



Brand promise versus experience: A cross-sectional qualitative investigation
into Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign within the context first year students'
experience.

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research report submitted for the Honours BA Strategic Brand Communication to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.

Signature

A black rectangular box redacting the signature.

Date: 29th November 2021

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ABSTRACT

Higher Educational Institutions make use of branding and marketing tactics the same way any other organisation does. Big marketing schemes, campaigns, and social media marketing is just some of the tactics that are used to entice prospective students. While this is completely valid in the chaotic and competitive markets they find themselves in, it can lead to over promising and under delivery. Looking within the context of Vega, this research looks at whether first year students believe that the brand promise from the “Don’t Settle” campaign has been kept based on their experiences at Vega. An interpretivism approach was used to conduct the qualitative research. An in-depth interview with Vega’s marketing manager was used to provide a better understanding into the “Don’t Settle” campaign. An online focus group with ten first year BA strategic Brand Communication Vega student was conducted to collect their opinions and experiences of Vega and how they feel they have experienced Vega’s brand promise.

The interview produced a wealth of information regarding the thought process behind the “Don’t Settle” campaign that helped provide the study with more context. The focus group finding was categorised into three themes: brand promise, stakeholder expectation, and stakeholder experience. There was a distinct unhappiness with the students as they felt that there was more to offer at Vega, but it was not being utilised. But they did recognise that they are still in their first year and have lots to learn. There was also the point brought up that there is currently a pandemic and that this would be hampering their experience and causing it to not align with the brand promise.

This research has provided Vega with a qualitative understanding of how their first-year students are experiencing their brand as compared to the brand promise laid out in the “Don’t Settle” campaign.

Key Words: Brand Promise; Stakeholder Expectations; Stakeholder Experience; Brand Equity

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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1. Introduction

This research aims to provide an understanding into Vega's first year students' experiences and compare them to the expectation set by Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign. This chapter will outline the overall intentions of the research and set the foundation for the rest of the research. The background to the research will be discussed followed by the rationale as to why it is a worthwhile study. The problem statement and the purpose statement will provide a defined intention for the research. The research question and research objective will round off the chapter.

1.2. Contextualisation

Everyday stakeholders interact with brands and these brands make promises about their product or service and how the stakeholder will experience it. But whether stakeholders experience these promises is often overlooked. Some brands adhere strictly to delivering on their promise, while others loosely use their promise to entice stakeholders. This is no different in the context of the Higher Education Institutions in South Africa with each one of them trying to differentiate themselves to attract prospective students. A study conducted by Neves and Hewitt (2021), found that since the pandemic nearly 30% of first year students' expectations for their studies were not met when compared with what was advertised to them. This is an indication that Higher Education Institutions, as brands, are not managing to deliver on the promises made to their current or prospective students. This research is going to investigate whether brand promises are being delivered on, and how the stakeholder interprets these promises within the context of their experiences.

The IIE's Vega and their "Don't Settle" campaign will be used as a case study for this research. The "Don't Settle" campaign was released in the June of 2020 and is primarily used in Vega's recruitment efforts. The central focus of the campaign is an advertisement by the same name. As the name would suggest, the core message of the advertisement is to not settle. "Don't settle for a job you want to snooze the alarm on... Don't settle for the ceiling when the stars are in clear sight" (see IIE Vega School – Don't Settle). Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign proposes the idea that one must not compromise on their passions, ideals, aspirations, and their career choices. It also promotes the idea that students and prospective students must not limit themselves by accepting the first available option offered to them if

it does not align with their dreams (Woolacott, 2021). The message and idea of the campaign is a relevant one for the ever-fluctuating marketing and branding environment.

1.3. Rationale

All brands make promises to their stakeholders. It is important for brands to follow through on their promise in order to create a strong brand equity (Frederiksen, 2020). Higher Education Institutions are no exception. A brand promise is a commitment that the brand makes to its stakeholders about their product, service, or aspect of their business. Brand promises can directly influence a brand's bottom line (Calagna, Rush & Reilly, 2017). If customers feel that the brand is failing to meet the brand promise, they will stop being loyal customers and turn to competitors. It will also influence a brand equity within the marketplace where customers will be willing to pay more if they receive the services they were promised without difficulties or complications (Thimothy, 2021). Retaining customers is also much less expensive than acquiring new ones which is another reason for brands to follow through on their brand promise (Wertz, 2018). The Advertising campaigns are primarily where brand promises can be found, and this research will be using Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign as a case study to explore this. The intention of this research is to identify students' perceptions of the "Don't Settle" campaign in order to establish if the core message resonates with the students and aligns with their experiences. The outcome of this research will provide a greater understanding of how the students experience Vega as a brand and identify the degree to which Vega is delivering on their brand promise. Furthermore, the findings of this research will allow for recommendations to be made for future campaigns, potentially strengthening the brand equity of the IIE's Vega. The research would also contribute to the conversations around brand equity in the context of private higher educational institutions.

1.4. Problem Statement

Are brands delivering on the promises made to their stakeholders as portrayed in their advertisements, and whether the stakeholders experience these promises through their interactions with the brand.

1.5. Purpose Statement

To analyse Vega's advertisement campaign "Don't Settle" and determine if first year students from the BA Strategic Brand Communication course believe that the promise of this campaign has been kept based on their experiences at Vega.

1.6. Research Question

Are first year BA Strategic Brand Communication Vega students experiencing the promise made in the "Don't Settle" campaign?

1.7. Research Objective

The objective of this research is to investigate and understand whether the Vega first year BA Strategic Brand Communication students are experiencing the brand promises laid out by Vega in the "Don't Settle" campaign.

1.8. Chapter Overview

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Chapter one outlines the overall intention and direction of the research by highlighting the background, rationale, research problem and research objective.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will discuss and explore existing theoretical modules and academic literature that will inform on the topic at hand and provide a foundation for which the research will be constructed upon.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm, approach and design are discussed in this chapter. The parameters for the population are clearly laid out and the sampling method used is explained. An explanation of the chosen data collection method is provided and how it was executed along with the data analysis method.

CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Chapter four presents the findings from the analysed data and provided an interpretation of the findings within the context of the research problem. There is also a discussion as to the trustworthiness of the research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter rounds off the research and provides a conclusion to the study with how the research question was answered and an evaluation of the success of the research. It provides recommendations for any future research that may be conducted on the topic with limitations and ethical considerations discussed.

1.9. Conclusion

Understanding the experiences of first year Vega students in relation to what was promised in Vega's "Don't Settle" advertisement is important for future campaigns and meeting stakeholder expectations. Chapter two will unpack existing literature and theoretical models that will provide a framework for the research.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

“The simplest act is to make a promise. However, a promise is only good if it is kept” – Randall Rozin (2012: 247). As much as that is true for humans, it is also very true for brands. With mass media omnipresent in today society, people are continuously exposed, and bombarded with information and messages from brands that are trying to cut through the clutter and be noticed. This is when brands make promises that can be a little too good to be true.

This chapter will be exploring theoretical foundations, a literature review, and a conceptualisation of key terms. Social identity theory, double vortex brand model, and Keller’s customer-based brand equity model are the three theoretical foundations that are discussed and will provide a framework to which this research can be constructed. The literature review covers four topics: Higher Education Institutions as a brand; stakeholder expectations, stakeholder experience; and brand promise. The conceptualization of key terms provides a better understanding to terms that are frequently used through the research.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

A theoretical framework or foundation is a vital piece to the puzzle in research. This section provides a framework that will be the starting point for conceptualisation through the use of theories and models that are academically recognised. The theories and models are used to help explain the research problem and drive the research forward (Bezuidenhout, 2014). Social identity theory and a double vortex brand model will be used as they are relevant to the research. They will provide insight into the key components of this research which are: a brands relationship with its stakeholders, the interpretation of information, and how people perceive themselves when aligned with a brand.

2.2.1. Social Identity Theory

Henri Tajfel's social identity theory was developed in 1979 and looks at a person’s cognitive process when identifying with a group or when analysing another group (McLeod, 2019). Social identity is how a person perceives themselves based on their group membership. Humans need to feel a part of a larger group as this provides them with a higher level of

self-esteem and acceptance. This leads to people categorising themselves into various groups that they perceive themselves to belong to (Trepte & Loy, 2017). This in turn leads to the idea of an in-group, also known as “us”, and an out-group, also known as “them”. There is a comparison between the different groups whereby the out-group is perceived negatively due to stereotypes and generalisations, and the in-group as being better and more similar to one another (McLeod, 2019). There are three mental stages one goes through when evaluating “us” and “them”. 1) Social categorisation is when people categorise themselves and others in order to make sense of their environment. 2) Social identification is when people adapt to the group, they have categorised themselves into and take on some of their traits. 3) Social comparison is when people will compare their group to other groups in order to build and maintain their self-esteem (McLeod, 2019). This theory will help identify why Vega students have chosen Vega as they attempt to find an institution of higher education (group) that they identify with. It can also help identify what traits or characteristics students identified with when considering Vega over other institutions.

2.2.2. A double Vortex Brand Model

A double vortex brand model was proposed by de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley in 1998. It is an improvement on the original atomic model that was developed by de Chernatony in 1993. It is known as a mental model that assist in decision making and helps people understand the environment around them through the use of capturing and processing data around them (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998). The layered and complex nature of a brand is the perfect use of a mental model as it helps layout all the various components, such as in the double vortex brand model (See figure 1).

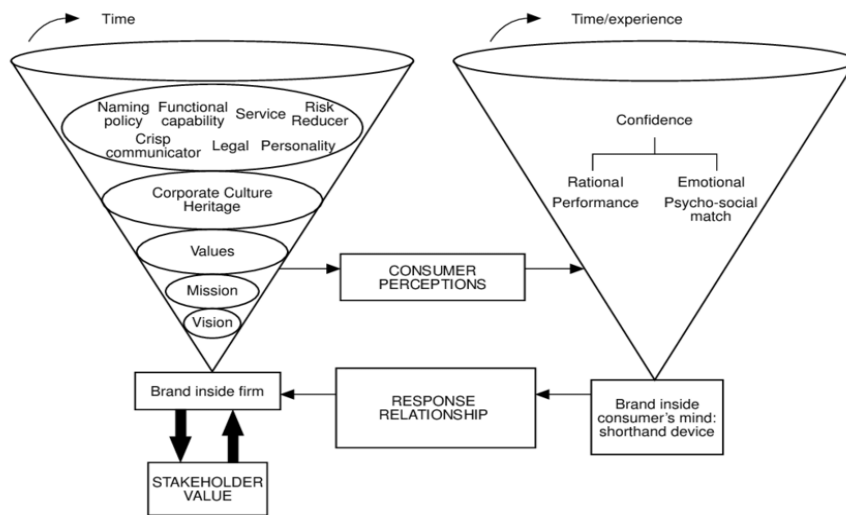


Figure 1: de Chernatony, L; Dall'Olmo Riley, F. 1998. Double vortex brand model. (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998).

The model makes use of vortices to demonstrate that the components are not stagnant and that as the brand strategy changes, so will the components and the consumers perceptions. The vortex on the left is in relation to the organisation and all the component that make up the brand. The top of the vortex is what is most visible and clear to outside stakeholders. The further down it goes, the less outside stakeholders will necessarily see, and it starts to look at the internal components that make up a brand from within the organisation, such as vision, mission statements and corporate culture (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). It is important to analysis all these components when looking at a brand as the top layer is only the tip of the iceberg, whereas the lower layers are the unseen core of a brand. Stakeholder will not breakdown the structure of the brand, but rather analysis it as a whole. The right vortex is the stakeholder's overall confidence in the brand which is broken down into two components: rational, which describes the brand's price-performance characteristic, and emotional, which is the social and psychological benefits of the brand (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). These two components influence each other in the vortex and are in constant flux due to the input of the brand vortex. The response from the stakeholder's vortex feeds back to the brand vortex and will then influence those components. This model will help provide a foundation in analysing Vega as a brand and the students perception of the brand and how it feeds back to Vega.

2.2.3. Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity Model

A brand equity is an important aspect that cannot be overlooked. Aaker (1991: 27) defined brand equity as “a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers”. Brand equity is essentially what the product or service is worth to the customer over and about its functional use.

Keller developed a model called Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) that is used as a framework by brand managers to establish, grow and evaluate a brands equity. CBBE is all about the customers perception of that brand within the marketplace and can fluctuate depending on the marketplace environment (see Keller's Brand Equity Model Explained (CBBE Resonance Pyramid), 2021). The model is a pyramid that has four levels that all focus on achieving an outcome that will contribute towards the growth of brand equity (see figure 2 below).

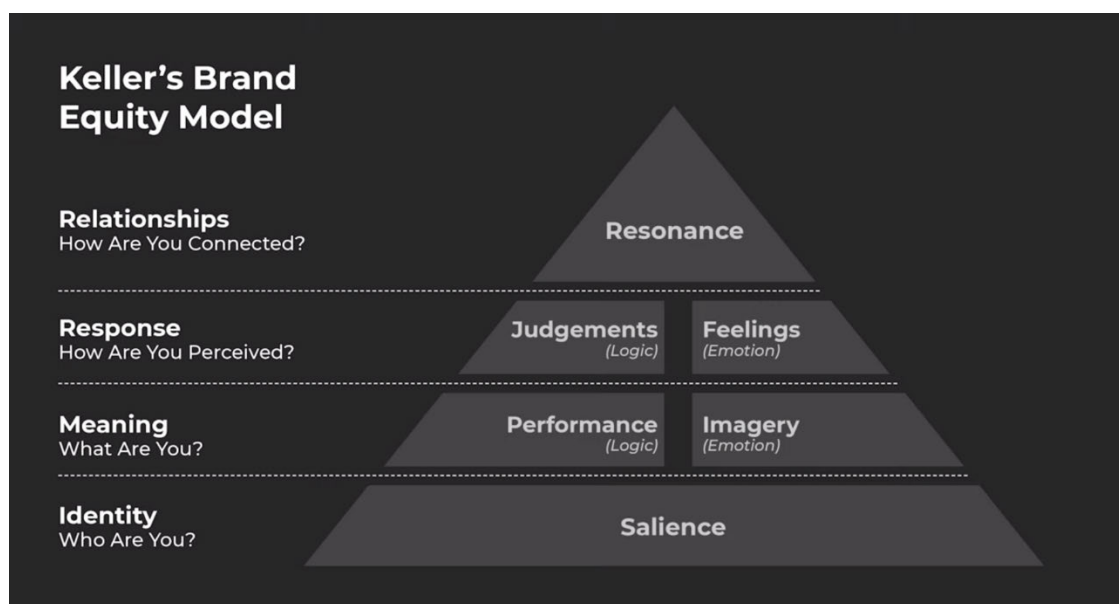


Figure 2: Keller, K. 1993. *Keller's Brand Equity Model*. (Brand Master Academy, 2021)

The first level of the pyramid is identity. It deals with brand recognition and brand awareness. The audience needs to be aware of who the brand is within the marketplace and what needs will it satisfy (Keller, Apéria and Georgson, 2012). This is an important level as it is the foundation of the whole pyramid and can affect everything above it.

The second level is meaning and answers the consumers' question, what is the brand. This is where the brand will show what value it offers within the marketplace and how it differentiates itself from its competitors. The level is broken into two different sections,

performance, and imagery. Performance is about demonstrating how the brand fits the needs of the consumer (see Keller's Brand Equity Model Explained (CBBE Resonance Pyramid), 2021). This is where the effectiveness, durability, reliability, design and price of the product or service are judge by the consumer (Keller et al., 2012). Imagery is how the brand aligns itself with the consumer on a social and psychological level. The brand needs to align itself with the consumers user profile, usage situation and their personal values.

Response is the third level of the pyramid and this deals with what the consumer thinks and feels about the brand. This has to do with their perception of the brand and is split into judgement, which is the logical thinking, and feelings, which are the emotions (see Keller's Brand Equity Model Explained (CBBE Resonance Pyramid), 2021). Judgement is the conclusion that people come to about the role that the brand plays in their lives. This deals with the quality, credibility, and superiority of the brand. Feelings are what emotions are evoked through the imagery and messaging used by the brand. Is the brand fun and exciting, promote self-respect, or a sense of security?

The top of the pyramid is relationships, how are you connected. This is when the brand is resonating with the audience on a deep emotional level. The audience will be self-identifying with the brand, and this is the ultimate goal. The consumers will align to the brand beliefs and who the brand is at an essence (see Keller's Brand Equity Model Explained (CBBE Resonance Pyramid), 2021). This will create loyal customers and brand advocates and engage with the brand and promote it willingly (Keller, et al., 2012).

This model will be useful in this study as it provides a framework to place the first year Vega students within and better understand how they identify and perceive Vega as a brand.

2.3. Literature Review

Brands surrounds us every day and make promises in order to persuade us to join their cause or buy their product. This extends from well know retail brands to institutions of higher education. But are these brands following through with the experiences that they promised their stakeholders? There is a lack of information surrounding institutions of higher education acting as brands and making promises to prospective students about their future experiences once enrolled. The subsection below reviews literature on Higher Education Institutions as a brand; stakeholder expectations, stakeholder experience; and brand positions.

2.3.1. Higher Education institutions as a Brand

Higher Education Institutions have had to start acting like corporations when it comes to branding in an age when there is just so much competition and clutter while trying to be recognised. Some higher education institutions put significant financial backing into their advertising and branding campaigns to try and stand out from the crowd. They need to show what makes the distinctive and different from other higher education institutions. Chapleo (2009) says that universities in the United Kingdoms are good at showing what makes them distinct from one another, but very few can be considered fully formed brands. More than just the distinguishing feature are needed to form a brand. Higher education institutions need to maintain a relative market position by increase their reputation, identifying and the way in which they communicate with stakeholders such as students (Rutter, Lettice and Nadeau, 2016). The brand positioning of a higher educational institution starts to introduce traits that identify a brand. These traits are reflected in how the higher education institution markets themselves and what areas they focus on in order to attract prospective students. ZCAS University in Zambia was the focus of a study that determined that the brand traits that attracted postgraduate students were teaching quality, reputation, student support, financial costs, and facilities (Kayombo, Mudenda, Mweemba, and Nduli, 2019). Another aspect that acts as brand traits or qualities is when a higher education institution is specialised in a particular field. Ologie Student Union (2016) reported that 25% would prefer or only consider specialised higher education institutions. The branding and marketing of a higher education institution is dependent on many factors that require special attention. Chapleo (2009) makes the counter argument that commercial style branding does not work in the higher education institution as it is so broad in nature. With so many different disciplines it is difficult to make a brand position that fits every faculty. This leads to the intentional underselling in terms of branding in particular areas or faculties in order to focus on the strengths of the institution (Chapleo, 2009).

2.3.2. Stakeholder Expectations

Expectations of brands are built upon preconceived ideas, marketing and branding efforts, and past experiences. Expectations are difficult to manage and even predict as everyone interprets information differently. Wylie (2018) suggests that to deal with expectations, the focus needs to be on marketing. A brand needs to market themselves a providing extraordinary customer experiences. And then living up to it is the difficult bit. But where is

the best place to markets and shape these expectations? Prospective postgraduate students at ZCAS University in Zambia were found to use new and tradition mediums to source information (Kayombo, *et al.*, 2019). But with prospective Generation Z students, it was found that they only used online sources such as websites, forums, articles, and social media for higher education institution information. It was also noted that attempting to make contact prospective students on social media lead negative feedback and lower interaction (Ologie Student Union, 2016). The image that a university has plays a role in developing stakeholders' expectations. It is the same as judging a book by its cover and first impressions. A good brand or institution image, which is how the public perceive a brand, is linked to student's expectations and satisfaction (Munshi, 2019). Pirozzi (2021) says that a relationship is key in managing stakeholder expectations, otherwise it can lead to misunderstandings and gaps in the relationship that may be difficult to repair in the future.

2.3.3. Stakeholder Experience

Stakeholder experiences are what can define a particular brand or organisation. This can be either positives, like exceptional customer experiences, or negative, like a rude employee or not living up to expectations. Stakeholder experience in higher education institutions is often overlooked or underappreciated as it is intangible. This may be due to pure ignorance or simple misinterpretation, but it cannot be underappreciated any longer. Higher education institutions need to have a built-in customer experience measurement according to Wylie (2018). It is also important to do something with that information. It needs to be shared with marketing teams so that they may strategies and alter their approach, especially when it comes to brand promises and building stakeholders expectations. The experiences at higher education institutions are influenced by the quality of the service provided. The awareness of the brand and quality of service is directly linked to brand loyalty, especially in higher education institutions (Abbas, 2019).

2.3.4. Brand Promise

If customers are not really at the heart of the organisation, then what is really driving the business? (Wylie, 2018). Brand promise is an integral part of what makes up a brand. The marketing that a brand does is essentially making a promise to the stakeholders. Higher education institutions essentially act as brands as they promote and entice prospective students to attend their institution. They make promises on what students will experience

and gain from them. It was found through a study that Millennials want authenticity in a brand and that one of the ways to do this is through the coherence between brand promise and the delivery of it (Pattuglia & Mingione, 2017). In the marketing of universities, it was found that traditional values such as teaching and research at universities in the United Kingdom are well communicated but there is a lack of the communication about social responsibility and the university environment (Chapleo, Carrillo Durán & Díaz, 2011). When looking at attempting to deliver on a brand promise, the 4P's of marketing are a good foundation. People, process, physical setting, and product is what makes up the 4P's. Each one plays a critical role in the delivery because if one is missing, it will impact the other factors and be incomplete. It is also important to emphasise that all internal stakeholders have a "playbook" about the brand promise and how to deliver on it (Poore, 2018). It is argued that at a higher education institution, to have a brand promise that represents the entire spectrum of the institutions activities and faculties is impossible. They suggest that the brand promise should rather be a reference point that is referred to when making operational and marketing decisions. In this case, the core brand promise should denote a particular point of difference to both internal and external stakeholders (Furey, Springer & Parsons, 2014).

2.4. Conceptualisation of Key Terms

2.4.1. Brand Promise

Brand promise is the ideology that the organisation or brand expresses to its customers through its advertisements. This can be in terms of their product or services, their experiences in dealing with the brand, or the brand image (Workfront, 2018).

2.4.2. Brand Positioning

Brand positioning is important when it comes to the marketing and branding of a higher education institution. These will be the features that help distinguish it from other higher education institutions. This could be in the form of specialisation in studies, or top of the range facilities and utilities. Each higher education institution will have to find its own distinct feature (Chapleo, 2009).

2.4.3. Stakeholder Expectation

Stakeholder expectations are a mixer of the stakeholders' perceptions, and the brands promises. These expectations are the hopes and ideals that the stakeholder hope to encounter when dealing with brand.

2.4.4. Stakeholder Experience

Stakeholder experience is what the stakeholder actually encounters when they interact with the brand. This can be either positive, negative, or even neutral. This experience can be based online or in a physical setting for higher education institution. The experience that a stakeholder, or student, has can determine whether they will return for the second semester and if they decide to continue with their postgraduation studies (Estes, 2017).

2.4.5. Brand Equity

Brand equity is what the value that the customer puts on a brand that is above and beyond that functional value. Brand equity deals with the emotional connection that the customer has with the brand, and it can be positive or negative (Williams, 2021).

2.5. Conclusion

“Discoveries are made by pursuing possibilities suggested by existing knowledge.” – Michael Polanyi (Polanyi & Porsch, 2008: 188).

The theoretical foundation provided will help frame the research going forwards and provide some credibility. The use of social identity theory will help provide a reason for students choosing Vega over other higher education institutions. The use of the double vortex model enables an investigation into the components that make up a brand, the way of thinking considered by the stakeholder, and the relationship between the brand its stakeholders. This will provide insight into how Vega came about to their brand promise and the various components that help either enforce or hinder it. Keller's customer-based brand equity model provides insight into how Vega students value what Vega has to offer.

The literature review looked at four different concepts: higher education as a brand, stakeholder expectation, stakeholder experience, and brand promise. Literature was review on each of these topics and synthesised together to provide context and understanding on

what has already been said about each topic. The next chapter will explore the methods and means in which the research will be conducted.

3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is on the methodology of the research and contains the research paradigm, the research design and approach, the population, sampling, data collection and data analysis methods. The research makes use of an interpretivism paradigm which aligns with the qualitative nature of the research. The data collection method consists of two different methods, a focus group and an interview. The population for the focus group was defined by ease of access to students and the interview was specifically for an employee of Vega. The research makes use of a thematic analysis to analyse the data collected.

3.2. Research Paradigm

Interpretivism is the paradigm being used in this research. The interpretivism paradigm aligns itself with the qualitative approach to this research. In simple terms, interpretivism asserts that people are profoundly different to objects and need to be studied in the environment that they are found within. The aim of it is to successfully describe meaningful social interaction to provide a better understanding of human behaviour (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Interpretivism concentrates on the fact that each human has their own interpretation of social interactions and that not everyone has the same experiences. This is where symbolic interactionism, which is discussed in the theoretical foundation, and interpretivism overlap (Nieuwenhuis, 2014). This links in with the first-year students' opinions and experiences at Vega as each student would have different experiences, whether that is good or bad. Interpretivism is subject-centric in that it wants to see everything from the subject's perspective and not from the observer's perspective (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This is crucial to interpretivism as it is one of the defining factors when compared to other paradigms such as positivism.

The epistemological position of interpretivism states that facts are not objective and that they depend on the societal context they are found within. Facts and knowledge are fluid and are embedded within a meaning system that is dictated by society (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This position is important in this research as the students will have differing opinions about Vega's brand promise or interpretation of the "Don't Settle" campaign, but neither are right nor wrong. It is also important to note that because of this, the findings of this research cannot be generalised as opinions and experiences will differ from campus to campus. The complex understanding of each unique world is highly valued by interpretivist and this comes with the

cost of adding value that shape the research. But not to the extent of blatant bias and manipulation of the data, rather the researcher's interpretation of the participants and the data that they provide (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) (Aliyu, Singhry, Adamu & Abubakar, 2015).

3.3. Research Design and Approach

Qualitative research was used as it allowed a non-numeral analysis of peoples thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. This was critical for understanding how Vega students feel towards Vega and whether they felt that the brand promise had been met. The benefits of qualitative research were reaped when analysing the thought process behind the "Don't Settle" campaign. This type of research also aligns with the interpretivism paradigm.

The research was conducted inductively as the research is not attempting to confirm or refute a theory, but rather taking data from the data analysis and data collection and coming to a generalised claim about Vega's brand promise and whether it has been experienced by students.

An explanatory research approach was used. According to Davis (2014), explanatory research is used to explain how and why certain phenomenon occur. While identifying the relationship between two variables, in this case Vega's brand promise in their "Don't Settle" campaign and the students experiences and perceptions, it also attempts to investigate the degree to which these relationships exist.

An ethnographic study was conducted as the research attempted to describe a particular culture or subculture, that being Vega's first year student and Vega as a brand. The look into the first-year students will lean more towards an audience ethnographical study as the research is not examining them in a long-term period (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This makes the study cross-sectional in design as it only investigates a small timeframe. This is due to time constraint with the Honours degree that it is being submitted for.

3.4. Population

This research will make use of two different data collection method which will be fully discussed below. The first collection method will be a focus group and the second will be an interview.

3.4.1. Focus Group

The population parameters for the focus group that has taken place in this research are students that are currently registered at Vega, are undergraduates, in their first year of study, and have been exposed to Vega's marketing campaign. This would make the target population for this research any first year undergraduate Vega students that is currently registered at Vega in the year 2021 and would have been exposed to the "Don't Settle" campaign during registration. The accessible population for this study is first year Durban Vega students that are currently studying BA Strategic Brand Communication full time and have been exposed to Vega's "Don't Settle" marketing campaign.

The reason for choosing first year students from the Vega Durban campus is due to ease of access. This does put a limitation on the research but after a discussion with the researcher's supervisor, it was deemed that only Durban students would be adequate.

3.4.2. Interview

The interview needed to be conducted with an employee from Vega. It cannot just be any employee that works at Vega. It needed to be someone that is involved in the marketing department and that was involved in the creation and development of the "Don't Settle" campaign. It would also need to be someone that is in a managerial position as they would have the best over-view of the campaign.

3.5. Sampling

3.5.1. Focus Group

Non-probability sampling was used for the focus group selection. This type sampling was used as it is difficult to accurately represent the entire population of first year Vega students that are studying BA Strategic Brand Communication through one campus for the focus group. The information regarding the exact population statistics would not be available to the researcher. There was also the matter that the whole target population would not have an equal chance at participating in the research due to restriction such as travel, finances, and the small scale of the research. The sample group was selected by the researcher to best fit the parameters mentioned in the population section (Pascoe, 2014).

This led to purposive sampling being used for the focus group. This allowed for different perspectives and opinions that may vary from each group of people. There was a sample

size of ten BA Strategic Brand Communication first year students that participated in the focus group. Their age, race, and gender were not taken into consideration as they are only required to be first year students studying BA Strategic Brand Communication at Vega.

3.5.2. Interview

Non-probability sampling was used for the interview by making use of purposive sampling. The interview was with the marketing manager from Vega. The marketing manager was involved in the creation, development, and implementation of the “Don’t Settle” campaign with intimate knowledge about the campaign. The reason for choosing to conduct an interview with Vega’s marketing manager was to gain insight into the context of the “Don’t Settle” campaign as to provide the research with a holistic view.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

3.6.1. Focus Group

The main data collection method was a focus group. A focus group is essentially a group interview aimed to determine and understand attitudes, perceptions, and experience of the group members (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The researcher chose focus groups as the main data collection method as it was determined to be the best way to get multiple opinions effectively and efficiently. It is also useful as participants can bounce ideas off on another and there is not pressure or awkwardness of a one-on-one interview. It allowed the researcher to collect a deeper understanding of why the participants feel about certain aspects of Vega and the brand promise as people can describe feeling better vocally as opposed to written answers. The focus group happened on Blackboard Collaborate as this was the most convenient place for the first years to meet with the researcher and it is a platform that everyone is familiar with. The focus group happening online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conducting this focus group online is not ideal as there is often internet connection problems and a sense of disconnect from the participants, the upside is that the whole session can easily be recorded to make the data analysis process easier. The focus group took around 45 minutes to complete.

3.6.2. Interview

An in-depth interview will be used to gather data on the “Don’t Settle” campaign. An in-depth interview is useful for gathering rich information on a particular topic as the research proposes open-ended question to the participant. These types of questions allow for the participant to explain themselves and clarify on points that otherwise would have been too vague to use in the research (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). This in-depth interview took place on Microsoft Teams as this was the most convenient for the marketing manager of Vega and allowed for the session to be recorded. The in-depth interview took around 30 minutes. The in-depth interview will have to freedom to switch from a conversation to an interview as some question can be impromptu due to a previous response.

3.7. Application of Data Collection Methods

3.7.1. Focus Group

The researcher did not have direct contact to the first-year strategic brand communication students as due to COVID-19 restrictions all classes were online. The research got in touch with Vega’s relationship navigator for the strategic brand communication course through email and asked if they could help by sending an email to the first-year students. The email explained the nature of the research and why the researcher needed to get into contact with the first-year students. Attached to the email was the ethical clearance letter for this research and other documents to support what was said in the email. The email also included a message for the relationship navigator to send out to the student. The message included a brief introduction, a brief explanation of the research that is being conducted, stating a time and date that the focus group will be taking place, and the platform that will be used. It was ended off with a request for them to contact the research for more details and if they would like to participate in the focus group.

The relationship navigator replied saying that even though I had the ethical clearance and relevant documents, they had to acquire permission from the vice principle of Vega to send out the email to the first years. This delayed the message going out but after about a day approval was given and the email got sent out. The day before the focus group there had been no responses to the emails and the researcher had to all off the focus group and reschedule it. After some investigation it was found that the majority of the first years did not know how to confidently operate or have access to Zoom, the platform which had been

selected. The focus group was rescheduled and Blackboard Collaborate was selected to be the platform on which the focus group would be conducted.

The focus group started with a brief introduction of the researcher and what the research project was all about to provide the participants with context and a reminder that the focus group was voluntary and there was no obligation to answer questions that they did not feel comfortable with along with some basic and brief ground rules on how the focus group would be conducted. After that the recording of the session was started. The “Don’t Settle” advertisement was shown to them as some of the questions are based off this material and to help remind the participants of the content they would have seen the previous year while registering. The questions were then asked to the participants and each of them were allowed to answer. Participants would often say they agreed with what someone had said before and even expand upon it while others would give new or conflicting opinions as each participants’ experience is unique. The focus group was well behaved and respectful of one another. There was no domineering voice, but it was a little difficult to get them to open up in the beginning as they all seemed a little nervous. But as the focus group went on the participants became more relaxed and open in answering questions.

3.7.2. Interview

The researcher received the contact information for the marketing manager at Vega through their co-supervisor. An email was sent out to contact the marketing manager at Vega outline who the researcher was, what their research was about, why they were being contacted and requesting if they could assist in the research process by participating in an interview. This email contained the ethical clearance letter for the research so that the marketing manager knew that this was an IIE sanctioned research project. The marketing manager at Vega was more than happy to participate in the research project and a meeting date and time was set up on Microsoft Teams. A follow up email was sent to confirm the date and time of the meeting for the interview. This email included two consent forms that the participant was required to fill out and return before the interview as to comply with the ethical regulation laid out by the IIE. The first consent form was for the participants and the second was to acquire permission to record the interview. Both consent forms were sent back on the day of the interview.

Overall, the interview went very smoothly and lots of information was obtained. The meeting started off with an exchange of pleasantries. Once both the researcher and the marketing

manager at Vega were ready, the recording of the session was started. Each question was asked within the context of Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign. Some of the responses given answered other questions that were lined up for the interview. Other responses prompted more questions that had not previously been thought of before.

3.8. Data Analysis Method

Qualitative data analysis was described as the progression of bringing direction, shape and meaning to large amounts of raw data (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). It is important to do the data analysis carefully and methodically as it can influence the whole research results and findings. Thematic analysis will be used to analysis the data collected from both the focus group and interview. A thematic analysis is generally used in qualitative research when interview transcribes are used. The data is closely examined to identify common themes such as topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that are repeated often (Caulfield, 2019). There are multiple layers to raw data, and it is important to understand each layer in order to have a holistic view of the data within the context of the research

In this research, the data presented particular themes that were useful in understanding what seems to be a whole lot of text. The researcher started by becoming familiar with the data. Since both the focus group and the interview were online, a recording of the sessions was available to go over and transcribe. The transcription was done on Microsoft Word which helped to become familiar with the data.

The next step in the process was coding the data. Through the use of a colour coding system, words or phrases of similar nature were grouped together. The colour coding system made it easier to spot patterns and trends in the data. The groups were given a code and provided an overview of the common points that are recurring in the data.

Codes that were similar in some respects, they were put together under a theme that best describes them. The themes are quite broad in nature, such as "experience". The researcher had some predetermined themes prior to the analysis but more were added as the data required it. After reviewing the themes, it was noticed that some themes were not as useful as previously thought and were disregarded. From the remaining themes, the write up of the findings and the interpretation of them within the context of the study could begin.

3.9. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a term used in qualitative research. It is the generalised term that encompasses the quantitative terms validity and reliability. Because qualitative research deals with people perception and opinions, it is impossible to attach how reliable or valid an emotion or opinion is (Koonin, 2014). Trustworthiness is broken down into 4 different components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The credibility refers to whether the correct data collection tools were used and how accurately the researcher interpreted the data in the data analysis process (Koonin, 2014). This research made use of two different tools in the collection process, namely a focus group and an in-depth interview. This ensure that there is enough data collected to be analysis. The analysis process becomes credible through the use of a recognise analysing method.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to a similar situation and yield a similar result (Koonin, 2014). The research is specific to Vega and the Durban Campus as this is where the students are located. This research can be repeated at other Vega campuses across South Africa, but the results may vary as each campus has different atmospheres, lectures, and facilities. The method can be transferred but the results will vary depending on a variety of factors.

Dependability refers to quality of the integration between the data collection, data analysis, and the theory generated from the research (Koonin, 2014). This research made use of valid data collection and analysis methods that have previously worked well together.

Confirmability refers to if the findings of this research stem from the data collection (Koonin, 2014). This is a very important aspect to consider as it is a consideration for both trustworthiness and ethics. Altering the findings to meet a preconceived idea is unethical and will ruin the whole study.

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter lays out the heart and soul of the research. The soul being the interpretivist paradigm along with the qualitative nature of the research. The heart of the research is population, sampling, data collection and data analysis. The next chapter will cover the findings from the data that was analysed. An interpretation of the data will be provided, and it will all be put into context.

4. CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will present and provide an analysis of the data collected from Durban first year Ba Strategic Brand Communication students on their experience at Vega in relation to Vega's brand promise laid out in the "Don't Settle" campaign. The was collected through a focus group with the students along with an interview with the marketing manager at Vega. Word clouds and graphs will be used to illustrate the different findings and make it easier to extract data. The findings of this research cannot be generalised to the whole population as this is a small-scale study and the limitation. The information obtained in this research is valuable to understanding the experiences and perceptions of first year Ba Strategic Brand Communication Vega students on the Durban campus.

4.2. Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

4.2.1. Interview

The interview with Vega's marketing manager did not necessarily produce any findings but was conducted to provide a background to the "Don't Settle" campaign and provide answers that the students experiences can be compared to.

The brand promise of Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign is one that encapsulates their philosophy of challenging the status quo, be a component of positive change in society, be bold, be confident, and find the passion that drive you. Well Vega is not directly saying be the best, it is telling its students to not settle for something when you know there is more.

A topic brought up in the discussion of the “Don’t Settle” is the demand for Vega students in the working world. The marketing team is often approached for students to work internship at agencies because of the quality of the students and the way they think. This speaks to the quality and respect that the IIE Vega degree carries in industry.



Figure 3: Word Cloud from Interview

The marketing manager pointed out that the “Don’t Settle” campaign has aligned nicely with the COVID-19 pandemic and the chaos the world finds itself in. The “Don’t Settle” campaign was planned to launch in March 2020 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it got delayed until June 2020 as they felt the timing was not right for such a strong and bold message in a time of confusion and high anxiety. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more students are wanting to pursue their passions instead of settling for the run of the mill degree.

4.2.2. Focus Group

Theme 1: Brand Promise

“What were some of the features and promise of the “Don’t Settle” campaign that encouraged you to register at Vega instead of another tertiary institutions?”

There was an overwhelming response that creativity and the aspect of practical work featured in the advertisement drew the students towards Vega. Two of the students mentioned that the fact it was an IIE degree attracted them with one of them mentioning the British Accreditation Counsel at the end of the advertisement. A respondent mentioned the groups of students in the advertisement attracted him to Vega as he was looking for likeminded people.

From these findings it can be concluded that Vega being a creative school and being marketed in the “Don’t Settle” campaign as such is a main feature that attracts students as other tertiary institutions do not offer the same level of creativity. It is also worth mentioning that the IIE’s name on a degree carries gravitas which the students recognise.

Theme 2: Stakeholder Expectation

“What was the main idea that you took away from the “Don’t Settle” advertisement?”

There was the general consensus that the “Don’t Settle” campaign portrayed the message that the institution was not conventional in nature and strived for an “outside of the box” type of thinking. A respondent mentioned that creativity was a big take away for them.

From this we can see that there the “Don’t Settle” advertisement creates an impression of differentiation when it comes to education and strives to stand out from the crowd.

“What features do you feel could contribute to the “Don’t Settle” campaign and its brand promise?”

There was a general call for more practical workshops or extra murals so that the students could channel and refine their skills. While one of the respondents pointed out that they were only in first year, they felt that so far, they had mainly been doing theoretical work and not engaging enough with the practical aspects of their degree. There was also a discussion about a mentorship program with lectures and selected students to help further their skills. One student brought up the point about more social activities on campus with another student

expanding on that point saying that it could lead to collaborative content that could benefit Vega. It was suggested that there would be dedicated campus staff to deal with that. With all of that said, one student pointed out that COVID-19 has restricted lots of activities on campus.

These findings suggest that the students feel that they are not engaging enough on campus and with fellow students. While this is partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions on campus, this could be due to students feeling that their skills and potential is going unnoticed and unutilised.

Theme 3: Stakeholder Experience

“How have you experienced the brand promises of the “Don’t Settle” campaign?”

There was a group of four students that felt that they had been let down by Vega and essentially told to settle when there were not enough students registered for the strategic copywriting degree. While they did say that they have learnt to love their degree, they do feel it was ironic and disheartening. Another student mentioned that he felt like Vega had all the potential to follow through with their brand promise but felt there were various factors currently restricting them.

A couple of students mentioned that they thought a lot more practical work would be involved in their degree from their perception of the advertisement and feel that this has not been met. Although the responses were generally negative, most students did say that they liked what they had experienced so far at Vega.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the students at Vega are enjoying themselves and like the institution but feel that there has been some inconsistency when it comes to the brand promise of the “Don’t Settle” campaign and what they perceived they would be doing in their first year of Ba Strategic Brand Communication.

What features of Vega do you feel did not live up to your expectations of the “Don’t Settle” campaign?

There was a consensus that the “Don’t Settle” advertisement was misleading in terms of visuals. The respondents said that they assumed Vega was technologically advanced from the advertisement, but upon experiencing the campus they were disappointed. There were some students that felt that the campus life and Vega experience was mundane at times

which they felt was contradictory to the upbeat “Don’t Settle” advertisement, but they did acknowledge that Vega is an educational institution and not a nightclub.

The findings suggest that the student’s perception of the advertisement and the experiences on campus do not align completely. While an advertisement will always have an artistic flare to it, the students feel that it does not resonate with that is being experienced on campus.

4.3. Findings in Context

The double vortex brand model (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998) is ideal for providing a better understanding of all three themes found in the findings. The left vortex, which is the organisation and all its components, is representative of a large amount of the content discussed in the interview with Vega’s marketing manager. Lots of the components are taken into consideration when developing the “Don’t Settle” campaign the students would not always see these decision-making processes as they only look from the top. This is where the theme of brand promise lies. Unlike universities in the United Kingdom mentioned in Chapleo, et al., (2011) study, Vega has not marketed themselves with traditional values like research, but rather through the use of creative and innovative messages that aim to inspire and create purpose. Vega has pushed away from the traditional ideas and is aiming to make itself stand out from the crowd. The “Don’t Settle” brand promise can be found in the 4P’s mentioned by Poore (2018): people being the students; physical setting is the student’s life; process is the striving for more than what is offered; and product is the education offered from Vega.

The right vortex is in relation to the students and their confidence in the brand, which is Vega. Through their experiences, their rational and emotional experiences with the brand influence their perception of the brand. This is where stakeholder expectations and stakeholder experience are involved. Pirozzi (2021) states that having a relationship is vital in managing stakeholders’ expectations otherwise it can lead to misunderstandings and gaps in the relationship that may be difficult to repair in the future. Vega needs to be vigilant of this as findings suggest that students feel that their skills are unutilised and that they have more to offer. The students feelings of being undervalued by Vega can have a negative impact of Vega’s brand equity. The findings suggest that the students are not resonating with their experience at Vega. Vega’s brand image depends on the students’ expectations and whether they can be met (Munshi, 2019). Managing the students’ expectation means that their experience should be fall in line easier. With the findings stating that the students’

perceptions of Vega and their experiences not aligning, it creates a break in the link between the brand loyalty and the quality of service (Abbas, 2019).

Depending on the confidence of the student, it will alter the relationship between Vega and the students and ultimately affect Vega's brand equity. This in turn will influence Vega (left vortex) and the structures that are found inside. The cycle then starts again as there is continuous input from both sides.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has enabled the researcher to provide insights and an understanding to the first year Ba Strategic Brand Communication Vega student on the Durban campus and whether they have experienced the philosophy behind the "Don't Settle" campaign. The findings from both the focus group and the interview were presented and an interpretation of those findings within the context of the study was provided. This enables the development of themes which were linked back to the theoretical foundation and literature review. The accumulation of this will provide an answer to the research question for this study in the next chapter.

5. CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides this research with a conclusion and recommendation for future studies. An answer to the research question will be provided with a discussion on how the research goal was reached with an evaluation of the success of the research. The implications of the findings for Vega and suggestions on what could be done in the future. There is also a discussion on the ethical considerations and limitations of this research.

5.2. Answering the Research Question

Are first year BA Strategic Brand Communication Vega students experiencing the promise made in the “Don’t Settle” campaign?

The “Don’t Settle” campaign is a large and complex structure and from this research is has shown to hold different means for different people. There are some aspects that provide students with the experience they expected but has also left many students feeling underwhelmed. As mentioned by Vega’s marketing manager, the “Don’t Settle” campaign encapsulates Vega’s core philosophies. By this mean, surely all students the enroll with Vega then experience a degree of the philosophy behind the “Don’t Settle” campaign.

While Vega markets and promotes their “Don’t Settle” campaign and philosophy that comes with it, they seem to be restricted in how the implement it to the best of their ability. The findings from the students suggest that they have accepted the philosophy of the “Don’t Settle” campaign and are full of ideas and motivation but feel impotent as they are unable to experience what was promised to them. It is the researcher’s opinion that the failure to fully implement on Vega’s behalf and the student’s frustration is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restriction that come with it. Vega has had to compromise of access to facilities and general campus life due to restriction like the on number of people gathered in one area. While students have had to accept the new way of studying online with a restriction on the access to the many great facilities offered on the Vega campus.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

Vega would really benefit from conducting a large-scale version of this research, are a version of it. Vega already has access to the quantitative data relating to the “Don’t Settle” campaign from the number of views, click-through-rates online, conversion rates, etc., but there is no research to suggest that they have data on the thoughts and opinions of the students experiences. Vega should conduct this research but on a national scale as each campus is different and has its own pros and cons and across a variety of course.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are vital to any type of research and must be considered from start to finish. Ethics is a set of morals and professional code of conduct that determine what is acceptable behaviour. Having a strong and clear set of ethical considerations increases the trustworthiness of the research and gains the approval of fellow academics (Louw, 2014).

Informed consent from participants is one of the most recognisable and important ethical considerations. Informed consent is when the participant is clearly informed on what they are partaking in and understand what is required of them. They should also be informed on how their identity will be protected and what the result of the research will be used for. This all needs to be in writing and signed before they participate in the research (Louw, 2014). The consent form for this research can be found in Annexure C – Consent Form for Participant.

Once the research has informed consent from the participant, it is important to treat them with the respect and dignity. During the data collection, the physical and psychological wellbeing is of the utmost importance. Personal and embarrassing questions should be avoided as this can make the participant uncomfortable, especially in focus groups. When sensitive information is brought up, it is the duty of the researcher to protect that information and not reveal the participant identity in the findings. Participants of this research will be provided with confidentiality. This means that the research will be able to identify the results with the participants but will not disclose any identifying marks in the findings or anywhere else in the research documentation (Louw, 2014).

It is extremely unethical to falsify the information at any point in the research through the fabrication or changing of data. The same goes for the distortion of results whereby there is more emphasis on particular aspects of the research that other equally important parts. The

results of this research will be represented as the data is provided without falsification or distortion.

The last ethical consideration for this research is getting permission from the IIE to conduct research on their premises and on the students and staff. It is unethical to go behind an organisation's back and conduct research without their consent. This could lead to legal action from the organisation. Annexure A is the ethical clearance from Vega to conduct this research under their name and Annexure B is permission from the IIE to conduct research on their brand and students.

5.5. Limitations

The limitations of research are the constraints and limits that the research experiences that is outside the control of the researcher (Enslin, 2014). A time limitation exists for this research as there are set due date for data collection and data analysis which means that any longitudinal study cannot be considered. This is due to the fact that the research is only being conducted at an Honours level. This also puts a constraint on financial resources as there is no funding for the research. This means that any that traveling to other campuses to gather information from those students would not be possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also limiting that research as there are restrictions on travel, venue capacity, and interaction with other people. This has been discussed in section 3.6. Data Collection Method whereby the focus groups may not be able to happen face-to-face but rather over video-communication platforms.

Some of the delimitations that will be experienced in this research are the sampling size for the focus groups. Since there is a time limitation, there number of participants has to be lowered in order to allow for enough time to analysis the data and comprehensively deliver the findings.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

There is that say, "You word is your bond", and this is as true as it gets when it comes to branding. Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign provides a beautiful platform to spread its message and distinguish itself in an overcrowded environment. But following through on that brand promise is sometimes hard. With the current COVID-19 pandemic hampering face-to-face learning and interaction, Vega's brand promise has been strained. Students feel that

there is lots of potential that is being missed out on, in a personal and institutional capacity. But at the same time, they realise the brilliance and power of the education provided at Vega. They can see where the brand promise lies within the walls of Vega, but they are sadly just out of reach.

Branding is never an easy task as it is a form of art and subjective to each person that views it. The best that a brand can hope for is a united idea that their target audience resonates with.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



15 June 2021

Student name: Richard Woolacott

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

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 your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

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

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.

4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: **Sarah Freestone**

Signature: 

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: **Carolanda du Toit**


Signature:

7 July 2021

ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON IIE

Please find this form attached to my submission through SafeAssign as a separate document.

Alternately click on the link: https://vegaconnectco-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/18001087_vegaconnect_co_za/EQ4BvS-OmChPkcYXa6F8kBq54dszj46G5WYlYclv-jQ?e=3upZU0

ANNEXURE C: CONCENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Richard Woolacott and I am a student at The IIE's Vega School. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Sarah Freestone about brand promises and whether stakeholder experience those promises, which using Vega as a case study. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of branding promises within the context of a tertiary institutions and how students perceive them. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit the parameters of my population, that being a first-year student studying at Vega Durban and would have been experienced to the "Don't Settle" campaign when registering last year. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interact with you in a focus group. The topic matter would be surrounding Vega's "Don't Settle" campaign and your experiences at Vega so far. You will view one of the main advertisements made of the campaign and then a discussion will take place with no right or wrong answers. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your experiences at Vega and whether you believe that it has met the brand promises laid out in the "Don't Settle" advertisement. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at The IIE's Vega School, will have

access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?
Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.
What happens if I have more questions about the study?
Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate. You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed. My contact details are as follows: Name: Richard Woolacott [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The contact details of my supervisor are as follows: Name: Sarah Freestone [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Participant or respondent consent	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Richard Woolacott about brand promises and whether stakeholder experience those promises, which using Vega as a case study. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • I agree to be interviewed for this research. • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. • My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. • I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. • I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO AND VISUAL RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Richard Woolacott to audio record my interviews as part of the research about brand promises and whether stakeholder experience those promises, which using Vega as a case study. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the “Don’t Settle” campaign come about?
2. How did Vega conduct their market research for the “Don’t Settle” campaign?
3. What is the intended brand promise from the “Don’t Settle” Campaign?
4. Could you explain why Vega changed from the “Find Your Purpose” campaign in 2017/2018 to the 2020 “Don’t Settle” campaign?
5. What were some of the challenges experienced while developing the “Don’t Settle” campaign?
6. How long do you feel the “Don’t Settle” campaign will remain relevant?

ANNEXURE F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the features and promise of the “Don’t Settle” campaign that encouraged you to register at Vega instead of another tertiary institutions?
2. After watching the “Don’t Settle” advertisement, what was the main idea that you took away from the advertisement?
3. How have you experienced the brand promises of the “Don’t Settle” campaign?
4. What features of Vega do you feel did not live up to your expectations of the “Don’t Settle” campaign?
5. What features do you feel could contribute to the “Don’t Settle” campaign and its brand promise?

ANNEXURE G: SIMILARITY REPORT

Please find this report on SafeAssign, the program through which this research report was submitted.

ANNEXURE H: FINAL RESEARCH REPORT DOCUMENT TEMPLATE

TITLE: *What is my study about?*

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
To analyse Vega's advertisement campaign "Don't Settle" and determine if first year students from the BA Strategic Brand Communication course believe that the promise of this campaign has been kept based on their experiences at Vega.	Are first year BA Strategic Brand Communication Vega students experiencing the promise made in the "Don't Settle" campaign?	It helps brands understand why brand promise is an important aspect to consider. This research will be useful to the IIE and Vega as they evaluate their future campaigns.	K. Keller – CBBE model Tajfel H. – Social Identity theory	Theme 1: Higher Education Institutions as a brand Theme 2: Stakeholder Expectations Theme 3: Stakeholder Experience Theme 4: Brand Promise	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemology I want to add to a larger body of knowledge and potentially help Vega with future marketing. Ontology Reality is a social construct that is determined and manipulated by the people's perceptions and the norms formed by what society accepts are to be proper. Axiology	Qualitative	Focus groups will be used. A maximum of 8 members in a focus group and 2 sets of focus groups to provide variety. A trial group will also be tested to work out the errors. An in-depth interview with the marketing manager at Vega.	Permission will be needed from The IIE and from Vega to ensure that the research conducted is done in a respectful manner. Provision approval on this research has been given and there is a plan to potentially work with the marketing department at Vega. <i>these?</i>	While some students feel like they are missing out on the brand promise, they recognise that it could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	Try adapting the marketing to the COVID-19 pandemic.
						Population				
						Population Parameters First year Vega students that are studying BA Strategic Brand Communication on the Durban Campus.				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	

Are brands delivering on the promises made to their stakeholders as portrayed in their advertisements, and whether the stakeholders experience these promises through their interactions with the brand.	How did this campaign influence the students' decision to study at <i>Vega</i> ?	Brand promise; brand equity; expectations; experience	Social Identity Theory, Keller's CBBE model, Double Vortex Brand Model		The complex understanding of unique realities is important. The research should show a unique different perspective.	Probability or non-probability Non-probability sampling Sampling method Purposive sampling as I need specific characteristics for my study, such as the participants being first year students. Size 10 students	Unit of Analysis Opinions or perspectives Data Analysis Method(s) Qualitative thematic Analysis	Qualitative research trustworthiness. Different campuses may have difference opinions and due to budget and location restrictions, this cannot be explored. Time restraints, financial restraints, location limitations, COVID-19 pandemic.	It will add to the understanding of brand promise and facilitate <i>Vega</i> in future marketing activities. It will also help <i>Vega</i> understand how its students are feeling towards its approach to studying.	
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