates a greater amount of loyalty from consumers, additional brand extension opportunities, increased communication effectiveness and larger margins for the brand.

Brand identity can also be described as a form of organisation identity that is expressed by a set of commonly shared values, competances, origin, vision, communication style and behaviour (Wood, Christmann & Alexander, 2015:7). It is important for a brand to know who they are and what they stand for. The identity of the company or firm needs to portray the values and vision of the company and requires buy-in throughout the firm (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan & McDonald, 2013:76). Brand identity is built from within the company and is the way that the brand would like to be seen in the eyes of the consumer, the identity is tangible and intangible features that differentiate the business (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:122). Coleman, De Charnatony & Christodoulides (2011:1063), State that the identity

of a brand is the way that the brand would like to be perceived by their target audience. This means that the business needs to set itself apart from competitors that operate in the same or similar industry, these are values that are associated with the brands products and service offerings (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:121). It can therefore be stated that when the brand leaders formulate the brand identity, it is imperative that they keep the target audience in mind as these consumers will essentially make the final judgement about the brand. The brand strategists or leaders create the brand identity or corporate identity and ensure a set of brand associations that they need to create or maintain (Lin & Sung, 2014:57). These brand leaders need to understand that one of the most important strategic decisions that top management have to make is the desired positioning of the organisation and the place it holds in the consumers' minds. (Varadarajan et al, 2006:199)

When the brand leaders of organisations set out to create the brand identity, they need to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the target audiences that they are hoping to attract. It is important to understand these consumers because these are the consumers that are going to interpret the brand identity and form an opinion about the brand. A clear brand identity creates a value proposition for the consumer that is comprised of functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. Brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and its consumers by generating a value-proposition (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179).

A strong brand identity will be made up of the following components; brand vision, brand culture, brand positioning, brand personality, brand relationships and brand presentations (Nandan, 2005:266 ). Brand vision describes the core reason for the existence of the brand. This means that along with the brand culture, the two elements help create and represent a set of values of the brand according to Nandan (2005:266). Brand positioning can be described according to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:41) as the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the intended target audience. It is essentially the place of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Brand relationships are the relationships that have been built between the brand and the consumer. (Nandan, 2005:272). A strong brand identity has five capabilities that it can offer the organisation or firm, it offers relational support, coordinates network players, leverages brand architecture, adds value to the brand and it quantifies the intangible (Coleman et al, 2011:1064).

Some brand identities are based on human characteristics, this is called brand personification which can be described as, a human-like portrayal of a product or brand that is designed to associate the brand with certain human characteristics, intended to shape

consumers brand images of the organisation. (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014:72) This then links back to the discussion on the role of understanding the target audience when creating brand identities. For a brand to know how they are perceived, they need to first know who they are (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179)

## 2.4 BRAND IMAGE

Brand image is the result of brand identity. Brand image can be best described as, an external perspective in terms of the brand experience of consumers (Christmann et al, 2015:7). Le Roux & Du Plessis (2014:121) concur with this statement and describe it as the perceptions that stakeholders form about a brand, according to the attributes associated with it. Lastly it is seen as consumer perceptions, encompassing a set of beliefs that consumers have about the brand. (Nandan, 2005:264). Therefore it can be said that brand image is based entirely on the consumers' perceptions and experiences of the organisation or company based on the brand identity. Karjalainen (n.d:2) states that in order for a brand to have successful communication campaigns, it first needs to recognise any issues that are affecting brand perception and image. The brand image will either be positive based on the brand identity or it will be negative, and this will also be based on the brand identity. Consumers form perceptions of brands based on their experiences with the brand, people will use their own interpretations and respond differently to brands, this subjective evaluation results in the formation of brand image in the mind of the consumer (Nandan, 2005:265). Keller (2009:146) states that by consumers linking the right associations to brand image, stronger and more positive brand judgements or feelings will be created and therefore a better consumer- brand connection will be formed. It has been found that those that are not new to the brand will view the brand more positively and that a new 'tryers' value of the brand will increase with usage (Aaker, 1972:161). Former users are more likely to make a brand image association than those who have never tried the brand, this suggests that consumers are influenced by past usage (Romaniuk, Bogamolova & Riley, 2012:244).

### 2.4.1 INFLUENCING BRAND IMAGE

There are many aspects that may influence the consumers' perceptions of the brand and customers may value specific types of brand image (Sonnier & Ainslie, 2011:518) It is important for brand leaders to bear in mind that a brand's worth is intimately tied to consumer's reaction to products or services carrying a particular brand name (Saaksjarvi & Samiee, 2011:169). Aspects that may influence the consumer's view of a particular brand may vary but could be due to the assumptions, attitudes and beliefs of consumers (De

Chernatony, 2010:158). It is important that each brand has its own culture and personality which is portrayed in the brand identity that is created and maintained by brand managers and leaders. Image can sometimes be as a result of the consumers views on these factors within the brand.

Consumers tend to prefer brands that are transparent, honest and trustworthy (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:129). These elements will attract consumers and help with the resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumers therefore creating equity, which can be described as, loyalty, perceived quality, associations and awareness of the brand (Aaker, 1996:105). With each brand creating and maintaining its' own brand personality, the attractiveness of symbolic brands is dependent on the image and personality that those brands convey (Lau & Phau, 2007:424). These brands have human characteristics that are often associated with them and in-part influence consumer's perceptions and usage of the brand. Human characteristics may include, intelligence, like beliefs, desires, intentions, goals, plans, psychological states, powers and will. These affect the perceived credibility of the brand (Lin & Sung, 2014:55). As the consumers tend to attribute human characteristics to non-human objects, brand personification can be linked to anthropomorphism (ascribing human characteristics to non-human objects) and, therefore, are easily comprehended by consumers (Lin & Sung, 2014:55).

As earlier stated, the brand will carry its' own culture that will influence the perceptions of the consumers on the brand. These could be various cross- culture differences, values, customs and beliefs and each could potentially influence the consumer's response to marketing strategies. (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014:70). Better performance of a brand is more likely if the firm has a strong culture which is, appropriate for its environment, adaptive to environmental change, respects leadership at all levels and satisfies the needs of staff, customers and stakeholders (De Chernatony, 2010:164)

#### 2.4.2 ACHIEVING A POSITIVE BRAND IMAGE

There are four steps to driving a positive brand image according to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:87). The first step is to involve customers actively in the brand, secondly to appeal to all of their senses, thirdly to support the experience with brand related queues and finally to extend the experience through multiple points of contact (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:87). There are, however, three requirements that successful branding must aim to achieve in the eyes of the consumer: firstly it needs to differentiate itself from competition. By differentiating itself, a company sets itself apart from its competitors and resonates with the consumers

(Aaker & Joachimsthaler: 2009:89). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009:87) also state that two brands that share a common brand identity element can still be differentiated from each other by having different interpretations and associations. Secondly it must be held in high esteem by the consumer. This means that the brand needs to have an emotional benefit for the consumer, leaving a strong value proposition for the consumer (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009:89). Finally it needs to possess characteristics that the target market can relate to (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:121). A brand can ensure all of these by conducting the strategic brand analysis that has been discussed in section 2.2.2 and are based on the customer analysis, competitor analysis and the self- analysis. The use of these three analyses will ensure that the brand has an effective differentiation from competitors. (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009: 40-41)

To achieve a favourable corporate brand image, businesses should not only consider and acknowledge the elements of corporate brand identity that are perceived to contribute to corporate brand image formation, but analyse how they contribute to the corporate brand image formation (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:124). From understanding these contributions of identity on image and how they affect each other, the firm can then develop an integrated communications strategy that is aimed at the consumers and can influence their perceptions of the brand. Integrated marketing communications strategies (IMC) is a strategy for message repetition and create consistency, enhancing brand image (Anavarro-Bailon, 2012:198). The messaging across a variety of platforms must have a consistent brand identity, a unique voice, a single message and one goal to offer consistency (Anavarro-Bailon, 2012:189). Having a strong brand identity can inform, guide and nurture the companies' IMC strategy and therefore influence the consumers' views of the brand (Madhavaram et al, 2013:70).

#### 2.4.3 COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS AS BRAND IDENTITY TOOL

The messaging that the brand communicates is important when it comes to brand identity. The messaging must use a unique voice, a single message and one goal to offer consistency (Anavarro-Bailon, 2012:189). It is important that both the visual identity and communications platforms both work towards one unique identity and that they work together. There are two platforms that this paper would like to discuss with regards to brand communication. Firstly offline platforms such as traditional media and online platforms, also known as digital platforms according to Keller (2009:141) Traditional media 'offline' media can be described as TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and print, whereas online media or as (Keller, 2009:140) describes it as, the new media environment, is based online and

consumers have the choice of whether they want to see an advert or not. It is important that these platforms are used when building a brand and in most cases they are used together as marketers are now using more varied marketing communication options to build brand awareness (Keller, 2009:141) This meaning that all of the campaigns that the company create need to speak to the same voice and for the same reasons. Integrated campaigns may be relevant communication strategies to create or reinforce the positioning of the brand in the mind of the consumer by ensuring a consistent and cohesive brand image (Anavarró-Bailon, 2012:198). Communication strategies are important when creating brand identities because brand managers rely heavily on mass communications to try and influence the consumers and pass on a desired image for their brand (Jevan et al, 2011:). This means that a strong brand identity needs to be one that stands out and differentiates itself from competitors as a strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and makes it easier to gain recognition and recall. (Coleman et al, 2011:1065)

## 2. 5 BRAND IDENTITY – BRAND IMAGE LINK:

Corporate brand identity and image are considered fundamental in enhancing the visibility and credibility of a business (Le Roux & Du Plessis, 2014:119). Ensuring that there is congruency between brand identity (how a brand would like to be perceived in the mind of the consumer) and brand image (the consumers perception of the brand) enhances brand loyalty (Nandan, 2005:264). Based on the extensive literature previously discuss, it can be argued that there are three pertinent differences between brand identity and brand image:

- (1) Brand identity is company based whilst brand image is receiver and target audience centred.
- (2) Secondly, brand identity is created by managers whilst brand image is perceived by consumers, and finally,
- (3) Brand identity is packed by the company or organisation and brand image is unwrapped by the consumer (Nandan, 2005:268).

Therefore we see that there is a direct link between the two concepts, the two factors are diverse, but both are essential ingredients for a strong brand (Nandan, 2005:270).

The brand manager's and brand leader's task, therefore, is to ensure that they develop a strategy for the key brands that includes a motivating brand identity as well as a position that differentiates the brand and resonates with the consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:40) A disconnect between the brand identity and the implementation can sometimes occur because of an organisational problem (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:63) for example, a brand may develop a brand positioning that is not driven by the brand identity, the leaders

therefore need to ensure that there is buy in throughout the organisation. Therefore it is imperative that brand leaders ensure that they are portraying the brand identity that they had hoped to and that consumers are receiving the brand identity in the intended manner. Disconnect may cause distrust in the brand or may hinder consumer usage.

The brand identity and brand image link is one that needs to be intertwined and the two are connected aspect of the brand. In the case of SANparks it should ideally be the case that the brand has set up an identity that sets itself apart from it's competitors as well as created an identity that resonates with the consumers. By having a link between the brand image and brand identity, the brand will ensure that the consumers feel a sense of trust within the brand and that they will either begin engaging with the brand or continue their use of the brand.

## 2.6 THE FRAMEWORK:

The framework that was used for this research paper was the David A Aaker framework of brand identity, "The Brand Identity System" (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44) and an alteration thereof. As this model encompasses the three central elements of a brand, as well as the four pillars that a brand should be designed around and the most important elements that a brand needs to be built on. This means that by analysing these four pillars from the brands perspective as well as the consumers' perspective, the researcher was able to ascertain any differences or gaps in the identity and image of the brand. The model is made up of three central factors and surrounded by four core elements, each with sub-elements. The three central factors are key to the brand identity creation and ensure that the brand speaks with a single voice across integrated platforms. These three central factors are: the brand essence, the core identity and the extended identity. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44). The core identity reflects the strategy and values of the organisation and should differentiate the brand and resonate with consumers. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:40). The extended identity is a description of the brand and often contains elements such as the brand personality (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:45). The brand essence is a single thought that captures the soul of the brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:45). In the research, the researcher intends to make use of the core elements rather than the three central factors.

The Brand Identity Framework model is depicted below:

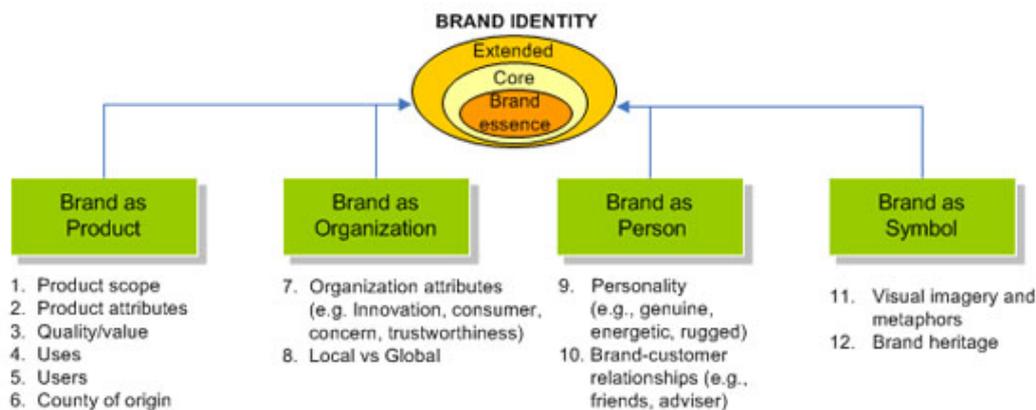


Table 2.1: Aaker's (2009:44) Brand Identity Framework

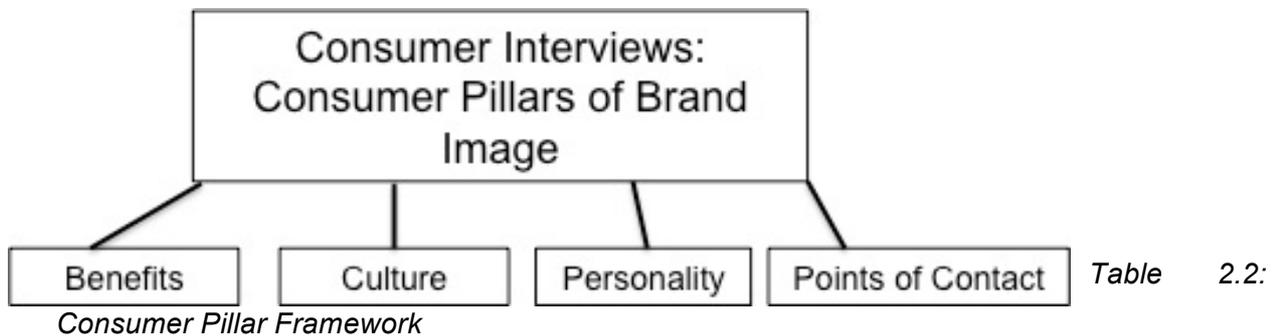
The core elements of the brand identity system are, Brand as product, Brand as organisation, brand as person and brand as symbol. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44). The brand as a product is broken up into 6 sub-categories, these categories are: product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users and country of origin. Brand as organisation is broken up into two sub-categories, these are, organisation attributes and local versus global. When we look at brand as a person has two sub-elements: These are brand personality and customer-brand relationships. Finally, brand as a symbol also has two sub- elements: these are namely, visual image and metaphors and brand heritage. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44).

The Aaker brand identity system is salient for three reasons, firstly, it is systematic and offers guidelines, secondly it is more comprehensive and in-depth when analysing a brand identity and lastly it is pragmatic and recognises that decision makers should be involved in formulating and implementing business strategy (Konecnik & Go, 2007:180). For the sake of this research the Aaker brand identity model was limiting to the research as the four pillars of the brand identity model, brand as person, brand as organisation, brand as product and brand as a symbol, all pertain to the building of the brand and therefore are more likely to be understood from an organisation's perspective leaving room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions by the consumers participating in the interviews. From the literature, four pillars were identified for analysing the brand image and the positive construction of a brand image in the mind of the consumer, from the consumer's perspective and feelings. These four pillars were identified in accordance to the Aaker model and the aspects of the 'consumer pillars' as they will now be referred to as each correlate to the four Aaker brand identity pillars. The four pillars that were identified to analyse the consumer's perspectives of the brand were, 1. Benefits (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:43) 2. Culture (Aguirre- Rodriguez, 2014:1) 3. Personality (Lau & Phau, 2007:422) and 4. Points of contact

(Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:87). These four pillars that have been designed for the sake of this research were based on the Aaker brand identity pillars, Brand as product was referred to as 'Benefits' for the consumers understanding, benefits describes the positive attributes that the consumers receive from the brand in terms of products and services and their judgements thereof. Brand as organisation was described as, 'Culture' for the consumers benefit, culture will describe the attributes of the organisation and why the consumer sees themselves within a 'membership' of this brand or why not. Brand as person was called 'Personality' in context for the consumer because this describes the relationship between the brand and consumer as well as the personal attributes of the brand. Brand as symbol was referred to as 'Points of contact' for the consumer as it refers to the visual symbols and communication channels that the brand uses.

For the sake of the research, the brand identity model was used when designing the interview for the SANparks employee and the 'Consumer Pillars' was used when designing the interviews for the consumers in order to make it easier for the consumers to understand the questions and provide input.

Depicted below is the framework that was designed for this study:



## 2.7 SANPARKS AND NATURE BASED ECOTOURISM BRANDING

SANparks, manages a system of national parks which represents the indigenous fauna, flora, landscapes and associated cultural heritage of the country (SANparks; N.D). SANparks was founded in 1926, and now has 20 national parks under it's management. (Sanparks; N.D). SANparks is the leading conservation organisation in South Africa and also the largest provider of ecotourism experiences in the country (De Witt, Van der Merwe & Saayman, 2011:1138). They have also established an anti-poaching initiative (SANparks; N.D). Poaching can be described as, any act that intentionally contravenes the laws and regulations established to protect renewable wildlife resources (Manel, Berthier & Luikart, 2002:650). These parks are well- established brands that generate millions of Rands per annum (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2011:1118). Nature- based products, such as game farms,

national parks and natural areas, play an important role in attracting tourists and guests to generate revenue and uplift local communities (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2011:1118). The primary focus of SANparks is the conservation of protected areas and their associated biodiversity for the pride and benefit of the nation, the people objectives of SANparks focus on both beneficiation from parks, cultural heritage and constituency building for conservation (Swemmer & Taljaard, 2011:4). One of the major contributors to the brand is the Kruger National Park which is one of the largest conservation areas in Africa (Eckhardt, van Wilgen & Biggs, 2000:108). There are three pillars that SANparks works on within a corporate environment and these pillars are, firstly, conservation, secondly, community and lastly, nature-based tourism or ecotourism (De witt et al, 2011:1139).

Ecotourism is a phrase that has been used to describe a genuine interest in nature that contributes to conservation respect and the conservation of local culture, creating a tourists awareness of conservation (De witt et al, 2011:1140). Ecotourism is the fastest growing market segment of the tourism industry according to Slabbert & Du Plessis (2011:1119). The concept of parks providing tangible benefits and hence being seen as 'valuable' to the majority of the nation has been difficult to define, measure and deliver on (Swemmer & Taljaard, 2011:1). However there is a continuous development of competitive destinations, this urges SANparks to keep up with developments in the market and identify aspects that can influence travel behaviour as tourist satisfaction is a very important factor to improve destination image (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2011:1119). There are five main factors that have been identified as factors that contribute to and influence travel behaviour. Firstly people enjoy learning when they visit these destinations, secondly, the consumers are looking for a time of relaxation, thirdly the choice may be based on interpersonal motivators. The fourth factor is that people choose destinations according to site attributes and finally, their travel behaviour could be based on the novelty of a destination. (Slabbert & Du Plessis, 2011:1120)

Although tourism destinations can be branded, considerable care should be taken in the transfer of branding principles to a tourism destination context (Konecnik & Go, 2007:177) this means that brand leaders and managers should take cultural and environmental factors into account when branding a tourism destination. The identity of a place can contribute to the creation of a distinctive competitive edge (Konecnik & Go, 2007:177).

## 2.8 CONCLUSION

From the literature that has been read, the paper can conclude that although brand identity and brand image are two separate entities, the two concepts should always be connected and evaluated in light of each other. The two concepts work together to build the brand and the resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumer. It can therefore be said that the brand image and brand identity of the SANparks brand should be based within the ecotourism sector and should show passion and support for conservation as that is what the brand stands for. The paper will conduct the interviews with participants in order to determine if there is a difference between the brand identity and brand image of the SANparks brand, and if there is, the paper would like to determine on which pillars of the Aaker brand identity model the difference between consumers views and the brands identity stands.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Methodology is an important tool when conducting research, as Du Plooy et al (2014:147) state; "Data collection is one of the most important aspects of any research study. Gunter (n.d:209) concurs with this statement as he states that the quality of research is crucially effected by the effectiveness of data processing.

### 3.2 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION:

The nature of any research problem should drive the methodology adopted (Levy, n.d:371). When designing the research process there are two types of research designs that the researcher took into account, these are namely, quantitative and qualitative design approaches. According to Du Plooy et al (2014:148) Quantitative data collection methods are often used to test hypotheses derived from theories. Strydom & Bezuidenhout (2014:174) state that, qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with the phenomena, dealing with experiences and meanings of phenomena. Quantitative research differs significantly from the way in which data is collected in qualitative research. Each data-collecting method has it's advantages and drawbacks (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:135). One of the aims of quantitative research design is to generalise results to a broader population (Du Plooy-Celliers & Cronje, 2014:148)

The research that needed to be conducted for this research paper was of an exploratory nature therefore the researcher made use of a qualitative research orientation to gather information around the feelings and experiences of the sample. The research methodology that was considered was namely, qualitative research design. Qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with the phenomena (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:173). This method of research is used when determining feelings and emotions of participants in the study because according to Strydom & Bezuidenhout (2014:173) it is difficult – if not impossible – to measure and quantify these experiences and feelings. By using qualitative data collection, the researcher obtains richness and depth of data (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:173).

A qualitative research design was used. This is because the researcher had set out to ascertain the feelings, emotions and experiences of the consumers towards the brand. Qualitative research is interested in the depth of human experience, including all the personal and subjective peculiarities that are characteristic of individual experiences and meanings associated with a particular phenomenon (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:174). This then assisted in determining the consumers' thoughts, feelings and emotions with regards to the SANparks brand, as well as how SANparks' members create the brand experience. A qualitative study was therefore appropriate as the researcher wanted to gain insights into the thoughts and feelings of the participants, and these are elements that cannot be meaningfully quantified.

The qualitative research method allowed the researcher a chance to understand the depth of the human experience within the SANparks brand and draw conclusions from the consumers' opinions. Qualitative research offers more detailed data according to Strydom & Bezuidenhout (2014:173) and the researcher then made a subjective interpretive analysis from the data that had been collected. This data collection method therefore allowed the researcher to gain the desired insights into the brand through evaluation, control and measurement and the exploratory research that has been conducted.

### 3.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLE:

The population, as cited by Davis (2014:133), consists of people or things possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested. Welman et al (2005:52) concurs with the statement, saying that the population is the study object and consists of individuals, groups, organisations, human products or the conditions to which they are exposed. The population is what will be referred to as participants in this research, and those

that the study can gain access to within the population are referred to as the sample (Davis, 2014:132). For the purpose of this study the population was the entire membership of the online forum of the SANparks brand. The forum is an online based platform where the consumers converse about the SANparks brand and the parks that they run. It is a platform that was created by SANparks for the consumers. On this platform the consumers offer suggestions to the brand and praise the brand for positive elements. The researcher selected the consumer sample group from the online forum on a volunteer basis. The population that this research targeted is the members of the SANparks online forum that have been members on the forum for more than two years, which means that the consumers would have developed an opinion about and experience with the brand. The total population of the SANparks online forum is 28546 (SANparks, n.d) this is the target population.

It is uneconomical to involve all the members of a population in a research project, consequently, we have to rely on data obtained from a sample of the population (Welman et al, 2005:55). Non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population (Pascoe, 2014:137). The sample that was used for the sake of this study were three members of the SANparks online forum, as well as the General Manager of the SANparks strategic tourism services. In the case of this research paper, it was members of the online forum that volunteered to take part in the research. There was three volunteers selected from the forums to take part in a face-to-face, in-depth interview with the researcher. Meaning that the sample was not randomly selected from a list and was selected on a volunteer basis. These four participants took part in the study as the forum members were long standing members of the online forum and have formed their own opinions about the SANparks brand and they have been following the brand long enough to be able to talk about the brand allowing the researcher to have gathered their insights and opinions about the brand. The sample selected from the SANparks employee base, was selected on a purposive sampling basis, meaning that the researcher had purposefully chosen the individual to take part in the study (Pascoe, 2014:142), because the General Manager could offer the research the desired insights into the brand, and has a greater understanding of the brand identity that the brand is hoping to portray to consumers. This means that the general manager was able to offer a deeper understanding and representation of the brand.

The SANparks employee was interviewed because the employee could provide the researcher with the desired information about the brand identity of the SANparks brand that the researcher needed to obtain. To select the sample for the study, the researcher needed

to decide between the two types of sampling: probability sampling and non- probability sampling (Welman et al, 2005:56).

Probability sampling refers to a sample type where the researcher can determine the probability that any element or member will be included in the sample (Welman et al, 2005:56). Pascoe (2014:136) is in agreeance with this, stating that probability sampling refers to whether or not each unit in the population has an equal opportunity to be part of the sample. This method is generally used in quantitative studies. The researcher made use of non-probability sampling for the sake of this research when selecting the forum members for the research, as it was difficult to gain access to the entire population (Pascoe, 2014:137) of the SANpark online forum. The project was based on a qualitative research method and non-probability methods are most often used in qualitative methods (Pascoe, 2014:137). More specifically, a random volunteer sampling method was utilised, which according to Pascoe (2014:144) refers to “a sample put together from people who volunteer to participate in the research”. The reason for volunteer sampling was so that the people that have opinions and would like to speak about their feelings and emotions were be able to voice their opinions, views and grieviances about the brand. This allowed the researcher to gain insights and determine the brand image of SANparks through the eyes of the consumer.

When selecting the SANparks representitave to take part in the study, Non- probability sampling was utilised as it was nearly impossible to reach the entire employee base of the SANparks brand. Within the non-probability model of sampling, purposive sampling (Pascoe, 2014:137) was used because the researcher purposefully chose a member of staff, the General Manager, who would understand what identity the SANparks brand is hoping to portray to consumers, as well what the brand stands for. Purposive sampling, according to Pascoe (2014:142) refers to the researcher purposefully choosing elements that they wish to include in their sample.

### 3.4 RESEARCH METHOD:

The data collection for this research project took place in the form of obtrusive, field research. This is where the researcher conducts research on the phenomena in their natural environment (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:175). For the sake of this research the data was collected in the form of semi- structured interviews with the participants. Interviews are a qualitative data collection method that allowed the researcher to pose questions to the participants with the aim of learning more about their views, opinions and beliefs about a specific phenomenon (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:174). Welman et al (2005:166) agree with this statement as they state that these interviews allow the interviewer to probe with a

view to clearing up vague responses and ask for elaboration, therefore gaining as much in depth information on the matter as possible. Levy (N.D:380) states that “in-depth interviews provide a far more effective tool and create an environment where participants would likely speak more open and frankly”. The researcher had chosen to conduct semi structured in-depth interviews as a form of research because the interviews would allow the researcher to gain the required insights from consumers. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow guidelines and gather the required information, but it also allowed the participants to voice their feelings and opinions about the brand and on the specific matter at hand. Therefore the method was chosen so that it created an opportunity to probe and gather the information that was required from the participants allowing the researcher to gather comprehensive information that assisted the researcher in answering the research questions as there was a certain amount of flexibility that is allowed in the discussion.

Although semi structured interviews allowed for comprehensive data gathering, there were a few disadvantages to the method. Firstly it could have time consuming, and, secondly, it may have been resource intensive, (Welman et al, 2005:168) therefore it was the obligation of the researcher to ensure that these elements were controlled and that the interviews were no longer than 45 minutes per participant. When conducting the in-depth interviews, the researcher needed to ensure that the following components were taken into consideration, according to the recommendations by Welman et al (2005:168) Firstly the questions moved from a broad to a narrow focus; secondly, the researcher did not rely purely on pre-planned questions; thirdly the researcher formed clear and simple questions and guarded against asking leading questions; penultimately, the researcher ensured that they did not ask double barrelled questions; and finally, the researcher needed to ensure that they were asking truly open ended questions (Welman et al, 2005:168).

### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS:

Data analysis in this research took place in the form of qualitative data analysis and interpretation, where data was transformed into findings (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:228). When we analyse qualitative data, whether collected through interviews, field notes or observations, we refer to analysing the text (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:228). Welman et al (2005:211) concurs with this view and states that qualitative data analysis converting notes into write ups which should be intelligible products that can be read, edited for accuracy, commented on and analysed. In this research paper, the Huberman and Miles Data analysis method has been applied, which is breaking the information up into ‘units of analysis’ or codes. (Baxter & Jack, 2008:545). The themes that the researcher collected

information on for this research were based on the four elements of the Aaker identity model, namely, brand as product, brand as organisation, brand as person and brand as a symbol (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44) as well as the four pillars created in the 'Consumer pillars' framework that the consumer interviews were based on. The information gathered was arranged around these four pillars and were subsequently coded.

Thematic Coding can be described as the time when the researcher has compiled and processed the information, it is the challenge of reducing the information to manageable and understandable texts (Welman et al, 2005:213). Bezuidenhout & Cronje (2014:236) also use the term 'fracturing' to describe the coding process, "fracturing data means the researcher breaks the text down into codes and concepts and rearrange and orders them into meaningful categories. It is grouping related coding units together to form categories of codes (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:237). There are three elements that the researcher took into consideration when forming the codes of this research. The first element was that the codes were all exhaustive, meaning that there were enough categories to accommodate all of the data. Secondly the codes were mutually exclusive meaning that each theme and category was distinct with no overlap in meaning. Lastly, the codes were specific and relevant (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:239).

### 3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The term reliability describes whether the same results would be produced if the research was to be repeated by a different researcher at a different time using the same method or instrument. (Koonin, 2014:257), therefore, reliability is about the credibility of your research. Welman et al (2005:145) concurs with this, stating that, "Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research, and relates to the credibility of the findings. In this research, the results that were collected were not of a reliable nature. This is due to the fact that the study had been designed specifically to be applied to the SANparks brand within the tourism and hospitality industry and may not work exactly the same for other brands. However, a pre-test was conducted to ensure reliability of the information and to test the questions asked by the researcher and ensure that they moved from a broad to a narrow focus; secondly, that the researcher did not rely purely on pre-planned questions; that the researcher formed clear and simple questions and guarded against asking leading questions; penultimately, that double barrelled questions were not asked; and finally, to ensure that the researcher was asking truly open ended questions. These are all elements that needed to be controlled when conducting the in-depth interviews according to Welman et al (2005:168). This therefore enhanced the reliability of the research. The sample for the pilot study was a

member of the online forum for over two years and someone who has a passion for the SANparks brand and has formed an opinion and judgement of the brand over time through their experience with the brand. Two interview questions were changed after the pilot study was conducted (Please see Appendix B), this is because questions 4 was believed to be a double-barreled question as culture and nature are two sperate entities. It was also believed that question 5 was a leading question as participants should be able to describe the personality of the brand without being prompted by the interviewer. Please see appendix A and B for the pre-test.

Validity is all about determining whether the research measured what it was supposed to measure (Koonin, 2014:252). Again, Welman et al (2005:142) agree with this statement as they claim that validity demonstrates or measures what the researcher thinks or claims it does. Therefore in the case of this research project, validity is present, this is because the study has made use of a valid framework, the Aaker model of brand identity and has also made use of past literature by reviewing the findings in the past research that was studied. The validity is measured by means of internal validity (whether the research design will answer the research questions) as stated by Koonin (2014:256). The researcher was convinced that the study would answer the research questions that were set out in the beginning of the study, based on the SANparks brand image and brand identity. In the case of this research study, construct validity was present. "Construct validity is when we measure something with an instrument we use to measure that which is supposed to measure" (Welman et al, 2005:142). The researcher believes that construct validity was present in the study as the study was based on the Aaker framework of brand identity and all questions and findings were based on the model, a pilot study was also conducted with a sample representative participant (see Appendix A) to ensure the validity of the findings.

### 3.6.1 TRUSTWORTHINESS:

Trustworthiness is a very important aspect when conducting a research study. Trustworthiness refers to four aspects that the study should incorporate. These aspects are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to the accuracy to which the researcher interpreted the data that was provided by the participants. (Koonin, 2014:258). Credibility which is also described as internal validity by Koonin (2014:258) was ensured in this study in three ways, firstly it was ensured that the interviews contained no leading questions for the participants, secondly it was ensured that the interview contained no double-barrelled questions and that the questions were clear to the participants and finally credibility was ensured by the researcher transcribing the interviews accurately and

thoroughly. Transferability refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results (Koonin, 2014:258). In this study was hard to ensure transferability as the study was conducted on a contextual and cross sectional basis. It was based on a specific brand and with a specific sample population, also due to the fact that the qualitative study was based on interviews conducted, it is hard to ensure peoples' feelings and emotions will be replicated in future studies. Reliability was ensured in the study due to the pilot study that has been conducted with a long standing member of the SANparks forum to ensure the questions were easily understood by the participant, that there were no leading questions and that there were no double – barrelled questions. Finally, confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the researcher. (Koonin, 2014:259). The study ensured confirmability as it made use of volunteer participants for the interviews that were conducted and due to the fact that the participants were answering on a voluntary basis, this ensured that the data collected for the study was of an objective nature. This research study, the researcher believes is of a trustworthy nature.

### 3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

There are a few ethical implications that the researcher took into account when designing the research project. Ethics are important to consider when conducting research as they set a standard for the attitudes and behaviour in the study (Louw, 2014:262). Ethics come into play at three stages of the project, namely, when participants are recruited, during the measurement procedure and in the release of results obtained (Welman et al, 2005:181).

There are certain levels that ethics needed to be considered, these were, at a participant level and at the researcher level (Louw, 2014:263). The researcher in this research project ensured that all of the participants that took part in the study all gave informed consent. This means that participants knew that they were taking part in a research study and they knew what was required of them for the duration of the study (Louw, 2014:264). The researcher also ensured that physical and psychological comfort of participants was ensured throughout the study. This means that situations where participants felt uncomfortable answering questions were avoided and personal information was kept anonymous or confidential. The researcher also ensured that the participants time was not wasted (Louw, 2014:264). It was also ensured that no incentives or bonuses were offered to participants that may have potentially skewed the research findings or information provided. (Louw, 2014:265). The researcher ensured that all participants that wished to have confidentiality (even though participants identities can be matched to the study, the information will only be known by the

researcher and won't be made available to anybody else) were given the confidentiality that they were promised. (Louw, 2014:267). From the researcher's side, ethics were ensured by the researcher in the fact that the findings of the research were not in any way skewed by the researcher and that the results of the study were not distorted in any way, shape or form. The researcher also ensured that there was no bias involved on the researcher's part in any way during the study.

### 3.8 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Limitations in the research study can be described as, constraints or limits that in your research study that are out of your control, such as time, financial resources, access to information and so on (Enslin, 2014:275).

(1) In this research study, time was a limitation. The researcher believes that by having more time to conduct the research, more participants may have been interviewed and therefore more insights and information could have been gathered from the study.

(2) As this research study is qualitative, the sample was not representative of the SANparks forum as a whole,

(3) There was a shortage of participants to take part in the study and the participant number should be changed to ten participants that were consumers and 5 participants that were SANparks employees.

(4) The research also stands the chance of encountering sample errors in the fact that some of the participants may not answer a question because they do not know what to say, and some may not want to answer the question.

(5) As discussed in the methodology section of this paper, the Aaker identity model proved limiting to the study as the model only offered insights from the brands perspective as it is a brand building tool, and the model had to be altered by the researcher to allow the consumers to be able to understand the questions around the four pillars of the model and offer their feedback.

(6) The researcher needed to design a separate frame work that was used to design the consumer questions for the interviews because the Aaker framework proved limiting for the study and the researcher believed that the consumers may have found it hard to understand questions based on the Aaker identity model. This is because they are not employees of the SANparks brand and they may not have understood the terminology used in the Aaker identity framework when referring to brands, thus the 'Consumer Pillars framework was designed by the researcher to enable the consumers to fully understand the questions.

Delimitations in the research study are definite choices a researcher makes when he or she decides on a scope of particular research (Enslin, 2014:276). As the study was of a

qualitative and contextual nature, the validity of the study was hard to prove for the sake of this research paper. Meaning that, because the study was set on a specific brand and of cross-sectional design, it was hard to ensure validity. These were the parameters that were set by the researcher. In this research study, the delimitations were set so that the researcher studied and interviewed participants solely based on the brand image and the brand identity of the SANparks brand and nothing more.

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

This research study was set out to determine the intended brand identity of the SANparks brand and the experienced brand image of the brand. It has done so by making use of past literature, the Aaker brand identity model, an adaption thereof and semi-structured interviews with a SANparks employee as well as three consumers within the SANparks brand. The study has done this by means of semi structured interviews as an obtrusive study with the abovementioned sample population. The sample was chosen in a probability and non-probability method.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter the researcher will be discussing the outcomes of the research conducted by means of coding. Coding can be described as the time when the researcher has compiled and processed the information, it is the challenge of reducing the information to manageable and understandable texts (Welman et al, 2005:213). When developing the codes, the researcher ensured that there were three elements that were adhered to. The first is that the codes were exhaustive, the second that the codes were mutually exclusive and finally that the codes were distinct (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014:239). The coding was based on the SANparks brand by means of the interviews that took place with three SANparks consumers that are members of the online forums, as well as a SANparks employee within the brands top management. The interviews conducted with these participants was done in a way that enabled the researcher to determine what the brand identity of the SANparks brand is, as well as discovering what the brand image is in the mind of the consumers. This research is hoping to decipher whether there is a gap between the brand image and brand identity of the SANparks brand.

The research questions were based around four primary pillars. The pillars for the employee interview were based around the pillars of Aakers brand identity framework (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44) as well as the consumer pillars of brand image as identified by the

researcher. The data will be arranged into three categories. The categories are namely, Brand Challenges, Brand Image and Brand identity.

#### 4.1 BRAND CHALLENGES

Brand challenges can be described as aspects that may influence the consumer’s view of a particular brand may vary but could be due to the assumptions, attitudes and beliefs of consumers (De Chernatony, 2010:158), it can also be described as the subjective perceptions that consumers associate with brands (Sonnier & Ainslie, 2011:518). In this study Brand Challenges can be describes as negative attributes that consumers may associate with the brand.

The Brand Challenges that the brand faces are presented in table below:

Brand Challenges			
Theme (Code):	Definition:	Frequency:	Verbatim Quote:
Poaching	The illegal killing of animals in game parks	1 – Manager 1 – Consumer	“In South Africa we have such amazing animals that are under threat of poachers, for example the rhinos”
Connecting with an older target audience an not appealing to a younger audience	Describes the generation group that is associated with the brand and who the brand aims itself at	1 – Manager 1 – Consumer	“Our biggest challenge is to influence the minds of the young people”
Kruger National Park as a stronger brand than SANparks	A national park that is a stronger brand than the SANparks brand	1 – Manager 2 – Consumer	“It is certainly a much stronger brand than the SANparks brand”

*Table 4.1: Brand Challenges*

Within this category there are three themes that will be unpacked. These are namely, the themes of Poaching, Connecting with an older target audience an not appealing to a younger audience and the Kruger National Park as a stronger brand than the SANparks brand.

##### 4.1.1 POACHING

Poaching can be described as, any act that intentionally contravenes the laws and regulations established to protect renewable wildlife resources (Manel, Berthier & Luikart,

2002:650). For the sake of the research poaching can be described as the illegal killing of animals in game parks. When conducting the interviews, it was found that two of the four participants mentioned the aspect of poaching as a challenge of the SANparks brand, it can therefore be said that due to fifty percent of the participants having poaching as a concern, that it presents itself as a big challenge for the brand to overcome. One of these participants was recorded as saying, “challenges that we have with security at the moment there’s a small element of society that say for example, rhino poaching and that, see it as a negative”. The fact that this was an issue that was brought up with by the participants and was an element that was of concern, shows that this is a big challenge and something that needs to be aggressively addressed by the brand to improve the brand in the eyes of the consumers as the brand boasts that it is an institution of conservation.

#### 4.1.2 CONNECTING WITH AN OLDER TARGET AUDIENCE AND NOT APPEALING TO A YOUNGER AUDIENCE

The second theme that will be addressed in the category of Brand challenges is the theme of the Target Audience. Target Audience is used to establish a relationship between the brand and its consumers by generating a value-proposition (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179). For the sake of this research paper and in the instance of SANparks as a brand, Target Audience can be described as the older generation group that is associated with the brand and who the brand aims itself at. In the interviews, two participants brought up the fact that the brand is aimed primarily at the older generation and that these are the consumers that visit the parks more frequently. The manager stated in his interview that their “big challenge is to cater for the young because that is where the future lies”, the consumer participant was captured saying that, “the older generations are using social media and SANparks cottoned on to that idea and started following their audience to that sort of medium”. It is a concern for the researcher that the consumer believed that the brand became active on social media specifically to talk to an older target audience and not necessarily to engage with a younger audience as well, the participant believed the brand is only interested in one audience. As 50% of the participants stated that the brand is aimed at an older audience, this is something that the brand leaders need to address. They need to address this because they are hoping to aim themselves at a younger audience but they have not managed to get the fact that they would like to engage and involve a younger audience across to their prospective audience. With the disconnect in their targetting, the brand is hindering their future sustainability as the younger generation will not know about the brand and the brand will not resonate with the youth. This means that when it comes to booking to go away, SANparks will not be a brand that the future generations will be booking with, and ultimately this may

cause the demise of the brand. This is because the older generations that they had been targetting will no longer be able to go away and the number of visitors to the parks will drop. They need to target the younger generations to ensure future sustainability of the brand.

#### 4.1.3 KRUGER NATIONAL PARK AS A STRONGER BRAND THAN SANPARKS

The third theme that will be discussed is the theme of the Kruger National Park as a stronger brand than the SANparks brand. The Kruger National Park can be described as one of the largest conservation areas in Africa, (Eckhardt, van Wilgen & Biggs, 2000:108). For the sake of the research and this study, the Kruger National Park will be described as a national park that is the driver brand for the SANparks brand. In the interviews that were conducted, three of the participants mentioned the SANparks brand over any park within the National Park portfolio. This shows that although the brand has a portfolio that consists of 20 national parks under it's management (Sanparks; N.D), the majority of the participants only mentioned the Kruger Park and none of the other parks within the brand. This proves a challenge for the brand because the other brands in the portfolio are not recieveing the recognition from the consumers that they should be. By the other parks not gaining the exposure and recognition that they should be getting, the brand is not capitalising on all of their opportunities to generate a larger income and ultimately grow the brand and increase conservation areas in the country. By accepting that the brand of the Kruger National Park is a stronger brand than the SANparks brand, as according to the SANparks employee, "If you go to an international show and you put the SANparks name up there above your stand, most internationals wouldn't know it, some do yes, we certainly have a lot of support overseas which are more people that are regular repeat visitors, but the general public wouldn't know. If you put the name Kruger Park up, they are there immediately because they know where it is and they know they want to go there so it is certainly a much stronger brand than the SANparks brand". SANparks is damaging its' own reputation because people are recognising the Kruger brand over the SANparks brand, it should be the other way around. The leaders of the brand need to ensure that all of the brands gain exposure.

#### 4.1.4 INTERPRETATION

From this we can conclude that the SANparks brand has to address the three challenges that have been identified in the study. The challenge of poaching must be addressed because they need to align themselves with what they stand for, which is a leading conservation organisation in South Africa and also the largest provider of ecotourism experiences in the country (De Witt, Van der Merwe & Saayman, 2011:1138). As the brand

prides themselves on the element of conservation, the identity of the brand, which they provide, they need to ensure that all measures possible are taken to ensure the safety of the animals in their parks. With poaching being such a big concern, with it growing in the parks, it is taking away from the brand image, the brand's credibility and the trust of the consumers in the brand is diminishing. They need to ensure this by reducing or eliminating poaching in their national parks and protect the animal species.

They also need to address the challenge that was identified of targeting a younger audience. They need to address this aspect because the youth will be the brand custodians that continue to help the brand grow and flourish in the future they will be the people that ensure the longevity of the brand. By ensuring that they connect with a younger target audience and build the resonance of the brand in the mind of the future generations, the brand is ensuring that they have sustainability for the future and that they can continue attracting visitors to their parks and facilities. So the brand therefore needs to continue targeting older generations as these are currently the most prevalent visitors, but it also needs to begin targeting the youth to ensure that the brand is ensuring that there will be visitors to the parks in the future.

Finally by building their brand portfolio and gaining a greater recognition of the other parks offered within the brand, the SANparks brand will ensure that they increase the number of visitors to their parks, build a greater brand resonance and generate a bigger revenue that can be used for conservation purposes. The key point that this presents is the fact that in this case, the brand needs to improve on or eliminate these challenges that they face so that the brand image can become more positive and align the brand image and brand identity. By aligning the two, the brand will resonate with consumers and be viewed positively by its' visitors and potential visitors.

## 4.2 BRAND IMAGE

Brand Image is Brand image can be best described as, an external perspective in terms of the brand experience of consumers (Christmann et al, 2015:7), Le Roux & Du Plessis (2014:121) concur with this statement and describe it as the perceptions that stakeholders form about a brand, according to the attributes associated with it. Lastly it is seen as consumer perceptions, encompassing a set of beliefs that consumers have about the brand. In this study Brand Image can be described as the experience and opinion of the SANparks brand according to its' consumers.

The Brand Image aspects that were discussed with the participants is presented in the table below:

Brand Image			
Theme (Code):	Definition:	Frequency:	Verbatim Quote:
Element of Conservation	Can be described as the preserving and protection of animal species	4	"It comes back to conservation, they always promote the message of looking after the planet you live on"
The Affordability of the brands facilities	Refers to the ability of the consumers to afford the brand offering	1 – Manager 2 – Consumer	"Accommodation is fairly priced"
Brand Culture of 'Holiday'	Describes the recreational element that is most commonly associated with the brand	1 – Manager 2 – Consumer	"The holiday destination they would think of"
Accommodation offered by the brand in its' parks	This is the sleeping facilities and stop over areas that are offered in the parks	4	"The rest camps have always been a strong pull for the national parks"

*Table 4.2: Brand Image*

There are four sub- themes that form part of this category, these themes are namely, conservation, affordability, holiday and accomodation. These are all aspects that will be unpacked to discover the brand image of the SANparks brand. This is based on the opinions and exeriences of the brand by the interview participants.

#### 4.2.1 ELEMENT OF CONSERVATION

The first sub-theme which is an important aspect of the brand image is the aspect of conservation in the parks. Conservation can be described as the preserving and protection of animal species. Conservation plays a major role in the brand image of SANparks, this can be said because all of the participants that took part in the study, mentioned the fact that for them, conservation is something that they appreciate about the brand, and the SANparks employee stated that conservation would be a positive aspect that many of the consumers of the brand would associate with the brand. The employee said when referring to their market of consumers, "we are trying to get them to be custodians of conservation". One of the participants said the following with regards to conservation, "although it is a holiday um, it is also conservation, and I go there to enjoy the wildlife as I have an interest in conservation." The fact that all of the participants had mentioned the aspect of conservation within the brand is very positive. This shows that the brand identity is very strong in that area and it's a

very positive attribute for the brand to have. The researcher feels that this is a great element that they can use to leverage the SANparks brand and help build its' strength in other areas. The fact that the brand has conservation as a strong part of its' identity and that the consumers have viewed the brand and experienced the brand as an institution of conservation is a very positive aspect for the brand. This shows the researcher that the brand image and brand identity are completely aligned when it comes to this large aspect of the brand that consumers are concerned with.

#### 4.2.2 THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE BRANDS FACILITIES

The second theme that will be discussed within the category of brand image is the element of affordability of the brand. Affordability refers, in the case of this study and with regards to the SANparks brand, to the ability of the consumers to afford the brand offerings. This can be any aspect of the SANparks brand, from the conservation fees that are paid at the park gates, to the accommodation and day visitor facilities, and the price of consumables and curios that are offered in the shops. Three of the four participants believed that the brand offered affordable rates and that the brand represented value for money. The three that felt it represented an affordable product, was two of the consumers and the manager. One of the consumers, when asked what a positive attribute is that he associates with the brand, the consumer replied, "definitely value for money."

From the fact that the majority of participants believed that the brand was affordable and offered value for money, it can be concluded that the brands' image with regards to its' pricing is a positive one and that the consumers and the brand employees opinions are aligned in that regard. The fact that the brand is a National entity and not in the private sector may influence their pricing decisions. This is because as a National offering, the brand need to ensure that it can cater for the average South African citizen, which in the case of the SANparks brand, this has been delivered. Therefore it can be said that the SANparks brand image and identity have been aligned in the aspect of prices and tariffs. This means that the brand is delivering prices that the consumers would expect, and the consumers are happy with the pricing.

#### 4.2.3 BRAND CULTURE OF 'HOLIDAY'

The element of the holiday as the product culture that the brand offers and should offer three benefits to consumers according to Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2009:43). These three benefits are referred to as, functional, emotional and self – expressive benefits. Functional benefits

are the services or products that the company offers that serve a purpose. Emotional benefits relate to the ability of the brand to make the buyer or user of the brand feel something during the purchase process or user experience. Finally, the self-expressive benefits of a strong brand identity is the brand provides a vehicle by which a person can proclaim a particular self-image (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:43). In the case of this study and with regards to the SANparks brand, Holiday can be described as, the recreational element that is most commonly associated with the brand. In the study, most of the participants mentioned the element of holiday within the brand. Two of the participants mentioned the fact that they associate the brand with holiday and the employee also mentioned that the brand has a strong element of holiday. When asked about the culture of the brand, one of the consumers replied, "I definitely think family, the whole feeling of culture, family braaing and family holidays." The manager also mentioned holidays and stated that, "its an association of pleasure, because people go on holidays to parks, they go and enjoy." As the majority of the participants had mentioned the fact that the park represented elements of holiday, it can be said that the brand image in this matter is a positive one and that the brand image that the brand created for the consumers is associated with leisure and is seen as a 'Nice thing.' This therefore also shows the researcher that the brand has a strong element that they need to portray to possible future consumers in order to build the reputation of the brand.

The fact that the brand has the element of leisure and holiday associated in its brand identity as stated by the employee, and the consumers of the brand associate it with the same cultural attributes, shows the researcher that in the case of the SANparks brand, the brand image and brand identity within the culture of the brand have been completely aligned and that the brand has a positive association in the mind of the consumer.

#### 4.2.4 ACCOMMODATION OFFERED BY THE BRAND IN ITS' PARKS

The final theme that will be discussed under the Brand Image category is the element of accommodation, which is also referred to in the case of SANparks as rest camps. Accommodation for the sake of the research and pertaining to the SANparks brand can be described as, the sleeping facilities and stop over areas that are offered in the parks. When conducting research on the brand, every participant brought up the subject of the accommodation facilities that the brand has to offer. All three of the consumers had brought the subject up, stating that, when they think about positives that the brand has to offer, "open space, wilderness and the rest camps come to mind." The SANparks employee also stated that "when they use our products, they have a certain expectation, in most cases the

feedback is certainly that people are satisfied.” It can therefore be said that the consumers have a positive view on the brand when it comes to the accommodation facilities that are offered and that these facilities are something that resonates with the consumer. The manager of the brand is also aware that this is something that the consumers appreciate. This shows the researcher that the brand has optimised the brand image for itself by ensuring that the facilities offered are up to standard and received positively.

#### 4.2.5. INTERPRETATION

Through analysing the SANparks brand in terms of its reputation with consumers according to what they are hoping to achieve, it can be stated that the employee of the SANparks brand who is the brand custodian, is in agreement with the consumers for all four of the major sub-themes that were presented in the category. Therefore it can be said that the brand has managed to obtain a positive brand image with their consumers and that majority of the consumers of the brand are satisfied with the brand and have had similar experiences when dealing with the brand, therefore reitifying the fact that the brand has a strong brand image leading off from its’ brand identity. By ensuring that the brand image, or the experience of the consumers with the brand stays a positive one, the brand custodians are ensuring that the brand continues to resonate with loyal consumers of the brand and that it will begin to resonate with first time consumers of the brand, therefore building the brand reputation and increasing the amount of repeat visitors to the National Parks that are governed by SANparks. By building and maintaining this strong brand image, and subsequently increasing the number of repeat visitors, the brand is ensuring that there is enough revenue generated to be able to continue with their conservation efforts and upkeep of the parks and facilities.

#### 4.3 BRAND IDENTITY

Brand identity is a concept that emanates from the organisation and is based on the perception and view that the brand is trying to create for consumers, it is the way that the brand wants to be perceived in the eyes of the consumer. Coleman, De Charnatony & Christodoulides (2011:1063). Brand identity is multidimensional, and it is important for a brand to have a strong brand identity as this is what will create relevance for the brand in the market place, it clearly specifies what the brand aspires to stand for and has multiple roles (Konecnik & Go, 2007:179). In this research paper and pertaining to the SANparks brand, brand identity will refer to the way that the SANparks brand would like to be seen by its’ consumers and the mediums they use to deliver these messages.

The brand identity elements that were discovered in the research have been presented in the table below:

Brand Identity			
Theme (Code):	Definition:	Frequency:	Verbatim Quote:
The SANparks Kudu Logo	Refers to the visual symbol that represents the brand	1 – Consumer 1 - Manager	“These memories all have to do with National Parks and the Kudu Logo that has a strong pull”
The SANparks Website as a communication means	Is the online platform that the brand uses to showcase its’ offerings as well as communicate with its’ consumers	4	“A nice responsive, popular website”
The view of SANparks as a Male Brand	This is the gender that is associated with the brand	1- Manager 2- Consumer	“ A large male, in the 40 -50 year age group”

*Table 4.3: Brand Identity*

In the category of Brand Identity, there are four sub-theme elements that will be unpacked. These are identity elements that are ways in which the brand intends to be seen by their consumer and the identity that the brand portrays. The four themes that form this category are the following, the Kudu logo that is representative of the brand, the Website of the brand, and finally, the aspect of brand being viewed as a male by consumers.

#### 4.3.1 THE SANPARKS KUDU LOGO

The first theme that will be discussed in this category is the Kudu Logo as the symbol of the brand. A strong brand identity needs to be one that stands out and differentiates itself from competitors as a strong symbol can provide cohesion and structure to an identity and makes it easier to gain recognition and recall. (Coleman et al, 2011:1065) . In the case of the SANparks brand the Kudu logo can be described as the visual symbol that represents the brand. In the research that was conducted only two of the participants mentioned the Kudu Logo. The two that mentioned the Kudu logo was firstly one of the consumer participants who stated, that “the Kudu Logo has a strong pull,” and secondly the manager of the brand who said that “the logo with the Kudu head is the part that has remained in the logo”. The fact that only half of the participants have mentioned the logo is a matter of concern for the researcher as essentially, the logo is what is going to create recognition and recall for the brand in the mind of the consumer, and in the case of the SANparks brand, they may be

losing out on prospective consumers because they are not harnessing the full potential of having a strong symbol for their brand and that half of the the consumers are not associating the symbol with the brand. This means that the identity of the brand leaves a lot be desired and that the brand leaders need to ensure that the logo is more associated with the brand to increase the identity and awareness of the brand.

#### 4.3.2 THE SANPARKS WEBSITE AS A COMMUNICATION MEANS

The second theme that will be discussed is the theme of the website that the brand owns. The website can be described as online platforms, also known as digital platforms according to Keller (2009:141). The website in the case of the SANparks brand can be described as the online platform that the brand uses to showcase its' offerings as well as communicate with its' consumers. The website that SANparks makes use of includes an optimisation for consumers to be able to make accommodation bookings, communicate with other SANparks consumers and chat to the rangers that form part of the brands staff. When discussing the brand, all four of the participants bought up the element of the website within the brand. They had all made use of the website and all mentioned aspects of the website that they utilise. All of participants mentioned the element of the online forums that they use to converse with other consumers and SANparks employees. One consumer said that "the online forum is not really marketing or anything like that, but you can definitely engage with SANparks on there." The manager of the brand also mentioned the website and showed appreciation for its' offerings, stating that, "whether it is for the webcam, online bookings or whether it is to tell your story or put your photographs on.. online is the way to go." For the researcher, this is a very positive aspect the fact that all of the participants have mentioned the website and the fact that they use it for one activity or another. The manager has shown that they, as a brand recognise the importance of having a strong online platform in the age of the online consumer. By the brand knowing where they can communicate with the consumer and harnessing the full potential of these platforms, it allows the brands identity and offerings to be communicated to the majority of the consumers of the brand, therefore ensuring uniformity within the brand identity and ultimately ensuring that the brand has a strong identity with the consumer. It can therefore be said that in the case of their website, the brand has a very strong brand identity and these elements will help build the brand image based on the consumer experience of SANparks brand online.

#### 4.3.3 THE VIEW OF SANPARKS AS A MALE BRAND

The final theme that will be discussed within the brand identity category is the element of the male brand. This can be termed the personality of the brand that is being portrayed to consumers. With each brand creating and maintaining its' own brand personality, the attractiveness of symbolic brands is dependent on the image and personality that those brands convey (Lau & Phau, 2007:424). In the case of the SANparks brand, the brand personality is seen as a male. The male brand can be described as the gender that is associated with the brand. When asked to describe the SANparks brand as a person, the majority of the participants stated that they see the brand as a male. Three out of the four participants made mention to the fact that the brand is a middle-aged male. The three that stated this were, two consumers and the employee of the brand. The consumer stated, when asked what the brand would be like as a person, that it would probably be a male. The manager also believed that the brand would be seen as a male and said that "he would be a sort of middle-aged person." This shows the researcher that the brand identity balance between the consumers views and what they have derived from the communication as well as the employees view of the identity of the brand are identical, therefore it can be stated that the brand identity of the SANparks brand and the way that it would like to be perceived and received by the consumer in the instance of personality, is a very strong identity.

#### 4.3.4 INTERPRETATION

It can be deduced from this category therefore that although the brands main identity strength lies online with their website, the brand has also built a strong personality that has been identified by the consumers of the brand. The downfall of the brand identity is however, the fact that the symbol that represents the brand, the Kudu logo, is not largely recognised by consumers of the brand and the logo is not top of mind for the consumers and it is not resonating with them. This is a concern for the researcher because the logo should be the symbol that sums up the brand as a whole and should be the primary element that people would use to recognise and associate with the brand. This is a large downfall in the identity of the brand because they may be losing out on the resonance of the brand in the mind of the consumer, which means that the brand is losing top of mind status. It must ensure that the symbol of the brand has two duties and these are namely, visual image and metaphors and brand heritage. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2009:44). The SANparks brand is losing out on the building the visual metaphors as well as the heritage of the brand simply because the consumers have not been associating these elements with the brand when they are presented with the logo. It can therefore be said that to harness the full potential of the brand

and to create a strong brand identity, the brand leaders need to ensure that the logo that represents the brand becomes highly associated with the brand in the mind of the consumer.

#### 4.4 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher will now answer the research questions based on the research conducted and information gathered and analysed within the context of the SANparks brand.

4.4.1 What is the intended corporate identity of SANparks according to SANparks employees?

The intended corporate identity of the brand as according to the SANparks employee is one that the SANparks brand has been built according to their promise of conservation. The employee was adamant that the brand stood for and identified itself in conservation.. This means that having the identity of an organisation that is a custodian for conservation, the SANparks brand needs to ensure that they maintain this identity as it offers strength for the brand. Conservation is not the only identity of the brand.

The logo that represents the brand, is according to the employee, widely recognised amongst consumers and a strong symbol that is associated with the brand and its' identity. This was believed to strongly represent the brand and stand for something that all of the consumers would recognise.

The brand identity of SANparks has seemed to have taken the backseat as the brand of the Kruger National Park has stolen the limelight. It is not beneficial for the brand to hide in the shadow of one of its' sub-brands. SANparks needs to ensure that the consumers recognise the SANparks brand first, ahead of any of the sub-brands, especially for potential consumers and the younger generations. This is hindering the SANparks brand awareness.

This brings the researcher to the next element of identity, which is the fact that the SANparks brand identity has been aimed at the older generation of consumers in the past and it is now hindering the brands potential sustainability as they are finding it difficult to identify with the younger generations. The brand leaders need to address this with a sense of urgency in order to ensure the longevity of the SANparks brand. The employee believes that the brand has been aimed at the 'grey' generation but that they now need to target a younger audience but have not achieved this.

A positive element of the SANparks brand identity is the fact that the brand has taken initiative and developed an online platform that offers a number of solutions. This is beneficial because the brand has recognised that in the modern era, most activities and conversations about brands and with brands, take place online. It is a positive for the brand to have the identity that it is up to date and understands the consumers of today.

#### 4.4.2 What is the perceived corporate image of SANparks amongst SANparks consumers?

The perceived corporate image of the SANparks brand, which is the way in which the brand has been perceived and experienced by the consumers of the brand are firstly, very similar to that of the identity which is a very positive aspect to have the image and identity aligned. The first element of the image is that the consumers view the brand as a custodian of conservation. This is an image that resonates with many of the consumers and this is an aspect that the consumers were proud to associate themselves with. The visitors to the parks that fall under the management of SANparks have a great attraction to the brand because of their love and passion for conservation. It is very positive for the brand to have their identity and the experience of the brand by consumers aligned. This makes sure that the brand gains strength and that the brand resonates with consumers.

The consumers of the brand did not make mention to the Kudo logo that the employee believed so strongly represented the brand. The fact that the brand believes that this is such a strong symbol and that it stands for all they are and is widely recognised amongst consumers, is a negative aspect because unfortunately the consumers are not recognising this element as part of the brand identity and they are not identifying with it and it is not resonating with them. The leaders of the brand need to ensure that they build the strength of the symbol within their target audience.

The consumers concur with the negative element of the brand identity as having the Kruger Park brand over shadow the SANparks brand. They have also experienced the Kruger National Park as a stronger brand than the SANparks brand. The consumers believe that the brand of SANparks has been over shadowed by the Kruger brand and that Kruger is the driver brand. This is a negative aspect for the SANparks brand and they need to make sure that they get the SANparks brand as front of mind for the consumer and not the Kruger National Park brand.

The consumers of the brand had also experienced the brand as targeting the older generation, this is an aspect that could hinder the longevity of the brand and needs to be

changed on the intended identity of the brand to be aimed at a younger audience, so that this can filter through to the image of the brand and be recognised by consumers as targeting a younger market thus ensuring the sustainability of the brand. For the younger generation this brand image is negative as they do not feel as if they are being targeted.

Similarly to the intended brand identity, the online portal is of importance to the consumers of the brand and they all made mention to the fact that they make use of the SANparks website, whether it was for booking accommodation, or just to talk to fellow consumers and SANparks employees on the forum. It is therefore a strength for the SANparks brand that they had thought ahead and ensured that they have a strong and responsive website that offers these solutions for the consumers.

The next element of the image of the brand as experienced by its' consumers is the fact that the majority of the consumers believe that SANparks offers an affordable getaway and that when they visit the parks and make use of the brand, they are presented with value for money. This is a very positive image for the brand as this is the element that will essentially create the desired brand loyalty and repeat purchases with its' consumers. This is essentially the element of leisure and holiday. The majority of the consumers mentioned the fact that the brand represented for them the aspect of a peaceful holiday and an element of leisure. This is a positive image for the brand to have because ultimately the brand represents tourism in South Africa and therefore needs to be known and have had consumers that have experienced the brand positively with regards to the leisure and 'holiday' aspect that they offer and are associated with.

#### 4.4.3 Is there a discrepancy in the corporate identity and corporate image of the SANparks brand?

The researcher believes that there is only a major discrepancy between the corporate identity and corporate image of the SANparks brand in the fact that the brand is targeting the wrong consumers. The brand does not target the younger consumers in its' communications campaigns and even the young consumers believe that the brand is targeting itself at an older audience. This needs to be addressed and the brand needs to aim itself at the target market that will help with the sustainability of the brand and those that have not been exposed to the brand.

The fact the fact that the Kudu logo is not easily identified as belonging to the SANparks brand is also an issue. Although the logo forms part of the intended brand identity for the

brand, many of the consumers did not associate the symbol as a visual representation for the brand meaning that it is not resonating with the consumers and the image of this symbol is not positive, the brand needs to ensure that they generate the correct image with the brand identity. This means that the intended identity of the brand has not become part of the experienced brand image for consumers. The brand leaders need to ensure that the logo becomes recognised amongst its' consumers and prospective consumers.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

After having conducted an analysis based on the brand image and brand identity of the SANparks brand, the researcher believes that the brand image and brand identity link between SANparks and its' consumers is very strong. The link seems to be one that is positive and many of the consumers had similar answers about the brand to those that were presented by the SANparks employee. However, the issue of the brand targeting the wrong consumers, needs to be addressed by the leaders, as the brand needs to ensure that it gains awareness with an audience that will create longevity for the SANparks brand. This shows the researcher that the two are aligned and that the brand is therefore strong. The fact that the consumers interviewed felt so positively in most instances about the brand showed the researcher that although there were some discrepancies between the brand image and brand identity, the majority of the factors mentioned helped build the brand and have helped the brand resonate with its' consumers.

##### 4.5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

As mentioned, there was two factors that created a discrepancy between the brand image and brand identity of the SANparks brand. The researcher believes that there are ways in which these elements can be dealt with.

Firstly, the brand needs to ensure that they begin to target a younger market in order to ensure their longevity and sustainability. They can achieve this by designing a marketing campaign that is directed solely at the youth. This means that the campaign that they design should be based in areas that they are hoping to find the younger target market, for example, online, in malls, in cities and in schools and universities around South Africa. It needs to talk to the target market using jargon and language that not only relates to the SANparks brand and what they stand for, but it also needs to communicate with a young audience. This campaign should ultimately help the younger audience understand everything that the SANparks brand stands for and increase the annual number of young

visitors to the national parks. The researcher suggests that the brand designs and runs the campaign with the help of a marketing specialist. As the brand has a strong online platform that it can leverage its' communication off of that will be aimed at the younger consumers who are prominent users online.

Secondly, the brand needs to ensure that the Kudu logo that represents the brand, is associated with the brand in the minds of all consumers, present and prospective. The brand can achieve this by using the logo as the driving tool in all of its' communication with consumers. This means that the logo should be placed on all items of communication between the brand and its' consumers, young and old, to ensure that the consumers associate the logo with the brand and start building a link between the brand and the symbol that represents it.

By implementing measures to ensure that they are targeting the correct markets and that the logo that represents the brand is in fact associated with the brand, SANparks will essentially strengthen their brand which will lead to new visitors to the parks as well as return visitors and repeat purchases. Therefore growing the SANparks brand and gaining a greater recognition with its' consumers.

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## APPENDIX A:

Interview 1: SANparks online forum member (Pilot Study) 18 September 2015

1. When you think of the SANparks brand, what are positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?

Participant: *Conservation would be a major attribute for me because of my love for animals but I feel like it also gives city dwellers an opportunity to experience the bush. I also think that the current visibility of army and poacher control units in their parks gives off a positive feeling for visitors because visitors can see that the parks really do care about the conservation of our animals.*

Interviewer: Why are these positive to you?

Participant: *It is the only national park entity in South Africa that looks after Wildlife, there are other parks such as the Pielansberg but SANparks always ensures the right prices and ensures that we all get the opportunity to view our natural areas. I also think that it allows for peaceful getaways from city a life which is something that I cherish as myself and my spouse often use their parks as an escape and offers relaxation, I enjoy knowing that the army and armed forces are looking after the wildlife*

2. When you think of the SANparks brand, what are negative attributes that you would associate with the brand?

Participant: *They do not control their staff sufficiently and there's a lack of maintenance in the parks, also I believe that Camps are growing too rapidly and becoming too 'city like' with the shopping that's available and the restaurants etc*

Interviewer: Please elaborate on the negative attributes?

Participant: *The staff cars speed in the parks and interrupt the game viewing and staff villages cause noise in the park camps and disturb the visitors, not only that but the tents in the camps need maintaining, they are falling apart. Camps are also becoming too large and*

*becoming metropolises within the parks and the outside villages are encroaching on parks borders.*

3. What do you appreciate the most about the SANparks brand?

Participant: *It's an emotion that I get when I go to the park*

Interviewer: please go more in-depth about this feeling?

Participant: *It's a warm emotion of tranquility, peace, game protection and relaxation, if I see the parks or visit the parks I get a warm fuzzy feeling*

4. How would you describe the culture and Nature of the SANParks Brand?

Participant: *It is a coming together of people who care, it is for sustainability of our animals which brings in tourism and expands nature experiences, the brand is the custodian of our heritage*

5. Think of SANparks as a person, please describe what you think SANparks would be like as a person? Please describe the personality and appearance?

Participant: *A big grandfather*

Interviewer: please explain why you believe the brand is a grandfather?

Participant: *he would be a cuddly big round with a big grey beard and he would be wearing Khaki coloured clothes. He would be jovial and protective and the kind of person you want to be around. He would be a caring and loving person with a stern voice and always has a jovial nature, although he is sometimes sad because of the poaching*

6. Please name ways that you know of in which SANparks communicates with its' consumers?

Participant: *They stand at shopping centres often with information sheets and tariffs and that kind of thing, they are visible on TV programmes such as 50\50 as well as being highly active on social media and the SANparks forum*

Interviewer: Which do you think is the most effective form of communication and what makes you think so?

Participant: *I think shopping centres because not everybody is on social media, so shopping centres give the brand the desired visibility, but it also offers the public a chance to get to know them and who they are and what they stand for.*

Interviewer: What symbols do you expect to witness when SANparks communicates with consumers?

Participant: *Thatch houses and the smell of them are always something I link to SANparks, but mainly the logo that contains the head of a Kudu on it, I have experienced years of it when visiting the park and witnessing their communications.*

## APPENDIX B:

Interview: SANparks online forum members edited questions for study:

1. When you think of the SANparks brand, what are positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?
2. When you think of the SANparks brand, what are negative attributes that you would associate with the brand?
3. What do you appreciate the most about the SANparks brand?
4. How would you describe the culture of the SANParks Brand?
5. Think of SANparks as a person, now can you please describe what you think SANparks would be like as a person as in-depth as possible?
6. Please name ways that you know of in which SANparks communicates with its' consumers?

## APPENDIX C: SANparks Employee Final Interview

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what is a positive attribute you associate with the brand?

*SANparks Employee:* Ja, I would say conservation

*Interviewer:* Can you elaborate on that a bit, what about conservation?

*SANparks Employee:* People see it as an institution of preserving, managing wildlife and I think wildlife in South Africa is a big thing, and SANparks is associated with that attribute of South Africa being a country of wildlife and the wildlife experience. People enjoy the national parks experience

*Interviewer:* What does the brand do to communicate this characteristic?

*SANparks Employee:* Um, ja the brand, the way it communicated, the physical appearance of the brand, the logo is quite well known, it has changed over the years. It still has an attachment to it, that people associate with an effective institution of conservation, um it's come over decades, people still associate that very much the association of conservation, the association of pleasure because people go on holidays to parks they go and enjoy because it is a nice thing in life, it's not a bad thing like SARS or something like that which is a different brand that is also effective but it is not a nice thing. We have the fortunate situation that we are involved in where people have leisure and they go and have a bit of time in a park and in modern day society, that has become more and more valuable than it ever was because it is so much more precious and people value their association with SANparks and with the parks.

*Interviewer:* In your mind, are there any negative attributes you think consumers may associate with the brand?

*SANparks Employee:* I don't think so, I mean obviously there are concerns with consumers on issues in parks um.

*Interviewer:* What do you think those major concerns are?

*SANparks Employee: Well we are obviously a state institution so people often associate us with being government, um, which we are we are a state institution. So if something goes wrong they say ja, it's like government you know, which is often very unfair but it does happen. And then obviously challenges we have with security at the moment there's a small element of society that for example the rhino poaching and that, see it as a negative, but we are still custodians that in most people eye are seen to have solved the problems*

*Interviewer: So leading on from that, how do you combat these negative associations?*

*SANparks Employee: Well obviously you have got to have an effective media, a sort of awareness program, which we do, we are quite active in terms of going out to tell people what happens, try and be open, try and be transparent. You can never hide things from the public because they will find out anyways. So we try and be proactive and spread the news through media released and media programs and things like that.*

*Interviewer: How would you rate SANparks' connection with their consumers? 1-10 scale with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest?*

*SANparks Employee: I would say quite high, um, I would probably say between 7 and 8.*

*Interviewer: And how does the brand achieve this connection with their consumers?*

*SANparks Employee: well it's through delivering what people expect you know people, when they interact with us, when they use our products they have a certain expectation in most cases the feedback we have is certainly that people are satisfied with what they get so, they then associate it with a reliable partner that normally delivers or exceeds on what they promise and what they offer.*

*Interviewer: If the brand of SANparks could be described as a person, what would this person be to you, what would the physical appearance and characteristics be?*

*SANparks Employee: Ja, he would be a sort of middle aged person that is humble um yet assertive um, got to be a leader and out there because there is a lot of negativity that one could dwell on so you have got to be an optimist, um, that is the sort of attributes that I can think of.*

*Interviewer: And his physical appearance?*

*SANparks Employee: Sort of middle aged*

*Interviewer: What would he be wearing?*

*SANparks Employee: haha, that is creative, um, it is obviously difficult but why I say middle-aged is because our market is generally grey. But certainly not exclusively but our profile is middle-aged and higher but our big challenge is we have to cater to the young because that is where the future lies so it has got to be a person that appeals to young people also while looking after the market that brings in the money and our biggest challenge is to influence the minds of the young people especially in South Africa which was so divided and so on where, a lot of people just don't know national parks, you have got to get people to like national parks even if they don't ever have the ability to travel to them, they have to feel that this is something special that we have in this country that we must look after for the next generations.*

*Interviewer: Please describe the most current communication campaign that SANparks is/was taking part in?*

*SANparks Employee: We recently had the SANparks week, which is uh, an annual thing that we do where we allow people free access into the parks, day visitors and we target the market that doesn't traditionally visit the parks trying to get them to be custodians of conservation so that was in September we did quite a big thing about it and it has become more and more successful. To provide access free of charge means a lot to people so people come in busses as in most cases transport is a problem for people. So it was quite a big thing that was linked to tourism month, so it was a recent thing that was quite successful.*

*Interviewer: What are other ways in which the brand communicates?*

*SANparks Employee: Look we are quite big on the web, we are privileged to have a nice and responsive popular website, whether it is for the webcam or online bookings, um or whether it is to tell your story or put your photographs on, I don't know the numbers but we have a huge amount of hits on our website so I think it has become huge and more than a third of our bookings these days are done online. Without any interaction with any office or telephone or email. Online is the way to go*

*Interviewer: If there was one visual symbol that you would want consumers to associate with the brand, which symbol would this be and why?*

*SANparks Employee: um, the logo with the kudu head is sort of the part that has remained in the logo, over the years. Um, that would be the one I think the Kudu head says it, I mean even the symbols that are used on the road signs for game reserves they have this Kudu on the signage and people often say, but that is SANparks, but it is not. But it is an interesting one I mean if you look at the brand of SANparks has got a strong brand but it was actually born, the brand was born in Kruger Park in the first parks which is where I mean if you think of that brand, one of the sub brands so to speak of SANparks is the Kruger Park and me that collects all this junk from years ago shows how well entrenched that name has become. If you go to any corner of the globe or remote areas and you ask people Kruger Park they probably know where it is .*

*Interviewer: So Would you say that one of the strongest symbols of SANparks is the Kruger Park?*

*SANparks Employee: Absolutley, no doubt about it. If you go to an international show and you put the SANparks name up there above your stand, most internationals wouldn't know it, some do yes, we certainly have a lot of support overseas which are more people that are regular repeat visitors, but the general public wouldn't know. If you put the name Kruger Park up, they are there immediately because they know where it is and they know they want to go there so it is certainly a much stronger brand than the SANparks brand*

*Interviewer: so would you say that the SANparks brand was built off of the backbone of the Kruger Park?*

*SANparks Employee: I would say that the Kruger Park had a strong influence on it and after Kruger other parks came on, places like Addo elephant park, that are also strong brands, people know Addo, even a new thing like table mountain it is one of our brands, one of our parks, more recently added to the SANparks portfolio. Table mountain itself is a huge brand that is already known, it is the same as Cape Town, a new place like Kalahari which joined in I think 1931. It is all the little brands that came together to form the SANparks brand and over the years SANparks grew. But those are the core pillars of the brand if I can use it because Kruger is certainly our flagship park. But even the lesser ones have all contributed to what is now the SANparks brand.*

*Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and for allowing me to ask you these questions*

## APPENDIX D: Consumer 1 – Online forum member Interview

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 1:* Definitely value for money

*Interviewer:* Can you elaborate on that a bit?

*Consumer 1:* Just in terms of the accommodation that I use especially when I go to the Kruger it represents the best value for money I think, than any other holiday destination in South Africa.

*Interviewer:* What basis do you think it represents value for money?

*Consumer 1:* well the quality versus price, so obviously it is not five star accommodation, but the accommodation that you get for what you pay represents value for me

*Interviewer:* Are there any other positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 1:* Obviously the conservation. I am a big supporter of conservation in South Africa

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are negative attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 1:* I would say the lack of skills maybe at a management level, you can definitely see over the past, I'd say, ten years the upkeep at SANparks is not what is used to be

*Interviewer:* What is that in terms of? What do you feel is not being kept?

*Consumer 1:* I think the accommodation facilities and day visitors areas in the parks

*Interviewer:* How do you think they could combat that?

*Consumer 1:* I think just coming in with a more hands on approach, you know, if something is broken, to go and fix it not to just let it lie for so long

*Interviewer:* How would you best describe an existing South African culture that the SANParks Brand would be best suited in?

*Consumer 1:* It is definitely a more sort of westernized holiday, I think you could say it is best fitted in an Afrikaans culture, because the facilities that are available and whatever speak to an Afrikaans background

*Interviewer:* So do you think that these are the people that they are targeting?

*Consumer 1:* I think they are targeting South Africans as a whole, but I think in terms of the way that Afrikaans people have been brought up these would be holiday destination that they would think of, I think before other cultures would

*Interviewer:* Think of SANparks as a person, how would you describe the person that you thought of?

*Consumer 1:* I think it would be someone with a lot of knowledge, someone who is peaceful and willing to sit down and share with you, they would be calm and collected. I think it would be a large male in the 40-50 year age group and he would be wearing khaki shorts and a two-tone shirt.

*Interviewer:* Judging from your personal experience - where have you seen SANParks messaging/branding?

*Consumer 1:* I am a user on the online forum, it is not really marketing or anything like that but you can definitely engage with SANparks on there

*Interviewer:* Are they quite responsive on the forum?

*Consumer 1:* Sometimes it takes a few days it depends what the answer is, I think they refer to the other SANparks staff so that they can come with a clear and reasonable answer, they don't just answer straight away. The forum managers really go and go out of their way to get the right answer.

*Interviewer:* What would you recommend SANParks do to get greater recognition?

*Consumer 1: for me it is tough because I would prefer it if the Kruger national park could stay as quiet as possible so I would say nothing and in my mind if you are going to market more, more people are going to go, and the tranquility and peacefulness of the parks are what I enjoy, this will be lost if there are more visitors*

*Interviewer: And in terms of getting more visitors it would obviously increase the revenue and allow them to expand conservation efforts and build more parks etc, how would that make you feel?*

*Consumer 1: I think maybe promoting the other national parks that already exist because I don't think national parks such as Makala or Kalahari National park or Addo Elephant Park are as busy as Kruger. So maybe instead of pushing Kruger as premier national park, maybe trying to just create more awareness for the other national parks that are already there*

## APPENDIX E: Consumer 2 – Online forum member Interview

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 2:* I suppose holiday, and the Kruger National Park because that is the main park that I have gone to. I have gone to a few of the other parks, and I think there is always a feeling of open space, wildness, the rest camps comes to mind.

*Interviewer:* ok, so what about that is positive for you?

*Consumer 2:* I suppose that I have been going since I was 5 so I suppose it's the smells of a place um, obviously it has changed over the years but that smell of thatch the quietness of the rest camps, has always been a strong pull for the national parks and that thatch smell, that leather smell and the smell of their SANparks soaps that are given. So those all make you think of National Parks, and also the china plates that they used to serve in the restaurants, which of course now have gone due to Mugg and Bean being used in the camps. These all have memories to do with National Parks and the Kudu logo that has a strong pull.

*Interviewer:* Can you emphasize a bit on the Kudu logo?

*Consumer 2:* The Kudu logo, um with it I associate the Kruger Park, flags always flying, so the flag poles, all of the tiles used to have it on but I think they have also changed that which used to be in the bathrooms and all of that as well. I think there was a very strong identification with the logo and their stickers that they used to put on the cars as well as you used as your permit basically.

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are negative attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 2:* um, negative... You know I am so pro SANparks that it is hard to think of a negative. Um, I suppose it has changed over the years and the entrance gates, I don't think the entrance gates are as branded as they could be. You don't get that strong feeling, it feels more like a drive in now and you used to get the feeling, it felt VERY much like you were entering a National Park, it had a strong parks board presence which so not so prominent anymore.

*Interviewer: So what would you change to get that back?*

*Consumer 2: Have the flags, have your sign boards and a bit of that old world feel that you are going into some exciting place. I think it is a little bit too sophisticated, I know it needs to be sophisticated but its too sophisticated.*

*Interviewer: How would you best describe an existing South African culture that the SANParks Brand would be best suited in?*

*Consumer 2: I definitely think family the whole feeling of culture family, braaing, family holidays, strongly that way ja.*

*Interviewer: Think of SANparks as a person, how would you describe the person that you thought of?*

*Consumer 2: Um, I suppose it would be a very strong person, very open, um, very together, very tidy, very neat. I think well presented um, a lot of mystery to them and curiosity you want to find out more.*

*Interviewer: For you would this person be male or female?*

*Consumer 2: Probably male*

*Interviewer: and age group?*

*Consumer 2: probably in their 40's*

*Interviewer: what would this person be wearing?*

*Consumer 2: Funnly enough a uniform, the khaki uniform, strong associations I think with that.*

*Interviewer: Judging from your personal experience - where have you seen SANParks messaging/branding?*

*Consumer 2: I get the Wild magazine, that has got a lot of that in it, uh I do, obviously I go onto their website a LOT! For reservations and also just to catch up and see what's happening, news things and um, I always take the newspaper that they have when I am in the Kruger. Um, and of course I pass their offices on my way to work everyday so I see that a lot.*

*Interviewer: What was the message being portrayed?*

*Consumer 2: I suppose holidays*

*Interviewer: If I had to mention conservation to you is that something that means something to you?*

*Consumer 2: for me it is an issue ja, because although it is a holiday um, it is also conservation, and I go there to enjoy the wildlife as I have an interest in conservation.*

*Interviewer: What would you recommend SANParks do to get greater recognition?*

*Consumer 2: I think they are well established and known um, and I don't like the crowding so I would be hesitant, I would be someone to say don't do too much because you don't want the parks to be too crowded, um but I think they are well placed and I think everyone knows of them. The general feeling is that it is well run and the accommodation is fairly priced and it is a good place to go and find escape from the city life and daily stresses so I don't know what they would add other than giving more land to make more parks (laughs).*

## APPENDIX F: Consumer 3 – Online forum member Interview

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are positive attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 3:* Um I think just from being part of the forum, um I think I have seen a lot of passion and it comes down to people who have been visiting the SANparks for years and they have built a group of people that are passionate about sort of building the tourism around it and also just going to enjoy the wildlife and making sure that everything is running properly and building the community around that that helps them understand and get to know the people that are in that group. That helps them build a bigger community around what they are passionate about.

*Interviewer:* for you, what is your biggest passion about SANparks?

*Consumer 3:* um, It would probably be for me, the conservation that they get involved in, in South Africa we have such amazing animals that are under threat of poachers, for example the rhinos and the poaching, and seeing all the efforts and the passion behind all of that to stop that kind of thing, I think that is quite amazing.

*Interviewer:* When you think of the SANparks brand, what are negative attributes that you would associate with the brand?

*Consumer 3:* I think it probably comes down to not letting outside entities buy into the concept of SANparks and sort of running SANparks for example Kruger National Park where they don't allow third party people to come in and sort of run a camp, it is all sort of like, run by SANparks. I think bringing other people in that have more knowledge into an entrepreneurial style of running things could probably add benefits such as running camps differently and that sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* how would you run the camps differently if you had the chance?

*Consumer 3:* I think it comes down to delivering what people want, I think a lot of the time they overcomplicated by giving people things that are firstly over priced that are mainly aimed at tourists and a lot of the time it comes down to them forgetting who their main target is, and that is the South African people. South African people are not going to be buying

*what they are putting out there because it is too expensive and secondly it needs to appeal to them*

*Interviewer:* How would you best describe an existing South African culture that the SANparks Brand would be best suited in?

*Consumer 3:* I think, from a culture perspective, um I think the sort of culture of bringing people together around a common interest, so people who go to any of the SANparks are not going to go there if they don't enjoy nature and wildlife and that sort of being disconnected from the real world. You are not going to find people who have to be on email 24/7 going to parks and enjoying it. I also think the culture of shutting off and enjoying the people you are around. I think a lot of South Africans enjoy that and go and do that sort of thing.

*Interviewer:* Think of SANparks as a person, how would you describe the person that you thought of?

*Consumer 3:* SANparks as a person, um, I think when you say person I think of personality attributes that come to mind are the whole conservation thing again I think that is their sort of their main focus for me it would be someone who is passionate and kind and caring and puts in and goes the extra mile to ensure that everything around them is happy before they are look at themselves if I could say that is a personality trait. Also, ja, I think it comes down to someone who puts other people first

*Interviewer:* What would this person look like, what is their gender and age?

*Consumer 3:* for some reason I am thinking a middle-aged woman for some reason because of the whole caring, sort of being passionate about things that's the first person that comes to mind, probably like a family orientated person in my opinion because I think that's what a lot of SANparks focus is on bringing families together to enjoy nature and that sort of thing

*Interviewer:* and physical appearance, what would this person be wearing?

*Consumer 3:* Very down to earth sort of clothes, nothing fancy or overboard, jeans and a t-shirt probably.

*Interviewer:* Judging from your personal experience - where have you seen SANparks messaging/branding?

*Consumer 3: Um They do quite a lot on social media at the moment which if you look a few years ago it wasn't very prominent then because the audience was not interested in that kind of thing, now I think even the older generations are using social media and I think SANparks has cottoned on to that idea and sort of followed their audience to that sort of medium, I haven't seen much print media around it though, which shows the way most things are going*

*Interviewer: What was the message being portrayed?*

*Consumer 3: I think it comes back to conservation; they always promote the message of looking after the planet you live on for the future generations.*

*Interviewer: What would you recommend SANparks do to get greater recognition?*

*Consumer 3: I think they should encourage more activity and stuff on the forums I know that they do already but in this day and age love that sort of instant gratification of being able to go online and ask a question and someone is there to answer and give me the information I am looking for.*