



Re-Branding and Consumer Confidence: A Case Study of Corporate Re-Branding in the Car Rental Industry

By

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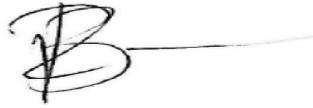
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DEDICATION

This work is unquestionably dedicated to my wife Tracey and my 8-month-old son Tyler, I need to thank them for putting up with all the late nights and for giving me the much needed time and energy to focus on the work required and lastly, for always pushing me to level up in everything I do. They really are *dad's* cheerleaders and are always in my corner, I could not have asked for a better life partner. Thank you for everything you do for me and for always believing in me, I love you both so much.

ABSTRACT

In this study the researcher looked at corporate rebranding within the travel and tourism segment of South Africa. The organisation in question, Imperial Car Rental, a home-grown South African company with a 30-year pedigree at the time undertook a rebranding project to a global car hire organisation, Europcar. The purpose of the rebranding project was focused on the elevation of the existing brand and how the change would allow Imperial/Europcar to connect with their existing customer portfolio on a deeper level as well as grow and reach a new customer base just in time for the 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa. The study was qualitative and utilised interviews (from interview schedules) with an identified respondent pool within the organisation to gather and analyse data specific to the rebranding project. A benefit to this work was that the researcher had access to all internal stakeholders that headed up the project in 2008-2009. The results of the study highlighted the specific requirements of communication, planning and negotiation to ensure the project was a success, it was noted that the most important consideration for the project was the inclusion of all stakeholders, internal and external throughout the process which was conclusive in nature allowing for several recommendations and appropriate conclusion by the researcher.

Keywords: Branding, car-rental industry, customer satisfaction, re-branding, tourism industry

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	II
DEDICATION	III
ABSTRACT	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
LIST OF FIGURES	IX
LIST OF TABLES	X
LIST OF APPENDICES	X
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	XI
CHAPTER 1: STUDY INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research problem	2
1.3 Study aim	4
1.4 Study significance	4
1.5 Study objectives	6
1.6 Study questions.....	7
1.7 Literature review.....	7
1.8 Research methodology.....	10
1.9 Definition of terms	11
1.10 Chapter layout.....	13
1.11 Chapter summary.....	13
CHAPTER 2: LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA	15
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 Tourism to and in South Africa	16
2.3 Tourism during the COVID-pandemic.....	21
2.4 Travelling in South Africa: air, road, and sea	24
2.5 Travel modes.....	26
2.5.1 The airline industry	27
2.5.2 Road transportation	29
2.5.3 Water transportation	30
2.5.4 Travelling by rail	31
2.6 The future of transportation	32
2.6.1 Domestic and international car rental industry, how important is car rental?	32
2.7 Branding.....	33
2.7.1 Corporate rebranding.....	34
2.8 Chapter summary.....	36

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	38
3.1 Introduction	38
3.2 Research intellection	38
3.2.1 Constructivist.....	39
3.2.2 Positivism	40
3.3 Research design	40
3.3.1 Process	40
3.3.2 Research landscape.....	41
3.4 Data collection and sampling.....	41
3.5 Population	42
3.6 Pilot study.....	43
3.7 Reliability and validity	43
3.8 Data analysis.....	44
3.9 Ethical considerations.....	45
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS.....	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 Demographic breakdown.....	47
4.3 Regional statistics	48
4.4 Age groups.....	49
4.4.1 Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980: 42 to 57 years of age).....	49
4.4.2 Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996: 26 to 41 years of age)	50
4.5 Gender	50
4.6 Departmental representation of participants	51
4.7 Education levels	52
4.8 Data analysis.....	53
4.8.1 Open coding categories.....	54
4.8.2 Axial code groups	61
4.8.2.1 Aspects of rebranding opportunities.....	67
4.8.2.2 Aspects of rebranding challenges	68
4.8.2.3 The stakeholder aspect of rebranding.....	69
4.8.3 Selective coding	70
4.9 Value creation from rebranding	71
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	73
5.1 Introduction	73
5.2 Research objectives	74
5.2.1 Objective 1: Motivation behind the rebranding process.....	74
5.2.2 Objective 2: Did the rebranding process lead to a competitive advantage	74
5.2.3 Objective 3: Rebranding challenges identified	75

5.2.4	Objective 4: Rebranding opportunities identified	75
5.2.5	Objective 5: Brand equity, old versus new	76
5.3	Research recommendations.....	76
5.4	Implications of research.....	77
5.5	Research limitations	78
5.6	Suggestions for further research.....	78
REFERENCES		80
APPENDICES		94

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Uber rebranding	5
Figure 1.2: Position of Motus in the South African car-rental industry	6
Figure 2.1: Travel and tourism GDP contribution in South Africa 2005-2020.....	15
Figure 2.2: Tourist arrivals 2004-2021 South Africa	16
Figure 2.3: Aerial view of the 2010 FIFA stadium in Cape Town built for the World Cup	17
Figure 2.4: How visitors spend money while travelling	18
Figure 2.5: Employment opportunities per tourism sector	19
Figure 2.6: Table Mountain	20
Figure 2.7: COVID-19 Impact on Tourism (Projected recovery timeline)	22
Figure 2.8: Global tourism arrival statistics, 2020 vs 2019	23
Figure 2.9: International tourist arrivals 2019	24
Figure 2.10: South African modes of transport 2018	25
Figure 2.11: South African modes of transport 2013	25
Figure 2.12: Sub-Saharan modes of transport	26
Figure 2.13: Popular and preferred modes of transport for tourists	27
Figure 2.14: Leading car hire companies in South Africa	30
Figure 4.1: Race split of respondents.....	47
Figure 4.2: Regions of respondents	48
Figure 4.3: Age groupings of respondents	49
Figure 4.4: Gender split of respondents	51
Figure 4.5: Departments of respondents	51
Figure 4.6: Education levels of respondents	53
Figure 4.7: Axial code grouping generated in ATLAS.ti.....	66
Figure 4.8: Pepsi logo change	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Themes and codes overview.....	55
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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CPUT ETHICAL CLEARANCE	94
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	95
APPENDIX C: GRAMMARIAN LETTER	98

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACSA	Airports Company South Africa
AV	Autonomous (self-driving) vehicles
COBEI	Cooperation between Europcar and Imperial
ESG	Environmental Social Governance
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IT	Information technology
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
KFC	Kentucky Fried Chicken
NPS	Nett Promoter Score
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturers
PnP	Pick and Pay
SAR	South African Railways
SA	South Africa
SOC	State-owned Company
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TOMSA	Tourism Marketing South Africa
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
V&A	Victoria and Alfred Waterfront.

CHAPTER 1

STUDY INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Imperial Car Rental was launched by Carol Scott and Maureen Jackson in 1979. Dawn Jones joined the organisation shortly thereafter in 1980, when Dawn had left Budget Car Rental after being head-hunted by Carol Scott. Carol Scott and Maureen Jackson, both ex-Avis employees, left the red blazers behind them and with the support of Imperial Group's Bill Lynch, started Imperial Car Rental. In 1984, Dawn Jones was appointed as National Sales Manager, and in 1986, a director at Imperial Car Rental. The company became highly successful over the next decade (the 1980s and 1990s), listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in 1987, and was seen as a well-operated, truly South African brand that had an affinity for the local consumer. This translated into South African loyalty and appreciation for this home-grown brand that, by this point, saw Dawn Jones succeed Carol Scott as CEO in 2000, more than 20 after leaving Avis, resulting in a plateau of local success. Looking toward the future, the inevitability of change became increasingly apparent to the leaders of this organisation (Kok & de Beer, 2015: 86-89).

Considering the economic position of South Africa as highlighted by the National Treasury in terms of GDP growth over this period, and understanding the varying transport requirements of the local consumers and tourists, creating an understanding of the current shortfall in terms of appropriate rental-transport solutions that are safe and affordable for everyone was necessary. Resulting in existing modes of transport requiring upgrades while other methods of transport would need to become more accessible to fit the budgets of travelling South Africans and foreign visitors annually. With the future in mind, the focus within the car rental industry had to realign with global requirements, and in this case, Europcar, which had been operating in South Africa as a franchise held by the Imperial Group for 20 years since 1994, and until the two organisations merged late in 2007 when Hubert Brody was appointed chief executive succeeding Bill Lynch, (Kok & de Beer, 2015: 210-217, 298-305, 314).

For a period, Europcar and Imperial Car Rental operated independently as a dual-branded organisation until the corporate rebranding transition occurred when the local brand (Imperial) gave way to the global brand (Europcar) in 2008/9 (IOL, 2009). Europcar had operated under the Imperial Group since 2008 until the group opted to split the portfolio in 2018 and finalise the merge by 2019, seeing Europcar leave the Imperial Group to form part of Motus Car Rental Division. Europcar formed a substantial part of the rental and retail sector of the integrated business model extending rental services to various segments of the vehicle value chain.

Under Motus, Europcar became a major contributor to the annual revenue of the group. (Motus, 2020a:6-7; 12-15).

Europcar was known to South Africans but was seen more as a strong international brand, while Imperial Car Rental had, by 2008, been effectively operating for 30 years in South Africa. The decision to merge the two brands was a strategic plan that would see Europcar South Africa achieve the same type of success locally, compared to the accolades of the European counterpart, while again focussing on the future of the company without losing strong local values that had been achieved over so many years of operations under the Imperial banner. The international brand, Europcar, now had a solid South African base and the merge appeared to be the logical step in the evolution of the brand. Throughout this transition period, the South African consumer showed their support year-on-year, according to the group annual reports displaying an increase of R2.2 million in profit from 2018 to 2019, as well as group figures listed in the four-year review (Motus, 2020a: 94-95).

Ultimately, the merger as a significant move for the South African brand that would result in the increase of market share in the South African rental market, which currently stands at Europcar having roughly 32% market share, inclusive of Tempest Car-Hire, as they belong to the same group. According to statistics received from the South African Vehicle Renting and Leasing Association SAVRALA (2015), the remaining 68% is split amongst the remaining top car hire companies in South Africa, namely Avis, Bidvest, Hertz, and Dollar Thrifty. . There was a greater purpose to merging the two brands—it was a strategic plan to maintain the proven track record, purpose, and policy of the local brand, and to apply these traditions to a successful global brand to bring about a new, successful organisation that could take the strengths of both organisations and apply them to a new car-rental culture, resulting in the culmination of something extraordinary (IOL, 2009). The merger would result in Europcar South Africa becoming the largest, most successful car rental supplier in South Africa, because of an immense corporate rebranding project by June 2009 (Kok & de Beer, 2015: 431-433).

1.2 Research problem

The research problem is systemic in that typical rebranding has its core fundamentals that need to be considered at the start of the project. The first move must be towards the core of each business in terms of the vision, mission, and organisational values. Both brands, Imperial and Europcar tend to focus profoundly on the customer, the services that were being offered at the time of the merger, and the quality of the product on offer. So, customer-centric, service delivery, and product quality were factors that were seen as a commonality between both brands, which assisted in the strategy used when the merge exercise began (Kok & de Beer, 2015: 431-433).

Once these commonalities had been considered at length, other important factors needed to be considered. In this case, the South African car-rental market was the next step— how would the South African consumer respond to the proposed changes in one of their local brands (the merge with Europcar), and how would this change affect the competition? Then the need arose to compare the two brands—Imperial Car Rental, a home-grown and well-known, trusted South African brand, and Europcar, a relatively young company in South Africa but one of the biggest car rental organisations in Europe, to come together through corporate rebranding, which is challenging, time-consuming, and typically has a high failure rate (Goi & Goi, 2011:5).

The prevailing challenge began with the actual changing of the existing Imperial brand. Consumers tend to believe that because an organisation's name has changed, the old organisation's values and ethos could be lost (Ahonen, 2008:32-37). Other reasons behind rebranding could stem from the Imperial Company's decision to look to the future and merge the organisations into one brand that would be in the best interest of future growth, and alignment with the diverse organisational cultures and climates of both organisations (Causon, 2004:297-306).

Aligning two successful brands under one umbrella was no simple endeavour but a requisite if Imperial Car Rental were to gain a competitive edge in the South African car-rental market and achieve preferred car rental status in South Africa. To address the competitive advantages, the decision was made to merge the two brands locally to compete at all levels to alter the competitive environment (Tevi & Otubanjo, 2013:120).

There were two competing aspects—the first being the expected change and challenges facing corporate organisations when looking at branding preparation for any future events (Knott et al., 2016:105-115). The second aspect pertained to the consumers and their reactions to any branding changes by corporate organisations. The problem developed when consumers expressed their dissatisfaction about the change and voiced their differences of opinion over a brand they trusted in customer feedback provided to the organisation, versus a brand that was not well recognised in South Africa. Customers typically expect a powerful but informal brand promise from the corporate brand where their loyalty lies (Balmer et al., 2006:732-739), and how this loyalty could be transferred from one brand to another.

Other challenges were presented at the time of merging, including:

- The two brands had to successfully merge in a limited time to be ready for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup in South Africa. The new organisation would need to operate successfully over this period to ensure maximum advances in revenue

opportunities, taking into consideration the forecasted number of tourists that would enter South Africa during the FIFA World Cup period.

- Many challenges could arise; brand recognition, loyalty, consumer customs, buying culture, and the trends of the established European market versus our South African market.
- The objective of the merge would have to ensure a successful shift of perception of local customers' loyalty over to the global brand while ensuring that a familiar, easy offering is made to tourists visiting South Africa.
- Information would need to be gathered through qualitative methods, most notably unstructured individual interviews with organisation executives present in the organisation (Imperial) during the rebranding process, as well as informal group discussions that would be held with specific departments of the new organisation, such as marketing. Respondent data would also be gathered quantitatively for processing.
- The purpose of the merger would be to best understand how decisions were made, and how any forecasted challenges would be overcome regarding the rebranding process and merging of the two brands.

The study problem, therefore, is to investigate the challenges experienced during the merger, and the successes needed to ensure the successful future of the merged organisation. A similar study of this nature had not been conducted in the Car Rental / Tourism space, having documented challenges and ways to overcome this while undergoing a rebranding project would be vital to the industry.

1.3 Study aim

The aim of this study to identify re-branding and consumer confidence in car rental industry in South Africa.

1.4 Study significance

The uniqueness of this specific challenge is that it is within the car rental space, and this type of rebranding opportunity is not frequently seen in South Africa, so it is an opportunity to study this specific type (car-rentals) of corporate rebranding. The process is not new; various organisations have gone through rebranding over time and have done so successfully. For example, Uber initially went through a rebranding process in 2016 that saw a change in their logo from a U: to something that resembled a C-shape in reverse. This was unsuccessful but there followed a different rebranding process in 2018 that proved to be successful for the

organisation in terms of user-feedback, application usage, and in the end, popularity (Jones Lane Marketing, 2020).



Figure 1.1: Uber rebranding

The Imperial Group had the opportunity to rebrand to Europcar, and eventually, Motus, as the holding company, to ensure global success and the longevity of the organisation. The situation is unique and would generate new knowledge specific to the rental-travel industry in South Africa. This is where the significance of this study lies—the relevance of this research in South Africa to the car rental and travel industry and how effective rebranding can be put into action. This research, therefore, could be used to understand good consumer behaviour when undergoing brand change and illustrate how consumers could be managed strategically to minimise losses.

Figure 1.2 below shows Motus as a holding company, the divisions under the brand in terms of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), dealerships, vehicle rental and the global footprint represented abroad. Europcar can be found within the group under the Motus vehicle rental division.

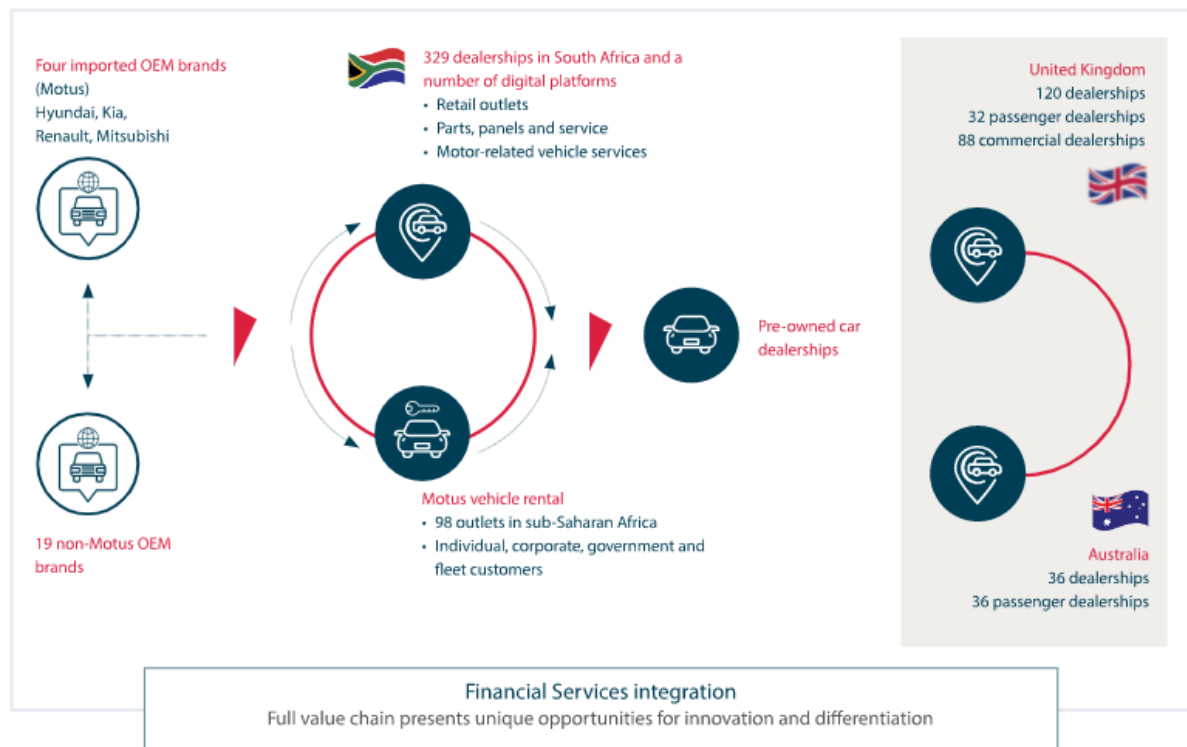


Figure 1.2: Position of Motus in the South African car-rental industry

Source: Motus, 2019.

Continuous changes are occurring within the travel industry, including changes in terms of suppliers, customers, new modes of travel, and easier ways to complete travel requirements, be they direct or via online services and portals made available to all consumers directly and to travel consortiums.

1.5 Study objectives

The objectives of this research, as listed below, are important and achievable for the organisation.

- Explore the aspects that motivated the rebranding to gain a deeper understanding of the entire process.
- Ensure the merged organisation achieves a competitive advantage based on the outcomes of the rebranding and that the process is documented for future use.
- Identify challenges that may come from the rebranding process to ensure growth and wisdom are gained from the experience.
- Identify opportunities that may come from the rebranding process to ensure they are used to best advance the organisation, and

- Identify and understand the equity of the current brand versus the new brand to be implemented and if this change will be to the benefit of organisation.

1.6 Study questions

The study questions of this research are important and need to be considered carefully for the merger outcome to be successful. They are as follows:

- Why the rebranding: what is driving this change and what is the most strategic approach to rebranding two car rental brands and why?
- What will be the rebranding process being implemented, and will it be done efficiently to ensure a competitive advantage?
- What are the expected challenges that may arise from the rebranding, and how can the organisation use this to grow in the future?
- How can the opportunities identified from the rebranding process be capitalised on by the organisation?
- What is the equity of the current brand versus the new brand and will the rebranding compromise this?

1.7 Preliminary literature review

The result of the rebranding needs to be carefully considered by the organisation and the strategists behind the process. The following crucial factors should be considered when considering the outcome and how to achieve an advantage:

- Looking at competitor shortfalls in existing brands and implementing strategies to overcome and benefit from these shortfalls, specifically service, branch network, operating times, fleet variances and customer accounts that were held by the competitors (Kok & de Beer, 2015: 90-95).
- Looking at ways to reach various consumers, considering the existing local consumer and then attracting new international consumers with an exciting new brand. A brand that assists the consumer in making a choice that hopefully allows the consumer to recognise the intrinsic value within the specific brand. By allowing the organisation such an exciting opportunity to engage better with its consumers, ensuring consumers experience the same emotion will enhance the organisations prospects of securing a successful new brand identity with a new customer base going forward (Wheeler, 2018:2-8).

- Another factor to consider is looking at the new brand to ensure it is contemporary and relevant to the current customers as well as ensuring that it will attract new customers. Ensuring that the brand image and reputation align between all sources, internal and external, is important in terms of attracting new customers (Foroudi & Palazzo, 2020:5-6).
- Lastly, does the change set the organisation apart? Is it strategic in ensuring the organisation is separated and seen as being a league apart from the existing range of competitors? Does it reverberate with staff and suppliers? If this is the case, then the strategy is effective and ready to take on new challenges that will arise (Wheeler, 2018:9-10).

When trying to understand these aspects, the long-term plan always needs to be considered. The long-term strategy must be drawn up and the changes that the new brand brings need to align with the organisation's goals (Wheeler, 2018:10).

If the organisation goals need to be redesigned, then a decision should be reached by the organisation well in advance. What brought about the change must be understood, so that alignment set in motion can be completed timeously. If, at the end of this process, the outcome is that the organisation's mission and vision need to be adjusted to better establish short-term and long-term goals, then let it be done in a concise manner that will benefit the organisation and its employees in the long run (Management Study Guide, 2021).

Financial gain would be one of the most important opportunities to arise from the rebranding process. Budgets are set and they need to be adhered to. In the end, the organisation needs to ensure that it is profitable and that the rebranding exercise ensures the longevity of the organisation (Imperial Logistics, 2018).

To document a successful process specific to the (car-rental) travel industry should be important to the project team managing the rebranding process. Reaching a new customer base, growing annual revenue, benefitting from the opposition's shortfalls, and ensuring the long-term success of the organisation should be documented for future reference as a tool for management to use if, when and where required (IOL, 2009).

For this specific study, the organisation was rebranding due to the merging of the two brands (Imperial and Europcar) and the desired revenue goals that would be achieved as well as the focus of the organisation on marketing, branding and product positioning. Leveraging off an international platform (Europcar's global presence and the approaching World Cup) versus domestic availability would ensure the future longevity of the new organisation. There are also

opportunities of adding business from new channels to the existing revenue stream that usually supports the motivation to rebrand (Imperial Logistics, 2010:1).

Typical challenges associated with rebranding would arise, and at that point, these would need to be assessed and identified in terms of which are most relevant to the success of the new organisation and dealt with appropriately. An example would be consumer misconception about the rebranding in terms of their behaviour towards the brand, recognition, and how important it is to ensure there is buy-in or involvement from the consumer to ensure relevance and building of brand loyalty (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2015: 17).

There are numerous strategies/perceptions to branding, such as laddering and modern instantiation to broadening the frame of reference (Tybout & Calkins, 2005: 16-26), when it comes to rebranding but, in this case, the strategy should be focused on the customer. How will the rebranding affect the customer in terms of loyalty and brand promise, and what is the best strategy to leverage off that would see the organisation succeed? Several factors affect the rebranding process, from the view of internal and external stakeholders to changes in organisational strategy or ownership, the image of the brand, the quality of the product delivered, brand loyalty, and competitive advantage. At the end of the day, the long-term goal needs to be realised in that improving the brand equity is the eventual outcome (Balmer et al., 2006: 819).

This question has significant relevance; the domestic Imperial brand had evolved and potentially reached its pinnacle but what else could be achieved in the car rental industry by this brand? The brand had a solid base and tremendous customer loyalty that had been established over the greater part of three decades but still the brand seemed to have reached a plateau. For further evolution and growth to occur, global recognition plays an important part, and using the established infrastructure from the domestic Imperial brand and partnering with the successful Europcar international brand, is sure to bring about strategic growth for the group as they are already seen as the second biggest and most successful car hire company in South Africa (Car Info, 2013).

Brand equity is important because it underpins a value to the established brand. If this value is positive, then the organisation could rightfully charge what they feel is appropriate for the use of its services and/or products. The Imperial brand had successful equity and merging with a successful international brand would not only bring the domestic brand further success but would also ensure the longevity of the (new) brand into the future (Forbes, 2021).

1.8 Research methodology

A qualitative methodology was primarily used for this study with quantitative secondarily to process respondent information. The reasoning behind the mixed methodology was to understand the thought processes of the merged organisation's staff and what was driving the process. The way in which the change is conceptualised internally for the consumer is what was important—how they viewed the branding before, during, and after the process had run its full course. Most importantly, the result needs to bring about positivity for the consumer, a lasting change that ensures the process has made a significant impact on the consumer.

The qualitative data gathered was invaluable in terms of understanding and answering the “why” behind the rebranding process. Qualitative data is typically based on the experiences and opinions of participants, where the feedback can be subjective but allows for the development of a theory or ideas in the long run (Nieuwenhuis, 2011:51). Typically, a one-on-one or group interview would work well for the type of information that needs to be gathered from those individuals at the merged organisation, to gain their insight into the rebranding process and the roles they played. For this qualitative information, a minimum of 20 interviews were conducted, until saturation point of obtained data is reached. The main sampling method to be used was purposive sampling (Nieuwenhuis, 2011:178).

Quantitative numerical information that was acquired from other stakeholders based at all the regional offices around the country and who contributed to the change within the organisation; at least one participant from each outlet was approached (Nieuwenhuis, 2011:145). The organisation's branch network breaks down the branches on a national scale, including the head office of the organisation, as the main sample that was used to display the population/staff members based per region and per branch around the country. This method of data collection was through the completion of the interviews allowing the researcher to extrapolate the accompanying data that was collected. The data allowed the numbers to be analysed and, in the end, corroborate the study questions that are formulated (Nieuwenhuis, 2011:145).

Other stakeholders contributing to the data would not have been the primary driving force behind the project but without their assistance, the conceptualising of the long-term result could not be possible, and their roles throughout the process of the re-organisation must, therefore, be noted. Without information from these key, and other individuals, the entire rebranding process would have presented bigger challenges than initially anticipated for the organisation.

All information gathered through interviews was processed from the relevant participants voluntarily, at their own discretion. The data analysis method to be used to analyse the

quantitative data was the 2021 version of the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) so that the data can be used efficiently. Once collected, the data was organised, relevant information printed and notes arranged accordingly. Qualitative data will be sorted, structured, coded and analysed through the AtlasTi system, as explained below by Friese (2014).

Any part of the information that will assist in its assimilation, including demographics, and regional information, must be noted and highlighted to assist in the eventual analyses. Thereafter, the data needs to be dissected, read numerous times, notes made, any patterns identified, points of interest highlighted and categorised accordingly for the way forward. Thereafter, any reoccurring factors, principles, ideologies, or other items, must be identified and exploited for the purpose of the study, and presented cohesively considering the target audience and the desired result of the study.

Finally, the data will be managed in an ethical manner to ensure the anonymity of the participants, ensuring their personal rights are not infringed on by any third parties involved in the review process.

1.9 Definition of terms

Brand equity: This refers to the marketable significance of a specific brand when looking at the positive and negative aspects, how this is quantified by the consumer, and how much money are they willing to spend for the specific product or service. If the brand changed its logo for example, what effect would this have on the product or service offered to the consumer, positive or negative, this would be brand dependent (Aaker, 1991:23).

Brand evolution: “The ongoing process of how a brand improves itself and how the organisation ensures that its customers’ view of the brand improves as well” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

Brand loyalty: A typical “response expressed repeatedly over time by an individual or an organisation towards a specific brand forming part of the decision-making process in terms of the choice that was made” (Anandan, 2009:159).

Brand promise: The promise by the organisation to deliver on what the brand stands for in the eyes of the consumer. This continues over time and is reinforced, depending on the level of interaction between the two parties as time progresses (Aaker, 2014:1).

Brand recognition: This is the “ability of the consumer to recognise a brand through tools of differentiation, including the company logo, the pay-off line or brand colours, instead of direct

exposure to the organisation's name, which internalise the brand for these consumers" (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006:323).

Consumer behaviour and trends: How consumers identify with different brands and trends based on factors such as cultural origin, ethnicities or more simple references like music or language and how organisations incorporate these influences to drive consumer behaviour in the marketplace (Noel, 2009:40-41).

Corporate merging: This typically happens when two organisations that were separate entities come together to create one new organisation. Traditionally there are "four types of mergers: horizontal, vertical, concentric and conglomerate." In this study, a horizontal merger took place (Investopedia, 2022.).

Corporate rebranding: When the organisation "transitions through a period of change from its existing brand formulation to a new brand formulation resulting in various degrees of change in all functioning and tactical spheres of the organisation" (Burke et al., 2011:281).

Global brands: Brands that, notwithstanding where they are conceptualised, marketed, and sold, "are extremely well recognised on a domestic scale, but are just as popular and recognised internationally and are shipped/available to the consumer anywhere in the world" (Minsky & Geva, 2020:9).

Home-grown brands: "Products or services that are domestically created and sold using recognisable trends and stereotypes specific to that origin country" (Davies, 2005:24-28).

Organisation identity: How the organisation's employees identify with the business, the brand, and ethos of the company, and whether they perceive themselves to be connected with the organisation (Oxford Review, 2021).

Organisational culture: This refers to an organisation's ideals and principles and how these are communicated throughout the organisation by management to employees, and how this reinforcement assists in shaping employee behaviour.

Rebranding process: The changing or updating of the organisation's image by changing the name or logo to create a new or different identity for the brand.

Car rental industry: Various automotive organisations that offer transport services through short-term vehicle renting to the public and business sectors across the globe. These organisations collectively make up the car rental industry, and they operate on a global scale, inclusive of South Africa.

Travel and tourism industries: These industries overlap significantly and are made up of people who travel for pleasure or for business purposes domestically or internationally, and through this travel use various other industry services, such as airlines for flights, hotels for temporary accommodation, travel agencies for their services, and car rental company services for transport. This is to ensure they can move freely while travelling, and these organisations contribute to the travel and tourism industries in this space specifically in South Africa (Watts & Parks, 2018:8-24).

Travel consortiums: The combining of resources for a shared goal within a specific area of operation, in this case, specifically the South African travel industry (Revfine, 2021).

1.10 Chapter layout

Chapter 1: The first chapter outlines the approach to be used to explore the research study in significant detail. The chapter includes an overview of the research problem and several key research questions to identify specific and general research objectives

Chapter 2: This chapter gives an in-depth look at the rebranding process to fully understand the challenges that arise from the process, as well as what the benefits are for the organisation. Also discussed are how these factors impact other organisations and what can be taken from the examples and used to the benefit of the Imperial Group throughout their rebranding process of two successful but very different organisations within the retail travel space in South Africa.

Chapter 3: Chapter Three focuses on the research design and methodology applied in gathering data for the study. It discusses the population, sampling, data collection instrument, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4: The chapter reviews and assimilates the data received from the questionnaires compiled and submitted to the subject pool.

Chapter 5: Chapter 5 summarises the research study and provides an overview of each chapter of the dissertation. The key findings and recommendations are presented. This chapter concludes the study and makes recommendations for further research.

1.11 Chapter summary

The chapter started by looking at the beginnings of the Imperial Group, specifically how the car rental division started in 1979 with Carol Scott, Maureen Jackson, and Dawn Jones. From their humble beginnings and “can do” attitude that was the inspiration for what is known now as Europcar South Africa. Landing their first fixed airport kiosk location in 1983 at Cape Town International, listing on the JSE in 1987, and becoming an extraordinarily successful home-

grown South African company, with Dawn Jones taking over as CEO in 2000. Imperial continued to operate very successfully for several years but eventually started looking forward to how the brand could be grown further from a global perspective. In 2008 the company decided to merge with then franchise partner Europcar already having a successful global footprint. This merge saw an impressive 2010 Soccer World Cup go-ahead with record rental numbers, once again reinforcing the decision by the Imperial Group to merge the two brands. In 2019 Europcar left the Imperial Group in terms of their unbundling plan and started to operate solely under the Motus Holdings group as the primary car rental brand, along with the low-cost option Tempest Car Hire. This saw the Europcar brand solidify further, its presence in South Africa by 2020 holding 32% of the domestic car rental market.

When looking at the research problem, and what drives this merger behaviour, an overview of both organisations had to be considered; what these companies had in common was used as a middle ground to begin the merger process. Once the internal factors were considered, the external factors had to be considered, especially typical rebranding issues that are common when undergoing such a process, such as the view of the customer throughout the process and what their reaction would be, as well as how the change would affect the competition in the market.

The aim and significance of this study are simplistic in that its purpose is to ensure a path to success is documented for other organisations to follow that are in the same environment, as mergers typically do not occur within the retail travel space in South Africa. The objectives and questions to the research align typically in that the method used is understood and the behaviour driving the action is also understood to ensure the desired result is achieved. Various sources are considered when it comes to looking at achieving a competitive advantage, and these are discussed in the literature review. How the strategies are conceptualised and leveraged against the competitors is important at this point. The thought process of the consumer is of the utmost importance and based on this perception, the research methodology being qualitative in nature.

Chapter 2 investigates the rebranding process to fully understand the challenges that arise from the process. The chapter also discusses what are the benefits for the organisation, how these factors impact other organisations, and what can be taken from these examples and utilised to the benefit of the Imperial Group throughout their rebranding process of two remarkably successful but vastly different organisations within the retail travel space in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focusses on the tourism sector in South Africa and how tourism is an extremely important cog within the South African economy; year-on-year the number of tourists arriving in SA increases, what is important to note was how these tourists arrived in the country and what means of transport was utilised throughout the visit to South Africa. This plays an important part in job creation within the country. From 2005 to 2020, the travel and tourism industry, on average, contributed 8% to South Africa's GDP annually (Statista, 2022a).

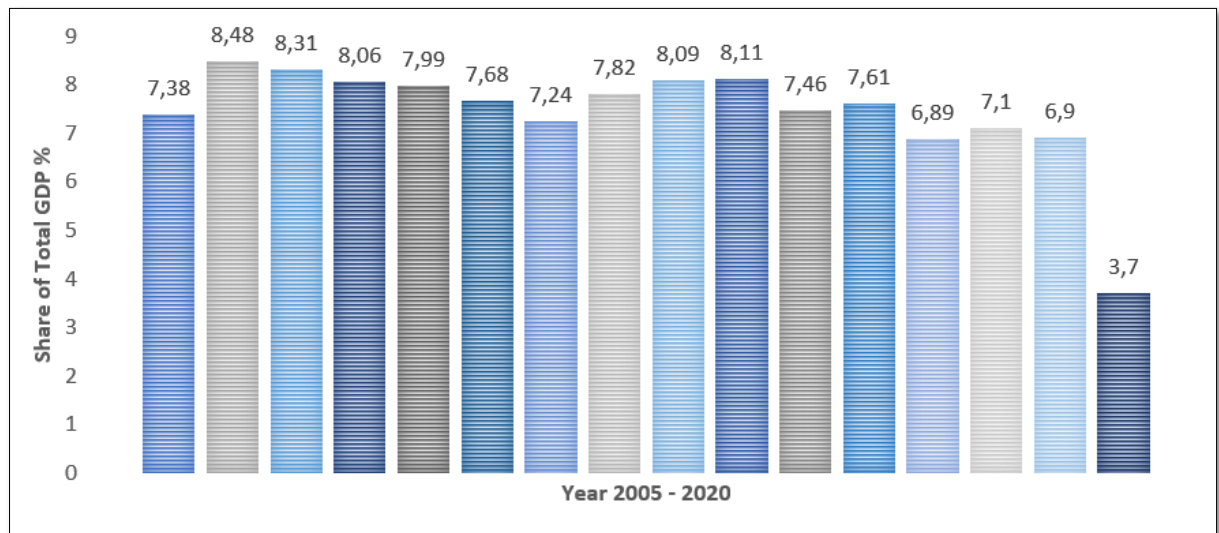


Figure 2.1: Travel and tourism GDP contribution in South Africa 2005-2020

Source: Statista (2022a)

Considering the tourism statistics over the past 20 years, there has been an average increase of around 35% for every decade from 1998 to 2020 in terms of tourism on a global scale. More importantly, for the South African market, there has been a slightly higher increase than the global average of 38% per decade.

The travel industry is the combined servicing or services that have any bearing on assisting the traveller in moving from one place to another by varying modes of transport (IGI Global, 2022). Once the traveller has arrived, information on where they stay in terms of accommodation in the desired location, and any other services that cater to their needs, is required. Globally and within South Africa, the travel industry offers varying modes of

transportation for the discerning tourist, ranging from air travel, ground travel, water travel and rail travel.

International tourism, in particular, plays a pivotal role in generating revenue in South Africa. Between 2015 and 2019 (just before the global COVID pandemic) an estimated \$47 billion was generated solely from tourism in South Africa. In 2020, this figure reduced drastically to only \$2.7 billion due to the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020). The 2021/2022 figures were expected to show an increase of around 17%—33% by 2023 and 50% by 2024 due to the increased administration of vaccines in first-world countries and important tourist destinations opening up (UNWTO, 2022d).

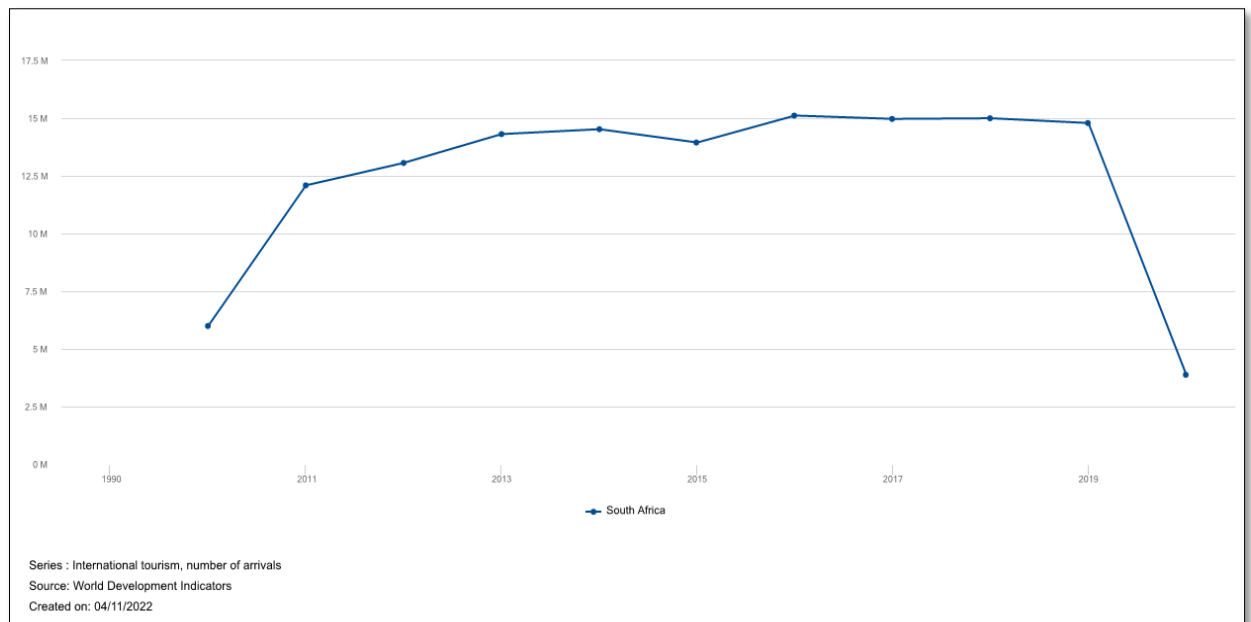


Figure 2.2: Tourist arrivals 2004-2021 South Africa

Source: World Bank (2022)

2.2 Tourism in South Africa

Road transport in South Africa, and specifically on the car-hire industry in this country. Therefore, while some tourist attractions will be referred to, this is in the context of travel in and around South Africa. Adventure tourism assisted these numbers by offering undeniable attractions for tourists in each province, from the Garden Route to extreme sports, along with picturesque beaches and wine country. The business traveller was always well accustomed to South Africa, adding around 15 million international arrivals by 2020 (World Bank, 2020).

According to annual tourism statistics available in the State of Tourism Reports from the South African government, an estimated annual average of 5.5% was contributed to the country's GDP (WTTC, 2021:2). In 2010, 0.4% was added to the country's economic growth as a direct result of the FIFA Soccer World Cup in terms of jobs created and tourists visiting that year, all while the rest of the world was in the middle of an economic recession (Mail & Guardian, 2015).



Figure 2.3: Aerial view of the 2010 FIFA stadium in Cape Town built for the World Cup

Source: Westend 61 (2008) (royalty free image)

Direct and indirect employment opportunities were plentiful and various meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibition events saw delegates from various countries, including the USA, UK, Turkey, Nigeria, India, and Australia visiting South Africa for business and leisure, which resulted in a need for ground, air, rail and even sea transport (South Africa, 2016:14, 23).

Figure 2.4 below is an annual representation, between 2005 and 2018, illustrating almost two decades' worth of how and where visitors in South Africa would spend their vacation monies. The largest portions of transport spend are directed towards road and air transport as visitors need to be mobile, whether the reasoning for travel is business or leisure related, South Africa's infrastructure in terms of public transport is somewhat restricted in urban areas and sadly lacking in the rural regions (Rough Guides, 2021).

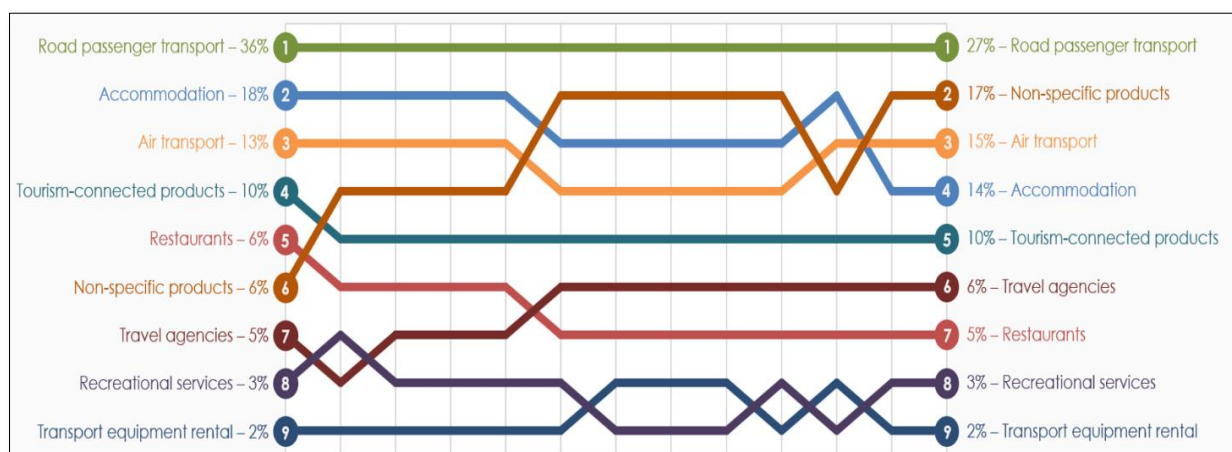


Figure 2.4: How visitors spend money while travelling

Source: StatsSA (2019)

Accommodation is another big contributor to SAs GDP as it is a necessity for any tourist coming to SA to have a roof over their head. Spending is typically based on the traveller's budget, which determines the length of time the traveller spends in the country to enjoy what South Africa has to offer (Academia, 1995).

Tourism-connected products, restaurants, travel agents and recreational services, also known as hospitality products, are essential for international tourists and locals. The existence of these hospitality products is made possible only by significant investments in the private sector (Tutorials Point, 2020).

Regional tourism within South Africa always attracts large numbers of tourists for a variety of reasons, ranging from the cuisine to excellent wines offered in Durbanville, Franschhoek, Stellenbosch and Constantia. This attraction of tourists relates to real opportunities for employment year-on-year, and between 2014 and 2020 the tourism industry contributed to direct employment opportunities by an average of 10% annually (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2021:3, 6-9).

Tourism, especially within the Western Cape, contributed R15 billion to the local economy in 2019 and a significantly reduced figure that marginally topped the R6 billion mark in 2020, due to the COVID pandemic (IOL, 2021), which is still significant by any standard. Tourism and tourism-associated activities for the country on a national scale were solely responsible for

generating 773 533 employment opportunities in the formal sector in 2019 alone (StatsSA, 2021).

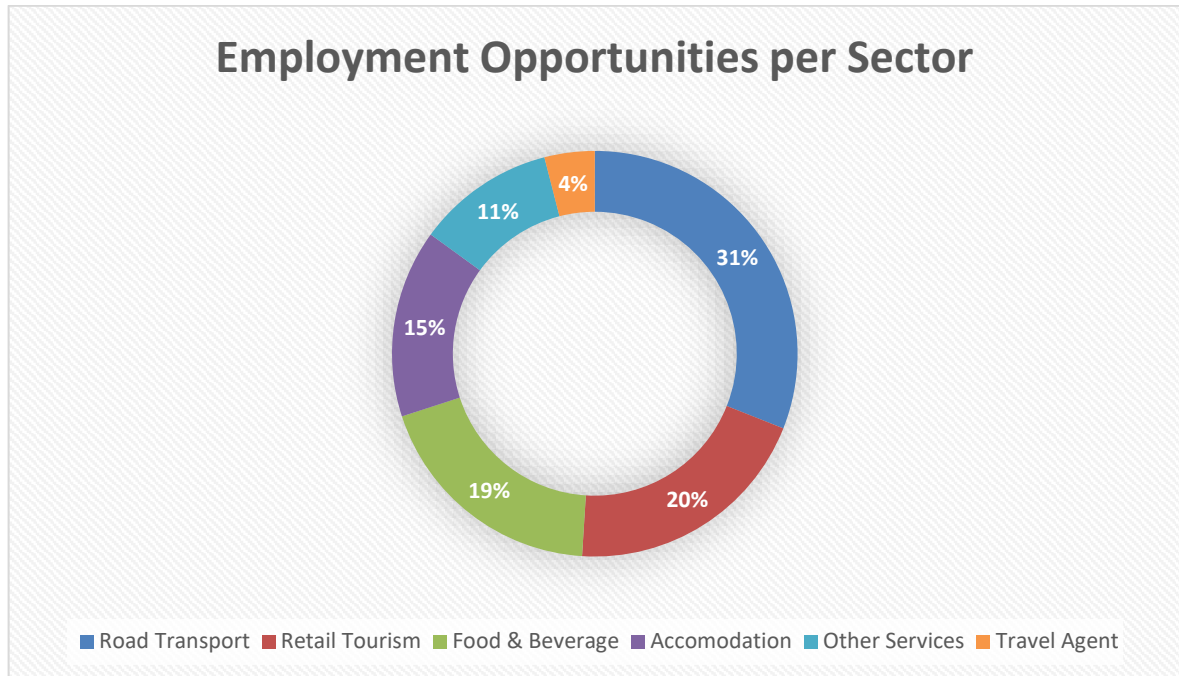


Figure 2.5: Employment opportunities per tourism sector

Source: StatsSA (2018)

Of these employment opportunities, the biggest contributor was the road transport sector at 31%, followed by retail tourism at 20%. When looking at regional contributions, Gauteng and the Western Cape made up the highest contributions with over 70% of tourism arrivals in South Africa in 2019 (StatsSA, 2020:4-17).

On offer in the Western Cape, and a true tourist attraction in the province is the well-established Victoria and Alfred (V&A) Waterfront. The Waterfront offers a variety of attractions for the discerning traveller, from famous brand name stores such as Louis Vuitton to various art and craft markets, trips to Robben Island, live music, the Cape Town stadium, and various options for the appreciative food-lover (V&A Waterfront, 2022). The Waterfront makes a substantial contribution to South African tourism annually. Leading up to 2018, the Waterfront had been in existence for just over 14 years and in this time had contributed R335 billion to Cape Town and the country's economy, along with an estimated 21 000 jobs created (V&A Waterfront, 2018:2).

The adventurous traveller can venture from the Waterfront to the heart of the City Bowl and visit other tourist attractions such as the Bo-Kaap, the Company Gardens, the Castle of Good Hope, the District Six museum, and the Iziko National Art Gallery situated in the “Company Gardens.” All this is en route to Table Mountain, part of the Table Mountain National Park within the Western Cape, which at the end of the 2020 financial year contributed over R370 million worth of revenue through accommodation, permits, the cableway concession, “My Green Activity Card”, to Cape Point, and fees associated with movie filming and rental incomes received (South Africa, 2021:1-3).

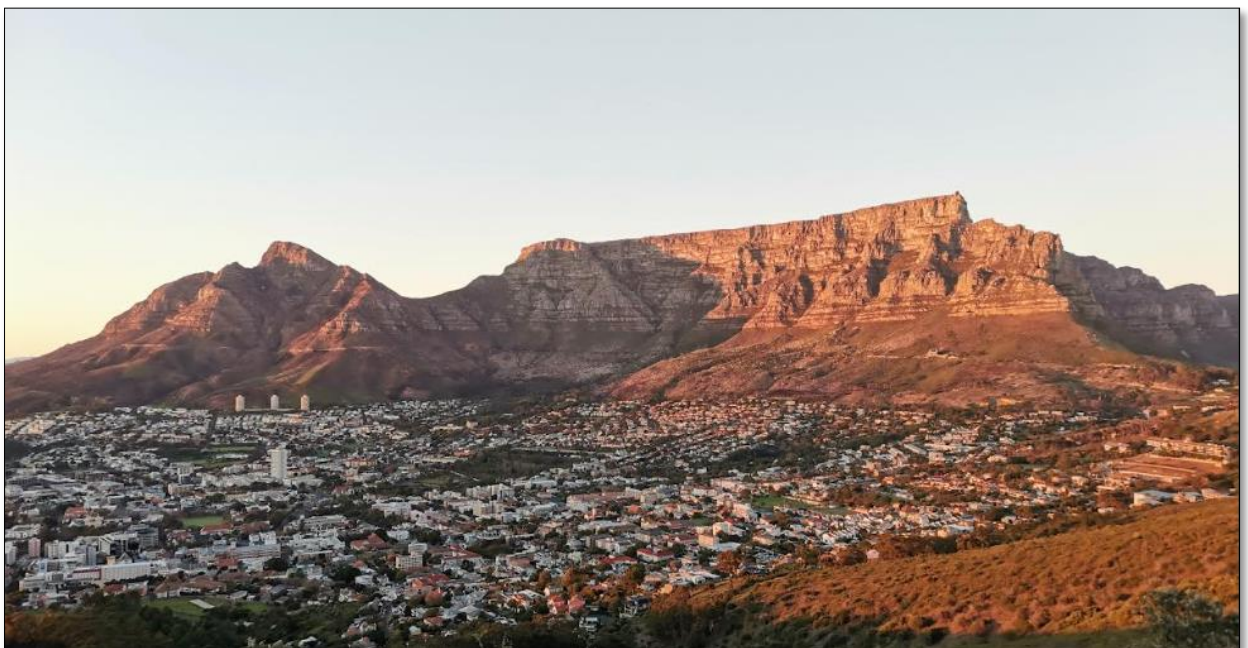


Figure 2.6: Table Mountain

Source: Researcher's image

Table Mountain is appropriately named due to its relatively “flat top” that resembles a kitchen table and today has an estimated 350 trails that lead to its top. The highest point on Table Mountain is Maclears Beacon, was so named after doctor and astronomer Sir Thomas Maclear. Maclear was a Fellow of the Royal Society of astronomers and served her Majesty (Queen Victoria) as director of the Royal Observatory at the Cape of Good Hope until 1870. Maclears Beacon is a popular tourist attraction and private guided tours are available for visitors to the national park (AWOL Tours, 2010). To comprehend the magnitude, Maclear constructed the sizeable cairn on the mountain in 1865 to assist in assessing the curvature of

the earth. Maclear was eventually knighted in 1860 for his many achievements in the field of astronomy and in 1870, passed away in Mowbray, Cape Town (Cape Town Etc., 2020).

From the Western Cape travellers can make their way along the Garden Route to the Eastern Cape where they can take in a variety of tourist attractions, including a safari through the Addo Elephant Park near Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha), scooter- as well as quad-biking tours through the Tsitsikamma National Park, or spend a few days touring the Central Wild Coast. Pretoria in Gauteng province is still considered the business capital of South Africa and is the country's administrative capital. Tourists can do day tours to Soweto and Johannesburg city, go on safari to the Kruger National Park, do hot-air balloon rides, or take a tour through the Pilanesburg Nature Reserve. Situated in the Gauteng province is the OR Tambo International Airport, the busiest airport in Africa, where an estimated 19 million passengers, pass through annually (Gauteng Tourism, 2022).

2.3 Tourism during the COVID-pandemic

From 2020 to 2022 there was a considerable change in local and international tourism due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism numbers were significantly down and overall traveller numbers entering SA were down by 71%, when comparing 2019 tourist arrivals with 2020. The spread of the pandemic and the frustration caused by the vaccination process was enough to ensure traveller numbers would be reduced. The refusal by many to be vaccinated, and most importantly, the closing of international borders and grounding of airlines in some circumstances, contributed to the reduction in tourism numbers. In most first-world countries this process took effect but in other countries, specifically third-world or developing countries, including South Africa, the pandemic hit home significantly (StatsSA, 2020:3).

According to UNWTO, international tourism arrivals were down 87% in January 2021 compared to January 2020 (UNWTO, 2022d). An estimated one billion fewer international arrivals were recorded as the worst year in global tourism ever (Statista, 2022b). This decrease was due to the travel restrictions implemented to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Airlines had been grounded, most travel stopped, and many countries closed their borders and prohibited any travellers from entering at all for extended periods of time.

Some parts of Europe are starting to turn things around with sizeable portions of the population already vaccinated. The same can be said for the US where (in early 2022) people are starting to get back to normal life after being vaccinated.

Unfortunately, South Africa showed some resistance as well as initial access challenges to the vaccination. UNWTO (2022d) predicted that the tourism world would start getting back to normal globally by the start of 2022, as shown in the Figure 2.7 projection below.

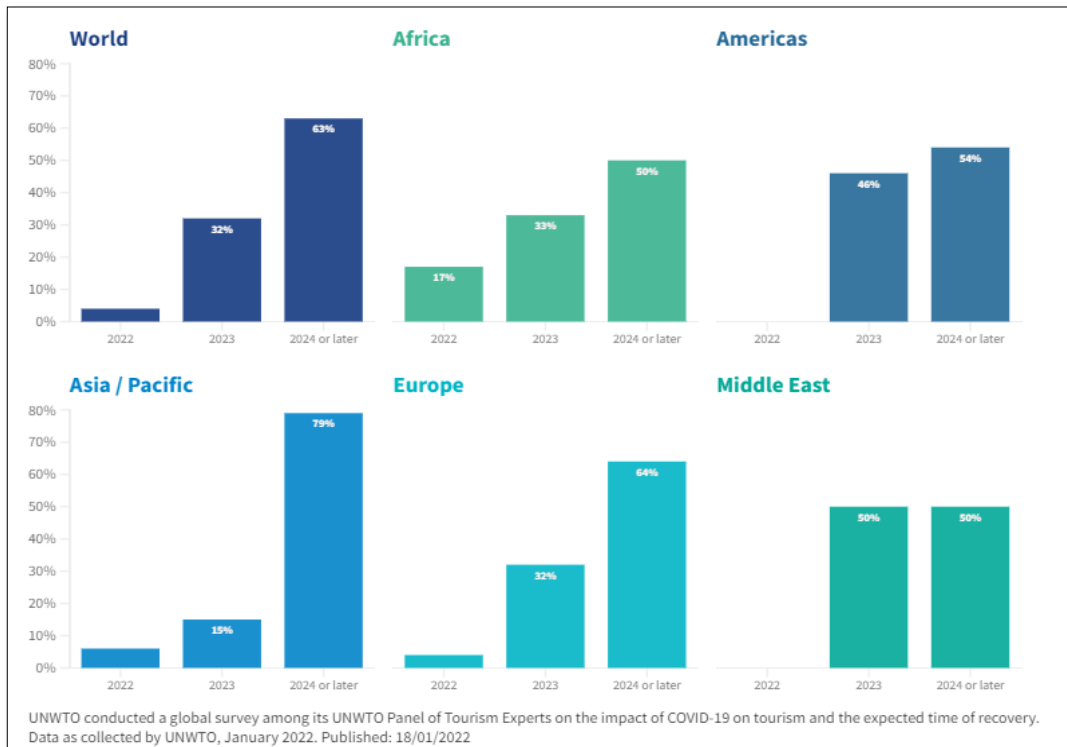


Figure 2.7: COVID-19 Impact on Tourism (Projected recovery timeline)

Source: UNWTO (2022d)

The recovery in 2022 has unfortunately been slower than anticipated with figures still under 20%: A panel of tourism experts at the UNWTO, as well as 61% of industry professionals, project further recovery throughout 2022; up to the 4th quarter of the year. Industry experts continue to debate when the pre-COVID tourism levels experienced in 2019 would be achieved again globally (UNWTO, 2022d).

This is important because the tourism industry has been affected drastically by the pandemic, especially industries that rely heavily on tourism to boost economies. Prior to the COVID pandemic, tourism accounted for 10% of the global economy, 4.4% of GDP for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries such as South Africa, and 10% of employment in some countries (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020). By 2023, the tourism industry should recover considerably, allowing South Africa to restore some consistency in terms of tourism development and employment. At least 43% of the experts questioned agree that these levels of tourism will only be achieved again in 2023, while another 41% of experts suggest 2024 or even later, according to the UNWTO Confidence Index (UNWTO, 2022d).

Figure 2.8 below shows the decline in global tourism arrivals per country in 2020 (COVID-19) versus arrivals in 2019. Despite these dismal statistics, there are still a variety of travel-worthy reasons to visit South Africa post-COVID-19. South Africa is, by most accounts, very affordable for the international traveller.

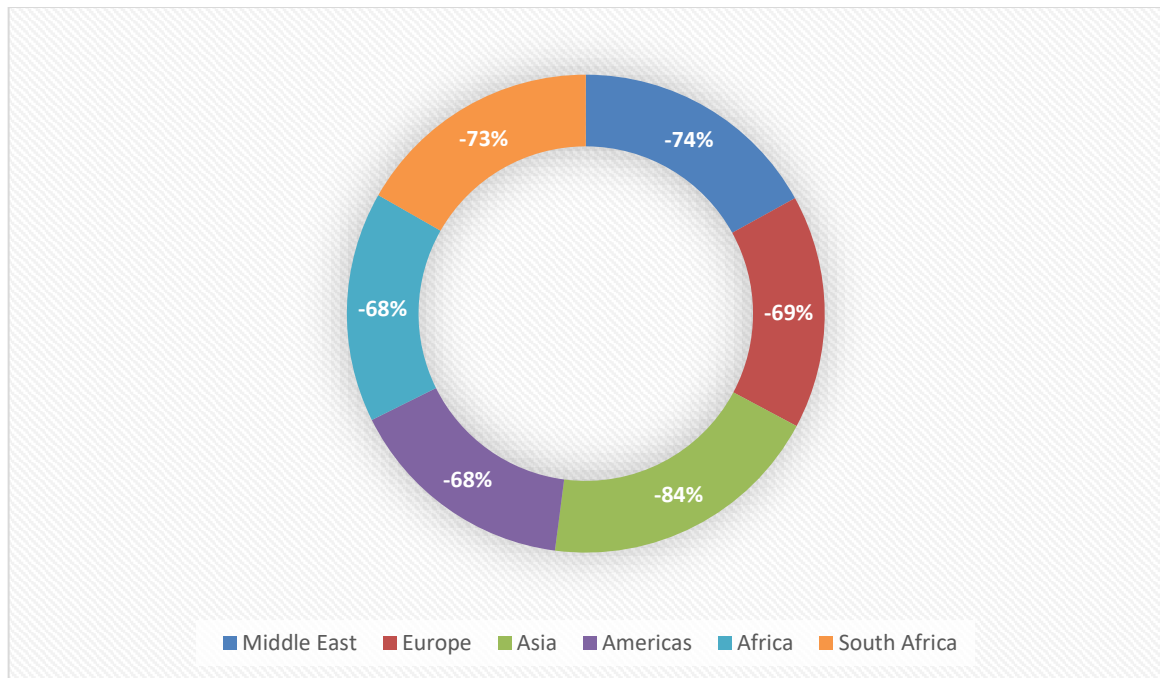


Figure 2.8: Global tourism arrival statistics, 2020 vs 2019

Source: UNWTO (2022a)

To travel in luxury is quite achievable and there is still money left over to go on a shopping spree or two. It is also understood that South Africa is exceptionally beautiful and that many options for the international traveller in terms of being away from home are available for a conservative amount of funding, depending on the exchange rates. With all the attractions available, it makes for a melting pot of South African cultures and history to experience, from a trip to Robben Island to see where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, to travelling along the Garden Route, to visit a neighbouring province.

The weather is typically always good in South Africa; on average for the year, Cape Town typically is around the 18° Celsius mark (Climates To Travel, 2022), and there are a variety of transport options to assist the international and local traveller in getting around Cape Town and the country. A visitor can travel very easily from one South African city to the next and really take in what the country has to offer in terms of wildlife, heritage, and adventure.

2.4 Travelling in South Africa: air, road, and sea

Figure 2.9 below reflects that in 2019 there were 1.4 billion tourist arrivals globally, Europe receiving the largest portion and Africa contributing 68 million, according to UNWTO global performing tourism data (UNWTO, 2022a).

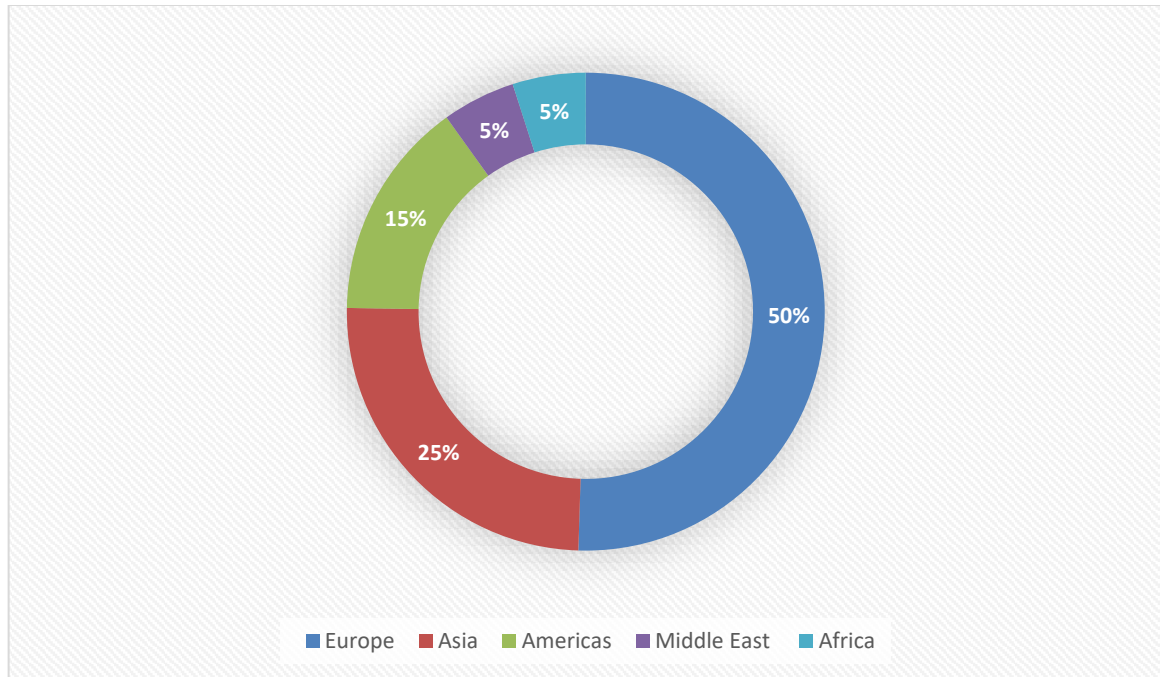


Figure 2.9: International tourist arrivals 2019

Source: UNWTO (2022a)

This is not a significant increase on the 2018 data, which had an estimated 7 million tourist entries. The average growth for Africa year-on-year is estimated to be 4.2% over the last 10 years. This equates to 5% of tourists for the world, with the biggest percentage arriving in Europe at 51%, and the rest of the world as can be seen in the pie chart (Figure 2.9) taken from the World Tourism Organisation website (UNWTO, 2022a). In 2018, when looking at sub-Saharan Africa and specifically South Africa, 16.4 million tourists arrived for leisure, health, and religion-related visits, of which 430 000 arrived from the UK alone (Statista, 2021). The biggest mode of transportation in 2018 was air travel. Figure 2.10 below shows the split between each mode of transport, while Figure 2.11 shows the breakdown for 2013, five years previously, revealing that over the years the change in preferred mode of transport for travellers was minimal. Car hire remains the second preferred mode of transport for all business

travellers, 53% in South Africa in 2018, amounting to R5.2 billion (Business Traveller Africa, 2019).

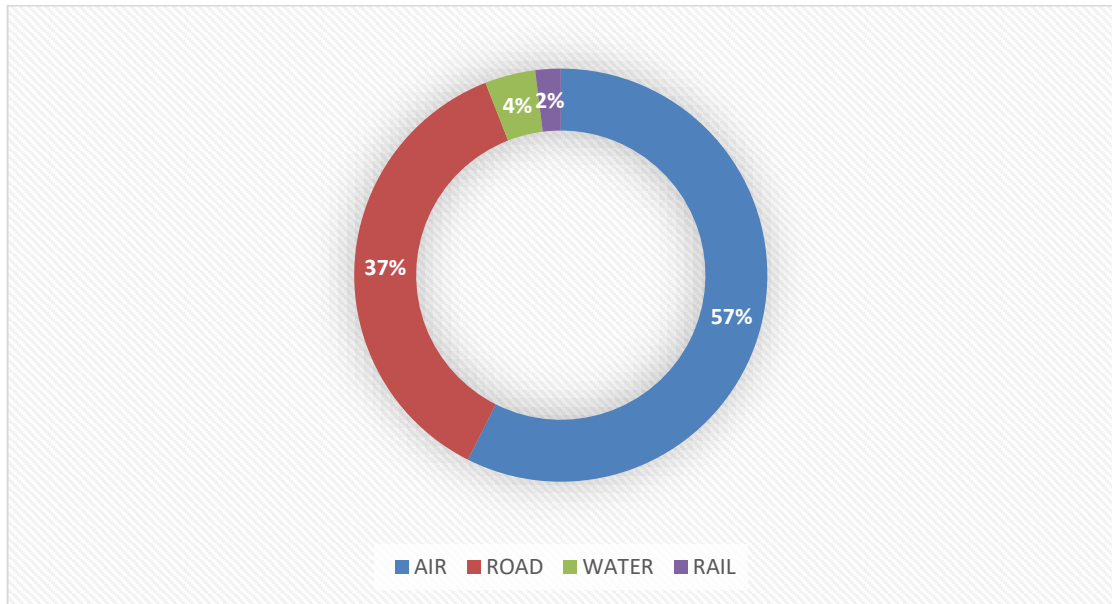


Figure 2.10: South African modes of transport 2018

Source: UNWTO (2022a)

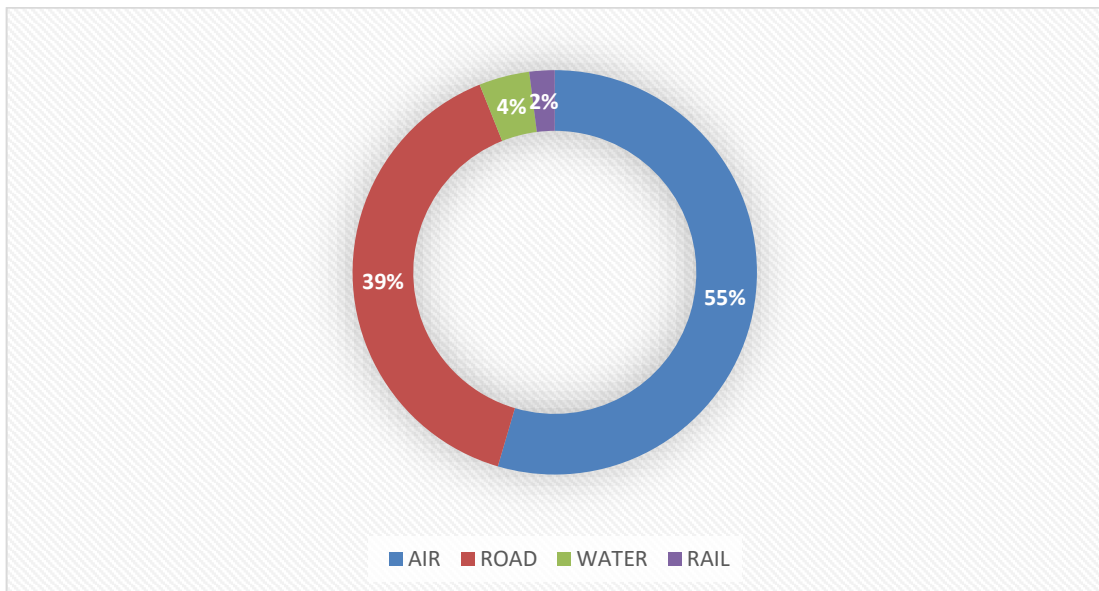


Figure 2.11: South African modes of transport 2013

Source: UNWTO (2022a)

As seen in Figure 2.11, the travel mode in SA has had a minimal change over the past five years, suggesting consumer confidence in the various modes of transport available. This also

suggests that there is a connection to a specific brand, brand loyalty is evident (Chovanova et al., 2015:618).

Figure 2.11 above displays information on South Africa in terms of the preferred modes of transport of tourists in 2013. The results only differ marginally when compared to the rest of the continent, as shown in Figure 2.12, with air and road modes of transport still holding the controlling percentage.

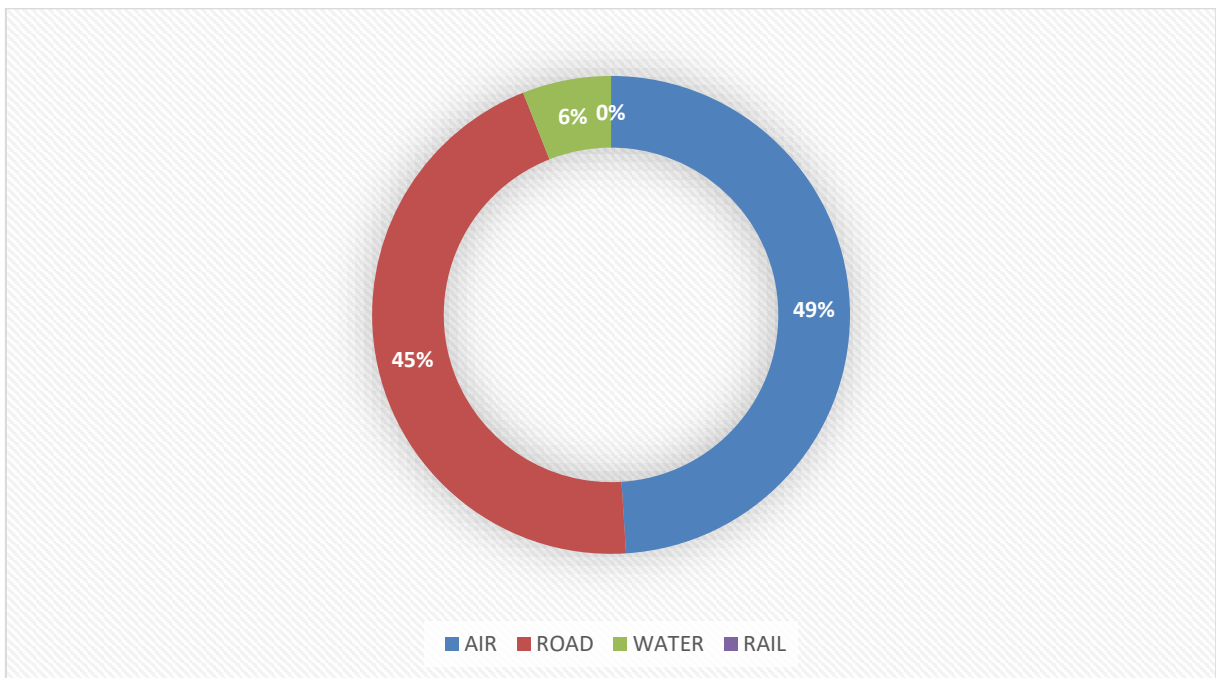


Figure 2.12: Sub-Saharan modes of transport

Source: UNWTO (2022a)

Travel by rail in Africa is not common for the tourist industry, as Figure 2.12 demonstrates. There are, however, a variety of options available such as the Madaraka Express in Kenya, and various mainline options in South Africa, such as the Blue Train for discerning travellers (Kenya Railways, 2022), and the Royal Livingstone Express in Zambia (Visit Victoria Falls, 2022), but other travel forms seem to dominate.

2.5 Travel modes

Air travel remains the transport mode of choice for most international tourists around the world and especially in South Africa. Important to note though is that other travel modes were also

discussed / noted because tourists require these various forms of transport to get to the final destination.

Note: Persons crossing South Africa's borders legally or illegally for purposes other than vacations or business are not considered in the study, although all trans-border crossings are included in the tourism-arrival data.

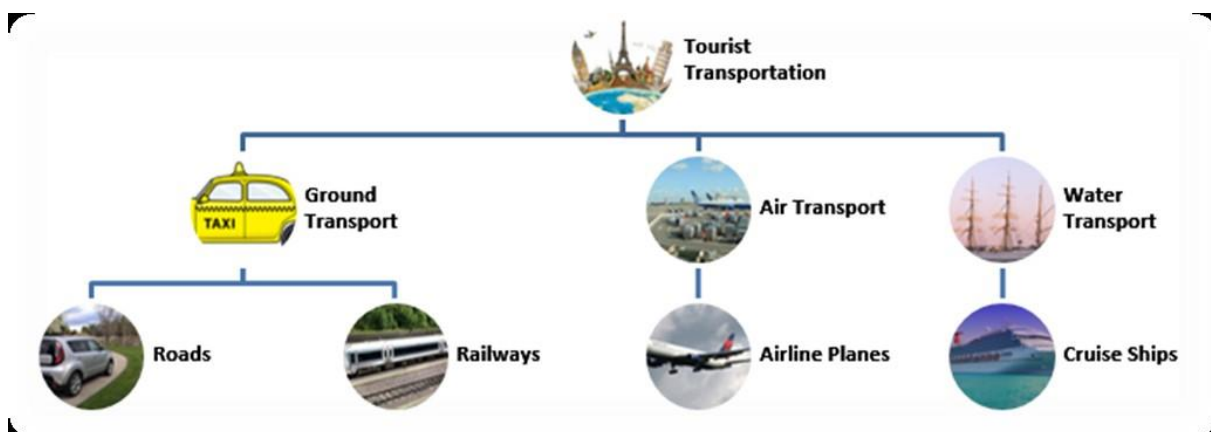


Figure 2.13: Popular and preferred modes of transport for tourists

Source: Tourism Notes (2022)

Typically, most visitors to South Africa, including the business traveller (53% of car-rental-sales) would use car rentals as their primary method of transport in South Africa. In 2017, the car rental industry grew by an estimated 4%, equating to an industry revenue total of just over R5 billion as noted in the historical reports in Who Owns Whom (2020). However, Travel and Tourism in general only grew by 7% in 2018 (South Africa, 2018:10) and in 2019 the Coronavirus pandemic sent South Africa and most of the tourism world into lockdown early in 2020 (South Africa, 2020:1), when travel and tourism were deemed as non-essential, resulting in record cancellations of all modes of transport.

2.5.1 The airline industry

Travelling by air is the most popular form of travel for any tourist and this is true for the South African tourist. Statistics over the past 20 years (2000 to 2020) from the World Bank indicate that the average number of tourists travelling by air globally almost doubled from 1.9 million (2000-2009) to 3.5 million (2010-2019) travellers per annum (World Bank, 2020), compared to road and rail transport statistics over the same periods.

With this form of transportation becoming more accessible to the mainstream traveller, the world has become smaller. The airline industry has shown significant growth over recent years,

as noted above from 2000 to 2019. In 2020 the global travel figures dropped to the figures of early 2000 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while airplanes are being built bigger so they can carry more passengers, and travel faster, allowing for the physical distance of a place to be quantified in time taken to travel there. Given below is a milestone timeline discussion for the Airbus organisation over the past 20 years. In the late 1990's, the Airbus A330 and A340 had their first commercial flights seating around 400 passengers for all economy seating layouts (Airbus, 2022).

The A380 had its first flight in 2005 carrying 545 passengers across two flight decks, making it the largest commercial aircraft flying, with up to 75% more seating than Boeings 747-400, and 60% more than the 747-8 in a 4-class seating-layout configuration (Airbus, 2021:1-4).

From 2013 to 2017, Airbus made the A350XWB, A320Neo and A330Neo that all managed significant advancements in fuel savings (up to 25%), using drastically more advanced building materials/engines (up to 70% cost reductions), and significant reductions in CO₂ emissions (Global Security, 2016).

The airline industry grew significantly over the following decades: the Boeing 707 jetliner made its first flight on 20 December 1957 and started commercial service in October 1958 when it flew from New York to Paris in 8 hours and 41 minutes, stopping only once to refuel in Newfoundland, Canada. This saw large carriers transporting travellers anywhere in the world, where various creature-comforts had been adopted ranging from internet access, in-flight entertainment, significant upgrades in comfort and sleeping accommodation for passengers who could afford it (The Travel, 2018).

A total of 1 010 Boeing 707 planes were constructed successively and successfully until 1991 (Britannica, 2022a), resulting in the company being accredited for inaugurating the jet age of commercial air travel. This contribution to the airline era made Boeing an industry giant at the forefront of profitable travel, paving the way for other airlines, including Airbus, that eventually surpassed Boeing as the number one airline in 2019 in terms of annual revenue, due to the horrific airline crashes of the Boeing 737 Max, in which a total of 346 people died—189 people in October 2018 on Lion Air flight 610, and 157 people on Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 in March 2019 (Perell, 2022).

Currently (2022), post-2021 and the 737 Max airliners' fatal crashes, commercial airline travel still shows interesting areas of growth in areas of safety, engineering, manufacturing, and airplane engines resulting in reductions in CO₂ gasses, and accessibility to more frequent airline travel (The Travel, 2018). This resilience of airlines is based on the ever-changing world of travel and travellers requirements that continue to change with time. Due to these traveller

requirements always changing, there have been significant developments in the airline space, including new carriers jostling for the limited available travellers, resulting in reduced airfare costs, and increases in air traffic over the years (Airline Ratings, 2019).

There are only two types of airline travel: chartered flights, which tend to operate more frequently over busy tourist seasons based on the demand for such flights, and scheduled flights, which are typically the costlier form of airline travel that operate according to a specific predetermined schedule.

Airline travel is regulated by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and currently (in 2021) has around 292 members (IATA, 2022) in its associations, which are made up of the world's major airlines. Ticket prices are dependent on several factors such as base fares, volumes in the relevant areas of travel, fuel and other service surcharges, taxes, airport fees, and baggage-handling costs, based on the relevant airline in question (Flightfox, 2013).

Over the last 10 years, when looking at Cape Town airport as an example year-on-year 2012 to 2019, 1.83 million international passengers and 7.7 million domestic travellers utilised air transport; when looking at and comparing to historical data over the same period, this equates to at least 75% of travellers linking their airline travel to road (car hire) travel (Airports Company South Africa [ACSA], 2022).

2.5.2 Road transportation

When discussing road transport, the primary form would be travelling by car. The car rental industry is a fundamental cog in the ground transport segment purely based on the level of flexibility that is available to the traveller when choosing this route (StatsSA, 2021).

The traveller can plan their day accordingly to their own leisure schedule, instead of working around other forms of transport and the schedules that are attached to these forms. Bus- and coach charter services are also available in this segment but are more geared for the domestic regional traveller. Annually, ground transportation is the second largest, most popular form of transport for the local and international traveller making up 38% of the global travelling population. Road transport is the most usual form used by tourists: 68% of South African resident-tourists (353 692) travelling domestically while international travellers made up 82% (159 833) in 2021. Of the 82% international travellers, comprising mainly Europeans, the majority utilised car rental as a means of transport (StatsSA, 2021).

The car rental industry is typically divided into 4-5 channels or segments and is hire-company dependent. The usual split when comparing the different car hire brands is the corporate

channel, leisure channel, replacement (insurance) channel, and the film industry (Research and Markets, 2021).

On average, over the last five years between 2017 and 2021, car rental companies in South Africa generated roughly R4.8 billion in revenue per annum. This average figure is skewed slightly due to COVID-19, and travel restrictions put in place saw revenue drop from R5.8 billion to R3.3 billion (-43%) in 2020 and a marginal increase of 15% in 2021 to R3.8 billion. Rental days dropped from 17 million in 2020 to 10.7 million in 2021 and the average fleet size showed exceptional declines from 67 153 in 2017 to 39 691 in 2021, with utilisation remaining flat at 70% and the rental fleet showing significant shrinkage of up to -28% by 2021(SAVRALA, 2015).

There are many car hire companies in South Africa, of which the top five in 2019 (market share estimates) are Avis (27%), Europcar/Tempest, shared holding (24%), Hertz (18%), Thrifty (15%) and the balance made up of smaller car hire companies. See Figure 2.14 below.



Figure 2.14: Leading car hire companies in South Africa

Source: ACRISS, 2022

2.5.3 Water transportation

Any sort of transport that assists travellers in moving across the water would fall into this category. While this mode of transport is limited to some degree and has its drawbacks, such as in time taken to travel, the traveller would make the conscious decision to opt for this transport which has positive aspects, including being sociable, peaceful, and ideal for travelling with the whole family. According to Wesgro, 52 580 passengers reached South African shores via cruise ships in the 2018-2019 season prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Wesgro, 2021).

Travelling via water on cruise ships certainly does carry some sort of appeal but is not as popular as air travel and annually makes up only 5% of the global travelling population (UNWTO, 2022b).

Water travel in South Africa accounted for minimal spend when looking at the other bigger contributors, for example, if compiling revenue gained from 2014 to 2018 (five years), this

segment of travel only contributed around R38 million to the revenue stream for travel and tourism. When linking to other forms of transport, tourists would typically use car rental to travel to the ports where water transportation would embark from, that is, cruise ship services, scheduled and non-scheduled passenger transport services, sightseeing excursions, ferries, and rental services by tourists (StatsSA, 2020).

2.5.4 Travelling by rail

This is another form of transport for the international and local traveller alike, but it is dependent on what is offered in the relevant country one is travelling in or to. Typically, this form of transport is more popular for domestic travel in, rather than international travel to, South Africa. Travelling on preserved heritage trains is exceedingly popular in the UK and Australia, and to a small extent in some regions of South Africa, especially in the Western Cape, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal.

Purely based on plausibility per country or region, and typically what the traveller would do, is use this form of transport when travelling around large cities and countries where accessibility, is not a problem. Travelling in Europe, for example, is cost-effective, safe, dependable, and viable. Travelling by rail annually makes up an average of just under 2% of the global travelling population between 2008 and 2018 (UNWTO, 2022b).

Rail is a fantastic way to get around South Africa for the international traveller, although the only challenge, at times, is that it is not always the most cost-effective option for the domestic traveller. Safe, reliable transport by rail is not very cost-effective in South Africa. For example, the Blue Train (The Blue Train, 2020) and Rovos Rail (Rovos Rail, 2022) range from R25 855 to R60 465, depending on season (high/low dates of travel) and number of passengers per trip.

Routes are fixed, so travel to and from each station's location would still warrant the use of a rental car for international tourists and the domestic traveller, circumstances depending (seat61, 2022). South African Railways (S.A.R.) was established around 1910 using the steam engine as the primary source of power until 1936 when S.A.R. converted to electrification. Diesel-electric trains were later introduced in 1958 built by General Electric (who still manufacture trains today) resulting in the steam locomotive being phased out after 1990 and S.A.R. going through name changes settling on Transnet which today is a state-owned company (SOC) in South Africa (The Heritage Portal, 2021).

2.6 The future of transportation

Currently, in 2021/2022, space transport is something that is not attainable by everyone, based on the cost involved but it is certainly a form of transport that is being discussed in depth in the 21st century. Billionaires like Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson have already been responsible for the first commercial space flight in 2021 and Tesla/SpaceX owner billionaire, Elon Musk, predicts a 2029 crewed mission to Mars (Space, 2022).

2.6.1 Domestic and international car rental industry, how important is car rental?

Ground transport is the second most important form of transport locally and internationally, after air travel for tourists, with an average usage statistic of around 40% between 2008 to 2018 (UNWTO, 2022b), and typically consumes a considerable portion of the travel budget, with up to 30% of the budget typically being spent on road transport, while accommodation can account for at least 14%, and meals and various other recreational services account for 5% or less (StatsSA, 2020). Transport today is certainly a significant cog in the travel wheel that allows tourists to venture off at their own discretion for several reasons, ranging from health, visiting family, and curiosity to the need to explore.

Modes of transportation have come a long way since the horse and cart and travelling by ship on the open seas (Britannica, 2022b), for reasons then aligned with trade, exploration, and survival. Eventually, the first motor wagon platform was created by Karl Benz in 1886 and the first mass-production motor car was the Model T by Henry Ford in 1908.

The future of the car-hire industry looks quite different: in 2022 organisations such as Tesla and Google are already investing time, resources, and funding into the production of autonomous (self-driving) vehicles (AV). An autonomous vehicle would be driverless with the ability to drive itself, managing external factors through complex systems that typically humans would manage (TWI, 2022).

While AVs are still a while off, many companies are again spending time and resources investing in automotive applications. Automotive apps will have significant car rental applications in that a greater variety of choices will be made available to the customer in terms of their preference and budget (Gulf Business, 2022).

Commercial airplanes were introduced to the world around the mid-1950s after the Second World War when excess military craft were converted to passenger use, which revolutionised the travel industry. People were able to travel more frequently at their leisure as these modes of transport became more accessible to the masses (Industry Today, 2019).

When mass travel began, certainly after the Second World War when leisure time became a reality and WW2 planes and lorries became available for transport, it is important to understand that destinations to which people travel needed to have a few factors in place to encourage this type of travel.

These destinations needed to be accessible by one of the various major forms of transport from air, ground, and sea and most importantly, these forms of transport needed to be safe for the traveller to access and use.

2.7 Branding

Branding is defined as “the marketing process by which a company, product, or service acquires a distinctive identity in the minds of consumers becoming associated with particular values, lifestyles, and meanings” (Oxford Dictionary, 2011). Another definition of branding is “The marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products. When looking at the competitive landscape, how an organisation is branded is what ultimately sets an organisation aside (or not) from the competition. The organisation brand communicates the organisation’s promise to the customer, the commitment to service excellence, and the willingness to go beyond the customers’ expectations in terms of the products or services the organisation offers (Entrepreneur, 2022).

The function of a brand can be broken down into three critical components and each concept is unique (Fill, 2013: 20). These concepts are as follows:

- **Direction:** brands compel consumers to make a much-needed choice, a choice between offers that exist, prompting the consumer to choose one brand over the other.
- **Participation:** brands use everything at their disposal to attract your attention and keep your focus. Pictures, language, anything to bring about an association with the consumer.
- **Promise:** the brand promise is important to the customer, the quality of the product or service offered affirms that the right choice has been made by the customer.

The goodwill and brand equity offered by any brand is the strength of the business and this intangible currency now presents business leaders with much-needed leverage to use at their disposal (Wheeler, 2012:2). The same logo would be used, the companies would share the same set of ideals, ethics, standing, similar protocols, internal systems, and would typically

have global headquarters coordinating specific purposes to every office regardless of the continent on which they are located (Steenkamp, 2017:3).

The need to revise the Imperial Car Rental brand came about out of natural succession and growth of the organisation. The brand was as established as it was ever going to be domestically and logical sense was to move forward with a global brand. This could have been done in a variety of ways, such as merging the brand with another that has new values that the organisation is looking to achieve, establishing an association with another sought-after brand, finding a differentiator to the existing brand to give it a refreshed outlook, and attracting a different sub-section of customers, or adding or deleting prioritise the preferred brand over the old, outgoing brand (Aaker, 2020:14).

The fact that Imperial Car Rental was a strong, local, home-grown South African brand was particularly important and was considered when planning the change. The brand had grown over a prolonged period that resulted in consumers being more than just customers, a blending of sorts had transpired, a unification that resulted in a brand that generated a sense of belonging. This was due to consumers growing with the brand, changing with the brand over time, so much so that at the start of the rebranding process the organisation ensured that the customer was consulted to ensure that they moved in the right direction. This belonging to the brand by consumers is user-positioned, creates buying trends and ensures performance from the consumer (Baaghil, 2013:9).

2.7.1 Corporate rebranding

Corporate rebranding can be defined as revitalising and shifting an existing brand through lesser, incremental changes to the brand's current standing, and positioning in the existing market through a more natural rather than forced business process. The potential list of consequences also requires outcomes-based evaluation before the change is affected to ensure the preferred direction of the organisation will be executed (Balmer et al., 2006:804-805).

There are many crucial factors the organisation needs to consider when undergoing the corporate rebranding process. The many complexities of the process require commitment and input from the entire organisation, as well as any external stakeholders that the process would influence (Burke & Martin, 2016:283).

The end goal of the rebranding exercise needs to be carefully considered when starting the process. Will the ultimate concept of the organisation relevant to the rebrand remain, will the fundamental nature of the organisation be carried through with the process, and will the organisation remain relevant in its current landscape? These factors need to be understood by

all involved in the process to ensure that the correct path is followed and the essential ideal of the organisation is maintained, while at the same time, the required evolution of the organisation is achieved. Maintaining the core values of the organisational brand is important, just how important is up to the internal stakeholders facilitating the rebranding process. Essential core values such as the organisations competitive advantage resulting from intellectual property should be kept and carried through to the next phase of the organisation so that the rebranding result still maintains the capabilities of the organisation despite the revised corporate image that has emerged (Merrilees & Miller, 2008:540-541).

In the case of the rebranding process Imperial Car Rental went through to the Europcar brand, the requirements that would be relevant for the new brand were important. The opening up of new markets compared to the existing brand's market would require changes in specific products and services. Additional fleet would be the biggest factor, in that moving from a domestic brand to a global one would require automotive brands relevant and known to these new markets. New service trends standards on a global scale would also require adjustment by the organisation. Even though one of the organisation's goals was to expand into new markets and grow its customer base, the existing base was important to maintain. Ensuring that ongoing communication through various forms of marketing, questionnaires and surveys to existing customers to gather feedback and consolidate an external stakeholder view of the rebranding process, was an imperative phase in the strategy used by the organisation to facilitate the rebranding procedure (Merrilees & Miller, 2008:541).

When considering the feedback of external stakeholders, internal stakeholder deliberation should be counted as well, and the alignment of both aspects needs to be reflected on to ensure a successful strategic outcome for the organisation. A comprehensive review of these elements is what guides the changes that need to occur throughout the rebranding process, whether one or two factors are significant or there are numerous factors to consider. These complexities need to be managed by the organisation throughout the implementation process. Awareness brought to all stakeholders of the change in brand is required through whichever outlets the organisations prefer, be it media channels, traditional print channels, public relations campaigns, and various social media platform engagements with all stakeholders. In essence, the concept for the corporate rebrand needs to account for everything that made the existing brand relevant to the consumer, combine these elements with the new brand concept, and ensure buy-in from all relevant parties that required conditions were achieved. Some key factors should be retained, and the balance revised according to new requirements in terms of additional markets acquired, where these revisions also need to be communicated correctly to all stakeholders and promoted in cases where required (Merrilees & Miller, 2008:542-546).

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter looked at the position of the tourism industry in South Africa as well as important aspects that affect global tourism (such as the Thomas Cook crash, Brexit) in comparison to the domestic market. It was noted how these factors (new low-cost European carriers) contributed and played a part in changing the local tourism landscape. Tourism globally showed an increase of 4% (+4% international arrivals) by the end of 2019 (Web UNWTO, 2020:1-4), which was higher than the global average in terms of economic growth which was 3% (UNWTO, 2022c).

It is important to note that over the last 10 years in South Africa, preferred modes of transport had minimal fluctuations in terms of how tourists like to travel. Transport is one of the biggest tourist budgets, equating to approximately R10.4 billion year on year, mainly around the December/January holiday period.

The number of jobs created by the tourism sector in South Africa is substantial. One out of every four jobs was directly or indirectly created by the sector, as well as the contribution to SA's economy each year. When compared to 2018, R125 billion (domestic and international) was spent with 49% of tourists ensuring they spent time in more than just one province in South Africa, utilising domestic flights and car rental to get around (Live South Africa, 2019:9).

This was significantly slowed due to COVID-19 end 2019/beginning 2020, with global travel restrictions in place. However, in 2022 the country's economy is slowly returning to pre-COVID days. South Africa is slow to catch up with global economic and travel trends compared to other countries around the world, as we reach the middle of 2022. As these trends start to take shape domestically travelling to South Africa is once again at the forefront of many tourists' minds (UNWTO, 2022d).

A substantial number of tourists typically come to South Africa to visit family and friends, this reason noted by a third of visitors and they would typically stay with relatives or friends. Of the international tourists, 17% visited South Africa for the first time while 83% were repeat visitors. These tourists typically stayed for around two weeks, spent just under R10 000 in terms of average spend, excluding flights and accommodation, and statistically were millennials when looking at age groups (Live South Africa, 2019:25).

The current state and future of transport in SA as well as globally is complex to say the least. Tourism in 2022 has a much better path to recovery when compared to the same period in 2021. International arrivals are up by 130% with the easing of travel restrictions and as many as 12 popular tourist destinations completely lifting all travel bans. The Russia/Ukraine war continues to disrupt global economies and transport while the COVID-19 pandemic has not

completely abated; there is still much uncertainty that could very well disrupt the travel and tourism industry soon as these factors are very unpredictable at the moment (UNWTO, 2022d).

Branding and corporate re-branding is no easy feat for any organisation to undertake. In this case, the process the Imperial Group opted to undertake is risky and risk mitigation is always complicated but when the process is well planned, utilising various sources and marketing strategies, researched information results in making an informed, collective decision about the process.

The typical changes that occur such as changing the organisation logo, how the brand will be positioned, and the new growth expected are driving factors when undergoing such a process for any organisation (Turner, 2019:17).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodologies used to collect data required for the outcome of this study paper. Jonker and Pennink (2010:21-23) define methodology as an action, the presentation of a form of thinking and acting that entails research work, while Vicki et al. (2015:17-19) refer to methodology “as the research process from formulating questions that provide conclusions as a result of the specific study”. Devi (2017:22) describes research methodology as the way to analytically answer the research problem, to understand the science of it.

The primary goal of the study was to gather qualitative data through interviews (based on the interview schedules) of which the questions were conceptualised by the researcher. If face-to-face time was not possible, the schedule was used and shared with participants via e-mail, social media and other communication platforms, requesting their feedback on the Imperial Group rebranding process that started in 2008 and concluded in 2009, in time for the arrival of international visitors for the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. In this chapter, the process of data collection, the sampling, general design and research paradigm are clarified and explained.

3.2 Research intellection

One definition of research is the systematic step-by-step process that is followed to gather, record, evaluate and interpret information (Wilson, 2014:9). A research paradigm, in relation to a qualitative approach to this study, is the focus on how information was collected. After careful consideration, the structures are noted by the researcher due to the involvement and concept gathered from the subjects. Stansfield (2001:4) states that the principle of a paradigm is to cause an effect that interacts desirably with the environment. Blaikie and Priest (2016:13) define research paradigms “as the context in which research will be performed, how ideas or beliefs are formulated and, in the end, will be used”, while Ling and Ling (2016:19) describe a research paradigm as the focus point of mindfulness and awareness of the paradigm within the research promoting reliability. A constructivist paradigm rather than a positivism approach was the focus because throughout the entire process, the observer was an integral part of the re-branding journey and subsequently, the outcome as well.

3.2.1 Constructivist

What does it mean to be a constructivist? In education philosophy, constructivism is the concept whereby individuals actively construct their own knowledge based on their past foundational experience along with new experiences gained. It is a theory about knowledge as well as learning, what it actually means to know something, and the experience that brings about how the individual comes to know (Fosnot, 2013:8-10). A psychological approach to constructivism refers to understanding how individuals make sense of the world they live in from a counselling, coaching and mentoring perspective (Bradley-Cole & Denicolo, 2020:7).

There are pros and cons to constructivism; some notable pros include the process being student-centric, significant gains in social and communication skills in early development and being pleasant in terms of the learning approach. The cons include significant amounts of time being invested and can be resource-intensive (Helpful Professor, 2022).

The key concepts of constructivism are that learning is a cognitive process and trial and error presents a unique way of teaching and learning through experiences. Wadsworth (1971:5) states that there are four stages of learning and other well-known constructivists like Maria Montessori believed in this concept as well.

- “*Sensorimotor stage (birth – 2 years)*: Cognitive skills are quickly developed by infants, skills we all know too well, deferred imitation, object permanence and action directed towards specific goals”.
- “*Preoperational stage (2 – 7 years)*: Kids from an incredibly early age can develop cognitive skills, think language use and symbolic play, but still seem to maintain only seeing something from one perspective, egocentric”.
- “*Concrete stage (7 – 12 years)*: At this stage, learners are able to develop relatively quickly, complicated logical thinking skills, conservation skills, are typically developed”.
- “*Formal operations stage (12 – 18 years)*: By this point, youths begin to develop deductive reasoning, metacognitive skills, abstract thinking processes, and overly complex moral and ethical logic”.

The inclusion hereof was to highlight Piaget's belief in this area, individuals do not operate at the same level, there is a benefit to gain if the cognitive levels of the individual are understood and the initial communication adjusted according to the levels of output from the individuals at the point in time.

3.2.2 Positivism

According to French philosopher Auguste Comte, positivism philosophy refers to any type of system that would typically constrain itself to only consider the experience linked to the data in question regardless of the reality perceived by the senses.

There are two fundamental assertions of positivism (Britannica, 2022c):

- “Positivism is related to a positive data experience that encompasses the specific fact, knowledge in question,” and
- “That all logical thoughts and mathematical formulations conceived are the driving forces behind all facts”.

The point is that accurate knowledge gained through the observation of the researcher from data collected remains the objective of the study.

3.3 Research design

Research design is a conceptual blueprint, an arrangement of conditions, a plan, structure, and strategy that is used to ensure the research remains within specific exploration considerations. The purpose behind the design is to maintain structure and allow a culmination of the actual research work proposed (Akhtar, 2020:68).

3.3.1 Process

The research study followed a qualitative process whereby non-numerical data were collected and analysed to understand and develop concepts towards the final objective. This is typically used in anthropology and sociology where thought processes are developed into research ideas and questions. The main process used for this study was that of a grounded theory, and once all the data were collected and scrutinised, the goal was to ensure an inductive research process was developed (Taylor et al., 2016:7-11).

The researcher's aim for this study was to gather data using interviews as the primary method and also utilise a quantitative methodology to process respondent feedback: other respondent information collected was processed through quantitative methods as the main research instruments. To gather and interpret the identified participant's understanding of the branding and rebranding concepts, their individual perceptions of the process, any opinions that might have contributed to their specific perceptions, and experiences were essential to the study.

To gain an in-depth understanding of the individual's experience throughout the process to identify specific concerns early on, the foremost focus was to gather at least 70 interview

schedules but due to several constraints relating to COVID-19 and geographical restrictions, individual availability (many of the original Imperial Rental staff had left the organisation post-2010), and lack of compassion towards the research process, only 20 completed, usable interview schedules were collected to use as a frame of reference for this study (Hennink et al., 2020:23-27).

3.3.2 Research landscape

The collection and analyses of data from a specific pool of candidates to gain insight and understanding of a singular event that has taken place is the purpose of this research (Azlan, 2013:7-8). The research landscape was predominantly conducted based on the availability of individuals from the sampling pool geographically (even past staff internationally were approached). Where possible, direct contact was initiated but most of the data collected were done through e-mail, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp forms of social media as not all individuals were still based in Cape Town or South Africa. The landscape extended to Johannesburg, Pretoria, the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and the United Arab Emirates, with regular follow-up after the initial distribution.

3.4 Data collection and sampling

The primary method of data collection was an interview schedule compiled by the researcher to gather data from a qualitative perspective. Other respondent information (for example region, education, age) gathered was processed quantitatively. Billups (2019:6-9) describes qualitative research from the constructivist's viewpoint, making provision for multiple views and perspectives as gathered from the specific sample population. The survey questions were constructed in such a way that it was specific to the research case, systematic and easily comprehensible for the reader so that the data gathered from the sample pool would have no discrepancies, thereby ensuring its accuracy and authenticity (Analytics for Decisions, 2022).

Sampling is an important aspect of any research design. Guest et al. (2013:43-47) describe sampling as the "method of gathering a subset of items from a well-defined population for inclusion into a research paper". As collection from the entire population group of the organisation was not possible over the study period, a specific smaller population (sample) was targeted for the purpose of this research. This specific sample was targeted for several reasons—based on the event in the research title, the population represented a complete array of responsibilities and involvement in the process, which is why they were chosen.

Sampling is extremely important to the researcher. There are plethora of benefits, ranging from cost effectiveness, to valuable time-saving, and the results acquired from the research would

be significantly more accurate. It assists in applying appropriate limitations when sample numbers are too large and aids when it comes to discerning population characteristics.

Compiling data from all operational levels was important to the study to ensure that an all-encompassing point of view could be ascertained. Access to key individuals was of the utmost importance, and as the driver for the research sample, the researcher was able to access all levels of management due to being in the organisation's employment during 2008/9, with access to levels inclusive of the executive stakeholders that steered the ship through the rebranding process. The questionnaire was completed by key stakeholders, inclusive of the company CEO, IT executive, executive for marketing, and operational general managers.

3.5 Population

Explorable.com (2009) defines a research population as "a sizeable group of people or items that are the focus of a specific research proposal or technical objection". Often, when looking at exploring research populations, chances are that the size of the group may be too large, too many individuals may be present which would result in other challenges, for example, cost- and time-related, which would cause the researcher to use sampling techniques to negate the ambiguity. A research population could also be referred to as groupings of individuals or elements that may be similar in attributes, and this typically occurs as these types of groupings almost always have common denominators. Arnab (2017:1-2) refers to a population as the assemblage of components or substances in a particular region at a specific point in time, typically resulting in the subject of the research study.

Dhivyadeepa (2015:11-12) defines a population "as a consortium of individuals that are the same or tend to have similar characteristics amongst them, regardless of size, be it large or small, but depending on the specific population", on which the researcher would focus the study. A population is considered differently when viewed as that from a research perspective compared to the usual way population would be considered. From a geographic perspective, population refers to the number of people in a country but from a research perspective population refers to the components of interest particularly related to the study. With research, relatable, criteria conformity becomes a driving factor resulting in the researcher generalising the conclusions of the research.

The target population specific to this research had conformity with the specific organisation. Most of the target population worked for the organisation (Imperial Car Rental) at the time at various levels of employment, from operations to sales and marketing on all management levels, from entry to executive. A minimal percentage of the population were key customers of the organisation with a long-standing history that allowed these customers to provide key

insight into the rebranding process. The target population for the study was a mix of male and female participants of all age groups, races, and religions. The target criteria was the distribution to 70 respondents (Dhivyadeepa, 2015:13-15), but at the end of the cut-off period of the study only 20 interview schedules had been completed. For qualitative literature, 20 interviews could be enough due to saturation of information. Another important factor noted was the respondents themselves, the key stakeholders made up the 20 responses, including key customers, executive management from marketing, and the chief executive at the time of project.

3.6 Pilot study

A pilot study is important for several reasons. Firstly, it assists the researcher in identifying any shortfalls within the study and if there are any challenges around the research methods or instruments being used. In this study, the researcher wanted to assess the research process and ensure the validity and reliability of the interview schedules that was developed to ensure that participants found the structure straightforward and easily comprehensible. Pilot studies may also be conducted to ensure that the research procedure followed does not cause practical challenges for the researcher or the candidate pool (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001:1-4).

Ruel et al. (2015:98-100) describe pilot testing as one of the most important aspects of inspection authenticity and maintaining elevated levels of research consistency throughout the process. When it comes to validating research and producing methodically accurate research findings that contribute to the environment of education, research, and learning.

The researcher quickly discovered that the interview questions compiled were indeed adequate in terms of the desired study objectives, and also that compiling feedback from further candidates proved to be quite a futile exercise as the researcher was met with much resistance when working through the sample pool of candidates for the study. While there is a time factor applied in checking the initial testing from the beginning to the end, it is time well spent in terms of producing excellent quality survey research.

3.7 Reliability and validity

Reliability, from a qualitative perspective, is of the utmost importance in that researchers need to ensure that their findings are indeed the results of good judgement and application of the most suitable methods used throughout the study. Reliable data need to be consistent, accurate and acquired through credible means of the research process (University of Miami, 2020).

Accounting for and acknowledging bias throughout the research process is important and the researcher must be mindful of this when interpreting findings. Showing clarity when it comes to these findings allows trustworthiness of the work to be applied while being analysed by relevant parties as the need for analysis becomes relevant (Noble & Smith, 2015). Enquiry and investigation processes must be followed and need to be methodical and systematic and ultimately increase the research knowledge base.

Reliability refers to the extent to which a specific development can be quantified when looking at the results produced and the consistency of those results (Wilson, 2014:87-89). Reliability was important to this study in that a combination of sources from which to produce evidence and maintain a good database was secured. This ensures that significant evidence is available on the subject matter when and where required by the party in question. The reliability of something is further weighted when considering the validity aspect as well.

Validity refers to the results of the study, how the results were measured, were they measured accurately from all aspects, and ultimately, are the results replicable. With the results being replicable, this again will support other individuals / organisations when undertaking a similar project. This helps to frame the support of the argument being made by the researcher, and the procedure of assessment of the argument with the aid of evidence to support its validity (Taylor, 2013:2-3).

3.8 Data analysis

Data cannot simply be counted and as accredited to Albert Einstein, “not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts, can be counted” (Morgan, 2013:7-10). Data analysis is dependent on the experience gathered from words and meanings and is mostly subjective, based on context rather than just numbers for this research study. The analysis was conducted through the following three steps:

- Codes were developed and applied. Typically, there are three forms of codes— Open, Axial and Selective coding. Coding can be done manually or through ATLAS.ti software and other forms of software available on the market.
- The second step involves identifying patterns and developing theories through various repetitions that are identified.
- Thereafter, in the decisive step, data is summarised and the findings culminate in the closing chapter (Business Research Methodology, 2022).

The study focused on the objectives set out by the researcher. The interviews gathered data for the researcher until this was no longer achievable due to the COVID-19 pandemic limiting

interaction over this period. The desired total candidate pool of 70 interviews was not achieved. This translated into the balance being distributed and, unfortunately, after many weeks of follow-up, a total of 20 candidate interviews was gathered for this research. The researcher used ATLAS.Ti qualitative data analysis and research software to analyse the primary data that was gathered from the interviews and interview schedules. The use of this software assisted the researcher with insight generation resulting in a conclusion for the study.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations specific to this research are a set of conventional principles that guide the researcher in terms of the study design and best practice (Bryman & Bell, 2007:1). The communication that was gathered through candidate participation in this research study was 100% voluntary and at the consent of the respective individual. The individuals were contacted directly through various forms of communication ranging from telephone calls to social media platforms such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Microsoft Outlook email. No individual rights of any of the candidates were infringed upon and the process remained anonymous and confidential in terms of the feedback provided through the questionnaire process.

“Bad science is bad ethics” – DeRenzo et al. (2020:13) note that any potential risk to research candidates where a reasonable outcome is not expected in terms of the study findings, is not ethical. If the candidate is disrupted, this too can lead to some form of disregard and should not be the case in question. Participants were not subjected to harm in any way. Each participant was treated respectfully, informed consent was obtained, and participant confidentiality and anonymity were upheld. The research was not exaggerated in any way and all affiliations were declared. All research communication was kept transparent, and information presented was not misleading at any point (Bryman & Bell, 2007:1).

Participant withdrawal was possible at any time and, of the pool selected, there were specific candidates that ignored all requests and elected not to take part in the process. Ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology was requested and approved for the process of this research (see Appendix A).

3.10 Chapter summary

The study process highlighted in this chapter presented the path that the researcher followed, this path was maintained in terms of the protocols noted under each section to ensure that no misalignment occurred by the researcher. In the next chapter, the researcher will break down the methodology used and use this to present the findings as highlighted in the preceding chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results generated from the data collected from the interview questions that were distributed to the sample pool of respondents. The data were analysed using ATLAS.ti v22, Windows research analysis software (Friese, 2014). Of the sample pool of 70 distributed, only 20 were completed and usable for the researcher, which constitutes a 33% uptake by respondents. When reviewing sample size guidelines, a range of between 20-30 interviews in total is considered to be adequate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Story and Tait (2019:199) state that "... good survey research reports deliver results with accurate and credible answers on the research topic with only a 40% minimum response rate". The researcher feels that, despite the low response rate, the data is dependable in that the findings "... did indeed occur as the researcher says they did" (Hinckley, 2011:299). While the researcher had projected a more successful uptake, regular follow-up with respondents proved fruitless and due to time constraints, a best-case results percentage was accepted. Saturation of anticipated information was observed exceedingly early in the responses.

This chapter presents and analyses the feedback provided, while the methods used to collect the feedback as well as the challenges that were present throughout the collection process, are explained. Most of the respondents were locally based and initial contact did not seem to present any challenges.

As time progressed, significant delays were experienced, primarily caused by the COVID pandemic and the subsequent devastating effect on the car-hire sector of the tourism industry but eventually the minimum data that were received were analysed. The initial data sets are displayed below in the form of diagrams to assist with quick representation for the reviewer. The demographics relating to the sample pool are highlighted below.

4.2 Demographic breakdown

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the racial split of the respondent pool. Most of the participants were white (52%), followed closely by coloureds at 33%, while the remaining 15% comprised Africans and Indians.

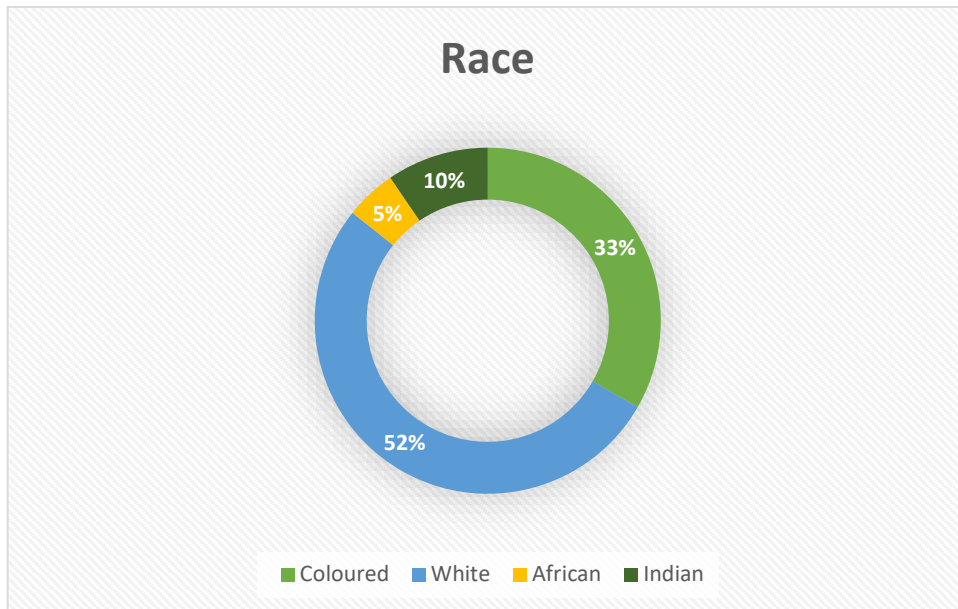


Figure 4.1: Race split of respondents

Unfortunately, even though many policies have been devised since 1998 in South Africa to address the inequality of actions of the past government, including the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 and the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act No. 53 of 2003, the tourism industry remains dominated by the white demographic in South Africa. This ascendancy is clearly highlighted in the respondent pool of this study as predominantly middle to senior and executive management contributed to this study and aligns with a study by Gasa (2019:10).

4.3 Regional statistics

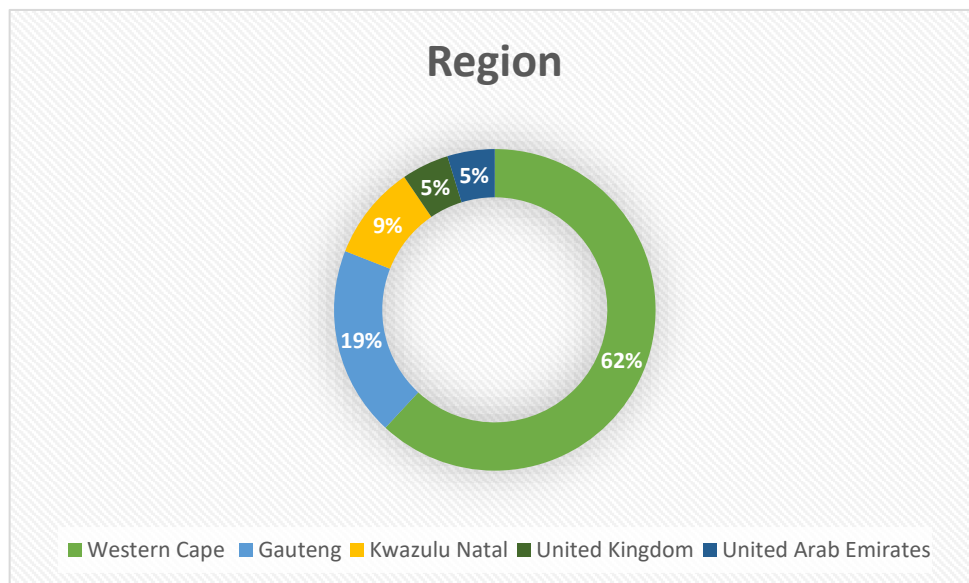


Figure 4.2: Regions of respondents

When looking at the regional statistics of the pool of respondents, the majority were based in the Western Cape, in Cape Town (62%), followed by the Gauteng region with less than half at 19%. KZN made up the final local region, contributing 9% to the respondent geographic mix. The majority of the respondents came from the Western Cape due to the researcher residing in this region and the apparent success of the car-hire business in the region despite the COVID epidemic. The candidates interviewed in the Gauteng region resided there and upon travelling, the researcher had access to these individuals.

The smallest percentage from the KZN region had travelled for work purposes and the researcher gained access to these individuals at common locations before returning to KZN. A minimal 10% of the respondents were no longer employed by the organisation or had subsequently left the country. This contributed to the delays in data gathering as responses were lagging due to no direct contact with the individuals and reliance on different forms of social media used to gather candidate responses.

It is important to note when considering the regional statistics, that all respondents worked for Imperial and Europcar during the period in question (2008 to 2009) with the majority being based in Cape Town and Johannesburg. This is completely logical as the organisations' main hubs are located in these cities—the head office in Johannesburg being the corporate hub and Cape Town the tourist hub. These two regional locations are in South Africa and typically generate the highest turnover annually for the organisation, with the last available statistics estimated at 31.9 million passengers transiting in 2019 (Get to Centre, 2022).

4.4 Age groups

The age groups of the participants are highlighted in Figure 4.3. Most of the study group comprises Generation X individuals (40 to 49 years of age) with 43%, followed by 38% made up of 30- to 39-year-old millennials. When considering these generation groups, it is important to note some general observations that could contribute to how the questionnaire was answered, which is unpacked further on in the study. The final age group, 50 to 59 years, made up 19% of the respondent platform and traditionally also forms part of the X Generation.

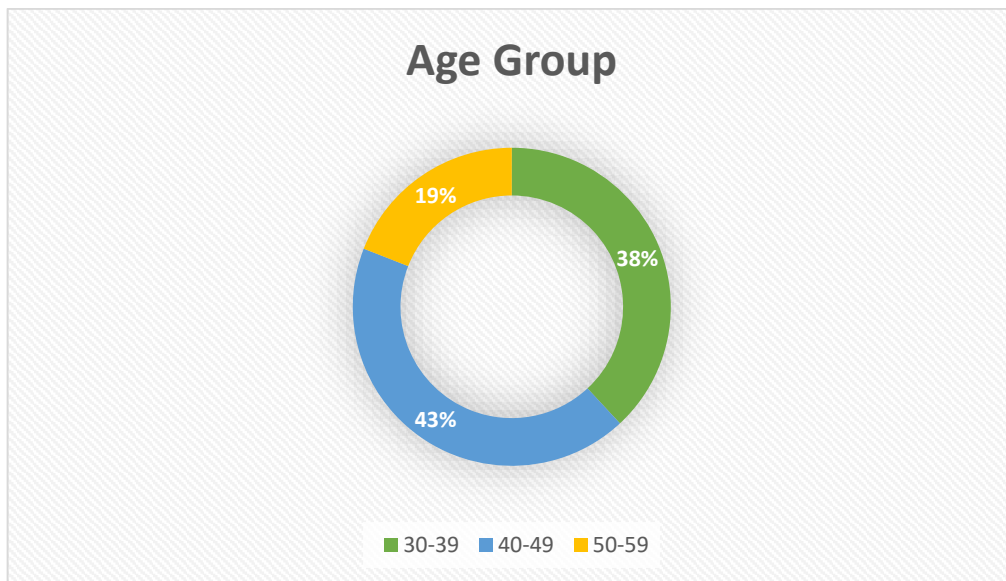


Figure 4.3: Age groupings of respondents

4.4.1 Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980: 42 to 57 years of age)

Historically, Generation X participants experienced substantial corporate economising and redundancies that resulted in a variety of challenges. They were the first generation to grow up in a household where two incomes were relevant, both parental units worked, divorce statistics were high and 40% were first-time childcare attendees. This generation would tend to be more educated, independent, resourceful, and innovative by default (Luttrell & McGrath, 2016:14).

“Family-comes-first” reveals that higher levels of work-life balance are prevalent. They are very comfortable with advances in technology and appreciate diversity and global standards in general (Luttrell & McGrath, 2016:16). These are factors to consider when analysing questionnaire data within this generation to establish trends and patterns and their way of thinking.

4.4.2 Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996: 26 to 41 years of age)

Millennials tend to believe that education is the best way to succeed in today's world. They believe in technology, multiplicity in terms of employment and being socially responsible. This grouping has high expectation levels when it comes to matters such as salary earned and typically has an 'air of entitlement' about them that is significantly more prominent compared to other generations. Equality and workplace expectations differ greatly for Millennials and this overconfidence needs to be managed in the workplace (Luttrell & McGrath, 2016:21-23).

This thought process needs to be considered when reviewing the data obtained from the questionnaires as this will assist the researcher in comparative analysis, identifying typical characteristics such as being more ambitious in terms of career advancements than their counterparts, to identify patterns or processes when completing the overall analyses resulting in the objective of the study (Heing, 2018:16-17).

4.5 Gender

The respondent pool has a small margin separating the male and female candidates, as represented below in Figure 4.4. Males made up of 52% of the pool while the remaining 48% was made up of female respondents. This is important in terms of workplace diversity as greater levels of productivity are achieved stemming from positive employee engagement that is the result of a successful rebranding process. This is true if the process has higher levels of success when all stakeholders are consulted, especially internally such as employees (MIT News, 2014; Saxena, 2014:77-80; Xaba, 2015:10-17, Nana et al., 2019:93-97).

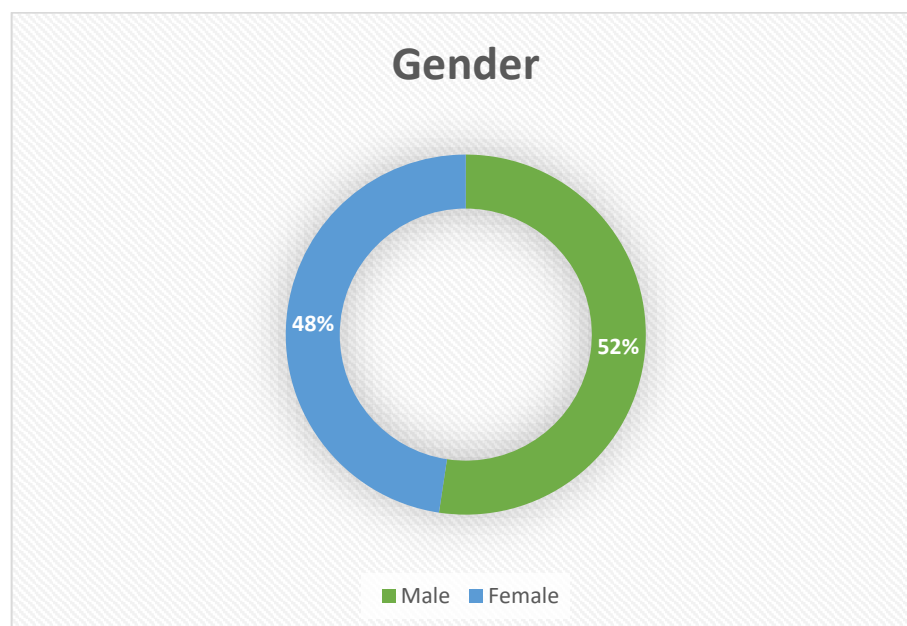


Figure 4.4: Gender split of respondents

4.6 Departmental representation of participants

Adding the functional department of each respondent was important in the view of the researcher, as gathering several aspects of the process would allow for a deeper final analysis.

It was important to extend the interviews to all departments within the organisation, to ensure that different opinions, views, and interpretations of the integration process would be gathered. As shown in Figure 4.5 below, the bulk of the respondents was from the sales department (52%).

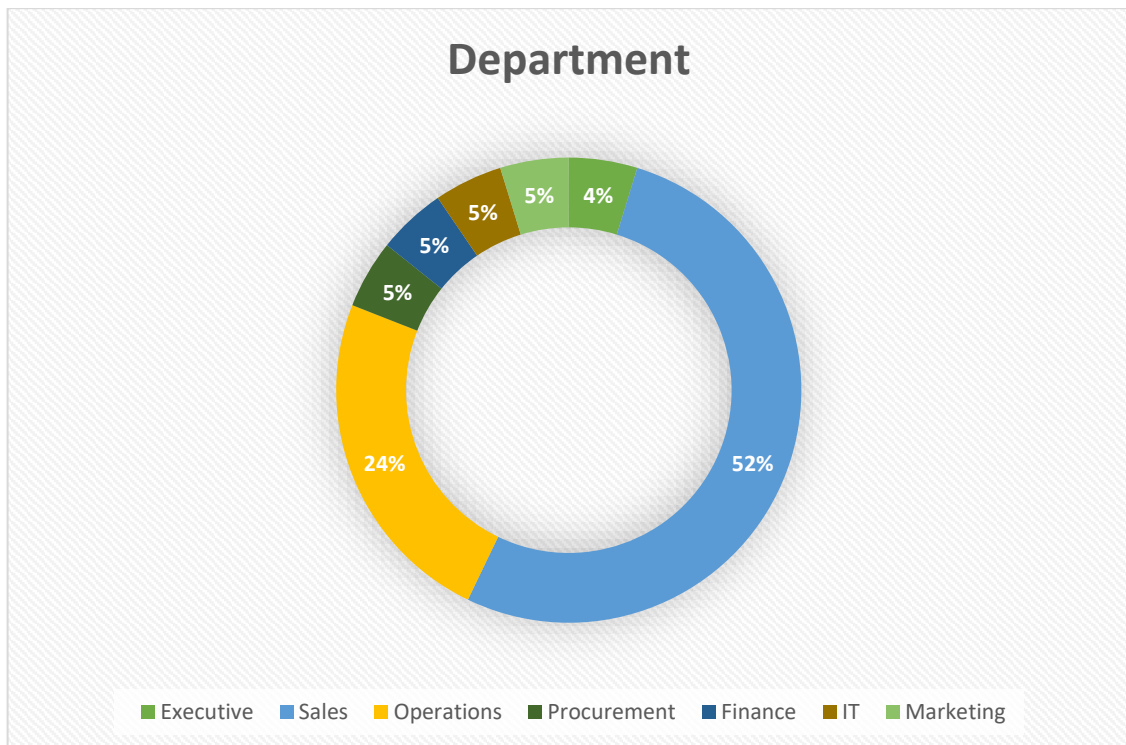


Figure 4.5: Departments of respondents

An important sidenote is that all sales managers that engaged in the integration process operated exclusively on specific segments so even though information was gathered from the sales department, it is important to note that this too is mixed between corporate, government, leisure, international and replacement sales channels. The next segment with the highest concentration of respondents was the operations team, at 24%. This was again spread over different operational levels, from entry-level at a branch to regional, and finally national levels.

The remaining 24% of participants came from all other departments within the organisation, being IT, finance, marketing, procurement, and the executive office.

Vital facts that need to be mentioned are that even though a small percentage of individuals were tasked with the questionnaire from other relevant departments, specific key individuals were targeted. In the marketing department, the general manager at the time, who was one of the leading proponents of integration on the project team, was gracious enough to provide feedback on the questionnaire. The same applied to IT, and the general manager at the merger-time who is now based overseas also gave of his time to answer the questionnaire. Finally, the executive member that provided feedback was the head of the merger-project team at the time.

With this information in the mind, even though the final responses in terms of feedback received were not what the researcher intended or hoped for, the fact that key individuals provided feedback is what is important for the sake of this study, as confirmed by Borges and Rodrigues (2021:131). Key stakeholders, such as in this case, provide more than relevant feedback that assists in the strategy formulation, and methodology formed and refined.

4.7 Education levels

Figure 4.6 below represents the formal levels of education amongst the respondents: the highest number of respondents (48%), had no formal tertiary education with high school (Matric) being the highest achievement academically. This is not surprising, considering that only 6% to 7% of adults/young adults in South Africa have studied after high school to attain any sort of tertiary education qualification (OECD, 2019:1-3) and the work selling car hire is primarily a taught skill within each car hire organisation.

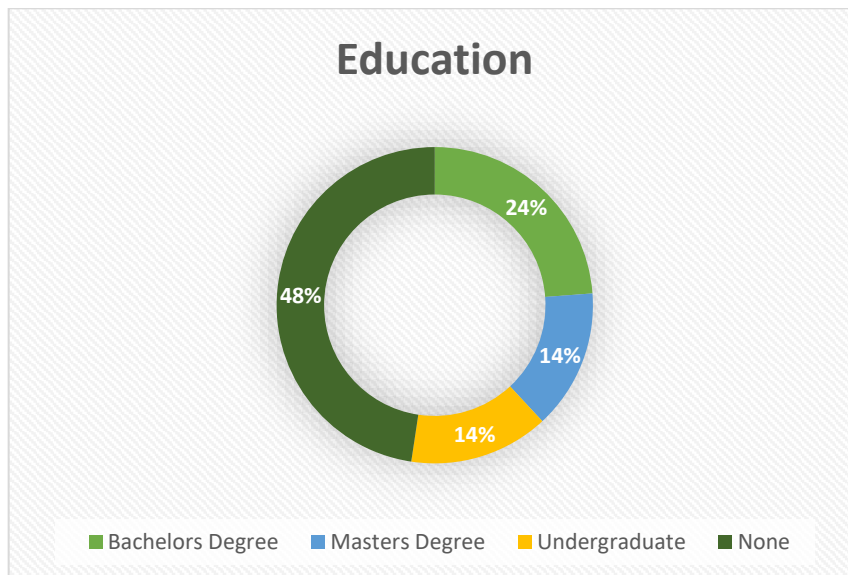


Figure 4.6: Education levels of respondents

This is important when it comes to analysing the data provided by each respondent in terms of their understanding and comprehension of the entire rebranding process that the organisation went through. Educated versus uneducated decisions have been debated since the early 1920s and historically, the differentiation remains crucial when it comes to a comprehension of the subject matter (Finnegan et al., 2014:86-87).

Figure 4.6 above also reveals that those participants who attained a bachelor's degree are ranked second at 24%, while undergraduate and master's degree participants registered an equal 14% each, respectively. There is a range of factors around education that have a long-lasting effect on the individual respondents in this study. From a general perspective, educated individuals are more likely to be competent and should not have issues providing feedback on this questionnaire. The researcher suggests that the small number of responders for this study was predominantly linked to the lack of formal tertiary education. This resulted in many respondents starting the questionnaire but then opting out before even getting halfway through as the questions were not close-ended and prompted some self-awareness in terms of thinking about how they would provide feedback on each point.

4.8 Data analysis

The researcher used the real-world data that were collected from the face-2-face interviews and interview schedules sent to the identified respondents (and in some cases followed up with telephone calls) due to COVID and geographical restrictions. The purpose of the initial distribution was for the analyses of the data collected to occur iteratively allowing for the enablement of new theory development that is indicative of grounded theory methodologies.

A key factor to note is that the data collected has resulted in real-world applications and the findings are linked to the data, albeit from a relatively small sample response size. Some challenges included time taken to collect the data and especially, for this researcher, recruiting candidates who worked with the researcher and who were directly involved in the merger, for the actual participation in the study.

Two main focus points for the study and this applicable theory were that the process of data collection and analysis were recurring in terms of the layers unpacked. The raw data collected from the candidates were analysed and developed into a theory but each time this process was followed the researcher found a recurring methodology to assist in arriving at a conclusion, for example, the way the organisation focussed on the customer, making the customer the priority when undergoing the rebranding process. This “customer central” theme is clearly outlined when reviewing the transcripts and developing the open coding process.

Theoretical sampling was applied initially until further candidates were identified and recruited for the study where the coding phase of the process began. The transcripts were analysed, and codes derived from the assessments.

This process continued until connections were made between the codes, resulting in the beginning of the axial coding process. Once more connections were identified by the researcher and the over-encompassing core category was developed, resulting in the selective coding process connecting all the codes and the focus of the research.

4.8.1 Open coding categories

Charmaz (2014:2-14) and Adu (2019:3-10) define open coding as “an analysis technique used to find patterns in a specific data set, to identify relevant themes and to determine the relationship between these themes”. Flick (2009:310), defines open coding in the grounded theory method “as the analytical course of action by which relevant notions are detected and utilized in terms of their specific properties and components”. Relevant questions are asked specific to the data and comparisons for connections and variations are made by the researcher. The researcher analysed the survey data and identified 25 codes through ATLAS.Ti. These 25 codes are shown in Table 4.1 along with a weighting generated per code. This is a typical methodological process when it comes to qualitative analyses and is essential to reveal the researcher's process on how the data were systematically categorised.

Table 4.1: Themes and codes overview

Code	Comment	Density	
• Customer Centric		90	Codes from Survey import
• Global Forward Thinking		59	Codes from Survey import
• Rebranding Strategy		52	Codes from Survey import
• <i>Sentiment Total</i>		35	<i>Codes from Survey import</i>
• Positive Brand Image		32	Codes from Survey import
• <i>Sentiment</i>	• <i>Positive</i>	32	<i>Codes from Survey import</i>
• Quality Brand Association		31	Codes from Survey import
• Agreed with Rebranding		30	Codes from Survey import
• Rebranding Timeframe		28	Codes from Survey import
• International Standards		27	Codes from Survey import
• SA Brand		26	Codes from Survey import
• Quality Products/Services		26	Codes from Survey import
• Industry Rival		24	Codes from Survey import
• Brand Equity		18	Codes from Survey import
• Unique Customer Traditions		14	Codes from Survey import
• Investment		10	Codes from Survey import
• Marketing/Branding Mistakes		10	Codes from Survey import
• Competitive Advantage		8	Codes from Survey import
• Staff Well-Being		8	Codes from Survey import
• Strategic Pitfalls		6	Codes from Survey import
• Target Audience		6	Codes from Survey import
• <i>Sentiment</i>	• <i>Negative</i>	3	<i>Codes from Survey import</i>
• Researcher in Agreement		2	Codes from Survey import
• Competitor Assumption		1	Codes from Survey import
• Sustainable		1	Codes from Survey import
• Unfavourable Brands		1	Codes from Survey import

Source: Researcher construct, generated by ATLAS.Ti from respondents' survey data

Customer Centric (*code weighting: 90*): Palmatier et al. (2019:1, 4) describe customer centricity as the creation of value for the customer as well as the organisation through the emergence of understanding of each customer, this understanding is then used to build long term customer relationships that are beneficial for both parties. With this sentiment in mind, the focus of the rebranding process was on the customer, how to best engage, service and grow the existing base as well as attract new markets without losing any of the existing customers. Throughout the process, from beginning to end, key customers were engaged

directly while the general customer base was consulted through the use of surveys via the NPS tool, in-branch questionnaires, various forms of advertising, and market research conducted on a national basis to acquire as much feedback as possible to assist in guiding the organisation through the rebranding process based on the feedback received from the customer.

The purpose was to get the existing customer base to identify with the new brand before the official launch and branding changes occurred, giving them an organisational identity that is familiar to them as the change occurred holistically. How a consumer views the specific brand is of the utmost importance, the brand equity that is generated in the mind of the consumer, organisations, and their management teams realise this, that the most valuable asset of the organisation is not its tangible assets but rather the brand and the value generated in the mind, of the consumer (Aaker, 1991:14; Keller, 2002:151; Kapferer, 2008:4; Pavelka, 2015:1).

Global Forward Thinking (*code weighting: 59*): The initial catalyst that sparked the rebranding conversation was the FIFA Soccer World Cup global event that was fast approaching with South Africa being the 2010 host. This international event prompted SA's alignment with the global Europcar brand as well as prioritising the discussion of all future plans for both brands Imperial and Europcar). Domestically, the Imperial Group and Europcar operated separately in terms of branch networks, back-office resources (finance, IT), and in terms of growth, where the Imperial brand had performed well over the last three decades but had reached a plateau in SA, while the Europcar brand presented a globally unified image for the group for the next decade in terms of resources and growth to the next level.

The plan was to become a global player in name only but not ownership, Europcar SA would remain 100% owned and managed by the Imperial Group. Satish (2015:82) highlights the need for rebranding for organisational growth and relevance in terms of future success. Brands need to remain relevant to their target markets and change and grow with these markets adapting to customer requirements. Other key factors include globalisation in terms of aligning to the same global standards of the brand, mergers, and acquisitions, as in this case, where the two brand audiences are aligned with the new global brand through the rebranding process (Satish, 2015:83-84).

Rebranding Strategy (*code weighting: 52*): "We will not lose one customer" said the Imperial CEO when the rebranding process started. Her words were the driving force behind the strategy to follow. A special project team was formed, designated COBEI (Cooperation between Europcar and Imperial) made up of individuals from all departments of the organisation, including the executive team to draw up a suitable strategy for the rebrand. This special team was responsible for formulating a strategy, adapting the specific planning phase

to be used and how the strategy (brand equity displacement model) would be rolled out. Weekly consultations were held with relevant board members of the group, past company chief executives, and key industry stakeholders such as ACSA and Tourism Marketing South Africa (TOMSA).

Burke et al. (2016:282-283) state that any strategy must be well-planned and well-executed to achieve success and throughout the various phases, managing all forms of communication is of the utmost importance. As are relevant core principles behind the rebranding strategy in terms of the vision for the revised brand, ensuring core values of the organisation are not lost in the process, relative new market segments are acquired, brand positioning is established, and the aligning of brand elements and promotion to stakeholders to ensure a successful rebranding outcome (Burke et al., 2016:287-289).

Positive Brand Image (*code weighting: 32*): This code is important as the respondents' feedback confirms how they relate to the brand. Aaker (2014:11) states that product attributes, quality, systems and being global are important because they bring a connection to the brand. Positive connections to brands mentioned include Pick 'n Pay, Woolworths, Apple, Kulula, Standard Bank, Discovery Vitality and Allan Gray, all key premium brands in terms of quality products and services and customer service standards that are well known to the South African consumer. This positive association with the above brands is important in that although each association is similar, they are also different in terms of the segments they represent and the respondents they attract.

Pick 'n Pay and Woolworths are both retail stores selling Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) products, Apple is a technology company, Standard Bank is one of the top five banks in South Africa, Discovery Vitality is predominantly healthcare and now financial services, Kulula is a leading airline, and Allan Gray investment and retirement planning. All these organisations attract several types of consumers, a diverse culmination showing a positive collective thought process for respondents and customers. This positive association also assists with trivial difficulties in that elevated levels of trust allow for leniency when small lapses in service or quality occur (Turner, 2019:24).

Quality Brand Association (*code weighting: 31*): This code is like a positive brand image but different in a less complicated way in that respondents simply listed the brands they associated with the organisation in an attempt to indicate what they perceived as quality to them as individuals. The researcher felt listing this code separately was necessary because it allows the reader a simplified understanding of the relationships between brands and how they are quantified in the consumer's mind. A luxury recurring brand noted by many respondents was Apple, over 60% noted this luxury brand, while some consumers are typically just predisposed

to premium brands and services for a variety of factors such as interpersonal influence or approval from their peers (Srivastava & Thomas, 2015:226-227).

Agreed with Rebranding (*code weighting: 30*): A key factor in any rebranding or change process is to have buy-in from the staff and customers. This code is important and represents the positive affirmation from the respondents to the rebranding process that the organisation went through. The respondents agreed unanimously that the rebranding process was required and was the best course of action for the organisation (Imperial Car Rental) at that time. Getting buy-in from the customer is important but just as important is buy-in from the staff as they will be the ambassadors of change throughout the process, ensuring the correct, positive message is relayed to the customers. Employees in this case make the rebranding possible, especially in the travel and tourism sector and other service sectors (Nwankwo & Gbadamosi, 2020:250).

Rebranding Timeframe (*code weighting: 28*): 28 references were made to the timeframe of the rebranding process for the organisation, where the majority of the respondents referenced two years which was the correct timeframe for the process as confirmed to the researcher by the executive management at the time of the researcher's employment with the Imperial organisation. Ensuring the correct timeframe is applied to the process is important where the heritage of a brand needs to be considered, and the future direction and sense of parting of the organisation must be meticulous, especially in cases such as this one where a merger and subsequent name change took place (Carroll, 2016:129-130).

International Standards (*code weighting: 27*): Respondents believed that the rebranding would bring about a global set of standards customary to the franchise owner in France, where Europcar's global head office is based. This would enable premium products and services to be offered domestically that were currently being utilised in first-world markets like Europe, giving customers in SA a truly international experience at Europcar. Other premium benefits would also benefit customers travelling abroad as their domestic profiles would be easily identified abroad; benefits such as auto-filled rental agreements and no need to produce methods of payment on arrival abroad as local account details would be picked up through the system.

SA Brand (*code weighting: 26*): Respondents noted that even though a global approach would be present at Europcar, the fact that the organisation remained 100% owned by the Imperial Group ensured that it remained a truly proud, home-grown South African brand with an ethos and values customers know and appreciate (Kok & de Beer, 2015:86-95), capitalising on both domestic and international positive perspectives being made available to customers.

Quality products/services (*code weighting: 26*): Respondents voiced their belief that the rebranding would ensure certain positive changes in the way the rebranded organisation operated. Fleet size would increase due to further funding from abroad to ensure premium standards were maintained. Innovation would be at the forefront in terms of new services being offered and improved back-office systems in terms of finance and IT as franchise standards would need to be upheld. The researcher knew this happened because he was based at the company when it happened, and it was clearly communicated internally.

Industry Rival (*code weighting: 24*): Aaker (2009:15) stated that when considering competitors, it is important to ask which competitors are considered by customers to have buying power. This is important when the feedback from respondents is analysed. Avis unfortunately (for Imperial/Europcar) is relevant in the SA car rental industry and is the biggest rival to Europcar South Africa in all aspects, from market share to branch networks, fleet size and service, and identification, which is why this coding is relevant.

Brand Equity (*code weighting: 18*): Aaker (2009:27) describes brand equity “as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a specific brand, based on the service or product provided by the company”, where value can be added or subtracted from the brand. Specific to the respondent feedback, many believe that the international brand (Europcar) would add value to the equity of the domestic brand in the views of the customer, global service standards would be adopted, and premium products would be provided.

Unique Customer Traditions (*code weighting: 14*): This code is specific to the organisation and the unique customer traditions that are maintained. The most notable tradition mentioned by most respondents is the mints (sweets) that are placed in each rental car. This is a tradition that started in the early 1980s when Carol Scott (past CEO of Imperial Car Rental), Maureen Jackson and Dawn Jones (past CEO Imperial Car Rental/Europcar) started the company after leaving Avis Car Rental (Kok & de Beer, 2015:86-95).

Investment (*code weighting: 10*): Into any brand is tangible as this cannot be displayed in black and white on the organisations balance sheet, ultimately though, these intangibles are key in terms of the desired outcomes for the business strategy model (Aaker, 2014:20). Investment, therefore, into the rebranding process for the Imperial Group was imperative for the successful outcome of the process.

Marketing/branding mistakes (*code weighting: 10*): Specific to the Imperial organisation and where respondents have noted these mistakes is the reason for this code. The tone of the feedback is around shortfalls made in the online marketing and advertising space on branding specifically, and vague, misleading campaigns, these could be the outcome of reductions in

marketing budgets which was another factor noted in respondent feedback. It is important to ensure that the bond between the customer and the brand is maintained, if this bond is broken through mistakes made, misleading or unclear advertising, and this results in an inaccurate assessment of the brand by the customer which can result in the brand declining (Haig, 2005:3).

Competitive Advantage (*code weighting: 8*): This is important in that one of the aims of rebranding is to gain a competitive advantage over the competition. This code references feedback from respondents where the organisation surpasses the competition in service and product. Also highlighted is the access to global products and services that the rebranding process would allow for the revitalised brand in South Africa, such as gaining an international footprint, customer network, and being able to offer new products and unique services. Rebranding is costly and precarious if not done correctly but, if done correctly, can be an immensely powerful tool in the organisation's arsenal against the competition (Mizoyan, 2013:59).

Staff Well-Being (*code weighting: 8*): Well-established brands bring about higher levels of pride and job satisfaction amongst employees, especially when they believe in the fundamentals of the brand, which typically increases productivity and loyalty (Turner, 2019:25).

Strategic Pitfalls (*code weighting: 6*): Noted by respondents in the feedback received is specific where the shortfalls are, some were repeated and are rather detrimental to the rebranding and marketing process. Martin and Stephens (2019:47) state that branding does not always follow the sensible route and one error can be detrimental and can damage all brand equity.

Target Audience (*code weighting: 6*): This code is quite straightforward in those specific actions were carried out by the organisation that targeted the customer on various levels. Ilias (2021:117) states that when a brand undergoes a renewal or change, this change needs to be communicated clearly to the supporters of the brand. For the scarcity codes noted below, with a < 5 ATLAS weighting per category, there is no need to report each line item. These are briefly mentioned: with a *weighting: 2*, about a specific brand noted and sentiment expressed by two respondents. Competitor Assumption, *weighting: 1*, one respondent noted a perception of Europcar's closest rival and the assumption on the brand standing in the South African market. Sustainable, *weighting: 1*, this code refers to Europcar's contribution towards sustainable business practice contributing to Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and other similar initiatives. Unfavourable Brands, *weighting: 1*, one respondent's feedback noted that Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) is an unhealthy food option. The above codes have been grouped, as seen in Table 4.1.

Sentiment Analysis, (ATLAS.Ti), is the contextual mining of text that assists in detecting and extracting subjective material from relevant source material, in this specific case, respondent survey data. This process assists the business in gaining insight into customer sentiment towards their specific brand (Towards Data Science, 2018).

Positive (*code weighting: 32*) *sentiment*, ATLAS.Ti identified a plethora of positivity in terms of sentiment, especially from the respondents that were involved in the process. Key characteristics relative to the brands, products, and services become apparent, as well as underlying purpose, responses, and feedback are further brought to the surface when going through the rebranding process (Liu, 2020:5).

Negative (*code weighting: 3*) *sentiment*, ATLAS.ti recognised three negative sentiments throughout the entire analysis—one reference to the industry rival, one reference towards an external brand, that technically has no bearing to this specific industry, and one relevant point toward the organisation in question.

4.8.2 Axial code groups

Allen (2017:80-81) defines Axial coding as the middle or “later stage” of coding in research analyses. This is specific to how categories and sub-categories are reviewed and then connected and has proved to be a credible and reliable tool for researchers when going through the analysis process. In the analyses of the initial survey data, the open codes were created and are shown in Table 4.1. As the researcher has progressed, the open codes created have been grouped into relevant aspects pertaining to the outcome of this research. Figure 4.7 below depicts the graphical display mentioned and elaboration further below in relation to *Opportunities*, *Challenges*, and the *People* aspect of rebranding. Going through the coding groups is a process; there is progression as the data evolves over time, which prompts revision of the coding assisting in the analytical thought process for the researcher (Friese, 2014:97).

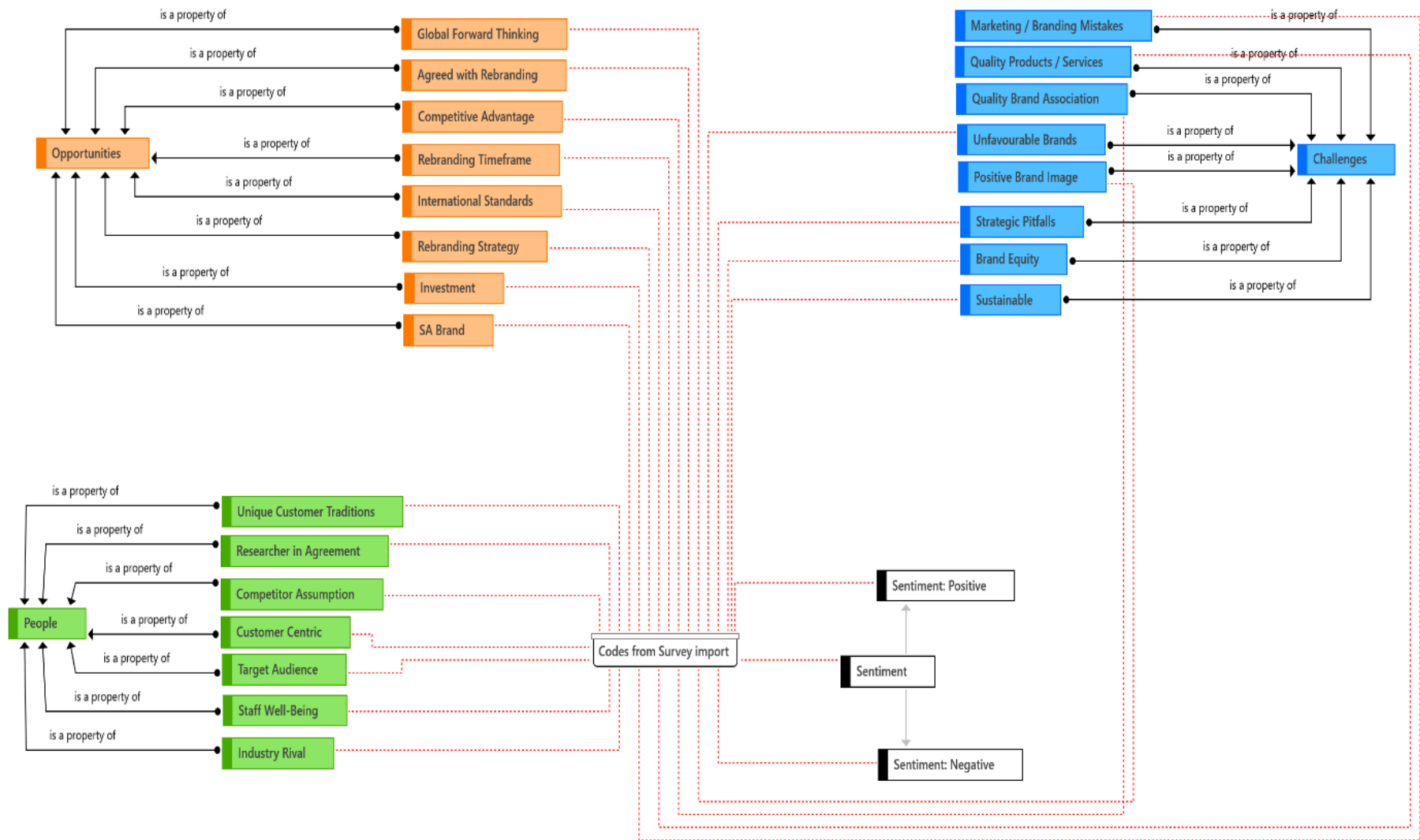


Figure 4.7: Axial code grouping generated in ATLAS.Ti

4.8.2.1 Aspects of rebranding opportunities

There are numerous opportunities and benefits when it comes to going through the rebranding process; one appeals to a wider customer base, growth, and partnership opportunities (Ong, 2017:109), generating greater brand awareness, perceptions and behaviour are affected (Aaker, 2014:10). A good brand image resulting from a rebrand can also positively influence delivery networks, supplier relationships, pricing guidelines and consumer relationships for the organisation (Burke et al., 2016:306).

In this case, relative to the code groups created, a collective label has been applied that groups the specific codes that are in line with Opportunities for Rebranding in the view of the researcher (Friese, 2014:82). Opportunities as a property of the rebranding process, the reasoning behind the process in terms of gaining a competitive advantage, investing into South Africa and a continent with great potential, especially when it comes to tourism prospects (Appau, 2021:241). This brings a global branding opportunity to be developed by a truly South African brand ensuring international standards for the South African consumer all within a structured timeframe and through an applicable rebranding strategy. The outcome is evident as most respondents believed the rebranding process to be required and agreed that it took place.

There are numerous examples of successful rebranding cases (two SA cases noted below) known to South Africans, brands presented with industry challenges that through this process of change, translated these challenges into significant opportunities linked to the longevity and success of the respective organisations, which is now evident 31 (KFC) and 15 (PnP) years later. Kentucky Fried Chicken rebranded to KFC in 1991 due to the diversification of their menu and to assist in separating the negative, unhealthy connotations associated with the word “fried” from its brand name (Markou & Bannister, 2008:47).

Pick ‘n Pay is one of South Africa’s oldest, most loved, and well-recognised brands that went through a rebrand in 2007, which is almost 40 years since being established without any changes to the brand. While the name of the store remained the same, everything else changed—the look of the logo changed as well as the organisation’s signature colours, in-store signage, staff uniform, media, advertising and, lastly, their slogan was updated to “Inspired by you.” The cost of the rebranding was estimated at R110m and the purpose was to strengthen its market position and update several of its in-store product lines (Media Update, 2007).

The business case was strategically compiled, the motivation behind the rebranding was identified and communicated, and a story was conceived where the value in storytelling is priceless. When it comes to customers identifying with the brand, it establishes a bond on an emotional level. For the Imperial/Europcar rebranding, a clear patch was laid out by the project

team and a key priority was to ensure the fundamentals of the original brand were not lost and that the refreshed brand was out in the public domain. The project team also ensured that the right managers were in place to drive the concept forward internally and with relevant external stakeholders. These individuals were key to the process and were responsible for ensuring buy-in was experienced across multiple levels (Forbes, 2018).

4.8.2.2 Aspects of rebranding challenges

Various challenges present themselves when undergoing the rebranding process which can also contribute to customer confusion as there is a period of adjustment towards the new brand (Collange, 2008:2). Besides the adjustment, what is the ultimate consequence of the rebranding for the organisation in terms of the challenges that became prevalent? How has this offset against the requirements of the customer? These factors need to be considered as the rebranding process can sporadically present challenges that are predictable and require understanding to be mitigated (Muzellec & Lambkin, 2006:807-808).

A key factor considered by Europcar was that rebranding essentially highlights change and this change needs to be evident as superficial change will not produce the desired results. The rebranding process is challenging in that it needs to be effective and inclusive of the marketing departments focus on the customers' requirements. The outcome of the process must attend to these requirements and the plotted course needs to be structured in design to ensure the outcome is successful. The plan must be researched properly and all stakeholders (internal customers, employees and external customers, suppliers) must be considered, as was the case in this rebranding exercise, to gain an understanding of the broader mindset of these stakeholders to ensure that the rebranding plan is executed effectively.

Finally, the role brand equity plays must not be overlooked otherwise there is an increasing risk factor that long-standing, loyal customers might feel estranged from the brand, resulting in potential counter-productivity for the organisation in terms of the overall desired outcome of the rebranding process (Aaker, 1991:48-51; Parameswaram, 2001:79-83; Kotler, 2003:67-70; Taylor, 2004:3-6; Satish, 2015:84-85). An example of a rebranding process from Pepsi in 2014, which unfortunately did not go as planned for the organisation, is highlighted below.

Pepsi

When it comes to cool drink (soda), two brands typically come to mind for the average person. Number one is Coke and number two is Pepsi, the latter being invented by pharmacist Caleb Davis Bradham in 1893 (Bradley, 2014:87). Since 1893, Pepsi had gone through around 16 rebrands where the logo was changed (Design Hill, 2021), but in 2014, after months of work and an estimated R16.5m price tag, the new design was critiqued quite negatively. The brand

was changed to resemble the smile on people's faces, but Pepsi customer-input was not considered, and the organisation found the rebrand to be uncreative and inconsistent, resulting in unhappy customers and a failed marketing rebrand.

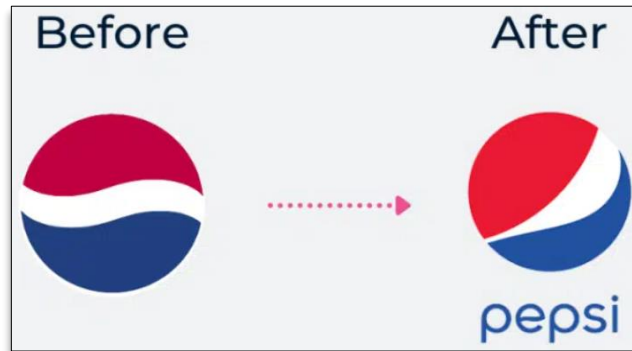


Figure 4.8: Pepsi logo change

Source: Klint Marketing, 2021

4.8.2.3 The stakeholder aspect of rebranding

The focus of this aspect is on the stakeholder aspect of the rebrand, from customers, long-standing and new, target customers, the employees of the organisation, employees working for any competition, the suppliers, investors, the community, and any other—the people-aspect of the process that contributed in some way to the outcome. Important aspects noted in the coding by the researcher are the customer traditions upheld by the organisation and the fact that there was always an extremely specific focus on customer centricity, internal and external, in terms of the existing base and targeting new customers. Considerable focus was also on the competition, one industry rival specifically, and the misconceptions of this competitor and their staff towards Europcar and its employees.

Understanding why each stakeholder is important and what they require through the rebranding process is imperative to ensure that the rebranding is successful. All stakeholders need to be considered to ensure any prospects are not missed, or any relevant feedback is not being analysed and considered in the final result (Reputation X, 2022). How the brand is perceived and interpreted by the customer is dependent on how it was communicated to the customer by the organisation. (Kapferer, 2008:19-20). Communication is key, how the brand talks to the customer and the perception thereof need to be monitored through various available forms. Throughout the process, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) values were quantified, where customers were selected at random for the process and their feedback was

closely monitored. Other forms are also used by Europcar, such as the repeat purchase rate. Customer-spend was monitored monthly and any significant up-or-down movements were investigated by the relevant account manager responsible for the customer (Hinckley, 2011:299; Reputation X, 2022).

People give meaning to brands; they create the significance behind the brand even though the organisation is responsible for the creation of the brands identity. This sense created is at the centre of behaviour for the customer, it is what motivates the customer and this needs to be understood by the organisation in commercial terms to capitalise on an exercise like rebranding. The complexity of this analysis is that when there is an emphasis on the decision-making process and consumer behaviour, then the focus is on the buying process instead of the consuming process from a holistic standpoint (Batey, 2012:1-2).

The premeditation of consumer behaviour must be considered, along with a degree of consciousness as well as the subconscious drivers or natural instinct of the individual (Armony & Vuilleumier, 2013:331-332).

The meaning behind the Europcar brand was explored significantly by the organisation prior to the start of the rebranding process, this led to the identification and greater understanding of the nature of relevant stakeholders, including cultural context, collective beliefs, and values that contributed to the success of the process (Valentine, 1995:7; Batey, 2012:3-4).

4.8.3 Selective coding

The overarching theme concluded by the researcher is the purpose behind the rebrand; its focal points were the customer and the organisation, driving the reinvention, which ultimately, was required. Within this reinvention lay the challenge as organisations today have very traditional setups, hierarchy, foundations, and processes, which is the subsequent result of its conception, Europcar Paris in 1949 and Europcar South Africa in 1996 (Europcar, 2022b).

This way of operating was outdated and, as the executive management team had realised, the current model was no longer suitable for the existing business environment and change was required, not a variation of the existing setup but something fundamentally altered and set up for success (Mckinsey & Company, 2010).

Through the rebranding, the identity of Europcar was strengthened to such a degree that the organisation went from the 4th best car rental company in South Africa to challenging Avis for the top spot over the past few years (pre-COVID). The focus was not on profits but rather on the people (staff, customers, providers) and creating a positive brand identity to promote positive company culture, unity, connection, purpose, and value for employees and customers.

The 'purpose' was the focus point for the organisation, the creation of a corporate purpose that brings everyone together, the epitome of why starts with the "why" (Sinek, 2011:1-5) to generate a collective of everything that the organisation embodies emotionally and practically.

Having purpose as the focus point will bring about the change the organisation was looking for, attract the right type of workforce, as well as a new client base along with strengthening the existing one. This type of view is becoming more acceptable in the corporate world as factors such as ESG become more prevalent and hold organisations accountable for not just profits but other ways of generating value and purpose for all stakeholders (Hill, 2020:30-32).

Through the rebranding, Europcar managed to bring about a stronger connection between itself and their employees, this new connection reinforced the greater purpose of the rebrand generating positive action towards the process. This also generated higher levels of engagement as any hesitation and doubts that came through were negated and lead to other untapped market potential opportunities being tapped into. The way forward was clearly marked and the reason behind the process was communicated and agreed upon by the majority of relevant stakeholders, resulting in an inspired workforce engaging with stakeholders to work together on the plan forward. The rebranding easily communicated the value that would be generated in the end for all stakeholders, this communicated outcome was highly regarded and tangible for all parties and a truly unique selling point if one were ever required (Mckinsey & Company, 2013:3-10).

The value outcome was important in that it allowed for a focus point of organisation resources, as well as a dynamic approach allowing for adjustments as priorities shifted through the process. As the purpose was clearly identified, the organisation's culture was the secondary focus point. The process of the rebrand, the people aspect, how behaviour and attitudes were shaped, encouragement and alignment of values, and strong company culture is linked to consistent organisation performance and the mantra of "Ubuntu, I am because we are" was uniquely conceived to drive this behaviour amongst all employees on all levels within the organisation (Kotter & Heskett, 1992:15; Mckinsey & Company, 2014:1-3; Grant et al., 2019:2-3).

4.9 Value creation from rebranding

In general, most companies go through a significant rebrand or brand refresh every 10 years, with the entire process taking an average of 12-18 months from start to finish (Crowd Spring, 2022). The process is critical for the longevity of the organisation and in this case, the necessary next step for both Imperial and Europcar. Combining the traditional best home-grown business practices of Imperial with the global and dynamic best in business practices

of Europcar leads the new firm to new value and continuity. The rebranding led to a combination of processes, the utilisation of a collective traditional best with newfound flexibility allowing Europcar an expanded view on available value in the existing market. Europcar began looking ahead in terms of greater aspirations for the brand, looking further than the traditional approaches in place to ensure there was a commitment to the transformation and focus on the value to be gained (Mckinsey & Company, 2020).

There are only two ways to have an impact on the behaviour of individuals—either they can be manipulated, or alternatively, they can be inspired. Manipulation is rather common when it comes to business strategies, typical examples of these strategies include reducing the price, product promotions, pressure within the relevant industry, fear tactics, and the promise of product development. These are the usual strategies for organisations that do not understand their customers; they do not know why their customers are their customers and they do not recognise the deeper purpose of the organisation (Sinek, 2011:57-58). Knowing the customers and the employees and utilising this knowledge was a key insight for leaders at Europcar, creating this sense of involvement really elevated the brand and its purpose.

A combinational, transformational synergy of the two brands (Imperial and Europcar) brought about the decline of any existing organisational redundancy and exposed the existing limitations of the two organisations. This shift came about from the effect of the rebranding itself and led to revolutionary performances for Europcar in the 2010 financial year. The organisation's focus over this period was selective but resonated throughout the organisation as it was centred on company culture and the union of the two brands (Imperial and Europcar). This focus on culture and people, the way employees were involved in the process and were able to give their input on the rebranding process promoted a degree of ownership of the changes that were made and helped them feel like they were able to add value and purpose to the organisation. There was active participation from the executive management team and clear objectives were set by the project team, which allowed Europcar to capture any opportunities that became available. Whether it was from an operations perspective or commercial, the result was new heights in terms of performance brought about by the rebranding (Mckinsey & Company, 2021).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, the study introduced Imperial Car Rental and Europcar and provided some history on both organisations from Imperial's inception in 1979, listing on the JSE in 1987 and the ushering in of Dawn Nathan Jones as CEO who succeeded Carol Scott in 2000. Running alongside Imperial was Europcar, which began its operations under a franchise agreement in South Africa in 1994 by Imperial, until the merger of the two organisations took place in 2007 and then the complete rebranding to Europcar in 2008. The research problem was discussed, common factors between both brands were highlighted, industry challenges noted, specifically how the market would react to the change and other challenges that arise when going through a rebranding process, company culture, service delivery, how the brands would be merged, and most importantly, the customers' perception on the merger outcome. The objectives of the research and subsequent study questions were highlighted as well as the methodology to be used for the study.

Chapter 2 focused on the South African tourism industry and its relation to the global tourism landscape. Factors contributing to this industry in terms of drivers and trends were discussed, such as the tourism industry's contribution to SA's GDP, various tourism statistics such as arrivals, how and where tourists spend their money when visiting SA, employment contribution, forms of transport (air, sea, land.), to car rental and its relevant trends, history within the tourism industry, and the impact of COVID-19 along with the predicted recovery for South African and global tourism.

Chapter 3 highlighted the research methodology that was utilised by the researcher, who opted for a qualitative study, rooted in a constructivist grounded theory analysis to construct relevant theories through the collection and analysis of survey data. Interviews were conducted with identified respondents within the travel and tourism industry and specifically in the organisation in question, Europcar. Once the survey data were collected, the open, axial, and selective coding approach was utilised to develop a core theory of analysis.

Chapter 4 broke down the data gathered for further analysis. Data were viewed as demographic, age, organisation designation, gender, and education of the respective respondents, as well as their interpretation of the merger exercise. The coding was generated and elaborated across all levels, further insight into the analysis was highlighted, leading to the value generated from the rebranding process.

In this chapter, Chapter 5, the implications of the research are presented along with suggestions for future research.

5.2 Research objectives

5.2.1 Objective 1: Motivation behind the rebranding process

What motivated the rebranding and understanding the process was key to reaching the desired outcomes set by Europcar. A rebranding process can be complex and has many moving parts, so from the offset, understanding the concept, the motivation, the approach, the people, and what the management team at Europcar knew was paramount to a successful project outcome. In a traditional sense, rebranding revolves around design, a brand refresh, the changing of colours, and revamping the website. These all require time and attention. Organisation foundations could also be updated or changed, such as the vision and mission, and the company could also opt to be renamed, which was the preferred way forward in the case of Imperial and Europcar (Gubnitskaia & Smallwood, 2018:218).

While these factors hold merit, these were not the fundamental motivators behind the decision to rebrand the organisation. The rebranding took place because of people and the organisation's purpose to better serve its customers and employees. Part of the catalyst behind the rebranding project was the 2010 Football World Cup and Europcar knew this global event would bring many international customers to South Africa. Ensuring that the new brand was in place to service these new customers was important and added further resolve to the Europcar management team to ensure the project was successful. This purpose was driven by a new global perspective that Europcar hoped would increase the value of its brand in the mind of the consumer (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012:113).

5.2.2 Objective 2: Did the rebranding process lead to a competitive advantage

Before the rebranding project was conceived and the merging of the two brands took place, their respective figures were as follows:

Imperial, Europcar 2007/8, published results (Imperial Logistics, 2007).

- Revenue R8m
- Fleet size 13 400 vehicles
- Employees 6 283
- Market share 18%

Europcar Rental 2018/19, published results (Motus, 2019).

- Revenue R65m

- Fleet size 20 100 vehicles
- Employees 18 628
- Market share 25%

The merged and rebranded organisation had achieved considerable developments in all areas of business noted above, from revenue to market share advances in the past 10 years and consistently challenging Avis Car Rental for the top spot in South Africa. Europcar had achieved “Africa’s Leading Car Hire Company” at the World Travel Awards in Africa for the 12th consecutive year since 2009, which consistently indicates how a competitive advantage has been gained due to the rebranding project that took place in 2008 (Europcar, 2022a).

5.2.3 Objective 3: Rebranding challenges identified

The various challenges arising from the rebranding process, raised a few key challenges for Europcar. How does the organisation rebrand and subsequently change their identity without losing any of the existing customer- and employee base while ensuring additional value is generated because of the project? Europcar addressed these challenges by focusing on what the customers' and relevant stakeholders' needs were by identifying this early in the merger process. Europcar was certain about why they were following a rebrand and this need was clearly communicated as customer-centricity to all stakeholders.

A comprehensive strategy was planned as the complexities of the rebrand were evident and through the stakeholder engagement, Europcar was able to anticipate relevant speed bumps before they caused any roadblocks (to be consistent with road-use language). The rebrand was publicly advertised from the beginning and Europcar made it known that the purpose behind the process was to grow the organisation by better serving its customers and employees. By being transparent with customers and employees, showing a clear path to success, and taking a slightly wider perspective on conventional perceptions about customer service, provided assurances to all that, in the end, would only benefit from the rebranding process (Manu, 2014:18-20; Business News Daily, 2022).

5.2.4 Objective 4: Rebranding opportunities identified

The opportunities that became arose through the rebranding process were centred on Europcar using its global expertise to extend its footprint and strengthen the home-grown South African franchise brand. Significant investment from Europcar’s holding company resulted in the brand being elevated to an international standard that was now being offered to the domestic (South African) customer base. The opportunity to apply an engaging rebranding strategy was done in the right timeframe, resulting in Europcar taking full advantage of their newfound status in the South African market, where they currently (in 2022) hold a

position equivalent to Avis. Through the rebranding process, Europcar was able to gain investor funding, increase its fleet significantly, upskill and employ more people, and aggressively model pricing to create competitive disruption in the domestic market. Other opportunities from the rebranding included strengthening relationships with their existing customer base, employees, and new customers from different market segments. Europcar advanced substantially as an organisation due to the rebranding process (Majid, 2022:38-40).

5.2.5 Objective 5: Brand equity, old versus new

Brand equity was at a good place with the old Imperial Car Rental brand: customers loved and knew the brand, brand association was positive, and products and services offered were of value to the customer. With the rebranding, Europcar brought about another higher level of service, international standards inclusive of internationally recognised benchmarks such as the Nett Promoter Score (NPS) methodology which assesses service to customers and was introduced in 2013 (Imperial Logistics, 2013:31). NPS measures Europcar performance against Europcar in 26 other countries, allowing customers to rate the service and advise whether they would recommend the brand or not, based on their experience. At the end of 2019, Europcar maintained a score of 58, where Bain and Co., the source of the NPS system, stated any score above 50 is rated as exceptional (Imperial Logistics, 2018:112-118; Customer Monitor, 2019; Auto Rental News, 2020).

When it comes to brand equity, there are a few rudimentary elements that warrant attention, the first being the perception of the relevant party, be it the customer, the employee, or the supplier, what perception of the brand the stakeholder has, negative or positive, and what the outcome of this perception is. Ultimately, there was a change in brand equity. The well-known local brand merged with the international brand to the benefit of the customer, the employee, and the organisation, and in the end, brand equity grew substantially, Europcar gained market share and according to NPS, customers could not be happier (Veselinova & Samonikov, 2017:12-14).

5.3 Research recommendations

In terms of what was set out to be achieved through this study, the following are noted as recommendations.

- In terms of the successful rebranding, all aspects available to Europcar were leveraged on the relationships with customers, staff, and suppliers, existing service, social platforms and operational and financial expertise. By gaining a better understanding of these aspects Europcar can gain deeper insight into

customer and employee culture and identify the true desires and influences of stakeholders.

- Europcar should continue to use forms of media and mobiles such as Nett promotor scoring and random SMS quick feedback surveys to customers to gather information about aspects of the brand and service.
- Platforms such as NPS and other customer service index mediums should be maintained to identify challenges relating to service and products and set corrective actions where required, note customer satisfaction and acknowledge staff where relevant.
- Further insight into customer behaviour is recommended and understanding drivers behind purchasing habits so that senior management can give these factors attention to better align business decisions.
- Further insight into the building of customer data profiles is recommended, NPS feedback should be added to customer data that is voluntarily provided by the customer at check-in and check-out points to build up specific profiles per user and use this data-generated profile to anticipate customer behaviour and trends.
- Further insight into autonomous checkouts and other procedures utilised in Europe should also be made available to the South African customer base through Europcar South Africa. The technology is readily available and in use at Europcar's head office in France and the rest of Europe. Utilising this type of technology that is currently available would add to the competitive advantage that the rebranding provided.
- Upgrading the checkout and return process through the use of video cameras and 3d scanning should also be implemented at high turnover locations such as the Cape Town and OR Tambo international airports. The exit and entry paths from the parking lot should have a scanning area that records the vehicles leaving and returning, picking differences in the body of the vehicle to alleviate damage claim queries and long timeframes experienced by customers due to the existing analogue process of physical checks, leaving room for human error. This would greatly benefit both the customer and Europcar and would streamline the check-in and out and return process, in terms of dispute and query resolution timeframes.

5.4 Implications of research

Understanding the mindset of the customer, relevant stakeholders, and their perceptions of the existing brand, what is their perceived value of the brand and what are the implications of the rebranding before and after the fact? The research has shown that including all stakeholders had tremendous quantifiable value, and ultimately could have significant

consequences if not properly considered by any organisation undergoing such a merger-process. Current, past, and potential stakeholders were all considered and assisted the organisation in making a well-rounded decision about the project and its outcome. The project was a success because the conditions of the project had reached consensus between the organisation, its culture, the brand, and the stakeholders' expectations of the outcome. In the end, Europcar's reputation, identity, and brand equity were quantified internally by employees and validated externally by customers (Campbell & Ma, 2015:764; Burke et. al., 2016:284; Gambetti & Quigley, 2017:183; Pedersen & Thibault, 2018:111; Eliasof, 2022:36).

5.5 Research limitations

While the researcher was of the view that this qualitative study had its benefits, there is no denying the limitations experienced throughout the process. The biggest challenge was the sample size of respondents and the time taken to follow up and consistently check in to find out if the survey questionnaire had been completed. Finding suitable respondents for the survey and inviting them to participate take in the study presented its own challenges as many had moved on from the organisation and various forms of social media had to be used to make contact. The researcher anticipated some of these limitations and even though the sample size was small, there was emphasis placed on ensuring that key respondents took part in the survey.

These key respondents were the drivers behind the project, they conceptualised the entire rebranding process for Europcar and without their authority and involvement, the project would not have happened. Having their feedback for this research was crucial to the outcome as it provided a sound framework from which to work for the researcher. This in itself could also be noted as a limitation as the subjectivity of the researcher is also listed as a key limitation when it comes to potential bias. To mitigate this limitation, the researcher ensured that the data collected remained anonymous and that all feedback was adequately reviewed and utilised to assist with the final framework for this study (Patton, 2002:563; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008:87; Marshall & Rossman, 2010:76).

5.6 Suggestions for further research

A suggestion for future research in the field of rebranding is to consider additional methods in this area and the consideration of case studies to advance specific research where literature is abundantly available. Relative to the nature of rebranding, especially within certain sectors such as the corporate industry or the travel and tourism industry, utilising this type of available literature makes sense. The reasoning behind this suggestion is that if these specific frameworks from existing case studies are utilised consistently, reliable concepts would start to prevail and from this utilisation, more applicable frameworks can be derived that have

general use applications in the industries mentioned above, as examples, certain aspects would repeat and lead to further development. The utilisation of relative case studies would be noted and theories combined, ultimately leading to more suited developed theories that are segment-specific (Burke et. al., 2016:300).

5.7 Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that brands drive decisions that customers make. If different managers within any organisation are asked, they will offer a slightly different driver for success, along the lines of price, the product or service, and the distribution thereof but ultimately, the brand matters and this is evident when looking at how stronger brands perform compared to others. This performance goes both ways as brands that perform well financially, such as Coke, Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon (Financial Times, 2020), where year-on-year financial growth is achieved, result in stronger brands as well (Investopedia, 2018).

The strategy is also key when it comes to rebranding. The relevant landscape should be observed, understood, and drivers and trends identified, the available interactions used, and feedback from customers and staff on the ground obtained. Europcar utilised special, unique characteristics to the brand that were consistent with the expectation of all stakeholders to build a successful rebranding strategy that ensured they were ahead of the competition and delivered on the opportunities that were presented (Mckinsey, 2021).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CPUT ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	Faculty: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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At a meeting of the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee on **19 June 2018**, Ethics **Approval** was granted to **Burch Ricardo (210121459)** for research activities of **MTech: Business Administration** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis/project:	RE-BRANDING AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE: A CASE STUDY OF CORPORATE RE-BRANDING IN THE CAR RENTAL INDUSTRY Lead Researcher/Supervisor: Prof J. P. Spencer
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Comments:

Decision: **APPROVED**

 Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	13 August 2018 Date
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Clearance Certificate No | 2018FBREC558

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Question 1

Why did the organisation (Imperial/Europcar) rebrand, what were the expected challenges and opportunities that would arise from the rebranding?

Question 2

What strategy was used for the car rental rebranding exercise?

Question 3

What factors were considered to ensure a competitive advantage was achieved?

Question 4

Was the South African consumer's point of view taken into consideration before following the rebranding process?

Question 5

What effect would the rebranding have on the equity of the current brand, what steps were taken to ensure it wasn't compromised?

Question 6

Did any collaboration take place for this project, internally in terms of special project teams formed?

Question 7

Who is your biggest industry rival and why?

Question 8

What do you like and dislike about their brand?

Question 9

How does your brand differentiate itself from other brands in the industry?

Question 10

What is unique about your business, its history, and traditions?

Question 11

Did any business processes change with the rebranding?

Question 12

What was the timeline for the rebranding process?

Question 13

What was the budget for the rebranding process?

Question 14

What existing customer base do you have, and will this change with the rebranding?

Question 15

What effect will the rebranding process have on your existing customer base?

Question 16

Why is there a need to change the current brand?

Question 17

Being a franchise, are there guidelines set out for the rebranding by the franchise owner?

Question 18

What brands do you identify with personally and why, give 2-3 examples?

Question 19

Which brands do you think show qualities that are aligned with your organisation's brand?

Question 20

Which brands have qualities that you dislike, why?

Question 21

What branding/marketing related mistakes do you think your competitors make?

Question 22

What branding/marketing related mistakes has your organisation made in the past?

Question 23

Do you think your organisation has the qualities required to be successful in car rental industry?

Question 24

Do you think the rebranding process will attract a new or different customer base?

Question 25

What benefits can your organisation offer these new customers?

Question 26

How do these offerings compare to other industry offers for the customer?

Question 27

From a marketing standpoint, do you think rebranding is the best approach for your organisation?

Question 28

Were there other marketing campaigns run in conjunction with the rebranding process?

Question 29

Which marketing campaigns have you favoured in the past, your organisation or others?

Question 30

Once the rebranding process was completed, how was any negative feedback addressed?

Question 31

What was the biggest challenges for your organisation once the rebranding process was completed?

Question 32

How were these challenges resolved?

APPENDIX C: GRAMMARIAN LETTER

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05 September 2022

LANGUAGE & TECHNICAL EDITING

Cheryl M. Thomson

RE-BRANDING AND CONSUMER CONFIDENCE: A CASE STUDY OF CORPORATE RE-BRANDING IN THE CAR RENTAL INDUSTRY

Supervisor: Prof J P Spencer

This is to confirm that I, Cheryl Thomson, executed the language and technical editing of the above-titled Master's dissertation of RICARDO BURCH, student number 210121459, at the CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY in preparation for submission of this dissertation for assessment.

Yours faithfully



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