

Understanding the impact of “Day Zero” on the University of Cape Town’s brand image through the possible decision of enrolled students leaving the university due to limited water resources

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Declaration

I, Porschia Kim Pedro, declare that this final Research Paper is my own original work. I am aware of plagiarism and for this reason, all of my sources have been referenced using the Harvard referencing method. These references can be found at the end of this Research Paper under "References".

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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Abstract

A brand is a social construct that is formed by society in all of its different spheres (Klopper & North, 2011). In simpler terms, this means that any brand and its identity are formed by how the consumers perceive it. Brands are often exposed to external environmental factors that they have no control over and might negatively influence their brand image. The aim of this study as mentioned in the title was to understand how an external environmental factor like “Day Zero” can impact the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) brand image through the possible decision of enrolled students leaving the university as a result. The objectives of this study were to determine the influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process to continue their studies at UCT and secondly, how the above decision of students will affect the overall brand image of UCT through ranking of the university. By making use of qualitative research, the purpose of the study is to determine whether “Day Zero” will have an incremental impact on the decision of students to continue their studies at the university. The small scale qualitative study includes seven semi-structured interviews of members that fit into the target audience as well as a small sample of surveys. Key findings and insights of this research study is found from both primary and secondary research. This enabled the researcher to make reasonable recommendations for the brand of UCT and for future research.

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO RESEACRH

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to understand how the brand image of the University of Cape Town (UCT) will be affected by “Day Zero” through the perception of enrolled students and whether they would consider the decision to study at another university in South Africa as a result thereof. The study will contextualise and aim to make a contribution in understanding how the Cape Town water crisis will affect how students see the University of Cape Town as main choice of higher education institutions. To do so, the discussion starts off with an explanation about the rationale, the problem statement, the purpose statement and the research question. The introductory section ends with the hypothesis of the proposed research.

1.2 Rationale

Brands can be affected by external factors over which they have no control. It is important for any organisation to set up a strategy that will address the impact that these unexpected factors can have on the continuity of operations. In the wake of the water crisis that the Western Cape is currently experiencing, the perceptions of students and views about universities might be influenced with regards to the availability of resources and the type of contingency plans the university puts in place to continue operations as normal when water is scarce. The key starting point of any strategy would be to focus on being customer-centric which is a way of doing business with your customer, providing them with a positive customer experience before - and after the sale in order to drive repeat business, customer loyalty and profits (MacDonald, 2017).

In the case of this research, UCT students will be the core stakeholders and customers of the product that UCT delivers. In order to discover important customer insights, this research would be of relevance to determine whether the water crisis is having an incremental impact on the decision of students to continue their studies at the university. This information will also be useful to determine how the brand image of the university has been affected with regards to their ranking against other universities in South Africa. The information that will be discovered, can also be beneficial to other universities that might be faced with an external problem like this in the future.

1.3 Problem statement

The University of Cape Town (UCT) does not know what impact “Day Zero” will have on the decision-making process of students to further their studies at the university and how this will affect their ranking in the minds of consumers against other South African universities.

1.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this research study is to identify how the thoughts and perceptions of students might be affected knowing that the Western Cape is experiencing drought and how this might influence the ranking of the university against other higher education institutions in South Africa.

1.5 Research question

What influence will Day Zero have on the decision of enrolled students to further their studies at UCT and how will that affect the brand image of the institution as a result?

Objectives:

1. The influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process to continue their studies at UCT
2. How the above decision of students will affect the overall brand image of UCT through ranking of the university

Additional question:

How much existing students have researched into the water situation and how it will affect them if they stay at the university.

Research assumption:

The water crisis in the Western Cape won't affect the student decision making process and brand image of UCT negatively as students did not choose the university because of water resources.

1.6 Scope of the study

The small-scale study will be conducted in Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Overview and Introduction to the research study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research plan

Chapter 4: Findings and interpretations

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

1.8 Summary

This chapter have outlined and contextualised the research that was conducted in terms of rationale, problem statement, purpose statement, research question, the scope of the study and the chapter outline of this dissertation. Going forward the study will look at secondary research in the form of the literature review, a research plan will be discussed and implemented, and findings and recommendations will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review forms the foundation for the primary research to be conducted through secondary information and insights. This research study takes existing literature into account in justifying the relevance of this research. The literature focuses on how the student decision making process can be influenced by “Day Zero”, an external environmental event, student satisfaction of Higher Education Institutions, Brand Image of University Education, Ranking of Universities, Brand Equity in Universities, Brand Loyalty of Universities, Branding of Higher Education Institutions and Destination Branding of Universities.

The research will use multiple secondary sources to back up the theory to the literature that has been mentioned above.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation and Existing Literature on Research Themes

The main theory that forms the core foundation of this research is the **student decision making process** as choosing to continue studies at UCT during “Day Zero” would require an informed decision. According to Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010) the student decision making process is a lengthy process because these individuals have to go through all five steps that includes problem or need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, selection and the post purchase evaluation process.

The first step, problem or need recognition occurs when returning students recognise that there is still a need for higher education and furthering their studies (Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan, 2010). In the case of this research, it is the ultimate reason why students were driven to UCT in the first place.

The second step is the gathering of information and this can be all of the information that the student is sourcing, firstly about UCT and Cape Town, and then about the universities in other South African sites. In this case it would be UCT particularly. The type of information they need and the amount of search these students engage in are also important information for the institutions to obtain. Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010) states that this will enable institutions to use media more effectively to reach more students.

The third step according to Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan (2010) is the evaluation of alternatives such as Stellenbosch University, the University of Johannesburg, the University of Pretoria or even the University of the Free State. This is ultimately the focus of the study and identifies the most important evaluation or selection criteria (choice factors). If institutions are aware of the factors that students use to evaluate and choose a specific institution and the relative importance of it, they will be able to ensure that their positioning, image and marketing strategies are in line with those factors.

The fourth step is the evaluation of the institution and the purchasing of the product which is higher education. Students will be able to do this by paying the registration fees and enrolment at UCT or another institution they decide to attend. The fifth and final step is the post purchase processes and it consists of dissonance (doubt or anxiety), service product use and evaluation. This step entails that students use the education product which will either have a negative (fail) or positive (pass) outcome. Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan, (2010).

Furthermore, Chapman (1981) implies that a student's decision of choosing a university is also influenced by an internal set of student characteristics with other external factors. Internal factors may include student performance and their level of aptitude and aspiration. External factors that might be considered are the opinions and beliefs of family, teachers and friends, as well as available courses and the benefits students will get from it (Moogan, Baron and Harris, 1999).

2.3 The evaluation criteria of the Decision-Making Process

The importance of the evaluation criteria will differ from the one student to the next and knowledge of these differences can assist Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in developing and managing their marketing mix in such a way as to ensure successful recruitment (Hawkins et al, 2004; Wiese, van Heerden and Jordaan, 2010).

Previous international studies, mainly reports from English-language literature and research that was conducted in the USA, revealed a variety of potential choice factors considered by students when selecting and continuing studies at an HEI. A couple of them are as follows:

- Bajsh and Hoyt (2001), and Bradshaw, Espinoza and Hausman (2001) identified five main factors considered by students when selecting a HEI. They look at the quality and

responsiveness of staff, research activities, social opportunities, economic considerations and the size of the institution.

- The popularity of the university, public relations and stability as additional choice factors (Punnarach, 2004).
- One South African study identified operational activities, auxiliary services, reputation of the institution and admission requirements as factors that influence students' expectations (De Jager & Du Plooy, 2006).
- Another South African study identified factors such as employment possibilities, course content, student experiences, sporting aspects and financial considerations (Bonnema & Van der Waladt, 2008).

Making reference to the information stated above, there seems to be a gap in the current body of research as the current water crisis known as “Day Zero” in the Western Cape might also become an environmental and even a social choice factor that will influence and contribute to student decision making. This might put students in a position to re-evaluate the university differently once they take the water aspect into consideration. It would be beneficial for HEI's to increase awareness and ensuring the students that they are making provision for unexpected external environment factors such as water scarcity and being able to continue with daily operations within the institution as normal.

2.4 Student satisfaction at higher education level

Satisfaction is defined by Kotler and Clarke as a state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that fulfil his or her expectation (1987). According to Hasan et al., (2009) satisfaction is seen as a function of a relative level of expectations and perceived performance. Students might have a certain expectation before entering a HEI, which makes it important for a researcher to determine what students expect before entering an university (Palacio, Meneses and Perez, 2002 ; Hasan et al., 2009).

Carey, Cambiano and De Vore (2002) is of opinion that satisfaction covers the issues of students' perception and experiences during their years of study. In the case of this research question, student satisfaction would embody different aspects, as students are different with regards to what they expect from UCT and certain characteristics would satisfy some students,

while it doesn't satisfy others. The availability of water would play a role in student satisfaction as it is a basic need that has to be realised.

William (2002) states that it is risky to view students as customers, but in the atmosphere of the higher education marketplace, there is a new moral prerogative that students have become the "customer" and therefore can, as tuition and fee payers, reasonably demand that their views are heard and acted upon.

According to Elliott and Healy (2001) student satisfaction results when actual performance of the students meets or exceeds their expectations. Grossman (1999) has discovered that satisfaction was significantly influenced by trust. It is beneficial for universities to build trust with their students by treating them equally to each other and in a consistent manner, meeting their expectations, and handling student complaints in a caring and efficient manner.

The perceived quality of education or an educational experience is seen as a result of student satisfaction (Athiyaman, 1997). Browne, Kaldenberg and Brown (1998) found that the possibility of a student making a recommendation to friends or family about an university is dependent on the extent of interaction between the students and university personnel. Thus, for this reason it is very important that students at UCT should be communicated with frequently about the water crisis and how they might be influenced with activities on campus and courses of study. This might have a positive contribution to how students react should Day Zero realise.

2.5 Brand image of University Education

Brand image is defined by Managementstudyguide.com (2018) as the current view of the customers and the unique bundle of associations these target customers have in their mind about a particular brand.

According to Chen (2016) the brand image that an educational system establishes plays an important role when students are selecting a school. If an institution has a positive brand image about them, it will be easy for students to recognize differences of one school compared with another, and develop their "selection intention" (Chen, 2016.,p.24).

Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986) developed three brand concept-images considering different benefits to consumers. They make use of the functional brand image to solve the external consumption demands of students, which means that the products or services that

schools offer has to solve the functional needs of students. (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986).

The symbolic brand image determines to connect individuals with specific groups, roles or self-images (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986). Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986) contextualizes this by stating that it relates to the brand of the school being able to satisfy the upgrading of self-value of consumers, enhancement of social roles, harmony in group relationships and identification with self-image.

Lastly, the experiential brand image aims to satisfy the internal pursuit of excitement and needs of the student that relates to the learning experience, the educational experience and the life experience. (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986). This brand concept-image puts emphasis on the satisfaction of the brand and the effect that cognition has on stimulation (Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986).

Chen (2016) states that consumers perceive different levels of quality for brand images based on their memory and association with the brand. Taking this into consideration for UCT, the brand image will be affected based on the particular associations students will make about the water crisis (which could be functional, symbolic or experiential).

2.6 Ranking of universities

Ranking is defined as a position held within the hierarchy of an organisation or society (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2018). Some governments have rankings in the educational sector when institutions are looking for international partners and to provide prospective students with information that will assist their decision making (Sandstrom, 2016).

Sandstrom (2016) identifies some of the following reasons why rankings matter in higher education:

- National policy: Governments make use of rankings to provide financial resources for selected institutions that is capable of becoming a world-class higher education institution.
- Monitoring and benchmarking: Rankings gets used to monitor the performance of institutions and look at what the competitors are doing for benchmarking purposes.

- Data collection: Ranking is an important tool to collect comparative data on a national or institutional level.
- Partnering: When institutions are ranked it makes it easier for potential partners to gain knowledge about them.
- Branding: An university's position in rankings is an indicator on how effective and constant branding efforts are of the institution to promote itself.
- Student choice: Rankings of university has the ability to affect the choice of study destination for some students.
- Quality of enrolled students: The amount of students that are enrolled at a higher education institution, and the quality of knowledge of these students, correlates with the particular university's ranking.
- Attracting researchers: There is a tendency of researches to seek employment at institutions that is perceived as prestigious in their field (Sandstrom, 2016)

According to 4icu.org (2018), the top five ranked universities are as follows:

1. The University of Pretoria
2. The University of Cape Town
3. University of the Witwatersrand
4. University of KwaZulu-Natal
5. University of Johannesburg (4icu.org, 2018)

2.6.1 University ranking in a South African context

According to Max Price, Vice Chancellor of UCT, all ranking systems have flaws and biases. Looking at universities from a South African context he notes that a majority of under-prepared students are being taken in by these institutions and the allocation of resources is used to bridge the gap between inadequate schooling and high standards of a leading university (Price, 2010).

Social responsiveness does not generally get measured in ranking systems and this is very important to consider as it ensures that a university addresses social challenges in the society that it operates in and engages with the community in which it is located (Price, 2010). In South Africa, these are critical goals for universities.

Another critique of university rankings are that they are designed to say which university is better than the other instead of indicating how good the university is and whether the university has improved or regressed (Price, 2010).

According to Price (2010) for UCT in particular, the ranking of the university can be beneficial as international staff and students choose them because of their global competitive position. It is also beneficial to South Africa if universities are ranked internationally as people from the outside considers the university based on a system of higher education (Price, 2010). The good performance of South African universities sends a message of world class and high quality education.

2.7 Brand equity in higher education

The term “brand equity” is referring to the value premium that an institute such as UCT generate from their recognisable name, when compared to another university. Universities can create brand equity for their service of higher education by making themselves more memorable, easily recognisable, and superior in quality and reliability (Staff, 2018).

According to Mourad, Ennew and Kortam, Keller (1993) states that brand equity is presented as a two-dimensional construct that is based around brand awareness and brand image. For this reason, brand loyalty is an outcome of brand equity rather than a dimension of the term (2011). Mourad, Ennew and Kortam (2011) makes reference to Aaker (1991) defining brand awareness as the ability of potential customers to recognise the brand as a member of a specific product category. He states that awareness and recognition are important before attaching attributes to the brand.

We can relate that brand awareness aims to link a brand to a product category while brand image is concerned with the associations that an individual makes with the brand (Mourad, Ennew and Kortam, 2011).

According to Mourad, Ennew and Kortam (2011) there is number of factors that have been identified as determinants of brand equity. Some of them might be relevant to the awareness dimension, while others are relevant to the image dimensions. Mourad, Ennew and Kortam (2011) makes reference to a modification of this approach by Vohries (1997) that looks at higher education. The determinants are categorised under the following headings:

- 1) Consumer attributes - These attributes relate to the customers' own socio-economic characteristics and experience with a brand. In UCT's case, These attributes represent student-related factors which includes motivations, academic qualification, occupational interest and previous experience with the service provided. (Keller, 1993; Lockwood and Hadd, 2007 ; Mourad, Ennew and Kortam. 2011).
- 2) Provider attributes – These are attributes relating to an organization itself, the staff providing the service and other attributes such as location (Booth, 1999; Scott, 2000; Chen, 2008; Kurz et al., 2008), country of origin, size (Cheng and Tam,1997; Kent et al., 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000) and history. In the model, these attributes can be the relationship between students and their parents as well as with the faculty and university staff (Scott, 2000; Chen, 2008; Mourad, Ennew and Kortam. 2011).
- 3) Marketing activities – These are the activities and efforts that is conducted by the HEI's, including word of mouth communication (Booth, 1999; Chen, 2008; Kent et al., 1993; Scott, 2000; Mourad, Ennew and Kortam. 2011).
- 4) Product attributes – These attributes include the perceived quality of education (Cheng and Tam, 1997; Kent et al., 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000; Kurz et al., 2008; Chen, 2008), tuition fees (Booth, 1999; Keller, 1993; Chen, 2008), after sales service and guarantees (Vorhies, 1997; Kent et al., 1993).

It can also be university-related factors that is relevant to UCT in terms of the availability of all of the courses that they offer, admission criteria to enrol and study, tuition fees and the graduate employment rate.

- 5) Symbolic attributes - Symbolic attributes are associations that relate to a brand's personality and identity. Applying this to higher education it represents the overall image and reputation of the university (Byron, 1995; Cheng and Tam, 1997; Keller, 1993; Kent et al., 1993; Scott, 2000; Smith and Ennew, 2000; Chen, 2008; Temple, 2006; Mourad, Ennew and Kortam. 2011).

UCT has the responsibility to manage their brand equity in a consistent and efficient manner during the drought. The five factors mentioned above should remain their focus.

2.8 Brand loyalty of universities based on Aaker's Model

According to Aaker's model of brand equity, brand loyalty is considered to be a key consideration in building the value of a brand, as it has the potential to generate future sales and profit streams (Jooste et al., 2012).

Aaker defines brand loyalty as the following: "A measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand. It reflects how likely a customer will be able to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product features" (Scribd, 2018).

Brand loyalty is crucial for HEI's. Returning students have emotional attachment or memory to UCT and is more likely to make a commitment and referring someone else to the institution (E2S Team, 2017). The more institutions take advantage of opportunities presented to them to build meaningful engagement, the more loyal and committed the public will become.

In this case, brand loyalty is very important for UCT as some of the returning students' decision to study at the university in the first place might have been influenced by friends or family who had good experiences with the institution, automatically giving them an advantage over other universities in South Africa. The decision to continue studies at the university even while they are experiencing water shortages, might not mean anything to some students as they are brand loyal and have good experiences with the institution.

According to E2S Team (2017) HEI's can build brand loyalty in the following ways:

- Developing a distinct brand experience starting at prospective students and other individuals who visits the campus. Enrolled students should feel inspired by the institution as they pursue their degree. It is also important when alumni and donors interacts or visits the institution, they should still feel like they are a part of the community.
- It is important for an HEI to work towards exceeding expectations by delivering consistent quality experiences that fits the value system and expectations of the individuals who are involved.
- Involving individuals in branding decisions might increase their feeling of ownership towards the institution as they will feel and know that the institution considered them (E2S Team, 2017).

2.9 Branding in Higher Education (HE)

Branding can be defined as the process of creating an unique name and image for a product or service in the consumers' mind. This can be done through the means of advertising campaigns with a consistent theme (BusinessDictionary.com, 2018). BusinessDictionary.com explains that branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market to be able to attract and retains loyal customers (BusinessDictionary.com, 2018).

Pinar et al. (2011) makes reference to Yavas and Shemwell (1996) and Landrum et al. (1998) stating that HEI's are also dependent on branding and marketing efforts to increase awareness. The brand image of UCT will play a crucial role in attitudes towards the institution and the sector.

A study on university image was conducted by Paramewaran and Glowacka in 1995 and suggests that HEI's should develop and maintain a distinct image to create a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive global market (Pinar et al., 2011). Ivy (2001) says that a distinct image is likely to have an impact on a student's willingness to apply to that institution. Taking that into consideration, establishing images in the mind of the stakeholders are important (Pinar et al., 2011). Pinar et al. (2011) makes reference to a study that Gatfield et al. conducted in 1999 suggesting that recognition in terms of quality of resources and educators, campus life with the added features, and guidance with regards to the access of services are the most salient promotional features used to market universities.

According to Gray et al. (2003) the learning environment, reputation, graduate career prospects, destination and cultural integration of universities are the main brand positioning dimensions for HEI's (Pinar et al., 2011).

The branding efforts of universities are mostly focused on promotion and identity (logos, mottos, promotional materials, advertising) (Argenti, 2000; Bunzel, 2007; Jevons, 2006; Pinar et al., 2011). These efforts are concerned with external branding, not considering and understanding the holistic nature of what a brand consists of.

Applying this to UCT as well, there are limitations to only focusing on the external dimensions of a brand without considering the larger internal and external context. The focus should thus be on bettering marketing and communications, as brand efforts are not likely to deliver the intended result all by itself.

2.10 The Gap Model of Service Quality

Ng and Forbes (2008) have developed a gap model for the university experience that is based on service quality making reference to and recognises the different parties that is involved in the creation of the learning experience, including the students (Pinar et al., 2011). Ng and Forbes (2008) recognises the importance of physical evidence and processes, putting emphasis on the complexity of the university experience, as it is co-created, emergent, unstructured, interactive, and uncertain, and the fact that not all students share the same goals and orientation with regards to university (Pinar et al., 2011).

Ng and Forbes (2008) adapted the Gap model of Service Quality which was originally developed by Zethaml *et al.* in 1990 and proposed four expectation-perception gaps that should be managed and monitored. These gaps will provide the best university experience to students (Pinar et al., 2011):

- Knowledge gap: The difference between student expectations and what the institution thinks the student expects.
- Standards gap: The difference between the understanding of the institution with regards to students' expectations and the development of the service designs and standards.
- Delivery gap: The difference between the development of the service designs and standards and the actual delivery of the service.
- Communications gap: The difference between the delivery of the service and the institution's external communications (Pinar et al., 2011).

Ng and Forbes proposes and makes reference to an "ideological gap" that is defined as the difference between designing the service towards fulfilling students' expectations and designing the service based on what the institution believes the students should experience (Pinar et al., 2011). The ideological gap is considered to be a fundamental issue to resolve in terms of competitive advantage.

The ideological gap is a fundamental issue to resolve in terms of competitive advantages and is relevant to the main research question of how the water crisis will impact decision making of the students and UCT's brand equity. Students might feel like having water available, while it

is a scarce resource, should be one of the institution's responsibilities. If this is the case, it should be communicated to the university.

2.11 Destination branding applied to universities

Destination branding is a process that is used to develop a unique personality and identity that differs from all other competitive destinations (Acharya, 2010). Destination branding is defined as “selecting a consistent brand element mix to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building” (Cai, 2000).

According to Acharya (2010) the five phases of destination branding are as follows:

- Phase one: Market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations.
- Phase two: Brand identity development.
- Phase three: Brand launch and introduction – communicating the vision.
- Phase four: Brand implementation
- Phase five: Monitoring, evaluation and review (Acharya, 2010).

Destination branding is concerned with the combination of all factors that are associated with a “place” (Acharya, 2010). These can be products and services from different industries like agriculture, tourism, sport, investment, technology and education that all collaborate under one brand.

According to Acharya (2010), the aim of such branding is to capture the importance and essence of the destination to be consumed at an experiential and symbolic level. These factors are then used to market the unique value-added offerings that will fulfil the needs of consumers and also helps with sustaining success in the face of competition.

The definition of destination branding applied to this research would translated into how well UCT's brand identity and image is structured, as well as what makes their “location” and branding different in comparison to other universities or HEI's. Considered the process of destination branding is applied in the correct manner to UCT, it might become a foundation adding to unique valued offerings.

Phases of destination branding could be a useful tool for universities to look at when making use of this process and establishing how attractive their institution could be perceived by students. Making use of those phases will also have an influence on the decision-making process of students when choosing an university of their choice as it promotes UCT as a “destination”.

Blaine, Levy and Richie (2005) states that destinations promote similar attributes such as culture, history and scenery. Taking that into consideration, effective branding of destinations requires an unique selling proposition that is sustainable, relevant and believable and something that “the competition wants and is maybe able to copy but which they cannot surpass or usurp” (Morgan, Pritchard, and Piggott 2002, p. 21 ; Blaine, Levy and Richie, 2005). The differentiation of these destinations are critical in the process of destination branding. It is clear that differentiation of these destinations are critical in the process of destination branding.

2.12 The availability of water as a factor of student success

Water is a basic human need and is important for survival. According to McCullough (2014) research indicates that students remember more and focus longer when they are staying hydrated.

Gowin (2010) states that brains generally depend on proper hydration to be able to function optimally. When humans are parched, they have more difficulty staying focused. Dehydration can also impair short-term memory function and the recall of long-term memory (Gowin, 2010).

Proper hydration has a positive contribution for student success at all ages. When the brain is operating with plenty of water, it gives students the ability to have greater clarity, creativity, focus and quick thought processing (Gowin, 2010). Another study that has been conducted also found that university students who drank water during exams scored better grades. It is clear that water does not only help to improve brain function, but it might also play a part in relieving anxiety during tests (Gowin, 2010).

Based on above mentioned information, water plays an important role in a student’s life. Students of UCT and other HEI’s in the Western Cape should get access to enough water on campus. If this does not happen, there is a possibility of studies being influenced negatively and might contribute to students changing universities.

However, there has been limited research done on the availability of water as a factor of student success for higher education institutions in South Africa and for UCT especially. This makes it difficult for the researcher to formulate comprehensive arguments as to how it applies to the South African universities context.

2.13 Conclusion

The literature review that has been discussed in this chapter lays the foundation in creating the research plan that will guide the research process. The secondary research that has been found is an important foundation for the primary research that is available in the upcoming chapters. The literature review indicates that brand equity and a positive brand image is important to all brands as it has a significant impact on the way consumers view the brand as a whole.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PLAN

3.1 Introduction to research design and approach

The research design and approach of the study will be discussed by looking at the paradigm, population and sampling, data collection method and data analysis. The research study is qualitative of nature as it seeks to understand a certain decision or behavior and the measurement tool for the outcome of the study will be the ranking of UCT in the mind of students.

3.1.1 Paradigm

The paradigm that was used for this research study was interpretivist of nature. The interpretivist paradigm is concerned with understanding the world through the subjective experiences of individuals (Uir.unisa.ac.za, 2018.). According to Thanh and Le Thanh (2015), researchers who make use of the interpretivist paradigm also seek for experiences, perceptions and understandings of the individuals who they collect their data from. This makes it best suited for the qualitative data that was collected as the information from enrolled students had to be interpreted and understood with regards to staying at the university should “Day Zero” arises in the near future.

The interpretivist paradigm consists of an empathetic understanding of subjectivity of the participants (Neuman, 1997). This allowed the research to focus on the student decision making process with regards to the attractiveness of UCT during this time. This was done by the researcher in a way that was subjective, and not leaning towards bias, as well as listening to participants with a clear mind.

This research was best assisted with the realist ontology as it is based on attempting to view things accurately and realistically from either a social, visual or emotional perspective. This was applicable to the research study as it specifically looked at the students of UCT with regards to their perceptions and opinions of the water crisis (Differencebetween.info, 2018).

Choosing an interpretive, also called anti-positivist epistemology was suitable for this study as the reality of the research was interpreted. This epistemology is understood through “perceived” knowledge and the research is focused on concrete and specific facts which seeks to understand a specific context (Carson et al. 2001, p. 6). Interpretivists believe that researchers

should focus on understanding the interpretations that social actions have for the people being studied (Positivists.org, 2018).

This interpretive epistemology was suitable for the purpose of this study as it was detective of nature, seeking to understand the students and why they make certain comments and feel a particular way, and it is also participative. It was suitable as participants all had a different opinions and views on “Day Zero” and the effects of that on decision making. The epistemology made it possible to understand these different opinions and the perceived knowledge in the mind of the students. This is also an epistemology that is very common for qualitative research studies.

3.1.2 Population and sampling

Ritchie (2003) establishes that the inclusion of appropriate constituencies are important aspects that inform application and understanding of the research study. The sample population of this study was the current enrolled students of UCT in Cape Town, South Africa. It was important to ensure that the sample focused on students that are currently studying at the institute. Seven students were interviewed to gain an understanding of their perceptions around the water crisis and how it will affect their view of the institution. The initial idea of the interviews was to conduct three and use it as foundation to construct questionnaires. Due to low volumes and lack of responses from online questionnaires, data was collected through conducting more interviews with a larger population.

The information gained from qualitative semi-structured interviews that was conducted for this study, is characterised as rich in detail and it has been proved as such (Ritchie, & Lewis, 2003). The research sampling procedure makes use of probability sampling strategy to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomena as students that participated in the interview process were picked at random. (Ritchie, & Lewis, 2003). The semi-structured interviews provided information that describes and explains how students think they will be influenced by the water crisis and whether that would convince them to change from universities, which makes it easy to draw comparisons from the sample. (Maree, 2016, p.174).

3.1.3 Data collection method

The research conducted was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews. These interviews do not follow strictly formalized questions. This allows the interviewee to engage in a discussion about the questions that were asked and leaves room for open-ended questions and to prompt for more in-depth answers (Doyle, 2018). The interviews were recorded on a cell phone, and notes were also made to capture some of the main comments and points that the researcher wanted more detail on. Recording the interviews made the transcription process easier and less time consuming.

It was helpful to record the interview as it allowed the researcher to be active, engaging and responsive towards the interviewee. The aim of qualitative interviews was to see the world through the eyes of the participant, and they were valuable sources of information. (Maree, 2016). The participants that were interviewed provided insight to this research study by sharing their personal opinions and perspectives about the water crisis. This detailed information assisted in analysing the data more effectively and efficiently.

The initial idea was to generate more data by sending out surveys to the chosen research population which is the UCT students. Surveys are methods of gathering information from a specific sample of people with the idea to generalise results to a larger population which would have allowed the researcher to understand the perceptions of a larger sample size (Qualtrics, 2018). It would have been successful due to effective assessment of status, opinions, perceptions, plans and beliefs of the students on UCT (Cohen, Manion and Morrison. 2001). This however did not realise as students were reluctant to complete the online surveys due to academic deadlines and not showing interest in taking a few minutes of their time to fill it out (Qualtrics, 2018). However, the seven semi structured interviews and ten completed surveys did provide clear information to give the researcher insights about the effect of the water crisis on student decision making.

It is important to remember that the data that was collected through interviews and surveys are only a representation of the perception of students that participated in the research study and will therefore be viable.

3.1.4 Data analysis

Data was analysed by interpreting and understanding the different results of the surveys and interviews, investigating the comments of the students and looking at what the majority of students were experiencing and feeling. Data of the surveys were analysed by grouping all of the answers of the interview questions together on an excel spreadsheet and making use of graphs to visually understand and depict what the findings were. The data generated through semi-structured interviews was typed out and compared with one another.

The data that was analysed after collection was trustworthy as the results are personalised due to students not sharing the same beliefs and sharing their opinions in a detailed manner. Thick and thorough descriptions of results indicated that the findings of the study were applicable to the current situation and the context of the research study. This makes the results transferable to be used in other research projects. Confirmability which according to Social Research Methods (2018) refers to the extent to which results of participants can be confirmed or collaborated by others, was enhanced throughout collection and analysis of data as the findings of questions asked will be based on the response of participants without bias and personal motivations of the interviewer (Statistics Solutions, 2018).

Thematic analysis was used for the semi-structured interviews and surveys as it identified, analysed and reported patterns of student perceptions about the water crisis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Dependability of this research was tested by having an outside person review and examine the research process and data analysis to ensure that the findings were consistent of nature and could be repeated, which had been confirmed (Statistics Solutions, 2018), Making use of this methods tested the trustworthiness of the data that collected throughout the research analysis component of this study.

3.2 Design of interview schedule

The interviews were structured to gain insight on how the student decision making process would be influenced by “Day Zero” to possibly transfer from UCT to another university. It is important to remember that the interviews were semi-structured of nature and leaves room for additional conversation and insight. Below is an outline of the questions that was asked:

1. In what year of studying are you currently?
2. Why did you choose UCT to study at in the first place?
3. What is your perception of the water crisis in the Western Cape?
4. On a daily basis, how often do you use water?
5. Would you say you use or consume water a lot while you are on campus?
6. How would you describe UCT?
7. If you could rank UCT on a top 5 list, 1 being the top position and 5 being the lowest, based on what you answered about your reason for choosing UCT, academic excellence and the student life, where would you place it, and why?
8. If Day Zero should arise, would you still see UCT as favourable or would you choose another university in another province or location to further your studies at?
9. Why would you say this?
10. How would you now rank UCT should there be no water on a Top 5 list?
11. Do you think your friends would remain at the university should Day Zero arise and why?

3.3 Anticipated contribution

The aim of a dissertation is to identify a problem, conduct research about it and looking for recommendations on avoiding it. Conducting research about the impact of an external factor on student decision making can make a valuable contribution to UCT by providing a better understanding about the needs and wants of students when they have to select a university or institution to further their studies. The management of UCT will understand the insights of students with regards to their perception of a water crisis on student experience and satisfaction.

The anticipated results of this research study might have a contribution in establishing and determining how current students of UCT will rank the university in the light of the water crisis

that the Western Cape is experiencing. This will allow UCT to assess their position in the mind of the customer and make decisions as they see fit.

3.4 Ethical considerations

The following ethical considerations were important to consider during the research process:

- Respect: The autonomy, decision-making and dignity of students should always be respected. Students that are interviewed should not feel disrespected through the questions that are being asked. It is also important to make sure that the questions in the survey are not personal and take the students into consideration.
- Beneficence: The physical, psychologically and socially risks should be minimised and the benefits to research participants should be maximized. The students should feel like they are contributing to the study as well and that they will gain something from it. For this reason, it is important to make participants feel like their opinion matter. Through the sharing of perceptions and beliefs, participants will provide a beneficial contribution to the research and they will be informed about this too.
- Confidentiality: As researcher, it is important to ensure participants that any personal information will be kept confidential and it will remain anonymous. This is applicable to this research study as students might feel that if they share their opinion, they might get into trouble for that.
- Informed consent: This is an integral part of any ethics involved with doing research. The participants that are being interviewed should give the researcher their permission to do so and they should know in advance which data will be collected and how it will be used.
- Communities: Protecting and respecting the values and interests of the UCT campus as a whole by not conducting interviews on campus, but rather making use of a focus group approach and interviewing these candidates off campus in a comfortable and relaxed environment (Cirt.gcu.edu, 2018.).

3.5 Limitations

It is important that every researcher take limitations into consideration as it places the findings in context, interprets the validity of the scientific work and ascribes to a certain level of credibility to the conclusions that are made (Ioannidis, 2018).

The following limitations for this research study have been found as the following:

- The short period of time available to collect data needed for the research study
- The size of the sample group was limited due to lack of availability and difficulty of respondent participation

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discussed the research plan thoroughly, allowing the researcher to obtain credible and viable results that will drive further research in Chapter 4 and 5. A qualitative design approach have been followed by conducting semi-structured interviews that has proved to be trustworthy through credibility, transferability and conformability. The researcher keeps the ethical considerations in mind while also working around the limitations of the study to find the most accurate findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the data that have been collected through primary research which includes semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The data that will be presented in this chapter is only a representation of the actual research process and recommendations will only be made later in Chapter 5. The results of the research study will be summarised in a way that highlights the most important objectives and making it easy to follow and understand. It is important to remember that this is a small-scale study and that the results cannot be taken as a generalisation of the population

4.2 Important objectives of findings

The following objectives were important for the researcher to collect to make a meaningful contribution in this field of study. This also enabled the researcher to answer the main objectives as identified in the purpose statement which is, firstly the influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process with regards to continuing to study at UCT and secondly, how the decision of students will affect the brand image of UCT.

Objective One: The influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process to continue their studies at UCT

Insights on:

- What perception do current UCT students have of “Day Zero” in the Western Cape
- How much students researched “Day Zero” by themselves in their free time (Secondary Research Question)
- Would students potentially transfer from UCT to other universities in other provinces with more water resources should “Day Zero” arise (Main Research Question)

Objective Two: How the decision of students will affect the brand image of UCT

Insights on:

- How students would rank UCT in terms of general academic programs, environment and student life

- How would these students now rank UCT taking “Day Zero” into consideration

4.2 Presentation of findings

The semi-structured interviews were used to ask specific questions in a manner that encouraged discussions of the questions and prompting participants in a way that could give the researcher a better understanding. Due to the open-endedness of the interviews, the research will be presented in themes of the objectives listed above. The researcher made use of more questions to lead participants to answering the questions better and when introducing the next tier of questions.

The results from the small sample of questionnaires will be presented in graphs and tables that will help the reader to depict and understand the findings better.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Interview Findings

Objective one: The influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process to continue studies at UCT

1. What perception do current UCT students have of “Day Zero” in the Western Cape

Question: What is your perception of the water crisis in the Western Cape?

Participant 1: I have a lot to say about this water crisis. I personally feel, like, the way that uhm, the government of the Western Cape has portrayed this water crisis, they have portrayed it as if there aren't other water crises happening all around South Africa. And you know, uhm, in our politics lecture... Our politics lecturer said something, to be aware of government propaganda and uh, this water crisis has actually really showed me that, because obviously the dam levels here in Cape Town... Like I can't vow for the fact that have lowered a bit but the extent that the, the Western Cape Government, obviously being the Democratic Alliance, gone through to make it seem as if Cape Town is the only place that is running out of water and that there aren't other areas in South Africa that are going through worst, it's not exactly as Cape Town, and I found frankly, which is disgusting, everyone was prioritising Cape Town, in fact, I really just think it

was the DA trying to manipulate people into using less resources and therefore saving government money.

Participant 2: Uhm, like it was bad, but then, since I was here at UCT, like we didn't, like experience, like, that there is no water and stuff. But then, when I was back home at Khayelitsha, it was like, yeah there are crises really. Like, there would be days where there is no water for like days. But then, when I'm here, it is fine, there is nothing wrong.

Participant 3: I wouldn't really say I have a good perception of it, because uhm, obviously that means that we don't have enough water available to do the things that we need to do. I definitely think, like, we as South Africans should've been provided with more information from the government' side, with, uhm, this entire situation, you know? So yeah, I think the water crisis is bad and uhm, a lot of things can be done to prevent it from actually happening, starting with transparency.

Participant 4: My perception? Uhm, obviously it isn't a good thing for the Western Cape to experience. Like, it doesn't really impact anyone positively, because at the end of the day it's going to put constraints on us, with like, daily needs and operations of businesses and all of that. So yeah, it is really bad for us as a country as well, because of tourism and all of that and investing, haha, yeah.

Participant 5: Uhm, I feel like it was definitely happening, there was a water shortage, but it also felt very "scammy". Like, we were being told that everything was fine, meantime nothing was being disclosed. How was it that all of the sudden the water crisis is cancelled? Like, that doesn't make any sense. Uhm, companies and farms owning dams and springs, why do they have that? They shouldn't have that. That's the peoples water and it should be owned by the government and all that, so. It was shady, so yeah, it was real and it was happening, but there's also a lot of politics and questionable things going on. That's my opinion.

Participant 6: Uhm, ja. Uhm, I had a very like negative feeling, like of course we were all scared, or well, I was scared at one point, like we are not going to have water, like for real-real. So yeah they made us believe that in a couple of weeks, there won't be water, so you are kind of in the state of panic where you are like – yeah, I didn't really buy water, I won't lie, but I was like "oh my gosh, I probably need to buy water", store water and stuff. Like I stay close to a spring and whatever, and we would see a queue for days, so we were like panicking and stuff.

Uhm, so, I like felt very negative about it, but then when the dates kept getting pushed back, I was like, “is this real?”, like this is a scam.

Participant 7: Uhm, the water crisis was definitely a negative issue that affected the Western Cape and I think a whole lot of people really didn’t feel, uhm, like happy about that. At the end of the day, I also feel like it wasn’t real at a certain point, because why was the dates continuously pushed? And now all of the sudden, water restrictions are going to be relaxed. In that regard, it doesn’t really make sense, but yeah, I definitely regarded it as negative.

Interpretation:

Students definitely felt very negative towards “Day Zero” as they felt like the water crisis puts restrictions on them and influences their day to day routines. Most of the students in the population felt like “Day Zero” was happening, but it was questionable in the sense of the lack of government disclosure and transparency. The theme of “Was it real” has come forward quite strongly from the interviews due to “Day Zero” being pushed back continuously and relaxed restrictions.

2. How much students researched “Day Zero” by themselves in their free time (Secondary Research Question)

Question: Would you say you did a lot of research on your own about “Day Zero”?

Participant 1: I actually did, but not a lot, I won’t lie. But yes, I used to read articles on my news app, listening to radio and all of that, but not every day. Only when new word was buzzing about it.

Participant 2: Uhm, no I didn’t research the water crisis in my spare time. Uhm, so I just heard stuff on campus and in residence, and from my friends.

Participant 3: Uhm, no. I can honestly say that I didn’t do a lot of research on the topic in my free time. Literally as seldom as possible.

Participant 4: I think I researched it as seldomly as possible, because like I listen to radio a lot, so my information mostly came from that, and social media like Facebook and Instagram helped me to stay up to date. I didn’t really Google it or anything like that.

Participant 5: Probably not, I mostly just heard everything through the grapevine

Participant 6: To be honest, only when I got really worried, which was like in the beginning stages, but other than that, not really hey.

Participant 7: Haha, honestly, I didn’t do research about it at all. I found my daily dosage of news on social media and listening to radio while driving to campus.

Interpretation:

Two participants of the sample said that they did research “Day Zero” in their free time during the beginning stages. They made use of platforms like news apps on cellphones, radio, posters and word on campus. The rest of the sample didn’t do additional research about the topic in their own time, they merely heard about “Day Zero” via posts on social media like Facebook and Instagram, radio and word on campus.

3. Would students potentially transfer from UCT to other universities in other provinces with more water resources should "Day Zero" arise (Main Research Question)

Question: If Day Zero should arise, would you still see UCT as favourable or would you choose another university in another province or location to further your studies at? Why do you say this?

Participant 1: Uhm, if I was already here, uhm and Day Zero happens while I was still studying here at UCT, I would not transfer, I would stay and stick it out, because I do think it presents an interesting challenge. But I do think if Day Zero were to come tomorrow, all the students that are applying to come in 2019, should really just, maybe choose a different university, because obviously now, we've experienced part of what it is going to be like to have water restrictions, but to go from bounces of water in your home to come to less than 25L, it is going to be a huge adaption but at least we were kind of giving the means a little to go into it.

Participant 2: I would stay at the university, because I am not here for the water, I am here for my academics. And I'm sure UCT will make plans if Day Zero comes.

Participant 3: I think, uhm, for me, that would obviously be dependent on when it should happen. Like, this is my last year, so I was planning on doing my honours via UNISA anyway, uhm, so, the chances are that I would stay because there isn't much time left, so yeah.

Participant 4: (Laughs) Okay, to be honest, for me, I think it would be very inconvenient having to go cue for water, because, I mean surely the government only used this crisis to get more media coverage, because that's personally what I feel. And this could have been avoided, they knew about the water shortage for a while now and people have been, like, predicting that this was going to happen a couple of years earlier. So, yeah, it wouldn't really be very nice and convenient for me, so I think the possibility exists that I might transfer from universities if I should still find myself here if it did happen. There is water back at home. I think it would be a big inconvenience to have to line up for water while having to study. It seems like it would take too much of my time

Participant 5: Uhm I would stay. Well, I know for one, management prioritises things like this, so I feel like they will make a plan. They will try to make a plan for like the academic programmes to still carry on as per usual, because if they can pull off tests and exams during protesting and

spending millions on private security during that time, I'm sure they can figure their way out with Day Zero too. So, I would stay, also when you transfer it's messy and the university does want to keep up their good reputation and what not, so they will try to make students as comfortable as possible to ensure that daily operations are carrying on as usual.

Participant 6: Uhm, so I wouldn't transfer because, also, if I look at me being nearly done with varsity, I wouldn't change universities. If I had to look at it from the perspective of just coming to UCT and being first year, it would be a concerning factor, because I can imagine my parents saying that there is no water and also me thinking I would have to go collect water every day, seems very tiring and unnecessary. But yes, I would stay.

Participant 7: Haha, I think if I was doing my first year, I probably would've considered going to another university, but I'm fourth year now, so transferring would be a lot of extra admin and time that I really don't have. So yeah, I also think the university will try to make students feel as comfortable as possible and bring some sort of plan to the table that'll let students forget about the crisis. And at this rate, the Western Cape won't see a water shortage soon with all of the rain and increase in dam levels, so yep.

Interpretation:

Six participants of the sample said that they would continue to study at UCT should "Day Zero" arise. Their reasons are that "Day Zero" would introduce an interesting challenge, university management will make students as comfortable as possible to keep up their good reputation and allowing students to study as per normal, participants are nearly done with their studies making the transferring process "messy", causing "admin" and inconvenient. Three of these participants mentioned that they might have transferred if they were first year as it would be a big adaptation and queueing for water would be time-consuming and tiring. One participant however stated that they would consider transferring from UCT to another university as there is water "back home" and because it would be inconvenient to queue for water.

Objective two: How the decision of students will affect the brand image of UCT

1. How students would rank UCT in terms of general academic programs, environment and student life

Question: If you could rank UCT on a top 5 list, 1 being the top position and 5 being the lowest, based on what you answered about your reason for choosing UCT, academic excellence and the student life, where would you place it, and why?

Participant 1: One, I'm not even saying this being biased. It is the best university in Africa, I really do think our academic programmes are amazing. The sporting facilities are nice, even though some sporting courts could be better. Culturally, we really are thriving, you know. The Baxter Theatre and the musical school. I really think that UCT is an all rounded university. That is not to say that things can be improved, of course things could really, really drastically improve at this university, but if I could go back and choose again, I would still choose UCT. Despite the water crisis, I would still choose UCT. I really do not regret my decision at all. I even turned down scholarships from UP and Wits to come to UCT 'cause I said that UCT is really the place to be. And in terms of job opportunities, you really find a lot of employers wanting students from UCT because they know that the background knowledge that you get from studying here is unmatched as at any other, uhm, university and that's really something that no other university can offer.

Participant 2: Obviously, I would rank them number one. UCT, we all know mos, UCT is the best facility and we had that like, on the news, the rankings, the South African rankings. So yeah, and UCT is fun. Like, let's say, in terms of the management, I have a friend from CPUT and she stays at res. And in terms of their financial aid, they get like maybe their money after 2-3 months, their allowances. But then here at UCT we get it when we are supposed to get it. They are always on time.

Participant 3: (Laughs) For obvious reasons I would place them at number one. Uhm, this is basically because they offer us so many opportunities to do stuff such as, uhm, vac work, internships and letting companies talk to us, as an example. Uhm, and like I've mentioned, we run some of the best academic programmes at UCT which is recognised all over the world, which really makes it an university that people know of and acknowledge. And the lecturers are

also really passionate about their subjects and really go the extra mile to, like, help if you were to ask. So yeah.

Participant 4: I think I would probably rank them second, because yeah even though we have good education programmes, there is still lots for the university to do to improve on certain areas. Like, some faculties get more attention than others and stuff like that. So yeah, there is always room for improvement.

Participant 5: Well, I can't really compare to other institutions because I haven't been there, so I'm just going with what I've heard and personal perception. I'm tempted to put UCT at two. Like any university it has its problems, it does, but other places might be worse.

Participant 6: Probably a two or three, like because the university has high standards and academics, all of the bad stuff going on gets ignored because everyone is like, "Aah, UCT is such a good institution, number one in the country", but there is some negative things going on. Like the mental health and the racism.

Participant 7: Uhm, I think I'd place UCT at number 1, just because of the environment being inclusive to everyone, the quality of education and also the availability of sport facilities which is also nice for athletic and active students like myself haha. So yeah, right at the top.

Interpretation:

Four participants of the sample placed UCT at the top position of number one. Their reasons included the high quality of academic programmes the university offers, enthusiastic and well-educated lecturers, the inclusive environment, good sporting facilities, thriving culture, being ranked Africa's best university and being on time with paying out scholarship fees to their students. The rest of the sample placed UCT at number two as they believe the university does achieve high quality of education and academic programmes but there are areas to be improved on. These areas include mental health, racism, treating all faculties equally and maintaining facilities.

2. How would these students now rank UCT taking “Day Zero” into consideration

Question: How would you now rank UCT should there be limited water resources available on a Top 5 list (1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest)?

Participant 1: Still at number one, as I've said, it is really an all rounded university and I don't think the water crisis would really take that advantage away from me.

Participant 2: If like we experience Day Zero? Yes, I would still list them as number one. I'm very loyal.

Participant 3: I think I would still rate them as number one hey, because, like water doesn't take away from the fact that it is a world class uni and uhm, and even though our environment might be negatively influenced, I still think this is a top-class institution to study at, like, we are all really lucky.

Participant 4: I'd probably rank them third, because it would be an inconvenience to collect water every day.

Participant 5: Yeah, I'd rate them at 2, because it would definitely change my perception of the university if we had limited water resources available.

Participant 6: I'd rate it two. Or wait, maybe three. Uhm, just because it would always be at the back of my head, like there is no water would be chanting at the back. We take water for granted, but you literally need it all of the time. Like it would be a mess.

Participant 7: Uhm, it doesn't really change a lot for me, so I'd still place them at number one. Just because feel like UCT will have a contingency plan if something like this happens, and most students are only on campus half of the day, so I don't think it will impact them that heavily, nor do I think it'll affect the “image” of the university so hectically.

Interpretation:

Four participants of the sample stated that they would still rank UCT at number one, the top position as water doesn't take away from the fact that UCT is an all rounded, high academic quality university, their loyalty to the university and their belief that management of UCT will have a contingency plan should “Day Zero” arises. Two participants of the sample said that

they would rank UCT in the third position as the water crisis will always be in the back of their minds as water is a basic need and would create inconvenience. One participant of the sample would rank UCT in the second place as it will change their perception of the university due to limited water resources.

4.3.2 Questionnaire Findings

Objective One: The influence of “Day Zero” on the student decision making process to continue their studies at UCT

1. What perception do current UCT students have of “Day Zero” in the Western Cape

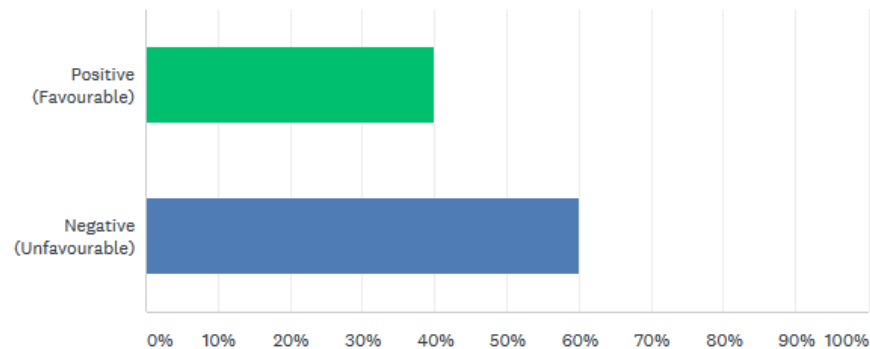
Q6

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What are your thoughts about the water crisis in the Western Cape?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Positive (Favourable)	40.00% 4
▼ Negative (Unfavourable)	60.00% 6

It is bad for tourism and for the residents as we would have to cue for water

9/1/2018 4:40 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

It was would ultimately cause a lot of stress and could lead to possible chaos.

8/18/2018 1:12 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Given the recent rainy season and decrease in water consumption,I believe the outlook on water available has improved.

8/17/2018 9:54 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Lack of water due to increase in climate change etc.

8/17/2018 6:15 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

With the winter rains and the assumption that people are still saving water. I think Day Zero can be avoided

8/17/2018 5:40 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

I fear the impact it may have on tourism, a big industry for cape town. I think it also exposes poor management and planning in the city, which is worrying

8/17/2018 2:50 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Helps draw attention to water concerns in the long run, including whether we have all the necessary solutions in place. And what not to do moving forward

8/17/2018 2:23 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

2. How much students researched “Day Zero” by themselves in their free time (Secondary Research Question)

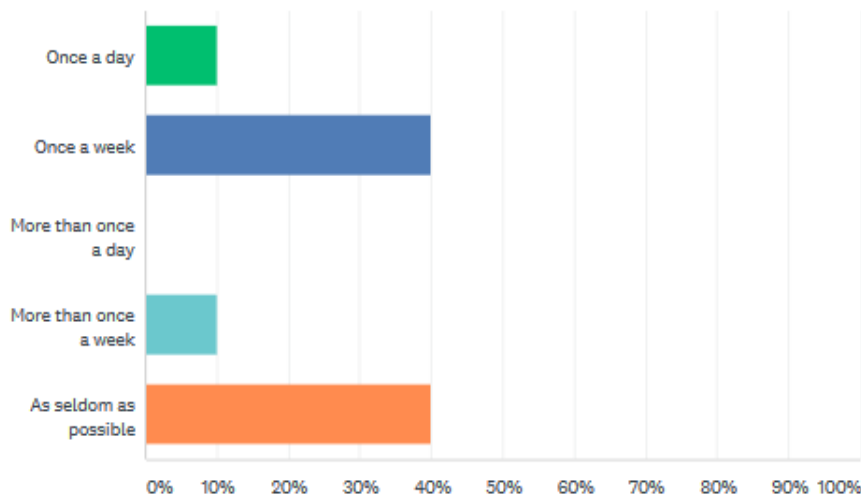
Q5

[Customize](#)

[Export](#) ▼

How often did you research “Day Zero” in your own time and the impact that it would have on your life when it was a near reality?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Once a day	10.00% 1
Once a week	40.00% 4
More than once a day	0.00% 0
More than once a week	10.00% 1
As seldom as possible	40.00% 4
TOTAL	10

3. Would students potentially transfer from UCT to other universities in other provinces with more water resources should "Day Zero" arise (Main Research Question)

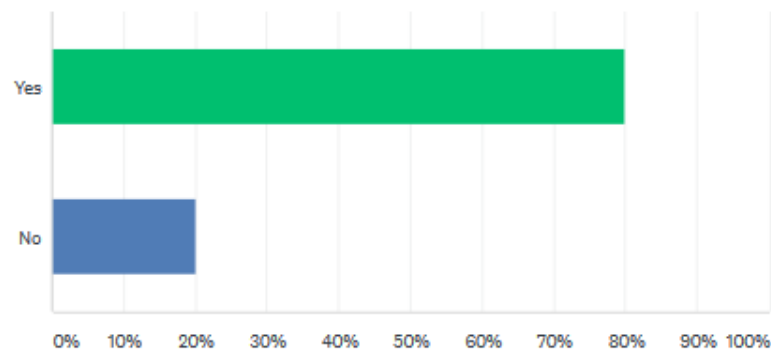
Q8

Customize

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Would you remain at the university should Day Zero arise and water usage would be restricted to 50L per day or less?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	80.00% 8
No	20.00% 2
TOTAL	10

I think id be able to study from home where I know Id be safe and secure with water

9/1/2018 4:40 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Well I would still want to finish my degree and hopefully there would be steps in place that we would be fine

8/18/2018 1:12 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

It still would be the best university in Africa,and I already invested a lot of time studying here.

8/17/2018 9:54 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

I'm about to graduate. No need to move when I have less than a year.. Just do what needs to be done

8/17/2018 6:15 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

There is water back at home. I think it would be a big inconvenience to have to line up for water while having to study. It seems like it would take too much of my time

8/17/2018 5:40 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

There is water back at home. I think it would be a big inconvenience to have to line up for water while having to study. It seems like it would take too much of my time

8/17/2018 5:40 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

changing would be too inconvenient, i'd rather stay

8/17/2018 2:50 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

There are other factors to consider such as length of degree left to go, funding etc

8/17/2018 2:23 PM

[View respondent's answers](#)

Objective two: How the decision of students will affect the brand image of UCT

1. How students would rank UCT in terms of general academic programs, environment and student life

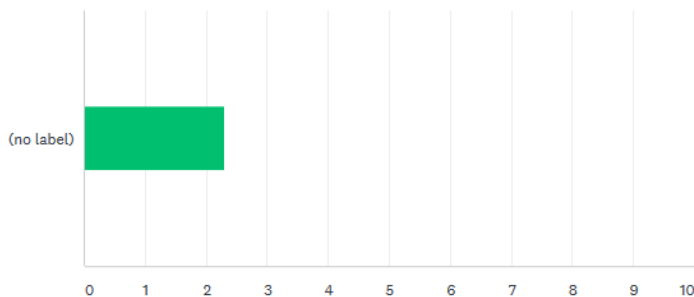
Q3

[Customize](#)

[Export](#) ▼

On a Top 5 list, 1 being the highest, 5 being the lowest, where would you rank UCT in terms of education and student life?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	20.00% 2	50.00% 5	20.00% 2	0.00% 0	10.00% 1	10	2.30

2. How would these students now rank UCT taking “Day Zero” into consideration?

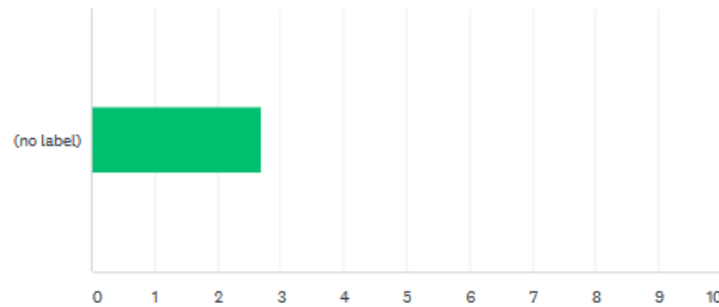
Q10

Customize

Export ▼

Where would you rank UCT now on a Top 5 list, taking the water crisis into consideration and the scarce availability thereof should Day Zero happen in the future? (1 being the highest, 5 being the lowest)

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



▼	1 ▼	2 ▼	3 ▼	4 ▼	5 ▼	TOTAL ▼	WEIGHTED AVERAGE ▼
▼ (no label)	10.00% 1	40.00% 4	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	10.00% 1	10	2.70

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter clearly discussed and illustrated the results and findings of the primary research that has been conducted. It is easy to understand the research findings through the structure in which it is represented, explained and interpreted. The information that has been collected in this chapter will be useful as common themes have been identified through conversations and answers which allows for credible results. The next chapter will discuss the key findings through conclusions and recommendations of each objective.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide recommendations and conclusions of the research that has been conducted. The structure of this chapter will identify the different objectives, and within these objectives, the link to the literature, the findings from primary research, conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Objective One

5.2.1 Link to literature

Objective one links to the literature in terms of the overall student decision making process and the evaluation criteria of the process. This was clear in the research as students sketched a scenario for themselves where “Day Zero” would impact them and whether they would continue their studies at UCT or if they would transfer to another university. The students went through the process of, problem and need recognition, gathering information, evaluation of alternative universities and the post purchase process in terms of the evaluating the end product of education.

The objective also links to student satisfaction of higher education as this will be a factor that can influence students to stay at UCT or to transfer. Brand loyalty of universities based on Aaker’s model is also linked to the objective as students who are very loyal to the university will not be swayed easily to leave or to transfer. Lastly, destination branding of universities are also linked as students specifically might have chosen UCT based on the location of the university, seeing it as one value-adding offering that will fulfil their needs and also sustains the success in terms of competition with other universities.

5.2.2 Findings from Primary Research

Primary research has found that the majority of the sample population would not transfer from UCT to another university because of “Day Zero”. Students believe that they did not choose the university because of water, they chose it because of the academic excellence the institution is known for, the belief that university management will make students as comfortable as possible

in allowing them to study as per normal and students also mentioned that they were near the end of their studies and transferring would be inconvenient.

5.2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, “Day Zero” does not have a significant impact on the student decision making process to leave the university should there be limited water resources. Primary research has indicated that six of the seven participants that have been interviewed, would continue their studies at the university, while 80% of respondents who took the questionnaire also agreed that they would continue their studies at UCT.

5.2.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that UCT familiarises themselves with the opinion of their students when external issues like “Day Zero” were to take place and how it will affect them as in institution in terms of brand equity and brand loyalty. This will enable them to brand the university better to students who have concerns about an issue like “Day Zero”.

5.3 Objective two

How the decision of students will affect the brand image of UCT

5.3.1 Link to literature

Firstly, the Brand image of University Education is linked to the research in terms of the associations students will make about the water crisis (which could be functional, symbolic or experiential) and how it will affect their overall image of the brand. Secondly, the ranking of universities is linked as it places UCT within a hierarchy of universities in South Africa. The measurement tool to indicate whether UCT’s brand image would be affected negatively is the ranking of the university in terms of education programs and student life, as well as knowledge that students might have of other universities. Brand equity in higher education is also literature that is linked to the research in terms of the value premium UCT generates from their recognizable name in comparison to other universities. This will influence how the decision to leave the university because of “Day Zero” would impact them in terms of consumer attributes, provider attributes, marketing activities, product attributes and symbolic attributes. Lastly, branding in higher education is also linked as the decision would impact how UCT brands

themselves throughout the “Day Zero”. Branding in higher education looks at creating an unique name and image for a product in the mind of the consumer, which is what UCT consistently did throughout “Day Zero” with poster on campus and news on their official website.

5.3.2 Findings from Primary research

Primary research has found that UCT’s brand image won’t be affected negatively based on the decision of students to leave the university because of “Day Zero”. The process that was used to indicate the effect of “Day Zero” on UCT’s brand image included asking the students how they would rank UCT on a Top five list taking education and student life into consideration and then asking them how they would rank UCT taking “Day Zero” into consideration. From the sample, four participants, which is the majority, ranked UCT at the top position of number one. Their reasons included the high quality of academic programmes the university offers, enthusiastic and well- educated lecturers, the inclusive environment, good sporting facilities, thriving culture, being ranked Africa’s best university and being on time with paying out scholarship fees to their students. The rest of the sample either placed UCT at second or third.

From this sample, four participants stated that they would still rank UCT at number one, the top position as water doesn’t take away from the fact that UCT is an all rounded, high academic quality university, their loyalty to the university and their belief that management of UCT will have a contingency plan should “Day Zero” arises. Two participants ranked UCT in the third position, and one participant ranked UCT in the second position.

Questionnaires indicated that 50% of the respondents ranked UCT in the second place based on the education and student life. Taking “Day Zero” into consideration, 40% of the respondents ranked UCT in second place.

5.3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the decision of students to leave UCT because of “Day Zero” and limited water resources would not affect the brand image of the university negatively. This is assigned to majority of the sample ranking UCT at number one or number two and still ranking them at number one or number two taking “Day Zero” into consideration.

5.3.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that UCT should understand why students would rate the university at the top position and why other students would not rank them at the top position. If the management of the university fully understand the different perceptions of students and what they could improve on, brand loyalty and overall brand image could be improved.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

The first suggestion for this research is to expand primary research to the management of the university brand that the researcher aims to investigate. Secondly, it is suggested to get a larger scale study if possible as this will allow the researcher to gain more accurate insights and findings.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The qualitative study covered how the University of Cape Town will be affected through “Day Zero” based on the decision of students to transfer from the university to another should this be a factor. This was to determine whether students would actually leave the university because of limited water resources and to investigate the impact it will have on their decision-making process. The study also aimed to discover whether students did make the effort to conduct research on “Day Zero” in their free time as a secondary question. This is an indicator that might have an influence on the possible decision to leave UCT altogether. Although there wasn’t a lot of secondary research done in this field, primary research through semi-structured interviews and a small sample of questionnaires proved that students would continue their studies at UCT should “Day Zero” arise in the near future. Primary research also shows that the majority of the sample did not do research about the water crisis in their free time as a tool to be more informed. This research has allowed for recommendations to be made so that brands like UCT are fully equipped to handle the negative perceptions of external factors that brands have no control over in a manner that is informed. This also allow the university to fully recover from any negative perceptions that students might have about “Day Zero”.

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APPENDIX A:

Ethical clearance form



27 June 2018

Student name: Porschia Pedro

Student number: 17807831

Campus: Vegas, Cape Town



Re: Approval of RESM 2018 Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research topic or methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,

Monika Edwards
Supervisor
Coordinator

[Insert Name]
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APPENDIX B

Interview Consent

VEGA School of Brand Leadership

Honours: Strategic Brand Management- Research Dissertation

Researcher: Porschia Kim Pedro (079 867 2447)

Supervisor: Patrick Pirow (paddypirow@gmail.com)

Dear Respondent,

My name is Porschia Kim Pedro. I am currently doing my honours in Strategic Brand Management at Vega School of Brand Leadership and to complete my qualification, it is essential that I conduct an in-depth research study. I invite you to participate in my research project titled; ***Understanding the impact of “Day Zero” on the University of Cape Town’s brand image through the possible decision of enrolled students leaving the university due to limited water resources.***

The aim of this study as mentioned in the title is to uncover how “Day Zero” will affect the student decision making process in possibly transferring from UCT to another university. Confidentiality and anonymity of all records identifying you as a respondent is assured. If you have any questions or concerns about completing the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact myself or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. My supervisor will ensure that I comply with all the terms of consent and with all ethical requirements.

The interview should take you about **10-15 minutes to complete**. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW

I, (Participants Name) have read the information presented to me in a

language that I understand. I understand the implications of participating in the interview. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied that they have been adequately addressed. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate and that I can withdraw from the interview at any time. I hereby volunteer to take part in this interview.

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name & Surname:

Signature:

_____ **Date:**_____

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule

1. In what year of studying are you currently?
2. Why did you choose UCT to study at in the first place?
3. What is your perception of the water crisis in the Western Cape?
4. On a daily basis, how often do you use water?
5. Would you say you use or consume water a lot while you are on campus?
6. How would you describe UCT?
7. If you could rank UCT on a top 5 list, 1 being the top position and 5 being the lowest, based on what you answered about your reason for choosing UCT, academic excellence and the student life, where would you place it, and why?
8. If Day Zero should arise, would you still see UCT as favourable or would you choose another university in another province or location to further your studies at?
9. Why would you say this?
10. How would you now rank UCT should there be no water on a Top 5 list?
11. Do you think your friends would remain at the university should Day Zero arise and why?

APPENDIX D

Online Questionnaire Format

"Day Zero" has recently taken the Western Cape by storm with the fear of taps running dry and residents queuing for their daily amount of water.

The questionnaire that you are about to answer aims to understand how "Day Zero" will affect the brand image of the University of Cape Town through the perception of students and whether they would make the decision to transfer from universities as a result thereof.

I would appreciate it if you can take 2 - 3 minutes of your time to complete my questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 10 questions and I urge you to be as honest as you can when answering these questions. Your response will be recorded, analysed and used in my final research document. You will remain anonymous and your insights will only be used for the purpose of this research study.

Thank you for your willingness!

1. I am currently doing my...

- First year
- Second year
- Third year
- Fourth year
- Honours / Masters / Doctoral degree

2. What made you decide to study at the University of Cape Town (UCT)?

- Recommendations from friends or family
- Career talk at school or another venue
- Scholarship / bursary
- Information on the university's website

3. On a Top 5 list, 1 being the highest, 5 being the lowest, where would you rank UCT in terms of education and student life?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Are you aware of "Day Zero" in the Western Cape?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, how did you become aware of it?

5. How often did you research "Day Zero" in your own time and the impact that it would have on your life when it was a near reality?

- ☐ Once a day
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ More than once a day
- ☐ More than once a week
- ☐ As seldom as possible

6. What are your thoughts about the water crisis in the Western Cape?

- ☐ Positive (Favourable)
- ☐ Negative (Unfavourable)

Briefly describe why you feel this way

7. Ever since Day Zero has become apparent, how has the day-to-day operations of the university changed?

- Significantly changed
- Slightly changed
- Remained the same

8. Would you remain at the university should Day Zero arise and water usage would be restricted to 50L per day or less?

- Yes
- No

What is your motivation for this?

9. Taking above mentioned statement into consideration, would you consider going to another university in a different province to further your studies?

- Definitely
- Possibly
- Not at all

10. Where would you rank UCT now on a Top 5 list, taking the water crisis into consideration and the scarce availability thereof should Day Zero happen in the future? (1 being the highest, 5 being the lowest)

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX E

Summarising table

How would the possible decision to leave the University of Cape Town affect the university's brand image – a qualitative research study.

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/Sources	Lit Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
investigate the impact that Day Zero will have on the decision making process of existing students regarding continuity of studies at the institution should water become difficult to obtain.	What influence will Day Zero have on the decision of returning students to further their studies at UCT and how will that affect the brand image of the institution as a result?	This study will explore how students perceive the University of Cape Town (UCT) in context of the water crisis and how this perception might influence their decision whether to return, or enrol elsewhere.	Aaker, Bonnema, J. & Van Der Walldt, D. Bradshaw, G.S., Espinoza, S. & Hausman, S. Chen, C. De Jager, J.W. & Du Plooy, A.T. Keller, K. Lockwood, R.C. and Hadd, J. Mourad, M., Ennew, C. and Kortam, W. Smith, R. and Ennew, C. Wiese, M., van Heerden, C. and Jordaan, Y.	Theme 1: The evaluation criteria of the Decision Making Process Theme 2: Student satisfaction at higher education level Theme 3: Brand image of University Education Theme 4: Ranking of universities Theme 5: Brand equity in higher education Theme 6: Brand loyalty of	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology Interpretive (anti-positivist) epistemology will be suitable as the reality of the research would have to be interpreted. Ontology Realist ontology. Based on attempting to view things accurately from either a social, visual or emotional perspective, specifically looking at the	Qualitative method	Semi structured interviews and surveys.	Ethical considerations: Respect, Beneficence, Confidentiality, Informed consent and communities	Student would remain at UCT should "Day Zero" arise and will still rank in at as top university of their choice. .	Increase scope of primary research to university management and increase the scale of the study to a larger sample
						Population Population Parameters Students of UCT				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions / Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	

Helping UCT in knowing the impact Day Zero will have on the decision making process of students to further their studies at the university and how this will affect their ranking in the minds	How much current students have researched into the water situation and how it will affect them if they stay at the university ?	Impact in terms of how Day Zero would affect people's lives. Brand equity Day Zero Higher Education Student decision making Brand image	Aaker's model of brand equity. The decision-making process. Macro environmental issues such as socio-cultural and the natural environment.	universities based on Aaker's Model Theme 7: Branding in Higher Education (HE) Theme 8: The Gap Model of Service Quality Theme 9: Destination branding applied to universities Theme 10: The availability of water as a factor of student success	students of UCT with regards to their perceptions and opinions of the water crisis Axiology Research should provide you with the relevant information and data to your initial question, in order for the research to be of meaningful and beneficial value to someone else.	Probability Sampling method Semi structured interviews and surveys. Convenience sampling would be the easiest and most accessible. Size 7 semi-structured interviews	Unit of Analysis The data generated from interviews, surveys, primary and secondary sources. Data Analysis Method(s) Interpreting and understanding the different results of info	Being limited by time and difficulty of finding students to participate in the research study restricted the scale of the study as well.	Determining the influence of the water crisis on the student decision making process and how it will affect brand image of UCT.	
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SAFE ASSIGN

Final Research Report (POE)

Assignments ▾

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1% overall match

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RESEARRCH FINAL DOCUMENT

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to gain more accurate insights and