

Title:

“To compare the intended brand identity and the perceived brand image of the City Of Johannesburg (CoJ) brand by conducting a comparative thematic content analysis between COJs official website as well as a select group of Johannesburg residents.”

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study is a cross-sectional exploratory case study, focusing on comparing the intended brand identity and the perceived brand image of the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) brand by conducting a comparative thematic content analysis between COJs official website as well as a select group of Johannesburg residents. The study attempts to establish if there is a difference between the brand identity that CoJ projects on its website and how the brand is perceived by residents.

This paper moves from the point of view that cities offer several advantages to the concentration of economic activities and as such, municipalities like CoJ have the mammoth task of building a strong municipality brand that can help boost its economic growth, tourism, investment and attract new resident. CoJ should use their brands to tell a story and why they should be the first choice whether be it for tourism, investment, residency etc. In telling this story, COJ must ensure that their intended brand identity matches their brand image as experienced and perceived by their residents so as to achieve the above.

Research has been done around brand identity and brand image and there seems to be an understanding that brand identity and brand image are intertwined (Konecnik and Go, 2007) and therefore the study will move from the point of view that brand identity and brand image are parallel to each other. CoJ needs to make sure that their brand identity is well communicated and is consistent on all their platforms as well as in their messaging to ensure that there is no gap between the two. By aligning brand identity with the perceived and experience brand image, CoJ can claim to be a credible and trusted brand by its residents.

The concepts brand, brand identity and brand image mean different things to different people, their meanings are explored in section 5 of this paper, as well as in the literature review, section 6 in more depth. The link between brand identity and brand image is also explored in the literature review.

2. RATIONALE

After CoJs re-branded in 2002 (City of Johannesburg, 2002), it is important to measure whether or not their communication strategy has been effective enough, are they communicating their brand identity well enough to the residents of Johannesburg and how are the residents receiving this?

The researcher deems the study relevant because understanding image and identity and furthermore, the space between these two factors, where the message travels, is vital to CoJ. Through understanding the process, usage of its most important elements (identity) and highlighting them in the right manner (image) CoJ can strengthen its future prospects as these enhance their visibility and credibility (Le Roux and Du Plessis, 2014). Which in turn helps the municipality to achieve its set goals and targets such as the Joburg 2030. The Joburg 2030 strategy was developed by the Council and is a Vision for Johannesburg as a world-class city in which all our citizens will be able to enjoy increased prosperity and quality of life by the year 2030, this vision is possible through sustainable growth (Joburg 2030, 2016)

This paper aims to conduct qualitative research with a select group of Johannesburg residents to measure CoJs' brand image against Aaker's brand identity framework. The sample chosen are Johannesburg residents, both male and female, they are property owners in Johannesburg, subscribe to CoJs' e-services platform on the website and have been subscribers to the platform for over a year. This sample was chosen because as property owners in Johannesburg who subscribe to the CoJ e-services platform for over a year, they frequently engage with CoJs website by paying their water, waste, electricity bills, registering complaints and compliments amongst other things, which means that they are in a better position to comment and to answer questions related to this study.

The brand CoJ was chosen because Johannesburg is the centre of education, culture, innovation, information and communication as well as the hope of millions of poor rural migrants (City of Johannesburg, 2002). A lot is at stake from employment, economic growth and foreign investment, for this reason, it is important that CoJ as a municipality has a strong brand that truly represents Johannesburg as the World Class African City they have positioned themselves as and that the Johannesburg residents resonate with the brand, experience and perceive the brand the same way.

This research aims to give a thorough understanding of whether or not COJs' brand identity as per its website has reached its residents. Is there a possible difference between brand identity and brand image as per CoJs' website?

After conducting the research the results are to be compared and the findings analysed so as to get an understanding of how well CoJs' website has executed its communication strategy. The possible differences if any do exist are to be analysed and motivated and can be used by CoJ to improve and/or strengthen the brand if this is necessary.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

To conduct a comparative thematic content analysis amongst Johannesburg residents and COJ's official website to determine if there is a difference between the intended brand identity and perceived brand image of COJ's brand against Aaker's brand identity framework.

3.1. Research Questions

1. What is COJ's intended brand identity according to its official website?
2. What is the perceived brand image of COJ amongst its residents?
3. Are there differences between the brand identity and the brand image of COJ using Aaker's brand identity framework?

3.2. Research Aims/Objective

1. To analyse the intended brand identity of CoJ through its official website.
2. To determine what the perceived brand image of CoJ is amongst its residents.
3. To evaluate whether or not there are differences between CoJs' brand identity and brand image amongst its residents using Aaker's brand identity framework.

4. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Enslin (2014) limitations are constraints or limits in one's research study that are out of the researchers' control, such as time, financial resources and access to information amongst other things. The following are possible limitations and delimitations in this study:

- ☐ With enough **time** dedicated to this study, the researcher believes that more people can be interviewed in order to gain more insight and gather more information from the study.
- ☐ The **number of participants** interviewed could possibly be a limitation considering that the researcher does not have the subscribers' contact details of those who subscribe to the CoJs'

e-service platform, as this information is confidential and as such the researcher will rely on volunteers for this study.

- This is a qualitative research study, the researcher is trying to gather insights and tap into the participants thoughts and feelings, this cannot be achieved with a huge sample given the time and resources so therefore the **sample chosen is not representative** of the entire CoJs' e-services subscriber base.
- The research also stands the chance of encountering sample errors, as some of the participants may not answer a question because they do not know how to respond to it or for whatever reason.
- As discussed in the methodology section of this paper, the Aaker identity model proved limiting to the study as the model only offered insights from the brands perspective as it is a brand building tool, and the model has to be altered by the researcher to allow the consumers to be able to understand the questions around the four pillars of the model and offer their feedback.
- The researcher needs to design a separate frame work that will be used to design the consumer questions for the interviews because the Aaker framework proves limiting for the study and the researcher believes that the consumers may find it hard to understand the questions based on the Aaker brand identity model. This is because, the participants do not work for COJ, they are not brand experts and therefore may not understand the terminology used in the Aaker brand identity framework when referring to brands., thus the 'Consumer Pillars framework' was designed by the researcher to enable the consumers to fully understand the questions. "Delimitations in the research study are definite choices a researcher makes when he or she decides on a scope of particular research" (Enslin, 2014:276). As the study is of a qualitative and contextual nature, the validity of the study will be hard to prove. The study is set on a specific brand and is of cross-sectional design and as a result ensuring validity will be a challenge.

Delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of your study. The delimitations are in your control. Delimiting factors include the choice of objectives, the research questions, variables of interest, theoretical perspectives that you adopted (as opposed to what could have been adopted), and the population you choose to investigate Simon, M. K. (2011). In this research study, the delimitations are set so that the researcher studies and

interviewees participants solely based on the brand image and the brand identity of COJ brand and nothing more. The study only looks at the official website, it will only interview residents that are registered on the e-services platform, are Johannesburg's residents, own property in Johannesburg, have been registered on the e-services platform for over a year and are frequent users of this platform.

5.CONCEPTUALISATION

Brand, Brand identity and Brand image are the three main concepts in this study that will assist in unpacking the research question using Aaker's Brand Identity framework (2009).

For the purpose of this study de Chernatony and McDonald (2000: 20) definition of a **brand** applies: "an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that a buyer or user perceives relevant and unique added values which match their needs more closely. Furthermore its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition".

Brand identity in this study is understood to be how COJ identifies itself and how it wants to be perceived as a brand. The identity represents the outward expression of a brand and is therefore fundamental to consumers' recognition and differentiation from competitors (Kapferer, 2008; Sääksjärvi, & Samiee, 2011).

Brand image is how COJ is perceived and experienced by their residents (Kapferer, 2008).

All these three concepts (**brand**, **brand identity** and **brand image**) are relevant to this study, as they will assist in unpacking the differences and meaning in relation to this study.

Aaker Brand Identity Framework (2009)

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

The paradigm for this study is interpretivism and thus focuses on exploring the complexity of social phenomena with a view to gaining understanding (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Interpretivism paradigm

tries to understand and interpret everyday happenings (events), experiences and social structures as well as the values people attach to these phenomena (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Interpretivism believes that social reality is subjective and nuanced, because it is shaped by the perceptions of the participants, as well as the values and aims of the researcher (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

Leedy and Omrod (2010) explain epistemology as the methods used to derive, elicit and analyse data, therefore the study will look at previous research that has been conducted around brand identity and brand image and the link thereof and why CoJ needs to make sure that their brand identity is well communicated and is consistent on all their platforms as well as in their messaging.

From an ontological position the researcher will objectively look at how municipalities are brands and therefore should be viewed and treated as such. Since the aim is interpretivism is to gain insights and in-depth understanding of multiple realities, this can only be achieved through a qualitative methodology, which is the route that this study will take.

This literature review aims to firstly discuss the concepts of a brand and how a brand is designed and developed, as well as what constitutes a strong brand. Secondly, the paper will discuss the elements of brand identity and brand image and what the meaning of each concept is, and the link between the two as well as the differences between the two concepts. Finally the paper will discuss the framework that will be used for the research, which is the 2009 Aaker model of brand identity. This study will determine the intended brand identity of CoJ according to CoJs' website, as well as determine the perceived brand image of CoJ amongst CoJs' residents and finally to determine whether there is a discrepancy in the brand identity and brand image of the CoJ brand.

6.1 Brand

Old civilization of Mesopotamia and Greek used marks and names to identify or indicate their offerings - predominantly of wines, ointments, pots or metals according to Sarkar and Singh (2005, cited in P. Mishra, 2012). Watkins (2006), Aaker (2002), Doyle (1994) and Kotler et al. (1996) define 'brand' as a name, term, sign, symbol, design, a good or service, which are identifying the sellers to distinguish them from their competitors. According to the latter definition, CoJ can be considered to be a brand as it has a logo, a tagline and provides a service over and above using these elements to communicate what makes it unique and appealing through a combination of visuals and words. According to City of Johannesburg (2002) CoJ launched its new logo 'Joburg' in 2002, the logo consist of one of the most prominent, well known and visible tower, the "Hillbrow tower" which was converted into an exclamation mark with a yellow dot that represents the City of Gold. The exclamation mark represents the City's identity as a "lively, vibrant and dynamic place and the tower

shows its unique variety”, according to its designers, Interbrand Sampson (City of Johannesburg, 2002). A strong brand in a case of a municipality, such as CoJ, can help boost economic development, investment opportunities as well as tourism amongst other things.

There seems to be no single definition for the word “brand” as researchers have argued for decades about the definition (Kapferer, 2004) but the definitions given above almost suggests that a brand’s role was to simply identify the product therefore making it easy for the consumer to differentiate it from competitors.

In June 2006, COJ improved their logo by including a slogan to go with the logo as a way to communicate the ‘hidden qualities’ mentioned above by Kapferer (1997), the positioning statement “a word class African city” was added (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). The logo, together with the added slogan was a way to differentiate CoJ from its competitors (other cities nationally and internationally) thereby rallying Johannesburg citizens behind a common vision of building a world class African city: young, ambitious and successful (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). This in itself is proof that over the years brands have moved away from using brands just a way to identify products/ services to a more holistic view of the brand building process. A commonly adopted definition is that provided by de Chernatony and McDonald (2000: 20) who define a brand as: *“An identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the BUYER or USER perceives relevant, unique ADDED VALUES which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to SUSTAIN these added values in the face of competition...”*. Pearson (2005) is also of a view that a brand is constructed by features, customer benefits and values. Thus, it is now widely understood that a brand is more than a name or logotype, it is an expression of an organization's vision, plans and goals - it is a promise (Kapferer, 2008).

Affectionately known as ‘Jozi’, Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa and is considered as the powerhouse within the African continent (world Atlas date unknown). The city of Johannesburg is seen as a beacon of light to those that live in other cities within South Africa as well as other African countries, it is seen as the land of economic opportunities and therefore attracts those that seek job opportunities and a better life (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). According to the Matshidiso Mlaba (date unknown) Johannesburg holds the largest economy within Sub Saharan Africa, it is one of the forty largest metropolitan areas in the world, boast Africa’s richest stock exchange and hosts some largest corporations, law firms, media houses, banks, and stadiums (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). Johannesburg may not have mountains, sandy beaches and wild animals but it has something that no other city can compete with, its cosmopolitan people and economic opportunities it holds, to look at CoJ as just a logo or slogan would be a mistake and misleading.

One of the most important elements to consider when building a strong brand are stakeholders, these according to Le Roux and Du Plessis (2014) are publics who have a 'stake' and are in certain relationships with the business or have a common interest or value in the business. Consumers' form part of a brand's stakeholders and as such their contribution towards the brand building process is key and should be taken seriously. This is important as this creates trust and credibility between the brand and the consumer (Kathman, 2002:25) and helps bridge the gap between brand identity and brand image.

CoJ has many stakeholders that they need to always take into account, these range from employees, residents, businesses, investors, tourists, opinion leaders which include, the media, academics, business leaders and government official (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). All these stakeholders are important to the brand building process and should be consulted in order for CoJs' brand to be strong, relevant and sustainable. This study will only focus on the residents as stakeholders as it is trying to determine the perceived brand image of CoJ amongst its residents. The study will also adopt de Chernatony and McDonald (2000) above definition of brand as more than just an identifier of products but one that incorporates a more holistic view of the brand building process

6.1.1 Brand Building Process

According to Urde (1999: 29) "The starting point for a process of brand building is to first create a clear understanding of the internal brand identity. The brand then becomes a strategic platform that provides the framework for the satisfaction of customers' wants and needs". Urde (2003) later added that there are two parts to the brand building process, one that is internal and the other, external. The internal is used to describe the relationship between the organisation and the brand, the objective here is that the organisation lives out its brand values. The external process is concerned with the relationship between the organisation and its customers with the objective of creating value and a relationship with its customers. Therefore the study will focus on the external process as it is concerned with the relationship between CoJ and its residents. As part of their brand building process, CoJ developed a brand strategy to build and grow the new logo and positioning statement that positioned them as a modern, progressive and dynamic city competing with world-class cities globally (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown).

6.1.2 Brand Strategy

The brand strategy looks at sets long-term direction and scope of a brand in order to build and maintain sustainable brand competitive advantage over the competition (Arnold, 1992). Aaker and

Joachimsthaler (2009) state that competitors and consumers are key when a brand strategy is being created and as such they have come up with a strategic brand analysis when designing a brand strategy. This is meant to aid brands in understanding the needs of the consumer and is made up of customer, competitor and self-analysis. Brand strategy itself, is the process whereby a company identifies which brand elements are necessary to create the appropriate and feasible brand proposition to the target group (Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2006). To support and entrench the new brand and ensure consistency in application, CoJ developed brand identity guidelines which were then applied across all City departments (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). This was done to ensure that all the departments of CoJ were all on the same page from an execution point of view as to avoid gaps and eliminate confusion where the brand identity is concerned. This way residents will perceive and experience the CoJ brand according to the intended brand identity.

6.1.3 Brand experiences

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009:43) outline three benefits that a strong brand should offer its consumers: functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. CoJs' Functional benefits are but not limited to: offering water and electricity to residents, looking after the city's parks and trees, collecting refuse, building and maintaining infrastructure amongst other things (Purpose Magazine, date unknown). Emotional benefits are meant to make the residents feel something when engaging with CoJ, are the residents happy and satisfied? Do they feel a sense of pride when they think of this 'world class African city' or are they not happy with the service delivery and feel cheated by the CoJ? "Self-expressive benefits are concerned with the consumers' self-image and are a way a consumer can express themselves" (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009:43). All these elements are crucial in forming a relationship with the consumer and may resemble a personal relationship if done properly. For the purpose of this study, the focus will only be on functional and emotional benefits as these two are the most applicable to CoJ. Functional and Emotional benefits highlighted above are crucial in how the residents experience CoJ as residents and the only way CoJ can ensure that they get it right is by understanding its resident's needs.

6.1.4 Understanding the consumer

It is imperative for brands to understand their consumers, which can be gained through the process of 'customer analysis', which is based on Aaker's 2009 brand identity model. This is a process of gaining insights through research to understand why the customers do what they do rather than what they do. For a municipality like CoJ, residents must be included from the beginning of the brand building process through consultation, focus groups, surveys and town meetings amongst others, this is done so as to seek input and then vetting the brand with a committee before it's finalised. This

involvement helps in creating a brand identity that talks to stakeholders and one that they agree with and are proud to identify with. Understanding the concept of brand and the brand building process is very important and can create a strong brand identity that resonates with consumers if the above steps are followed.

6.2 Brand Identity

Brand identity is a way a company/entity differentiates itself from its competitors and communicates its unique features by way of identification. Aaker (2000) defines brand identity as the unique set of brand associations that represent/ what the brand stands for and promises to customers.

The identity represents the outward expression of a brand and is therefore fundamental to consumers' recognition and differentiation from competitors (Chernatony, 1999; Kapferer, 2008; Sääksjärvi, and Samiee, 2011). Visible elements of a brand, such as colors, design, logotype, name and symbol are all part of the brand identity and together identify and distinguish the brand in the mind of consumers' (Aaker, 1996). In addition, brand identity is concerned with the brand's vision, mission, culture, positioning, personality, relationships and presentations, the company DNA (Kapferer, 2008).

The visual identity of CoJ consists of the word Joburg, with the Hillbrow tower as an image which was turned into a yellow dot to represent the City of Gold as a lively, vibrant and dynamic place (Matshidiso Mlaba, date unknown). These are the artistic expression of the municipality's unique personality and reflection of its vibrant energy. The verbal identity wishes to project CoJs' values, attributes, and personality and this is done through its "world class African city" positioning statement which is aspirational and provides a vision of CoJ.

Research has shown that successful communication of brand identity into the market leads to brand loyalty, brand preference, higher credibility, good prices and good financial returns (Kapferer, 2008). CoJ needs to ensure that it communicates the correct and intended brand identity across all its platforms (in this case, their website) and through its messaging by being consistent so as to avoid a mismatch between how the brand is presented and perceived by the market, this way they can avoid a mismatch between the brand's identity and the perceived and experienced brand's image.

6.3 Brand Image

Kotler (1998) defines brand image as a set of beliefs held about a particular brand. According to Aaker (1991) a brand image is a set of associations, usually organised in some meaningful way. Keller, (1993) defines a brand image as an association or perception consumer's make based on their memory toward a product. Thus, brand image does not exist in the technology, features or the actual product itself, but is something brought out by promotions, advertisements, or users, for the purpose of this study, the above Keller's definition of brand image applies. In the case of CoJ, the study will look at the brand identity as per the CoJ website in relation to the perceived and experienced brand image of a selected group of resident who use the CoJ website. Their perceptions will be based on their experiences by the CoJ website as well as the brand identity both visual and verbal to determine if there are differences or not between the brand identity and brand image.

Keller (2009) states that by consumers linking the right associations to brand image, stronger and more positive brand judgments or feelings will be created and therefore a better consumer- brand connection will be formed. It is important then for the CoJ website to project the intended brand identity and the only way this is possible is by ensuring that CoJ remains consistent on all their platforms through their messages as well as look and feel.

6.3.1 What influences brand image

Consumers are more likely to trust and resonate with brands that are honest, transparent and share the same values as them (Le Roux and Du Plessis, 2014). All these elements will assist in creating brand equity, loyalty, perceived quality, associations and awareness of the brand Aaker (1996). Through a process of consultation and brand verification, a brand is able to get input from stakeholders, CoJ would've had to go through this process when they re-branded to create a brand that resonates with its residents. Brand personification also plays a huge role in influencing a company's brand image as the consumers tend to give human characteristics to non-human objects, brand personification can be linked to anthropomorphism (ascribing human characteristics to non-human objects) and, therefore, are easily comprehended by consumers (Lin and Sung, 2014). The values of the CoJ brand are young, ambitious and successful and are consistent with creativity, fun and leadership (Purpose Magazine, date unknown). Which makes CoJ relatable and easy to understand according to Lin and Sung's 2014 theory. The culture of a company also plays a huge role in influencing the consumers' perception, if the brand has a strong culture that is appropriate, adaptive to environmental change, respects leadership at all levels and satisfies the needs of staff, customers and stakeholders (De Chernatony, 2010) then the brand is more likely to succeed.

A brand needs to follow these four steps in order to achieve a positive brand image according to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2009:87):

- Involve customers actively in the brand (involve residents through a process of consultation with and including them during the brand building process)
- Appeal to all of their senses (take the resident's needs and feelings into consideration)
- Support the experience with brand related queues
- Extend the experience through multiple points of contact (ensure that all their platforms are consistent and communicate the intended brand identity).

A strategic brand analysis which includes customer analysis, competitor analysis and self-analysis can be conducted to ensure that the above mentioned steps are properly executed and that the brand is effectively differentiated from its competitors (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009: 40-41).

Integrated marketing communications strategies should also be taken into consideration as this will assist brand leaders effectively communicate the companies brand identity to the target market as this creates repetition and consistency which enhances the brand image (Navarro Bailón, 2012).

6.4 The Link between Brand Identity and Brand Image

The link between brand identity and brand image is an important one as people interpret brands and brand messages differently depending on their frame of reference. CoJ must always seek to align their brand identity with the perceived and experienced brand image of its residents by being consistent on all their communication platforms and messaging. From the extensive literature previously discussed it is clear that there is a direct link between brand identity, how a company identifies itself and wants to be perceived and brand image, how the company is perceived and experienced by the target audience. CoJs' brand identity is therefore created by CoJ brand agency together with CoJ whilst brand image is created by the residents according to their own experiences and encounters with the brand.

For COJ to qualify as a strong brand the intended brand identity must set them apart from its competitors and its residents must resonate with the CoJ brand. By aligning brand identity with the perceived and experience brand image, CoJ can claim to be a credible and trusted brand by its residents.

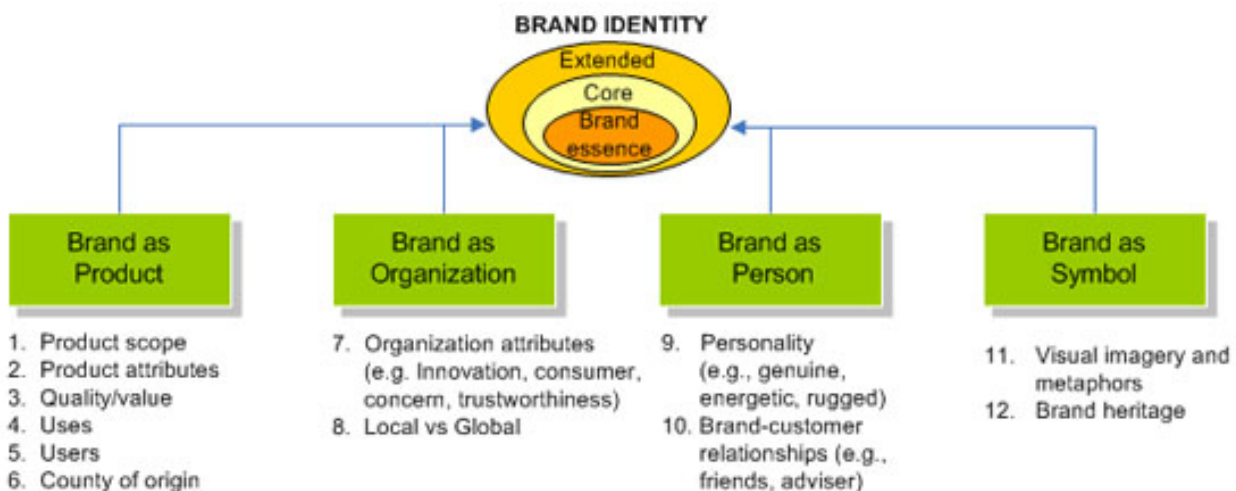
6.5 The Framework:

The framework that will be used for this research paper is the David A Aaker framework of brand identity (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009) and an alteration thereof. The Aaker brand identity system is important for three reasons, firstly, it is systematic and offers guidelines for building a strong brand, secondly it is more comprehensive and in-depth when analysing a brand identity and lastly it is pragmatic and recognises that decision makers should be involved in formulating and implementing business strategy (Konecnik and Go, 2007).

According to the “Brand Identity System” there are four brand identity perspectives; the brand as product, the brand as organisation, the brand as person and the brand as symbol. The function of the different perspectives of brand identity is to help the strategist consider different brand elements and patterns that can help clarify, enrich, and differentiate an identity (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009). This means that by analysing these four pillars from the brands perspective as well as the consumers’ perspective, the researcher will be able to ascertain any differences or gaps in the identity and image of the brand.

Aaker’s brand identity planning model, including the brand identity system, can be described with the following model: (see figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1 The Brand Identity Framework:



Source: Aaker (2009: 44) Brand Identity Framework

This research paper will only focus on what Aaker (2009) refers to as the brand identity system, which is: Brand as product, brand as Organisation, brand as person and brand as symbol.

Aaker's brand identity model was built from an organisation perspective and therefore may be not be understood as well by the participants as these are not brand experts and may have not come across Aaker's brand identity nor are they familiar with the terminology used, this leaves room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions by the participants taking part in the study.

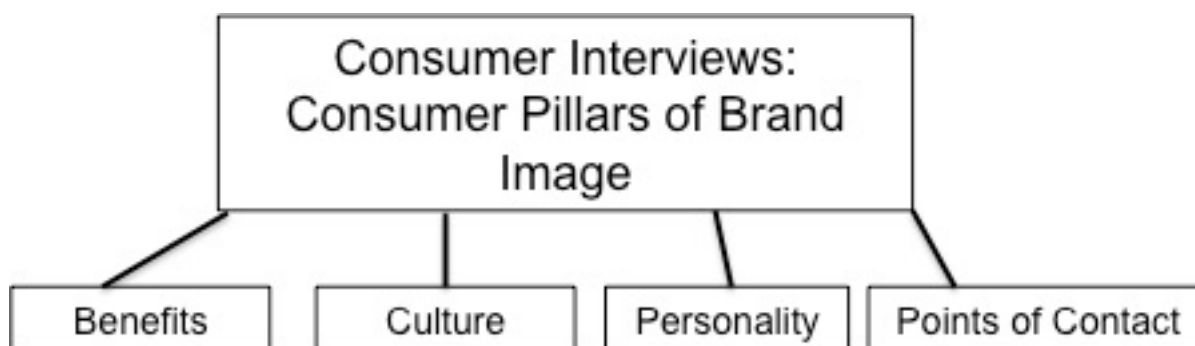
From the literature, four pillars are identified for analysing the brand image and the positive construction of a brand image in the mind of the consumer, from the consumer's perspective and feelings. These four pillars are identified in accordance to the Aaker model and the aspects of the 'consumer pillars' as they will now be referred to as each correlate to the four Aaker brand identity pillars. The four pillars that are identified to analyse the consumer's perspectives of the brand are, 1. Benefits (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009) 2. Culture (Aguirre- Rodriguez, 2014). 3. Personality (Lau and Phau, 2007) and 4. Points of contact (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009).

These four pillars that have been designed for the sake of this research are based on the Aaker brand identity pillars, Brand as product is referred to as 'Benefits', benefits describes the positive attributes that the consumers receive from the brand in terms of products and services and their thoughts on this. Brand as organisation is described as, 'Culture', culture describes the attributes of the organisation. Brand as person is 'Personality'; this describes the relationship between the brand and consumer as well as the personal attributes of the brand. Brand as symbol is referred to as 'Points of contact'; these are visual symbols and communication channels that the brand uses.

For the sake of the research, Aaker's brand identity model will be used when designing themes to lookout for when analysing the website and collecting data from CoJs' website and the 'Consumer Pillars' will be used when designing the interviews for the participants and this is to make it easier for them to understand the questions and be able to provide their input.

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

Figure 1.2 Consumer Pillar Framework



7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Methodological Approach

When designing the research process there are two types of research designs that the researcher takes into account, these are namely, quantitative and qualitative design approaches. According to Du Plooy (2014) quantitative data collection methods are often used to test hypotheses derived from theories. Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) state that, qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with the phenomena, dealing with experiences and meanings of phenomena.

This study will analyse the intended brand identity of CoJ through its website, determine the perceived brand image of CoJ amongst its residents as well as evaluate whether or not there are differences between CoJs' brand identity and brand image amongst its residents. Therefore, the study will take an exploratory approach making use of a qualitative research orientation to gain insights as well as gather information around the feelings and experiences of CoJs' residents.

The research methodology will be a qualitative research design. "Qualitative research deals with the underlying qualities of subjective experiences and the meanings associated with the phenomena" (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014:173). This method of research is used when determining feelings and emotions of participants in the study because according to Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) it is not possible to quantify these feeling nor experience but what the researcher gains is insights and obtains richness and depth of data (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

A qualitative research design will be used in order to gain a deeper understanding, feelings and emotions of the participants towards the CoJ brand. "Qualitative research is interested in the depth of human experience, including all the personal and subjective peculiarities that are characteristic of individual experiences and meanings associated with a particular phenomenon" (Strydom &

Bezuidenhout, 2014:174).

Qualitative research will assist in determining what the residents of Johannesburg think and feel about the CoJ brand, it will also assist in determining how CoJ according to its website position themselves and how they create the brand experience. A qualitative study is therefore appropriate in this regard.

The qualitative research method will make it possible for the researcher to understand the depth of the human experience within the CoJ brand and draw conclusions from the residents' opinions. According to Strydom & Bezuidenhout (2014) qualitative research offers more detailed data according.

Once the data is collected the researcher will make a subjective interpretive analysis from the data that will be collected. This data collection method will assist the researcher gaining the desired insights into the brand through evaluation, control and measurement and the exploratory research that will be conducted.

7.2 Population and Sample

The population, as cited by Davis (2014), consists of people or things possessing the attributes or characteristics in which the researcher is interested. The population is what will be referred to as participants in this research, and those that the study can gain access to within the population are referred to as the sample (Davis, 2014).

For the purpose of this study the population is all the CoJ e-services subscribers. The CoJ e-services is an online based platform hosted on the CoJ website, where residents can pay their levies, for example, waste, lights, and water, complain or give compliments about the services as well as download their statements.

The researcher selected the consumer sample group from the CoJ e-services platform on a volunteer basis. The population that this research targeted are subscribers of CoJs' e-services platform, live in Johannesburg, own property in Johannesburg, currently live in Johannesburg, these participants have been subscribers to the e-service platform for a minimum of a year. The researcher chose this sample because they engage with the CoJ website frequently when they login to their accounts to pay their bills, log a complaint/compliment or look for information. A year is enough for them to have formed an opinion about CoJs' brand identity as well as develop their own thoughts and feelings

about the CoJ brand based on their own personal experience.

Non-probability sampling will be used as it is uneconomical to involve all the members of a population in a research project (Pascoe, 2014), consequently, we have to rely on data obtained from a sample of the population (Welman, 2005).

The researcher intends to select three volunteers who utilise the CoJ e-services platform for face-to-face, in-depth interviews, this means that the sample will not be randomly selected but will be chosen on a volunteer basis. Through these interviews the researcher will determine the perceived brand image of CoJ according to its residents.

For this study the researcher will make use of non-probability sampling as the researcher anticipates difficulty in gaining access to the entire population (Pascoe, 2014) of the CoJ e-services platform.

Advantages of Non-Probability Sampling (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012)

- ☐ Possibility to reflect the descriptive comments about the sample\
- ☐ Cost-effectiveness and time-effectiveness compared to probability sampling
- ☐ Effective when it is unfeasible or impractical to conduct probability sampling
- ☐

Disadvantages of Non-Probability Sampling (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012)

- ☐ Unknown proportion of the entire population is not included in the sample group i.e. lack of representation of the entire population
- ☐ Lower level of generalization of research findings compared to probability sampling
- ☐ Difficulties in estimating sampling variability and identifying possible bias

The project is based on a qualitative research method and non-probability methods are most often used in qualitative methods (Pascoe, 2014). More specifically, a random volunteer sampling method will be utilised, which according to Pascoe (2014:144) refers to “a sample put together from people who volunteer to participate in the research”. The reason for volunteer sampling was so that the people that have opinions and would like to speak about their feelings and emotions are given an

opportunity to voice their opinions, views and grievances about the brand. This in turn will allow the researcher to gain detailed information and help determine the brand image of CoJ through the eyes of the consumer.

7.3 Data collection methods

The data collection for this research project will take place in the form of both field and un-obtrusive research.

Field research

With field research, the researcher conducts research on the phenomena in their natural environment (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). The data from the in-depth interviews will be collected in the form of semi- structured interviews.

“In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation” (Boyce and Neale, 2006). In-depth interviews are useful when one requires more detailed information about ones thoughts, feelings and behaviour on certain issues or it can be used to explore new issues in depth (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

Advantages of in-depth interviews (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

Depth:

Can uncover real valuable insights into why people behave the way that they do.

Disclosure:

Participants are more likely to open up because of the relaxed nature of these interviews.

Quality of data:

Skilled interviewers are able to probe and ask the right questions as well as change some questions in real time to get more details.

Short timelines:

Data can be collected faster than other methods as diaries can be managed more effectively as opposed to a focus group.

Disadvantages of In-depth interviews (Boyce and Neale, 2006).

Analysis can be challenging and time consuming:

Qualitative data can be ambiguous, resulting in a more difficult analysis, particularly for less experienced analysts.

Interviewing requires a high level of training and skill:

It is important to have well-trained, highly skilled interviewers conducting this type of interview. Using less skilled interviewers increases the possibility of bias.

Small numbers:

Given the length of each interview and the associated costs, the number of in-depth interviews you will complete for a research project will be small (there is no standard number of interviews, but a total of between 10 and 15 interviews would not be uncommon).

Through conducting semi structured in- depth interviews, the researcher will gain the required insights from the participants. The semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to follow guidelines and gather the required information, but it also allows the participants to voice their feelings and opinions about the brand and on the specific matter at hand. Therefore the method is chosen so that the researcher can ask questions and have the opportunity to probe, which will result in the researcher gathering comprehensive information that will assist in answering the research questions

Although semi structured interviews allow for comprehensive data gathering, there are a few disadvantages to the method: it can be time consuming and resource intensive (Welman et al, 2005) therefore it is up to the interviewer to ensure that these are controlled by putting measures into place, for example, the interviews shouldn't be longer than 45 minutes per participant.

When conducting the in-depth interviews, the researcher needs to ensure that the following components are taken into consideration, according to the recommendations by Welman et al (2005:168) Firstly "the questions move from a broad to a narrow focus; secondly, the researcher does not rely purely on pre-planned questions; thirdly the researcher forms clear and simple

questions and guards against asking leading questions. The researcher must make sure that they do not ask double barrel question, the questions need to be open ended (Welman, 2005) and Aaker (2009) Brand Identity Framework will inform the questions .

7.4 Data analysis method

The researcher will record the interviews, transcribe and then do a thematic analysis.

Field Research

Data analysis in this research will take place in the form of qualitative data analysis and interpretation, where data is transformed into findings (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). When we analyse qualitative data, whether collected through interviews, field notes or observations, we refer to analysing the text (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). Welman (2005) concurs with this view and states that qualitative data analysis converting notes into write ups which should be intelligible products that can be read, edited for accuracy, commented on and analysed.

In this research paper, the Huberman and Miles Data analysis method will be applied, the information broken up into 'units of analysis' or codes (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The themes that the researcher will collect information on for this research will be based on the four elements of the Aaker identity model, namely, brand as product, brand as organisation, brand as person and brand as a symbol (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2009) as well as the four pillars created in the 'Consumer pillars' framework that the consumer interviews will be based on. The information gathered will be arranged around these four pillars and subsequently coded.

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

2014).

Un-obtrusive research

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1278). The researcher will use qualitative content analysis to extract data from CoJs’ official website in order to determine the intended brand identity. The researcher will focus on establish categories in relation to Aaker’s (2009) brand identity framework that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts.

The researcher plans to condense raw data into categories or themes based on the Aaker (2009) brand identity framework on valid inference and interpretation. This process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher’s careful examination and constant comparison (Patton, 2002)

7.5 Reliability and validity/trustworthiness

“The term reliability describes whether the same results would be produced if the research was to be repeated by a different researcher at a different time using the same method or instrument (Koonin, 2014:257)”; therefore, reliability is concerned with the credibility of the study. Welma (2005:145) concurs with this, stating that, “Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research, and relates to the credibility of the findings”. The results that will be collected in this study will not be of a reliable nature if one considers the fact that the study is designed specifically to be applied to the COJ brand which is a municipality and therefore may not work exactly the same for other brands. However, the researcher intends to conduct a pre-test to ensure the reliability of the information and to test the questions asked by the researcher so as ensure that they are moved from a broad to a narrow focus; secondly, the researcher will not purely rely on the pre-planned questions; the questions formed will be clear and simple and guarded against asking leading questions; double barreled questions will not be asked; and finally, the researcher will to ask truly open ended questions. The above control measures will certainly the reliability of the research.

Validity is all about determining whether the research measured what it was supposed to measure (Koonin, 2014). This study will pass as valid as the researcher uses a valid framework, the Aaker model of brand identity and has also made use of past literature by reviewing the findings in the past research that was studied. The validity is measured by means of internal validity (whether the research design will answer the research questions) as stated by Koonin (2014). The researcher is

confident that the study will answer the research questions, as construct validity was present. “Construct validity is when we measure something with an instrument we use to measure that which is supposed to measure” (Welman et al, 2005:142). The researcher believes that construct validity was present in the study as the study was based on the Aaker framework of brand identity and all questions and findings were based on the model.

Trustworthiness refers to four aspects that the study should incorporate. These aspects are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. “Credibility refers to the accuracy to which the researcher interpreted the data that was provided by the participants” (Koonin, 2014:258). Credibility which is also described as internal validity by Koonin (2014) was ensured in this study in three ways, firstly it was ensured that the interviews contained no leading questions for the participants, secondly it was ensured that the interview contained no double-barrel questions and that the questions were clear to the participants and finally credibility was ensured by the researcher transcribing the interviews accurately and thoroughly. Transferability refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results (Koonin, 2014). This will be hard for this particular study as the study was conducted on a contextual and cross sectional basis. It was based on a specific brand and with a specific sample population, also due to the fact that the qualitative study was based on interviews conducted, it is hard to ensure peoples’ feelings and emotions will be replicated in future studies. Reliability will be ensured through the pilot study. “Confirmability refers to how well the data collected supports the findings and interpretation of the researcher” (Koonin, 2014:259). The study will ensure this by using volunteer participants for the interviews and as a result the data to be collected for the study will be of an objective nature therefore the researcher believes the study is of a trustworthy nature.

8. ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTION

This study can potentially be used by CoJ to improve the brand should they deem necessary. The researcher hasn’t come across a study of this nature and therefore, the study will assist COJ, brand leaders, academics identify gaps for opportunities if any exists.

9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

“Ethics are important to consider when conducting research as they set a standard for the attitudes and behaviour in the study” (Louw, 2014:262). The researcher will observe the

following ethics when conducting research: get informed consent from all participants, respect for anonymity and confidentiality, respect for privacy and vulnerable groups of people. The researcher will also ensure the physical and psychological comfort of participants is ensured during the interviews and focus groups. Lisa Given and Kristie Saumure (2008) state that trustworthiness is an important aspect when one conducts qualitative research and as such, the researcher will also ensure that they trustworthy and objective at all times and that they get permission from the participant to share their information.

10. PROPOSED CHAPTERS

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Data Findings and Analysis
- Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

11. CONCLUSION

From the literature review, the paper can conclude that although brand identity and brand image are two separate concepts, they are intertwined and should always be measured and checked against each other to ensure that the message is well received and understood for the intended target audience so as to add value and to satisfy the consumer's needs. Both brand identity and brand image work together to build a strong solid brand that resonates with consumers. CoJ's brand image and identity should be one that is based on the resident's needs, makes their lives easier, adds value and is of global standard as per their pay offline 'A World Class African City'. Interviews will be conducted with a select group of residents to determine if there is difference between the brand identity and brand image of CoJ brand as per their website, and if there is a difference, the paper would like to determine on which pillars of the Aaker brand identity model the difference between residents views and the brands identity stands.

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