



**EMPLOYER BRANDING AND ATTRACTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES: A CASE
STUDY OF THEKWINI TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING
COLLEGE**

By

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Master of Commerce in Human Resource Management

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TITLE PAGE

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Commerce in
Human Resource Management

College of Law and Management Studies
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2018

DECLARATION

I, Denis Musengi (214581824), declare that:

Unless indicated, the research reported in this dissertation is my original research.

This dissertation has never been submitted for any degree or examination at any other education institution.

This dissertation does not include anybody's work, unless categorically stated as being sources from other person.

This dissertation does not contain other person's work, unless specifically stated as being sources from other authors. Where other sources have been quoted then:

Their work has been paraphrased and referenced accordingly;

Where their exact words have been quoted, their work has been placed inside quotation marks and acknowledged as such.

This dissertation does not contain information copied and pasted from the internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source indicated in the dissertation and in the References section.

Signature:



Date:

22/08/2018

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I am also grateful to my family and my wife for encouraging me to keep working until the completion of my study.

I would like to acknowledge and the thank management of Thekwini Technical Vocational Education Training College for granting me permission to use the college as my study site.

Finally, I would like to thank the Thekwini exit level students for participating in the research without any remuneration.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family, my wife Vimbai and my sons Malachi and Michael for being there for me throughout the entire duration of the Masters programme.

ABSTRACT

Employer branding implies differentiation of a company's traits as potential employer from those of its rivals. The employment brand shows the unique aspects of a company's employment offering. This study explored the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. The study investigated the influence of employer branding, employer brand associations, image and self-concept in attracting new employees.

The study was underpinned by a case study research design which required an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. The qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews was employed. Twenty exit level students from the N6 Business Studies and Engineering were selected to participate in the study using non-probability sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample. Data was analysed through the use of thematic analysis.

Results of the study indicated that employer branding has an influence on attracting new employees. The study results showed that the brand associations that influence attraction are salary, benefits, working conditions, culture, growth opportunities and coaching and mentoring. The results of this study also indicated that employer image is central to the attraction of new employees. Self-concept was also revealed as a factor which influenced attraction. The study recommends employers to benchmark their employment offerings with best employers in their respective industries, employers to give top management support to employer branding programs and to fulfill employment offerings among other recommendations.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

FET : Further Education and Training

TVET : Thekwini Technical Vocational Education Training College

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background and contextualises the study of perceptions of the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees based on students' perception at Thekwini Technical Vocational Education Training College (TVET). The problem statement, research questions, and objectives of the study are presented in this chapter. The significance, purpose and limitations of the study are explained and is followed by the operational definition of key terms, chapter outlines and lastly conclusion.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The Thekwini TVET College is a public funded education provider and was formerly known as Thekwini Further Education Training College. Thekwini FET College as it was known by then was established in 2002 through the amalgamation of Cator Manor Technical College, Durban Central Technical College and LC Johnson Technical College. The name was later changed to Thekwini TVET College in 2013. The College has six campuses around Durban (Thekwini College, 2017). Thekwini TVET College offers diplomas in business studies and engineering studies to post matric students.

The issue of employer branding is relatively a new concept in human resource management. The concept has been borrowed from marketing. Hence, employer branding incorporates both marketing and human resource resources concepts. The stronger the brand the more it will attract and retain customers (Hassan, 2012). In addition the stronger brand the more it will be able to instill brand loyalty among the customers (Kim & Sturman, 2012). The research explains employer branding concept from a human resource perspective.

A brand is essentially that which separates one organisation from another. Employer branding is a set of features and qualities which includes both tangible and intangibles that makes a company different in terms of the employment experience (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2008).

The perceptions of prospective employees on what they are looking for in a job would help to attract the best candidate in the labour market. Positive employer brand attracts many applicants. The organisation will be able to select candidates from a large pool hence increasing the chances of selecting the best employees available in the market (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012). The reality is that sometimes companies fail to attract and retain the talent they want. The war for talent has intensified in recent years and it seems like developing countries are losing the fight (Collins & Han, 2006). The research will help to give insight on what makes some employers unique thus increasing their attractiveness.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa is facing a critical shortage of skills especially in the engineering field (Erasmus & Breier, 2009). The majority of qualified artisans are leaving the country in search of the so called “greener pastures”. The world is becoming smaller because of globalisation. Competition for product markets and talent has become intense. Strong employer brands contribute to higher productivity and employee loyalty while weak brands contribute to high employee turnover. High employee turnover is costly to an organisation in the following ways (Reh, 2017).

- Hiring costs - companies pay a lot of money in hiring new employees. Companies have to pay the agency involved in sourcing those new employees. Advertising charges to place the vacant position in the media, furthermore in some cases the company will reimburse a candidate his/her transport and accommodation costs.
- Opportunity costs - the cost of lost business because the company did not have the necessary human resources to do the work. Though it is sometimes difficult to quantify the loss, however, it can run into millions depending on the nature of the business.
- Training costs - it is very expensive to train new employees to reach the expected level of performance.
- Morale costs - these are costs related to low motivation especially when remaining employees are overburdened by work because other employees have left.

The research will also help to fill the existing research gaps on the influence of employer branding and attraction of new talent.

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to investigate the influence of employer branding in the attraction of new employees at the Thekwini TVET College.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE

The study expands the existing body of knowledge on this relatively new concept in human resource management by borrowing concepts in product branding and applying them to human resources. This study is valuable in providing solutions to the challenges facing human resource practitioners on issues such as employer turnover, talent management and employee retention. It can be used, as a strategic management tool in managing talent especially in this era of intense competition for talent. The researcher believes that the study can solve issues of low attraction in organisations based on participants' perceptions of employer branding and attraction of new employees.

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of the study is to investigate and understand the perceptions of students at the Thekwini TVET College on the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees.

1.7 CONTRIBUTIONS

The study will contribute to the understanding of the concept of employer branding, its components and its influence on attraction of new employees. This study is conducted in the context of the South African economy, which has high labour unrests and hence may be a sign of weak brand loyalty. The study provide insight from a South African perspective since most of the previous studies are from the Western perspective. If the study is not conducted then there will be a continuous reliance on the findings from Western researchers which may not be relevant to the South African context and hence South African companies may continue failing to attract and retain talent. The study also fill existing knowledge gaps due to it being a relatively new area.

1.8 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To determine what prospective employees consider before applying for a job.
- To determine employer brand associations that influence the attraction of new employees.
- To determine to what extent employer image influence attraction of new employees.
- To determine the effect of self-concept in attracting new employees.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What will prospective employees consider before applying for a job?
- What are the brand associations that lead to the attraction of new employees?
- What is the extent of employer image influence in attracting new employees?
- What is the effect of self-concept in influencing attraction?

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this study is that due to time constraints to complete this study, only the Thekwini TVET College Springfield Campus was selected to participate. No other study was conducted on this subject at this particular institution, hence making it challenging to have a point of reference to start the study.

1.11 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The following concepts have been used in this study:

- **Employer branding** is a set of features and qualities, tangible and intangibles that makes a company different in terms of employment experience (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2008).
- **Brand** “is a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible symbolised in a trademark, which if managed properly will create value and influence” (Swystun, 2007, p.14)
- **Brand associations** are the thoughts and perceptions which come in the minds of customers and clients when a brand name is mentioned.
- **Self-concept** is the feeling of being unique, separate or distinct from others.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINES

The research study is presented in six chapters as presented below.

- **Chapter One: Introduction and background to the study**

This chapter presented the introduction and background to the study. The problem statement, research objectives, research questions and limitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. Key concepts used in the research are defined in this chapter.

- **Chapter Two: Review of related literature**

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature related to employer branding and its influence on the attraction of new employees. The research objectives served as a guide to gather the necessary literature for this study.

- **Chapter Three: Research methodology and design**

The research methodology adopted by this research is explained in this chapter and the reasons why it was adopted is presented. The sample size, sampling method and the data analysis procedure is also explained in this chapter.

- **Chapter Four: Data analysis and presentation**

The major research findings are presented under this chapter. The data is presented according to the recurrent themes identified during the process of data analysis.

- **Chapter Five: Discussion of findings**

The main research findings are discussed in detail in this chapter and are aligned to the relevant literature that was gathered for this study.

- **Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations**

The final conclusion of the study and recommendations that can be adopted by organisations are presented in this chapter. Suggestions for future research of this topic are also presented.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined a brief summary on employer branding and its influence on attracting new employees. It highlights the statement problem statement, the significance of the study, the aims, purpose, contribution, research objectives, and the research questions that guided the study. The concepts which underpin the study were defined and the limitations and scope of the study were also outlined. The next chapter presents the literature review gathered for this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The success of the organisation lies in its people because all other resources of the organisation can be duplicated by its competitors, but not its people. This implies that any organisation that is conscious of sustainable competitive advantage should be able to attract the best talent in the industry. Employer branding may be useful in attracting the best talent into an organisation. Employer branding is a relatively new concept in the human resource management. The concept has been borrowed from marketing. Employer branding incorporates both marketing and human resource connotations. Hassan (2012) argues that the stronger the brand the more it will be able to attract and retain customers. In addition a strong brand will be able to instill brand loyalty among the customers (Kim & Sturman, 2012). The research investigates this relatively new concept from a human resource point of view. Every company has an employer brand though most companies do not deliberately take steps to build a strong employer brand. (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012) argues that if the employer brand (which is the image of the company to the outside world) is positive it will attract many potential employees.

The organisation will be able to select from a large pool of candidates hence increasing the chances of selecting the best employees available in the market. Employer branding plays an important role in positioning a company as the best possible employer. Employer branding can assist an organisation to attract the right candidate especially during this era of competition for talent. Strong brands are a source of competitive advantage because of a positive perception that is created in the minds of potential employees hence their stay with the company is for a long time.

This chapter explains the concept of employer branding in detail and previous studies around the topic are also outlined. The concepts of employer brand loyalty, employer brand equity, the role of strategic human resources in employer branding, different types of image and also the linkage between brands and employees are also explored in this chapter. Signaling theory and social exchange theory and how it affects choices in potential employees are discussed. In addition, the conceptual framework which consists of employer branding processes and social identity theory is also presented in this chapter. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

2.2 EMPLOYER BRANDING

The term employer brand was first introduced to business literature in the early 1990s by Barrow and Ambler. A brand “is a mixture of attributes, tangible and intangible symbolised in a trademark, which if managed properly will create value and influence” (Swystun, 2007, p.14). Employer branding is “an activity where principles of marketing in particular the science of branding are applied to human resource activities in relation to current and potential employees” (Edwards, 2009, p.6). If the above definitions are to be applied to human resource setting the branded product will be the unique employment experience. If the employment experience is managed correctly it will create value and influence more and more customers in the form of potential employees wanting to experience that employment experience. Those who are already experiencing it in the form of current employees will not wish to leave it hence contributing to employee loyalty. In summary employer branding involves the management of a firm visible and invisible employment experience it also incorporates the management of the company’s reputation and identity through rigorous communication campaigns. The final goal of any branding process is to create a loyal customer base, with regard to employer branding that customer is the employee.

2.3 ROLE OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES IN EMPLOYER BRANDING

Strategic human resource management should lead the employer branding process. The main objective of strategic human resource management is to align human resource objectives and processes with strategic organisational goals. Human resource activities should contribute to the overall organisational strategy (Cascio, 2015). Human resource function must work closely with other line functions advising the organisation on the quality of talent that will contribute to the organisation’s strategic objectives (Cascio & Graham, 2016). The human resource leader and marketing leaders can play a leading role in the campaign to attract and retain top talent especially if employees themselves are involved. The campaign will help to outline and explain the tangible and intangible benefits, as well as the image and identity of the company (Edwards, 2010).

Organisational identity is relevant and important to the concept of employer branding because it represents the character of an organisation. Organisations with strong identities encourage their employees to associate themselves with the organisation (Lievens, Van Hove & Anseel, 2007). Potential and existing employees play a crucial role in encouraging individuals to join or stay with an organisation. Employer branding should be active both internally and externally. Ideally the human resource department will concentrate on the internal side while the marketing department on the external side. However, the two departments must coordinate their efforts. The human resource department should take the initiative in ensuring that employees are able to validate the employer's value proposition (daily expectations and experiences). The process starts from recruitment, to on-boarding, training and development, performance management and lastly reward management (Cascio & Graham, 2016). The role of strategic human resource management "is to leverage the process individually as well as together as a set, as internal mechanisms to convey a positive employer brand" (Cascio & Graham, 2016, p.187). The individual processes are discussed below.

2.3.1 Recruitment

The study conducted by Landis, Earnest & Allen (2014) indicated that it is important to inform potential employees the truth about a job. The organisation should not focus only on the positive aspects of the job such as high salary but also focus on the negatives such as the unpleasant working conditions. Though revealing the entire truth about a job may lead to low job acceptance. Employees who receive realistic job previews experience high job satisfaction and performance. Organisations should highlight the positive aspects within the company because it helps to enhance the image of the organisation. Honest communication of values is of paramount importance in the branding process as it may help to reduce turnover and negative rumours about the organisation (Cascio & Graham, 2016).

2.3.2 On-boarding

On-boarding is simply that process of trying to make a new employee settle and be familiar with the organisation. It is highly important because most turnover occur in the first few months of joining an organisation (Cascio & Graham, 2016). A formal on-boarding program must be

designed to cover aspects such as culture, values and norms these are integral components of an employer brand because they have some effect on brand image. A good on-boarding programme will result in a win-win situation for both parties namely the employees and organisation.

2.3.3 Training and development

Investment in training and development is a strong indication that the organisation is committed to personal and professional development of employees. Relevant training and development programmes directly enhance an employer's brand (Cascio & Graham, 2016).

2.3.4 Performance

Feedback is crucial especially to young employees who are starting their careers. Feedback helps the young employees to know how to handle challenges. According to Hirsch (2016), if young employees do not get feedback they will look for it elsewhere. Feedback is part of developing employees as long it is not done in a confrontational manner.

2.3.5 Rewards

The final strategic human resource process is rewards which is also called total compensation. Total compensation include monetary and non-monetary rewards. Total compensation must be designed bearing in mind other contextual factors such as the demographics of the organisation, culture and legislation. The most important aspect on rewards is that the promise by organisation should be met. The reward package must be in line with the image and the employer brand message which the organisation is trying to communicate (Cascio & Graham, 2016).

2.4 EMPLOYEE BRANDING

This form of branding is often referred to as internal or behavioural branding (Foster *et al.*, 2010). Employee branding has a different purpose with employer branding. The aim of employee branding is to make current employees embody the company promise to the customers (Mosley, 2007). Employees will be trained and equipped on how to act in a customer focused way (Tavassoli *et al.*, 2015). Employee branding is about making sure that employees understand the company values with regards to company products, by shaping employees' brand attitudes and behavioural patterns (Punjaisri *et al.*, 2008).

2.5 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Many studies have been conducted on the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. From the two studies that Turban and Cable (2005) conducted, they concluded that companies with better reputations attract many applicants as well as high quality applicants. However, no reasons were put forward to explain why companies with better reputations attract many applicants.

Collins and Han (2006) criticised Turban and Cable (2005) study for being too simplistic in selecting reputation as a major variable in recruitment attraction. They argued that applicant quantity and quality is a consequence of various variables. Collins and Han (2006) study found that firm reputation has no linkage with applicant quantity and quality however, corporate advertising and firm image do correlate with recruitment results.

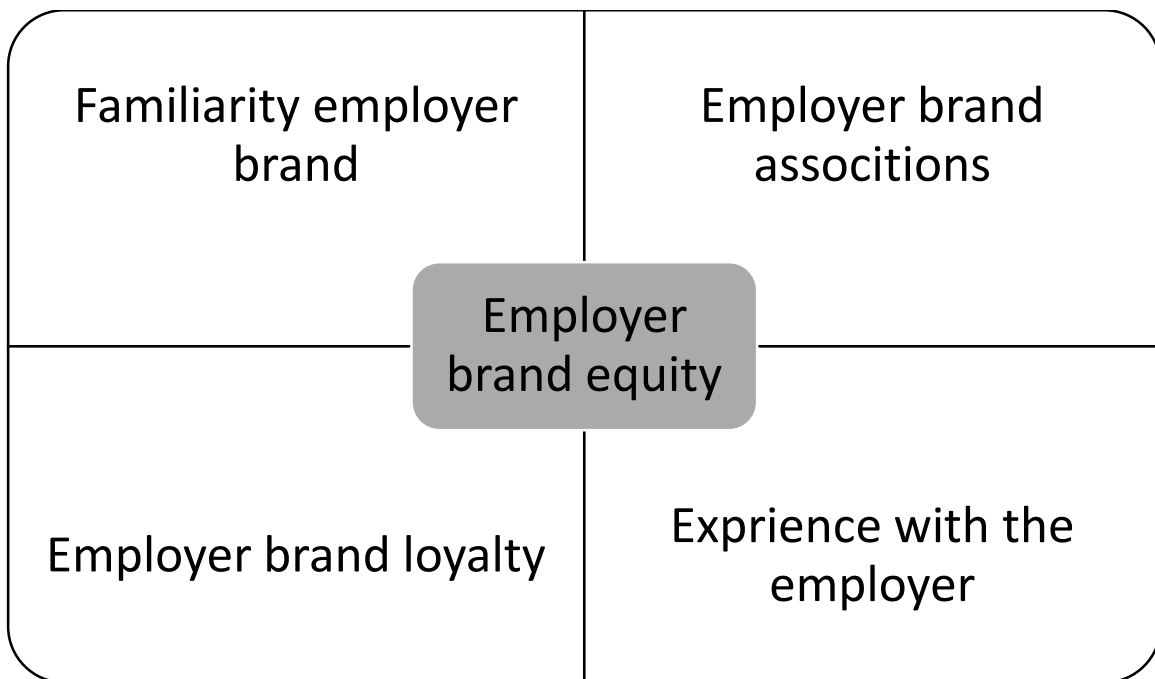
Collins and Hans (2006) concluded that the beliefs and perceptions of employment seekers about the company as a potential employer showed high desire to join an organisation. The beliefs and the desire were determined by familiarity, reputation and the image of the company. Edwards (2010) postulates that research in personnel psychology states that prospective employees are more likely to apply at an organisation that has existing positive reputation. Reputation is defined as the perception that people have about an organisation. Reputation and image can be used interchangeably.

Widen *et al.* (2010) argued that potential recruits are constantly seeking information about the recruiting organisation beyond that which is provided by the organisation. Some of the information is sought outside the formal sources of information for example from peers and word of mouth. The study by Widen *et al.* (2010) also revealed that people with experience were more concerned with what the company will provide in terms of career development whilst inexperienced employees valued the impact of the brand on their curriculum vitae. Research by Sokro (2012) indicated that brand name and image plays an important role in influencing the decision to join the organisation they are currently working. However, the study by Sokro was conducted in Ghanaian banking industry hence universal application can be problematic. The studies discussed in this section is indicative that reputation plays a significant role in the attraction of applicants.

2.6 EMPLOYER BRAND EQUITY

Employer brand equity can assist to explain potential employee's decision to join or not join an organisation. Employer brand equity "is the envisaged package of benefits that reflects the value of being an employee of a company" (Alshathry *et al.*, 2017, p.416). Employer brand equity consists of four elements namely familiarity with the employer brand, employer brand associations, experience with the employer and employer brand loyalty (Alshathry *et al.*, 2017).

Figure 2.1: Elements of employer brand equity



Source: Alshathry, S., Clarke, M. & Goodman, S. (2017,p.416)

2.6.1 Familiarity with the employer brand

Familiarity with the employer brand refers to the level of knowledge a job seeker has of an organisation. The level of familiarity with the employer brand will affect the other elements of employer brand equity either positively or negatively. Familiarity with the employer brand does not entail recognising company name and symbols only. However it includes deeper knowledge about the organisation (Alshathry *et al.*, 2017). Employees need to invest more information gathering to have less uncertainties when making employment decision (Wilden *et al.*, 2010). Employment decisions have long time implications on applicants because they may entail foregoing another opportunity somewhere else. The importance of familiarity is not limited to employer branding only but even also on employee branding as it helps to interpret work values and company norms (Sokro, 2012).

2.6.2 Employer brand associations

Employer brand associations are the thoughts and perceptions which come in the minds of potential and existing employees when a brand name is mentioned (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Employer brand associations can be either positive or negative for example when a company goes through retrenchments, they create negative associations in that employment with the company in question is not secure (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). It is also possible for an individual to hold contradictory associations for example a positive impression on financial performance and a negative impression on the quality of products. Employer brand associations are not constant but always dynamic as the situation changes.

2.6.3 Experience with the employer

Experience with the employer can be defined as internal and subjective response to the financial and non-financial exchange transaction between employer and employee (Edwards, 2010). Value is delivered during employment relationship and it is different from employer brand associations because it is employment specific and ordinarily occurs within the organisation (Alshathry *et al.*, 2017). Experience with the employer refers to the actual experience rather than the intended. However, this will demand proper management of the compensation package and the working conditions (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007). Experience with the employer is complicated and difficult to manage due to a wide range of variables at play for example co-workers, supervisors and customers (Davies, 2008). Negative employment experience can be caused by issues such as lack of promotional opportunities.

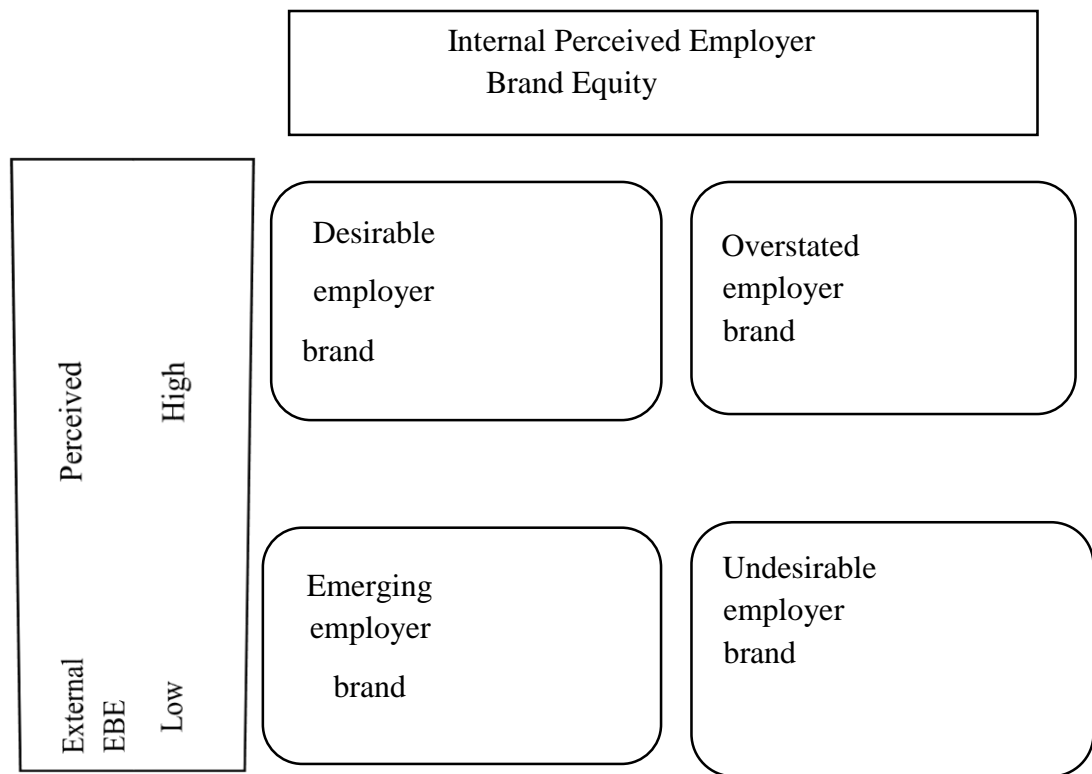
2.6.4 Employer brand loyalty

Employer brand loyalty is “the attachment that an employee has to a brand” (Mandanya & Shah, 2010, p.47). A consumer who has a strong brand loyalty is less likely to shift even if the brand is weakened by competitors. Mandanya and Shah (2010) argued that employer branding leads to loyalty or commitment to the organisation through impacting on culture and identity of the organisation. Moroko and Uncles (2008) argued that during the recruitment process expectations are created for both parties and a psychological contract will be created. Psychological contract refers to the mutual expectations which both parties have towards each other in any employment relationship. If the employer is successful in fulfilling the psychological expectations of the employee loyalty and commitment will be established. However, if any of the parties breach the expectations this may lead to dissatisfaction and disappointment on the part of employees and employer respectively, which may ultimately cause resignations, dismissals and negative impressions about the employer. Employer brand loyalty changes over time because of the pleasant or unpleasant experiences the employee will experience with that employer (Rampl & Kenning, 2014). It is important to highlight the fact that the four elements of employer brand equity are inter-related.

2.7 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VIEWS FOR EMPLOYER BRAND EQUITY

Figure 2.2: Four-cell typology of employer brand equity

The following figure depicts various employer brand equity situations as perceived by current employees and potential employees. It is important to emphasise that no situation is permanent, it can change positively or negatively as alluded by the discussions below.



Source :Alshathry, S., Clarke, M. & Goodman, S. (2017,p. 425)

2.7.1 Desirable employer brand

An organisation achieves “desirable” brand status when both internal and external employees regard its employer brand equity as high which implies that the organisation will be able to attract and retain employees. This is the ideal status as it gives the organisation a competitive

advantage in the labour market (Sengupta *et al.*, 2015). Since this is the ideal scenario the organisation should strive to maintain it through continuous promotion of pleasant employment relationship which employer brand promises with actual experience (Edlinger, 2015).

2.7.2 Overstated employer brand

Overstated employer brand occurs when an employer brand equity is perceived positively by potential employees, while current employees perceives it negatively because of failure to deliver on actual experience. Overstated employer brands will attract larger applicant pool but will fail to retain them as their actual experience will be poor (Alshathry *et al.*, 2017). Human resource managers should take advantage of the situation by offering actual job experience which match or exceeds expectations. This can be done through job-redesign, improving working conditions and providing responsive management styles (Edwards, 2009).

2.7.3 Emerging employer brand

Emerging employer brand is when an employer brand equity is strong internally but weak externally. This can be easily managed by rigorous communication activities and deliberately publicising employment offerings. The organisation can also improve familiarity of their employer brand by engaging in corporate social responsibility programmes. Corporate social responsibility programmes helps to improve the reputation of the organisation. Corporate social responsibility helps to increase familiarity of the employer brand. Positive reputation is linked to the ability to attract applicants (Turban & Cable, 2005).

2.7.4 Undesirable employer brand

Undesirable employer brand is when both the internal and external view the employer brand equity as negative. The organisation will struggle to attract quantity and quality applicants. In this scenario the organisation should revisit its job design and ensure that jobs are attractive to target employees. Basic elements of a job such as opportunity to use skills and knowledge can help to improve the quality of an individual's experience with the employer (Ito *et al.*, 2013).

2.8 BRANDS AND EMPLOYEES LINKAGE

A brand is a name or design feature which identifies the seller's good or service as unique from others (American Marketing Association, 2007). The challenge to a company is how to present the several brands it offers to various stakeholders for example the employer brand, corporate brand and consumer brands. One brand can negatively or positively affect the other brands hence the need to align and integrate efforts in managing the brands. Organisations with low product penetration may find it difficult to attract employees as potential employees are not aware of the employer's brands. Products that are viewed by the consumers as unattractive may result in potential recruits having negative perceptions of the company and hence unwilling to consider employment with the organisation.

Marketing concepts can be equally applied in employment context or relationship. Organisation can consider internal employees as customers and potential employees as potential customers (Edwards, 2010). It can be argued that customers are confronted with the same dilemma as prospective jobseekers in deciding whether to buy a product or not, and to join a particular company or not? Employee attraction and retention can be equated to customer attraction and retention. In order to attract a customer the organisation must communicate the expected value of a brand to the potential customer/employee this is where branding and employer branding comes into power (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

2.9 SIGNALING THEORY

The signaling theory argues that in order to prevent bad choices/selection, information seekers use warranties, price and brands to come with proper judgments (Spence, 1973). Brands constantly send signals into the markets, however consumers or potential employees as in the case of employer branding rarely have perfect information. Potential employees will always seek to add information on what they already know about any potential employer because information asymmetric exist in employment markets (Celani & Singh, 2011). Information asymmetric occurs when one party (the buyer) has more information than another party (the seller), although the reverse can also occur. In employment markets usually the seller i.e. the potential employee normally have less information about the buyer namely the potential employer (Celani & Singh, 2011).

Employment contracts have long term bidding effects on both parties, hence this will motivate the potential employee to invest in gaining information about the prospective employer. In the process of seeking information costs will be incurred, the more information costs incurred by the potential employee the less attracted will he/she become to join the organisation. Asymmetric information arises from intangible characteristics of the potential employer for example work climate and career development which are not easily observable. Asymmetries basically occur when there is an in-balance of information between the seller and buyer (Celani & Singh, 2011).

It is important for a prospective employer to signal to the market through employer branding about what it has to offer to the market. Permanent traits in the firm's brand have capacity to influence a potential employee's understanding of the firm as a prospective employer (Widen *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, if prospective employees have inadequate or wrong information they may view joining the company as high risk hence may remove the organisation as a prospective employer in the mind of the potential employee and may select another organisation which they perceive as less risk. However, the need to put "bread on the table" may literally force potential employees to take employment with the organisation they view as high risk just for survival especially in view of high unemployment rates globally.

2.10 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The Social Exchange Theory by (Homans, 1961) can be used to explain certain human behaviours. Essentially the theory seeks to interpret human behaviour based on estimates of potential rewards and punishments. This theory can be used to predict whether an interaction will be repeated or not, based on reward (approval) or punishment (disapproval). The assumption is that if rewards exceeds the punishment then the interaction is likely to occur. According to the social exchange theory the formula used to predict behaviour in any situation will be:

- Behaviour (profits) = Rewards of interaction – cost of interaction.

Rewards can range from social recognition to monetary benefits. Punishment can include public humiliation or physical beating.

2.11 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

The following are basic assumptions of the social exchange theory:

- Humans always seek to maximise profits/gains.
- People have access to information which allows them to make decisions.
- People are goal directed in a freely competitive system.
- People are always rational in their decision making.

2.12 APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY TO EMPLOYEE ATTRACTION

Potential employees will always try to maximise their profits namely potential salary by choosing an employer who is offering the highest. Potential employees will do a cost benefit analysis of a potential employer by using the formula: Behaviour (profits) = Rewards of interaction – cost of interaction. Rewards of interaction will be the financial and non-financial rewards being offered and given to potential employees and existing employees respectively. The cost of the interaction will be the work content, duties and the level of skills or knowledge the job holder must possess. Prospective employees will weigh the rewards versus the costs if the rewards are more, prospective employees will be willing to join that particular organisation. This theory also implies that employees who are already in a more rewarding employment relationship will not be willing to leave. If the costs are higher than the rewards prospective employees will not be willing to join that particular organisation and those already employed would want to leave.

However, employees may remain in an employment relationship which is not rewarding when social exchange theory would predict leaving the situation due to a number of reasons for example the unavailability of alternative employment. The theory assumed that people (potential employees) have access to information which is not always true as employment agreements are always confidential. Organisations are not willing to divulge such information to the outside people. However, knowledge of this theory can help to predict behaviour and improve employer branding strategies.

2.13 IMAGE

Image can be explained as what the public think or assume about an organisation. The perceptions will differ from person to person depending on circumstances and backgrounds. From the above explanation it can deduce that image consist of several factors and that the factors differ from individual to individual. Image formulation depends on the amount of information available to the information seeker. Using company products and services or even

working at an organisation and interaction with other individuals will result in perceptions being formed.

Most of the information is broadcasted via mass media such as print media or electronic media. Cole and Bruch (2006) state that one of the advantages of better image or reputation will be the ability to attract better job seekers. Based on this assertion it can be concluded that positive image perceptions will influence an applicant's desire to seek employment vacancies at certain organisations. Companies naturally deal with various stakeholders for example customers/clients, employees/potential employees and government which inevitably will have different images. This leads to three different forms of images namely corporate image, employment image, corporate product image and employer image.

2.14 CORPORATE IMAGE

Corporate image is what the public think or perceives when a company name is mentioned. Corporate image is the same as the organisational image or institutional image. Edwards (2010) concluded that positive image/reputation is likely to increase the intentions of potential employees to apply for vacant positions.

2.15 CORPORATE PRODUCT IMAGE

The quality of products may provide customers with crucial information to determine an image of the organisation. When a company offers high quality product to the market, the company will naturally gain competitive advantage. This will result in the company receiving more attention from job seekers and also earning positive approval from current employees. This may improve the company's attractiveness. Organisations that are associated with high quality products also send signals that it desires to be associated with quality applicants (Hermain & Gioia, 2006).

2.16 EMPLOYER IMAGE

Employer image is “an amalgamation of transient mental representations of specifics of a company as an employer. An image is held by individuals (versus the general public), might fluctuate (versus being stable), targets specific aspects (versus an overall impression), and is cognitive in nature” (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016, p.409). Employer image assists potential employees to differentiate employers. Pleasant image attracts a high number and a better quality of applicants. Employer image also leads to fast decision making and strong emotional bond and it is also linked to good financial performance (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Employer image is normally formed after an applicant has been exposed to company recruitment processes. However, exposure to company recruitment activities is not the only contributing factor to employer image as word of mouth can also play a part in the formation of employer image. Fombrun *et al.* (2007) argued that potential employees will prefer to be associated with organisations with a positive external image in order to receive social appreciation from others.

2.17 CHARACTERISTICS OF A NEGATIVE EMPLOYER BRAND

Negative employer brand is usually characterised by a selective application of human resource policies. Promotion and salary adjustments are done based on a patronage system favouring certain individuals. The organisation takes more time to fill up vacant positions and often pay extra to attract the same talent than organisations with a positive employer brand (The Financial Gazette, 2015).

2.18 BENEFITS OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

Strong brands have the possibility of bringing the following benefits to the organisation:

- Reducing the cost of hiring new employees;

- Improve employee relations;
- Induce feelings of trust and commitment;
- Increases attraction and retention of top talent;
- Reduce demands for higher salaries; and
- Helps the organisation to gain a competitive edge in terms of having top talent seeking to work for them even for less money (Kim & Sturman, 2012).

2.19 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

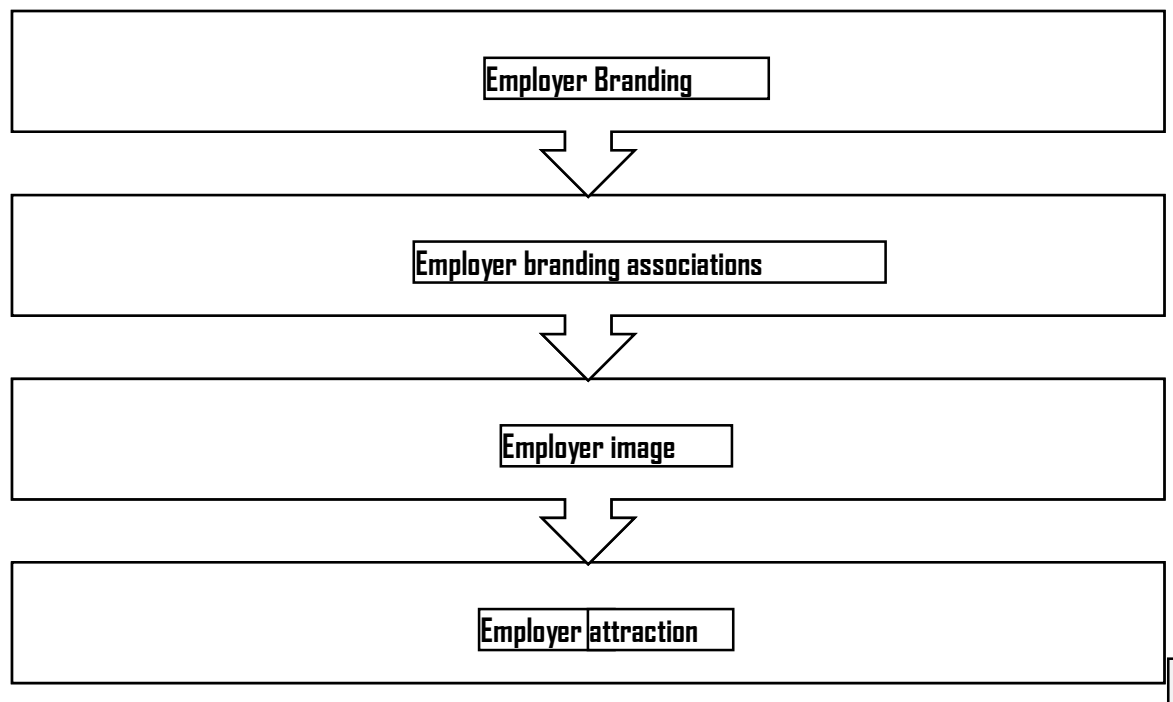
2.19.1 Employer Branding Processes

Brand associations are the thoughts and perceptions which come into the minds of customers and clients when a brand name is mentioned. Brand associations can be either be tangible or intangible. Brand associations determine the brand image. Brand associations consist of both symbolic benefits and functional benefits. Brand image can be defined as the combined perceptions which are either product linked or non-product linked features (Mandhanya & Shah, 2010). Product related are the tangible or visible benefits accrued from using the product in other words these are the functional benefits. The non-product linked attributes refer to the non-visible or intangible benefits derived from using the product. The non-product linked attributes can also be referred as the symbolic benefits. Symbolic benefits are psychological feelings or satisfaction in using a product (Mandhanya & Shah, 2010).

Employer brand image can also be explained in similar terms. Functional benefits of the employer will refer to the tangible benefits given to employees for example salary, leave allowance and other benefits. Functional benefits can easily be observed by potential employees. Symbolic benefits are the prestige, innovativeness of the company and the social recognition applicants assume they will enjoy if they are to work for the company. Symbolic benefits are not easily observed. Potential employees will be attracted to a company based on

the extent to which they perceive a company to possess the desired employee related attributes and the level of importance attached to these attributes. Symbolic associations plays a significant role in making decisions to buy or not to buy especially if the functional differences between the brands is minimal. In the context of the work environment job related factors or conditions especially in the same industry may be very similar and hence difficult for employers to differentiate themselves from competitors (Lievens & Highhouse, 2007). Using employer branding to communicate symbolic benefits can be helpful in creating a favorable employer image which will attract potential employees. The above discussions are summarised in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Employer branding process by Mandhanya and Shah (2010)

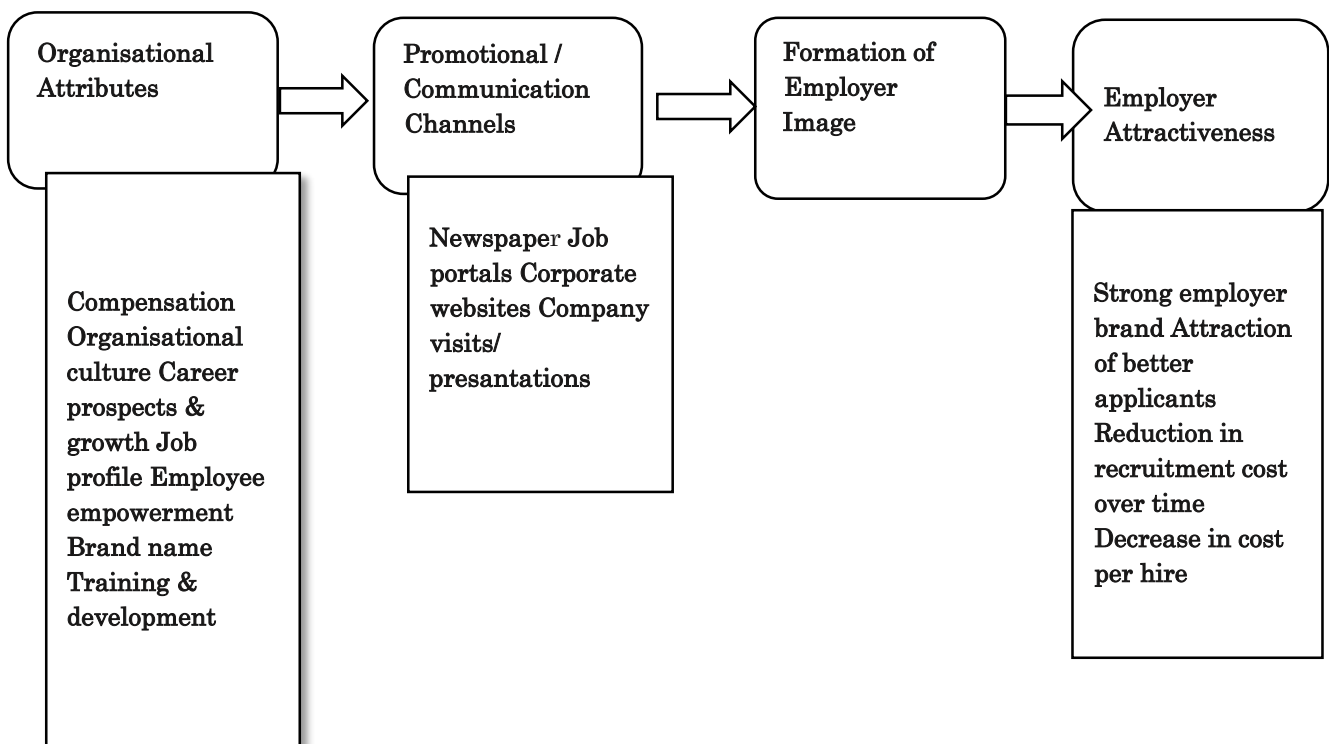


Source: Mandhanya and Shah (2010,p.46)

Chhabra and Sharma (2012) derived a slightly different employer branding process model (see Figure 2.4). According to the model employer branding process starts with the evaluation of organisation values and policies. The value sets and organisational attributes are changed into

value propositions that is “what it means to work for a company”. The value propositions are communicated through the use of media such as newspapers, job portals and company websites. Communication at this stage is of paramount importance because it is the means in which a company gets to be known. Without communication even a good organisation will not be able to generate intentions to apply from talented potential employees. The knowledge gained by potential employees through communication programmes will result in the formulation of employer brand image. Positive employer image will lead to employer attractiveness. The organisation will enjoy benefits such as reduction in hiring costs, reduction in recruitment costs and will attract better applicants. The above discussions are summed up in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4: Employer branding process by Chhabra and Sharma (2012)



Source: Chhabra and Sharma (2012,p.58)

2.19.2 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity theory was developed to try to gain insight into the psychological basis for intergroup discrimination. Tajfel and Turner (1979) attempted to highlight the minimal factors that cause members of one group to prefer the in-group to which they belonged and against another out-group. The Social Identity theory can provide insight into understanding the relationship between employer brand image and attraction (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The Social Identity theory argues that people derive their self-concept from their membership to social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Self-concept is the feeling of being unique, separate or distinct from others. The reputation of the group which people are associated with helps to contribute to self-concept. The Social Identity theory implies that consumers buy brands because of favourable self-concept that result from associating with the brand. In the context of the work environment potential employees are more likely to seek membership with employers who give them a positive self-concept. Potential employees will more likely want to join those organisations which they think are prestigious and will give them “status” within the society. Potential employees, all things being equal will hesitate to join organisations which are looked down upon by society.

2.20 CONCLUSION

Employer branding is quite a new approach towards managing the attraction and retention of employees. The employer branding concept has the potential to be an important strategic human resource management tool if conducted correctly. Due to competition from global companies who offer better packages, the talent pool is increasingly becoming smaller especially in developing countries. There is a need to create positivism through employer branding in the minds of potential employees. Organisations should constantly send desirable signals to the labour market that it is a desirable place to work. The created image should be monitored and

sustained constantly. Brand associations lead to brand image. The components of brand associations result in the creation of the image of the organisation. Social identity and social exchange theory may help to explain why people choose to belong and not to belong to certain groups. The next chapter presents the research methodology used to gather relevant primary data for this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the research methodology that was applied in the study. The research location where this study was conducted, the study population, the sampling method used, the instruments used for data collection and the data analysis techniques are highlighted in this chapter. Reliability and validity issues are also addressed in this chapter. This chapter ends by addressing ethical issues considered in this study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used a case study research design. According to (Mutinta, 2014), a case study is deep enquiry of a specific event, process or phenomenon over a sustained period. It helps the researcher to get a deep insight of the situation being studied. The case study design was adopted as it affords an in-depth opportunity to investigate the phenomenon by using the potential recruits. Case study design connects the researcher to the actual action as close as possible. Mutinta (2014) adds that a case study has the potential to generate the best theory. An in-depth investigation was conducted to establish the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. A quick preview of literature has indicated that no study has been conducted on this phenomenon at Thekwini TVET College.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are three basic types of research methodologies namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods as presented below:

- Quantitative methods focus on statistical measuring and numerical analysis of data gathered through polls, questionnaires or surveys. Quantitative research methods focus on collecting numerical data and generalising it across the study (Babbie, 2010).
- Qualitative research methods focuses on deeper investigation of the experiences, perspectives, and ideas of subjects. In other words, qualitative research investigates meaning, purpose, or reality (Harwell, 2011).
- A mixed method research is a research that combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques in collecting and analysing data in a single study (Creswell, 2008).

This study used the qualitative approach to gather information. Qualitative research is a method for investigating and appreciating the meaning individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. The qualitative approach was selected because of a number of reasons as discussed below:

- Qualitative research is not rigid in nature;
- It is exploratory in nature and hence allows the researcher to change data progressively so that an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon can be obtained;
- It adopts an insider view by interacting and observing the participants in the actual setting hence providing first-hand experience of this problem;
- The qualitative approach is holistic in nature in that it permits the researcher to collect different forms of data by interviews and questionnaires;
- Qualitative research makes use of small samples of people which can be studied by means of in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2014).

3.4 STUDY SITE

The study site is simply the actual physical location where the research was conducted. This research was conducted at Thekwini TVET College. Thekwini TVET College is an institution that is a public education provider located in Durban. The study was conducted at the Springfield Campus.

3.5 TARGET POPULATION

Target population refers to the actual pool of subjects that the researcher is interested in studying (Mutinta, 2014). In the research, the target population refers to the N6 students in the business studies and engineering department. These students are at their exit level which means they are about to complete their studies and enter the job market. The target population predominantly consists of African students with a small number of Indian and White students who mainly are enrolled in the Engineering department. The target population consists of 385 students.

3.6 SAMPLING STRATEGIES

Sampling is a process of choosing a small portion of the population to represent the target population (Mutinta, 2014). Since this study used a qualitative approach, the non-probability sampling was used to select the sample. The purposive sampling was adopted because the researcher already has prior knowledge of the students' category. Selection was based on the choice of the researcher not by chance. Participants were only selected if they were knowledgeable and articulate about the subject and were willing to participate in this study. Inclusion in the sample depends on the judgment of the researcher (Etikan *et al.*, 2015).

3.7 SAMPLE SIZE

A sample is a small portion of the population chosen to represent the entire population. Sample size is the actual number of units selected to participate in the study. For this study the selected sample size was 20 participants as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Sample size

COURSE (N6)	Total number of students	Sample size
Business Management	90	3
Public Relations	75	3
Marketing Management	60	3
Edu Care	65	3
Fitting	40	3
Motor Mechanics	25	2
Boiler making	30	3
Totals	385	20

3.8 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

In-depth interviews was used to collect data for this study. There are three basic types of research interviews, namely, structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The reason of the research-interview is to investigate and explore opinions and knowledge over the subject matter under discussion. Qualitative methods, such as interviews have the potential to provide an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the social phenomena than would be provided from purely quantitative methods, such as questionnaires (Mutinta, 2014).

An in-depth process of collecting information from participants is generally referred to as unstructured interview. It is basically the interaction of two people on any given topic. It affords the participants a chance to freely and candidly express themselves (Mutinta, 2014). Unstructured

interviews provide the interviewer with the opportunity to read the non-verbal communication of the interviewee and to probe further where there is no clarity.

Boyce & Neale (2006, p.3) postulate that 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, programme, or situation. In-depth interviews are useful when detailed information about a person’s thoughts and behaviours is required or when there is a need to explore new issues in depth. Interviews are often used to provide context to other data (such as outcome data), offering a more complete picture of what happened and why”.

“The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that it provides much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. The in-depth interview also provides a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information as people may feel more comfortable having a conversation with the researcher about their problem as opposed to filling out a survey. However, there are a few limitations of in-depth interviews can be time consuming, not generalisable and prone to bias” (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p.3).

3.9 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data was collected using unstructured interviews. The main reason of using an unstructured interview is that it gives the interviewer an opportunity to probe further with the participant and by so doing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon is obtained.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process in which raw data is scrutinised and arranged in order to retrieve information. The process of arranging and screening data is important in understanding what data should be included and excluded. Qualitative data is usually analysed by using thematic or content analyses (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). According to Braun & Clarke (2012, p.1), thematic analysis “is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset.

Through focusing on meaning across a data set, thematic analysis allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences”. Thematic analysis can be viewed as a data analytic strategy; it helps the researcher to proceed from a general reading of

the data towards identifying common patterns and developing themes. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected through interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen because of its accessibility and flexibility especially to new researchers, it provides entry into a way of doing research that may seem meaningless, is conceptually challenging and very sophisticated.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are six thematic analysis phases that was also applied in this study to code the data:

- **Phase one: Familiarising with the data.** The initial phase was for the researcher to familiarise themselves with the data. Prior to reading the interview transcripts, a "start list" of potential codes was created. The data from the interview transcripts was read and re-read in order to become familiar with the data. The recordings of the interview was repeatedly listened to in order to ask pertinent questions.
- **Phase two: Generating initial codes.** The second step in thematic analysis was to create an initial list of items from the data set that are appearing frequently. This is an orderly way of arranging and gaining meaningful parts of data as it relates to the research question is what is referred to as coding.
- **Phase three: Searching for themes.** A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). In this phase themes were searched for and identified accordingly. This enabled the start of the analysis of potential codes. In this phase, it was vital to begin by examining how codes integrate to form over-reaching themes in the data. At this point, a list of themes was available and the focus on general patterns in the data had begun thereby integrating coded data with proposed themes.
- **Phase four: Reviewing themes.** This phase required the perusal for data that supports or refutes the proposed theory. This allowed for further sieving of themes as they developed. At this stage, there was a set of potential themes, as this is the phase where the reworking

of initial themes took place. Some existing themes overlapped and collapsed into each other, other themes needed to be condensed into smaller units.

- **Phase five: Defining and naming themes.** At this phase, identification of the themes' essences related to how each specific theme affected the entire picture of the data.
- **Phase six: Producing the final report.** The final report was written after final themes were reviewed. While writing the final report, a decision was taken on themes that made significant contributions to answering research questions which were refined later as final themes.

3.11 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

The quality of data should not be doubtful. The trustworthiness of qualitative content analysis is often presented by using terms such as credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability, and authenticity (Elo *et al.*, 2014).

3.12 CREDIBILITY

The issue of credibility alludes to whether the findings of a study are trustful and truthful. Researchers must take steps to ensure that their findings are true and relates to the data. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings represent an honest and true account of what happened in the research. Credibility automatically addresses key questions such as, “Did the researcher present what actually happened in the research setting?” and “Did the researcher gather what he/she intended to gather?” Strategies for addressing this component of trustworthiness include triangulation, prolonged collection of data, member checks and peer reviews (Pitney & Parker, 2009).

3.13 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability “refers to the potential for extrapolation. It relies on the reasoning that findings can be generalised and transferred to other settings or groups” (Elo *et al.*, 2014, p.2). For transferability to occur the researcher must address contextual factors such as the characteristics of the participants and the research setting.

3.14 DEPENDABILITY

According to Elo *et al.* (2014), dependability refers to how stable the data is if exposed to different conditions over a period of time. Any changes to the conditions must be explained and how the researcher has addressed those changes must be presented. To ensure dependability detailed descriptions of responses by participants was given.

3.15 CONFORMABILITY

According to Elo *et al.*, (2014, p.2), conformability “refers to the objectivity of data. Researchers must ensure that personal feelings and opinions do not shape the results of the research”. For conformability to occur the researcher must use quotations wherever possible to represent the voices of the participants. The researcher must approach the research without preconceived ideas.

3.16 AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity refers to the extent to which the research was fair and faithful in presenting and analysing the data (Elo *et al.*, 2014). In order to ensure that the data had quality and credibility adequate details and supporting evidence was provided in this study. Checks were done on the participants because it is important in evaluating honesty and quality in a study like this. Data from the interview were verified by the participants as they were better positioned to check the genuineness of the research findings since they provided the information.

3.17 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was granted from the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (reference number HSS/0818/016M) prior to conducting this study. The gatekeeper's permission from Thekwini TVET College Management was also obtained to conduct this research. Participants were informed about their rights to withdraw from the research if they felt the need to do so, hence no participant was obligated to participate. Privacy and confidentiality was addressed with the participants before the interview and an assurance was given that no names will be published and that the information gathered was for academic purposes only. To ensure human dignity participants were informed that they are not compelled to answer questions they were not comfortable with. In addition, interviews were conducted in privacy.

3.18 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the data collection and analysis methods which were used. A design that was perceived as most relevant for this research study was the case study research design. The qualitative research methodology was selected for the study. The Thekwini TVET College was selected as the study site. The non-probability sampling method and in particular the purposive method was used to select the sample. Reliability, validity and ethical considerations were addressed in this chapter. The next chapter presents the data that was gathered for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses data collected in this study. Twenty participants were selected to participate in this study. The presentation and discussion is intended to answer the following questions:

- What will you consider before applying for a job?
- What are the brand associations that might attract you to apply for a position?
- What is the extent of employer image influence in attracting new employees?
- What is the effect of self-concept in influencing attraction?

The chapter is divided into four sections: factors to consider before applying for a vacancy; the effect of employer image in influencing attraction of new employees; brand associations that may attract applicants; and the effect of self-concept in influencing attraction.

4.2 FACTORS THAT ARE CONSIDERED BEFORE APPLYING FOR A JOB

This section represents factors that are considered by the participants before applying for a job.

4.2.1 Size of the organisation

The results showed that students will consider the size of the organisation before applying for a job. The responses of one interviewees were as follows:

- Participant A: *“I will apply for a job in a big company because it will boost my CV can’t join a small company because I will not benefit in terms of experience”*. This view was also shared by several other participants (Interview: September, 2016).

- Participant B: *“the size of the company is my major push to apply for a position within any organisation because it shows that they is growth opportunities within that organisation”* (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant D: seemed to share the same view, but talked about size with reference to the production levels and the progress which the company is making: *“I will check the production level of the organisation is it progressing or going down I will want to join a company which is growing”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The perceptions presented above show that the participants will consider the size of the organisation before applying which is indicative that small companies are less attractive to applicants.

4.2.2 Existing knowledge about the organisation

The study shows that existing information about an organisation can help to influence applicants to apply.

All applicants mentioned that they *will try and research and find information about the company from public forums such as website information concerning policies about the organisation and any news concerning the company. Participant F expressed reservations about applying in an organisation he is hearing about it for the first time and which does not have readily available information”* (Interview: September, 2016).

What these findings suggest is that the exit students at the Thekwini TVET College are skeptical about applying and joining organisations that have little information in the public domain.

4.2.3 Labour relations

The study results showed that employees do consider the labour relations atmosphere within the company before deciding to join or not. The response from Participants were as follows:

“Before joining an organisation I will look at how the organisation treats its employees, how grievances are solved within the organisation, are the current employees happy? I will hesitate to join a company where employees always go on strike” (Interview: September, 2016).

The view by Participant D is also shared by two other Participants as follows:

“Expressed their willingness to join an organisation in which employees are unionised this will prevent the employer to do whatever he feels like to them (Interview: September, 2016).

The above perceptions indicate that the way the organisations treat and recognise its employees has a positive bearing not only on the current employees but also on potential employees.

4.3 THE EXTENT OF EMPLOYER IMAGE INFLUENCE IN ATTRACTING APPLICANTS

This section reveals whether employer image has an influence in attracting applicants.

4.3.1 Employer Image

The response for employer image were as follows:

- Participant G responded quite frankly and bluntly and stated that:

“I can’t go and work for an organisation with a bad name. Image will increase my chances of getting better jobs in future” (Interview: September, 2016). This view was shared by Participant H and I.

- Participant J stated that *“I will join a company depending on what it does to its people/staff members whether it has a positive image among its current employees”* (Interview: September, 2016).

When probed further by the researcher on how they will know since some of these aspects are confidential, the response was that employees share information with outsiders through networking. It is important to highlight that this perception of the positive impact of image on attraction seem to be predominant among the participants who have prior work experience and who are mature in terms of age. When it comes to some young participants the perceptions was totally different. One young Participant (M) concurred with Participant M expressed the perception that *“I will not really care about employer image for now as long I can get a job and the organisation can afford to pay my salary. The participant further elaborated by giving reference to the high unemployment rate among the youth in South Africa (sixty-three percent in 2013) (Cassim & Oosthuizen, 2014). The participant further elaborated that there is no room for being selective”* (Interview, September: 2016).

However, another young Participant (O) different view as follows:

“Employer image will influence participant on which company to apply according to the participant image of the organisation should be positive. He stated that he will not want to work in an organisation which does bad things in the community. A company must assist the community in which it operates. He further went on to give example of Transnet as his dream organisation. Transnet assist a lot of young people with bursaries to further their education. Transnet is his employer of choice he will not hesitate to join the company even as a cleaner despite his qualification, he will look for other opportunities as long as he is in the system. This participant also further claimed that Transnet remunerates well” (Interview: September, 2016).

Although the above findings presented a divided perception it is clear that employer image has an influence on the selection of employer.

4.4 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS THAT INFLUENCE ATTRACTION

The following section presents the various tangible and intangible brand associations that are considered by participants that has an influence on attracting them to apply for positions within an organisation.

4.4.1 Salary/remuneration

The issue of salary was unanimously agreed that it is one of the first brand associations they need to observe before deciding to join an organisation. Examples of some of the participants' perception on salary were as follows:

- Participant R: *“Before joining an organisation I will check whether the remuneration which is on offer meets what I expected. Salary will enable me to meet some of my needs”* (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant Q: *“If I am going to change from my current job I will compare the ‘means of payment’ which is salary. The ‘means of payment’ must be higher and attractive to induce me to move to that particular organisation”* (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant S concurring with several other participants shared the same perception that: *“Salary is the main attraction for one to join a particular organisation, and that salary is the reason why people go to work so that they will be able to earn a living. Salary should be “adequate”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The above perceptions suggest that salary is one of the major components of employer branding associations. It shows that everything revolves around salary. Salary is one of the tangible attributes of an organisation which can be easily observed by internal and external employees. Salary is observed through job adverts in the media and is normally disclosed to candidates during the recruitment process. Some organisations also have a transparent pay structure which is known to everyone. In addition, employees disclose salaries to each other even though they are told that salary should be confidential.

4.4.2 Benefits

The participants indicated that benefits and allowances are some of the brand associations which attract employees to certain organisations. Specific responses are presented below:

- Participant L concurred with other participants stated that: *“Benefits and allowances are a top up to the salary as that has the same effect of increasing the income”* (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant A stated that: *“Benefits and allowances such as medical subsidy and housing allowance help to reduce my expenses and affording me a good standard of living”* (Interview: September, 2016).

Participant B stated that: *“I value pension benefit coupled by a good salary package because this will guarantee good income after retirement”* (Interview: September, 2016).

Participant H concurred with Participant F and G agreed that: *“Benefits and allowances are another way of increasing total remuneration package so they will consider it as a good attraction factor the same way they consider salary”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The above findings indicate that benefits and allowances play a critical role in influencing the attraction of employees to organisations. Benefits and allowances are part of the total remuneration package offered to employees. The findings suggest that the participants will compare potential employers and are more likely to be attracted to an employer who offers the best benefits and allowances.

4.4.3 Working Conditions

The study found that working conditions are one of the branding associations which influence attraction. Specific responses are captured below:

- Participant C stated that: *“The buildings and the equipment which are used by the employees can send message whether the company will be able to take care of the needs of employees Buildings should be attractive and I will be eager to work for a company which uses the latest equipment and technology in that particular field”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The above response implies that the physical environment must be appealing to both internal and external stakeholders.

- Participant D who is currently working for a government department concurred with Participant F and stated that *“Working conditions are a big factor in deciding which employer to join. Before joining an organisation I will look at the condition of service with regards to things such as leave conditions, working hours, overtime and how the company looks at the welfare of its employees with things like assistances in times of needy with personal loans”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The above discussions show that working conditions probably are perceived within the same level with salary when it comes to considerations in choosing an employer.

4.4.4 Growth opportunities

The data from the interviews showed that the participants do consider opportunities within a prospective employer. The growth opportunities found within an organisation influence attraction by prospective employees.

Specific responses were as follows:

- Participant A stated that *“The existence of promotional opportunities within an organisation is a positive aspect because it shows that there is future within that particular organisation. This participant expanded her view on the size of the organisation which she made when discussing image earlier. Big companies are associated with more opportunities because of the different levels within the company. The student expressed her unwillingness to be stuck on one position despite her capabilities”* (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant K concurred with two other participants and stated that *“Growth is key to their decision to join or not to join an organisation. According to these exit students growth opportunity will translate into more salary and benefits which have a long time effect when it comes to pension pay-outs upon retirement”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The findings suggest that companies should make available promotional opportunities especially to its current employees as this will send positive signals to other employees that there is a future for them.

4.4.5 Coaching and Mentoring

The research findings indicate that the participants also consider the availability of coaching and mentoring in an organisation before deciding to join an organisation. Specific responses are captured below:

- Participant O stated that *“Mentoring and coaching is important as a young person with little experience will need some guidance and advice to do my job properly. Throwing a new inexperienced employee in the deep end will likely result in frustration, demotivation and possibly resignation. Mentorship programmes may foster a long term relationship with the employee”* (Interview: September, 2016).

The above finding suggests that organisations should have mentorship programmes with new employees especially the young and inexperienced.

4.4.6 Management practices and culture

The results indicated that the participants also consider the management style or culture of the organisation before deciding to join. Specific responses are as follows:

- Participant I stated that “*Organisations should adopt a style which accommodates divergent views and perceptions. Companies should involve employees in decision making through participative management. Management must implement fair practices when dealing with employees concerning issues such as recruitment, promotion, disciplinary issues and awarding of salary increments*” (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant J shared the same perception as Participant I: “*The way a company applies its human resources policies goes a long way in influencing attraction. He further explains that he will not bother applying for a vacancy in an organisation where appointment and promotion is not based on merit but on other undefined aspects*” (Interview: September, 2016).

The above findings suggest that even though management practices and culture are largely internal, the reality is that current employees express their frustrations externally in the communities thereby sending bad signals in the market which will negatively affect the brand of the organisation.

4.5 EFFECT OF SELF-CONCEPT IN INFLUENCING ATTRACTION

This section presents the perceptions of self-concept which is the feeling of being unique or separate from others. The responses were as follows:

- Participant G stated that “*Self-concept is important usually the organisations which give them these feelings are also good in other aspects like employee welfare. Self-concept will give them pride and motivate them to work hard and commit themselves to the organisation*” (Interview: September, 2016).
- Participant D stated that “*Definitely self-concept is a factor to consider when choosing an employer, under normal condition no-one will be attracted to an organisation which is looked down upon by society*” (Interview, September, 2016).

The above findings suggest that prospective employees are attracted to organisations which give them this sense of being unique. Prospective employees want to be associated with organisations that do things differently and which are viewed as prestigious generally by society.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings around factors that are considered by employees before applying for a job. The factors include size of the organisation, existing knowledge about the organisation and labour relations. Specific opposing responses were also captured in this chapter. Brand associations that attractions were also presented and includes factors such as salary, working conditions, growth opportunities and coaching and mentoring and management practices/culture. The effect of self-concept on attraction were also presented and the findings suggested that self-concept has an influence on attraction as prospective employees wants to be associated with an organisation which gives them feelings of uniqueness. The next chapter presents the discussion and analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the perceptions of students at the Thekwini TVET College on the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. The chapter is divided into four sections: factors considered before applying for a job; extent of image /reputation in attracting new employees; brand associations that influence attraction and the effect of self-concept in attracting employees.

The study was underpinned by four research questions as follows:

- What will you consider before applying for a job?
- What is the extent of employer image in attracting new employees?
- What are the brand associations that attract you to apply for a position?
- What is the effect of self-concept in influencing attraction?

5.2 FACTORS THAT ARE CONSIDERED BEFORE APPLYING FOR A JOB

The first objective of the study was to identify factors that are considered by exit level students at the Thekwini TVET College. The findings pertaining to this objective are discussed in the subsections below.

5.2.1 Size of the organisation

This study found that the participants consider the size of the organisation. The study revealed that small companies are less attractive to job seekers. Job seekers attribute the size of the organisation to stability and possible profitability. The exit students are of the opinion that the size of the company will give them a positive job experience which will increase their chances when applying for better opportunities elsewhere.

There are very few recent studies on the influence of size on attraction. However, Uggerslev *et al.* (2012) found that predictors of applicant attraction size revealed that the influence of size on attraction is one of the factors that lead to attraction in the early stages of recruitment. Another research by Tanova (2003) revealed that large organisations are assumed to have more growth opportunities because it is easy for them to access financial assistance for expansion, whilst smaller organisations are perceived negatively by potential employees. Growth opportunities were also identified in this research as an attraction factor.

The above two studies support the current findings in concluding that size plays an important role in the attraction of new employees. Large organisations offer more than the job itself, the exposure and experience which they afford to the employee may act as a magnet to prospective employees.

5.2.2 Existing knowledge about the organisation

The results showed that potential employees will apply for vacant positions in an organisation, which they are familiar with or an organisation they can easily access information about. This implies that an organisation should continuously communicate and participate in various community programmes in order to increase their popularity among job seekers. The Signaling theory by Spence (1973) supports and offers an explanation for this result. The Signaling theory (1973) argues that in order to prevent bad choices/selection, information seekers use warranties, price and brands to judge the organisation. Brands constantly send signals into the markets,

however consumers or potential employees as in the case of employer branding rarely have perfect information/knowledge. Potential employees will always seek to add information/knowledge on what they already know about any potential employer. However, asymmetric information exist even in labour markets. Asymmetric information is the imbalance of information between two parties in a transaction.

The lack of knowledge about a prospective employer will deter potential employees to look for opportunities with that particular employer. Organisations must constantly increase knowledge about their existence within the labour market in order to be able attract the talent they need. Potential employees are unwilling to make bad choices because employment contracts have long term effects.

5.2.3 Labour Relations

The findings from the study indicate that exit level students at the Thekwini TVET College will consider the labour relations atmosphere within an organisation. The participants suggested that they will prefer an organisation where there is stability and employee rights are respected. Positive labour relations within an organisation are influenced by many variables. The major variable being that an employer is able to keep the employees happy in resolve grievances early and applying practices and procedures fairly. Internal employees are the biggest ambassadors of any organisation. Constant volatile labour relations will give a company a negative image. For example internal recruitment procedures and practices which are deemed to be unfair will give an organisation a poor employment image.

Research conducted by Agrawal and Swaroop (2009) on undergraduate students in India revealed the same information as this current research has found in that image is closely related to student's intentions to apply for vacant positions. Other aspects which have a direct impact on labour relations is discussed separately later in this chapter.

5.3 EXTENT OF EMPLOYER IMAGE IN ATTRACTING NEW EMPLOYEES

5.3.1 Employer Image

The findings indicated that to a greater extent image/reputation has a big influence on attracting applicants to apply for positions. The participants seem to agree that image will better their prospects of getting other jobs because of their association with a good company. Various studies that support the above findings are as follows:

Edwards (2010) explains that research in personnel psychology revealed that prospective employees are more likely to apply for vacancies in an organisation which has an existing positive reputation. Reputation is defined as the image or picture which is displayed by the firm to the outside world. Lievens *et al.* (2007) concluded from their research on potential army recruits that organisational image and organisational identity are closely related to the attractiveness of the organisation. Companies with a positive reputation have a competitive edge in terms of recruiting the best talent (Thornbury & Brooks, 2010). Turban & Cable (2005) also concluded that companies with positive reputation are able to attract better applicants.

Research by Sokro (2012) indicated that brand name and image plays an important role in influencing their decision to join the organisation they are currently working in. Terjesen *et al.* (2007) concluded that potential graduate applicants evaluate the organisation based on its attributes and make a decision whether to apply. The decision will be led by the value and image the organisation portrays through publicity and advertisement. This underscores the need by organisation to make public their values and the kind of image they want to be associated with.

The Social Identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979) supports these current findings. The Social Identity theory was developed to try to gain insight into the psychological basis for intergroup discrimination. Tajfel and Turner (1979) attempted to identify the minimal conditions that cause members of one group to prefer the group to which they belong and against another group that they did not belong to. The theory suggested that groups which people belong to give them a sense of pride and self-esteem. The Social Identity theory provide insight into understanding the link between employer brand image and attraction. The Social Identity theory

argues that people derive their self-concept from their membership in social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Self-concept is the feeling of being unique, separate or distinct from others. The reputation of the group which people are associated with, helps to contribute to self-concept. The Social Identity theory implies that consumers buy brands because of favourable self-concept that result from associating with the brand. In the context of the work environment potential employees are likely to seek membership with employers who give them positive self-concept. Potential employees will more likely want to join those organisations which they think are prestigious, and will give them “status” within the society. Negative images will attract negative comments from others which will lead to an unwillingness to join that particular organisation.

5.4 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS THAT ATTRACT APPLICATIONS

5.4.1 Salary/Remuneration

Salary is cash payments awarded to employees after services have been rendered. The salary is normally determined by the company’s pay structure or system (Worldatwork, 2011). The current study found that salary is one of the brand associations considered by prospective employees before deciding to join an organisation. Companies should offer salaries which are in line with the current cost of living and also in line with the position and the skills needed to execute the job. Salary is one of the main components which distinguish a company from its competitors. People seek employment to be able to earn a decent living therefore salary should allow that to happen. Organisations must strive to be the employer of choice in terms of salary.

The findings corroborated the assumptions of Social Exchange Theory by (Homans, 1961) that human beings will only do something in exchange of something of equal or more value. The theory further argues that human beings will try by all means to avoid punishment which in organisation may be public humiliation. It assumes that human beings will always act in an economical rational manner. The study results indicate that human beings are attracted to organisations that promise to offer high salaries and organisations that are known to pay “good” salaries.

Adam's theory of equity (1965) is in total agreement with the finding of the study. Adam's theory of equity (1965) argues that employees compare their outcomes namely rewards such as salary to inputs that is the efforts and the skills invested in the job with what others in the same situation receive. If the employee perceives that the equation is not balanced or there is no equity or fairness he or she will reduce the inputs or leave the organisation and seek employment in organisations where they perceive that equity exists. The reality is that potential employees will always compare the salary offered with what other companies are offering. Bhengu & Bussin (2012) found that salary or fixed compensation is a major factor in attracting employees initially but once in place other factors such as work environment and career development will take precedence in deciding whether the employee will stay with the organisation.

Research by Schechter *et al.* (2014) focused on the influence of financial rewards on perceived job attractiveness. The study found that salary is important in influencing the attractiveness of a position. Job position exists within a company hence once an employee is attracted to a position it follows that he or she is also attracted to the organisation. Organisations can distinguish themselves from competitors by offering unique salary packages which are flexible to the company (Lievens *et al.*, 2007). Competitive salary will help to send good signals to the labour market that the company cares about the welfare of its employees.

5.4.2 Benefits

Benefits are defined as programmes an employer implements to augment the cash reward that employees get (Worldatwork, 2011). The study results showed that benefits are also considered by prospective employees. Benefits are an extension of the salary offered to the employee. Employee benefits act as an attraction tool since they assist the employee to meet their personal needs such as health and sometimes helps employees to acquire assets such as cars and houses (Armstrong, 2015).

Worldatwork (2007) study showed that ninety-five percent of participants rated medical aid plans as having moderate to high impact in attracting applicants. Medical aid plans are one of the benefits that are offered to employees. The Worldatwok (2007) study supports the results of this study which indicated that good benefit packages lead to the attraction of new employees.

Bussin and Toerien (2011) argued that non cash rewards such as tickets to sports events should be encouraged more in the workplace because they have long term effects and those awards can

be tailor made to suit individual needs and become more personal. Other research on benefits as an attraction tool revealed that different demographics prefer different benefit systems. Older employees prefer benefits such as flexible working hours (Hedge *et al.*, 2006). Reward categories such as salary and a proper working environment are valued more by young people (Schlechter *et al.*, 2014).

The importance of benefits as part of the remuneration package has also been reinforced by legislation. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 makes it mandatory for companies to provide benefits such as maternity leave, family responsibility leave and annual leave. The Act stipulates the minimum leave days an employee is entitled to.

5.4.3 Working Conditions

This study revealed that working conditions are part of the branding associations considered by participants in deciding whether or not to join an organisation. Working conditions cover a broad range of issues ranging from working hours, remuneration, the job itself and the physical set up of the workplace. In this instance working conditions will refer to the physical set up of the workplace and the actual job performed by the employee. Other aspects of working conditions have been discussed separately.

Research by Rampl & Kenning (2014) supports the current findings. Rampl & Kenning (2014) found that work content and work culture are integral brand associations that are closely linked to being first choice employer brand hence more attraction of potential employees. Lievens (2007) in a study that focused on the Belgian army also found that task variety is central in attracting applicants. Agrawal & Swaroop (2009) revealed that attractiveness is mainly determined by the perceptions of the work itself by aspiring employees.

The work environment which is part of working conditions was identified as one of the elements that influence employer value proposition (Sengupta *et al.*, 2015). Employer value proposition can be defined as “a unique set of attributes and benefits that will motivate target candidates to join a company and current employees to stay” (Botha, 2011, p. 3).

Research by Sutherland *et al.* (2007) titled “Employer of choice branding for knowledge workers” identified growth and challenging work opportunities as one of the desired attribute. Challenging work opportunities fall under the umbrella of working conditions. This finding is also in total agreement with other research mentioned below.

The influence of working conditions on attraction was also found by a study conducted by Coster (2014) in Australia whilst researching for Hassell a leading design company. The study indicated that workplace design greatly influence employee attraction. The study results showed that salary had achieved a forty-five percent influence on attraction followed by workplace culture (thirty-two percent) and workplace facilities (sixteen percent). Combining workplace culture and facilities will outweigh the influence of salary.

Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow, 1943) also give relevance to these finding. Maslow identified five needs of human beings which are believed to help to motivate employees. Maslow grouped the needs in different levels/hierarchy and argued that once a need has been satisfied the individual moves to the next level. The five levels which Maslow identified are as follows: physiological, safety, affliction, esteem needs and lastly self-actualisation. The second level need in Maslow’s theory is safety which is also called security. Prospective employees will need assurance that their physical and job security will not be jeopardised. Organisations should ensure that the working conditions are safe and also offer employees long term contracts or even permanent jobs. Once this is in place current employees will be motivated and prospective employees will be attracted to the organisation.

The government has also ensured that legislation was in place to ensure and promote safe physical working conditions. The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 seek to address and promote safe working conditions through a number of initiatives like the establishment of a safety committee and the appointment of inspectors under the Department of Labour.

Poor working conditions or unsafe working conditions which may result in occupational injuries or deaths will send wrong signals into labour market, hence damaging the employer brand of the organisation. A well-structured and physical appealing workplace will portray the organisation as a pleasant place to work.

5.4.4 Growth Opportunities

The research findings indicate that growth opportunities are among some of the branding associations considered by prospective employees. Minchington a leading global authority on employer branding also agreed with this finding when he developed a model called ‘employer brand excellence model’ (Minchington, 2015). According to Minchington (2015), the model helps guide organisations on employer branding initiatives from recruitment to retirement. In that model career development was identified as one of the attributes necessary for employer branding to be successful. Existence of growth opportunities helps to retain and attract employees. Growth opportunities result in more salary and benefits which has been already identified as some of the branding associations that lead to better image and eventual attraction.

The perception of the participants on the influence of growth opportunities on attraction is also similar to the finding by McLeod (2007) which was conducted in Australia with job seekers and human resource professionals. Career development and progression was listed as one of the ten most attractive employer attributes (McLeod, 2007). Organisations which seem to offer better chances of promotion will naturally be perceived in a good way with prospective employees. Companies must make it a habit to groom and promote internal talent. The beneficiaries of such deliberate initiatives will become brand ambassadors of the company and spread the news helping to lift up the image of the company. Availing promotional opportunities to internal staff also helps to motivate them.

5.4.5 Coaching and Mentoring

The results of this study showed that availability of coaching and mentoring is one of the brand associations that potential employees consider before applying for a job. In this study, coaching and mentoring are be used interchangeably. Coaching implies teaching and directing another person to achieve high levels of competency by providing advice and guidance. Usually a more experienced person is appointed to guide the less experienced person. Coaching and mentoring will result in the improvement of the quality of products or services offered and transfer of knowledge and skills usually to the young employee.

This finding is similar to Allen & O'Brien (2006) findings that individuals who rate learning highly are more attracted to companies that offer formal mentorship programmes. The study offered two explanations for this occurrence. The first reason they argued is that individuals who are familiar with the benefits of mentorship to their career development will feel attracted to companies offering mentorship and the second reason is that companies will be sending positive messages in that it cares about their development hence increasing attraction.

Harvath *et al.*, (2008) also concluded that mentorships programmes in their different forms help to lift up the image of the organisation and enhance attraction among the undergraduates. Earlier on image was identified as one of the elements which make up employer branding. In the light of these findings, organisation should implement mentorship programmes such as internship programmes. Internship programmes go a long way in imparting skills to young people to break into the job market and also at the same time giving them the much needed job experience and confidence to strive in the labour market.

5.4.6 Management practices and culture

The research findings indicate that participants value organisations that practice fairness in their human resource practices and procedures. Perceived unfairness will subsequently affect the image of the organisation. The previous findings showed that prospective employees are attracted to an organisation that has a positive image (Turban & Cable, 2005). Culture on the

other hand can be defined as a system of shared values that dictate what happens in an organisation and the expected behaviour from its members (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). It can also be defined simply as the way things are done in an organisation.

The Social Identity theory by Tajfel and Turner (1979) supports the current finding. The theory argues that people are more likely to join an organisation that gives them self-concept, which are feelings of being unique. Image also helps to contribute to self-concept. Potential employees are more likely to join companies that give them these feelings.

The importance of management practices in employment has received the attention of the law makers with the enactment of Labour Relations Act of 1995 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 which seek to give employees against overpowering employers. Abuse of power or perceived abuse of power will result in negative perceptions from current, potential and prospective employees. Companies should strive to be fair in all its dealings with employees.

5.5 THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-CONCEPT IN ATTRACTING EMPLOYEES

The results showed that self-concept which refers to feelings of being unique has a direct influence in attracting applicants. Results indicated that society views play a part in the decision making of applicants. The way a company positions itself helps to send the right or wrong signals to customers and job applicants. The potential employees want to be associated with companies that give them prestigious status within the society. Since organisational identification is a form of social identity, an employee's social identity will be enhanced if the employee joins a distinctive and more favourable group compared to other groups (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

Insights from Signaling theory Spence (1973) showed that when information about an organisation is readily available either through the company's own efforts or through other means it makes it easier for applicants to make a decision on whether or not to join the organisation. Potential employees will not hesitate to join an organisation which sends the right signals. Organisations should engage in deliberate branding exercises to indicate to the internal

and external publics that it cares. Information about what the company offers in terms of policies should be readily available to prevent employees from incurring ‘information costs’ which will hinder them from attempting to apply for vacant positions in the company.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the data received from the interview on the influence of employer branding on the attraction of new employees. Employer branding is both a human resource management and marketing concept and cannot be applied or analysed in isolation of other factors or variables. Employer branding is a multi-dimensional concept. For employer branding to be successful all facets of the business must be aligned in one direction. Factors that are considered before applying for a job were discussed. The factors are the size of the organisation, knowledge about the organisation and labour relations.

The extent of image in attracting applicants was also discussed and the findings revealed that image/reputation influences attraction to a larger extent. The findings have clearly indicated that image is central to everything as it has the ability to influence other factors. Brand associations that influence attraction were analysed and discussed. The brand association includes salary, benefits, working conditions, growth opportunities, coaching and mentoring and management practices/culture were found to influence attraction. Finally the effect of self-concept in influencing attraction was analysed and discussed. It was found that self-concept plays a major role in influencing attraction. Potential employees want to feel unique and proud with their employers. The next chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed factors considered before applying for a job, extent of employer image in attracting new employees, brand associations that attract applicants and the effect of self-concept on attraction. This chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of this study.

6.2 FACTORS CONSIDERED BEFORE APPLYING FOR A JOB

The findings help to reinforce the notion that corporate advertising is important as product advertising. Corporate advertising will increase the knowledge about the company with the public. Corporate advertising may cover aspects such as the size of the organisation and the human resource policies. The factors which were listed by participants of this study were the size of the organisation, knowledge of the organisation and labour relations atmosphere.

6.3 THE EXTENT OF EMPLOYER IMAGE IN ATTRACTING EMPLOYEES

The findings help to give credit to what literature argues about the influence of employer image on attraction of new employees. The study concluded that employer image does influence the attraction of new employees to a large extent. The image of the organisation contributes to making the organisation unique. Employer image on its own is a multi-facet concept which is influenced by a number of aspects. Companies should evaluate all its activities/programmes to ensure that it contributes to a positive employer image. Every organisation has its own image whether it is built consciously or unconsciously.

6.4 BRAND ASSOCIATIONS THAT INFLUENCE ATTRACTION

The results of this study revealed that both tangible and intangible employment offers by companies help to increase the attraction of new employees and probably the retention of current employees. Companies should constantly monitor the external environment and benchmark its offering with the best employers in that particular industry. Brand associations were also found to have a direct influence on the image of the organisation. The findings also indicated that different demographics prefer certain offerings more above others.

Organisations should note that employer branding is not a once off event but a continuous process, hence organisations should be flexible to adapt to any changes. The brand associations that were mentioned by the participants are salary, benefits, working conditions, growth opportunities, coaching and mentoring and management practices and culture.

6.5 EFFECT OF SELF-CONCEPT IN INFLUENCING ATTRACTION

The results showed that self-concept is important in influencing attraction. Potential employees will not want to join organisations which are considered inferior or looked down upon by members of the society. Potential employees want to feel unique by joining organisations that are prestigious. Organisations should continuously rebrand as the same way products are rebranded. Efforts should be made to make sure that feelings of self-concept are induced.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested:

- Organisations should benchmark their employment offerings with best employers in their respective industries and should then participate in employer of choice surveys and find out what the market thinks about them as an employer.
- Employers must understand the demographic characteristics of their workforce so that they will tailor package their employment offerings to suit the needs of their workforce.
- For any employer branding programme to be successful top management support is needed. Top management must provide the resources to implement these programmes.
- Employer branding must be an on-going exercise which must be given support by all departments within an organisation.
- Employer should employ fulltime public relations consultants to counter negative media reports and to give publicity to company programmes.
- Organisations should engage in corporate social responsibility as it helps to build the image of the organisation. Organisations should be ethical and also law abiding in their operations.
- Employment offerings promises should be fulfilled in order not to breach a psychological contract. Breach in a psychological contract will damage the brand of the organisation. Current employees should be used as brand ambassadors.
- Open communication between management and employees should be encouraged. Open communication will allow the organisation to solve current and potential problems timeously.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to time constraints, this study did not include other Thekwini TVET campuses (Centec, Asheville, Umbilo, Melbourne, and Cato Manor). Only Springfield Campus based in the area of Springfield in KZN was selected for this study. In the light of this, a suggestion for future studies is to conduct similar studies with other campuses as well. It is also suggested that a bigger sample should be used.

Participants in this study were not actual job applicants who reported about the actual organisation hence the perceptions of actual job applicants may differ. It is recommended that this study should be replicated with sample of graduates/job applicants. It is also suggested that a different research methodology to be used in order to compare findings. Future research can also focus on specific brand associations and their influence on attraction of new employees.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

WELCOMING REMARKS (RESEARCHER)

I will first greet the participant, introduce myself and then invite the participant to do the same.

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW (MODERATOR)

I will inform the participants that all issues to be discussed are of great importance for understanding the influence of employer branding on the attraction of new employees.

I will encourage participants to feel free to express their views. I will remind them that there are no right or wrong answers hence their views are very important. I will make it clear that this research is mainly aimed at eliciting information that would contribute towards understanding the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. I will advise participants of entitlement to their own opinions. All participants will also be informed of the duration of the interview and a request will be extended to record the entire interview session.

INTERVIEW

I will start of the interview by posing a general question about the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees. I will then ask the specific questions as stipulated below:

- What will you consider before applying for a job?
- What is the extent of employer image in attracting you to apply for a position?
- What are the brand associations that might attract you to apply?
- What is the effect of self-concept in the attraction of new employees?

CLOSING REMARKS

I will offer an opportunity for any short final comments that the participants may wish to make. The specific question/statement will be: “thank you very much for your invaluable input to the research study, would you like to make any last comments? The information you provided will be vital in my research dissertation and will contribute to the understanding of the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees”.

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM PARTICIPANT TO CONDUCT STUDY



University of KwaZulu Natal

School of management, information technology and governance

Dear respondent,

Researcher: Denis Musengi (073 9619834)

Supervisor: Dr Given Mutinta (031 260 8854)

I, **Denis Musengi** am a Masters student in the discipline of management, at the school of management, information technology and governance of the University of KwaZulu Natal.

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: an investigation into the students' perceptions of the influence of employer branding on the attraction of new employees: a case study of Technical and Vocational Education and Training at Thekwini College.

Your participation will assist in understanding the influence of employer branding in attracting new employees and what employees consider before applying for a job. Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the School of Management of the University of KwaZulu Natal.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the study, you may contact me or the supervisor at the numbers listed above. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The interview should take about 25 minutes to complete, I hope you will take the time to participate in the study.

Thank you in advance for your help with this research exercise.

Sincerely

Investigator signature _____

date

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS

I, _____ (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project and I consent to participating in this research study. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, should I feel the need to.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Consent for use of audio equipment

If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded.

Equipment	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

APPENDIX D: DECLARATION STATEMENT

This is to declare that Denis Musengi will ensure that the respondent's privacy is protected. I will not use the participant's name in any of the information received from this study or in any of the research reports. Any information received in the study will be recorded with a code number that will be secured. When the study is completed, the key that shows which code number goes with your name will be destroyed. Participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

I also confirm that the respondents have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequence.

APPENDIX E: GATEKEEPER LETTER



To Whom It May Concern

This is to confirm that Denis Musengi Student number 214581824 has been granted permission to conduct research at our institution. The title of his research is : An investigation into students' perceptions of the influence of employer branding on the attraction of new employees: a case study of Technical and Vocational Education and Training at Thekwini College.

For further information don't hesitate to call the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely

CAMPUS MANAGER
SPRINGFIELD CAMPUS
THEKWINI COLLEGE

Mr P. Mthimukulu

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mthimukulu", is written over a horizontal line.

APPENDIX F: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



22 March 2018

Mr Denis Musengi (214581824)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Musengi,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0818/016 M

New project title: Employer branding and attraction of new employees: A case study of Thekwini Technical Vocational Education Training College

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 08 March 2018 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title
- Change in Supervisor

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for period of 3 years from the date of original issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Sulaiman Aliku
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isobel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angela Parcoe

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: www.uqn.ac.za

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APPENDIX H:EDITOR LETTER

31 January 2018

To Whom it may Concern

This serves to confirm that I Lorraine Rajagopaul was the editor for the dissertation of Denis Musengi.

If there is further information that you may require, please contact me on:

Cell: 0824541275

Email: rajagopaul@gmail.com

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Rajagopaul

Lorraine Rajagopaul

Masters Dissertation Editor