



An investigation into the effects of multiple rebranding on the overall corporate brand identity. A study on Uber's corporate brand identity shift.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects that multiple rebranding has on the overall corporate brand identity. It focused on the understanding of how rebranding as a whole works and in the instance of a corporate brand that undergoes the act multiple times. The overall objective of the study was to investigate how Uber's multiple rebranding throughout the years, has affected the overall Uber corporate brand identity. This objective was achieved through gaining an understanding of what strategic value Uber Riders perceive the corporate brand has gained, through their multiple rebranding and how the act of multiple rebranding has influenced how they perceive the overall Uber corporate brand identity.

Qualitative research was conducted with two focus groups comprised of Uber Riders who have used the Uber app since the brand first launched in South Africa. The research revealed that multiple rebranding works for corporate brands similar to Uber's nature which are digital based apps, as their industry requires them to constantly change, stay on trend and innovate. However, in the grander scheme, the effect of undergoing multiple rebranding and the overall corporate brand identity does not have a negative outcome if the product or service itself is not been impacted.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Corporate brands strive to remain relevant and maintain their appeal in the dynamic environments they exist in, the complex and ever-changing corporate environment necessitates corporate brands to continuously review their business strategies and make the appropriate adjustments when necessary (Chad, 2016). As a response to that ever-changing corporate environment, amongst many other strategies, corporate brands sometimes look into revitalising their corporate brands through gradual modifications of their positioning, visual representation and business and marketing programmes – the act of rebranding (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007).

This research paper reports on the corporate brand identity and multiple rebranding of the Uber corporate brand. The aim of this study was to investigate the effects that multiple rebranding has had on the overall corporate brand identity. It aimed to further understand the phenomenon of rebranding by way of digging deeper into multiple rebranding in the context of the Uber corporate brand.

1.1 Background and orientation

The phenomenon of 'rebranding' is often used to describe three common cases that can occur for corporate brands; changing name, changing corporate brand identity aesthetics and/or repositioning the brand (Muzellec, Doogan & Lambkin, 2003). Rebranding seeks to redefine the corporate brand identity; however, it also risks the possibility of potentially overturning years of a strategic effort to create a strong corporate brand (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). The rebranding literature explains that there are common drivers of rebranding however, the true reasons and effects of rebranding differ from one corporate brand to another (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006).

To contribute to the rebranding literature, it was further investigated in the context of one single corporate brand that has redefined their corporate brand identity multiple times, the act of multiple of rebranding, by understanding the rebranding drivers and more so the effect that it has had on their overall corporate brand identity. To gain deeper understanding on

the phenomena of multiple rebranding; this study explained the terminology of brand in order to highlight the different types of brands that exist, including corporate brands. Following the explanation is a focus on corporate brand identity in order to understand what changes when a corporate brand undergoes rebranding as a branding strategy.

The corporate brand Uber is a prime example of multiple rebranding. Uber is a taxi and ride-sharing company that gained popularity in 2010. It is the first ride-share company that became the default verb and noun for the industry it exists in – this shows the strength of their corporate brand within the ride-share industry (McAlone, 2016). Since its debut in 2010, Uber has undergone four rebrands, this opened for further investigation on the drivers of those multiple rebrands and the effect that it has on their overall corporate brand identity.

1.2 Rational

Rebranding is common in the field of branding, it seeks renewal, revitalisation, reinvention and repositioning of the corporate brand (Merrilees & Miller, 2008). The main reason, based on the understanding of the phenomenon of rebranding, is that corporate brands undergo rebranding to improve the old and enhance their overall corporate brands (Miller, Merrilees, & Yakimova, 2014). It is also understood that the triggers and drivers for rebranding can be wide-ranging and depend on the corporate brand itself (Tarnovskaya & Biedenbach, 2018). Because the drivers for rebranding differ between corporate brands the outcome and effects of the rebranding are dependent on the evaluation of those drivers.

In the instance that a corporate brand was to rebrand multiple times, it opens the gap to further understand the triggers at every stage and what overall effects the multiple rebrands have had on the corporate brand itself. The aim of this paper is to investigate rebranding in a much more granular scale, where a corporate brand has rebranded multiple times and understand the driving factors of multiple rebranding in order to understand the effect that it has on the overall corporate brand identity.

The given driver for Uber's rebranding has been to showcase how they have evolved throughout the years in the online ride-sharing industry they exist in (McAlone, 2016), however, it is not known in a much more granular scale why the corporate brand underwent multiple rebrands and what long-term effect that has on their corporate brand. This research

paper investigated that through understanding corporate brand, corporate brand identity and rebranding literature in order to dig deeper into multiple rebranding and the effects it has.

1.3 Problem Statement

Change is an evitable part of the corporate environment, it allows corporates to adapt to a new normal and improve their position in the market they exist in (Olufemi, 2009).

Because of the intricate and ever-changing corporate environment, it is vital that corporate brands constantly strive to remain relevant and sustain a competitive advantage amongst their competitors as the failure to do so results in loss of opportunities to grow and evolve their corporate brand (Chad, 2016; Stuart, 2018).

In order to strive within a complex environment, corporate brands need to continuously review their branding strategies and adjust where necessary (Stuart, 2018). Amongst many other branding strategies to address change is rebranding, it is where corporate brands address the ever-changing environment, they exist in by undergoing significant change to their corporate brand identity change in order to evolve within the ever-changing environment (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007).

It is against this background that the study investigated the multiple corporate brand identity changes that Uber has undergone through the years and what effect and value that has had on their overall corporate brand identity.

1.3.1 Why this problem is worth investigating

Rebranding literature clarifies that the drivers and effects of rebranding differ from one brand to brand (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006). This problem is worth investigating as it further builds on this literature which looks at a single corporate brand that has redefined and revitalised their corporate brand identity multiple times. In looking at that kind of corporate brand, this study is worth investigating as it will try to understand the drivers of the multiple rebranding and how it affects their overall corporate brand identity.

1.3.2 Research Questions

In order to investigate what effects multiple rebranding has on the overall corporate brand identity, the following research questions have been set:

1. What perceived strategic value has Uber gained amongst Uber Riders from its multiple rebranding?
2. How has the multiple rebranding influenced Uber Riders' perception of the Uber corporate brand identity?
3. How has the Uber corporate brand identity shifted throughout the years against Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework?

1.3.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects that multiple rebranding has on the overall corporate brand identity with particular focus on the Uber corporate brand identity and its multiple shifts. Based on the research questions, the corresponding research objectives are:

1. To determine the perceived strategic value Uber has gained amongst Uber Riders from its multiple rebranding
2. To analyse the influence multiple rebranding has had on how Uber Riders' perceive the Uber corporate brand identity
3. To evaluate Uber's corporate brand identity shift throughout the years against Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework

1.4 Purpose Statement

Based on the problem statement, the purpose of this study is to investigate the drivers of Uber's corporate brand identity changes and if multiple rebranding has affected their corporate brand identity, against Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework (CBIM).

1.5 Key concepts conceptualization

- **Corporate Brand:** Balmer and Gray (2003) reflect corporate brands to be symbols or marks that signify ownership in the form of name, logotype or trademark. These symbols or marks are also linked to key values that are associated with the corporation itself and the products and services it offers.
- **Corporate Brand Identity:** Balmer (2017) argues that corporate brand identity shouldn't be an external interpretation only but internal as well. They should be an extension of the characteristics that give the corporate brand continuity and consistency.
- Balmer's (2017) corporate brand identity explanation alludes the use of **Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) Framework** (2013) which looks at the understanding of the corporate brand identity concept from both theoretical views and managerial views – an internal and external view.
- **Corporate Rebranding:** This is seen as the gradual revitalisation of a corporate brand through a shift in positioning and representation, visual brand elements included. This allows corporate brands to respond to their ever-changing business climates (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007).
- **Corporate brand strategies:** Corporate brands need to have clear consistency and alignment throughout their branding strategies. Christensen, Firat & Torp (2008) refer to the aligning of corporate brand identity symbols, messages, methods and attitudes with what the corporate brand communicates and relays to their audience as Integrated Marketing Communications

These key concepts drive the study and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2.

1.6 Overview of Research Methodology

The main research objective of this study is to investigate the effects that multiple rebranding has on the overall corporate brand identity of Uber, which required in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

The research used a qualitative research design, and was conducted in Johannesburg through an online platform, Zoom, with selected Uber Riders. Qualitative data was collected from two focus groups made up of Uber Riders who have used the Uber app since it's 2013

launch in South Africa. The data from the findings of the study were analysed using thematic analysis to pull insights. A detailed discussion on methodology is in Chapter 3.

1.7 Structure of the paper

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of previous work relevant to the outlined topic will be presented to identify a gap between what has been written and what has not been written (Maree, 2016) in the corporate brand identity and rebranding literature. A theoretical foundation relating to the core elements of corporate brand identity is provided to illustrate what the study will measure its focus on.

The literature will review various branding theories and emphasise corporate brand identity as a type of branding theory. Following this, the literature on branding strategies with a key focus being rebranding as a strategy for corporate brands will be explored to drive the discussion on multiple rebranding, while using the Uber corporate brand as a study.

2.1 Branding Theory

There are various definitions centred around the term 'brand.' Some explanations take the word's literal meaning and others try to illustrate a deeper meaning of the term into a universal business understanding.

American Marketing Association's, (1960 as cited in Erdis & Du Toit, 2013), defines brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them,' this definition focuses on the tangible attributes as points of differences for a brand. The problem with this definition is that it fails to take into account the consideration of intangible attributes of the meaning of brand. The intangible attributes of brand are taken into account through the definition of brand by seminal author, Keller (1998) who defines brand a set of 'mental associations' consumers hold that adds to the perceived value of a product or service. Those associations are unique, strong or positive.

Another seminal author's approach to the definition of brand is illustrated by Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1998), who consider brands as classifications of 12 themes; brand is seen as a logo, as a legal instrument, as a company or corporate, as a shorthand, as risk reducer, as an identity system brand, as an image in consumer's mind, as a value system, as a personality, as a relationship, as an added value and as an evolving entity (Maurya &

Mishra, 2012). In this classification, Chernatony and Dall'Omo Riley (1998) gives the term 'brand' a chance to exist in a holistic sense of what the meaning is.

Following the terms of brand is understanding that various types of brands exist and there are clear differences from those branding types (Carlucci, Agostini, Filippini & Nosella, 2014). Brands are looked at as corporate brands, service brands and product brands. Balmer (2006) notes brands differ in terms of responsibility for management, focus, disciplinary foundation and communications focus, they are also looked at in terms of how they may transfer or enhance brand association (Kolarova, 2009). Product brands focus on the tangible performance while service brands' main focus lies in intangible performance, within any service industry (Chernatony & Segal-Horn, 2003), while corporate brand places focus on the organisation itself.

A focus on brand as a corporate will be further elaborated on to understand the organisational focus.

2.1.1 Corporate Brand

Loved, cherished and held in high esteem by both customers and organizations, corporate brands are constituted as one of the most captivating phenomena in the business environment (Balmer, 2001). In relation to the definition of brand by the American Marketing Association's (1960 as cited in Erdis & Du Toit, 2013), Keller (1998), and Balmer and Gray (2003) see corporate brands as; a mark which signifies ownership in the form of a name, logotype or trademark. Corporate brands are also seen as symbols linked to key values, it is where the corporate brand encompasses the additional values that are associated with the corporation and the products and services it offers. To further understand corporate brands, Aaker (2004) reflects that most corporate brands share these similar sets of characteristics; corporate brands often have a rich heritage, they have a set of core assets and capabilities, they have a strong people element within its founder whom people can identify with, they have a set of values and priorities that are most important to them, some corporate brands have citizenship programmes and have a good performance record which enhances their good corporate brand.

In understanding a corporate brand, Balmer and Gray (2003) explain that there is a growing realisation that corporate brands serve a variety of stakeholders as a powerful navigational tool for a variety of purposes including employment, investment, and consumer purchasing behaviour, all at an organization level. Brands are actively managed at an organisational level (corporate branding), or at an individual product level (product branding) (Xie & Boggs, 2006). At an organisation level, corporate brands are given the chance to leverage on organisational vision, corporate culture and identity as part of their points of difference for stakeholders and within the markets they exist in (Khojastehpour, Ferdous & Polonsky, 2015). As a seminal author on corporate branding literature, Balmer (1998) asserts that corporate identity is an essential corporate asset which reflects the identity, ethics, priorities and values of the company in order to distinguish itself from its competitors.

In explaining the concept of 'corporate brand' Balmer (1998) also refers to corporate identity. This opens the need to understand the corporate identity concept within the literature for this study to further expand on the corporate brand as a concept.

2.2 Corporate Brand Identity

The corporate identity is a key source in the definition of the 'corporate brand identity', as it defines the distinguishing characteristics of any company, which all have a corporate identity (Urde, 2013). When trying to understand corporate identity, organisations ask themselves the questions 'who are we?' and 'what we are' (Abratt, 2011) to understand what their corporate brand is. In the literal sense of the word, corporate brand identity can mean the visual cues, what one recognizes from the company and how it distinguishes itself from others (Tourky, Foroudi, Gupta & Shaalan, 2020), however, Balmer (2017) argues that corporate identity shouldn't only be about the outward interpretation but also an extension of the characteristics that give the company continuity and consistency.

Traditionally, the corporate brand identity was considered to be guided and regulated by managers, the perspective was that managers influence the true essence and meaning of the corporate brand (Iglesias, Landgraf, Ind, Markovic & Koporcic, 2020), this perspective focused on the internal. However, Balmer argued that meaning and understanding should be both internal and external stakeholder (Balmer, 2010). This perspective illustrates thus the meaning that multiple stakeholders co-create corporate brands. Balmer further

reiterates that corporate brands are born out of corporate identities, however, they live in the minds of groups and individuals, these corporate brands identities have held a special meaning to groups and individuals.

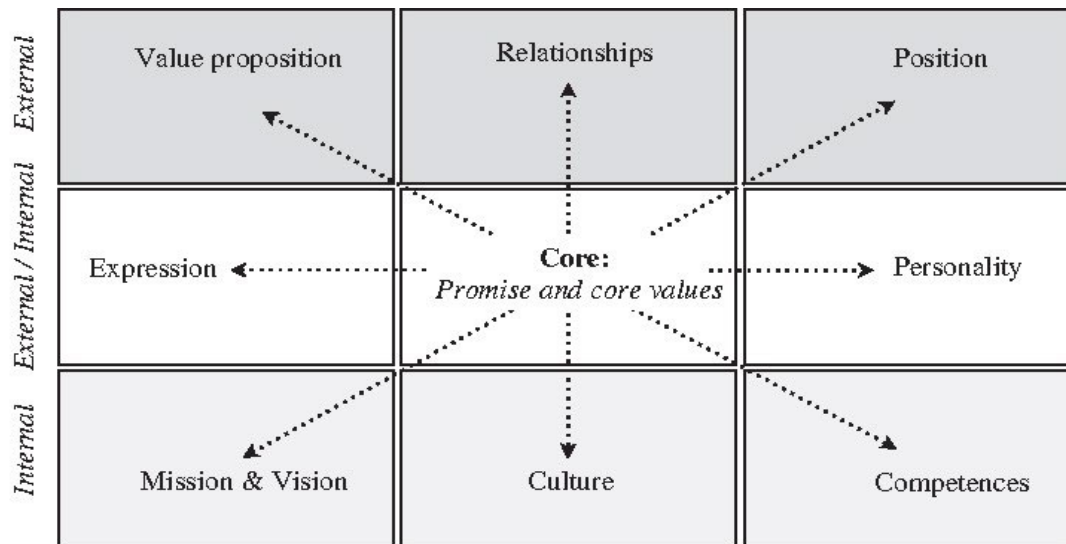
Based on the understanding that corporate brand identity reflects both the internal and external, a theoretical foundation for this study needs to reflect that understanding. Existing theoretical foundations include Aaker's Brand Identity Planning Model (1996) which focuses on building the brand identity and its core essence as well as Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2003) which depicts the picture of the sender and the receiver from an internal and external point of view – however, these theoretical foundations may not be relevant for this study as their main focus and measure is brand identity on their own. A more relevant theoretical foundation for this study would be Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) Framework (2013) which looks at the understanding of the corporate brand identity concept from both theoretical views and managerial views.

2.2.2 Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM)

This theoretical framework provides a structure for managing a corporate brand. The first view of this framework is from a theoretical perspective; it creates a balance between the external and internal components of corporate brand identity and links them into a single entity. It also highlights the relationship between the core and extended elements of corporate brand identity (Urde & Greyser, 2016; Urde, 2013). The importance of this view for this study is to bridge the theoretical gap between understanding corporate brand identity as internal or as both internal and external.

The second view is from a managerial perspective; it provides an overview of what corporate brand identity is and the different elements within it. Why this view is important for this study is that it suggests ways to maximize corporate brand identity and direct the creation and retention of competitive value proposals.

To illustrate the theoretical gap, Urde (2013) illustrates the elements within the CBIM in Figure 1 below as:



RIM

Figure 1: The CBIM (Source: Urde, M. 2013: 750).

To drive this study, the CBIM will need to be applied by firstly describing the corporate brand identity (the internal) to be studied, secondly to define that corporate brand identity by looking at all dynamic stakeholders (internal and external), and lastly by aligning the corporate to make a linkage between the different parts of the corporate brand (internal and external).

The limitation Urde (2013) outlines for the CBIM is from the managerial point of view, it explains the gaps between the current corporate brand identity and the one that the corporate brand envisions. The purpose of this study, the limitation of the CBIM and the application of it is based on the research problem, which is if a brand were to shift their corporate brand identity multiple times within the CBIM, how would their overall corporate brand identity be affected by that action.

2.3 Corporate Branding Strategies

In building and enhancing a corporate brand, the key is the selection of an appropriate branding strategy (Saji, Jit Singh Mann & Kaur, 2013), the suitability of that branding strategy depends on the goal that the corporate brand has set for themselves to achieve. Appropriate branding strategies are built to address the need to action some kind of change for the corporate brand as Balmer (2017) asserts that corporate brands are in a constant

state of change thus the change must be recognised as an essential and an on-going characteristic.

In building appropriate branding strategies that drive change, there needs to be a clear consistency and alignment throughout the entire corporate brand – from the marketing to the communication of the corporate brand identity. The notion of aligning all corporate brand identity symbols, messages, methods and attitudes with what the corporate brand communicates and relays to their audience, which is referred to as Integrated Marketing Communications (Christensen, Firat & Torp, 2008). Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plays a significant role in the synchronisation of cross-channels, Kliatchko (2008: 140) defines IMC as “Strategic management of stakeholders, content, channels and outcomes of the brand communication programmes.” These two definitions assert the importance of corporate brands to ensure that their brand strategies within marketing and communications of their corporate brand identities are consistent and aligned across their channels.

In the context of branding strategies and IMC, the two types of strategies include multi-channel strategies and omnichannel strategies. Multi-channel and omnichannel strategies share similar traits by ensuring that there is a consistent messaging of the corporate brand on all channels. The key difference between the two strategies is dependent on the corporate brands’ approach to digital channels; in a multichannel strategy, corporate brands seek to maximize the performance of each channel whereas, in an omnichannel strategy, corporate brands focus on the overall profitability on all channels (Payne, Peltier & Barger 2017).

Overall, branding strategies are driven by any form of change for the corporate brand and IMC reiterates that the communications that come from the corporate brand need to be consistent throughout their communications channels.

2.4 Corporate Rebranding

There are various ways that a corporate brand can change within the context of their corporate brand identity. That change can be a change to their strategic direction, the corporate brand identity physical aesthetic or brand – in literature this kind of change can be referred to as corporate rebranding (Muzellec, Doogan & Lambkin, 2003). Muzellec and

Lambkin (2006), further explains corporate rebranding as a dynamic method of brand revitalisation, ranging from small adjustments to a brand logo to significant changes including the whole company's restructuring and strategic approach. The revitalisation of a corporate brand by a gradual, incremental shift in its positioning and representation can be seen as a natural feature of corporate brand management's response to the ever-changing business climate they exist in (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007).

Corporate brands react to their ever-changing corporate environment differently, and in the context of corporate rebranding, the stimulus or drivers for the act of rebranding will differ from corporate brand to corporate brand. To assist in dissecting the research problem of this paper, it is important to understand the typical stimulus of corporate rebranding. Stuart (2004) argues that while the detailed reasons may differ, there are similar drivers and factors that lead to corporate rebranding which may be internal or external; a common internal driver is the corporate brand feeling that their corporate brand identity is outdated and needs to be refreshed, it could also be the corporate brand needing to shift their focus or vision – this could be done to the corporate brand identity's exterior or interior (Stuart, 2004). A common external factor for corporate rebranding is a shift the corporate brand makes within the market it exists in which is caused by old and new competitors, it is the change in external environment and change in competitive position that leads a corporate brand to wanting to change their corporate brand identity (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006).

While it is known that the reasons differ between corporate brands, Stuart (2004) asserts that the overall reason of corporate rebranding is to send a message to all stakeholders and the market they exist in that the corporate brand has undergone some kind of change. Stuart (2004) also highlights that there are three obvious categories of the types of changes that a corporate brand undergoes during the process of corporate rebranding, those types are a change in name, logo and slogan. It is argued that a change in one of these elements results in an evolutionary change of the corporate brand, however, in the instance that the corporate brand undergoes a name, logo and slogan change simultaneously, that form of corporate rebranding may be seen as revolutionary in the market the corporate brand exists in.

Corporate rebranding can be seen as a good corporate brand identity change strategy; however, it has its pitfalls. Stuart (2018) argues that there is often a misalignment between the old and new, the actual and desired corporate brand identity as well as the actual and

communicated corporate brand identity. This point thus proves the earlier corporate brand strategies point of ensuring that there is a clear and consistent messaging of the strategies that corporate brands utilise. Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) identify the two common pitfalls to the disconnection with the core of the corporate brand and the challenge of multiple identities.

For the purposes of this study, the common problem of ‘the challenge of multiple identities’ will be elaborated on in the context of a brand who has undergone multiple corporate rebranding changes.

2.5 Multiple Corporate Rebranding: Uber

Multiple corporate rebranding happens when a corporate undergoes a rebranding strategy more than once. Meaning that a corporate brand considers and actions changes involving their corporate brand identity and corporate brand meanings multiple times to their audience and stakeholders (Tarnovskaya & Biedenbach, 2018). Gotsi and Andriopoulos’s (2007) pitfall on ‘challenge of multiple identities’ argues that people still reflect on their old identities and cultures that have been deepened into their minds. When undergoing the act of multiple corporate rebranding, the corporate brand introduces a new corporate brand identity and positioning to people who have deepened into their mind the message and identity of that corporate brand, this act could have a positive and strategic value on the corporate brand or a long-lasting negative effect.

The way to put the phenomenon of multiple rebranding into context is by the illustration of a corporate brand that has undergone that act. Uber is a taxi and ride-sharing company that gained popularity in 2010. Since the corporate brand’s debut as UberCab in 2010, Uber has undergone multiple rebrands that showcase how they have evolved throughout the years (McAlone, 2016).

In relation to Stuart’s (2014) three obvious categories of the types of changes within corporate rebranding, Uber’s corporate rebranding came in the form of a change in their logo and their rider- and partner-app icons & user interface (Hempel, 2016), which is seen as an evolutionary corporate rebrand change, as seen in Figure 2 below. The driver for each of their corporate rebrands has been an attempt to transform their purpose, to cement

a new reputation, change how the world and corporate brand itself perceive the Uber corporate brand. The act of multiple corporate rebranding has been driven by trying to find a balance between being inclusive in their aesthetic and simplification (Bowman, 2018).



Figure 2: Fatanmi, V.A. 2018. *A Case for the Mobility of Uber's Logo-life*. Noteworthy – The Journal Blog

The earlier presented argument on corporate brand identity highlighted that corporate brand identity overall reflects both the internal and external aspects of the corporate brand. While Uber may have undergone many corporate rebrands, the core essence of each corporate rebrand has been to bridge the gap between what the internal Uber corporate brand knows it to be and what the external audience and stakeholders know and experience the Uber corporate brand to be – inclusive of its corporate brand identity.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of research is a way of systematically solving the research questions, it is understood as a science of the intended research which is done scientifically (Kothari, 2004). The main research objective of this study was to investigate the effects that multiple rebranding has had on the overall corporate brand identity of Uber.

In understanding why research is done, it is essential to explain why certain methods are used throughout the course of the study. The research methodology for this study starts by explaining which research paradigm was used. The choice of paradigm assumptions impacts the methodological choices of the research design (Maree, 2016), which were qualitative due to the nature of the study and the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the Uber corporate brand identity in the context of multiple rebranding. The research strategy below further describes the population and sampling, data collection and data analysis methods used to conduct the research and to also answer the research questions and objectives of the study.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The concept of paradigms coincides with the diversity of views and interpretations about meanings. Most research is guided by three broad paradigms; positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. For this study, the interpretivism paradigm is chosen as the paradigm places emphasis on the need and ability to develop a deeper understanding (Kekeya, 2019) and complexity of a phenomenon of corporate brand identity effects within the context of multiple rebranding. The interpretive researcher's main aim is to understand the meaningful behaviours and interpretations of human beings to understand their views on the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

In unpacking the diversity of views and interpretations of various meanings, paradigms discuss basic assumptions about reality (ontology), what is known and unknown (epistemology), the already explored theory (meta-theory), the beliefs and values of the study in the broader sense (axiology) and the methodological approach (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Thus, the interpretivism assumptions for this study are;

The *ontological* assumption is that the in-depth understanding of the drivers and effects of the act of multiple rebranding is known to the corporate brand itself and only an on-the-surface understanding from what people perceive of those drivers and effects. The *epistemological* assumption is that corporate brands build strategies in the corporate brand identity sense, to address their challenges or simply to stay ahead of the competitors within the market they exist in. The *metatheoretical* assumption is in refining the thinking of corporate brands, corporate brand identities and rebranding in the more detailed context of multiple rebranding for the Uber corporate brand. The *Axiology* assumption is the uniqueness of this study and can be seen in the choice of the corporate brand and the expansion of the rebranding phenomenon into multiple rebranding for the Uber corporate brand. The *methodological* assumptions are purely qualitative methods in nature and will be further discussed in the next section below.

3.2 Research Approach

The choice of paradigm assumptions influences significantly the choices of research design for the study (Maree, 2016). By utilising interpretivism as a paradigm, the desired outcome is to gain an in-depth understanding of the social realities of individuals – thus depending on qualitative research to gain that in-depth understanding (Kekeya, 2019). To understand how multiple rebranding has affected the overall Uber corporate brand identity, in-depth conversations with relevant individuals are paramount to delve deeper into the effects of multiple rebranding on the overall corporate brand identity.

Qualitative research is used to answer questions concerning experience, meaning and perspective, most often from a participant's point of view topic (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). Based on the research questions, the study required in-depth understanding from participants on the corporate brand identity of Uber – the understanding of the shift and drivers of multiple rebranding, the strategic value for the overall corporate brand identity and the influence for the riders. Through the use of qualitative designs or approaches, the views of participants were revealed, and the research objectives were achieved.

3.3 Research Design

In qualitative research design, three types of research studies are distinguished to address the overall research objectives for a study: exploratory, descriptive and illustrative qualitative research (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:54). For this study, the exploratory qualitative study has been used as it formulates the problem for precise investigation, it works largely with an emerging theoretical framework and places emphasis on the discovery of ideas and insights (Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Kothari, 2004). The ideas that have been investigated and insights which have been revealed are around Uber's multiple rebranding and how they moved through Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework, how multiple rebranding has affected their overall corporate brand identity and how their riders now perceive their corporate brand identity.

In further explanation of qualitative research exists four approaches for qualitative research designs which drive how the research process will be approached; phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case studies (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Due to the nature of this study, phenomenology has been used as the qualitative research design approach as it places emphasis on understanding the true essence of a particular phenomenon and what participants experience or interpret of that phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), which in this study is the phenomena of multiple rebranding and corporate brand identity. It is important to first understand how participants interpret the phenomenon in order to be able to understand how it has affected them.

To put the phenomenology approach into further context; it is now known that since the corporate brand's debut in 2010, Uber has undergone multiple rebrands throughout the years that showcase their brand evolution (McAlone, 2016). Figure 2 as shown in section 2.5 above illustrates all the rebrands that were seen by their riders through the digital Uber app. To conduct the qualitative research, a cross-sectional design approach was taken as this design approach places focus on studying from existing phenomena, at a specific period and sample which would be the Uber app (Payne & Payne, 2004). A cross-section is thus relevant for this study as it allows the use of data from a large number of phenomena as explained in the literature review.

For these reasons and approaches, the researcher has conducted two focus groups for rounded and holistic conversations with relevant Uber Riders in order to address the research questions of this study.

3.4 Population and Sampling

Following from the research plan which provides a detailed explanation of how the research was conducted to achieve the earlier stipulated research objectives, the researcher identified the following population for the study and sampling method:

3.4.1 *Unit of Analysis*

Understanding the unit of analysis is the first step in analysing data. The unit of analysis answers the question of ‘what’ and ‘who’ is being studied, it is the person or object from which the researcher intends to collect data – at the broadest (Kumar, 2018). The unit of analysis at its broadest sense for this study is the Uber Riders.

Uber is available across the world and spread across 65 countries with over 75 million riders and over 22,000 corporate employees (Iqbal, 2020; Uber, 2018). In the South African context, Uber launched in the country in 2013 with operations in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, the corporate brand recorded 969 000 active riders in 2017 (Walker, 2019; Venter, 2017) – this shows the broadness of the unit of analysis for this study. While the focus of the study is the Uber corporate brand identity, the indication of this will be further illustrated in the accessible population of the study.

3.4.2 *Population*

Clearly defining the population of interest is an essential component of the research plan, as the definition of the population dictates the range of the conclusions resulting from the research (Salkind, 2010).

Following from the unit of analysis, the information required to answer the research questions was answered by the population of the Uber Riders. However, due to the large

amount of this population – population parameters needed to be set in order to distinguish between the target population and the accessible population (The IIE. 2020).

South African Uber riders were recorded at 969 000 active riders in 2017 (Venter, 2017) which is the broadest of the population, thus requiring population parameters of the Uber Riders which relates to the target population as well. The population parameters for the Uber Riders were:

- The Uber Riders need to have used the Uber app since the brand's launch in South African in 2013
- Uber Riders need to be riders from the Johannesburg area
- Uber Riders need to have an interest and understanding on branding and branding phenomena

These unique characteristics allowed the researcher to gain further insight and address the research questions of this study.

By sharing these unique characteristics, the accessible population provided the researcher with the relevant and required information needed to draw final conclusions on what the overall effect of multiple rebranding has been.

3.4.3 Sampling

From the accessible population, the researcher was able to develop the sample design. In sampling, there are two major methods that exist, probability and non-probability methods (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). Because this study is a qualitative design, the sampling used was a non-probability sampling method as this method helped the researcher select units from their accessible population that they are interested to study in-depth (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). In selecting the sample size, the following method was used:

For the Uber Riders, the purposive sampling method was used, as the method produced a sample that can be logically assumed by the set list of characteristics (Maree & Pietersen, 2016). For the Uber Riders' population, while the numbers of Uber Riders may be many, a set list of characteristics has been set for this study. The characteristics for the participants are those who have used the Uber app since 2013, are from Johannesburg and have

branding knowledge. Through this set list of participants, the researcher was able to have the appropriate sample size of seven Uber Riders.

3.5 Data Collection

In conducting qualitative research, various methods exist to collect data. The first method is data through field research in the form of in-depth interviews or focus groups and the second method is through unobtrusive research where content analysis and historical can be done (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). In this study, field research has been conducted.

Field research has been conducted through focus-group interviews, which is a meeting with 6-12 people and a facilitator. The aim for focus-groups is to widen the range of the participants' responses and produce rich data from free-flowing conversation between the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Focus-groups were held with the targeted population, the Uber Riders. The aim for the focus-group with the Uber Riders was to have a natural and unstructured discussion on the Uber corporate brand identity and how their multiple rebranding has influenced their perception on their corporate brand identity as well as the perceived value that Uber may have gained, amongst them, from their multiple rebranding. The number of Uber Riders were carefully considered as per the accessible population characteristics and were seven in total.

The participants from the two focus-groups voluntarily agreed to participate on Zoom due to the current COVID-19 and Working from Home climate. The facilitator recorded the data through audio only in order to ensure all participants that their identities will remain confidential throughout the data collection. Following the recording, the interview was transcribed – upon receiving permission from all participants through a signed consent of participation form.

For the focus groups, an interview schedule was formulated and comprised of the following sections:

- **Section 1:** Introductory remarks: The researcher set the scene for the interview session and confirmed administrative details by ensuring participants have signed the participation form and that the session is recorded and transcribed to draw data.

- **Section 2:** Body: These are the questions the researcher asked which reflected the overall aims of the research and centred around Urde's (2013) CBIM framework.
- **Section 3:** Closing remarks: The researcher gave closing remarks on the interview and thanked the participants for their time and insights.

Consequently, an example of the interview schedule:

Section 1: Introductory Remarks	Example
The researcher will introduce themselves and provide information for the purpose of the interview	Hi, name is [researcher's name] and I am an honours student at Vega. Today we will be discussing the Uber corporate brand identity and their multiple rebranding
The purpose of the research will be established	The purpose of this interview and study is to understand how multiple rebranding has affected the overall Uber corporate brand identity
The use of the gather information	The collected data and insights will assist in answering the research objectives of this study

Section 2: Body of the focus groups	Research Question link
General Questions: 1. What does rebranding tell you about a corporate brand's overall identity? 2. What does multiple rebranding tell you about a corporate brand's overall identity?	
Central Questions guided by Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework	
Position Question: 1. What are your thoughts on Uber's corporate brand identity?	RQ1
Value proposition/Competences Questions: 2. What value do you think Uber has gained from their multiple rebranding?	RQ1
Expression/Competences Questions: 1. What do you think about each of these Uber corporate brand identities?  2. From each of the Uber corporate brand identities, which one do you associate Uber with the most and why?	RQ1 & RQ2
Relationship Questions: 1. How does the fact of Uber constantly changing their corporate brand identity make you feel? 2. If Uber were to rebrand again, how would that make you feel? 3. Do you think the multiple rebranding has influenced how you perceive the corporate brand?	RQ1 & RQ2

Section 3: Closing remarks	Example
Establishing the end of the interview	And this is where we end the interview. The insights have been extremely helpful and thought-provoking for this study.
Informing to the participants how their insight has contributed to the study	Because of your thoughts on Uber's corporate brand identity it has made for further thinking on how their multiple rebranding has affected them
Thanking the participants for their time	I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to, please do not hesitate to let me know. Thank You

3.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative data-analysis attempts to determine how participants make sense of a particular phenomenon by "analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding and experiences in an effort to approximate their phenomenon construction" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:109).

The data collected in this study was through field research, thus resulting in thematic analysis for field research. The thematic analysis looked at the collected data in the field research and identified the common issues and themes that occurred, by using Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework. The thematic analysis required the researcher to look at messy collected data and make some importance of it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis for the focus groups was analysed through the following thematic analysis steps:

1. The recorded audio interviews were transcribed and read to make initial observations about the data.
2. From the transcribed data, common themes were identified
3. A coding scheme based on the themes were developed
4. The data was then coded
5. Categories and sub-categories were developed

Data analysis approaches for the conducted field research have enabled the researcher to be immersed in the collected data and identify the patterns of meanings in the collected data (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

3.7 Limitations and delimitations

The **limitations** of this study were around the COVID-19 pandemic and the analysis of one platform. While restrictions in South Africa were easing, some individuals were still not comfortable to interact with others outside of their immediate surroundings. This made it difficult for the researcher to conduct any face-to-face focus groups, thus seeking the researcher to use alternative ways to conduct the focus group.

This study looked at only one platform of the corporate brand, the Uber app, which results in the study being narrow and focussed. While the study was focussed, it created limitations for the study as the study cannot be generalised for the entire Uber brand.

The **delimitations** of a study are the parameters in which the study takes place (Enslin, 2014). This study focused on Uber and particularly its corporate brand identity, it spoke to the following audience group in order to answer the research questions of the study:

- Uber Riders who spoke on how Uber's multiple rebranding has influenced their perception of their corporate brand identity and what strategic value Uber has gained amongst them from its multiple rebranding? Because of the focus on a branding phenomenon, it was important that the riders have an understanding of branding to be a part of the conversation. These riders had used the Uber app for the number of years Uber has been in South Africa because they were able to share with the researcher experiences and views from their own perspective.

The study focused solely on perceptions and thoughts of Uber Riders as the Uber brand team was not accessible to the researcher. While Uber has headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa – decisions on corporate brand identity strategy come from Uber global, thus not allowing the researcher the ability to gain further understanding from a brand point of view, particularly in South Africa, as that population was inaccessible.

Further delimitations to the study are the focus on one platform which is the Uber app. The Uber corporate brand identity can be seen through multiple platforms of the Uber corporate brand however, this study only focused on the app as it is a large platform used to engage with the corporate brand and the overall corporate brand identity.

These delimitations ensured that the study was focused and guided by the research objectives, it ensured that the population falls within a criterion which allowed the researcher to gain rich data required to make conclusions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter details the findings from the data collection described in Chapter 3.

Through the use of thematic analysis, the chapter discusses findings based on codes and themes from Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix. The tables below showcase the CBIM elements relevant to the study as well as supporting verbatim quotations from participants.

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Position

Position		
Theme	Frequency	Verbatim Quote
Modern/Trendy	5	- "Very modern" - "It's modern, it's with the times" - "The minimalist and modern kind of feel is everything that I need in an app" - "Pretty modern, simple, straightforward" - "It's in vogue with tech companies and the trend that we see these days."
Minimalist/Simple	3	- "It's very minimalist, it doesn't have extra stuff, it doesn't try hard, it just has what you need." - "Simple. I remember it being very simplistic" - "Uber remains very neutral and I just like how simple it is"

Table 1: Position findings

Discussion of Table 1:

Urde's CBIM (2013) refers to *position* as the distinct position a corporate brand holds in the market and in the minds of key customers and non-customer stakeholders. In the context of corporate brand identity, it is how customers and non-customer stakeholders perceive the corporate brand identity for them.

Balmer (2017) argues that corporate identity shouldn't only be about the visual cues alone but also an extension of the characterises that give the company continuity and consistency, thus leading the researcher to ask participants their general thoughts and what they view the overall Uber corporate brand identity to be. Participants view Uber's corporate brand identity as modern and in-vogue with technological and corporate brand identity trends which they view as being minimal and simple. Participant B affirms the minimal and simple sentiments by looking at when the corporate brand came into South Africa, that "had they had the old corporate brand identity that they used to have when they first launched, it would not be in-vogue" with current trends and the industry it exists in as a "modern, fresh and clean" corporate brand identity is "exactly what you want for that kind of company."

In support of the Balmer's (2017) argument, the study is focussed on the Uber App, participant C notes the corporate brand identity of Uber is "conducive to what an app [and supporting logo] should be which is more to the point and direct." Participant D concurs with the same sentiment in that the Uber App is "very modern and minimal, which is what one needs within an app" of that nature.

While the Uber corporate brand identity has changed multiple times, participants take the remembrance of what they know the Uber corporate brand today to describe it as modern and minimal overall.

4.1.2 Expression/ Competences

Expression/ Competences		
Theme	Frequency	Verbatim Quote
Premium/ Luxury	4	- "The first logo is very premium, exclusive kind of offering, that's just the first thing that jumps at me." - "It's more luxury than accessible" - "Something very sophisticated, super premium and black tie." - "It does look classier, more premium."
Minimalist/Simple	4	- "It's quite interesting to see how simple they've always kept it."

		- "Simple yet, straight to the point, but still recognizable" - "Having this kind of logo is very neutral but still very strong and speaks to everyone." - "This last one is hundred percent my favourite one, just because of the simplicity."
Symbol	5	- "I don't even know what that little circle thing it is, almost a waste of space" - "They [Uber] started to get confused because a lot of apps around this time we're starting to go for just an icon" - "At face value, it means nothing." - "You could identify even if the name wasn't there." - "It's a symbol for location"

Table 2: Expression/ Competences findings

Discussion of Table 2:

In Urde's (2013) CBIM describes as how distinct, visible and consistent is the overall communications and how the corporate brand expresses themselves, which makes it possible for them to be recognised.

Stuart (2004) highlights three types of changes that corporate brands undergo during corporate rebranding as change in name, logo and slogan. It is argued that a change in one of these elements results in an evolutionary change of the corporate brand. While Uber underwent multiple rebrands, the change has been to one element – their logo, which participants also translated as the first things they saw to change, thus leading the researcher to use Uber's app logos as a way to get an understanding for all participants on what they think about each of those.

The overall sentiments from participants is that Uber has moved from an old and premium kind of expression in their logo to a being a lot simpler and more minimal. The believe that Uber's multiple rebranding has been a journey which lead them to their current simple and modern corporate brand identity. The table below briefly discusses how participants view

each of those logo's in order to arrive at the sentiments of the current expression – simple and modern.

 U B E R	 U B E R	 U B E R	
All participants feel that this logo worked for it's time. Partipant F agrees with this thought in saying that "the apps we had at that time were not as clean. So, it was probably linked to the devices of the time." One out of seven partipants associates Uber with this logo as the U within the logo made it easy to find with all other apps on their phone.	The second logo echoed various sentiments of the use of the symbol. Two of seven participants knew that the symbol meant 'journey completed', however the remaining five were unaware of what it is. One (Participant D) of the five participants believed that the use of the symbol allows for the ability to "identify [with the Uber] even if the name wasn't there"	Within this part of the multiple rebranding journey, participants believe this is when Uber started to know and trust itself a lot more as a corporate brand. It became more "universal, accessible and simple." Two out of seven participants associate with this logo the most as it was one, they truly remember because of their highest Uber usage at the time.	The current Uber logo is noted as simple. Participant 3 views the use of black and white as what made it all look "simpler and worked better for them [Uber]". However, participant G associates the use of black and white as something "very sophisticated, super premium and black tie." While the black and white is given different associations, participants still see this logo as simple.

Table 3: Uber App Logos findings

Balmer (2017) asserts that corporate brands are in a constant state of change and the change needs to be recognised as essential and on-going for corporate brands. Participants showcase this understanding in saying that building a corporate brand identity is a gradual journey, thus noting that the Uber corporate brand identity has been an evolution throughout

the years and has led them to where they are today which participants believe is an inclusive, accessible and simple.

4.1.3 Value Proposition/ Competences

Value Proposition/ Competences		
Theme	Frequency	Verbatim Quote
Evolution/ Journey	3	- "Their rebrand was very gradual... it wasn't all in one year" - "It has been a build up to where they are now, they haven't shocked us" - "There's been change over time, a journey and a story."
Uber as a verb	4	- "They've built it up in such a way that Uber has now become a verb" - "Everybody was using Uber as a verb instead of an adjective or it's normal sense" - "People even refer to Uber when are talking about other e-hailing services." - "A winning formula, they've got a good name that stuck and has become a verb."
Industry	3	- "Especially if you're an app based or digital based company or brand, you continuously need to be doing something different." - "If you are online and you're a digital based brand, it's very much necessary for you to refresh yourself constantly." - "Because they're in the tech space and in that, tech and innovation go hand in hand, which means constant change within those spaces."

Table 4: Value Proposition/ Competences findings

Discussion of Table 4:

In the CBIM, Urde (2013) explains value proposition as how appealing and meaningful the offer is to customers and competences as what a corporate brand is particularly good at.

When coupled together and in the context of the study, it is how the Uber multiple rebranding has appealed to Uber Riders.

Stuart (2004) highlights a change in name, logo and slogan was the types of changes a corporate brand undergoes when rebranding. When one of those elements change, it is seen an evolutionary change of the corporate brand. In its multiple rebranding, Uber changed only their logo and participants believe that while the rebranding happened a lot, it was gradual. The Uber corporate brand identity has been a gradual change that has been changed throughout the years, however it told a brand story and each corporate brand identity made sense for its time – participant A and B coincides with this in saying that the multiple rebranding “has been a build up to where they are now, they haven't shocked us” and that every change has been “an essential part of the evolution” to lead to where Uber is now.

While multiple rebranding has its pitfalls and participants believe not any brand can do so, Uber managed to for two reasons: their strong brand and the industry they exist in. In chapter 1, the researcher noted that Uber is the first ride-share which became the default verb and noun for the industry it exists in (McAlone, 2016). Four of seven participants supported this statement in saying that Uber have impressively built the corporate brand in such a way that they have “Uber has now become a verb” because of their story corporate brand and corporate brand identity that they have built, participant C believe this has allowed Uber to easily get away with rebranding multiple times over the years because it's part of “everyday life and language.”

Uber has also managed to get away with multiple rebranding because of the e-hailing and digital based app industry they exist in. Participant F notes that “if you're an app based or digital based company or brand, you continuously need to be doing something different.” Participants B, E and G agree in saying that a “digital based app needs to move and evolve with the times” because consumers' phones are always updating and the technology/innovation industry keeps getting better” thus making it important for a corporate brand like Uber to use the necessary strategies to keep up with those trends and stay relevant in the minds of consumers.

4.1.4 Relationships

Relationships		
Theme	Frequency	Verbatim Quote
Trust	3	- “Very hard for people to trust you as a brand because it seems like you don't trust yourself” - “It does make it difficult to trust a brand if that happens often - “As soon as that's changed, I start to question that identity that I had.”
Storytelling	4	- “Sometimes, there's a lack of understanding as to why. And that's when it sometimes seems unnecessary” - “Brands just rebrand without giving some sort of insight” - “If they say ‘this is why we're rebranding because we're branching out’ it would help make me understand better” - “Brands lose focus on really informing the strategic directions or change in terms of why they are rebranding”
Aesthetics	2	- “Aesthetics in the grand scheme of things don't matter much if something works and it works well.” - “You overlook what it looks like and you just want to see what it is and how it functions”

Table 5: Relationships findings

Discussion of Table 5:

Urde's (2013) CBIM interprets relationship as the nature of corporate brand's relationship with key customers and noncustomer stakeholders.

Corporate rebranding can be seen as a positive strategy for improving the corporate brand identity however, it has its drawbacks. Often these drawbacks are due to a misalignment between the old and the new as well as what the consumer knows to be (Stuart, 2018). Without focusing on Uber, the general thoughts participants have about corporate

rebranding is that it equates inconsistency, lack of trust for the brand and a loss of familiarity. Consumers “familiarise and attach” themselves to a brand’s corporate brand identity and participant B and D believe the change of that makes “one starts to question that identity that I had” and makes it “very hard for people to trust you as a brand because it seems like you don’t trust yourself.” Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) concur in that people still reflect on their old identities and cultures that have been deepened into their minds, thus being a pitfall for multiple rebranding.

While participants in agreement about loss of trust, in the case of Uber, the trust can still be maintained as the corporate brand has gradually taken customers through their multiple rebranding. However, a misalignment is in lack of explaining why they have rebranded. Four of seven participants believe that brands not sharing why they have rebranded makes the rebranding unnecessary and completely shuts out the “perceptions and values of customers.” Participant E highlights the importance of storytelling within corporate brands today as customers connect emotionally to stories that corporate brands tell because in doing so it will make easier for the consumer to “buy into the rebranding and make it more memorable.

Corporate brands need be clear in the strategic direction they are intending to take in order for consumer to make sense of the evolution or brand story, which could be both negative or positive, depending on the brand itself and the shared story.

On an overall value perspective, majority of participants believe that visual cues and aesthetics do not matter much in the grander scheme as one is already loyal to the brand so no matter how much they change their corporate brand identity, you’ll accept the change and move on. Participants believe that a negative impact of rebranding would be if the service itself changes post the rebrand, participant F mentions that Uber “it’s a very specialized type of functionality” so visual identity is not as important for them as it would be for various other product driven corporate brands, which allows them to change it as much as they can and customers will accept said change as it does not affect the service and needed app functionalities.

4.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a genuineness test for the data analysis, key findings and conclusions of the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). Guba (1981 as cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2016) believes that in the pursuit of trustworthiness for qualitative research, the researcher needs to consider the four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the accuracy in which the researcher interpreted the collected data (Koonin, 2014). To ensure credibility of the study the researcher conducted two focus groups with Uber Riders who clearly fit the population characteristics in order to show that their views are indeed valid and believable. The use of two focus groups allowed the researcher sufficient amount of data to conclude views and insights from various participants.

The **transferability** is in the 'thick descriptions' of the Uber rider participants and the research process, chapter 3, section 3.4 provides a detailed explanation of the participants used for the study. *Transferability* also made reference to the Intra-coder reliability of the study through the use of Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework, this means that different coders will be able to code the same data, in the same manner, to draw conclusions, using the framework.

Dependability is in the value of the integration process between the method of data collection, data analysis and the theory produced from data (Koonin, 2014). Due to the study being qualitative research, the researcher used field research in the form of focus groups as a collection tool and in order to be able to pull the necessary insights from this tool, the researcher used thematic analysis as the data analysis tool. The researcher would not have been able to pull the insights if it were not for the earlier identified theories and framework. Each tool within this study was dependent on each other in order to be able to draw final conclusions.

Confirmability concerns the degree of neutrality and the extent to which findings of the study are shaped by the participants and not the bias of the researcher, it is how well the data collection supports the findings and discussion (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). To confirm the confirmability of the study, the research fully detailed the research process in chapter 3 which led the research to draw the findings and discussions in chapter 4 which were solely

from the two focus groups and not of the bias of the researcher. The full research process discussion allows the researcher to scrutinise the research design.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Corporate brands exist in complex environments that require them to continuously review their branding strategies and adjust where necessary (Stuart, 2018). Amongst many branding strategies, corporate brands use rebranding as a way to redefine and change the corporate brand identity as a way to address the complex environments they exist in.

This study set out to investigate Uber's multiple rebranding and how doing so has affected their overall corporate brand identity.

Due to the overall nature of the study, the researcher was led to conducting qualitative research which provided various conclusions about the overall Uber corporate brand, which is discussed below.

5.1 Concluding Answers

In conducting focus groups with Uber Riders, the researcher was able to answer the research questions of the study in the following way:

Research Question 1: What perceived strategic value has Uber gained amongst Uber Riders from its multiple rebranding?

Multiple rebranding occurs when a corporate brand changes and evolves their corporate brand identity and corporate brand meanings multiple times (Tarnovskaya & Biedenbach, 2018). What is known with Uber is the brand has undergone four rebrands throughout the years and the change has been driven by an attempt to transform their purpose and to cement a new reputation. The multiple rebranding has been driven by the need to create a balance between being inclusive in their aesthetic and simplification (Bowman, 2018).

Multiple rebranding has its pitfalls which Uber Riders see as losing trust however in the case of Uber, Uber Riders believe that the industry they exist in requires them to be in a constant and on-going process of change and keeping up with the trends in the industry in whichever way needed. As the technological advances grow and their services grow and improve, Uber Riders believe so should the corporate brand identity itself. The perceived strategic value Uber gains amongst Uber Riders is continued loyalty and support due to Uber Riders understanding that Uber continues to stay in-vogue with trends in the industry as their

multiple rebranding means continuously ensuring that their corporate brand identity is modern, simple and comes with consistent communication throughout their platforms.

Research Question 2: How has the multiple rebranding influenced Uber rider's perception of the Uber corporate brand identity?

Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) highlight one major pitfall with multiple rebranding: The audience of the corporate brand still reflects on the old corporate brand identities and cultures that they remember to be and has been deepened into their minds. Uber Riders associate the Uber corporate brand with what they truly remember it to be, which is a split between an old identity which is when they used Uber the most or the current Uber corporate brand identity which is what they've recently seen.

The multiple rebranding of Uber has had a neutral influence on how Uber Riders perceive the Uber corporate brand identity, because in the grander scheme, the changes that Uber has undergone has not negatively impacted Uber's offerings thus making it easier for Uber Riders to accept the change.

In relation to the perceived strategic value in research question one, Uber Riders also understand why Uber has changed so much. Due to the industry they exist in and the need to constantly revitalise themselves, Uber Riders easily accept the multiple rebranding. Riders also accept the multiple rebranding as Uber was able to go through a full evolution and journey which led them to where they are today, each corporate brand identity has been relevant for its time and where they have landed up today remains on trend and in-vogue with its industry.

Research Question 3: How has the Uber corporate brand identity shifted throughout the years against Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework?

Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) framework details a structure for managing a corporate brand. It focuses on the balance between the internal and external components of corporate brand identity by linking them into what an overall corporate brand identity equates to. Uber's multiple rebranding has been solely a change of its visual assets, which Urde (2013) frames as *expression*. Thus, the major shift that Uber has made has been within this element of the CBIM which is the unique way in which they've communicated themselves and have made themselves easily recognisable – their logos throughout the

years. The shift with their expression has moved from a premium and messy look to one that has been more minimal and modern.

Because Urde's CBIM focus is both internal and external, the shift in *expression* has led to a shift within the thoughts of customers and noncustomer stakeholders in the elements of position, value proposition, competences and relationships within the CBIM.

Throughout the years, Uber has undergone multiple rebrands which Uber Riders see as a journey that the corporate brand has gone through, this has led Uber's *position* to shift from having an exclusive or premium corporate brand identity to one that is more modern and minimal, their ability to do this is because of the *value proposition* and *competences* in their strong corporate brand that they have built throughout the years. The basis of Uber Riders relationships with corporate brands is trust and Uber's multiple rebranding throughout the years has not affected the trust riders have in them because the evolution and shifts Uber has done has been gradual and always told a story.

5.2 Future Implications

Existing literature on multiple rebranding highlights that when a corporate brand undergoes the act of multiple rebranding, that corporate brand presents a new corporate brand identity and a positioning that could have a positive or negative impact on the overall corporate brand identity as that identity has already been deepened into the minds of their audience (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007). While this study agrees with this statement, it reveals what corporate brands need to note when undergoing multiple rebranding and how it affects their overall corporate brand identity: Multiple rebranding takes on different outcomes depending on the industry the corporate brand exists in. With a digital-app based kind of corporate brand, multiple rebranding does not affect its overall corporate brand identity as their industry necessitates continuous change and revitalisation – however, certain other industries may not have the same kind of effect.

5.3 Conclusions

Rebranding is a common strategy that corporate's use to respond to their ever-changing business climates, it is the gradual and incremental shift in the corporate brands positioning and representation (Gotsi & Andriopoulos, 2007). There are often brands who use this strategy more than once which is seen as an act of multiple rebranding – however in doing

so, the corporate brands open the possibility of impacting their overall corporate brand identity – positively or negatively.

In the Uber context, rebranding was used a strategy to bridge the gap between what Uber Riders know the corporate brand identity to be and what it is known to be internally. While multiple rebranding has its pitfalls, as highlighted throughout the study for a corporate brand such as Uber, the act can be seen as acceptable because the strong corporate brand that it is and the technological/digital app-based industry it exists in.

In the grander scheme, aesthetics and changing them multiple times does not matter much if the act of doing so does not affect the value of the product or service that it being provided, the change in aesthetics [corporate brand identity] means that the corporate brand is simply responding to its changing environment.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethics provide the researcher with what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as well as the protection of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Before conducting research and including participants into the focus group, the researcher compiled a consent participation form that participants need to sign to prove that they are willingly participating in the study and that what they say will be recorded through Zoom video and used as data collection for this study, however their identities will remain anonymous and confidential to the researcher and supervisor alone.

The data collected in this study has been transcribed carefully and stored in a password-protected computer and Google Drive cloud to validate the trustworthiness of the study. The data has been used to conclude findings for the study alone and will be destroyed after five years. While the collected data is stored by the researcher, it available to the supervisor and at the request of the IIE.

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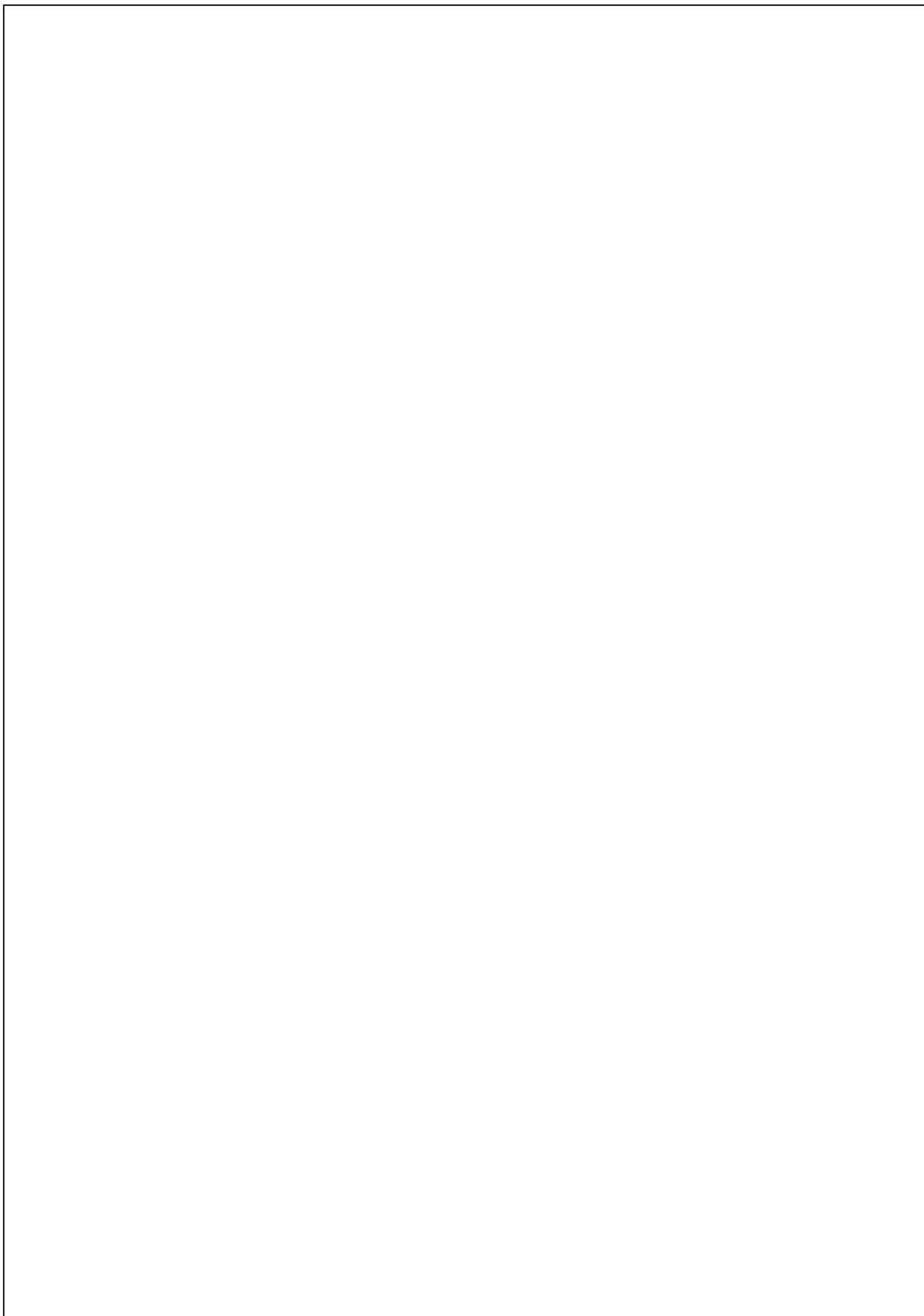
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APPENDICES

A: Ethical Clearance Form



B: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is Katlego Mpho Ntlatleng and I am a student at Vega School. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Helena van Wyk about the effects of multiple rebranding on the overall Uber corporate brand identity. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of multiple rebranding and how it affects the corporate brand identity.

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 I would like to find out your views on Uber's current and previous corporate brand identities. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you a couple of questions relating to the Uber corporate brand identity. 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 views on Uber's corporate brand identity. 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 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:

Katlego Mpho Ntlatleng



The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Helena van Wyk



Consent form for participants

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Katlego Mpho Ntlatleng about the effects of multiple rebranding on the overall Uber corporate brand identity.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. 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.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

Consent form for audio-recording / video recording

I, _____, agree to allow Katlego Mpho Ntlatleng to audio/video record my interviews on Zoom/Skype as part of the research about the effects of multiple rebranding on the overall Uber corporate brand identity.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. 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

C: Focus Group Schedule

Section 1: Introductory Remarks	Example
The researcher will introduce themselves and provide information for the purpose of the interview	Hi, name is [researcher's name] and I am an honours student at Vega. Today we will be discussing the Uber corporate brand identity and their multiple rebranding
The purpose of the research will be established	The purpose of this interview and study is to understand how multiple rebranding has affected the overall Uber corporate brand identity
The use of the gather information	The collected data and insights will assist in answering the research objectives of this study

Section 2: Body of the focus groups	Research Question link
General Questions: 1. What does rebranding tell you about a corporate brand's overall identity? 2. What does multiple rebranding tell you about a corporate brand's overall identity?	
Central Questions guided by Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework	
Position Question: 1. What are your thoughts on Uber's corporate brand identity?	RQ1
Value proposition/Competences Questions: 2. What value do you think Uber has gained from their multiple rebranding?	RQ1
Expression/Competences Questions: 1. What do you think about each of these Uber corporate brand identities?  2. From each of the Uber corporate brand identities, which one do you associate Uber with the most and why?	RQ1 & RQ2
Relationship Questions: 1. How does the fact of Uber constantly changing their corporate brand identity make you feel? 2. If Uber were to rebrand again, how would that make you feel? 3. Do you think the multiple rebranding has influenced how you perceive the corporate brand?	RQ1 & RQ2

Section 3: Closing remarks	Example
Establishing the end of the interview	And this is where we end the interview. The insights have been extremely helpful and thought-provoking for this study.
Informing to the participants how their insight has contributed to the study	Because of your thoughts on Uber's corporate brand identity it has made for further thinking on how their multiple rebranding has affected them
Thanking the participants for their time	I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to, please do not hesitate to let me know. Thank You

D: Final Research Report Summary

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 explore the rebranding phenomenon in the context of a multiple rebranding and how the act of multiple rebranding affects the overall corporate brand identity	What perceived strategic value has Uber gained amongst Uber Riders from its multiple rebranding? How has the multiple rebranding influenced Uber rider's perception of the Uber corporate brand identity? How has the Uber corporate brand identity shifted throughout the years against Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework?	It further builds on the literature of rebranding by looking at a single a single corporate brand that has redefined and revitalised their corporate brand identity multiple times.	Corporate Brand - Balmer, 2001 Balmer & Gray, 2003 Corporate Brand Identity Urde, 2013 Branding Strategies Christensen, Firat & Torp, 2008 Rebranding Muzellec, Doogan & Lambkin, 2003 Stuart & Muzellec, 2004	Theme 1: Corporate brands are a mark which signifies ownership in the form of a name, logotype or trademark. They serve a variety of stakeholders as a powerful navigational tool Theme 2: Corporate Brand Identity Matrix is a balance between the external and internal components of corporate brand identity Theme 3: Corporate brands to ensure that their brand strategies within marketing and communications of their corporate brand identities are consistent and aligned across their channels. Theme 4: An exploratory review of the corporate rebranding phenomenon Theme 5: A common reason for rebranding is a shift in the corporate brand makes within the market it exists in which is caused by old and new competitors.	Paradigm Interpretivism Epistemological Corporate brands build strategies in the corporate brand identity sense, to address their challenges or simply to stay ahead of the competitors within their environments Ontological The understanding of the drivers and effects of the act of multiple rebranding is known to the corporate brand itself and only an on-the-surface understanding from what people perceive of those drivers and effects. Axiology The uniqueness of this study and can be seen in the choice of the corporate brand and the expansion of the rebranding phenomenon into multiple rebranding for the Uber corporate brand. Metatheoretical Refining the thinking of corporate brands, corporate brand identities and	Qualitative Research Design	Field Research Focus group with Uber Riders which were conducted on Zoom	Method Consent of participation forms for participants to sign willingly and voluntarily participating in the study which be recorded to draw data. Challenges: No ethical challenges occurred during the study	Uber's corporate brand identity is minimal and modern. Uber is a digital based app thus requiring it to constantly change and innovate their corporate brand identity Aesthetics do not matter in the grander scheme. A negative impact is if the changes affect the product or services	It is important to tell a story on the overall corporate brand identity and the rebranding in order to keep the audience fully informed on the change.
						Population				
						Uber Riders Rides who have used the Uber app since the South African launch in 2013. These riders have an understand of branding				

				Theme 6: Types of rebranding are a change in name, logo and slogan.	rebranding in the more detailed context of multiple rebranding				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution
Corporate brands exist in complex environments and they need to continuously review their branding strategies. Rebranding can be used as a strategy to address change. However, what of it if corporate brand rebrands multiple times	To determine the perceived strategic value Uber has gained amongst Uber Riders from its multiple rebranding To analyse the influence multiple rebranding has had on how Uber Riders perceive the Uber corporate brand identity To evaluate Uber's corporate brand identity shift throughout the years against Urde's CBIM Framework?	Corporate Brand Corporate Brand Identity Branding Strategies Rebranding / Corporate Rebranding	Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) Framework			Non-probability sampling method. Sampling method purposive sampling method Size 7 Uber Riders	Thematic Analysis Focus groups held on Zoom were recorded and transcribed. They were coded and grouped into specific themes using Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix Framework	The COVID-19 pandemic and the staying/working from home restrictions – which required the researcher to conduct the focus group on an online platform Uber Global. Due to Uber being a global brand, strategy regarding corporate brand identity comes from the global headquarters thus the researcher was not able to speak to any Uber SA team members	The effect of multiple rebranding on the overall corporate brand identity is dependent on what industry they exist in.