Antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in comparable newer universities

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Statement of Original Authorship

Title: Antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in comparable newer universities

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The purpose of this research is to explore interpretations of brand success in the context of comparable newer universities.

This research establishes a specific branding tool for higher education institutions (HEIs) to identify the factors that contribute to a successful HEI brand, and consequently assesses the implications of that success. This is of value as higher education (HE) is not currently well served by established branding models, which mainly focus on market share, popularity, and profitability. In such a competitive marketplace as HE, the need to understand what defines brand success through the eyes of key stakeholders is important for developing a strong educational sector.

This research adopts a multiple case study approach with three broadly comparable post-1992 universities. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, an inductive methodology was used in order to build rich, insightful theory and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of brand success. Data from twenty-four semi-structured interviews was undertaken from these three case studies. This research defines HE brand success as **Enabling a transformational experience for positive social outcomes** and identifies four key themes that signify brand success in a post-1992 university brand. Having analysed the data through recursive abstraction, the themes identified are: Identity alignment, Co-creation, Driver for change, and Delivering on promises. These themes inform the conceptual framework, along with presenting themes identified for the antecedents and consequences of HE brand success. The conceptual framework guiding this research is drawn predominantly from branding theory and highlights how the key characteristics of HE brand success enables deeper connections and alignment to the stakeholder need. This research has important managerial implications in developing and executing branding strategies in the HE context as it provides a new perspective by introducing a bespoke model for HEIs to identify their brand success.

Key words: Brand attributes, higher education, success, university branding, brand success.

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However, mostly, I hope that I have been able to show my children that if you work hard enough and never give up, your dreams can come true.

Keep Moving Forward

Come what may   Helen O'Sullivan

Covid-19

This PhD research started in 2014; when terminology such as tiers, social distancing, and lockdown were not day-to-day vocabulary. And certainly, the world was not quite so familiar with the capital of central China's Hubei province, Wuhan.

At the point when normality became a distant memory, this PhD study was at the analysis point. Luckily all data collection has been obtained, so no contingency plan for zoom interviews was needed thankfully. For this I am extremely grateful as I truly think this would have compromised the level and depth of emotions and feelings, I was privileged to be a part of during data capture.

However, the last year of this research has taken place during three lockdowns and months and months of home-schooling. This has presented its fair share of issues and stress of course. Whilst planning my project timescale for this research, I didn't expect to need to factor in a pandemic.

Whilst I am proud that I ploughed through and submitted this thesis during such a distressing, anxious and exhausting time for everyone, I am sad my viva will be via zoom and not in person.

However, undertaking this PhD has taught me resilience and the true depth determination and commitment takes.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief overview of the research focus, introduces the context, and identifies the research gap. This research resides within the domain of branding and higher education (HE). The core contribution of this research lies in drawing out the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in a selection of broadly comparable newer UK universities (referred to in the literature as post-1992s).

1.1 Research justification

Branding has become increasingly common in HE over the last few years (Waeraas and Solbakk 2009), triggered by a period of great change: changes to student tuition fees, the de-regulation of student number controls, questions around contact hours and value for money, and trends towards large-scale marketisation and viewing the student as the consumer are but a few (Tomlinson 2015). By beginning to compete with other organisations, the sector has propelled itself into adopting sophisticated and sleek business practices including marketing and branding (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana, 2007; Melewar and Akel, 2005).

However, HE has its complexities, and insight into how to achieve a successful brand effectively and efficiently is important. Significant contributions to university branding scholarship have taken place, including international branding (Gray et al. 2003), brand architecture (Baker and Balmer 1997), brand equity (Pinar et al. 2014) and brand identity (Lowrie 2007), but empirical research related to assessing brand success are scarce, despite the growing importance of this subject (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007).

Whilst research into successful branding has been conducted in numerous commercial settings, research into defining brand success in the HE context is still needed (Melewar and Akel 2005). This work builds on existing literature in the domain of branding, specifically building on the works of Chapleo (2007, 2010, 2015), Hemsley-Brown et al (2006, 2007), and Maringe and Gibbs (2009), who identify that more understanding of brand success is needed, accompanied by a model that addresses the particular qualities of HE brand success. Investigating the benefits of branding in higher education institutions (HEIs) is crucial in developing a strong educational sector (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015). Furthermore, this research responds to scholars such as Leijerholt et al., (2019) who suggest that if existing brand management theories and models are insufficient for NFPs, the need to understand how these organisations should manage their brand is fundamental. The literature is clear that more research is needed that relates to the branding efforts of public sector organisations, such as universities (Watkins and Gonzenbach 2013).

de Chernatony et al., (1998) stated that university branding makes a promise to consumers about the service they can expect, as well as helping institutions to build strong images and reputation to attract stakeholders. To attract students, it is essential an institution stands out. This is achieved through successful branding; a process which highlights the institution's distinguishing features (Bennett and Ali-Choudhury 2009). Branding has become a critical ingredient for universities to increase their market share and as suggested by de Heer and Tandoh-Offin (2015), the motivation for HEIs to commit to branding may become stronger when the benefits are made clear.

This research is of particular significance for newer English HEIs, as to the best of the researcher's knowledge, it is the first to investigate brand success purely in the context of newer university brands. Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) note branding is of particular interest and importance to the more recently created universities. These post-1992 HEIs need to establish successful brands to enhance awareness among potential recruits and their influencers, and gain market share (Bennett and Ali-Choudhury 2009). Successful branding is also important for newer universities due to the increasingly competitive marketplace.

1.2 Problem definition: Identifying the research gap

Whilst considerable research has been undertaken on successful branding in the commercial sector, less has been investigated in HE; academic investigation has been slow and specific models are not understood (Chapleo 2015a). Scholars suggest that ‘traditional’ marketing theories and approaches do not provide sufficient capacity for the modern-day HEI, (Palmer et al. 2016) and furthermore, argue that models to help provide a holistic offering that meets these evolving needs, are lacking (Chapleo and O’Sullivan 2017). Furthermore, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) support Chapleo (20011) who argues that university branding is complex, and therefore the application of commercial approaches without accommodating the complexities in HE could be over-simplistic.

This study addresses this gap, investigating and defining brand success in university brands and developing a conceptual framework identifying interpretations and implications of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities. Such debates around the successful branding of HE are timely and significant (Chapleo and O’Sullivan, 2017).

A further fundamental challenge for university branding is communicating a naturally diverse and complex brand to multiple stakeholders with differing perceptions (Roper and Davies 2007), all with different understandings of what a brand is. Roper and Davies (2007) also highlight that there is little empirical research that demonstrates how differing groups in HE view the corporate brand.

Exploratory research with a variety of participants who have experienced the HE brand are limited. Accordingly, this research addresses this by exploring interpretations of brand success from a variety of participants; students, academics and university brand managers. An investigation of brand success from different perspectives will provide a robust foundation for the research findings and will support arguments for its contribution to knowledge.

This thesis therefore seeks to address the gaps in both theoretical knowledge and the practical understanding of the contemporary application of brand success in comparable post-1992 UK universities.

Gaps in knowledge about brand success in post-1992 universities are as follows:

i. There has been limited primary scholarly investigation into branding success in HE
ii. There has been no comprehensive research of brand success in post-1992 universities.
iii. An extensive study of the perceptions of brand success by such a variety of key stakeholders of post-1992 universities is absent in contemporary literature.
iv. Scholars (Chapleo, Maringe, Melewar, Gibbs) identify that a bespoke model to understand brand success in HE is needed.

1.3 Research context

The UK educational domain represents the research setting, and official statistics listed 163 Universities at the time the research was undertaken (HESA, 2018). In 1945-6 there were just 40,000 UK university students, and despite the post-war baby boom, by 1962 only 4% of school leavers attended university (Riesman 1982). The Education Act of 1962 introduced financial support to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to provide universities financial resource to cover tuition fees; making HE no longer reserved for those from privileged backgrounds. The Robbins report in 1963 introduced financial support for students from all socio-economic backgrounds. This opened the HE marketplace, encouraging opportunity for behavioural and societal change.

The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act granted 35 polytechnics full university status, in an attempt to diminish the divide between universities and polytechnics. All these institutions could now call themselves universities and award their own undergraduate degrees. The 1992 act increased the number of universities by 50% and doubled the number of university students (Halsey and Webb 2000). All HE institutions were now competing for funding and student recruitment. This act signified the start of promotion and advertising as a serious consideration for the UK HEI marketplace. Today, the HE landscape continues to be complex and multi-faceted. There continues to be shifting external contexts within the HE academy, and the move towards higher fees in England (announced in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review) in England has added to the already tense landscape.

The global increase in demand for HE, an escalation in student consumerism and an increased focus on the 'end product' in a revenue-generating market has led to a shift in the HE landscape and a corresponding marketisation of the way universities operate. Removing the cap for student places from 2015-2016 has seen the market become even more competitive. In addition, opening HE to new private providers has seen an additional pressure for HEIs as previously numbers were minimal. April 2018 saw the introduction of the 'Open for Business' initiative from the Office for Students. The focus on supporting students to receive a high academic experience and receiving value for money are the fundamental foundations for the regulatory framework.

Brexit has added further complications and uncertainty for the HE landscape, with implications for EU students and staff, as well as research grants. The increasing expectation that HE providers hear the student voice and act on it immediately is evidenced by a wealth of success metrics that have been introduced over the past few years; National Student Survey (NSS), Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE), to name a few. These make the voice of the student louder than ever. Indeed, the modern terminology within HEIs conveys the era of the quasi-commercial higher education; Student-centred, student-focused and personalised learning to name a few (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

1.4 Aims and objectives

The aim of this research is:

To explore interpretations and implications of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities.

Understanding the complexities of HE is important in providing a lens to frame the aim of this thesis. By considering brand success from different perspectives, it is anticipated that a greater understanding of interpretations will be understood as well as the consequential implications.

The aim will be achieved by four research objectives:

i. To critically examine the concept of success
ii. To critically examine the concept of brand success
iii. To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education
iv. To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities

1.5 Expected research contributions

Clearly, the issues and challenges of 21st century HE is significant. "Universities operate in an increasingly uncertain environment, with macro forces moving with speed, complexity and risk" (Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2017, p159). This research is relevant and timely due to the competitive nature of the landscape in which universities operate, and the need to ensure effective brand management to strengthen HEI brand success.

It is expected that this thesis will provide two major contributions to both fields of theory and HE marketing practice:

1.5.1 Contribution to theory

The literature informs us that much of the branding activity undertaken in HEIs is focused on promotion and brand identity elements (David 2007), without any focus on understanding the holistic nature of what constitutes a successful university brand (Pinar et al. 2014). Furthermore, empirical studies led by Chapleo (2005, 2007) have explored what HEI heads of marketing consider constitutes a successful brand but much remains unknown about how branding is perceived, and differs among other stakeholder groups (Melewar and Nguyen 2015). Therefore, this study relies on multiple framing from multiple viewpoints.

A conceptual framework will be crafted to support a new theoretical contribution to the understanding of brand success in the context of HE.

1.5.2 Contribution to practice

This research is expected to have several the managerial contributions to offer. Through exploring the theories of branding, and the various interpretations of brand success collected, the findings of this research may have important implications in developing and executing brand strategies in HE. Furthermore, through gaining insight into the perspectives of brand success from a range of committed stakeholders, the HEIs sampled for this research can develop and deliver their brand to ensure it meets, embedding a more competitive HE brand. A better understanding of how consumers perceive success, alongside an understanding of the drivers and outcomes of success, can help the institutions' brand managers to develop better-aligned recruitment campaigns and enhanced branding efforts, as well as allocate resources effectively. (Watkins and Gonzenbach 2013); a key objective for successful brand management.

1.6 Methodology

The adopted methodology of this research is introduced here and discussed in detail in chapter 3. As discussed in Section 1.1 this research investigates and defines the concept of brand success in a selection of newer universities. Therefore, a qualitativeinductive standpoint has been adopted for this research; this is most applicable as it sees experiences being socially, culturally and historically produced (Finlay and Evans 2009). Furthermore, Boeije (2009) reinforces that adopting a qualitative inductive process is recommended for researching a phenomenon.

This research uses a case study approach as it will provide a rich multi-dimensional holistic picture of brand success across cases (Remenyi 1998) and generate theory (Connie 1988), as, despite the growing importance of branding in HE, research remains sparse and great opportunities exist to contribute new branding concepts, theories and frameworks (Melewar and Nguyen 2015). Yin (2009, p.114-5) emphasises that one of the major strengths of case study data collection “is the opportunity to use many sources of evidence” and that findings that emerge from case study “data triangulation” (p.116) are more likely to be truthful.

The literature also identifies that adopting a case study approach can create interesting, accurate and testable theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). A multiple case study design was adopted due to its robust characteristics (Yin 2009) and creates a greater generalisability than single case studies (Jensen and Rodgers 2001; Noor 2008). The cases for this study were three broadly comparable newer UK universities. An overview of the selection criteria for choosing the cases is detailed in chapter 3.

The primary data collection used a qualitative method with semi-structured interviews. This is a well-suited technique for case study research and establish an epistemological coherency (Farquhar 2012). During the pilot study multiple research methods were tested: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and talk and draw methods. Whist the data captured was valuable, the researcher felt there were too many approaches being executed and, the most depth in the data was caught during the semi-structured interviews. The interview questions require honest and personal reflection; the one-to-one approach enabled a rapport to be built between interviewer and interviewee which resulted in more honesty and depth.

This research sought considered opinion, so the research population was expected to be engaged and committed to the HEI brand and capable of assessing its qualities and strengths. There is a need for research in HE branding to adopt a more exploratory approach with those who are already proactive with the HEI brand, to provide insight into their perception of brand success, and to ultimately develop strong theory-building research.

The sample population comprised: Final year undergraduate business, management and marketing students, brand-aligned academics who have been identified as embodying the HEI brand, and HEI brand managers/ marketing managers. Universities were selected based on four criteria: post-1992 universities, mid-ranking institutions, course portfolio similarities, and similar size of institution. (See methodology for criteria of research population).

1.7 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 1 has provided a context for the domain of study as well as providing an understanding of the research rationale, details the scope of the study, and discusses the method of data collection and analysis. This chapter discussed the research problem and justification for the research as well as introducing the overarching aims of the research and the underpinning research objectives. Lastly, this chapter discusses the contribution to both theory and practice which this research aims to provide.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Chapter 2 reviews seminal and contemporary literature exploring key knowledge on the concept of success, brand success, and the application of branding in HE to inform the conceptual framework. Predominantly the literature spans branding, higher education branding and social psychology literature. Defining terms for success and branding are introduced and the characteristics of success and brand are presented. The literature review details the leading scholars within this field as well as introducing and critiquing dominant branding theory which have influenced the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The methodological approach adopted is presented and details the research method and the research design for this study. The justification for adopting a multiple case study approach is presented, and the selection criteria for the three HEIs are discussed. The multiple sources of data collection to triangulate the research are discussed. Justifying the use of semi-structured interviews as the most suitable primary data source is presented. The methods employed in preparing for, conducting and post-data collection processes (such discussing the reflective data collection log) are critiqued. Lastly, the steps undertaken to analyse the qualitative data for this research are presented.

Chapter 4 – Presentation and analysis of findings

The analysed findings are presented in key themes and codes and draw heavily on interview quotations to provide justification of these themes and codes as well as provide a rich narrative into the various perceptions of brand success of each post-1992 university.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and interpretation of findings

Chapter 5 summarises the thesis and reviews the main findings. It provides a comprehensive interpretation and discussion of the key findings identified in chapter 4. The chapter concludes with reflection of the research's contributions to theory, introduces the conceptual framework, discusses the impacts to policy and practice this research prompts, as well as the impacts to learning and teaching.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

This final chapter offers an overarching conclusion to the research, including the research limitations. The chapter presents the impact of the research to date, as well as identifying future research opportunities. Finally, the chapter presents concluding thoughts.

1.8 Research boundaries

This thesis has several boundaries around the research parameters; in the attempt to aid the manageability of the research. The boundaries establish the scope of the research:

i. Undertaken within a single sector setting, the HE sector.
ii. All three cases were constrained to newer universities; this research did not capture data from Russell Group universities. There is however a recommendation that the model is tested in this group of universities in the future.
iii. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are multiple stakeholders of universities, the parameters of this study are focused on gathering perceptions from the aforementioned sample population only. It is recognised that data collection from business and local community would also be interesting and potentially valuable research.
iv. The focus of the study is university brands. However, lessons of good practice from other corporate brands are important reflections.
v. The geographic scope of this research was constrained to a single country (England).
vi. The methods are purely qualitative, based on a multiple case study approach. The research does not engage with quantitative methods.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The focus of this research is to explore and understand different interpretations of brand success in post-1992 UK universities. Exploring the concept of success and understanding the variables participants use to assess brand success, so that potential synergies or distinctiveness to higher educational brands can be identified provides an appropriate and effective theoretical landscape. This literature review therefore covers four key areas – discussing key themes and constructs of success, brand success, nature of the HE brand, and finally, brand success in the HE context.

A literature review follows which builds theory and knowledge for this research to inform the conceptual model design by investigating and comparing emerging concepts (Eisenhardt 1989). This chapter also identifies areas where there is a lack of knowledge or theory. The core theoretical foundation of this research lies in branding theory, however due to the exploratory nature of the research objectives focused on the concept of success, the literature spans HE branding, pedagogy and social psychology.

This chapter follows the following sections.

Section 2.1 provides a conceptualisation of success to build theory. Whilst the focus of this research is to understand brand success in newer universities, Chapleo (2005) argues that the notion of success is complex and further complicated when it is applied to a concept as intangible as branding. Therefore, it is important for this research to establish a lens through which to view and define success as a precursor to exploring brand success.

Section 2.2 provides a conceptualisation of brand. It introduces the corporate brand concept and identifies brand characteristics. The increased competition in the HE landscape has introduced sophisticated branding tactics which have traditionally been practiced in the commercial sector. It is therefore important to explore how ‘corporately’ the HE brand behaves. Accordingly, this chapter explores the nature of the HE brand and questions its purpose and efficiency in an educational setting.

Section 2.3 explores the benefits of branding but also presents the notion of brand rejection. It explores branding as a strategic activity for universities, reflects upon the multiple publics and expectations HEIs experience, and recognises the contentious issues of branding in HE.

Section 2.4 considers appropriate criteria to examine brand success, offered by key scholars. The concept of brand success and brand equity in HE is discussed. A synopsis of the criteria for brand success is presented around the headings of functional competencies, internal capabilities, and emotional benefits.

Section 2.5 provides a synthesis of the literature with a summary of key concepts, and theories that have provided scaffolding for the research objectives and conceptual framework.

Section 2.6 provides a summary of the chapter.

2.1 The conceptualisation of success

"He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has enjoyed the trust of pure women, the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished the task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has always looked for the nest in others and given them the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory a benediction."

Bessie Anderson Stanley (1904)

Success is a subjective concept that means different things to different people. The word success has its roots in Latin from the 1530s, "result, outcome," from Latin successus "an advance, succession, happy outcome," from succedere "come after". The meaning "accomplishment of desired end" (good success) was first recorded 1580s (Oxford Dictionary 2015). In a literal sense, success can mean "the favourable outcome of something attempted" (Collins Dictionary 2015) or "the accomplishment of an aim or purpose." (Oxford Dictionary 2015). These definitions point to achieving a positive outcome. However, in reality, the ways we define success vary.

Broadly understood as the realisation of an aim or activity directed towards its fulfilment (Baczko-Dombi and WysmuŁEk 2015), to set and achieve positive goals (Payton et al 2008), success is a construct built on shifting sands. It is never a constant; rather it is a journey towards an ever-changing destination. Success is never achieved with any degree of finality; rather it requires constant readjustment, reassessment and re-measurement. Success is a journey, not a destination. Goals may change during the journey; original ambitions may be overtaken by newer ones. How success is viewed will vary based on experiences, environment and social constructs. However, understanding the factors that influence success in life offers rich information about society (Baczko-Dombi and WysmuŁEk 2015).

Success is understood by some as a highly prized achievement, or by others as the experience of happiness and satisfaction. Mainstream culture may influence the way success is viewed; power, money and status may be viewed as characteristics of success. For some however, the most successful life may be spent helping others "Success isn't about how much money you make; it's about the difference you make in people's lives." (Michelle Obama, 2015). For some, a successful life would be devoted to God (Chua and Rubenfeld 2014). Korda (1977) asserts that whatever the key driver for success is, the best way to succeed is to begin with a realistic goal and attain it.

Broad determinants of success have been explored in empirical research with examples such as 'hard work', 'good education' and 'knowing the right people' (Baczko-Dombi and WysmuŁEk 2015), and crucially, motivation (Goleman 1996). Korda (1977) enforced that if you have a desire to succeed, you need to develop a real passion for winning as people who don't care, don't succeed. Korda (1977) also reinforced that desire, resilience, determination, and good timing are common determinants of success.

Gladwell (2008) asserts success is not exclusively due to individual merit, but often a product of the world in which they grew up; enforcing that opportunity plays a critical role. Furthermore, (Gladwell 2008) suggests success can arise from the steady accumulation of advantages; when and where you were born, your parents' careers, the circumstances of your upbringing. Sociologist Robert Merton (1968) famously called this phenomenon the "Matthew Effect", after the New Testament verse in the Gospel of Matthew "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matthew 25:29). This verse teaches us that those who are already successful are more likely to be given opportunities that lead to further success (Gladwell 2008). The Matthew Effect is an accumulated advantage where: "the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer" (Gladwell 2008 p.30).

Gladwell (2008, p.67) also suggests that luck and success are correlated. "Success is not exceptional or mysterious. It is grounded in a web of advantages and inheritances, some deserved, some not, some earned, some just plain lucky." Korda (1977) reinforces this for the American success story saying that luck has always played a significant role.

Morality in the plight of success is a recurring theme in the literature. The literature suggests that our attitudes of how successful a person is are set early, and measurement of how successful a person is can be influenced enormously by their behaviour. Focus on ethical decision making in the journey to success (Payton et al 2008) is observed in the literature.

Characteristics and traits such as self-awareness (Goleman 1996), self-presentation (Goleman 2007) and authenticity (Albreght, 2006) were recognised in the literature to impact the success experienced in our lives. (Race, 2014. p.213) states “confidence is perhaps the single most important pre-determinant of success.” The belief in our ability to achieve is considered a key factor.

For the most part, the literature represents a collective view that success is a positive achievement that offers great reward. The literature demonstrates that whilst success cannot insulate from emotional and physical danger, it is far more comfortable than failure (Korda 1977). However, there is also a body of evidence that views success as problematic and often once the initial thrill wears off it can cause stress and anxiety. For some, success can cause negative impact such as distraction or paranoia (Kluth 2011).

Success can bring its own challenges, as much as failure can. Playwright Tennessee Williams famously lost himself in the heap of his own prosperity and viewed the security deriving from the success of his play The Glass Menagerie as “a catastrophe” and even as a “kind of death.” (Williams 1984) Athletes, scientists, generals, entrepreneurs, performers, and politicians have all expressed this paradox in different words (Kluth 2011). For some, anxiety surrounding success exists due to the lack of understanding of how it was indeed created and how it can be repeated. Doyle (1989) reported that many small businesses failed after making a promising start because they did not know why they had been successful and how to repeat it. Success can be a double-edged sword; sometimes enabling prosperity and power, but sometimes being the catalyst to lost relationships and severed trust. Success can be a blessing and a burden (Berglas 1986).

2.1.1 Failure

"It is not the critic who counts.
The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena.
Whose face is married by dust and sweat and blood;
Who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again
And who at the worst, if he fails
At least fails while daring greatly"

Theodore Roosevelt (1910)

Success is the intent of every project, aim and goal, whether professional or personal, yet is entirely subjective. In comparison, failure attracts great attention and is clearly understood. In order to understand success, perhaps first, we need to understand failure. Success is fulfilment and most people would rather succeed than fail (Korda 1977). In locations "such as Silicon Valley, it has become almost fashionable to fail fast, early, and often; in a sense, to fail into success and call it innovation. Even in wider society, people are discovering that their personal disasters paradoxically liberated them to start anew, to live the life they actually wanted but needed an excuse to start living." (Kluth 2011., p.7)

Sonfield et al (1995.p.22) identify that there is generally "no accepted list of variables distinguishing success from failure" however, understanding the common causes can be a fruitful to get on the right path. If you ask a classroom of five-year olds who can draw the best picture, the odds are that they will all put their hand up. Ask the same question in a room of adults, however, and you'll find the reaction is completely the opposite. Failing at something – even though the activity itself can be completely subjective – can be such an overwhelming prospect for many that they go to extraordinarily lengths to avoid being placed in a situation where failure is a possible outcome. Being resilient, by demonstrating the ability to adapt to problematic and complex situations is discussed in the literature as an important characteristic to understand in the process of learning from failure (Goleman 1996).

Of course, a fear of failure inevitably inhibits success. Success usually involves the risk of failure, but the two are often viewed as being in opposite directions to each other, instead of as different stopping points on the same journey.
Winston Churchill famously preached that “success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm,” the only true failure is one from which we do not learn – so why are so many people terrified of failing – or even being perceived to have failed? Richard Branson, summed this up when he quoted the playwright Samuel Beckett, saying: “Ever tried. Ever failed. No Matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.” Of course, failure can only be viewed as part of success if it ultimately leads to adaptation that overcomes the hurdle in question. The cycle of try, fail, adapt can be seen in almost every human endeavor, from a baby trying to put wooden blocks through the correctly shaped hole to NASA scientists engineering a spacecraft to explore new planets.

Perhaps it is because people are their own worst critic and, even when others praise our efforts, we judge ourselves on failing to meet a subjective goal that may or may not be relevant to how others perceive our successes. This can be seen as having drive and passion, and always looking to improve, but in reality, it can be debilitating and lead to a lifetime where success is achieved, but never enjoyed. The athlete who wins Olympic gold, for example, but chastises themselves for not breaking the world record in the same race. The entrepreneur who grows a family shop into a global business but considers themselves to have failed because they are only number two in their sector.

In such a world obsessed with achieving first place, Lasch (2001) considers the exaggerated concern with being viewed as successful as being a form of narcissism that is in opposition to actually achieving success.

Many elements of true success as discussed earlier come from the individual’s perception of their achievements and are part of a linear journey that will also feature failure. Those who struggle to achieve success – or who struggle to realise they have achieved success – do so because they become caught in a circle of shame where failure is seen as a barrier.

Those who remain trapped in that cycle – who see themselves as powerless, inefficient and fearful – may only ever judge themselves by the things they cannot do. Those who accept that failure is a friend – something they can learn from and improve from – become free to continue their journey.

2.1.2 Summary

This discussion has outlined the complexity of the concept of success. Great variation in the interpretation of success is evident. Whilst many studies across the literature identify a collection of differences in the variables of success, it seems possible to identify similarities and commonly occurring variables. Furthermore, it seems appropriate to categorise variables into two distinct groups: earned success and legacy success.

Table 1: Summary of the variables of success in relation to RO1

	Concept	Principle author
Earned Success	Desire, Hunger, Determination	Korda (1977),
	Motivation	Goleman ((1996)
	Practice	Gladwell (2008)
	Timing	Korda (1977)
	Faith	Chua and Rubenfeld
	Innovation	Korda (1977)
	Confidence	Race (2014)
	Resilience	Goleman (2007)
	Morality	Payton et al (2008)
Legacy Success	Upbringing, Background	Gladwell (2008)
	Wealth/class	Gladwell (2008)
	Opportunity	Gladwell (2008)
	Luck	Gladwell (2008; Korda 1977)

(Source: Created for this research by the author)

2.2 The conceptualisation of brand

Branding is not a new phenomenon; existing since ancient times (Farquhar 1989, Aaker 1991, Kapferer 2012). At its simplest, branding has been defined as a legal statement of ownership (Crainer 1995), or as adopting a mark to designate legal ownership (Broadbent and Cooper, 1987). A credible definition of a brand provided by the American Marketing Association (1960) is as follows:

> "A brand is a distinguishable name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors."

Historically, scholars have suggested the purpose of branding is to increase sales, sustain brand loyalty, and attract more customers. Furthermore, objectives of branding are to inform and educate the market, offer a differentiate from competitors, and improve promotion efficiency (Jennifer 1997). However, its form has evolved considerably (Mercer 2010). Definitions of brand that focus purely on the name, or logo, intended to identify a product or service are frequently criticised in the literature (Arnold 1992; Crainer 1995).

A more contemporary approach to view branding is presented by Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, (2018, p. 256) who define the brand as "an evolving mental collection of actual (offer related) and emotional (human-like) characteristics and associations which convey benefits of an offer identified through a symbol, or a collection of symbols, and differentiates this offer from the rest of the marketplace." Brands provide functional and symbolic value and help in the development of long-lasting relationships (Merz et al., 2009).

Clearly, brands have evolved from being transactional tools to experience agents (Veloutsou and Ruiz-Mafé, 2020). The modern-day brand includes places, people, experiences, events, and information. Ideas are also brands and should be equally concerned with branding decisions Veloutsou and Guzmán, (2017).

The relevance of the brand is highlighted by Kapferer (2012) who stated that all organisations are brands with “a name, with a personality, the power and influence, being driven by values, and a source of innovations that give birth to a community.” (p.51)

Brands are complex however (Pillai 2012) and further complicated in the branding literature where ‘brands’ and ‘branding’ are frequently used interchangeably (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015). Whilst mapping the field in the branding domain for this research, numerous definitions are evident; however, all contemporary interpretations focus on three perspectives – the consumer, the company, and the purpose it serves (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015).

2.2.1 The corporate brand

The concept of ‘company as brand’ has gained significant traction in academic and practitioner literature (Knox and Bickerton 2003, Schultz and de Chernatony 2002). A corporate brand “needs to be an all-inclusive organisational process that comprises a single umbrella image that casts a glow over panoply of products." (Hatch and Schultz, 2001, p.129) There is a wealth of definitions for corporate branding in the literature; however, all are similar and reinforce one another. Balmer and Gray, (2003, p.985) explain “a corporate brand makes the organisation and its values easily identifiable and connotes a level of quality and consistency of performance in the minds of its target audiences”.

Corporate brands fulfil numerous activities, including communicating the organisation’s vision and values. It identifies differentiation and influences stakeholder’s perceptions of the organisation, encouraging loyalty (Balmer 2001b). Corporate brands are “complicated and nuanced” (Hatch and Schultz 2001, p.130) and “one of the key challenges of having an effective corporate brand is to ensure that all the messages emanating from the organisation, everything it produces and all the activities it is involved in contribute to shaping positive stakeholders.” (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006, p.850)
Balmer (2001) suggested that while organisations are born with identities, they are not necessarily born with a brand. Crafting the organisation’s identity is developed

through focused effort of conveying a covenant (promise) with key stakeholders (Balmer 2001). Einwiller and Will (2002) enforce this by suggesting corporate brands should transmit a consistent brand personality that supports and strengthens the reputation of the organisation to all stakeholders. In increasingly unsettled and competitive landscapes, corporate brands are concerned with differentiation, improving images and communications (Kay 2006). However, whilst marketing communications plays a crucial part in reinforcing the visual identity of the corporate brand, corporate branding suggests far more than just a logo and tagline (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2003).

Roper and Davies (2007) identified that corporate branding is a more suitable brand categorisation for not-for-profit organisations, charities, healthcare and universities than product branding. Roper and Davies add that responsibility for the brand should lie within the whole company and not just the marketing department (Roper and Davies 2007). Balmer and Liao (2007) reinforced the notion of the HE organisation being a corporate brand noting that “senior managers are beginning to examine their institutions through the corporate branding lens.” (p. 357)

Assessing the modern-day university brand in the current landscape, Aaker’s critique of a corporate brand certainly seems to fit effectively:

> “The corporate brand is special because it explicitly and unambiguously represents an organisation as well as a product. As a driver or endorser, it will have a host of characteristics and programmes that can help build the brand. It can help differentiate, create branded energiser, provide credibility, facilitate brand management, support internal brand-building, provide a basis for a relationship to augment that of the product brand, support communication to broad company constituencies, and provide the ultimate branded house.” (Aaker 2004, p.10).

It seems apparent that in an increasingly competitive and uncertain environment, HEIs have moved towards adopting a corporate brand. The nature of the HE brand will be explored further throughout this thesis.

2.2.2 The HE brand

This research recognises that traditional branding has been connected to the commercial sector and its products, seen as tools to increase profits, to differentiate products, and to improve market share – all commercial aspirations. Such activities were not generally seen as applicable to the non-profit sector, because 'competition' was not seen in the same way. However, as funding reduced dramatically, organisations within the non-profit sector began to identify that they needed to become more competitive.

While branding is arguably a relatively new development in the sector, as highlighted by (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014), it has quickly become a consideration for all non-profit organisations (NPOs), including universities. "Even the more traditional universities whose promotional activities and selection criteria which were centred on the reputation of their academic excellence and pedagogic ability have had to adopt a more managerial culture." (Boyett, 1996, p.24).

Brands now have a fundamental role to play for private and public organisations alike (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014; Gromark and Melin 2013); indeed, Temporal (2002) argues that branding activity in a public sector organisation is no longer a 'nice to have' but a 'must have. Concepts such as place marketing, stakeholder marketing and societal marketing are now common in the HE literature (Chapleo and O'Sullivan, 2017).

Maringe, (2005, 2010) asserts that the increased competition in the HE landscape has been seen as the key driver of higher education marketisation. The HEI is therefore "generally accepted as a branded institution." (Schouten et al, 2004, p. 62) Temple (2006, p.15) enforces this by saying "it seems difficult to have a discussion about anything in a university today that doesn't involve branding."

The brand represents a valuable strategic resource. In private companies it can aid to provide a competitive advantage, generating and sustaining financial performance (Aaker, 1996). However, this is also the same for the HE sector – indeed, as revenue streams became scarce, HEIs have found themselves competing with each other for the same pool of students. Competitor sets were defined, unique selling points were identified, and the same terms of engagement that had been so prevalent in the private sector has become second nature in the non-profit arena.

HE has become one of the fastest-growing service sectors (Alwi and Kitchen 2014) consolidating both international markets and global service systems. However, with the difficulties involved in differentiating products with no tangible characteristics or products, Berry (2000) underlines that brand development is crucial for non-profits. The intangible nature of HE may mean it is difficult for prospective students and their parents to evaluate the merits of an institution before selection, which increases the perceived risk of making a wrong decision. When an audience has limited prior knowledge of a product or service category, the brand name may be the only accessible and diagnostic cure available (Chapleo 2011).

As Temporal asserts, products and services can be copied; the only thing a public sector company has that cannot be replicated is a powerful brand image (Temporal, 2002). Branding should therefore convey a succinct image by communicating quality and trust (Casidy 2013); an important area of overlap in the role branding plays in the nurturing of increased legitimacy and trust (Gromark and Melin, 2013; Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). Wootliff and Deri (2001) referred to non-profit brands as the “world’s super brands” (p.157) in accordance with empirical studies which demonstrated non-profit organisations were more trusted than governments, corporations and the media.

The literature demonstrates how complex and diverse the elements of the higher education brand is. Rutter et al. (2017, p. 20) argue that HEI branding includes concepts such as brand as a logo, brand as an image, brand awareness, brand identity, brand differentiation, brand meaning, brand strength, impact on satisfaction, brand consistency, brand reputation, and brand personality. Ali-Choudhury et al., (2009), suggest that the components of a university brand consist of three major factors: 1. a collection of promises concerning the brand’s benefits (high-calibre faculty, post-graduation job and career prospects, opportunities for in-campus socialisation). 2. a set of distinctive features that define the brand’s inherent nature (university’s market positioning, research vs. teaching orientation, university’s matriculation requirements campus safety). 3. external communications that describe the brand (that is, name, logo and ad slogan).

It is also widely recognised that HE has a diverse stakeholder group including students and their families, academics and administrative support staff, global employers, local and regional communities, the media, government and its agencies and assessment bodies, to name a few (Alcaide-Pulido et.al 2017, p.162).

As the competition in the external landscape increases, HEIs are appreciating the importance of utilising their brands "to improve their performance and build deep relationships with their customers." (Hariff and Rowley, 2011, p.348) However, HEIs have their own complexities, and numerous studies suggest that existing brand management theories and marketing models may not be fully transferable to this context (Dean et al, 2016; Hytti et al, 2015; Chapleo, 2010; Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009) and bespoke approaches are needed. (Chapleo, 2011)
In Leijerholt et al., (2019, p.4), it was agreed that "traditional brand management approaches may not always be suitable in an NPO sector context, and that rather, public organisations may need to adapt brand practices to suit the complex nature of the sector."

2.3 The benefits of branding and brand rejection

2.3.1 The benefits of branding

The world in which we live revolves around the concept of brand (Solomon and Association 2003). Understanding this concept of brand is key to understanding the role of branding, and the benefits it brings (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015). As demonstrated in the literature, during the last decade there has been a shift away from considering the brand as just a logo, to embedding the role of the brand as an expression of the organisation's values.

Kapferer (2012) suggests that it in fact provides a vision, and subsequently an identity, that can guide the way products and services are created. Although branding remains diverse and multi-dimensional in nature, there is a clear body of knowledge in the literature which assert that brands play a crucial role in the organisation's success (Davis 2000).

In a cluttered environment a brand helps cut through the noise, articulating the organisation's values and promises. Furthermore, organisations with strong brands can often transfer to new markets on the strength of their existing brands (Porter, 1985). From the functional aspect, brands are credited with providing value to the consumer such as reducing consumers' perceived risk and uncertainty, as well as reducing the time and effort needed to look for products and services that will deliver the quality that the consumer wants (Keller 2013; Schmitt 2012). We know that brands are more than just functional devices; the brand is a tool for relationship building (Alsem and Kostelijk 2008).

Through brand experiences and interactions, stakeholders develop a perception of the organisation and its brand. When implemented effectively, branding can result in stronger relationships and increased recognition and reputation. Brands can be powerful, creating deep, emotional connections and poignant meanings between the individual and the brand (McCracken, 1986).

2.3.2 The benefits of branding universities

The strategic branding of HEIs has been a key focus in the university landscape for over a decade (Hashim et al, 2020; Yao et al, 2019; Garza Salgado & Royo Vela, 2019; Rutter, et al, 2017; Rauschnabel, et al., 2016; Pizarro Milian & Rizk, 2019; Poole et al, 2018).

Branding has contributed a significant role in what has been called the ‘market turn’ in higher education (Chapleo, 2015). Ritchie et al. (1999, p.26) postulated that “brands provide a number of benefits that can make them a powerful tool for the non-profit sector”. Universities embrace branding for a variety of reasons, chief amongst them is that they are competing for the same resources, rankings, staff and students (Kizilbash and Canadian Bureau for International Education / Bureau canadien de l’éducation 2011) and branding becomes a means to simplify students’ selection process (Casidy 2013). In a market where students demonstrate the characteristics of a consumer, universities need to communicate their characteristics effectively if they are to remain competitive (Melewar and Akel 2005).

Those who advocate branding in HE draw attention to benefits such as establishing legitimacy and building prestige (Chapleo, 2011; Waeraas & Solbakk, 2008), communicating shared values as a way to secure support from stakeholders (Sargeant et al, 2008a; Sargeant et al, 2008b), and reducing the element of risk by expressing quality (Chapleo, 2011). A good brand can help the university to establish a strong position in the marketplace, as well as protecting it from competition and improving overall performance (Ali-Choudhury et al. 2009).

Furthermore, Harris (2009) suggests that a strong university brand may enhance student interest, and aid recruitment figures. Laidler-Kylander and Stone (2012) suggested that organisations with a strong brand attract partners and collaborators; particularly relevant to HE who rely on co-creation for knowledge transfer and funding. Chapleo (2011) and Mazzarol et al (2000) argue that branding can also help to give universities a competitive advantage by creating a consistent image and message. However, as demonstrated in this literature review, the unique complexities of HE may requires a different lens for which to critique what constitutes brand success.

An empirical study by Chapleo in 2007 saw 15 Vice-Chancellors interviewed from comparable HEIs to identify their perspectives of successful university branding. Their views differed according to the type of institution they represented. Universities established before 1992 saw their reputation as an evolving perception that enabled differentiation, while newer, post-92 universities viewed a brand as a manufactured way to differentiate themselves – more of a deliberate, commercial objective undertaken by the marketing department. Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) go further by suggesting branding is in fact an antecedent of reputation – that reputation is created as a result of successfully marketing values and services.

Temple (2006) defines the University of Oxford as a successful brand, postulating the university having district images and values in the minds of prospective students, as well as a strong product in terms of league tables for research as well as teaching.

The belief that a university's brand image is crucial in forming public attitudes towards both the institution and the sector as a whole is further presented in the literature (Chapleo, 2007; 2010; 2015). In the process of encouraging students and staff to feel part of the university, effective corporate brand management is needed (Balmer & Liao, 2007).

However, several authors demonstrate a dislike for such a branded world, including the appropriateness of a branded higher education system. This perspective is discussed in the following section.

2.3.3 Anti-branding and brand rejection

There is another branch of thought with the rise of anti-branding sentiment (Palazzo and Busu 2007), where brands are actively rejected, and can be the recipient of ethical activism and even boycotts (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013) have been evidenced. Anti-brand sentiments have raised awareness of unethical and unsavoury marketing tactics (Klein 2000).

Leading global brands such as Nike have been named and shamed with documentaries and viral campaigns made by undercover workers in their production factories such as 'Nike – the truth behind the swoosh'. Exposure of unethical and cruel practices have also been evidenced within the fast-food sector, further fueling the 'anti brand' sentiment (Haiven 2003). Stride and Lee (2007) assert that "branding terminology itself appears to deliver negative rather than positive associations across key recipient stakeholder groups" (p.113).

'Corporate capitalism' is a phrase coined to describe a capitalist marketplace which is dominated by bureaucratic corporations. The literature suggests that consumers may react to some brands in a negative way, which influences their behavior accordingly Romani, et al., (2012) discuss their research findings which demonstrate how consumers' moods can react to brands: sadness makes consumers inactive with the brand, anger induces complaints, and worry encourages brand switching. Ngugi et al (2020) reinforce this by articulating brands elicit moods by using stimuli to improve the consumer's desire.

Branding also continues to be criticised for creating peer pressure in adolescents. The literature identifies that even when younger generations are aware of these manipulation tactics, they feel unable to stop themselves from falling victim to them (Isaksen and Roper 2012).

2.3.4 Anti-branding and brand rejection in HE

The literature informs that branding in non-profit organisations experiences resistance from both internal (Hytti et al, 2015; Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015) and external stakeholders (Färlin, 2016; Westin, 2016; Whelan et al, 2010). During the earlier period of branding in the non-profit sector, Ritchie et al. (1999, p.36) noted that “although most non-profits that use brands are motivated by noble intentions, they run the risk of appearing to have sold out - of having become ‘too commercial.” Henkel (1997) asserts that HEIs are being transformed into corporate enterprises. Experiences of brand rejection in HE continues to be evident.

The marketisation of education refers to universities adopting free market practices (Hemsley-Brown 2011), which has triggered scholars to suggest that this marketisation of HE may be contentious (Molesworth et al. 2009; Hemsley-Brown 2011).

Academics have voiced varying opinions on the appropriateness of a branded HE; whilst some have expressed optimism that branding can make universities more competitive and improve their reputation (Waeraas and Solbakk 2009), others have argued that the HE environment is different to that of business, and that the concept of branding is not transferrable as a result. At the extreme end of opposition for a branded HE system, some believe there is great contradiction in the values of education, and protest that educationalists should actually oppose any form of marketing in their institutions (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007).

The conversation around learning, teaching and the ‘student experience’ has changed significantly since funding shifted from government to student, with students developing an increasingly stronger voice. With an increase in targets coinciding with a drop in revenue from the state, universities have found themselves under pressure to operate in a more business-like manner as they seek to manage the shortfall. That has resulted in students becoming consumers of a service that they see as existing to give them an economic advantage (Harrison and Risler 2015).

In 2010, the UK Government published the Browne Review, a significant milestone on the journey to embedding free market principles and values into the HE environment (Holligan and Kuang-Hsu 2011). The report stated that “student choice will drive up quality." Browne asserts: "What we recommend is a radical departure from the existing way in which HEIs are financed. Rather than the Government producing a block grant for teaching to HEIs, their finances now follow the student who has chosen and been admitted to study" (Browne 2010). The cost pressure on universities looks set to increase, so investment is required if the standard of education they deliver is to remain constant. The importance of a customer value proposition has never been so great, and the value and success of HEI brands is under great scrutiny. This has raised many concerns within the academic community. Changes in legislation and technology in HE and the need to reconcile the different stakeholders' interests has required a more professional and business-like management approach (Alcaide-Pulido et al, 2017). With increased competition from around the globe, universities are looking for unique ways to define what they offer so that they stand out from their rivals when it comes to attracting students (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007).

Marketisation has significantly changed the landscape of HE and students must now be attracted, catered for, and approached like consumers in a profit-seeking setting (Guilbault 2016). Potential students are bombarded with marketing messages from universities that all promise to deliver a better service than their competitors. HE institutions have had to seriously re-think their strategic actions and market positions, now vying for the attention of school graduates as they begin their HE search (Tucciarone2007). University websites are designed to sell the university to students, playing a major role in creating the subsequent relationship between the institution and potential consumers (Essam et al. 2013). Since the market is a cluttered place, brands need to be clear about what they expect consumers to remember and think about them (Park et al. 2013).

Scholars recognise there are inevitable linkages between the marketing of HE and the marketisation of HE (Nedbalová et al. 2014), with the marketing investment being significantly increased by the need to increase student numbers as well as grow reputation, whilst the marketisation being driven by the introduction of tuition fees for UK undergraduate students (Palfreyman and Tapper 2016). The concept of the student as consumer has called many to question whether scholarship can even exist in such a paradigm. However, as suggested by Hemsley-Brown and

Goonawardana (2007), concerns surrounding the marketisation of higher education have always existed.

Holmwood (2014) and others such as Collini (2015) have contested that the fundamental public purpose of universities is being challenged through branding. Controversy resides not only in the wider discussions of the appropriateness for branding in HE, but also around the semantics of the word ‘brand’ and the way HEIs interpret and make use of it (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007). Hankinson (2004) highlights problems of internal stakeholders in universities committing to the concepts of branding and Chapleo (2007, p.26) identifies “marketing” as one of the barriers to brand building in universities due to the way in which it “invades most areas of the organisation”.

However, the literature presents numerous scholars such as Pringle and Fritz (2019, p. 19) who argue that regardless of the criticism towards the appropriateness of branding activities in HE, “a strong, successful university brand will evoke emotions,positive images, and associations”.

2.4 The conceptualisation of brand success

Having a strong and successful brand is a considerable managerial resource (Kay, 2006), which provides advantages such as a sustainable competitive advantage, greater profitability and improved market performance (de Chernatony and McDonald 2011).

Urde (1999) describes brand success as

"…an approach in which the processes of the organisation revolve around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands." (p.19)

The literature clearly shows that brand success is a complex proposition. Creating a successful brand is hard (Joachimsthaler 2007). As Aaker (2012) highlights, organisations face considerable obstacles if they are to create and maintain a successful brand – especially with enduringly positive brand associations for stakeholders. de Chernatony (1998) asserted that brand success is a construct that contains business- and consumer-based criteria and is multi-dimensional as a result.

Doyle (1989) suggests that the creation of successful brands requires three things: an effective product, a distinctive identity, and added value. Aaker (2012) proposed a successful brand depends on: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and finally, proprietary assets.

2.4.1 Operational competencies

As Aaker (2012) highlights, organisations face considerable obstacles if they are to create and maintain a successful brand – especially with enduringly positive brand associations for stakeholders.

Balmer (2012b) proposed a successful brand needs to be credible, durable, meaningful, profitable, and responsible. Kader et al. (2009, p.150) lists the characteristics of brand success; prioritising the years in business, as this provides evidence of 'experience'.

Producing and maintaining an effective output is not only relevant for product or commercial brands.

The theme of added value as an element of brand success is frequent in the literature. Pitta and Katsanis (1995, p.52) provide the following definition of brand success as "the value a brand name adds to a product." Aaker (1996) discusses the perceived advantage which is embedded in successful and strong brand names; explain that this extra value is essentially 'price premium'

A consumer's perception of the quality of an organisation's products and services will influence their perception of the organisation's brand (Aaker 1991), as stakeholders experience several interactions at various touchpoints "with a brand and it is during this journey they will consider the extent to which it has fulfilled what it has promised" (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012. p.1051).

2.4.2 Brand equity

Brand equity is an important concept in management theory and practice (Srinivasan et al, 2005) and has been the subject of considerable academic research and interest (Broyles et al, 2009). Strong brand equity can lead to a number of advantages which include higher profit margins, freedom to operate a price premium, and increased opportunities for brand extensions (Budac and Baltador 2013). It can also make an organisation more likely to survive a crisis (Kaplan 2005).

The literature presents an array of definitions of brand equity. A well-cited definition of brand equity states that brand equity is "a set of assets and liabilities liked to a brand, its name and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by its product of service to a firm and /or to that firm's customers" (Aaker 1991, p.12). Wood (2000) states that the reason for varying definitions is due to the financial and marketing domains having different orientations. These are also described as firm-based and customer-based brand equity (Christodoulides and de Chernatony 2010).

Brand equity is clearly a crucial component of successful HE brands (Aaker 1991;

Keller and Lehmann, 2006), however, HE brand managers often struggle with assessing brand equity; especially clearly demonstrating and expressing the financial value that branding brings (Madden et al.2006), due to the nature of the context.
Ho and Merrilees (2008) present empirical research that demonstrates strong correlation between brand orientation and brand performance. The study showed that strong brands (which will therefore be able to build brand equity) have four dimensions: awareness, association, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

The literature demonstrates that brand equity is an important factor when considering brand success. It is however complicated when applied to the public sector. It is an important contribution to theory, to understand how brand equity can be assessed in HE in the process of establishing the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in newer universities. Thus, assessing how HEIs capture and assess brand success through evaluating their brand equity will be valuable for the branding literature domain.

2.4.3 Internal capabilities

2.4.3.1 Leadership of vision and values

The literature clearly summarises that for a successful brand to be built and managed, several variables need be in place, however the key focus is to instil a brand orientated organisation (Ewing and Napoli 2005). Aaker (2014) suggests that when a brand vision is absent from the organisation, the brand will suffer drift which will prompt ineffective, scattergun approached marketing. It is important, therefore, that the brand promise is aligned to the organisation's strategic vision and its culture.

Gussoni and Mangani (2012) enforce the need for organisations to be forward-thinking and for their brand strategy to be based on the future objectives, vison, and values of the organisation. However, M'Zungu et al (2010) introduce the concept of a 'brand spirit' in the branding literature. These scholars suggest that communicating a brand with a solely external focus will not build ongoing brand equity. They recommend that an organisation’s leaders should aim to develop a ‘brand spirit’ in which the whole organisation supports the strategic plan. M’Zungu et al (2010) underline that this ‘brand spirit’ can align the corporate culture and the brand, helping all employees – management and employees – to experience the same brand reality.

Hatch and Schultz (2001) also assert the importance of aligning both internal and external stakeholders’ perceptions of an organisation. It is clear from the literature that a brand is more likely to succeed if its values match the emotional needs of its stakeholders (Chapleo, 2010; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

Hatch and Schultz, 2001 (p.130) corroborate that “employees’ performance can be improved through having relevant connection to the brand vision which may enhance their feeling of involvement and self-worth avoiding a ‘vision-culture gap.” However, aligning values between employee and organisation is challenging. The literature suggests this may be especially difficult to achieve in the public sector due to meeting resistance from internal (Hytti et al. 2015; Sataøen and Wæraas 2015) and external stakeholders (Färlin 2016; Westin 2016; Whelan et al. 2010).

Furthermore, some employees may identify more strongly with their specialism and department, rather than the organisation, so may feel they compromise or even lose their identity (Hemesley-Brown and Gonnawardana, 2007).

2.4.3.2 Brand ethics

Brand ethics is about more than being known as an ethical organisation. It extends to the way that a brand conveys its own values, ensuring that the brand and the way it is used reflect the organisation’s core values (Laidler-Kylander and Stone 2012).

Ind (1997) also introduces the notion of social responsibility and ethical consideration being imperative to the corporate brand. Hatch and Schultz (2001) discuss how the meaning of the corporate brand is supported by organisational development, physical design and culture.

This is reinforced by scholars in the literature such as Ruth (2001) who asserts that brands have the capacity to evoke a wide range of emotions. Aaker (2012) suggests that if brands can represent a desirable group which offers social benefits, then the brand will be achieving significant power and success.

2.4.3.3 Organisational culture

The importance of organisational culture is discussed frequently in the branding literature, with the significant role that internal brand management plays being recognised. Scholars assert that the service employees receive will mirror the service that they themselves go on to deliver (Aurand, et al, 2005). Therefore, the organisational culture is fundamental in aligning the brand attitudes of employees with brand commitment, identification and loyalty (Punjaisri and Wilson 2011). Poor interaction between employees and consumers can affect the organisation's reputation which may be difficult for the organisation to recover from (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012).

de Chernatony and Harris (2000) and Pringle and Gorden (2001) emphasise the importance employees' values and behaviour being aligned with consumer expectations. Roper and Fill (2012) suggest when this happens successfully, it prevents the creation of any potential gaps that could create difficult, or even irreversible damage to the reputation. de Chernatony and Cottam (2006) claim that "organisations with a culture whose values are congruent with that of the employees and of the brand will have a much stronger brand that will be genuinely lived by the employees." (p.622)

Employee behaviour must therefore be aligned with the organisation's brand values because it is staff who are at the centre of the brand-building process (Harris and de Chernatony 2001). (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014) suggest a brand harmonisation proposition is only realised when there is evidence of sub-departments aligning with the organisational brand and brand values. Therefore, a key activity for brand managers is ensure the identity of the organisation supports the brand by relating it to what is central to the organisation's values of the stakeholders, and then communicate the brand vision to employees in an engaging and motivating way.

2.4.3.4 Brand management

To build a successful brand, organisations need to understand the key organisational competence that is brand management. (Aaker 1996; Louro and Cunha 2001). It is a key strategic issue for an organisation (Rindell and Strandvik 2010) as it can enable them to understand how they are viewed by stakeholders, as well as raising awareness of the brand amongst its target audience (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Jevons, 2006). Furthermore, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) assert that brand management is a key activity for gaining brand equity.

Branding in NPOs “is emerging as an interesting area of research, as diverse organisations find themselves using branding principles to promote a consistent and clear brand” (Leijerholt, et al. 2019, p.277), and establish a point of differentiation (Temporal, 2002; Sataoen et al, 2015). Studies by Kirovska demonstrate that an integrated approach to planning and communication contribute to an effective corporate brand (Kirovska, 2013).

However, (Leijerholt et al., 2019; Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015) also suggest private and NFP organisations may apply brand management techniques differently to promote alternative outcomes. Whilst a clear positioning strategy and value proposition may be at the core of private sector organisations, for many public sector organisations, such as HEIs, the prime focus of the brand may be more on enhancing a positive perception of the organisation in the minds of stakeholders in the attempt to build a strong reputation.

The HE branding literature suggests a number of factors which have prompted the need for effective brand management attention including: a) Increased tuition costs (Rauschnabel, et al, 2016); b) Financial difficulties faced by universities (Simiyu et al, 2020); c) Governmental pressures to attract and retain more students (Nguyen, et al., 2019); d) Reliance on international students (Chapleo, 2010); e) Marketization (Guilbault, 2016); and f) The globalisation of HE (Miotto, Del Castillo-Feito & Blanco-González, 2020).

The role of the brand manager is fundamental for maintaining the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000) as brands require ongoing management to maintain their appeal to their target audiences (Yin Wong and Merrilees 2008). However, brand management needs to be proactive, inspirational and strategic rather than reactionary and tactical. Whilst “the use of symbols such as logos and straplines help to identify the brand and reinforces the brand message and core values” Urde et al. (2007, p.12), branding in the public sector has been criticised historically as often being about slogans and straplines rather than the development of brand strategies (Whisman 2009).

Brand management is complex as it demands satisfying both internal and external stakeholders. Leijerholt, et al (2019) assert “a strong organisational brand is dependent on a unified perception of the brand among both internal and external stakeholders.” (p 276). The on-going process of brand management therefore demands brand managers to adopt a holistic process to identify relevant connection points (Hulberg 2006), due to stakeholders’ world views often varying significantly (Golant 2012). However, in the context of HE, this is an extremely challenging proposition. Chapleo (2011) asserts that this is a fundamental issue for universities due to their multiple stakeholders, and therefore communicating a diverse and complex brand requires significant effort and attention.

Ind (2001) asserts the need for managers to promote a shared understanding of the organisational brand values by implementing brand-supportive behaviour. Furthermore, sensitivity and a consultative nature has been recognised as important for brand managers.
As well as the brand being trusted, the team managing the brand also need to be trusted. Laidler-Kylander and Stone (2012) introduce the notion of brand democracy which can aid this. They asserted how important it is in the NFP sector that organisations should not try to police their brand. Instead, brand managers should “strive instead to implement a participatory form of brand management.” This further demonstrates the significance of the need for a supportive, appropriate organisational culture which aids employee buy-in. Effective internal and external brand management is crucial to further manage and grow the brand. This branch of thought will be explored during interviews.

2.4.3.5 Internal brand management

Berry (1981) proposes the following definition for internal brand management "viewing employees as internal customers, viewing jobs as internal products that satisfy the needs and wants of these internal customers while addressing the objectives of the organisation." (p. 34) The literature clearly shows that building a team of positive and brand-aligned staff in the organisation is an extremely powerful brand asset (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Balmer and Gray, 2003; Boxall and Purcell, 2008).

Internal brand management has received attention within the domain of branding for several decades (Yildiz, and Kara, 2017), and has become an important topic in non-profit brand research in the UK (e.g., Hankinson, 2004; Liu et al., 2015). Internal communication is a key activity of internal brand management, as communicating a clear and consistent brand message to employees is essential (Aurand, et al, 2005; Miles and Mangold 2005).

Liu, et al, (2015, p. 319) position internal brand management as "an organisation's attempts to persuade its staff to buy-in to the organisation's brand value and transform it into a reality." The concept of which being related to, yet distinct from, that of employer branding (Saleem and Iglesias 2016). Employee understanding of brand values and what is needed from them to support them is at the core of internal brand management. (Aurand, et al, 2005). This is enforced by (Miles and Mangold, 2005) who say that the brand needs to be endorsed and supported from within if employees are to become brand-bearers.

Bélanger, et al (2007) suggest that when a brand is not developed in a bottom-up manner, it may not be representative of all employees and instead be based predominantly on the vision of the organisation's senior managers (Gregory 2007), therefore brand development that adopts a top-down manner approach is often criticised in the contemporary branding domain (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014).

Furthermore, (Matanda and Ndubisi 2013) assert that actually aligning employee values and beliefs with organisational goals are central to supporting employee brand-related behaviour. The literature enforces that the ways in which internal stakeholders interact with external stakeholders will affect the organisation's reputation, so the employees need to be motivated and encouraged to 'live the brand' (Gotsi and Wilson, 2001, p.103)

In recognition of the need to nurture buy-in from internal stakeholders and enhance brand attachment, some organisations have adopted internal brand management as a brand implementation process, which is designed to consult and engage with their employees (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014). This approach is well-advised as the literature clearly shows the role of the employee plays a fundamental role in branding (Aurand, et al, 2005; Punjaisri and Wilson 2011; Whisman 2009) due to an organisation achieving its greatest advantage when employee actions and brand identity reinforce one another (Aurand, et al, 2005), and employees feel they identify with the organisation and thus become brand champions who embrace the brand (Ind 2001).

In Clark, Chapleo, and Suomi, (2020) it was argued that there is consensus that marketing needs to start from the inside out. The value of organisations embedding an internal marketing activity as part of their wider internal brand management programme is therefore clear. Effective and consistent internal communication needs to resonate with the whole organisation; through a variety of methods (Aurand, et al, 2005) based on shared values (Chapleo, 2010, Harris and de Chernatony, 2001) between the organisation and its key stakeholder groups (Balmer and Liao, 2007). However, as suggested by Whisman (2009) "this can be complex for universities due to inadequate internal communication systems to reach the 'silo' culture which affects and hinders the 'effective and meaningful dialogue about the identity of the organisation." (p.368)

2.4.4 Emotional benefits

A brand “is built not only through rational arguments and tangible manifestations, but also through their impact at the emotional level of feelings” (Iglesias and Bonet 2012, p. 258) Emotional value are “the perceived utility acquired from an alternative’s capacity to arouse feelings or affective states. Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991, p. 161) suggested that this emotional value is “measured on a profile of feelings associated with the alternative.”

Stride (2006) asserts that the brand is indeed a “multidimensional construct” (p.417), which has a fundamental role in matching “functional and emotional values with the performance and psychosocial needs of consumers” (p. 417).

de Chernatony (2009, p.105) asserts that “enhancing the perceived value of an entity by augmenting a cluster of functional and emotional values” is essential to achieve brand success. Knapp (1999) also enforces that establishing and maintaining brand success requires the organisation to clearly articulate their distinctive emotional benefits, as well as their functional benefits. Furthermore, Elliot (2001) identified other components to building a successful brand: brand awareness, brand loyalty, and positive associations related to the brand.

Successful brands connect with customers to create an emotional connection (Berry, 2000) as well as building positive attitudes and confidence (Aaker, 2004). Organisations must therefore use a range of criteria to assess their success which is not purely a financial measure (Brown 2014). Gronroos (1994), asserted that embracing relationship marketing in the process of establishing, maintaining, and enhancing long term relationships with customers and other stakeholders should be a key priority for organisations to build on the emotional brand benefits for their stakeholders.

2.4.4.1 Brand identity, image and personality

Brand identity represents “the symbols and the set of the brand associations that represent the core character of the brand that the team supporting the brand aspire to create or maintain as identifiers of the brand to other people” (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018, p. 256).

Brand identity is created and promoted through communicating the value proposition, and functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000). Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006, p.846) suggest that brand success is achieved when “organisations have a strong identity as it helps them to align with the marketplace, attract investment, motivate employees and serve as a means to differentiate their products and services.” This complements the view of Keller (2009) who suggested the most valuable asset a brand owns is the image they project. Kader et al. (2009, p.150) also validates proposals of brand success as having the ability to “attract outside financial investment.”

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) maintain that a strong brand identity aids relationships between the brand and the consumer. Balmer and Wilson (1998) assert that a well-managed identity will develop a positive corporate image that will, over time, result in a positive corporate reputation. Brand image is then projected through actions and communication and aims to demonstrate what the brand stands for. Brand reputation derives from the “accumulation of brand images and is an aggregate and compressed set of public judgments about the brand” (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018, p.256). The brand is reliant on stakeholder perceptions (Dean et al. 2016; Saleem and Iglesias 2016). Accordingly, Bélanger, Syed, and Mount (2007) assert the importance of aligning brand identity and stakeholder perceptions therefore, resulting in a shared brand meaning, cannot be overstated.

Aaker (2014, p.25) uses brand identity and brand vision interchangeably and suggests that it is “crucial for organisations looking to build a strong brand presence.” A brand requires a vision, something that it aspires to, and an articulation of what it stands for to relevant stakeholders. A brand identity that correlates strongly to brand personality can enhance reputation (Pinson and Brosdahl 2014). As a result, organisations often use a variety of visual tools including brand logos, packaging and brand imagery to build a brand identity (Schroeder 2005).

This corporate visual identity has a significant impact on how the organisation represents itself to internal and external stakeholders (van den Bosch et al, 2006). These consist of elements such as logo, colour palette, font choice and corporate slogan (Dowling 1994; van den Bosch et al. 2006).

Brand image is the “perception formed to the mind of a member of the external audience about the brand after one real or mental encounter with the brand” (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018, p.256). Studies into university image became of particular interest in the literature in the early nineties (Alcaide-Pulido et al. 2017) discussing its importance for the HE context. There are many definitions of image referenced in the literature (Westcott 2001), and it is often confused with corporate identity and reputation (Alcaide-Pulido et al. 2017). Alcaide-Pulido et al. (2017) propose that it is a “set of students’ mental perceptions that influence them to express a positive or negative opinion about the university.” (p.165)

It must be noted however, that the concept of brand image is complicated and involves a number of dimensions (Martinez and Perez 2009); especially due to the multiple stakeholders HEIs need to satisfy. Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) propose that a good brand image can play an important role in convincing a prospective student to attend a specific university. Whilst it is widely accepted that universities benefit from having a strong brand, it is impossible to ignore that this suggestion attracts criticism.

Kapferer (1997, p.9) defines brand personality as “the way in which certain groups perceive a brand and refers to the way these groups decode all the signal emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand.” Brand personality is also defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker 1996, p.105). McCracken (1989) suggests that personality traits associated with the brand can influence the brand personality. The literature shows overwhelming evidence for the notion that humans anthropomorphise almost anything, including brands. Veloutsou and Guzmán (2017) validate the focus on human characteristics by suggesting brands are entities that include the physical offer, incorporates the sum of fundamental values, attributes and human characteristics ascribed to this brand by people. Agrawal, Bajpai, & Khandelwal, (2020) and Ng, (2016) refer to this as ‘brand anthropomorphism.’

Fournier (1998) suggested this may explain the brand and other associations embedded in celebrity endorsement as consumers impart a psychological recognition beyond the functionality of the product. Some consumers actually perceive brands as if they were living forms (Guido and Peluso 2015). Levy (1959) asserts that brands are the most obvious and apparent symbols of identity.

There is also a wealth of literature suggesting that consumers use brand as a form of expression as well as to define their own identity (Aaker 1999; Hogg, et al, 2000; Solomon 1983). The literature also demonstrates how in a practical application of marketing, marketers are able to manipulate consumer perceptions of a brand through creating distinctive brand personalities. We see this frequently through sophisticated marketing campaigns attempting to create loyalty and attachment with characters such as Ronald McDonald and Tony the Tiger (Aguirre-Rodrigues 2014). Moreover, Malar et al (2012) assert that there is a clear measurable increase in consumer loyalty and market share when a brand personality is successfully implemented.

2.4.4.2 Brand awareness, association, and reputation

Brand awareness is defined as “the ability of a potential buyer to recognise or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category” (Aaker 1991, p.61). Aaker suggests that in order to make a brand more memorable and increase awareness of it, organisations should strive for a point of differentiation through the effective use of slogans, symbols, publicity and even the possibility of event sponsorship (Aaker 1991).

Brand association is defined as “anything linked in memory to the brand” (Aaker 1991, p.60). This means that brand associations can be diverse in nature and can therefore be the beliefs and attitudes held in the memory of consumers which enable differentiation from one organisation from another (Aaker and Keller 1990). Keller (1993) asserts therefore that the brand associations should be strong, unique and favourable in the aim to connect and bond with stakeholders. Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) reinforces this notion by suggesting that brand relationships, brand attachment and brand loyalty can all be created as a result of positive brand associations.

When brand attachment is strong it evokes emotions, which encourages self-connection the consumer has with that brand (Whan Park et al. 2010). Brands therefore need to work hard to create emotional benefits that match the expectations and needs of consumers, inspiring affection and trust in the process (Berry 2000). Organisations therefore need to understand their consumers’ emotional triggers (Ruth 2001) as brands and brand images are highly identifiable (McClure et al. 2004).

The literature demonstrates how good experiences through awareness and association improve the organisation’s reputation, which in turn strengthens the brand (Abimbola 2009). Brand reputation derives from the “accumulation of brand images and is an aggregate and compressed set of public judgments about the brand” (Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester, 2018, p.256). Whilst there are many definitions for corporate reputation, Villafañe’s interpretation (2004, p.24) is recognised as the most comprehensive in the literature: "the recognition of stakeholders to the behaviour of the organisation over time (...) in relation to its

audiences, employees, shareholders and the community at large." Most studies consider corporate reputation from a mid-long-term relational perspective and deem it to be an asset for the organisation, which is built from positive stakeholder perception (Alcaide-Pulido, 2017).
Raithel and Schwaiger, (2015) suggest that a superior corporate reputation has deep strategic value for organisations. Scholars suggest that corporate reputation is also a particularly important activity for HE to invest in as it “reduces perceived risk” (Wu et al, 2018, p.210), due to the intangible nature and the “characteristics of services” (Dijkmans et al, 2015, p.59). Abratt and Kleyn (2012) asserted that poor interaction with stakeholders can affect the organisation’s reputation which may be tricky, or even impossible for the organisation to recover from. This is particularly relevant for the HE sector, demonstrated by Balmer and Greyser (2006, p.906), who asserts “the principal threat to a non-profit brand today comes from reputational trouble.” Furthermore, Chapleo (2007) suggests that upholding a strong reputation can be problematic if separate departments are seeking their own reputations, often the case in HEIs as previously identified by (Hemesley-Brown and Gonnawardana, 2007), and documented within this research.

Waerass and Solbakk (2009) considered the use of branding to be an effective instrument for improving competitiveness and reputation in universities. Indeed, Mazzarol et al (2001) found that a strong reputation is important if an HEI is to compete in the global market. Berger and Wallingford (1996) found that the two most important selection criteria in choosing a university were reputation and academics. Moreover, further research suggests the image and reputation of the university are actually more important factors in influencing students’ choice of university than the teaching quality (Mazzarol et al. 2000).

2.4.4.3 Brand heritage

Brand heritage is recurring terminology in the literature. Urde et al, (2007) define brand heritage as “a dimension of a brand’s identity found in its track record, longevity, core values, use of symbols and particularly in the organisational belief that its history is important.” (p. 4). Brand heritage has triggered much interest in the domain of branding with an increasing amount of exploratory research emerging (Balmer and Burghausen 2015; Hudson and John 2013).

Aaker (2004) suggests that heritage is important as it adds authenticity and differentiation. Wiedmann et al. (2011) reinforce this and adds that the trustworthiness of a brand is heavily influenced by brand heritage, with consumers likely to place more trust in a heritage brand and associate less risk with it.

The literature suggests that brand heritage creates and strengthens the consumer-brand bond (Wiedmann et al., 2011). It is also used to create brand communities (Kessous and Roux, 2008).

Indeed, the literature complements this suggestion by noting that a good reputation signifies historical success (Yoon et al, 1993). Brands need to be cultivated to be consistent in delivering on their promises, driven through their core values Urde et al. (2007), which will then lead to the “accumulation of credibility and trust” (p.12).

Brands are important assets that need to be maintained over the long term (Wood 2000) as a brand’s history is formed by the accumulation of experiences that will ultimately shape and influence consumer perceptions of the brand. Merchant and Ford (2008) identify this nostalgia as extremely powerful for both non-profit and profit-making brands. Furthermore, studies have found that a strong brand heritage can lead to increased customer satisfaction, trustworthiness, brand attachment, and ultimately, brand loyalty (Merchant and Rose, 2013; Wiedmann et al, 2011).

2.4.4.4 Brand experience

Brand experience is defined as “a combination of memorable, subjective esoteric impressions varying in polarity and amplitude, in humans, triggered from brand interactions, which occur at various stages of contact with a brand” (Chevtchouk et al., 2021). The notion of the brand creating and providing an experience for the consumer is prominent in the literature, with scholars such as de Chernatony et al (2000) proposing that brands enable a promise to be made about a unique and welcoming experience.

The literature continues to reinforce the importance of the brand experience felt by the consumer as this may lead to a strong emotional bond between the consumer and the brand (Brakus et al, 2009). Taute and Sierra (2014) suggest consumers want an emotional engagement with brands, so organisations need to create emotional relationships. Just the name of a brand can provide an accessible cue when consumers have limited information about the product or service (Stamp, 2004). Grisaffe and Nguyen (2011) reinforce this, stating that once consumers have developed strong emotional bonds with a brand, they are much more likely to engage in buying only from that brand. This can result in brand loyalty strong enough for them to resist switching, even when there are very attractive incentives to do so Berry (2000, p. 134) summarises this effectively by stating that “brands that connect emotionally are authentic summations of a company with a soul.”

Harris and de Chernatony (2001) suggest that increased competition combined with rapid developments in technology is making it difficult for organisations to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Instead, they are turning to differentiating themselves emotionally, rather than relying on the functional characteristics of their brand. This is particularly relevant within the context of HE as highlighted by (Clayton, Cavanagh, and Hettche 2012) who suggest public sector organisations experience trouble finding a unique message and communication, as they tend to be characterised by a “sea of sameness.”

2.4.4.5 Brand relationships

Heding et al. (2009, p.172) argued the relational approach of the organisation's interaction with the consumer is the "the one approach leading brand management into the twenty-first century". The 'relationship' element of the branding process provides a new approach to branding models, considering consumer and brand as a connected relationship. Social psychology theories have been used as conceptual foundations in empirical research into relationship marketing: "relationships are built on the foundation of mutual commitment" (Berry and Parasuraman 1991, p.139). This shift represents the demand modern-day consumers have to build long-lasting emotional relationships with the brands they love. Accordingly, Heding et al. propose the landscape has evolved from the "brand being 'owned' by the marketer, who controls the communication to a passive recipient/consumer" (p.21).

Veloutsou and Ruiz-Mafé, 2020 refer to brands act as "socialising agents" which build relationships between the consumers and the brand. Equally, brands can also build brand strong, emotive communities between consumers that are all passionate about the same brand. Keller 2013; Schmitt 2012 enforce the power brands have for facilitating consumers to explore their identity, influencing their social group aspirations, and providing a sense of social attachment and belonging through developing brand communities. Bhattacharya et al. (1995) defined identification as "perceived oneness with or belongingness to an organization" (p. 46). The literature is conclusive that branding encourages personal exploration and expression as individuals and as part of a brand group (Dessart et al., 2015).

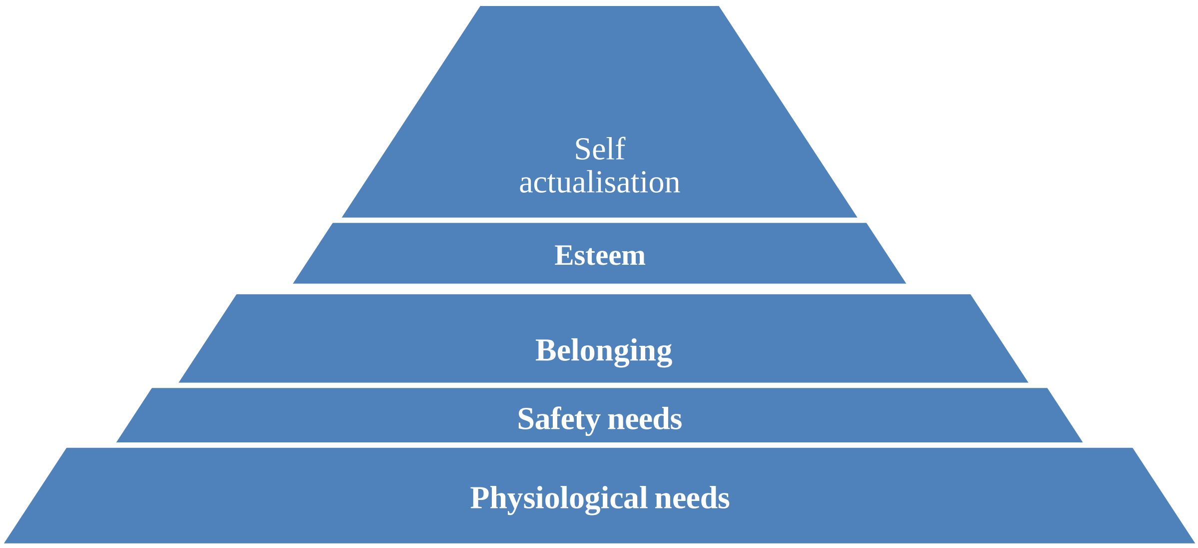
Social interaction is a fundamental necessity for human existence, that not only enforces social skills, but adds quality and happiness to life (Ybarra et al. 2008). Affirmed by Knowles et al. (2010) who agree that humans have a basic need to experience a sense of belonging and to belong to a group, not only for the need of survival but also for feelings of self-esteem and worth. Dahlberg (2007, p.206) asserts that "all humans need to be connected."

Tajfel and Turner (1979) asserts that social identity theory argues that an individual's connections to social groups or organisations are an important element when it comes to defining self-concepts. Social groups are collections of people with similar views, who identify with each other, according to a number of scholars (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Stets and Burke 2000).

Ashforth and Mael (1989) assert that a person's social identity influences their engagement with certain activities which they feel support their identity. Thus, they may support organisations that demonstrate an identity or values that match their own. Scholars such as Park et al (2013) emphasise the point that brands give consumers a sense of who they are. This is powerful; it can cause people to seek like-minded individuals within a 'brand community'. Thus, brands can be considered as socially constructed which can be influenced by consumers taking an active role in their creation and lifespan. Consumers then go on to share their brand preferences with other like-minded people which grows more value for the brand (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009).

Maslow (2014) identified 'belonging' as a fundamental step in his hierarchy of needs model. This model identifies the entities needed to ensure a sense of feeling whole and content.

Figure 1: Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 2014)



2.4.4.6 Brand loyalty

Brand loyalty is defined as “a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (Aaker 1991, p.390). Bowlby (1983) investigated the theory of attachment which demonstrates individuals needing to create bonds by developing relationships. We see evidence of bond building in brands; Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, p.412) defines a brand community as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand”. They assert that the formation of brand communities directly influences brand equity. Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001) continue to explain the characteristics of brand communities:

i. A shared consciousness or connection to the brand and the community members
ii. Communal traditions, rituals and stories transmitting the community meaning and brand essence
iii. A belief in a moral responsibility towards the entire brand community as well as individual brand members

Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) assert that brand communities provide a good environment for consumers to develop strong emotional connections with the brand. Lemon et al, (2001) suggest that consumers who have a commitment to a brand community typically become ‘fiercely loyal’. Muñiz et al (2005) assert that this loyalty is so passionate; it is actually comparable to religious zeal. McAlexander, et al, (2002) suggest that these brand communities can provide organisations with huge advantages such as being more forgiving with quality lapses or failures, as well as being less prone to brand switching. The authors suggest that these brand communities as actually “The Holy Grail of brand loyalty” (p.38). This view is supported in the literature; Erwing, et al, (2013) stated “brand communities have emerged as one of the most important new fields of enquiry in brand management scholarship over the past decade.” (p.9). Founier and Lee (2009) assert that brand communities should be given greater importance as a top-level business strategy to maximise the benefits that arise when they become established.

Borrowing such constructs from social identity theory, the importance of relationships between HEIs and their stakeholders has attracted much interest over the past decade. This thesis will explore the extent to which university students feel part of a brand community with their HEI, as part of the data capture. It will be fascinating to consider how deeply a brand community within the context of HE can impact the brand success.

Brand loyalty is a precious asset for an organisation. Strong brand attachment can result in the highest form of emotional connection, resulting in ultimate brand loyalty – 'Brand Love'. Brand love is a contemporary marketing construct which assess consumers' emotional loyalty to particular brands. It is a heightened emotional relationship between the consumer and the brand. For brand love to develop, there must first be customer satisfaction, and brand love itself is an antecedent of brand loyalty (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006).

When brand love is measured, consumers are seen to show behaviours and develop emotional bonds with their brands that are similar to those they would experience with another human (Noel and Merunka, 2013). The results of brand love include brand loyalty, increased engagement and positive word of mouth (Ahuvia, 1994).

Consumers exhibiting brand love can help the brand grow, as they want to share their excitement about the brand (Albert, et al 2013). It is therefore mutually beneficial for the organisation and the consumer. Since its introduction, brand love has been a focus of great interest for brand managers in the commercial sector, and more recently studies that explore how brand love may be influenced by brand characteristics in the HE sector.

2.5 Synthesis of concepts and research objectives

This chapter has drawn upon literature surrounding success, branding, and higher education branding. The existing gaps in knowledge have also been presented.

Section 2.5 will now align the concepts to the research objectives.

2.5.1 To understand how the concept of success is viewed

The literature states the need to understand the phenomenon of success in order to understand the concept of brand success. Thus, the concept of success was explored.

The literature also emphasises the need to understand whether success is always positive. Scholars also assert in the literature that it is not possible or appropriate to study of success without also studying failure. Understanding how participants assess the concept of success may highlight intrinsic links with their definition of a successful brand.

A summary of the variables of success in relation to RO1 was established in table 1. These characteristics were categorised into two overarching headings: Earned and Legacy. These shall be used to underpin the research interview tool during the first section of data collection, to gather data on perceptions and interpretations of success.

Much needs to be learned about how this complex social phenomenon is perceived as currently there is a lack of theory. Undertaking a deeper analysis of the determinants that stakeholders think influence success reveals opinions reflecting a broader category of attitudes (Baczko-Dombi and WysmułEk 2015). It is importantto explore if the way the social construct of success is interpreted determines or influences how brand success is viewed.

Hence, research objective 1 was formulated as follows: RO1: To critically examine the concept of success

2.5.2 To critically explore how the concept of brand success is viewed

As a precursor to understanding perceptions of brand success in HE, exploring the concept of brand success holistically is crucial in an attempt to identify potential synergy or distinctiveness of HE brands to commercial organisations. This literature review provides a synopsis of the criteria for brand success around the headings of functional competencies, internal capabilities, and emotional benefits. The section introduces key theories which are used to inform the conceptual framework for this research.

The literature is clear that brands are complex offerings. Conceived by organisations but ultimately, they reside in consumers' minds (de Chernatony 2010) and therefore the 'brand' is a subjective term where "no one is talking about precisely the same thing" (Kapferer 2012. p.3). Therefore, establishing a unified consensus from data participants of their interpretation of the meaning of brand will be necessary, prior to questions surrounding brand success are posed.

Attempting to reach a consensus of the definition of a successful brand is important not only for an appropriate use of the term 'success' but also for improving the organisation's understanding of what criteria should be used to determine their brand success (de Chernatony and McDonald 2011). Success is a term widely used yet not clearly defined, and further research is needed that relates to the branding efforts of public sector organisations, such as universities (Watkins and Gonzenbach 2013)

Hence, research objective 2 was formulated as follows: RO2: To critically examine the concept of brand success

2.5.3 To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of HE

Critical discussion of the nature of the HE brand is an important contribution for this research as an approach to understand the heart and soul of modern-day HE. Discussion surrounding what constitutes a ‘university’ is a longstanding and extensive one (Dopson & McNay,1996). The publics of the modern-day university are multiple and diverse; and so are their demands and expectations of HE. Exploring and understanding the multiple publics is important in the attempt to appreciate the stakeholders brand managers need to engage and attract through branding activity. Increased global competition has led universities to being looking for unique definitions of who they are so they can stand out from others and attract students (Chapleo 2007; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007). This has prompted concern surrounding the contemporary nature and essence of the HE brand, as well as the appropriateness of branding HE. The literature suggests that branding in HE introduces the risk of moral conflicts, with the possibility of damaging the integrity of institutions as a result (Chapleo, 2011; Waeraas and Solbakk, 2008; Hemsley- Brown and Goonawardana, 2007).

Exploring the controversy in HE - by further establishing if there a place for branding in HE is important during data collection, in the process of understanding perceptions of brand success in HE from varying perspectives, and to question if the perception of the interviewee would vary dependant on their stakeholder status (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). It will be interesting to explore differences in opinions between the academic community, students and brand managers in order to explore gaps and further appreciate if this could cause a barrier between the stakeholders and impact a positive working culture. Understanding the environment in which the brand resides is crucial in order to investigate and determine if HE brands are significantly different to commercial brands. Therefore, this research objective will be focussed on the current view of higher education.
Data participants will be challenged to consider the purpose of modern-day HE considering both the more ‘traditional’ notion of the nature of HE and contemporary role, as found in the literature.

Hence, research objective 3 was formulated as follows: RO3: To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education

2.5.4 To critically define the concept of brand success in the context of UK newer universities

Building on the previous sections where success, brand success and the nature of HE has been considered, and a foundation of knowledge has been built, the literature review has explored branding as a strategic activity for universities. Furthermore, the literature explores if brand success in HE shares similarities to other brands, or if indeed, it is distinct due to the context it resides. This will be further explored during data collection. The concept of brand success and brand equity in the HE context is discussed.

Fetscherin and Usunier (2012) identified knowledge gaps in both HEI and corporate branding literature, relating to corporate branding, despite the fact that “higher education and branding go back a long way” (Temple, 2006, p.15).What’s more, different elements of corporate branding such as corporate image, identity and reputation, remain “largely undefined and there is clearly no consensus as to what they mean” (Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012, p.744).

De Heer and Tandoh-Offin (2015) insist that universities need a strong understanding of the role branding plays and the benefits that it offers. By understanding how HEIs create desirable, successful brands, universities can attract world-class academics and top-performing students, leading to improved public image and goodwill (Melewar and Akel 2005). The customer experience is influenced by every single interaction an HEI has with internal and external stakeholders. Positive experiences will improve the university’s reputation, which in turn strengthens the brand and increases brand equity (Abimbola 2009). Therefore, understanding what makes effective brand management in HE is crucial. This research is timely as the literature identifies that little research has been conducted into what constitutes effective brand management, and brand managers in HE have limited guidance as a result (Cui, Hu and Griffith 2014).

Hence, research objective 4 was formulated as follows: RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities

The following identifies the key theories in the literature review which will inform and underpin the conceptual framework. The thesis foci – brand success – has been categorised into three categories which shall now be presented.

Table 2: Three pillars of brand success. Synopsis of brand success factors

	Concept	Major references	Research objective addressed
Pillar 1: Operational competencies	Effective	Doyle (1989)	RO2, RO3, RO4
	Profitable	Balmer (2001), Kader et al (2009)	
	Perceived quality	Aaker (1991), Keegan (2002)	
	Credible	Balmer (1997)	
	Added value	Doyle (1989)	
	Proprietary assets	Aaker (1991), Elliot (2001)	
Pillar 2: Internal capabilities	Leadership	Hatch and Schultz, (2001); Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006)	RO2, RO3, RO4
	Responsible	Balmer and Gray (2003)	
	Vision and values	Hatch and Schultz, (2009); Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), Balmer (1997), Keegan (2002), Kader et al (2009)	
	Organisational culture	Kader et al 92009)	
	Brand management	Kader et al (2009)	
	Internal brand management	Hatch and Schultz, (2001); Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006)	
Pillar 3: Emotional benefits	Brand identity, image and personality	Doyle (1980), Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, (2006) Keller (2013)	RO2, RO3, RO4
	Brand awareness, association, and reputation	Aaker (1991), Elliot (2001), Abratt and Kleyn,, Keegan(2002)	
	Brand heritage	Balmer (1997), Kader et al (2009)	
	Brand loyalty	Aaker (1991) Elliot (2001)	
	Belonging	Maslow (2014)	

(Source: created for this research)

2.6 Summary

It must be reinforced that success is a subjective term that is extremely difficult to define.

The literature demonstrates how success is multi-faceted and very personal. Throughout the exploration of success within the literature review, two recurring themes seemed evident: success which was self-made and success which was handed down. For the purposes of this research, the author therefore split the characteristics of success, into two overarching headings: Earned and Legacy. It is clear the concept of success is complex (Chapleo 2005), but nevertheless, important to understand as a stand-alone construct as a precursor to exploring brand success.

The literature review continued to explore the concept and characteristics of brand, highlighting the ubiquitous nature and complexities of branding. The nature of the HE brand was discussed, presenting the challenges of the modern-day HEI brand.

The literature also considered the change in the environment that has forced UK HEIs to examine their operations and strategies and has seen them integrate business practices to keep them competitive and economically sustainable (Tomlinson 2016).

A discussion on the elements of brand success as identified by leading scholars in the field was presented. Again, as previously identified with exploring the concept of success, clear groupings of themes were identified in which to categorise findings in the literature. Consequently, the researcher classified the findings of brand success into three ‘pillars’: Functional competencies, Internal capabilities, and Emotional benefits.

Following the presentation of various theories drawn from the branding literature, as well as highlighting the gaps in knowledge, the researcher aligned the concepts to the research questions. Insight achieved through the literature review provides a clear scaffold to enhance the conceptual framework presented post literature gathering; having been shaped by the data. The next chapter guides the reader through the methodology selected for this research.

CHAPTER 3 –METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological approach adopted for the research and seeks to demonstrate the research design is appropriate for the topic and research objectives invested in. The theoretical paradigm, and dominant ontological perspective which guides the research is discussed, along with presenting the rationale and justification for the chosen research methods, including the choice of multiple case study as the main research strategy, and justification of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

The HEIs selected for the case study are introduced, well as presenting the criteria created for the selection of the cases used. The research population, and recruitment of these participants is discussed. Evidence of data triangulation is also presented. The seven-step process of the semi-structured interviews was also discussed.

The data analysis process (recursive abstraction) is described. The chapter also presents the pilot study; providing critique for where methodological changes were made following the pilot data collection phase and details the value this brought to the research. The chapter defines the parameters of the research, acknowledging the methodological limitations as well as considering other possible research approaches. The chapter concludes by identifying validity, reliability and ethical considerations during the planning and implementation of the research.

3.1 Theoretical research paradigm

Whilst deciding how best to conduct the research, the researcher considered two key areas: epistemology and ontology. Although the focus is on the research aim, epistemological and ontological assumptions influence the selection of research methods (Morgan 2007).

It was a fundamental element of the research journey to consider one's own philosophical assumption, as the paradigm adopted guides the researcher. Reflections on the nature of life, matter and consciousness are a crucial underpinning for any research. Saunders et al (2016) stated that the research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of such knowledge. The theoretical paradigm is the underlying belief system guiding the research process (Sarantakos, 2005), defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.106) as *'the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation.'*

Easterby-Smith et al (2008) identified three reasons that make exploring research philosophies an effective route to the creation of a research methodology. The first is that it helps to answer the research question by identifying the specific research methods to be used, including where the data comes from, how it will be gathered, and how it will be interpreted. The second is that knowing what the different philosophies are will help when it comes to selecting an appropriate one, identifying its limitations before the project even starts. Finally, it empowers the researcher to use new methods that they may not have known about previously, as each research paradigm influences a different research methodology (Creswell 2009). Each paradigm was explored to ensure the most appropriate was adopted to complement the methodological choice for this research as Creswell (2009) advises.

Table 3: Basic beliefs of theoretical paradigms

	Positivism	Post-positivism	Critical theory	Constructivism/ Interpretivist
Ontology	Naïve reality - 'Real' reality but apprehendable	Critical realism – 'real' reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values;	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist ; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/dialectical	Hermeneutical/ dialectical

Source: (Guba and Lincoln 1994)

Critical theory research often requires long-term studies of the ethnography and history of organisational processes and structures, with the goal being to transform political, cultural, social, ethnic or gender values (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Therefore, this would not be an appropriate paradigm to use for a research thesis of this nature.

Constructivism sits at the other end of the research paradigm spectrum (Hans-Gerd 2014). Constructivist/interpretivists see reality as something that is constructed individually, where its meaning emerges through feelings, meanings and interpretations. This methodology looks to understand events from an individual's perspective (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

The researcher believes that the world is socially constructed. They concur with Bryman's observation that the social world requires a logic that reflects individuality (Bryman and Bell 2011). The researcher is particularly interested in exploring meanings and feelings during this research and follows Merriam's belief that 'Qualitative researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences' (Merriam, 2009 p.5).

The focus of this thesis sits under the broader umbrella of marketing, with a particular focus on branding and brand success in the HE context, which corroborates with Healy and Perry (2000) who assert "the ontology of realism assumes that the research is dealing with complex social phenomena involving reflective people" (p.121).

Furthermore, the aim of this research is to explore, and subsequently understand, the varying perceptions of brand success in newer universities. This will require the researcher to comprehend and report on complex social science phenomena (Marilyn and Chad 2000). This study will therefore follow the realism ontological perspective as it aligns most appropriately with the aims and objectives of this research, has implications for the development of the conceptual framework, and is identified as being the most appropriate scientific paradigm when adopting a case study research approach (Perry 1998).

The concepts, interpretations and idea construction within this study are therefore guided by the interpretivist paradigm, concerned with subjectivity, understanding, agency and how humans construct their social world (Bryman 2012). An interpretivist approach is appropriate as it sees experiences being socially, culturally and historically produced (Finlay and Evans 2009). To further complement this, an inductive reasoning will build theory rather than test it through hypotheses (Farquhar 2012).

As with other inductive paradigms, the realism paradigm is inductive rather than deductive (Donnellan 1995). The role of the literature review within an induction paradigm is different from deductive research as it is not seeking to establish variables, but instead to seek a gap in existing knowledge. In the case of this research, gaps exist in theoretical knowledge as well as the practical understanding of how brand success is currently applied in post-1992 English universities.

The interpretivist standpoint is a direction in social science that concentrates on humans and how they interpret and make sense of reality. (Farquhar 2012). The researcher believes that all knowledge is subjective, and it is the role of the researcher to take an active involvement in deconstructing the findings. The interview tool was therefore powerful in enabling the researcher to establish depth with their data participants. The first section of the data collection focuses on the concept of success and draws from literature founded in the discipline of psychology and anthropology. This had added an opportunity for the researcher to comprehend the social situation from the perspective of those who experience and live it, which is important having adopted an interpretivist approach.

Adopting an interpretive approach encouraged the researcher to be an active agent (Farquhar 2012) and draw specific ideas and themes from the participants. Through this interaction, deeper meanings will be uncovered. The researcher is not a detached observer as suggested in positivism and having knowledge of the HE environment will help demonstrate the credibility (Saunders et al. 2016). Furthermore, objectivity is not the aim in interpretivist research: the interpretivist researcher seeks to be neutral and to achieve transparency in their research (O'Leary 2004). Again, this is a suitable approach to adopt due to the researcher's involvement and insight into HE.

As with all credible research, the success of this study depended on achieving honesty and authenticity from the participants in order to develop the existing body of knowledge by understanding brand success more effectively in HE. The rich insight into the research was dependent on a deep meaning being uncovered through using the actors in the data collection in the journey of exploring and understanding the real-life phenomenon of success.

Table 4: Characteristics of interpretivist research

Element	Description	Application to this research
Understanding	Reality is viewed as socially and societally embedded and exists within the mind. It is fluid and changing and multiple realities are presumed	Data collection is with real people so views and opinions are entirely subjective and fluid. One person's interpretation of success and brand success may be different to another. The research offers a collection of perceptions and views from final year Business, Management & Marketing Students, Academic Brand Ambassadors and Head of Brand/Marketing Managers.
Subjectivity	This involves interpreting the meanings and actions of actors according to their subjective frame of reference	The researcher is an active agent and understands their role in interpreting the data. Subjectivity, involvement and closeness with the data are all encouraged by the researcher, who acts as an active agent.
Subjective	Knowledge is constructed and based on shared signs and symbols recognised by members of a culture. Research encompasses researchers' own views and how they have been constructed	The researcher has a wealth of knowledge through working in the HE environment for 17 years. This must not influence the data but acknowledging it is crucial in the quest to achieve non-biased research.

Setting	The emphasis is on natural settings, and the subject of research is not removed from what surrounds it in everyday life. It involves an in-depth investigation	Interviews conducted in the HEI setting. The researcher considered if this would influence data collection as not in a neutral setting. Body language and environment setting was recorded in research log.
Holistic	To interpret a phenomenon, the researcher much look at its parts in terms of its whole and the whole in terms of its parts	As encouraged in the literature, success was explored prior to attempting to understand perceptions of brand success.
Rich insight	By exploring in depth, the researcher can gain a much fuller understanding of the phenomenon	The researcher designed the interview tool with semi-structured questions; enabling the opportunity to explore deeper. The questions for data collection approaches are derived from deconstructing and analysing critically prior conceptions of the phenomenon (of success) (Denzin 1989).

Source: Creswell (2009). Adapted by researcher for this thesis

This research adopts a case study research methodology, an interpretivist approach offers a more appropriate paradigm than positivism (Perry 1998), as demonstrated in the following table.

Table 5: Positivism Vs Interpretivist approach

Element of research	Positivism	Interpretivist	Application to this research
Research	Detached	Engaged	Researcher has an established career working in HE.
Research question	What	Why, how	Establishing perceptions and exploring understandings of brand success. Research objectives ask how success and brand success look and feel to the participant and why they deem their HEI's brand successful.
Values	Free	Laden	Axiology - The research has a specific value which guides it. This is important as values affect how research is conducted and what is considered as 'valuable' in the findings. The research is value-bound and cannot be separated so will be subjective.
Concepts	Clearly defined to enable measurement	Defined but open to reconsideration during the course of research	Research is fluid and welcomes subjectivity.

Units of analysis	Classified and simple	Rich in themselves and complex	Data collection from people which in itself is complex.
Generalisation	Deduction	Induction	Building theory.
Underlying logic Role of theory	Theory testing through hypothesis formulation, data collection and testing	Generation of theory through pattern analysis	Seeking to explore reoccurring patterns from literature review and data collection.
Samples	Random	Selected according to research objectives	Cases and participants were selected following criteria.
Findings	Measure	Meaning	Purpose of research is to discover deeper meanings and understandings of brand success in HE and not to measure brand success in HE. It is proposed this is executed at a later stage.

Source: (Farquhar 2012) Adapted by researcher for this thesis

3.2 The role of self

Prior to joining academia in 2014, the researcher was the Head of Schools and College Liaison and Marketing Manager in the Marketing and Communications Department at Bournemouth University for ten years. It was therefore important due to the familiarity of the research environment that the researcher acknowledged this in the research design and methodological choice made to ensure non bias.
As a hands-on marketer, the researcher spent many years not only working on recruitment strategies, but also functioning at the 'sharp end' of student recruitment, representing Bournemouth University globally. It was in this capacity that she became acutely aware of a significant change in the approach of prospective students – and their parents. Instead of students asking, 'What can I do to make myself a more attractive proposition to your university?' questions such as, 'What is your university doing to become a more attractive proposition?' were asked.

Stakeholders' expectations were changing due to an emergence and dominance of a marketisation narrative in higher education. This theme of the commodification and 'corporate' takeover of HE was prominent in the academic literature and suggested an erosion of focus of education as a public 'good' to one which increasingly sees itself as a private 'good'. This made the researcher question how the HEI can fulfil these expectations to ensure brand success.

The literature identifies little academic research, or practical experience and understanding, in the area of the antecedents of brand success in HE (Chapleo 2010) and the concept of successful brands in the university context needs more discussion, especially when the characteristics of HE poses unique challenges when embedding and nurturing a strong brand (Chapleo 2010). The researcher was therefore inspired to establish a framework that can help marketers and academicsalike to understand the context of this changing HE environment and help it to not only to meet the challenges that universities face today but prepare it for those expectations graduates will demand in the future.

The initial objective for this research was to measure success in a selection of comparable HE brands, however as the literature was explored it became apparent that the concept of success is actually a vastly under-explored area itself. Through the process of reflecting on prior experiences and considering questions such as ‘Why am I carrying out this research?’ and ‘What am I hoping to achieve with this research at the start of my PhD?’ (Langdridge 2007) the researcher soon realised that until more was known about success itself, and what the characteristics represented, it would be impossible to actually measure it. This triggered the first section of this literature review; a presentation of the essence and determinants of the phenomena of success.

3.3 Justification for qualitative research method

The previous section established and justified the direction of the ontology of this research. This section deepens the discussion of the chosen methodology; particularly justifying the decision to adopt an inductive, qualitative method.

Table 6: Theoretical and methodological approach for this research

Research considerations		Theoretical and methodological approach for this research
Research Aim		To build theory
Ontology		Realism - reality is individually constructed with the meaning emerging through feelings and interpretations.
Epistemology		Interpretivist
Nature of human/environment relationship		Qualitative insider
Direction of research inquiry		Exploratory
Methodology	General approach	Inductive. Theory construction and theory building through case study approach
	Secondary research strategy	Literature review (Key branding constructs), branding models and frameworks, empirical research explored
	Primary research strategy	Semi-structured interviews
	Sample size	3 HEIs, 24 interviews in total
	Data collection	Interviews follow interview protocol, interview guide. All digitally recorded.
	Type of data collected	Interview and audio files, verbatim interview transcripts.
	Interaction of researcher and interviewee	The researcher is not a detached observer but an active agent of the research
	Type of data analysis	Qualitative. Recursive abstraction.

Adapted from Perry (1998); Healy and Perry (2000).

The research methods for this research have been influenced by key findings in the literature: Chapleo (2005; 2007; 2010; 2014), Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006), Maringe and Gibbs (2009), all of whom identify that more depth and understanding of the concept of brand success in the context of HEIs is needed. Bragge (2010) asserts that a qualitative research design is most suitable for research relating to subjective circumstances including attitudes and emotions. This is because it involves a formalised way of collecting and interpreting the material that the researcher gathers through observation and discussion (Khankeh et al. 2015).

Qualitative research methods use an inductive approach, which is based on building theory by deriving generalised inferences and theory through observation (Bryman 2012). The primacy and closeness to the data are crucial for successful qualitative research and understanding and interpreting the data effectively is crucial for the production of high-quality impactful research. A qualitative approach relies on depth rather than breadth, enabling researchers to gather a considerable amount of information about a relatively small number of subjects. This gives a fuller, more rounded insight and understanding (Veal 2005).

A qualitative approach captures the behaviour, experiences and feelings of participants in their own context, which can result in a more detailed understanding of the issues being researched (Malhotra and Birks 2003). This is particularly important for this research and is embedded in the philosophy that this research recognises there are multiple realities from multiple perspectives. Quantitative research with university students has been previously undertaken to establish their perceptions of university branding, (Bennett and Ali-Choudhury 2009), but due to the nature of the research approach, results represented breath not depth with students who had demonstrated no commitment to a university.

Quantitative research typically focuses on gathering and analysing numerical data and is often used to test hypotheses before drawing conclusions (Veal 2005).
In contrast, this research offers a unique methodological contribution in its approach to accomplish the research aim as the research will be driven by the data exploring the construct of success and brand success and will seek the meaning and understanding from various stakeholder groups who have insightful knowledge of the

brand; through first-hand experience and interaction with it.

This research seeks a holistic approach; embracing subjectivity and ambiguity in the findings, as it deals with real subjects. The researcher appreciates this brings challenges for validity and reliability, but this has been managed through field-note journals and sense checking. The research relied on getting close to the data and searching for the meaning of successful branding in the HE context: it recognises that these meanings will emerge from many different places.

This research has been shaped using an inductive research design. This complements the methodological choice: Bryman (1988, p81 cited in Saunders *et al.* 2016) recommends that an inductive approach is best suited to qualitative work; it is concerned with exploring and understanding. An inductive approach demands the researcher generates theory from the data by looking for patterns (Maylor and Blackmon 2005). It is recognised there may be tension between an inductive approach which introduces a conceptual framework; however, this work is framed in terms of the importance of the phenomenon of success and the lack of plausible existing theory (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

The approach also suits the focus of enquiry as the theory of success is underexplored, and this research explores a range of opinions. There are multiple realities of how people view successful brands. (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008) indicated that qualitative research is often associated with inductive research designs where a range of methods are used to collect data and explore the issue from different perspectives.

Clearly, qualitative research allows for a solid understanding of specific phenomena and situations can be explained that would not be identified through quantitative research methods (Houser 2015). As the literature suggests, a brand is a subjective term where “no one is talking about precisely the same thing” (Kapferer 2012), so identifying what brand success is in the context of HEIs may vary significantly, depending on who is consulted. Using qualitative research will allow an understanding of behaviour conditions through the actors’ perspectives, as well as draw out intricate details about process, feelings and motives that are difficult to extract through quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014).

The decision to adopt a qualitative research approach is also particularly suitable for this area of focus as Gephart (2004) suggests that qualitative research provides insight that is typically beyond the scope of quantitative research.
It is important to understand and avoid the potential areas of weakness that qualitative research can introduce. The researcher was guided by Yin (1994) to ensure the interview questions were tested for suitability during the pilot phases as this otherwise may result in bias. Consideration was also given to ensure appropriate interpretation of the data was detailed as again; this can be a complication of undertaking qualitative research. Yin (1994) suggests that qualitative research can introduce reflexivity, so the researcher paid attention to ensure the data was accurate and not a representation of what the researcher wanted to hear.

Finally, it was recognised that adopting a qualitative approach is extremely time consuming; not only during the interviews and transcribing, but also accessing interview participants and gatekeepers. However, the researcher was committed to this approach in order to obtain the level of depth and insight needed to explore the research focus. Unlocking participants' feelings and perceptions of success and brand success would not have been to the same level of truth if accessed through a quantitative approach as the opportunity to establish rapport with the interviewee, and probe during data collection would not be possible.

3.4 Justification for case study method

As the previous section highlights, the researcher ensured the research method adopted for this thesis, was the most appropriate in order to answer the research questions most effectively. Various research methods were critiqued during this process.

Case study research is usually defined as:
"An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context." (Yin 2009 p.29) and has been described as 'intellectual gold' (Jenson and Rodgers 2001).

Adopting a case study research strategy complements the interpretative perspective as it allows the researcher to look at the definition of brand success in context (Farquhar 2012).
A case study approach will also provide a rich multi-dimensional holistic picture of brand success across collective cases (Remenyi 1998) as well as generating theory (Connie 1988). Furthermore, the case study approach is better suited to small sample sizes, rather than the larger numbers required for quantitative research (Yin 2009a). Indeed, Cohen et al (2007 p.257) asserts "a key characteristic of case study research is that they 'replace quantity with quality and intensity."

A case study approach seeks to gain an understanding of a phenomenon through a variety of data sources, and then uses this understanding to create and develop theory (Farquhar 2012).
This aligns closely to the research objectives for this thesis as identified by Yin (1994) who stated the case study method adds value in addressing 'how' and 'why'.

Case studies are not appropriate when a mature understanding of a phenomenon already exists, and constructs are subsequently well developed. However, as the understanding of brand success in newer universities is currently inadequate, with little empirical substantiation, a case study approach is particularly well suited. This is because research theory is at an early stage (Darke et al. 1998).

Table 7: Components of case study research design

Component	Case study	Application to this research
Research question	It is not necessary always to find a 'gap'. It may be quite sufficient to explore a phenomenon in a new context, use a different research design or revisit a question that has not been explored recently. Case study research poses a 'how' or 'why' question.	The research question seeks to explore interpretations of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities.
Propositions/objectives	Develop a set of propositions or objectives that will direct a particular aspect of the research question i.e., the source of data.	The literature guides the researcher to firstly explore how the participants view the concept of success and build on perceptions of brand success
Unit of analysis	This relates to the basic problem of what the case is. What are the bounds of the case and what is the focus of investigation.	The bounds of this research are three broadly comparable newer English universities.
Linking data to propositions	This refers to the analysis of the data. If data is generating theory (Inductive) then structure tends to be based on emerging patterns.	The research seeks informed opinion from key stakeholders. Purposeful sampling has been collected in order to gather rich data from participants who have insight about brand success through first-hand experiences in the context of the HEI, in order for the researcher to build theory and expose patterns in the data.
Interpretation of findings	The literature will have debated rival theories and studies, and these will be returned to interpreting findings.	The literature review explores theories and previous empirical studies. An interpretivist approach has been adopted.

Source: Adapted from Yin (2009). Further developed by the author, for this research.

3.4.1 Justification for multiple case study method

Case studies can involve single or multiple cases, however the literature enforces multiple case studies to be more robust than single case studies (Yin 2013) as this enables comparisons to be made (Jensen and Rodgers 2001, Stake 1995), which provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena researched (Wahyuni 2012).

This research will adopt a multiple case design approach to investigate, compare and contrast perceptions of brand success in three different cases. This will enable stronger arguments for validity and theory (Farquhar 2012), and aid rigour (Noor 2008). This approach will allow comparisons across HEIs which will provide the opportunity to develop a deeper and richer analysis, which in turn, will lead to greater understandings being formed. In order to achieve a purposeful sampling approach, this research focuses on a sample of three broadly comparable newer universities. While the literature guides that there is no ideal number of cases to use, a number between three and ten works well (Eisenhardt 1989). Following this guidance, the range of HEIs studied for this research represents an ideal number for a multiple case study design approach to ensure rich and deep data which will allow comparisons.

3.4.2 The case study organisations

The selection of an appropriate sample is vital, as it controls variation and can help to define the extent to which findings can be generalised (Eisenhardt 1989). Qualitative studies typically select small, non-random samples (Creswell 2014). As contingency is also an important consideration for research, five HEIs were initially contacted and invited to participate with the research.

Table 8: Criteria for the selection of cases

Criteria assessed	Institution				
	Bournemouth University	Manchester Metropolitan University	University of Portsmouth	Kingston University	Leeds Beckett University
Age of university	Achieved university status in 1992	Achieved university status in 1992	Achieved university status in 1992	Achieved university status in 1992	Achieved university status in 1992
Size of university	18,000	32,485	22,000	22,000	25,920
Portfolio of courses in Business School	Business, Management, Marketing, Retail	Business, Management, Marketing, Retail	Business, Management, Marketing, Retail	Business, Management, Marketing, Retail	Business, Management, Marketing, Retail
Gatekeeper in place?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

3.4.3 The benefits to the HEI of participating in the research

The literature suggests that university marketing departments frequently over-promise institutional capabilities (Jonathan and George 2003). Accordingly, brand managers need to manage their brand more systematically in order to communicate the benefits (Japutra et al. 2016). This research explores the perception of brand success from a variety of key stakeholders. These perceptions will be of interest to a variety of HEI policy makers especially to the marketing services team.
Bennett and Ali-Choudhury (2009) argue that newer universities need to work harder to create awareness, increase market share and demonstrate their calibre in comparison to older universities.

Therefore, this study offers impactful research enabling the understanding of the antecedents of brand success in HE will provide the institution with a necessary competitive edge. Furthermore, through gaining insight into the perspectives of brand success from a range of their stakeholders, the HEIs sampled for this research can develop and deliver their brand to ensure it meets and exceeds expectation, embedding a more competitive HE brand.

Accordingly, by deepening our understanding of the characteristics of the HE brand, we may experience opportunities for more effective brand management which offers a deeper connection and alignment to the stakeholder need.

3.5 Data collection

This section presents the most crucial issues of the data collection process and details the methods that were used for data collection for this multiple case study.

3.5.1 The research population

The technique used for this research has been purposeful sampling; purposely selecting individuals for research due to their understanding and experience of the research problem (Cresswell 2007). Whilst it is acknowledged that "a senior management view can provide insights into how a brand is managed" (Leijerholt et al 2019, p.152), this research aims to understand perspectives from stakeholders who will offer perceptions of brand success from their own institution in order to demonstrate how branding efforts are received and understood" (Leijerholt et al 2019, p.152).

The researcher used their own judgement in selecting participants to aid valuable contribution to answering the research questions (Saunders et al, 2016). The research population is therefore: final year undergraduate business, management and marketing students, academics who have been identified as embodying the HEI brand (criteria created by researcher for this study); and the HEI brand manager (or equivalent). This population has been selected because it has a solid understanding of the brand through experience and interactions and are therefore aware of the values of the HEI brand under discussion. It is felt this research population will inform the research objectives and enhance the understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Table 9: Participants for data collection

<table>
<tr><td>Bournemouth University</td><td rowspan="3">3x Brand-aligned academics
2x Brand manager/marketing manager
3x Final year business, management and marketing students</td></tr>
<tr><td>Manchester Metropolitan University</td></tr>
<tr><td>University of Portsmouth</td></tr>
</table>

3.5.2 Recruitment of HEI staff for data collection

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken at each HEI with members of the academic community. These brand-aligned academics were identified as engaged with recruitment activity (such as open days) and demonstrated a collaboration between their values and the institution's brand values. Accordingly, the HEI brand manager/marketing manager were also interviewed face-to-face.

Participants were chosen to contribute to the research based on the following criteria:

1. The nature of their role.
2. Their engagement with corporate marketing and recruitment activities, such as open days.
3. The commitment they demonstrate to the university brand.
4. The reputation they hold for being brand ambassadors

3.5.3 Recruitment of students for data collection

Gatekeepers at each HEI were used to identify final year undergraduate students in the discipline of business, management and marketing. Clear details about the aims and objectives of the research; reinforcing that participation is not compulsory was communicated to all student participants. Obviously, ensuring students understood their participation in data collection was not attached in any way to their successful completion of study was paramount.

3.5.4 Triangulation

To acquire and develop an in-depth view of an organisation via a case study, Yin (2010) proposes that a number of information sources should be examined. Yin suggests that no individual source should be seen as having an advantage over the others., and that good case study research should utilise a range of sources. It is recommended that a minimum of three different methods of verifying or corroborating data are used to provide triangulation during the data collection phase. Triangulation “can capture a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal of the units under study” (Jick 1979, p.603).

Forms of triangulation would include interviewing more than one person in each organisation being studied (Perry 1998); accordingly, twenty-four individual face- to-face in-depth interviews were conducted in total with both female and male participants. Participant ages and nationalities varied. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to ensure confidentiality. This research has adopted the data triangulation approach, gathering data from various participants, at different times, on the same subject. This version of triangulation is particularly common in case study research (Farquarson 2012).

3.5.5 Semi-structured interviews

The exploratory tool chosen for this research was semi-structured interviews in order to gather an insightful and rich understanding of the research participants' experiences and perceptions of success and brand success. Farquhar (2012) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest this research method is well suited for a case study approach and also to establish an epistemological coherency. In fact, Yin (2009) claims that interviews are the most important source for generating theory from case study research, and as Barbour (2008) suggests, “one-to-one semi-structured interviews are possibly the most commonly used qualitative method and have become almost the ‘gold standard’ approach against which other data are frequently compared and found wanting” (p.128). A semi-structured approach is also particularly well suited for this research as it offers an opportunity for detailed discussion where respondents are given the opportunity to consider their thoughts and for those thoughts to be listened to (Smith et al. 2009). This approach provides an opportunity to enter the world of the participant and view their understanding of success and brand success through their eyes.

3.5.6 Research journal and field notes

The reflective part of qualitative research is an important part of the process, so a research journal has been kept throughout the data collection. This is an important document, acting as an audit trail for the transcripts and recording the emotive elements of the data collection.

Establishing an insight into the behaviour of the respondents is important for an interpretivist approach, as is the need for visual cues from non-verbal data. Field notes also helps to remind the researcher of the interview setting and specific topics of the data collection. Retaining a research journal and accompanying field notes will also provide evidence of validly (Saunders et al 2016).

3.5.7 Semi-structured interviews – the process

The researcher had previous experience of interviewing using a semi-structured technique during master's study, however, to build on skillset, in-house training courses at their host university were undertaken. This was useful with refreshing memory and learning new skills such as polishing how to adopt a conversational mode during interviews to encourage two-way interaction. Interviews were conducted professionally and respectfully. The researcher used a friendly tone and an inclusive approach with the aim of ensuring participants felt comfortable, secure and equal (Salada 2011). It was important to set the scene and establish the boundaries of the interview. The researcher therefore discussed the aims of the research at the beginning of the interview. It was important that the researcher didn't influence the participant's responses so attention to body language, tone of voice and general mannerisms were closely guarded to ensure own biases or preferences were not conveyed and the researcher remained neutral at all times (Yin 2013).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) recommended that the interviewer follow a seven-step process to control and direct the interviews. The seven-step progression offered not only a systematic and rigorous approach which the researcher saw value in, but also acted as a crib sheet to ensure best practice was achieved during the interview process.

Thematising

This stage is the purpose and conceptualisation of the research. This required the researcher to have an understanding of the knowledge of HE brand success in order to understand and appreciate the gaps where new areas may be added. Kyle and Brinkman (2009) state that only once this ‘pre-knowledge’ is understood, can the research questions be formulated. Accordingly, the researchers detailed knowledge of HE brand success was used to create the research questions that subsequently guided the direction of the semi-structured interviews.

Designing

The design of the study was created to gain the knowledge required to address the gaps, as identified in the literature review, as well as grow knowledge in the HE branding domain. Section 3.3 discussed the rational for adopting a qualitative research approach, and section 3.4 rationalises the adoption of a case study approach. Section 3.4.2 identified and justified the organisations selected for this research. The process of identifying and gaining access to various internal and external key stakeholders of these HEIs is documented in section 3.5.1.
Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) identify that in addition to the task of collecting the relevant and required knowledge; there is also the need to focus on the moral implications of the study. Therefore, the research took particular care to fulfil ethical requirements as discussed in section 3.8.7.

Interviewing

The literature recommends the creation of an 'interview guide'.
Bryman (2012) and Easterby-Smith et al (2008) proposed the following basic elements for preparing a semi-structured interview guide. The researcher therefore followed this guide throughout the course of the data collection:

i. Ensure the questions relate to the research objectives.
ii. Follow ethical research principles. The researcher was discrete and respectful to the interviewee.
iii. The researcher ensured the questions followed logically. Space for 'probing' for further detail was also factored into interview time.
iv. The researcher ensured respondents understood the questions and asked them to explain any unfamiliar terms.
v. Field notes to be made for every interview which include considerations and thoughts immediately after each interview, capturing the highlights.

Recognising and appreciating the importance of developing interview questions which are directly based on the overarching research problem (Rubin and Rubin 2011), the researcher developed an interview guide.

In addition, a research information pack was given to participants prior to the interview. This included a participant information sheet about the research, as well as a consent form which participants needed to sign prior to the interview; in accordance with the ethical requirements (Flick 2006) (appendix B and C).
The researcher was certainly no 'expert' in qualitative research but did have some experience in conducting one-to-one interviews through previous academic study. The importance of establishing rapport and building trust, as well as using appropriate body language and tone of voice was appreciated. The researcher does have experience of presenting to senior management and executive teams, as well as presenting in larger environments such as conferences, lectures and open days, therefore was comfortable interviewing in this interview environment and was able to draw on experience to guide the interview process, ensure the participant felt comfortable and respected, whilst probing and teasing out deep and valuable information, as well as ensure participants received a comfortable and enjoyable

experience. Following Yin's guidance, the researcher gave careful consideration to
1. Being a good listener 2. Being inquisitive 3. Being sensitive in managing others' time
4. Distinguishing between first-hand, second-hand, and third-hand evidence and triangulating evidence from multiple sources (Yin 2010, pp.152-3).

Transcribing

As discussed previously, a participant information sheet was crafted for this research.

Shared with all participants prior to the interviews, this proved useful for participants to plan their time effectively; it was important no one felt rushed during the interview. Allowing for sufficient time was crucial for both the researcher and participant. The average time for each interview was 60-90 minutes.

Although scholars such as Barbour (2008) argue that a verbatim transcript is not essential for effective coding, the researcher felt it was a crucial part of the data analysis process which would ensure the researcher was central and deep into the data. Gibbs (2007, p.40) reinforces the need to transcribe prior to coding:

"Coding is easiest using a transcript. It is possible to code directly from an audio or video recording or from rough field notes, but it is nether easy to do not is it easy to retrieve sections of recordings or notes that have been coded when you need them."

The researcher was aware that professional transcription service providers were available to use for transcribing the interviews. However, the researcher wanted to ensure ownership of all the data, and was also anxious that interpretation may be skewed, and therefore felt a responsibility to ensure accuracy. The researcher is aware this decision added several months onto the overall work but is confident in the decision made.

Analysis

Yin (2011) asserts that an essential element of data analysis is how much rigor the researcher brings to the process. To ensure this rigor, the researcher thoroughly checked and rechecked data accuracy. To ensure unwanted bias (Yin 2011) the researcher was always aware that they might impose their own views on the research. Furthermore, the researcher followed Maylor and Blackmorn's (2005) guidelines to aid credibility and quality of the data:

i. Traceable: The researcher demonstrated where the data has come from, who said what and which organisation they come from, using recognised techniques
ii. Reliable: Recordings and transcripts faithfully recorded the discussions. Data was always transcribed within 24 hours
iii. Compete: The researcher kept all field notes, recordings and transcripts in line with ethical guidelines. These transcripts became the primary source material that was used for data analysis.

Verifying

All interviews were recorded for transcribing purposes, and participants were also reassured that their words will be recorded accurately and faithfully (Seidman 2012). The researcher also followed Seidman (2012) suggestion of offering respondents a copy of the transcript for them to review and endorse.

Reporting

Yin (2009a) identifies that the most challenging aspect of case study research is creating the case study report. For this research, this thesis serves as the case study report, and the primary audiences are expected to be the academic examiners of the thesis and the senior brand managers who were interviewed for it. Clearly their focus of interests will vary from one another: Therefore, the report attempts to clearly highlight the key results and findings from the data collection for both practical and theoretical contributions. The thesis identifies current publications and conference papers already emerged from the research as well as identifying opportunities for future research.

3.6 Pilot study

The literature recommends the researcher undertakes a trial run in order to fine-tune and test the interview questions and process (Rubin and Rubin 2011). Yin (2009) drew distinction between piloting and pre-testing, where the pilot is a formative exercise assisting in the conceptual development of the enquiry. The advice of Remenyi et al (1998) was followed: The choice of pilot was based on convenience, easy access and proximity, being undertaken at the researcher's home university (Bournemouth University).

The purposes of the pilot phase were:

i. To explore and inform tensions and benefits of each research question
ii. To establish if the research population were the most appropriate for the demands of the data required
iii. To ensure the research instruments were appropriate and robust
iv. To experience the process of the data collection

Stimulus material, drawn from the literature (definition of a brand, well-known logos), were used at the start of the interviews as a warm-up and to set the scene for the research. This activity also helped to establish an agreed consensus of what a brand actually is from the participants as a brand is such a subjective term as identified by Kapferer (1997). A detailed interview guide was developed (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

After the initial analysis of the pilot exercise, changes in the instrument design took place to ensure any closed questions were amended to become more open-ended. This was to ensure the questions were meaningful and enable participants to develop depth in their answers. As stated previously, during the pilot study NVivo was used during the data analysis. During this part of the research, it became clear that not only a considerable amount of manual analysis would have been undertaken before entering the data into the software, but also there was concern that unexpected themes would be lost. Yin (2010) warns that researchers need to understand that they are responsible for analytical thinking and should not use computer-assisted tools for this task. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) echo this view by asserting that interpreting the data remains both the task and the responsibility of the researcher. The researcher felt manual data analysis would allow for a more accurate and direct interpretation (Robson, 2011).

3.7 Methodological limitations

This section describes the limitations related to the case study method, interpretivist approach, sample, and time frame of the research.

3.7.1 Limitations to an interpretivist approach

An interpretivist approach welcomes subjectivity, ambiguity and an infinite variation of opinion, which can introduce the danger of vagueness due to few conclusions being drawn. Data participants are contributing perceptions, rather than fact, and the researcher is central to interpreting meaning. This obviously introduces the potential for misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

An interpretivist ontology is based on the nature of human behaviour and the nature of reality; there are multiple realities for how people view branding and success, and these options may well change over time. Human subjects are also not rational, so how they view success and brand success may also not be rational. Situational factors such as social factors, time factors and antecedent states can also influence the data capture; due to the nature of researching with emotional subjects rather than qualitative data. This approach therefore opens an opportunity for inherently subjective data.

3.7.2 Limitations of case study research

Case study research attracts criticism within the literature; some argue it lacks objectivity and rigor (Remenyi 1998). One of the most critical observations is related to the difficulty in generalising the findings to a larger population (Yin 2009). Noor (2008) agrees that there is much difficulty in being able to generalise findings, however, this is more frequently a criticism made of single case studies. The researcher is confident that by adopting a multiple case study approach rather than single case, far greater depth and understanding has been achieved. It is however crucial with case study research not to generalise the findings of the sample to a population (Bryman 2012), but to view the data in context to the cases. It is therefore recognised that the data produced during this research is specific to the cases used and the participants interviewed.

Criticism may also be attracted due to the potential lack of depth (Farquhar 2012), however as the aim of case study research is to establish a detailed understanding of a contemporary phenomenon in context, objectivity is not an aspiration (Farquhar 2012). As this research adopts a multiple case study approach, it is anticipated that due to the number of interviews undertaken at each HEI, an appropriate level of depth has been achieved as the multiple case study method provides deeper understanding (Wahyuni 2012).

Another criticism is that case study research can sometimes generate far too much data which can become unmanageable and overwhelming which makes the analysis too complex (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001). The researcher appreciates this observation, and agrees that at times, the data seemed overwhelming. The researcher wanted to get as close to the data as possible, so transcribed it manually and then coded it manually. This was a different approach to the pilot study data collection.

Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2001) suggest another potential limitation of case study research is the difficulty to appropriately represent complex findings. Accordingly, the researcher has used numerous direct quotations from participants to develop the depth of the narrative. Gibbs (2007) reinforced this approach to aid the reader to feel closer to the data and gain a greater insight into the flavour of the research. Data collection in case study research is also limited by the fact that undertaking it can be time consuming and expensive (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001). Travelling time, waiting time to meet with interviewees, complete data collection and undertake data analysis were all contributing factors to the overall PhD journey. However, the benefit of the approach became clear with the depth and value of the data obtained.

3.7.3 Limitations to the sampling frame

It is acknowledged that there may be limitations relating to the sampling frame of this research, which is confined to business, management and marketing students. The students interviewed may have more knowledge of branding than students from other faculties, which may influence their understanding of the institutional brand. Future research comparing the opinions of institutional brand success from students of a variety of faculties would be interesting.

The sample size may be a cause for criticism: However, as this study adopts an interpretivist approach, focus is on depth of the data collected, rather than breadth. The researcher is confident the research design is best to tackle the research aim and objectives as it will generate depth and discussion to a contemporary phenomenon which has been previously under-explored. The data collection method triggers ideas and the sharing of narratives which a different approach, such as a questionnaire, would not have achieved.

3.7.4 Limitations of time horizons

Cross-sectional designed research involves collecting information from any given sample of the population once only (Malhotra and Birks 2003) whereas in longitudinal designed research, a fixed sample is measured repeatedly. For the purposes of this research, the sample is not needed to be studied over a period of time. Whilst it is recognised that the longitudinal approach has an advantage over cross-sectional design due to its ability to detect change as a result of measuring the same variables on the same sample repeatedly (Malhotra and Birks 2003), the aim of the data capture is to explore and understand initial perspectives of success and brand success of key stakeholders.

3.8 Data analysis

Qualitative research is complex (Holloway and Todres 2003). As a major component of qualitative research, data analysis is arguably the hardest part of the process (Eisenhardt 1989). Data analysis is an analytic process which relies on the researcher to turn copious amounts of data into insightful analysis (Liamputtong 2009). The role of the researcher is to unpick the data so that patterns and trends emerge. From these patterns and trends, the researcher will have a clearer understanding of the problems and issues being researched. From this, improved understanding, theoretical and practical recommendations can be made.

The data analysis for this research followed a six-step systematic process of analysis which distils text down so that key themes can be identified (Polkinghorne 2019). This qualitative analysis method is called recursive abstraction. The ability to demonstrate that a rigorous analysis process (Gephart Jr 2004) has been undertaken in qualitative research is enforced by many in the literature.

Recursive abstraction is a trusted form of analysis that has been applied in a wide variety of research areas (Guzys et al., 2017; Ortiz et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2020) and is pertinent to the fields of tourism, management, and marketing (Polkinghorne et al., 2020). Unlike other thematic analysis techniques, recursive abstraction uses a series of repeatable steps in an iterative manner (Polkinghorne 2019) A key focus is identifying high-level themes and subsequently paraphrasing and coding the data.

The following presents a discussion of the data process that was followed during this research.

3.8.1 Six phases of qualitative data analysis through recursive abstraction

Deciding the best approach to adopt for the data analysis of this work was a significant consideration. During this decision-making process the researcher read much literature surrounding the topic of qualitative data analysis. The researcher was keen to use a tested and trusted model, but also wanted to adopt a contemporary model rather than apply an overly used approach.

Recursive abstraction is comprised of six phases: **Extracting the data, tabularising, paraphrasing the data, grouping paraphrased comments into themes, coding the paraphrased comments, identifying trends and patterns.**

During the first stage of analysis, the process of extracting the data takes place. Polkinghorne (2019) advises that the original narrative should be read a number of times before the data is extracted, to give the researcher an overview. Marginal remarks were compiled as the interviews were transcribed, and a summary had also been recorded immediately after each interview to capture the thoughts of the researcher. This helped to validate the themes as they then began to emerge later in the process (Saunders et al, 2016).

The next step was putting the extracted data into a table so it could be sorted and re-ordered easily (Polkinghorne 2019). Once the identified data was placed in a spreadsheet, step three saw a paraphrased version of each extracted section of text created (appendix E). As directed by Polkinghorne (2019), in some cases, the original text has been paraphrased into a single line. However, where there were multiple points being made, the researcher used several paraphrased comments to ensure that essential meanings had been retained.

Step four explored the group paraphrased comments both holistically and individually (Polkinghorne 2019), and initial themes were then identified. Scarcely used themes can at this stage were merged together, as the objective is to ensure each item of the paraphrased data is linked to a theme (Polkinghorne 2019).

Step five of recursive abstraction focused on coding the paraphrased comments. Charmaz (2006) highlights the importance of coding in qualitative research by referring to it as the ‘critical link’ between the collection of data and its subsequent explanation. Boeije (2009, p.94) referred to coding data as “the most important tool for qualitative analysis”

A code in qualitative research is defined by Saldana (2012, p.3):

“… most often a word or short phase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”. The paraphrased data was then replaced by a code. Crucially, all codes retained an indication of the meaning contained in the paraphrased narrative. This process was then reviewed and then minor codes representing just a few paraphrased comments were joined.

Stage six is the final stage of recursive abstraction. This stage sees a final check of meanings and then enables the researcher to seek trends and patterns across participants. These interpretations of the research study are presented in chapter six. This stage of the analysis was the most exciting for the researcher as the research started to ‘come to life’ and a strong narrative formed.

The flow of activities is presented below.

Table 10: Data collection process - recursive abstraction

Step	Recursive Abstraction
1	Summary of thoughts from field work Highlight interesting sections within the selected text
2	Transfer the selected text into a spreadsheet or table for easy data manipulation
3	Paraphrase the data to make easier to manage and manipulate
4	Group connected paraphrased comments into themes. Delete duplications
5	Code paraphrased comments to describe the meaning in just a few words
6	Identify patterns within the resulting themes and codes that reveal underlying trends and issues within the original data When trends are spotted, return to the original data to ensure meaning has not been lost or misinterpreted during the analysis process.

(Polkinghorne and Arnold (2014)

3.8.2 Validity and reliability

Validity is concerned with whether the data collected reflects the real-world situation (Walliman 2006). Furthermore, scholars enforce that it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure validity (Stake 1995). This research works hard to demonstrate validity throughout the research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the findings. Interpretivist research is based on a value system that is integral to its paradigm, honesty and personal integrity. To ensure the research delivered a true interpretivist paradigm, focus was placed on trustworthiness, authenticity, truth of findings, and validity. Openness to exploring new ways to understanding different perspectives was important to demonstrate interpretivist credibility. Yin (2010) identifies four critical components of case study design quality: (1) construct validity, (2) internal validity, (3) external validity, and (4) reliability. These components are commonly used to assess the rigor of fieldwork research.

The following section addresses these components and the manner in which they have been addressed for this research.

3.8.3 Construct validity

Construct validity ensures there are appropriate operational measures in place for the research concept. Construct validity is achieved by the research using multiple sources of evidence during the data collection, as well as having a chain of evidence throughout the research. In the attempt to ensure construct validity is achieved during this research, the researcher has used multiple evidence sources (multiple stakeholders). The data collection process has included direct observations being recorded in a field note logbook. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of key stakeholders from a selection of broadly comparable newer UK universities. These converging lines of inquiry provided multiple measures of the same phenomenon which ensured triangulation of the data (Creswell 2009) aiding construct validity. Additionally, a chain of evidence has been established and maintained through verbatim transcript of the interview documents and maintaining a very clear linkage from data collection to case analysis, interpretation of the findings and finally, the implication for policy and practice for the final conclusions.

3.8.4 Internal validity

This research is exploratory rather than explanatory, which minimises the relevance of internal validity. However, internal validity in case study research does give the potential for the researcher to make inferences and assumptions. This is also a particularly important consideration having adopted an interpretivist approach; co-constructing themes and realities with the participants is the aim, rather than the researcher leading the data interpretation.

As a result, the researcher needed to take other potential explanations and possibilities into consideration, looking at all of the evidence. Yin (201) recommended that the researcher designs their research to pre-empt making inferences and identifies the data to be collected as well as the study's propositions and questions. The research design for this work has clearly identified the research questions and proposition I through the interview guide and the research question. The units of analysis were identified in the previous section, while the criteria used for interpreting findings are detailed in chapter four.

3.8.5 External validity

External validity concerns the extent to which a case study's findings can be applied to other domains, and how much generalisability the findings have. The literature suggests that generalisability can be a potential barrier for effective single case study research. Noor (2008) reinforces this, suggesting the single case approach can lack sufficient rigor to generalise findings. Therefore, and in response, scholars such as Yin (2010) recommend applying 'repetition logic' to avoid limiting successful case study research. Yin (2010) states that the best approach to achieve this is through the use of multiple case studies that have been carefully chosen as having similarities in the area of research interest. Accordingly, the researcher therefore implemented a criteria selection process for the multiple case studies.

3.8.6 Reliability

Reliability can be assessed by asking the following (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008):

1. Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions?
2. Will similar observations be reached by other observers?
3. Is there transparency in how sense was made from the data?

Reliability in research requires the demonstration of a set of operational measures that can be repeated and achieve the same result. Demonstrating this in qualitative research can often be tricky due to the nature of the investigation enquiry; data will also vary when gathering thoughts, feelings and opinion from human subjects.

Demonstrating that errors and bias have been minimised in case study research is crucial in showing the research to be reliable. Evidence of this would be if another researcher was to conduct the same case study, they would uncover the same findings and conclusions. Robson (2011) asserts that there are four threats to reliability – participant error, participant bias, observer error and observer bias.

3.8.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were taken into consideration during the creation of this research, which also respects the data protection regulation. The parameters of the study were agreed with the gatekeepers before data collection started. This included seeking permission for use of the HEI as a research location, as well as consent for the university to be named in the thesis.

All participants gave informed consent and were made aware of the purpose of the study and any likely outcomes (journal publications, for example) on the participant information sheet, which also outlined the expectations on participants themselves, and secured consent to record the interviews.

It was necessary to collect audio material as the transcripts formed the basis of analysis. This was used purely for transcribing and was not shared or distributed. It was ensured that participation was voluntary, and participants were under no obligation to sign during this meeting. The confidentiality of information supplied by participants was respected. Additionally, research material was stored in a locked unit and all electronic files are password-protected. A range of ethical guidance documents informed the design of the research. These included the British Educational Research Association's 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research', BU ethics guidelines and the ESRC Framework for research ethics. Appropriate ethical training and advice has been undertaken during doctoral training sessions. An ethics application was submitted to the BU ethics committee, which included details of the research's purpose and the research plan, including a sample of the proposed questions for the semi-structured interviews. The consent form and the participant information sheet were also submitted for approval. The research ethics committee subsequently approved the interview study, classifying it as 'low risk'.

3.8.8 Participation information sheet

A participant information sheet was created and given to participants of data collection during this research. This document included an invitation to participate with the research, a detailed description of the project, and outlined the aims and objectives for the research; including the benefits for the cases involved. The document highlighted that participation was completely voluntary, and participants could stop the interview at any time. The information disclosed the expected length of the interview, as well as informing the participant that the interview would be recorded digitally. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants was assured, and they were also offered the chance to review the transcript of their interview.

3.8.9 Consent form

All participants were asked to sign a consent form before the interviews began. This recorded that they understood the nature and purpose of the research and data collection. It also confirmed that they agreed to take part, and that they consented to the interview being recorded. All participants were made aware that the BU ethics committee had approved the research and were provided with the researcher's supervisor's email address and phone number should they need to raise concerns about the interview or the research itself. A copy of the participant information sheet can be found in appendix B.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has detailed the theoretical and practical approach of the research. Decisions have been justified, and the processes taken along the research journey.

The study's theoretical approach has adopted an interpretivist approach, with the focus on the ways human beings interpret and make sense of reality.
A qualitative approach has been used to reach the study's aim and objectives as it provides depth and discussion of the phenomenon being investigated: Brand success in the context of HE. Using a case study research strategy will enable the research to explore brand success from different angles by using multiple sources of evidence, including semi-structured interviews.

This chapter has considered issues of ethics, validity, and trustworthiness. Finally, itconsidered the limitations and risks of the research.

The following section presents the findings from each case (Creswell 1998). The chapter is structured in line with thematic headings which were in turn derived from the data analysis for each research objective. Doing so provides a logical framework that can host discussion and debate (Holliday 2007).

CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the emerging themes and codes established during the data analysis from the twenty-four in-depth interviews undertaken and presents the foundation for the discussion in the following chapter. This chapter presents the first three objectives across case, and then the findings from the fourth objective are presented within case. This will enable the research to demonstrate clear evidence of brand success from the perspective of each case study. This will provide data scaffolding for the conceptual framework which is presented in chapter five.

To support the narrative, selected quotations from data participants have been included to add depth and richness to the research story. This is consistent with the research approach as it “enables the reader to get closer to the data and show exactly how the ideas or theories you discuss are expressed by those you have studied.” (Gibbs 2007, p.97). In qualitative research it is typical to substantiate the research by making extensive use of quotes from data participants (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

4.1 Precis of research objectives

In keeping with the inductive approach adopted for this research, the research questions were based on the research objectives, to narrow the scope of study (Gabriel 2013). This chapter presents the data findings established through the first four research objectives:

RO1: To critically examine the concept of success.

The core contribution of this research sought to gain an insight into interpretations and implications of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities. The literature, however, states that in order to appreciate the interpretations of brand success, a stronger understanding of the concept of success is needed. The first research objective therefore explores participants’ feelings, perceptions and experiences of success.

RO2: To critically examine the concept of brand success

The second stage of data collection sought to understand participants' feelings towards, and interpretations of, brands and brand success. The researcher considered this section important to precede gathering opinion on brand success in HE due to several factors: It is important to establish what 'brand' means to the individual, as the literature in this field demonstrates interpretations vary. It is also important to understand the variables participants use to assess brand success to see potential synergy or distinctiveness to HE brands.

RO3: To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education

The third research objective focused on understanding participants' interpretation of the nature of brand in HE. It was crucial to understand how participants perceive the essence of the HE brand, as well as explore its similarities and/or distinctiveness to other brands in the corporate and not-for-profit remit. Participants concluded what the HE brand looks like and meant for them personally and discussed if it is possible to distinguish between university brands. Focus was also placed on questioning if participants felt branding HE was appropriate.

RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities

This fourth and final section presents a case-by-case analysis of the key areas of brand success, evidenced by data participants' own HEI. This builds on previous sections where success, brand success and the nature of HE were considered, and a foundation of knowledge was built. In the process of understanding examples of brand success in the three comparable HEIs, a clear scaffold is possible, enabling the researcher to present a conceptual framework which demonstrates the theoretical implications, but also presents a tool which identifies HE branding best practice, which may contribute to future policy in practice in the HE landscape.

4.2 Precis of analysis process

This chapter, guided by the research objectives, discusses the data that been extrapolated from the qualitative data analysis by applying a systematic process of analysis (recursive abstraction) in accordance with the six data analysis phases described in the methodology (chapter 3). Having previously extracted the data, tabularising, and paraphrasing the data, this chapter presents the data findings at stage 6 of the analysis process (identifying trends and patterns).

4.3 Coding of respondents

To protect participants' anonymity, as well as identify the 'type' of stakeholder, the following codes have been created:

Table 11: Coding of respondents

Case	Data source	Coding of Respondent
Bournemouth University (BU)	Brand-Aligned Academic x3 Head of Brand/Marketing Manager x2 Final year undergraduate Business, Management/Marketing student x3	BUA1, BUA2, BUA3 BUHoB/MM1, BUHoB/MM2 BUS1, BUS2, BUS3
Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)	Brand-Aligned Academic x3 Head of Brand/Marketing Manager x2 Final year undergraduate Business, Management/Marketing student x3	MMUA1, MMUA2, MMUA3 MMUHoB/MM1, MMUHoB/MM2 MMUS1, MMUS2, MMUS3
University of Portsmouth (UoP)	Brand-Aligned Academic x3 Head of Brand/Marketing Manager x2 Final year undergraduate Business, Management/Marketing student x3	UoPA1, UoPA2, UoPA3 UoPHoB/MM1, UoPHoB/MM2 UoPS1, UoPS2, UoPS3

4.4 Research objective 1 - The concept of success.

The following details the findings aligned to the first component of the research; to understand the concept of success. specifically, this section addresses: **RO1: To critically examine the concept of success.**

4.4.1 Objective/task driven

The data demonstrates success to be objective and task driven. UoPA3 proposed “if you set a particular objective, and you achieve that objective, or succeed it, then that is success.” (UoPA3)**.** Interviewees identified a fundamental characteristic of success is to “have a sense of purpose, be objective based, and have a need to be driven, to want to achieve success.” (BUA3) It was recognised that whilst success flows between both professional and personal lives, achieving success is about “meeting these aims and making sure you are happy with the outcome.” (MMUHoB/MM1)

The data demonstrates many different drivers for objectives and tasks dependent on the overall goal. On a personal level, it was suggested that objectives and tasks can be very subjective and certainly something which “one needs to decide for yourself.” (UoPA2) The concept of having a sense of purpose and a feeling of aspiration were interplayed frequently. Examples of aspiration included “personal, domestic and emotional success, integrated into your employment work aspirations.” (BUA2)

Interviewees felt that these objectives needed to be considered and confirmed, put into place, and then worked towards. All participants proposed that a fundamental consequence of success is achieving what one set out to achieve. This was presented as almost a defining term of success. It was felt that achieving something perceived to be ‘against the odds’ makes the experience a surprise not only for the individual but others around them. “It’s a nice feeling when I can surprise people that I have achieved something they didn’t think I could.” (BUHoB/MM1) Furthermore, it was highlighted that achieving what you set out to, can also change perception of your own character and ability. “I’ve always thought of myself as being quite a quiet, shy person, and my success has made me realise that I’m not actually. It’s made me realise there is a lot I can achieve.” (BUHoB/MM1)

Achieving goals and objectives made interviewees feel good about themselves and take pride in their ability. BUHoB/MM1 noted success “also made me have increased confidence in my ability.” BUHoB/MM1 explained that this feeling of confidence flowed into their personal life: “Achieving success in my career has impacted my confidence level in my personal life. It’s pushed me outside of my comfort zone. It has made me grow and be more confident.” (BUHoB/MM1)

Whilst interviewees recognised that “luck happens in lots of areas that can contribute to success,” (UoPA3) it was considered that “intrinsically, I don’t see that as being part of the definition of success.” (UoPA3) UoPA3 considered planned objectives to supersede luck, stating that luck is not a “significant contributor to success or failure. It’s rather how much you can prepare.” (UoPA3)

Maintaining control of a situation was deemed important, and luck should not be considered an antecedent of success because if “success happens when you have no control whatsoever, it means that you haven’t done anything in that particular context to make it happen, because success is worked for.” (UoPA3)

4.4.2 Fluid and subjective

It was felt that “the nature of success is definitely fluid,” (BUA1) which can change over a lifetime as BUA2 recognised: “Over a lifetime my aims for success have been extremely fluid and varied.” (BUA2) Interviewees all agreed that “success changes over time.” (BUHoB/MM2)

Participants agreed that the shape of success changed from less tangible to more emotional outcomes. BUS1 reflected to a younger self:

> “When you’re younger you think about success as being money and based on what other people think. But when you get older, it’s more based on how you feel about yourself. And if you believe that money defines your success or not.” (BUS1)

BUA2 endorsed this by suggesting that in a younger life, success was more about objects, things.” (BUA2)

The data demonstrates a timeline, in that “as time passes and one gets older, a shift happens” (BUA3), and success tends to be “more about a sense of personal satisfaction.” (BUA3)

It was suggested that as this shift happens, the consequences of success may become easier to achieve due to expectations and demands on our lives easing as we grow older.

> “I think that shift often goes downwards; for example, my financial needs as my family have grown and left home. Therefore, the nature of my success is changed, as I don’t need to earn as much money. Lower paid jobs are often less stressful, and I take less work home with me. Therefore, the definition of what I want, what I need, and therefore my success has changed. Therefore, my ability to succeed is easier and the consequences of my success have become easier to achieve, because they are at a lower level.” (BUA2)

Establishing what success means to an individual is crucial, as the concept of success varies significantly from person to person: “You’ve got to have an understanding of what success actually looks like to you.” (BUHoB/MM1)

Participants described success as entirely subjective: “I think it’s all about how you feel about yourself. If you think you’ve done a good enough job, or if you think you could have done better.” (BUS1)
It was felt that only once you understand what success means to you as the individual, can you go on to put the steps in place to achieve a successful outcome. Accepting the “small wins” (UoPA1) was deemed important because “if you are the type of person who defines success quite specifically you are potentially setting yourself up for quite a big fall.” (UoPA2)

Participants suggested adopting an approach which demands one accept that things happen in life (UoPA2) and, ensures the need to reassess, which means there is a need to recalibrate or define and appreciate the small wins (UoPA2). Interestingly, it was suggested that whilst the concept of success is subjective, it doesn’t always happen deliberately. There doesn’t always have to be a goal worked towards; “success can be accidental.” (BUA3) However, the data shows the subjective nature of success can prompt a conflict dependent on the individual’s motivation. This can create feelings of unrest and disruption. MMUA2 presented the example of delivering an excellent student experience conflicting with career progression for some academics: “I believe the definition of success in my role is about the service to students, but to other academics it may be about their own ambition.” (MMUA2)

Participants suggested a contributing factor for success being fluid is age; MMUS1 saying that “success has changed for me as I have gotten older,” suggesting that in younger years success was experienced through more tangible rewards that revolved around significant outcomes. It seems that age and maturity has prompted the awareness from interviewees that success is “more of a process than a specific moment.” (MMUS1) Participants viewed success as a “life journey” (UoPS3) recognising that it “changes through a lifetime. It’s fluid.” (UoPS1) This was reinforced by MMUS1 who suggested success to be an “ongoing journey and not just an isolated moment, where the moments of success become less defined and instead, become a long line of life experiences.” (MMUS1)

MMUS3 suggested the reason for this may be “your perspective changes as you get older, and you go through different milestones.” (MMUS3) Due to this ever-changing perspective, new goals and challenges are created in response as “there is always a step further to go.” (MMUS1)

All interviewees felt the “nature of success is multifaceted,” (MMUA3) which varies significantly for every individual and “can take many forms.” (MMUA1) Therefore, the journey to success can often take unexpected turns as success can mean doing something that you “weren’t really sure you were going to do.” (UoPHoB/MM2) However, it was noted that whilst the “goals of success change over a lifetime,” (UoPS1) The emotional feelings and euphoric response to achieving success “remain the same.” (UoPS1)

The process of achieving success can be changeable and fluid too; “as things evolve, timescales may adjust. It’s a very fluid concept that changes, dependent on the context.” (UoPHoB/MM2) It was suggested that “a broad determinant for success therefore is the ability to reframe, be flexible, and view things differently along the way” (UoPA3) due to the ever-changing shape of success.

It was recognised that the path of success can be difficult and cause anxiety along the way:

> “The more I fight the stress of being successful, it feels like someone is sat on my chest and I couldn’t breathe at times. Setting the bar lower and appreciating the little things in life and the quick wins is ok.” (UoPA1)

The shift in our perceptions of success changing with our life journey was mirrored with how we judge each other’s success. This too was evidenced in the data with less focus on money being recognised from older participants, but more focus on a positive well-being and work life balance. In fact, the research notes there are many variables for achieving happiness, and many different measurables. It was noted that academic success, money or career development and seniority do not always result in the individual being happy – though others may use those achievements to benchmark themselves against and conclude that they are less successful.

The interpretation of success is also impacted by the “context of where you are achieving success.” (MMUS1) Participants recognised that success will be very different depending on whether it is personal or professional success, for example, or success in a very commercial and superficial context as opposed to success in a socially rewarding enterprise.

Participants suggested that sometimes “there needs to be a compromise.” (BUHoB/MM1) in the journey for success, and that the outcomes of success “might not actually be what you initially wanted, but it would still be a successful outcome.” (BUHoB/MM1)

4.4.3 Values and ethics

The data demonstrates that the way we view the shape of success can often be influenced by your “individual philosophy and personal values.” (MMUS2) Demonstrating “good morals and standing by your values” (UoPS2) was considered a consistent requirement for success. Interestingly, the proposition that “upbringing may influence our core values” (MMUA1) was floated with examples of “being raised in a working-class family influencing my philosophy being provided.” MMUA3 articulated success to be a complex, rounded construct, but ultimately is “about people achieving what they want.” Witnessing others achieving success through demonstrating strong values and ethical commitment was considered motivating for others to do the same. Furthermore, it was recognised that a person’s circumstances can change throughout a lifetime which “could be positive or negative.” (MMUA1) It was felt that this change in circumstance can impact how success is viewed and trigger a “significant shift in someone’s perception of what they think is important and therefore then how they define their own success.” (MMUA1)

The data notes that peer recognition of success will vary depending on how ethically success was achieved as it “depends on the role the person or organisation have played in order to achieve said success.” (MMUA1) Whilst the data demonstrates respect to be a consequence of success, participants were firm believing that success should be achieved ethically and morally in order to attract peer respect, and that the way success is achieved will impact the level of recognition and respect encountered. BUHoB/MM1 commented that “those people that do achieve success through being trustworthy, authentic and empathetic, have a lot more respect for their successes.” (BUHoB/MM1)

MMUS1 reflected on the importance of sharing successes and ultimately the feeling this evokes, explaining that it’s “not about bragging about my success, it’s the feeling, the sharing that kind of experience and having people I know be proud of me.” Being “acknowledged as a role model” was considered not only a consequence of success,” as these role models can demonstrate that it is achievable, something to aspire to,” (MMUA1) but furthermore, role models should act as examples of encouragement and offer inspiration around ethical and sustainability issues. MMUA3 suggested people in the public eye can encourage this sense of responsibility in consumers to ensure they are consuming brands which are ethical and demonstrate integrity, making a positive impact to wider society.

4.4.4 Support network

The data indicates that success is rarely achieved in isolation. Having a support network was considered fundamental by interviewees for achieving success: “Having someone in your life who drives you to be the best you, the most successful you.” (UoPS2)

It was considered to be “rare that you achieve success completely solo.” (UoPS1) It was felt that due to the support networks needed to achieve success, “the fruits of success” (UoPS2) should be shared.

Participants listed family, friends and colleagues all as contributors to the wiser team for enabling and achieving success. Within the university setting, students often referred to “lecturer and student” (UoPS2) as a fundamental team. “Supportive, inclusive, two-way relationships and partnership” (UoPA3) were identified as fundamental support networks in the journey to success.

A support network, also referred to during interviews as an emotional crutch, (UoPS2) was considered crucial not only for getting the task achieved, but also for providing “valuable emotional support and guidance.” (UoPS1)

Witnessing the strength and value a team brings in the plight for success was noted frequently in the data: “I think events such as the Paralympics are inspiring and demonstrate people who have achieved huge success due to commitment and motivation to succeed.” (MMUA2)

The data suggests personal attributes such as values and morals are important characteristics in the plight for success as this will influence how great your support network is. It was recognised that being likeable is “an added advantage.” (UoPS2) “If you’re likeable, you’ve got other people supporting you and they want you to strive and be successful.” (UoPS2)

It was suggested that not being likeable could actually hinder success as “you might have people that try and hold you back or try to create failure systems for you. It might be harder for you to be successful.” (UoPA2)

4.4.5 Resilience

A person or organisation will inevitably encounter challenges and undergo difficult periods. Resilience was presented in the data as an integral quality required to not only tolerate and overcome adverse conditions and situations, but to emerge stronger for it. Resilience is about being willing to change internal processes or focus in order to overcome a problem presented by the external environment. It is about accepting that the specific solution in question did not work but having strong enough beliefs in the direction of travel to try again in a different way.

The data shows resilience to develop when a person or organisation has such strong faith in their beliefs that they are willing to try different approaches in order to overcome an obstacle in the external environment. Embracing a variety of approaches was considered a key element of being resilient in the journey toward success. MMUS1 reflected on working in a group for an assignment where due to lack of engagement from group members, resilience and patience were tested. Interviewees listed a variety of working approaches to achieve success which all demands resilience; be it collaborative by having “comradeship as a team and experience the success as a team,” (MMUS1) or engaging in an individual approach which is then “shared with others on a second stage or level.” (MMUS1)
In a team and individual approaches, an important antecedent of success is “delivering on a planned action” (MMUS3) and being “able to perform well.” (MMUS2) Furthermore, it was suggested that “the older you get, the more you realise there’s more people to compare yourself to,” (MMUS3) which demands resilience as often awareness of others’ success may cause disappointment.

The data demonstrates that sometimes being resilient can also mean looking inward to our own behaviour and possibly needing to “change our own behaviour to enable success.” (BUA2) Participants were clear that “your behaviour influences how successful you are.” (BUA1) Participants noted this can be emotionally challenging and sometimes difficult to accept, but an important element to resilience.

Influencing variable such as background, education, class, opportunity and health were suggested as potential barriers to success. Furthermore, they can offer a “straight measurement of your success. Where you were, where you are now, and what you did to get there.” (MMUS3) It was also recognised that the path to success can also at times require “enormous resilience” (MMUS2) due to having to “overcome adversity and barriers.” (MMUA2) MMUA1 suggested barriers can vary, but in the process of overcoming them, there are always levels of resilience, commitment, and motivation involved. Furthermore, “overcoming barriers to success is a reflection of a sustained effort; it can’t happen overnight.” (MMUA1) The resilience required often makes the drive for success “more focused.” (MMUA1) Participants felt that the more barriers there are on the way to success, the greater the achievement. “If I know how hard they have worked to get there, and the barriers they have had to face, I think their success particularity stands out.” (MMUA1)

The data shows success to be “sustained and planned,” (MMUA1) which “often involves tremendous commitment and dedication.” (MMUA1) Moreover, often success comes at the cost of compromising other aspects of life, and certainly “juggling a lot of different roles.” (MMUA1) This was felt particularly prevalent in the world of academia for female professors by MMUA1, who felt that “they particularly stand out as examples of resilience and overcoming barriers.” (MMUA1)
The need to make personal sacrifice on the journey to success was recognised as unavoidable. “Sacrifice to family time” (BUA2) was frequently mentioned by participants throughout interviews.

4.4.6 Perseverance

The theme of perseverance was raised by UoPA2 as a precursor to attaining success:

“Success for me right now is about being perseverant. And with every knock, just dusting yourself off and getting back up and carrying on.” (UoPA2) Overcoming barriers was frequently mentioned during interviews. Participants listed gender, ethnicity and class as variables that have been factors for causing barriers for participants in the path to their success. Throughout interviews with UoP participants, the theme of perseverance was presented by staff and students alike; both in a personal and professional setting.

Students provided examples from their studies of needing to be determined to meet academic pressures such as deadlines and exam anxiety. Students also reflected on times when they needed to develop their determination to receiving challenging feedback on assignments, or even failing a unit. Staff presented examples of needing to demonstrate and develop their perseverance when not being successful in a promotion opportunity or needing to work with disruptive and difficult colleagues. Participants linked demonstrating competitiveness and perseverance together, suggesting that success is a competitive concept which can push you to out-perform others around you. For many it is about “trying to do better than the people I’m comparing myself against.” (UoPS1) When instances of underachieving happen, it was recognised this can demand perseverance to “take stock and brush yourself off.” (UoPA1)

Personal goal setting and then making comparisons was noted during data collection. Interviewees also suggested that the nature of success is to be competitive by constantly pushing yourself to perform better.

> “Once you achieve success it goes further and further. I feel like success has to do with the resetting of goals. So, once you achieve a goal, and you have success with that goal, you set another to have a new success.” (UoPS3)

Success can therefore instill a “sense of endless challenge which demands great perseverance.” (UoPHoB/MM2) Participants also reflected that a competitive streak experienced during the journey of success can be triggered by how our peers view us as “often if people see you achieving your goals, they will see you as being successful.” (UoPS2) Whatever, the situation., all participants reflected that building and maintaining perseverance is a fundamental consideration for achieving success in any context.

The research demonstrates that perseverance is when a person or organisation is so committed not only to the end goal but also the tactics they are employing that, to overcome an obstacle in the external environment, they will keep trying until the external environment weakens and changes so that the obstacle is not so much overcome as removed completely.

To persevere with an activity when it does not look likely to succeed requires commitment to both the end goal and the methods being used to get there. It can be a challenging experience, as it involves not abandoning those principles and instead trying to change or remove the barriers to the goal being achieved.

Inevitably, this often involves considerable sacrifice on behalf of the person or organisation needing to show perseverance, and there is a high level of burnout as a result – many people will only be able to keep making those sacrifices for a certain time, after which they will eventually give up.

The data demonstrates that perseverance is often an integral way to overcome broadly repressive social barriers, such as racism, sexual inequality, gender discrimination. In so doing, it can contribute to one of the broader elements of success identified elsewhere in the research – that of contributing to an impactful legacy.

By changing the external environment to remove an obstacle, it is highly likely that perseverance can pave the way for others to build on the same success, leading to huge advances in society. Examples from history found in the data include women securing the right to vote and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Respondents explained how those systems were only ended through extreme perseverance, often at considerable personal sacrifice including prison sentences and even death – but their ultimate success is considered all the greater for the difficult path to achieving them.

4.4.7 Enabling

In line with a holistic view of success, another key element to be taken into consideration is the impact that an undertaking has on others. Whether it is the social mission of an organisation or a by-product of the organisation's existence the data shows concern for the impact on the external environment as being of at least equal importance to the impact on the individual, or the organisation at the core of the activity. MMUS1 voiced the importance of being "humble and helping others when you are successful is crucial." (MMUS1) BUA1 asserted that success is based on being "impact orientated and enabling others to succeed." (BUA1). BUS3 presented the following example:

> "It can be as simple as you're bigging up a six-year-old when they read something and you know they don't like reading, and then seeing a little glint in their eye, and I'm feeling proud. That is success for me now; in enabling another person to feel proud of themselves." (BUS3)

Experiencing this sense of pride can provide motivation to encourage and develop success in others as BUA3 asserted: "That's the part I find the most motivating. If I have had an impact, a contribution to their success. Success to me is the impact of seeing others achieve success through my influence**."** This was further reinforced by BUA2 who noted that being in "an environment where I can help people is a necessary ingredient of me feeling like I've got a successful life."

BUA2 added to previous comments surrounding the fluid nature of success by stating "I am no longer interested in how much I earn; I'm not bothered as I don't need it instead, the drive for success is based on seeing success as the stuff that makes people feel better." (BUA2) Enabling others' success was clearly important to

interviewees, and for some had significant impact on their life. BUA2 recalled "that's why I chose to change my job as the bit that I really enjoyed was helping other people develop and seeing them progress."
BUA3 summarised the essence of experiencing the feeling of enabling others to reach their potential, describing it as emotional success.

> "I like the thought that I am influencing people's lives and their future. I like the warm glow that you get from students who really value the help and support you give and reflect it back in some form of thank you, even if it's just those two simple words. This is the emotional success I get from being an academic." (BUA3)

4.4.8 Quantifiable

Interviewees felt that measurement was a fundamental characteristic of success.

> "Success is related to evaluating what happened, compared to what you wanted to happen. That would imply measures which were evaluating things against performance or quality, or financial, or emotional satisfaction base." (BUA2)

The measurement of success, however, was considered to be as fluid as the characteristic of success itself as it was suggested that as "situations in your life change, so does what you want and what you need; and how you measure your success changes." (BUA2)
Measuring success in both an individual and group context were discussed during interviews. Whilst it was noted that success can be achieved in both settings, it was considered that the way success is realised depends on the type of person attempting to achieve it. Furthermore, the nature of success is variable dependent on the personality traits of the person achieving success. This all impacts how the success should be assessed.

The interpretation of success will "vary person to person" (UoPHoB/MM2), and "a very personal thing" (UoPA3) which "depends on what you feel is successful. It can be a lot of money, or it can be about being happy living on a farm" (UoPS3) and will be guided by influencing variables such as "upbringing, opportunities and culture." (UoPHoB/MM2) Thus, measuring success will be influenced by personal characteristics. Values and ethics played a noticeable part to the journey of success:

> "If you are the sort of person that measures success in quite a quantifiable way as in 'I have this job, I earn this salary, I have this car. If you measure your success in that way and you can tick all those boxes, you may well have trampled over several people on your path to achieving that." (UoPA2)

Whilst respondents felt that success didn't need to be validated by peers, it was recognised that success can go unnoticed and "you can be successful without other people thinking you're successful." (BUS1) This can therefore further complicate assessing success.
Examples of this including basing success around happiness and contentment as opposed to financial gratification. MMUHoB/MM1 suggested measurement of success was actually not always necessary, as it can be "about how you feel about something." (MMUHoB/MM1)

The fact that the nature of success is very individual means that benchmarking the success of others can be a complex undertaking. Respondents talked of benchmarking others as more successful than them based on factors such as money and status, when in fact the individual in question was very unhappy and did not consider themselves to be successful as they felt they were lacking other assets that would have made them happier.

> "Beneath the threshold the activity wasn't successful; above that threshold, it is successful. Therefore, the nature of success is going to vary for different people and for different activities, and possibly even vary on different days for the same people, depending on how they feel." (BUA2)

4.4.9 Failure

The data suggests when objective not achieved, this is failure: "If you have a specific goal, say you have a project and it's supposed to be launched on a certain day and for whatever reason it doesn't hit that date. You would say that was failure." (UoPS3)

Whilst failure was clearly recognised as an experience that can "dampen your spirits" (BUS2) it was considered "an inevitable part of achieving success" (BUA3) it's crucial to see failure in the journey of success." (UoPA2) and furthermore, "you have to experience failure in order to fully-appreciate success." (BUS3)

BUA3 further contributed: "I don't see failure as the important bit; I see it as the bit that enhances your ability to succeed in the future." BUA3 suggested failure an "antecedent of success. Otherwise, without it, you're just going to do the same thing again." **(**BUA3) It was noted that "reflecting why we fail is important" (BUA3) in the attempt to understand and "learn from your failure." (BUHoB/MM2)

Understanding the characteristics of failure was therefore deemed crucial for the journey of success as there is a need to "understand failure in order to appreciate what you need to do to be successful." (UoPS3) Participants commented that failure is a two-step process: Firstly, to identify the failures, and then secondly to learn from them and make changes to minimise further failure. "It's the classic saying, you learn more things from failure than you do success. And you can't expect to succeed first time round." (UoPA1)

BUA3 suggested taking a "step back and question where it went wrong enables us to change our behaviours." BUA1 reinforced this by asserting the need to "stop and reflect and think where did I go wrong, or why did that not work." **(**BUA3) Unpacking and reflecting on failure were appearing themes due to potentially needing to change behaviour in order to succeed. Not only did participants regard failure as necessary in the journey to success, but also it was felt that the more failures experienced, the "greater the feeling of reward" (BUS2) when it is achieved, as repeated failure "makes the feeling of success even more euphoric as it feels more of an achievement." (BUHoB/MM1)

Accepting that goals might not be achieved on the first attempt is crucial as “it might take several steps to get up to the ultimate goal” (BUHoB/MM2). As the journey of success experiences “steps of progress” (BUHoB/MM2) experiences of failure actually make the strive for success greater, and “each failure makes you even more determined to reach your goal”. (BUHoB/MM1) The act of failure, followed by developing strategies to aid success, “encourages respect” (BUA1) which wouldn’t have been felt if failure had not happened and success had been easy.

> “A lot of people that you see in the limelight, successful leaders, celebrities, and business owners, they haven’t just gone from zero to success. They have failed along the way. They then have tried different things and then ultimately succeeded. And that makes you respect them more.” (BUHoB/MM2)

A middle ground of success was floated by MMUA3, suggesting that “most people have a level of success in their environment but very few people are outright successes, or outright failures.” (MMUA3)

It was felt that sometimes to be successful you “have to take risks.” (UoPS2)
The link between risk-taking and increasing the potential of failure was therefore presented and deemed that risk should be measured and considered carefully, as there is a “balance point in how much risk should be taken however.” (UoPS2) The link between risk-taking and failure was presented as a thin line. “If you take a large risk, there is a large possibility of failure, but it’s crucial in order to achieve success.” (UoPS2)

It was noted that the potential for failure can be introduced by others, and this can create obstacles in the path to success. “If other people fail you, I don’t think necessarily that stops you from being successful, but I do think it creates an obstacle.” (UoPS2) However, this should not be an insurmountable problem as motivation and determination will ensure you “keep going and walk around those obstacles.” (UoPS1) Taking responsibility for one’s own success was noted important when external influences cause potential disruption for success. Experiencing issues such as “poor teamwork or other’s poor work ethics” (UoPHoB/MM2) can create obstacles, but “it doesn’t necessarily cause failure.”

(UoPHoB/MM2) “You can’t solely blame it on other people. You need to take responsibility for your own success.” UoPHoB/MM2)

It was suggested that success is a binary feeling (MMUA3) and often experienced through a series of life events (MMUA3) Interestingly, this contrasts with the concept of failure. MMUA3 suggested that failure “seems to be a process, rather than event and it is quite possible to be failing at the same time as succeeding.” (MMUA3) Fondness for a ‘rags to riches’ story was described by students interviewed, who described particularly relishing in an individual’s success when it wasn’t “handed to them on a plate” (UoPS3) and they had to work hard to achieve it.

It was suggested that if the chance of failure was greater than the chance of success, then the feeling of success when it is achieved, would be more euphoric. “When the chances of success have been limited, but I still achieved it, and when I have the odds stacked up against me, that’s real success for me.” (UoPS2)

Participants felt failure an inevitable part of the journey to success. However, understanding failure and learning from it was deemed to be fundamental, as learning from failed attempts will encourage determination for future success. Being open minded to new approaches was also deemed crucial. Furthermore, it was suggested that additional respect can be gained if failure has been involved on the way to success if the success was not anticipated. It was observed that success depends on bravery and taking risks, and that failed attempts can attract respect from stakeholders. The concept of feeling shame after a failed attempt is largely considered to be an outdated concept now, as demonstrated by the following:

> “To learn from failure and then to consider how you are going to change it, or how it changes you as a person is crucial in order to be successful. Ultimately, you need to understand how you must adapt to the understanding of failure.” (UoPS2)

Respondents also felt that failure can strengthen resolve, paving the way to overcoming future hurdles. If everything is always easy and success seemingly straightforward, then the first instance of failure can lead to a crisis of confidence, where previously held beliefs can be abandoned quickly in the scrabble for success. However, if failure has been experienced and embraced in the past, it provides a broader skillset for the individual or organisation to work around the challenge. It can also make any subsequent success feel like an even bigger achievement. - that the success in question has been truly earned.

4.4.10 Recognition and reputation

The data suggests there are “two main characteristics of success. They are recognition and reputation.” (UoPA3) It was felt that recognition depends on a positive reputation to work hand-in-hand because “if you are known for having a bad recognition, people know you, but they might want to avoid you. So, the second aspect is critical for success is a good reputation.” (UoPA1)

Reputation was considered to be about “being popular” (UoPS1), meaning that “if you are a brand, university, or a person, people know about you.” (UoPS1) Participants considered it crucial to have a positive reputation (UoPA1) for numerous reasons such as being able to cut through the noise in the marketplace “when people not only know about you but also what they think about you.” (UoPA1) Furthermore, reputation was considered crucial because it demonstrates “you are a well-recognised and a trustable person, institution or brand.” (UoPA1) Trust was therefore linked to be an outcome of a good reputation.

Participants considered confidence as an important ingredient of success that can build recognition and reputation. However, a balance is required as too much confidence can tip into arrogance. It was deemed crucial not to be “overconfident but to try to push to the boundaries of your ability so people will recognise you for those abilities and will require your advice.” (UoPA2) It was additionally noted that recognising own weakness is important and being able to reach out for “help when you need to.” (UoPA1)

Again, success being fluid through a lifetime was referred to, this time in context to gaining respect from peers and others was important and seemed to grow in importance a lifetime.

> “When I was younger, the consequences of success were focused on the financial. It was wanting to move on that salary scale. Whereas now, it is far more about recognition, reputation and respect. Recognition and respect for my expertise. Being respected is far more important to me than salary now.” (BUHoB/MM1)

The data demonstrates recognition from peers and loved ones important and considered a key consequence of success as “getting a sense of recognition for what I have achieved is important.” (MMUS1) as “their impression of me counts.” (MMUS1)

It was noted that this appreciation sparks a sense of empowerment which fuels an aspiration to achieve further success. MMUS1 added: “the recognition I receive through success makes me feel empowered to go on to achieve more success.” (MMUS1) Furthermore, status was noted as a strong outcome of achieving recognition through being successful**.** This involves both the way you see yourself, but also, the way others view you.

Experiencing trust from superiors can also encourage feelings of status and success. Students particularly drew on reflections from their work placement.

> “When I got my placement, I felt a lot of success. I didn’t think anyone would want me as I had never had a job before. And then I got the job and I had so much responsibility. And my boss trusted me so much. And then when I succeeded, she was so nice and so proud of me for doing so well. So that trust she gave me felt great., very successful and very happy and good about myself.” (BUS1)

Furthermore, a sense of worth was also noted: “I felt success when I got my first proper job. They felt I was worth investing in.” (BUA3) BUS1 also suggested that experiencing a sense of feeling trusted is not only a key achievement of success, but can in turn, develop confidence.

> “Because my boss trusted me to take on tasks and roles that I wasn’t necessarily confident in, also the fact that she trusted me to do so made me feel really successful and ultimately made me want to do well and succeed more.” (BUS1)

Interviewees considered that being respected is far more important than being likeable. UoPA3 reflected on points in their career; recognising that “respect was far more important than being likeable. I needed people to respect my ability.” (UoPA3) Furthermore, respect from both internal and external stakeholders were deemed consequences of success: “Coming from a revenue generation context, it didn’t matter if people liked me. What mattered was if customers and staff respected me.” (UoPA3)

However, participants recognised that whilst respect is crucial for obtaining a solid and trustworthy reputation, it was felt that respect takes time to nurture and is “built over time.” (UoPA3)

4.4.11 Reward

Understanding and defining the concept of ‘reward’ is key to defining and understanding success. For an activity to have succeeded, it must have achieved something – there must be a reward. However, the way in which we have perceived reward has changed over the years, and there remain a number of different parameters that need to be taken into consideration when understanding how an endeavor’s reward relates to its success (or failure).

The data demonstrates that experiencing reward is an obvious driver for, and outcome of, success. However, “success in its tangible form varies tremendously.” (MMUA2)

Variables of reward manifested in the shape of enabling, respect and recognition have been discussed, but other intangible rewards were discussed. The notion of traditional and contemporary rewards of success were discussed with the examples of “power and money are often considered as the outcome of success.” (MMUS2) However, “I do think it depends on the individual” (MMUS2) was reinforced frequently as it was felt that emotional reward can be of equal value to material gain.

Whilst tangible outcomes of success, such as luxury cars, a large house, and travel were noted, it was felt that success is also achievement and reward orientated on a more emotional level. Historically, the tangible results of success have been the highest-prized rewards. Outcomes such as money, access to holidays, large houses, new cars – the visual representations of wealth – have often signified great success and been considered a benchmark. However, those visual, superficial aspects of success tell only a fraction of the story. The data demonstrates however that modern-day success needs to incorporate fewer tangible aspects, such as happiness, work/life balance, wellbeing, inner peace and more. Furthermore, the data demonstrates that what we perceive reward to look like will vary from person to person, influenced heavily by the values instilled into us as we develop, and molded by the environment we find ourselves in.

Another element of reward identified in the data is finding a sense of belonging and identity – a sense of connection and community. Again, this can be a function of the project, process or product itself or a by-product - the friendships and collegiate nature of working together and achieving a shared goal, resulting in emotional gratitude.

“Emotional gratification” (BUA1) was seen to be an important reward of achieving success. So too was “seeing that you are adding value to someone.” (BUA2) Furthermore, a sense of feeling loved alongside feeling respected was also noted by participants: “I need to be loved and I need to be respected. These two things are the most important outputs of success for me.” (BUA2)

Experiencing the feeling of “making a difference” (BUHoB/MM2) was discussed, furthermore, articulating the need to feel they “are making a difference, as this will mean “my contribution of success is even greater.” (BUHoB/MM2) This was reinforced by BUA2 who noted they tend to think “people are more successful if they have made an impact on the world.” Various other emotional feelings of success were noted during interviews. Satisfaction, happiness, and the “sense of achievement and being proud of something you have done is the consequence of success for me.” (MMUA2)

Terminology such as comfortable, happiness and humble were used by all participants when discussing feeling satisfied with one’s life. “It’s about being comfortable and being humble in your life. Having what you need in your life and not having struggles.” (UoPS2)

A sense of feeling wanted was also considered to be a consequence of being satisfied with your own success: UoPS2 reflected, “success isn’t just about being happy, but also about being wanted. I suppose.” **(**UoPS2) The experience of feeling “secure and feeling safe.” **(**UoPS2) is also noted in the data. It was also recognised that for some, a consequence of success is having a family life; UoPS2 commented: “For me, success is one day; having a family of my own.” (UoPS2)

Successful completion of a task can often provide its own reward – the relief that something has worked and served its purpose well. This was particularly noticeable among the student respondents to the research, who identified the end of their qualification as a relief, marking the end of a difficult challenge and the opportunity to

regroup and refocus on what comes next. Again, participants noted that the shape of the reward changes during a lifetime:
“As I have got older success to me is more about the emotional gratification that I feel, as opposed to what financial or object award it used to mean, as the achievement.” (BUA3)

The sense of “being happy with what you have achieved was recognised to be a big consequence of success. Otherwise, you could keep achieving goals but if you’re not happy with them you won’t be happy.” (BUHoB/MM2)

4.4.12 Impact and legacy

It was suggested during interviews, that there is a traditional and a contemporary interpretation of the nature of success. The traditional view being focused on “reputation, wealth, and power,” (MMUA2) as outcomes of success. However, more recently a change of focus in society has taken place which has moved the focus of success to be about “giving back to society and being a corporate citizen.” (MMUS2) The impact we make on the world around us, and the legacy we leave were considered to be key factors for achieving success.

Having a positive impact on society was considered a consequence of success by all interviewees as it is considered “important to use success for a greater good.” (MMUS1) Leaving an impact and legacy on the world was a theme raised by interviewees, especially from the students interviewed who felt that people “who have made their mark on the world have massive success.” (MMUS2)

Respondents felt that an important element of success comes from the impact a person makes on the world around them, and the legacy they leave behind. For millennia, this was something judged in heavily religious terms – whether someone was ‘good’ or ‘pious’, and success often considered in terms of the rewards they would receive in the next life. In more recent times, religion has had a decreasing influence on human endeavor, increasingly being replaced as a driver by mindfulness, or awareness of our surroundings. Success is not so much seen as what awaits us in the next life as a reward from a deity, but by the legacy we leave behind for those who will follow us on the mortal plane. Although ultimately this is still about contributing to a ‘greater good’, respondents judged this in terms of the impact on society around us. This can take a number of different forms – solving a particular problem that benefits the lives of others, creating jobs, acting as a social entrepreneur to provide safety, opportunity and prosperity to groups that would otherwise have been unable to secure them. Leaving a lasting footprint behind is also an important measure of success. Success is often viewed as a long-term process that is best judged over generations rather than in the short term. We are surrounded by obvious examples where short-term success has been unsustainable, and ultimately caused more harm than good. Success must not die with us if it is to be considered to have a true societal impact. It must leave a legacy, a baton to be picked up by others and taken to even higher heights.

4.4.13 Longitudinal

It was felt that success cannot be achieved in a short time; it can take a long time to establish, and then needs to be evaluated over time. It was considered that the “vision between short term and long term is relevant for the individual or brand, and success is a long-term evaluation of your achievements over time.” (UoPA1)

Interviewees felt the long-term focus demonstrates resilience and it is important to “build on the long term which is often based on resilience.” (UoPA1) It was recognised that being resilient takes courage and can be difficult to obtain and sometimes “you have strength, but the great difficulty is being able to cultivate that and to be resilient and to make these big strides.” (UoPA3)

It was suggested that whilst success and longevity are synonymous, it was felt that too much focus on the short term can lead to failure as “failure has to do with short term goals.” (UoPA1) Moreover, “sometimes you try to maximise success in a very short time frame and in the long term you can lose quite badly.” (UoPA2)
UoPA1 further suggested that a long-term focus on issues which may not yield an instant return, are nevertheless important investments. An organisation’s

commitment to corporate social responsibility was provided as an example, as there are “aspects of CSR that do not have an immediate return, however those aspects are critical for a long-term success and image of the brand or of the person.” (UoPA1)

Furthermore, it was suggested that failing to achieve success is often caused by lacking foresight and “being myopic and you fail to have a success when you just focus on the short term.” (UoPA2)
UoPA1 suggested that likeability is relevant for longevity of success: “I think that being likeable is something you can have without success but success in the long term depends on likeability, if not it will just remain as a short-term success.” (UoPA1)

Crucially, the way others are treated on the journey to success is key. Demonstrating integrity was considered crucial. UoPA1 noted: “If you are getting success by exploiting people it might work in the short run but in the long-term people will realise and will avoid making partnerships with you” (UoPA1) Establishing a human connection is fundamental as “likeability is probably easier to achieve by simply being nicer with people. But a human connection is important**.”** (UoPA1)

4.5 Research objective 2 - The concept of brand success

The following details the findings aligned to the second component of the research; to understand the concept of brand success. Specifically, this section address **RO2**: **To critically examine the concept of brand success.**

4.5.1 Heritage

The research asserts that a "successful brand absolutely depends on heritage." (UoPA3)

For new brands, this is one of the biggest challenges – evidencing they can not only make grand promises but must deliver on them too. "Establishing credibility and trust" (BUHoB/MM2) is not an endeavor that can be solved with innovative marketing campaigns or by investing money into the business – it can usually only be "established over time" (BUA3). Longevity as a factor of brand success was discussed as "brand success takes time to develop." (UoPA3) Furthermore, there was the feeling that the longer the success of the brand, the more confidence consumers will have to consume the brand as "a brand needs evidence that it has been successful for a while. And certainly, I am the type of person to go for products and services which have proven ability." (UoPA3)

The link between heritage and reliability was also raised during interviews. It was felt that the more history the brand had, the more likely the brand's success as "heritage is important as it shows reliability." (UoPA3) That said, a strong heritage is often considered so important to a brand that they do find ways to pay for that privilege, by buying older, longer-established brands and "piggybacking their reputation" (BUA3) "history and credibility." (BUHoB/MM1) BUA2 presented the example of online fashion retailer Boohoo purchasing the Dorothy Perkins, Wallis and Burton brands from the failed retail group Arcadia in 2021, specifically because those brands had a heritage that pre-dated Boohoo's existence by the best part of a century. To that end, it was felt that heritage is an "antecedent of brand success" (BUA2)

The older a brand is, and "the longer it has been consistently delivering on its brand values and promises" (BUA2) the stronger the relationship it is likely to have with its stakeholders.

The data also shows that a brand's heritage is considered a "badge of honour" (BUA1) often demonstrating that it has "weathered many storms" (BUHoB/MM2) throughout its life, changing with the times and "recovering from setbacks." (BUHoB/MM2)

4.5.2 Brand awareness and positive image

The data clearly shows that a successful brand needs to be "well known" (BUHoB/MM2) in the marketplace and hold a "positive place in people's mind." (BUS2) Furthermore, the data emphasises the strength a successful brand has when there is a desire to achieve brand association from the marketplace as there will be a "good response to the brand." (BUS1)

The data presents the perception that many successful brands focus strongly on cascading their brand values (BUHoB/MM2) to the market which consumers resonate with and want to be part of. The power of association was recognised to often instill a sense of aspiration of belonging as presented by BUHoB/MM2:

> "I love Nike. They do a lot of female sporting stuff. I don't even know who some of the female athletes are who are branded up by them, but I like the association I have with those female athletes. It's the association. Not an aspiration to be like the athlete. It's the association with the brand which makes me feel part of it." (BUHoB/MM2)

Characteristics such as being "full of entrepreneurial ideas," (MMUS1) and trying new things were referred to as important in building awareness. Pushing boundaries and being inspirational were considered important as "entrepreneurs and leadership are important characteristics to grow brand awareness." (MMUS3)

"Telling the brand story" (MMUS1) was considered to be an effective marketing tactic to grow brand awareness. The brand story was mentioned by all student data participants. MMUS1 used Ikea as an example of this.

> "I think Ikea is a great example of brand success. They are simple. Nice styles and suits everyone. On top of this they are friendly and fun, but they also tell their story." (MMUS1)

Furthermore, it was suggested that this can actually encourage brand affiliation:

> "Positive brand awareness is crucial for brand success. For example, you can walk into Topshop and see Cocoa cola branded clothes. Being trendy even through it's a soft drinks company has made Coke look very successful and Topshop want to be a part of their brand success." (MMUS2)

Participants reflected that the image is "the first thing you see when you associate yourself with the brand name." (UoPS3) Participants recognised the relevance the image of the brand plays in their life, remarking that "for a lot of people, if they were being honest, myself included, image plays a massive part in the brands they follow." (UoPS2)

Participants recognised the emphasis brands attach to the image they create as "brands are trying to create a certain image to consumers with their messaging. If they manage to do that succinctly then they are successful." (UoPS1) The data shows that the visual representation of the brand is a fundamental consideration for presenting and developing brand awareness, as well as encouraging positive association from the marketplace. BUA1 explained the expectation from consumers to "see the brand values coming through within the words and visuals used." (BUA1)

Interviewees all felt that a consequence of brand success was a positive brand image that consumers want to be part of. MMUA2 articulated that a "clear consequence of a successful brand, is of course, having a good image and people wanting to be a part of it." (MMUA2)
Positive brand image impacts how the consumer feels, which will whet their appetite to join the brand community. Interviewees reflected on the power of a positive brand image as it not only attracts consumers to the brand but encourages a sense of brand community and a feeling of belonging for the consumer. MMUS2 presented an example of purchasing fast fashion to demonstrate the impact of being part of an online brand community.

"So, say I liked coca cola, I would buy a t-shirt with their logo on and post a picture of it on my Instagram because I thought it made me look and feel cool." (MMUS2)

The data shows how consumers may be “happy to pay more per item for the image.” (UoPS1) Specifically students commented on the importance of self-promotion and the perception of others with brand choice. UoPS1 considered the brand image “crucial, as it’s about the way other people see you when you are wearing or using the brand.” (UoPS1) Participants reflected that actually this brand image can trigger negative implications due to “a lot of peer pressure.” (UoPS3) therefore, the data suggested that “the brands we follow are often influenced by others.” (UoPS2)

Student participants felt that social media plays a major role in this due to “the level of exposure you have out there now to so many people.” (UoPS3) The data suggested this may be a particular concern for younger generations, students interviewed articulated:

> “There’s such a high level of exposure now. Anyone can voice their opinion in any way they please. So, I suppose subconsciously I associate myself with brands which I deem to be viewed as positive in the public eye, the ones I know that people will take a positive judgement on.” (UoPS2)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants discussed how positive brand image provides reassurance to consumers. Reassurance for the quality of the product or service was recognised as an antecedent for brand trust. MMUHoB/MM2 asserted that brands “with a positive brand image make the consumer feel happy and reassured they are spending money on a good brand.” (MMUHoB/MM2)

4.5.3 Brand identity

Participants considered an antecedent of brand success is not only to have a "clear identity" (BUS1) but that brand identity must be "clearly communicated at every touchpoint" (BUHoB/MM2) due to the need for consumers to understand "exactly what the brand stands for" (BUA3) as well as to "reinforce the various brand characteristics." (BUS2)

The data demonstrates the connection of the brand's identity and the brand's personality as emphasised by BUHoB/MM2: "A brand's identity demonstrates its personality." (BUHoB/MM2) Fundamentally, it was felt that this brand identity needs to "connect and have shared values" (BUHoB/MM1) with the brand's target audience.

It was also felt that the brand's architecture plays an important role in the brand's identity; there is a strong need for clearly structured brand architecture. Interviewees felt that smaller sub-identities to the overarching brand "enables brands to have a wider range of brand communities" (BUA2) which strengthens the overall brand identity, if they complement and work in synergy with one another. BUHoB/MM2 provided Nike as an example of best practice.

> "What I love about Nike's identity is that it's not just the one identity. They have lots of smaller identities, different pockets of people and different sports. So, lots of different brand communities to be part of**."** (BUHoB/MM2)

Status was discussed as a characteristic of brand identity due to the added value status offers:
"I love Nike, mainly due to its status. I get things from Nike that I wouldn't from its competitors, due to its status." (BUHoB/MM2)
Participants suggested that a desired characteristic for a brand's identity was the ability to demonstrate individuality and difference from rival brands in the process of achieving brand loyalty and preference:
"There needs to be differentiation in the identity between brands. Otherwise, why would I bother to be loyal to one brand over another." (BUA3) "Clarity about what the brand stands for" (BUA2) was deemed a crucial part of this.

4.5.4 Agile

The data demonstrates an antecedent of brand success is the ability to be an agile brand; to “move with the times,” (BUHoB/MM1) demonstrate evidence of “thinking progressively,” (MMUA1) and “never standing still as an organisation.” (MMUHoB/MM2)

It was felt that brands who recognised the need to stay “contemporary and modern” (BUS2) will attract the new generation of consumer, therefore staying a “relevant and attractive brand proposition.” (BUA2)

BUHoB/MM1 presented an example of John Lewis:

> “A lot of brands have been around for as long as John Lewis but haven’t kept as modern, they don’t attract say the young professionals, so they haven’t been as successful.” (BUHoB/MM1)

The data presents a picture of a brand journey (BUA1) which sees the brand experience change and evolve as it grows. It was recognised that an antecedent of a successful brand will be a brand which evolves and changes as the target audience does:

“Brands need to grow and develop alongside me.” (BUA2)

The theme of experiencing a brand journey alongside “one’s own life journey” (BUA2) was consistent across the data from the BU respondents. All participants were able to recall brands they have followed throughout their lifetimes which have “developed and grown” (BUHoB/MM2) during their own life journey. Accordingly, it was recognised that those brands who have changed and reacted to change in line with their stakeholders will “remain the favoured brand.” (BUS3)

Furthermore, the data suggests that those brands who take responsibility for understanding their “market’s needs and wants” (BUHoB/MM1) will be more likely to remain “buoyant during times of trouble” (BUA1) as they will be able to respond to a “changing marketplace” (BUHoB/MM2) meaning they will be a successful brand.

4.5.5 Brand ethics and values

A brand's ethical code is considered to be at the core of success for many consumers as demonstrated by MMUHoB/MM2 who "will only commit to brands which follow and demonstrate a strong ethical moral compass." Interviewees all felt a successful brand will have clearly defined core values which are for the most part shared with their stakeholders. It was felt these core values will be evident in all communications and images, demonstrating a "strong representation of values." (MMUA1) It was felt that a key core value of a successful brand is one which demonstrates a clear understanding of where the organisation sees itself in the future and "not resting on its laurels." (MMUHoB/MM2)

It was suggested that successful brands are "powerhouses," (MMUA1) that can shape and "change lives" (MMUA2) through persuading and informing consumers of their values. Participants felt strongly that due to brands being so "powerful and influential," (MMUA2) they need to take responsibility for their actions, "especially the bigger brands. They must be ethical and responsible." (MMUA2) However, for this to happen effectively, organisations need to earn consumers' trust, as well as demonstrate their longevity. "Trust and longevity are very important." (MMUA3)

Again, the concept of the "story behind the organisation" (MMUS2) was discussed. MMUS1 defined this 'story' to be a focus on the "things consumers believe companies to be. What they represent. What makes us like them. It's all of these things together. Their whole story. Their values." (MMUS1) Interviewees felt it paramount that the organisation effectivity communicates the characteristics which drive the brand and "what makes it tick ethically." (MMUHoB/MM2)

The data shows that brands demonstrating they are committed to "environmental and welfare issues" (BUHoB/MM1) are an important antecedent for brand success.

> "A successful brand will stay with you. You will remember it. It won't just float in and out. It sticks in your mind for a reason – and that reason is its ethics and values." (BUA3)

Whilst it was acknowledged that whilst the need for a brand will vary dependent on the use of the product or service, the "expectation for a brand to be responsible does not change." (BUS2) The data asserts successful brands have a "huge responsibility as they change lives." (MMUA1) Moreover, the data shows the perception that leading global brands are additionally "powerful and influential, and therefore they have bigger responsibility than smaller brands to be ethical and responsible." (MMUA2)

Participants recognised that brands committing to sustainability can often "add so much more cost" (BUA1) "and can be difficult." (BUA1) However, the data demonstrated that "if a brand is trying to be sustainable and responsible in their production, at their own cost, it makes their brand far more successful than those who don't." (BUS2)
While the data shows that brands who are guided by ethical values with production and "supply networks" (BUA2) were held in high regard, it was recognised that for many businesses, they have been "driven by consumer demand for ethical sourcing and production" (BUHoB/MM2) and so it's "harder for brands to tiptoe around sustainability." (BUA2)

The data also presents concern around other ethical considerations alongside sustainability such as "staff welfare and equality" (BUA3). Participants suggested the focus on values which consider the organisation's staff has "often played second fiddle" (BUA1) to issues surrounding sustainability but following "increased focus on mental wellbeing" (BUA1) brands are now "striking more of a balance." (BUHoB/MM1)

MMUS2 introduced the concept that green futureproofing is an expectation from students as "Millennials want more and more ethical branding. This is about the wellbeing of our future and my generation need to see a commitment in brand values from these global brands." (MMUS2) Students clearly prioritised the importance of brands being ethical. MMUS3 articulated that this is a key consideration for choosing their career path: "I'd like to get a job for a firm that does something I believe in. and making our world a little bit more sustainable." (MMUS3)

It was felt that many corporate brands are greenwashing (MMUS2) consumers; over-promising on their sustainability agenda and not actually making a difference.

MMUS1 voiced the perception that “a lot of companies nowadays claim they ‘are green’, but actually are corporate greenwashing to make the brand more favorable to consumers.” (MMUS1)
Participants also suggested that global brands who don’t actively demonstrate commitment to sustainability could impact negatively on their reputation as “you must be seen to also be committed to helping the future generations. So, if you’re not then consumers will question why these global brands aren’t supporting being more environmentally aware.” (MMUS2)
It was suggested that the most successful brands are those that benefit society through their ethics and values. UoPA2 explained that brands who work to benefit society make consumers “feel very positive, as they are doing something to benefit other people rather than just flog their stuff to make money.” (UoPA2) Whilst it was appreciated that profit is an obvious consequence of brand success, the theme of making a difference was clear throughout data collection.

“I understand that it’s not going to be a successful brand if it doesn’t make money. But I do think brand success is about making a difference.” (UoPA2) This ‘difference’ was considered to be more than purely making a difference to people’s lives, going beyond the original product intention to change perceptions and behaviours, for ethical and sustainable benefit. UoPA2 suggested that brands need to “come up with new ways of looking at products which haven’t been changed for ages, to change perceptions.” (UoPA2)

Again, the “nice feeling when a brand does something ethical” (UoPA3), and a brand having an “ethical standpoint” (UoPS1) was reflected on. Furthermore, participants felt the need to understand and appreciate where and how brands are being ethical. Participants considered a commitment to sustainability to be key for brand success; especially relevant for younger generations as “sustainability is always in the back of my generations’ mind” (UoPS2) and due to the amount of information “out there for you to educate yourself about the concerns.” (UoPS2)

Consumer expectation for brands to be sustainable and ethical are high, and the goalposts are frequently changing.

> "It's something which has ballooned in the past ten years. So, I can remember when M&S had their Plan A campaign. That was exciting. They weren't going to use plastic bags. And now, it's well, everyone is doing that – what else are you going to do?" (UoPA2)

Brands, therefore, need to be responsive as there is "an expectation that brands will do certain things. Consumers are questioning what else they are going to do on top of what everyone else is promising." (UoPA1)

4.5.6 Brand trust

The data identified that trust is a “fundamental antecedent” (BUA1) of brand success. Brand trust, however, is a multi-faceted concept with different aspects being referred to by different respondents, although all agreed that “a brand’s trustworthiness influences its relationships with stakeholders.” (BUA3)

Respondents felt that trust is something a brand needs to earn over time, through repeated interactions in which it delivers on its promises in a number of important areas. Firstly, is the trust that the product or service that the brand delivers is fit for purpose. Whether it is a durable product that is expected to last for many years or a single-use, disposable product, the consumer must have faith that the product or service they are purchasing will do what it is supposed to do.

The more often a consumer has interactions with a brand where this happens or knows of others having interactions with the brand where this happens, the stronger the feeling of trust will become. MMUA3 felt that trust will encourage further brand loyalty; presenting the example of preferred supermarket: “I trust Sainsburys as a brand and because of that trust I repeat purchase.” (MMUA3) It was suggested that the more trusted the brand, the more consumers reward it with autonomy to make decisions on their behalf: “If I trust a brand, then I allow them to do more as I give them more freedom. Such as make a purchase decision on my behalf.” (MMUA3 Interviewees also discussed the increased power brands have when they are trusted by delivering a strong brand experience

> “When my partner was ill, we allowed the delivery driver to bring the shopping into the house and unpack it for us. So, we were allowing strangers – typically men – into our home. They were allowed to do this because we trusted the brand.” (MMUA3)

The data shows brand trust to be linked to the brand’s heritage, where the brand has developed feelings of trust over time as part of its image. This covers a number of the areas discussed in this thesis – consistent adherence to the brand values and the absence of scandal or compromise are good indicators that a brand has achieved trust through its heritage.

The data also asserts the need for trust in the ongoing relationship between the brand and its consumers – that the relationship is seen by both parties as an ongoing one, and not one that is terminated at the point of purchase. The "after sales care" (BUA1) was deemed an important element of developing trust since "brand trust grows post-purchase." (BUHoB/MM2) It was considered important that if a consumer experiences issues, is there "trust that they will be resolved." (BUA3) Knowing that any problems will be addressed post-purchase offers much greater peace of mind to consumers, leading them to trust the product or service they are investing in.

The data demonstrates that brands need to be nurtured. Trust can be lost: "We were originally Tesco online shoppers, but then products would arrive damaged, so the trust became diminished." (MMUA3) A corporate brand can however be undermined by those organisations that form part of its supply chain, for example, or by the lower standards of other brands with which it is associated. BUA3 presented the Volkswagen emissions case as an example of loss of brand trust:

> "We had a Volkswagen Passat. I will never give them any of my money ever again. because what they did was fundamentally wrong. They lied to me about diesel emissions. Massive brand and now dead to me because they lied." (BUA3)

The data demonstrates a perception that the bigger the brand, the more research and development will be undertaken which in turn means consumers "trust the best functioning brand." (BUA3) The data also demonstrates how fragile brand trust is and consequently how easily it can be damaged. BUA3 went on to explain that the "loss of trust runs deep goes further than just the trust" as it also casts shadow over the consumer and "influences how others view them" due to the negative brand association. Participants identified a dislike for changing brands due to the added complication and time investment required. They liked to stick with their brands for the "long term." (BUA1) Accordingly, the deeper the brand trust, the more commitment and brand loyalty is demonstrated.

Lastly, it was felt brands don’t even need to be likeable if they are trusted. MMUA1 presented the banking sector as an example of consumer trust superseding likeability of a brand:

“I can think of banking brands that are not particularly likeable and they are not organisations you feel particularly affectionate about– but they are highly trusted because of their wealth, their skills, and their role in the economy.” (MMUA1)

4.5.7 Brand experience

The data demonstrates that engagement with successful brands runs far deeper than a simple transactional relationship and extends into emotional interactions and associations. Participants clearly emphasised their belief that a brand is more than just functional qualities, rather, it is “a collection of experiences, emotional interactions and associations.” (UoPHoB/MM2) Furthermore, “the experience you had to have the reasons why you’ve associated with that brand, and how it makes you feel.” (UoPS2) Furthermore, “when you experience joy with a brand, that’s when you know a brand is successful. The overall experience is crucial in brand success.” (UoPA3).

Participants not only explained how experiencing the brand brings “pleasure and excitement” (BUS2) but immersing in the brand experience is such an important element of the brand consumption that “I am happy to go out of my way for a nicer shopping experience.” (BUA3) In this manner, stakeholders will prioritise the brand experience over convenience, using products or services that they have a strong relationship with even if it is not the easiest option to do so. Furthermore, they will also be prepared to pay a price premium to use a brand that they know will deliver a satisfying experience, rather than using a cheaper alternative about which they do not have the same feeling. Participants provided numerous examples of being “willing to pay a higher price for the flight”, or and even “change travel itinerary” to accommodate a preferred company rather than using a cheaper and easier rival because they know that the “experience” (UoPS1) will ensure they arrive at their destination in the “right frame of mind” (UoPA2).

Interviewees referred to the brand experience in various forms such as the physical buying experience, as well as the virtual experience, recognising the importance of a consistent and “enjoyable experience” (BUA2) both on and offline. Furthermore, BUA3 explained that if the physical brand experience is polished then actually, they will continue to shop in store due to the enjoyment of the experience: “John Lewis for examples. On and offline are excellent but I will actually go out of my way to physically shop in store because I enjoy the experience so much.” (BUA2) The online brand experience was considered an important consideration for repeat purchase as demonstrated by BUA3 who used Amazon as an example of a brand who have “made it as easy as possible for consumers to buy online. The experience is easy, so I return.” (BUA3)

Furthermore, it was felt that a positive experience with brands build solid relationships. MMUS2 reflected on first-hand experiences with Royal Caribbean stating that the joy of the experience meant they “loved their brand more because of this.” (MMUS2) Accordingly, it was felt that a positive experience can lead to long-lasting, strong relationships with consumers: “The experience was so good that I now have a very good relationship with the brand.” (MMUS2)

Evidence of others’ experience of a brand was deemed important. Evidence of the brand success was seen to be learnt most effectively through word of mouth. “Word of mouth is important to me; People’s experience is important.” (UoPA3) Brand comparisons were therefore deemed an important process by all data participants as assessing the “added value is important to assessing a successful brand.” (UoPA2). Participants stated the desire, where possible, to “experience the brand prior to purchase so I can also make my own evaluations.” (UoPA3) This buys the brand the intellectual and emotional space in the relationship to expand their activities into different arenas, media or even sectors. The brand loyalty established by the brand experience means that those existing stakeholders will come with the brand into their new activity. However, they will do so with a predefined expectation that the brand experience will remain consistent.

It was also observed that the not only does the brand experience influence your feelings towards the brand itself, but it can also influence your thoughts on the wider world as the “positive experiences you have had with it determine the way you see the brand, and the way you view the world.” (UoPS2) Finally, the data asserts the importance of the brand experience throughout the consumer journey, including post-purchase. MMUA3 suggested the make-or-break interaction with the brand experience is often their “competence and level of customer service as this represents the relationship with the customer.” (MMUA3)

4.5.8 Brand loyalty

Interviewees noted the “ultimate brand success is being the consumer’s first choice, instead of searching for the product in general.” (UoPA1) Brand loyalty was referred to as “the great power of brand” (UoPS1) during interviews.

Participants considered brand trust to be the key enabler for brand loyalty. Thus, having trust in a brand ensures that “instead of searching around you go directly to that brand because you know and trust it.” (UoPA1)

Interviewees acknowledged that brand loyalty is fluid and volatile during a lifetime, however.

> “When I was younger, I would choose brands based on how others saw me. That’s the change, I would aspire to top brands, all about the status. Now, I follow brands for me.” (UoPS3)

Participants recognised that as they aged, their attention to brands would be more personal and less directed by peer pressure or peer acceptance. Reference to how environments influence our brand loyalty was prominent during data capture.
UoPS3 reflected:

> “When you are younger the brands you like are influenced by your community. So, for example, back in my school days, everyone used to wear their trainers and you saw what the cool kids were wearing. And you were then like, ok, I’m gonna buy that brand too then as it will make me cool too. But then as you get older, you grow out of that mindset, and you see brands for what they are.” (UoPS3)

Participants articulated the desire to feel engaged with the brand’s activity as this further grew brand loyalty; it was considered to be frustrating for consumers when they “find out about a brand who is doing something really positive, but they aren’t shouting about it.” (UoPA1)

4.5.9 Brand community and belonging

The data demonstrates that participants consider the most successful brands work hard to build emotional connections and "instill a strong sense of brand belonging." (BUHoB/MM2) Shared values and ideology were highlighted as fundamental antecedents of brand success. Participants articulated that "emotional connections trigger strong feelings of brand community**."** (BUS1) It was felt that the very essence of a successful brand is to provide stakeholders "with a series of positive interactions and emotional connections" (BUA1) which stakeholders experience during the brand interaction. In turn, these interactions and connections "create and cement brand communities." (BUS2)

Interviewees felt brands "establish emotional connection" (BUS2) with their stakeholders through "demonstrating their personality" (BUHoB/MM2) and representing those who follow it and "instilling a sense of the brand community." (BUS1)

Whilst it was felt that our favourite brands trigger an emotional connection with the consumer, it was recognised that this is mainly relevant for "brands we choose to invest into" (BUHoB/MM1), rather than disposable FMCGs products for example. However, even then, there are still points of emotional concern for consumers such as their "CSR agenda." (MMUS1)

The data demonstrates the power brands have by creating and encouraging brand communities and furthermore, the "positive impact" (BUS2) brand communities can have on consumers. BUS1 reflected on the brand communities they associate with and considered "people need to feel part of something. A union with others who share the same ideologies." (BUS1) Brand communities can actually "work together to bring about change" (BUA2) and "make a positive impact on society." (BUHoB/MM1)

Participants recognised belonging as a fundamental characteristic of an emotional brand connection as brands "make you a part of a big cultural group. You have a sense of belonging and also a sense of being able to relate to them." (UoPS3). Furthermore, it was even suggested that brands "help you to find your identity and your brand community. (UoPS3)

Participants suggested “as well as the organisations brands you associate yourself with, it’s also the people, campaigns and movements we can have a sense of belonging to.” (UoPS2)
It was also recognised that the celebrities and political movements we attach ourselves to “determine how other people think of you” (UoPS2) as much as commercial brand associations do. Accordingly, it was suggested that observing peers engaging as part of a brand community encourages one’s own interest to belong. Celebrity endorsement was noted to be particularly effective for inspiring a positive brand image and acting as a figure head for a brand community. Suitability of this figure head was deemed crucial (MMUHoB/MM2) with previous examples of failed collaborations listed by interviewees.

The emotional element of being part of a brand community was referred to as “the pleasure and enjoyment experienced as an outcome of being part of a brand community.” (MMUS2) Furthermore, not only was a sense of connection voiced as a key outcome, but interviewees also explained how being part of a brand community “helps overcome social barriers and feelings of acceptance.” (MMUS1) Interviewees stated a brand is “as much the feeling you get as the product itself. So not only the service it delivers, but the way it makes you feel.” (UoPA3) The data demonstrates a large influence of this to be the emotional connection and associations consumers experience when engaging with a successful brand; making them feel part of a brand community.

4.5.10 In tune with stakeholders

It was felt that a successful brand understands its stakeholders' needs and wants. The organisation should exist to "tune into the needs of their stakeholder and then also focus on doing well itself so it will perform well for its staff. There is a need for consistency and honesty." (MMUA1)

Furthermore, a truly successful brand will have a shared philosophy with their stakeholders. MMUA1 considered John Lewis to be a "very successful brand not only as a standalone organisation, but because it matches how I behave, there is a match between the two." (MMUA1)

Consistency to the organisation's brand values was deemed important by interviewees as if brand values or brand personality change, there may be disconnect and sudden lack of brand affiliation with their existing stakeholders. MMUA3 presented Jaguar as an example of this.

> "I used to enjoy Jaguar as a brand. Their values used to be luxury, safety, and making a statement of success. That's what their brand used to say to me. Now, they say flash. So, I don't feel a brand affiliation. It's all about relating to the brand personality for me." (MMUA3)

MMUA1 introduced needing to be in-tune with internal as well as external stakeholders as "employees are at the heart of the business. However, it was recognised that in practice, this is not the easiest thing to do and it's particularly challenging in the current competitive conditions." (MMUA1) Furthermore. working conditions, salaries and overall treatment of employees was considered to be important antecedent of a successful brand, by interviewees. It was felt that staff should be "earning sufficient money and should be treated with respect. The organisation should reinvest in its staff." (MMUA1)
Understanding, anticipating and responding to consumer demands was considered to be beneficial to both the consumer and the organisation. MMUS2 reflected that for some brands, they can actually lead on consumer want and need, "offering me support before I even knew I wanted it." (MMUS2)

4.5.11 Fulfilling expectations

Participants felt that an antecedent of brand success is one that doesn't overpromise and underdeliver. A "successful brand will deliver on its promises. It doesn't overpromise and under deliver." (UoPA3)

UoPA3 presented Mazda as a personal example: "That's why I like Mazda. It does what it promises to do." (UoPA3)

It was suggested that successful brands tend not to overcomplicate their products or services as they are "self-contained. Don't over-complicate the brand, keep it simple." (UoPA3)
Keeping the brand simple was reinforced by UoPA2 who proposed that a "successful brand knows what they are good at and push this. They don't add unnecessary frills." (UoPA3)

The data suggests that in the aim of developing stakeholder trust, the brand must demonstrate their added value (BUHoB/MM1) and crucially, "needs to deliver on its promises." (BUHoB/MM2)

At this point, the theme of measurement was introduced. It was suggested that measurement is an important activity to assess if brands overpromise and underdeliver. "Key performance indicators demonstrate brand success. Basic revenue, internationalisation, awareness, recognition, and so forth." (UoPA1)

Variables such as durability and reliability were mentioned during interviews as important ingredients that contribute to ensuring the brand fulfils expectation. Furthermore, it was felt that this added value presents consumer trust.

"For me, it's the durability and the reliability offered. There is trust there." (UoPS1).

4.6 Research objective 3 - Nature of brand in HE

The following details the findings aligned to the third component of the research; to understand the nature of brand in the context of HE. Specifically, this section addresses **RO3: To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education.**

4.6.1 Core values

Participants felt that nature of a HE brand is its commitment to the promises and proposition of the university's values and mission as it sets the tone for what the university stands for. Stakeholders want to see what "the goals of the university are, as this shows the brand statements of the university, and we see a focus on the values of the institution." (UoPA1)

The need for the HE brand to satisfy "a multitude of internal and external stakeholder," (MMUA3) who have a variety of "different expectations" (UoPA1) was acknowledged.
Participants recognised that this made "the focus so very difficult." (UoPA3) However, interviewees felt the brand values needed to be consistent to "ensure a strong nucleus of the brand." (UoPA3) Furthermore, it was felt that the HEI mission and brand values must be cohesive. The need to continue to do this was raised with the aim to continue to "make the university brand look stronger and more unified." (UoPA1)

HE brands that match their consumers values are deemed particularly successful as "the most successful brands balance your individual values and needs to match their values." (BUA3) UoPS2 suggested the reason consumers attached themselves to certain HE brands is "because it's representing what you want to represent and it's doing something that is in line with your own actions and values." (UoPS2) Academics and students alike suggested that emphasis on brand values aligning to the consumers' personal attributes can be an effective brand building activity as "a lot of brand awareness is crucial for brand success." (UoPS3) Furthermore, "in order for you to increase brand awareness, you need to always emphasis your values," (UoPS3) which is obviously a strategic focus for brand management. "Clear brand values are crucial for HEIs," (MMUA3) however, communicating diaphanous values at each brand touchpoint and "being transparent about these values throughout the whole system is crucial." (BUA3)

Staff participants all noted that the nature of core values in HE is to predominantly focuses on "quality teaching and research and equipping with skills and knowledge. Upstanding and dependable, everything you would expect from a university. I'm happy to deliver on these brand values as I believe in them." (UoPA2) Furthermore. staff noted these university values were longitudinal rather than short-lived. However, it was noted that "creating a unified brand is very difficult to achieve" (UoPA2) due to the complexity of the brand architecture in higher education.

> "Universities are a little like a department store. It has lots of different schools all achieving different things, at different times. Collectively it's quite hard to come up with something that has a strong wow factor surrounding 'this is what my university brand is about' because how do you draw together an engineering school, a business school, a language school." (UoPA2)

4.6.2 Distinct culture

A distinct culture underpinned by a strong community presence was presented by all participants as a key component of the nature of brand in HE, as articulated by BUHoB/MM2: “This distinct culture is at the very heart of the nature of the HE brand.” Students and academics felt that organisational culture plays an integral role in the nature of the HE brand. It was commented that this characterises and makes the brand what it is. MMUA1 considered the fundamental nature of the HE brand to demonstrate “the kind of university that it is. It’s a representation of the organisational culture.” (MMUA1) Furthermore, it was felt that a key characteristic of the distinct culture in HE is that it is “fluid and continues to evolve” (BUS2) and depends on “understanding the changing dynamic of its target market as that market evolves during generations considerably.” (BUHoB/MM1) Students identified that their understanding of the HE brand was also very different once they were experiencing it first-hand during their student journey, compared to their previous perception prior to joining the university.

BUA3 noted that the HE brand needs to be inclusive due also to the diverse nature of stakeholders, and specifically the diverse body of students. MMUA3 also noted that the brand “has to be extremely flexible due to the portfolio of disciplines”, as this will influence personal characteristics of students. It was felt that the identity of student will be influenced by their field of interest. Therefore, the brand needs to be inclusive to different types of students which adds to the distinctive nature of the HE brand.

BUS1 suggested HE must prioritise being “trustworthy and authentic in its culture.” (BUS1). Furthermore, participants considered the distinctiveness of the HE culture arises from having great responsibility for “shaping and changing the future.” (BUA2) In addition to guiding and influencing young people at a “key point in their life,” (BUS1) the data suggests the HE brand represents a social mission. As part of this, promoting “wider society integration” (BUHoB/MM2) and breaking down barriers to HE was deemed fundamental to the nature of the HE brand. The data presents a narrative of a culture which relies on “providing belonging for staff and students alike” (BUA2) “nurturing multiple relationships based on co-creation and multiple-beneficial outputs" (BUA1) and "inspiring the future generations of society" (BUHoB/MM1).

Furthermore, it was suggested the many layers of stakeholders involved with the HE brand demands acceptance, likability, and to demonstrate a distinction from the competition. MMUS1 presented the example of the universities needing to "win the hearts" of not only prospective students, but also their parents as an additional layer of stakeholder to influence: "The university is an important part of the student's family, so it's important to be likeable and important to have brand distinction" (MMUS1) which is developed through the institutional culture. It was felt that the nature of a successful HE brand therefore is to "interact with all people and support and educate people." (MMUA1)

Participants suggested therefore that the HE brand is not disposable like commercial brands as it makes a "significant impact to your life and influences your outlook on life." (MMUS1) Furthermore, participants felt strongly that the nature of the HE brand is not to be a transactional brand, but instead a brand which relies on co-creation, "partnerships and relationships. And learning together along the way." (MMUA3)

Furthermore, the interplay of social capital and the brand was raised by MMUA1, who suggested that the university becomes "part of the individual's social capital and they carry with it for them for life." (MMUA1) Accordingly, interviewees suggested this social capital prompts a sense of ownership towards their university, which "plays a part in driving the distinct HE culture." (MMUA1)

4.6.3 Inclusive

The data demonstrates a key ingredient of the HE brand to be “inclusive and welcoming to all.” (BUHoB/MM2), and an environment which offers a “non-judgmental safe space for all.” as reflected upon by BUS1. BUS3 felt there must be one inclusive brand “which represents everyone.” (BUS3) Interestingly, the data presents the need for treating students as individuals who desire different experiences as an important activity for embracing inclusivity. MMU students considered MMU an effective mentor due to the “type of student who come here and the type of institution it is. And I think that’s where institutions can go wrong, thinking all students are the same and want the same experience.” (MMUS1)

There was feeling that the inclusive culture of the HE brand acts as a vessel to create joint identity between the institution and the student community. “The university brand is a way of collecting people, so they feel part of the same wider team, and have a sense of joint identity.” (BUA2) BUS1 noted the need for an inclusive culture with local community, and not just within the university bubble itself as students want to feel inclusivity within their local community. It was recognised that creating such an inclusive culture between the student body and local community can be mutually beneficial to both the local residents, and the university itself.” (BUS1) Promoting “wider society integration” (BUA2) with community partnerships was considered a key strategic activity for the HE brand to demonstrate not only this inclusive culture, but also to “promote the student contribution and impact to society.” (BUA2)

It was recognised that inclusivity is not only student-focused but also crucial in the staff force to encourage interdisciplinary approaches. UoPHoB/MM2 recognised UoP’s “interdisciplinary work is strong because of the diversity.” (UoPHoB/MM2) Interviewees discussed the importance of universities recognising diversity in their staff and embracing the value of difference. Inclusivity during brand development was recognised important, as well as implementing strategies to be “inclusive with staff to bring them on the branding journey.” (UoPA1) UoPHoB/MM1 asserted the need for the university brand to be “inclusive and accept that each person brings a different strength to the wider picture.” This was evidence in the suggestion that HEIs often expect staff to excel in numerous dimensions, and this needs to be recognised in the brand: “A strong HE brand is a blend of different expertise. People who are strong in teaching and making strong connections with students and delivering an excellent student experience are as important as excellent researchers.” (UoPA1) Furthermore, it was suggested that due to the complex marketplace, it is ever more important to embrace diversity as “this is a very unsettling time politically and in the overall HE landscape, so we need to draw on a wide pool of academic talent and strength in all areas.” (UoPA1)

Communicating clearly and consistently to stakeholders was deemed a crucial activity to encourage and demonstrate inclusivity at “the heart of the HE brand.” (BUHoB/MM1). It was suggested however that the level of inclusivity in a HEI’s culture may vary across the sector. BUHoB/MM2 suggested that those universities who are “very prestigious can be quite snooty and not have the warmth”. It was further suggested that this could be resonant to the age of the institution. “Maybe it’s an old/new thing. This is a vibrant, fun and inclusive place. But the older institutions don’t seem to have that feeling of inclusivity.” (BUHoB/MM2)
Overwhelmingly, participants considered “inclusivity is a positive thing which we should be celebrating” (UoPA2) through brand values. Furthermore, participants felt HE brands had a responsibility to “demonstrate their focus on equal opportunities.” (UoPA1). Participants felt those who demonstrate their equality and inclusivity will be “more respected compared to other HE brands in the market” (UoPHoB/MM1)

4.6.4 Nurturing environment

Students and staff alike felt the essence of the HE brand is to offer a nurturing, enabling environment. Participants described the HE brand as a hub for learning social skills, developing life-long friendships, and broadening horizons, as much as for developing academic skills.

It was felt that the HE brand holds responsibility for acting as an enabler, for both staff and students: "helping staff and students to support each other to deliver." (BUA2) Participants suggested a nurturing working and learning environment "helps to enable us all to be better at what we do, and hopefully then consider ourselves to be more successful." (BUA2)

The data suggested that a nurturing environment will provide a sense of unity for all stakeholders, to "encourage and provide a sense of community and unity." (BUA3) Furthermore, BUA1 asserted that a nurturing environment encourages stakeholders to feel they have made "an impact with your work." This was considered important as an environment which isn't nurturing can lead to negativity, where "people feel disillusioned or undervalued." (BUA1) Therefore, the importance of a nurturing environment in HE is paramount as otherwise, it won't "lead to an environment that people feel they have been successful to themselves, or they are successfully delivering towards the organisation or mission values." (BUA2)

Participants felt that universities need to motivate students to be the best they can be and not to be driven by purely academic performance measures. MMUS1 stated they liked "the fact that this university doesn't compete on its academic performance to the detriment of its students." (MMUS1) Students explained that the "nature of HE is about meeting friends, a good nightlife and a good community" (BUS1), and therefore universities should ensure they have a "positive reputation around the nurturing culture and not just academic excellence." (BUS2) Students noted how inclusive and nurturing characteristics such as "embracing diversity and supporting various learning styles" (BUS3) are crucial elements of the nature of the HE brand. Whilst students all communicated their expectation of the HEI to guide them, the staff communicated their satisfaction for contributing to this role.

The university environment was described as nurturing, which is experienced at various touchpoints, specifically “represented throughout the interactions with academics. That’s the essence of the university brand to me. The professionals.” (UoPS2) Furthermore, the role of mentor in “preparing the student for the working world” (UoPS2) was considered to be more valuable than being a high achiever in university league tables: “The nature of a university brand isn’t about being the highest in the league tables. For me, it’s about helping me do really well personally.” (UoPS3)

Interviewees also recognised that their values develop and are shaped during their journey at university, which is another role of the university brand as a mentor: “I feel like my values and this uni’s values are the same. These have developed and been shaped during my time here.” (UoPS3)
Accordingly, the role of the academic in facilitating a nurturing environment was identified as integral to help students who experience such a culture shock: “I found my lecturers at level 4 to nurture this transition really well. They’re always there to help you for your best interest.” (UoPS2)

4.6.5 Innovative

Participants considered innovation to be a key characteristic of the HE brand. It was felt HEIs have a responsibility to be “creative, innovative and modern.” (BUHoB/MM1) BUA2 reflected if you just concentrate on “university rankings and re-position the university brand accordingly, you will lose other aspects of the brand’s success.” Therefore, investing in innovation and creativity demonstrates that HE exists to “provide a portfolio of experiences to the student; not just quantifiable educational experiences which get measured.” (BUA2)

Furthermore, instilling innovation in all intangible touchpoints such “the reputation, the added value, being progressive, and being inclusive” (MMUA2) were presented as key activities. MMU students in particular noted a demand for the institution to demonstrate continuous progression and to “continue to progress and do better in every element. To demonstrate it’s innovative.” (MMUS1) Students saw this activity as “investing in the next generation by demonstrating innovation. Innovation in teaching. Innovation in facilities. Innovation in approach.” (MMUS3).

Participants commented on the importance of HEIs demonstrating innovation and creativity at multiple touchpoints. Evidence of innovative pedagogies in “teaching and assessments” (BUA3), for examples, was thought to be a crucial factor in demonstrating a modern and innovative institution. Students voiced the need to be “taught a variety of innovative skills.” (BUS3)

The physical representation of innovation through campus servicescape was a key consideration for participants. Students especially noted the importance of seeing innovation “all around us in the buildings and facilities.” (BUS3) Students also suggested there is an expectation “unis will be super modern and fresh” (BUS2) and “always updating.” (BUS1) Working in an “innovative and modern environment” (BUHoB/MM1) was deemed important by staff. The impact for staff and students being in such an innovative environment was discussed during interviews. “That makes me very excited as a staff member to work for HE. It never stands still. We never sit on our laurels. We are always moving and progressing.” (BUHoB/MM1)

MMUHoB/MM1 demonstrated how MMU has invested in its servicescape to visually represent their innovative value by “spending millions over the last few years, investing in our city campus.” Staff described having positive feelings of support for the university investing into the physical representation of innovation, expressing how important “innovative, state of the art facilities are for students.” (MMUHoB/MM2)

UoPA3 defined the role of the HE brand is to “inspire, inform and make an impact.” Interviewees felt a “HE brand is strong and constantly moving and innovative. Which will therefore “impact society.” (UoPS2). Characteristics such as being captivating and inspirational were deemed important in the process of making an impact to society:
“Universities are there to be captivating.” (UoPS2) All interviewees felt strongly that the nature of brand success in HE is to make a positive impact on society and encourage behavioural change. MMUS2 felt that “higher education has more roles to play than just research. In today’s shifting sands situation, the diversity of the landscape demands this. Our contribution to society is ultimately our brand success.” (MMUA2)

Moreover, it was considered that “to see a university being brave and innovative whilst impacting society is exciting” (UoPS2) and inspiring future generations as part of this process is important as “universities are there to entice young people to be attracted to their values.” (UoPS2)

4.7 Research objective 4 - The concept of brand success in HE

The following details the findings aligned to the fourth component of the research. Participants drew upon examples of brand success from their own institution, which later forms the knowledge for the conceptual framework.

Specifically, this section addresses **RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities**

4.7.1 CASE STUDY 1: BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY (BU)

4.7.1.1 Antecedents of brand success in HE

This section presents the antecedents of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the first case study.

4.7.1.1.2 Brand clarity

Brand clarity and a clear direction were deemed fundamental antecedents for brand success in HE, and on which BU had successfully implemented over the last decade. Demonstrating evidence of consistency and transparency at every touchpoint was considered important for reinforcing the brand's vision. However, it was recognised that HE is "servicing multiple stakeholders" (BUA3) and this can cause complications due to "stakeholders interpreting and interacting with the brand differently." (BUHoB/MM1) However, the need for an "overarching brand which resonates in some way to all stakeholders" (BUHoB/MM2) was reinforced, otherwise, "if it's not clear or if it's diluted, then it won't work." (BUHoB/MM2)

The complexity of achieving an overarching brand all stakeholders view favourably was reflected on as extremely challenging, and one which has challenged BU marketing services. BUHoB/MM1 recognised "there are some aspects of the brand which not everyone will get, or tune into." Emphasis was placed on the BU brand to be clear and inclusive to build an engaged following. These participants recognised the complexity further added to the brand as many of the academic community view themselves or their faculties as brands; rather than the overarching BU brand:

“There are pressing issues such as academics seeing themselves as the brand, rather than the institution. The academic status is their brand.” (BUHoB/MM2) Therefore, the importance of providing brand clarity and clear direction is crucial to help colleagues feel “informed and included.” (BUHoB/MM1)

It was recognised that BU stakeholders hold varying perspectives on the meaning of the brand, which was suggested to stem from “what they personally get out of the university due to being either the staff or our student community,” (BUA2) and also “being at different life stages.” (BUS1) BUA2 considered the ultimate outcome of facilitating BU’s successful HE brand has been by demonstrating a transparent narrative and a clear direction. BUHoB/MM1 explained applying clear and consistent integrated marketing communications throughout as a fundamental activity which “educates and reinforces” (BUA2) the brand strategy. Examples of realising BU’s brand clarity with both internal and external stakeholders was evidenced during data collection with examples such as “strong internal buy-in, brand community and ultimately, brand loyalty.” (BUA2)

4.7.1.1.3 Effective brand management

The effective execution and ongoing management of the BU brand was deemed to be a fundamental antecedent for the institution’s successful brand. Not surprisingly this theme was discussed in more depth by the marketing services data participants as shown here by BUHoB/MM1 who asserts the importance of the university to manage its brand effectively otherwise it “becomes messy, confusing and diluted.”

Marketing service participants articulated the complexities of managing the university brand; especially due to multiple and diverse stakeholders’ groups as “keeping the many different people happy is very hard with university branding.” (BUHoB/MM2) Therefore, in addition to effective collaboration with stakeholders, understanding who your audience is, and appropriately segmenting your audience was deemed a crucial activity BU has invested in.

Ensuring internal stakeholders are satisfied with the brand was discussed during interviews. Marketing services participants felt it important “colleagues don’t run away with the brand or ignore the brand altogether,” (BUHoB/MM2) so, striking a balance was deemed important as you “obviously want employees to be happy as you want them to continue to engage positively with the brand.” (BUHoB/MM2). BU staff recognised the efforts Marketing Services has applied here. This further prompted discussion surrounding brand architecture.

It was recognised that like all universities, BU has many different levels and sub-brands. BUHoB/MM2 recognised that “trying to make sure you manage the overall brand effectively when there are many sub brands is hard.” It was noted that faculties and professional service departments who historically have wanting sub-brands has applied pressure onto the overarching brand. It was noted that this had been a recurring request over the past decade at BU; perhaps being triggered by the fact that some “colleagues associate stronger with their faculty or department than they do the university brand, so this is difficult to manage.” (BUHoB/MM1)

It was noted that particularly within the BU academic community, the sense of brand association can run deeper than just faculty-level as “many academics actually identify and feel a stronger sense of brand association with their particular research area, rather than even their department or faculty" (BUHoB/MM1) this in turn demonstrates the need for effective brand management which resonates and connects the staff and student community.

4.7.1.1.4 Effective brand communication

BU participants noted that a key antecedent of the BU brand's success has been to embrace and nurture the art of effective internal and external communications. It was noted that "keeping stakeholders updated by regularly communicating with them" (BUHoB/MM2) has been a priority as there is a need to publicly demonstrate the value of the branding activity. "Otherwise, you are undermining your relationships and you're not going to be trusted." (BUHoB/MM2)

Furthermore, focus was also on the need to "appropriately communicate to the varying audiences and really understand how they see the brand, and how they feel about it." (BUHoB/MM1) As a result, BUHoB/MM2 recognised BU's strength in communicating to its stakeholders by offering a "lot of tailored messaging to various stakeholder groups." (BUHoB/MM1)

BUHoB/MM2 felt that "working with stakeholders to achieve their targets has been important" and this is only possible however if the marketing department is trusted. It was felt that following an internal restructure, marketing colleagues were deployed physically within faculties and this visibility grew trust which helped enormously. Furthermore, it was suggested that trust has improved the internal reputation of marketing services which has resulted in improved communication collaboration: "You know, six years ago internal stakeholders didn't believe marketing was happening here or we knew what we were doing. Now it's more transparent. And so, we become trusted." (BUHoB/MM1)

4.7.1.1.5 Brand identity

Discussion focussed on a need for the brand to have a clear identity both through its visual presence but also through its commitment to the brand values which people can relate to and champion. BUHoB/MM2 asserted “the identity of the HE brand needs to ensure people feel positively associated with it.” (BUHoB/MM2) Marketing Services participants asserted the effort BU had invested into exploring and nurturing its brand identity, underlining the importance of this activity as the “feelings and emotions you have because of this identity can influence you massively.” (BUHoB/MM1)

The data shows that whilst universities essentially offer the same products, they can and do have different identities, which can be based on many variables and greatly influence the student experience. Moreover, the data suggests that identity can take various forms.

The data demonstrates that the brand identity of the university can influence and its tactical marketing activities such as its internal and external communication:

> “The way universities talk about themselves is also different dependent on their identity. For some unis you know, their identity is all about how students are going to get this prestigious degree and amazing jobs. Whereas for some universities, it’s about making students ready for the modern working world and having amazing experiences along the way. I feel like the more modern unis communicate this more.” (BUHoB/MM2)

Therefore, the data prompts the question if brand identity is crafted in the same way and driven by the same variables as it is in newer universities. BUHoB/MM2 questioned “if you feel the identity of an institution in the older Russell Group unis as you do with post-92s like us.” Furthermore, suggesting that for the older institutions their identity may be led by “their heritage, rather than personality and values.” (BUHoB/MM2)

The BU data suggests that if brand identity is positively nurtured, it can lead to brand loyalty. BUA2 explained that BU’s alumni have a strong sense of BU identity which “travels with them, which links into indirect marketing because they’re more likely to come back to us if they have had a good experience.” (BUA2)

4.7.1.1.6 Location

Location was identified as an important antecedent of a successful HE brand, and furthermore, it was recognised that “the HE brand works in many different ways with its location.” (BUA2) It was suggested the main function of the location is obviously to provide a “sense of geography,” (BUA2) but it offers far more than just the “geographical identifier,” (BUA2) “the location provides a differentiator.” (BUA2)

Participants recognised that the location requirements for students vary significantly depending on many variables such as wanting to be near (or far) from home, and preference for a city or campus-based institution. Common considerations were recognised to be choosing a location near home, “so they can live with parents and not travel too far.” (BUA1) In contrast however, it was recognised that some students want to go to university away from home, “so that they can get some separation, and live the university and social life they want to live, without parental scrutiny.” (BUA3)

The location of the university was recognised as playing an important part in the decision- making process. BUS1 reflected “the right location definitely played a big part in why I chose the university I did.” (BUS1) The BU location was considered to contribute to the characteristics of its brand personality, “brand image” (BUS1) and place image. BUA2 reflected on the coastal setting of BU “suggesting that because of the location of Bournemouth uni, near the beach, it makes it a fun location,” (BUA2), which definitely “attracts students.” (BUHoB/MM1) This was reinforced by student interviewees who promoted the university’s location as “being a place the students would enjoy going to,” (BUS3) and felt this “plays a massive role in the success of the university in general.” (BUS3)

Participants recognised the need for effective partnerships with the local community. It was felt that working with the local councils to embed the university into the local community is a positive activity, as well as engaging students into local community voluntary and paid work. BU was commended in the data for the effort it has invested into local networks and partnerships (such as AFC Bournemouth), which offers further opportunities for students.

The need for universities to promote their location was highlighted in the data. BU students noted that often the location of the university is unknown to students so emphasis on it during marketing recruitment campaigns is crucial. BUS1 reflected: "I didn't know where the town actually was before, but I really wanted to be by the beach." (BUS1) Participants from Marketing Services reflected on the attention to the coastal location of Bournemouth being a core focus of many marketing collateral, such as the prospectus.

However, there were also deeper reasons for location influencing choice. Employability opportunities were considered an important variable to accessing location suitability. BUA2 noted how "some people want to go to certain places such as London, where they recognise there's more employment and social opportunities." (BUA2)

In addition to the location of the institution, the accessibility of the campus itself was also considered an antecedent of brand success. BU was commended for sustained effort to provide "an open and accessible campus." (BUS1) Furthermore, students reflected that universities such as BU that have a main campus and are compact are often favourable as "it's all in one place," (BUS2) saving valuable "time and effort wasted going back and forth." (BUS2)

Interestingly it was suggested that "whilst the brand offers lots of positive things in terms of shared values, and identity," (BUA3) and using the location as a marketing tool can be positive, the brand "can be vulnerable to issues with the location." (BUA2) When exploring this suggestion further BUA1 suggested that if the local area experiences negativity, such as increased crime statistics and unemployment, this can have a negative impact to the reputation of the institutional brand. This suggests the prestige of the university's brand is reliant to some extent on the prestige of the location in which it resides. Furthermore, that the brand is "vulnerable if there is bad press in that geographical area." (BUA1)

4.7.1.1.7 Servicescape

The “visual representation of the brand” (BUS1) was considered an important factor for brand success in HE but was particularly prevalent during interviews with students. BUS1 reflected to their first impression of seeing the BU campus.

> “I remember the open day and seeing a big mural on a wall outside the lecture theatre, and I thought it was really cool. And I thought that it added a lot because some of the buildings were looking a bit dreary.” (BUS1)

The data shows a strong successful HE brand will anticipate and appreciate what their target audience expects and wants to see on campus: “The fact this university has tried to make the campus look nicer, more welcoming and brighter is great. It shows an understanding for what the students want.” (BUS2)
Participants all felt that investment and innovation into servicescape was crucial for demonstrating a forward-thinking, progressive brand.

> “Look at the newer buildings, lovely and open with all the big windows; a total contrast from the older buildings which are dreary. It’s great to see the splash of colour in the new buildings.” (BUS3)

However, it was suggested that the values of servicescape runs deeper than just being aesthetically pleasing. The servicescape was considered to play an integral part to the success of the university brand by demonstrating and reinforcing the brand’s identity. In a competitive landscape which sees similarities in the portfolio of offerings and promises pledged, it was suggested that the servicescape can cut through the noise and demonstrate differentiation. Furthermore, it was suggested by BUHoB/MM2 that the servicescape triggers emotional responses:

> “There are obviously similarities between universities, but I do think that actually they are different. You get a different vibe or feeling from each institution. A lot of that is down to the buildings and how modern it is. The surroundings. The servicescape is really important to the identity.” (BUHoB/MM2)

It was suggested that the servicescape may be more important for newer universities such as BU than for Russell Group institutions. Participants felt older institutions are able to draw on their heritage to their advantage whereas post-1992 institutions need to demonstrate innovation and due to an over-competitive landscape and similarities of promise.

> “I think the Russell Group unis can get away with crumbling buildings, as it’s the original building, and they draw on their heritage, and people say it’s part of their charm. Whereas newer unis need to almost prove that they’re modern and forward thinking, visually.” (BUHoB/MM2)

4.7.1.1.8 Strong brand ethics and values

The importance of the institution's brand values was discussed by interviewees: particularly in seeing evidence of commitment to a sustainability agenda. Specifically, due to the role HE has in mentoring, guiding and informing younger generations, student interviewees felt their demands for brands to demonstrate strong sustainable and ethical commitment was shaped during their university journey.

> "Before joining BU, I didn't have any idea about sustainability. It wasn't really something that crossed my mind. But now, if I was back picking my university, it would definitely be something that is more prevalent in my mind about choosing where to go." (BUS1)

Furthermore, the data suggests the visual representation of the university's commitment to sustainability is important to inform and encourage support.

> "I know that in SUBU they've got our sustainability goals listed on the wall, so that's a great incentive for everyone to see what's going on and see the university's commitment to achieving those goals." (BUS3)

Participants voiced the benefits of shared values between stakeholders and the HEI. Accordingly, evidence of sustainability investment from the university was considered beneficial for recruitment purposes as prospective students want to see brands committing to such activities.

"I think the values of a university play a massive role on if you chose that university or not, and the type of person you become." (BUS1)

4.7.1.2 Nature of brand success in HE

This section presents the nature of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the first case study.

4.7.1.2.1 Deliver on its promises

There was opinion from BU participants that a successful HE brand will "deliver on its promises." (BUHoB/MM2) This was felt from the cross section of data participants.

BUHoB/MM1 recognised the role of marketing services specifically contribute to this by needing to "work collectively as a team which depends on being accountable and putting yourself out there as a department." Unsurprisingly, Marketing Services interviewees were extremely in touch with this as demonstrated by BUHoB/MM2 asserting the need to "actually deliver on what you say you're doing by showing results and you have to demonstrate your successes so people can then see the added value of the branding activity."

Furthermore, as well as the impact on the brand strength, it was felt that the consequence of HE brands delivering on their promises, will result in consumers growing to "trust the brand" (BUA2).

Participants recognised how delicate trust in the brand is and how it can be "damaged so quickly" (BUA1) in a number of ways such as "misaligned staff with the brand values" (BUHoB/MM2), poor service (BUS2), and ultimately, "not delivering on the brand promises" (BUA1).

4.7.1.2.2 Emotional connection

BU interviewees considered one definition of HE brand success is to achieve an emotional connection with stakeholders. There was a feeling that the essence of a successful HE brand is the collection of emotional interactions consumers have with it and the associations they make as a result. Accordingly, interviewees felt the emotional connection a successful HE brand entices from its consumers influences the “categorisation of where the brand sits. It should never be commercial. It’s an emotional brand with its success fueled through love, affection and emotional connection” (BUS2).

The associations consumers experience when engaging with a successful HE brand was frequently drawn upon during interviews, with BUS3 suggesting that the brand is “as much the feeling you get, as the service itself. So not only the service it delivers, but how it delivers and the way it makes you feel” (BUS3). This was reinforced by members of the BU academic community who noted, they liked what the BU brand “does for me personally, the sort of experience you had with the brand, the reasons why you’ve associated with it, but also how it makes you feel” (BUA3).

Participants reflected on their feelings of excitement and pleasure they experience during interactions with the BU brand which they recognised consequently increased their affection. BUHoB/MM2 reflected upon the “joy experienced with the brand” and the overall experience which is crucial in brand success” (BUHoB/MM2).

Student participants recognised that some HE brands can be more “popular than others” (BUS1), but key for them wasn’t just public perception but a more individual, personal experience of the brand. They reflected on the BU marketing collateral, specifically the tone of voice and language which is used in such a way as to appeal to not just the prospective student but also their wider family, who are also key decision makers in the application process. Whilst participants recognised that the attempt of creating an emotional connection with the reader is a usual marketing tactic, adopted by HEIs, they felt that BU created a strong “brand story” (BUS2) which draws on “using alumni success stories and diverse student voices to create an authentic and friendly feel.” (BUS1)

4.7.1.2.3 Driver for change

Interviewees suggested that a successful HE brand acts as a vessel to offer stakeholders a transformational experience. This experience was described as it "often involving the promotion of a significant life change" (BUA1).

Student participants felt that a successful HE brand acts as a "mentor who influences you for life" (BUS1). They considered part of the university's role as their mentor is to "focus on the added value and the benefit uni provides to the student," (BUS1) acting as "a hub for development." (BUS2).

BUS2 recognised the growth a student will undertake during their university experience, "as the university is your mentor. It's your role model for the rest of your life." (BUS2) Students considered that a successful HE brand will provide the training and tools needed "to climb the ladder." (BUS2) Furthermore, BU students reflected that the institution had "made me feel empowered to make changes in life" (BUS1).

Fundamentally, interviewees felt that the BU brand works hard to build "globally aware and responsible citizens" (BUA1) and communicates to all its stakeholders "how the university has changed lives and aided opportunity with tangible outcomes, which demonstrate the benefits to society" (BUA3).

BU academics and marketing services participants also reinforced how BU guides and informs students about important life considerations that previously were not prioritised, such as promoting their commitment to UN sustainable goals. BUS3 provided an example of their school days when the subject of climate change was discussed and at that time it "didn't seem that relevant to me but now I am older I'm taking it more seriously as this university is leading and informing me."

4.7.1.3 Consequences of brand success in HE

This section presents the consequences of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the first case study.

4.7.1.3.1 Reputation

A strong reputation was considered to be a consequence of brand success. BUA3 felt that "brand success in higher education is always going to be measured in terms of reputation." (BUA3) Interviewees considered that a strong reputation will yield positive results for the institution; student recruitment was considered one of these positive outcomes for BU.

BUA2 suggested that not only will a strong reputation mean "more solid student numbers; it will also attract good students." (BUA1) Whilst participants felt BU having a strong reputation has been valuable for student recruitment, it was suggested that it has beneficial for other activities such as being "able to attract quality staff and disseminate research.," (BUA1) "gaining funding, involvement in professional practice initiatives, and having people who are seen to be good, valuable contributors, who are making a difference to the business society." (BUA2) Brand recognition, reputation and a "sense of pedigree" (BUA2) were terms used interchangeably during interviews.

Participants recognised that BU works hard to influence positive public perception. It was noted how universities in the marketplace have changed their institutional name as a rebranding exercise to attract and appeal specifically to their target audience and "make themselves more aligned with the youth of today." (BUA2) BUA2 noted how the University of Plymouth has rebranded to become Plymouth University:

> "It's the same university with the same academics and the same students on the same courses. And yet, Plymouth University sounds like a university that might be a lower value educational experience, University of Plymouth sounds like an old university with good pedigree." (BUA2)

The sense of pedigree was further referred to with university clusters and groupings. Participants felt it important to recognise that the sense of pedigree will change dependent on the type of university. Furthermore however, BUA2 suggested the "heritage of the institution" will play a significant part on the reputation and perceived pedigree. and the institutional heritage is influential.

4.7.1.3.2 Brand community and belonging

It was felt that “much of the focus in HEIs now is about creating and nurturing loyalty to the overarching brand and encouraging a sense of belonging.” (BUHoB/MM2) Stakeholders experiencing deep emotions is considered a consequence of HE brand success, which is packaged across many touchpoints and interactions. BUHoB/MM1 recognised the importance of the overarching brand experience impacting BU’s brand community and sense of belonging, articulating that “students are not just studying with us; they are living here as well so the overall feel of the campus and the people they meet on a day-to-day basis is part of the experience.” Therefore, the importance of employees at every level understanding their role in the brand and representing the brand values was recognised as “paramount.” (BUA2)

The importance of BU crafting “a clear identity” (BUA3) where “people feel they have a sense of belonging” (BUHoB/MM2) was presented during interviews. Furthermore, it was felt that leading with clear direction to “nurture a sense of belonging will result in strong brand loyalty.” (BUA1) Participants asserted that a successful HE brand will deliver a “sense of community and a feeling of belonging for its various stakeholders,” (BUA3) rather than just providing “a student bubble in ivory towers.” (BUS2) Students and staff alike recognised the importance of an integrated HE brand internally. However, interestingly student interviewees especially discussed the need for the HE brand to demonstrate not only an internal sense of belonging, as BUHoB/MM1 suggested BU to have a “very tight community feel”, but it was recognised that the HE brand needs to instill a wider alliance with its local community, as BU has. BUS1 voiced that “it’s really important all universities work with their local councils, so students actually feel part of the local environment.” (BUS3)

The sense of belonging to the university town during the student experience was mentioned by BUS1 as being important as “students don’t want to feel on the side-lines of their community.” (BUS1) Interviewees considered BU’s community partnerships to be beneficial for both parties, and an important activity to demonstrate their contribution and impact to the local area, which enables “students to show our contribution and impact to society.” (BUS1)

4.7.1.3.3 Staff and student recruitment

Participants from the first case study all considered a consequence of their HE brand's success has been witnessing strong student recruitment at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. It was suggested this was due to the "powers of persuasion" (BUA2) a strong brand with a solid reputation will have in the process of "influencing prospective students and their parents to apply" (BUHoB/MM2).

Participants recognised the marketing communication efforts led by marketing services to ensure the brand is "open and transparent" (BUHoB/MM1) which has resulted in potential students and their parents "knowing about the university brand which definitely influences their decision making" (BUA2). It was also noted that a positive experience on campus during recruitment activity such as open days has impacted recruitment choices significantly. Specifically, this type of recruitment activities provides opportunity to showcase how the brand is physically represented as it provides an opportunity for potential students to assess how suitable the campus was for them personally. BUS1 reflected that the number of open days provided for people to come around the campus really helped me make my choice. It was great to have the opportunity to see it for myself.

There was clear also correlation in the data findings between "gaining stakeholders trust through brand success" (BUA1) and "healthy student recruitment" (BUHoB/MM1).
It was recognised that BU prioritise ensuring students are equipped with a solid skillset, as this will builds brand trust as it demonstrates recognition and credibility for the academic teaching teams and shows "how the staff are experts, which is in turn means you can trust the brand more." (BUS1)

Participants recognised the investment the BU brand had made in disseminating its pioneering research through the areas of staff success, which has greatly impacted "not only the staff recruitment figures, but also the caliber of academics applying to further their career with us" (BUHoB/MM2).

At this stage the data from BU has followed steps 1- 5 of recursive abstraction analysis for all research objectives. The data has been extracted, tabularised, and paraphrased. These paraphrased comments have been grouped into themes and then coded.

The following figure presents the synthesis of these themes and codes identified from data participants for RO4 at BU (step 6). The following chapter (chapter 5) will discuss these themes in depth, apply across case, and present the conceptual framework this data provides the scaffolding for.

Table 12: Synthesis of brand success in HE. Recursive abstraction step 6. BU key findings

		Data Participant		
Stage 6: Themes	**Stage 6: Codes**	**BUA1 BUA2 BUA3**	**BUHoB/MM1 BUHoB/MM2**	**BUS1 BUS2 BUS3**
Brand clarity (antecedent)	Consistency	**	*	
	Transparency	**	*	
	Inclusivity	**	*	
Effective brand management (antecedent)	Brand architecture	*	**	
	Stakeholder relationships		**	
	Trust	*		

Effective brand communication (antecedent)	Internal and external comms	*	**	
	Demonstrate brand value	*	**	
	Tailored messaging		**	
Brand identity (antecedent)	Belonging	*		***
	Visual representation (image)		**	
	Sets communication tone			*
Location (antecedent)	Employment and social opportunities	*	**	***
	Place image		**	***
	Engaging with local community		*	***
Servicescape (antecedent)	Progressive	*		*
	Innovative	*	**	*
	More challenging for post-1992s			
	Facilities	**		**
Strong brand ethics and values (antecedent)	Communicating and demonstrating		*	**
	Expectation for HEIs			*
	Inspire, inform and educate	***	*	
Deliver on its promises (nature)	Working collectively		**	
	Accountability		**	
	Trust	*	**	
Emotional connection (nature)	Interactions		**	*
	Feelings			**
	Experiences	*		**
Driver for change (nature)	Mentor	*		**
	Empowerment			**
	Influencer	*		*
	Self-esteem			*

Reputation (consequence)	Multi-faceted Brand management Identity	** 	* ** 	 ***
Brand community and belonging (consequence)	Identity Community partnerships Role of the student union		 *	*** *** *
Staff and student recruitment (consequence)	Power of persuasion Reputation Trust	** ** 	 * 	 *

4.7.2 CASE STUDY 2: MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY (MMU)

4.7.2.1 Antecedents of brand success in HE

This section presents the antecedents of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the second case study.

4.7.2.1.1 Location

The MMU data suggests that “the university brand is intrinsically linked with the location.” (MMUA3), and accordingly, the power of place marketing was evident:

> “I strongly believe that having the word Manchester in our title does help our brand success. The word Manchester itself is very positive. It is very strong, so therefore any branding associated with Manchester is respected. It is liked.” (MMUA1)

MMU students considered there to be “a lot more going on in this city and it’s youth-friendly.” (MMUS3) Furthermore, students felt the location of MMU (Manchester) is “the largest destination for international students.” (MMUS3)

Representatives from MMU marketing services recognised that the location is an antecedent of brand success which the institution “leans hugely on for our marketing. Many of our students come to us because they want to study in Manchester.” (MMUHoB/MM1) Clearly place image is an important factor for students choosing a university in which to study. However, university staff also identified location as being an important consideration for staff recruitment.

Practical considerations for selecting a university location were raised by MMU students. Consideration for the distance of the university to enable students to “stay at home and attend uni and have more money than moving away” (MMUS2) was clearly a factor for some students interviewed. Furthermore, characteristics of the HEI location were considered antecedents of brand success. For example, MMUS3 stated the “location was crucial to me. I wanted a city university.” (MMUS3).

The data suggests that the location of the HEI may offer distinction. This is an interesting consideration; particularly important in a marketplace where achieving differentiation seems challenging. MMUA1 asserted “location is distinctive for HE brands as you can differentiate between the institution.” (MMUA1) Furthermore, MMUA1 felt that the personality of Manchester itself works in synergy with the institution and influences the university brand as the “personality of the city is inextricably linked and reflected in the brand.” (MMUA1)
It was suggested that including the location therefore in the name of the university has been a positive brand tactic due to the emotional attachment to the location.

Furthermore, participants suggested the location of the university is embedded in the institutional culture. MMU academic participants specifically referred to being a “Northern University” (MMUA1) as a fundamental characteristic of the culture which adds to the brand personality. “And of course, that word, Manchester, is embedded in our brand and we are part of that culture.” (MMUA1) Demonstrating resilience due to adversity and times of unrest were highlighted to be cultural characteristics:

> “Manchester has this reputation of just getting on with things, no nonsense. And you just keep seeing that time and time again. And we have had many knocks over the years. We will either write a song about it or laugh about it and then get back to work. Just get on with it.” (MMUA2)

Participants clearly demonstrated how the personality of the location influences how students feel about MMU as explained by MMUS2, “When I think of Manchester uni I think all the trendy kids go here. Because Manchester is trendy. It’s cool. Which makes me feel cool. I think its reputation is massively influenced by the location.” (MMUS2)

4.7.2.1.2 Effective brand communication

The role of communication was referred to frequently in the data collection. It was felt that universities are operating in a challenging environment due to the introduction of higher tuition fees, which has meant "students have become much savvier about their rights." (MMUA3)

> "They have been far more vocal about getting their results back in time and if their lectures have been cancelled due to strikes; they have been much more vocal about getting sessions rearranged.". (MMUA2)

The observation that students are vocal about seeking the value for money in their university experience was linked to the cost of their degree and issues such as "contact time seems more important now as students want to know they are getting their money's worth." (MMUA2) Furthermore, there was the suggestion that modern day students have higher expectations than those who studied prior to higher tuition fees. MMUHoB/MM1 suggested: "When I went to university years ago, I wouldn't say that students were anywhere near as demanding with their expectations as they are now." Against the backdrop of this marketised system, effective internal and external communication was identified as a crucial antecedent of MMU's brand success.

> "There is a key message for students that a successful university brand delivers: That is that coming to university is not like checking into a hotel. You don't just pay for a service. It's more like signing up for a gym membership. In other words, you pay but you have to work hard." (MMUA2)

Accordingly, communicating the need for co-dependent relationships between MMU and students was deemed crucial in order for both parties to reach their potential and objectives. "Whilst students are paying a tuition fee that means they have the right to expect a good service, I think the university should provide this good service. However, they also need the student to work hard, to put the sweat in and get a good degree." (MMUA2)

Demonstrating how MMU prepares students to succeed through their communication was a priority for MMU Marketing Services.

> "We enable students to be successful through their academic experience, the facilities they use, and the student support available to them. This is all crucial to ensure they have the tools needed to enable them to graduate." (MMUHoB/MM2)

Furthermore, it was recognised that not only having a solid vision, mission and values are fundamental for a successful HE brand, but equally, communicating these messages effectively is important and for "communications to evolve to ensure we are relevant and fresh." (MMUHoB/MM1) Participants all agreed that MMU has "strong brand values communicated effectively" (MMUS1) and especially important is communication from the top down.

"We always have a lot of communications. So, for examples, the Vice Chancellor regularly makes presentations about the vision and what we are doing." (MMUA3)

Demonstrating the value of MMU employees through effective communications was also recognised as a crucial activity in aligning the brand values as for MMU "our people are key aspects to our brand. How we get this across in our messaging is crucial." (MMUHoB/MM2)
Furthermore, communicating this message consistently was deemed important to set the tone of the brand HE offers as the brand "has to be enacted by the people who deliver it, and bring it to life, demonstrating it's unique and beautiful." (MMUA3)

4.7.2.1.3 Servicescape

The university servicescape was deemed by students to be an antecedent of MMU's brand success. Whilst other participants also raised the importance of the tangible touchpoints of the brand; the students were particularly focused on "the landscape of the campus" (MMUS2). Moreover, students wanted to see open green spaces and feel they were studying in a relaxing environment. Students articulated that even though they are on a city campus, they "wanted to see trees, and have an outside space on campus." (MMUS2) This was further reinforced by MMU staff, who also highlighted the importance of a tranquil green space which makes the working day more enjoyable than "only being surrounded by grey concreate." (MMUA2)

Interviewees also considered the "facilities were really important, as well as the buildings." (MMUS2) The data demonstrates the opinion that the appearance of the university campus physically represents the institutional brand values.

"The buildings and working environment of the university strengthens the brand for sure. I can see how it physically resembles the brand values of innovation. The campus is staying modern." (MMUS1)

Interviewees noted the importance MMU has placed of investing into the physical landscape of the university as this signifies a commitment to moving forward and embracing innovation.

> "The visual representation of innovation is so important. Because you have to actually see it to notice it. And then you do see it and it's like oh look at what they're building. You see the visual outputs of innovation." (MMUS3)

The data demonstrates how MMU's servicescape has drawn upon its location and heritage and has identified synergy with their brand values and project this at various touchpoints across campus. For example, one student described Manchester as "trendy and has loads of heritage" (MMUS2) and recognised that these characteristics are echoed in the MMU servicescape as its "friendly nature resembles Manchester. It's inclusive, like Manchester is. It's a laid back and chilled environment." (MMUS2)

4.7.2.1.4 Brand identity

It was felt that students carefully consider which institution to attend as students "pick their university by how they want to be viewed by their peers." (MMUA1) This concept was considered so important, it was reinforced by students that actually, "it's more about the fit of the university identity than the league tables." (MMUS3)

MMU students felt "the university identity resembles my identity. I am committed to my academic studies. I'm friendly, and I'm approachable. Just as this uni is." (MMUS2).
The suggestion of a synergy between the university's brand personality and student personality was presented by student interviewees with comments such as "I see similarities with the brand personality and me. In the end this has been the perfect university for me." (MMUS1)

Furthermore, it was suggested by MMUS2 that the identity of the brand enables students to sustain an individual identity and "never feel like just a number." A basic tactic MMU use to enable this is "knowing students by name." (MMUS1)
Interviewees also reflected that the identity of the institution resembles and resonates the identity of the geographic location. In this instance, Manchester. This was deemed to be important, especially for a location as vibrant, diverse and innovative as Manchester.

> "The university is a sort of no nonsense, busy, energetic, cosmopolitan, diverse institution. Very innovative, which comes up with very interesting innovative ideas, and gets involved with what's going on in the city. It's like a city in its own right, really. So, it shares many of the characteristics you associate with Manchester itself." (MMUA1)

The themes of heritage and identity were suggested to be interlinked.
"I mean, these big cities, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Leeds, the heritage and the identity of the people living there is so strong." (MMUA1)
Interviewees also felt that the identity of the university has a positive influence on the student's future career opportunity, as it "opens doors in terms of careers. So, identity is crucial." (MMUA3)

4.7.2.1.5 Strong brand ethics and values

The essence of MMU's brand success was considered to be its attention and commitment to the overarching vison, mission and values that guide the institution's behaviour. Fundamentally, "telling the world what we do and stand for, is integral. But then equally, standing by those values and that vision is crucial." (MMUHoB/MM2) The data demonstrates opinion that it is "fundamentally crucial that a university's brand ethics and values involve being sustainable." (MMUS3)

Furthermore, interviewees believed universities should be incorporating brand values surrounding sustainability and ethical branding into practice, via learning and teaching. MMUS3 reflected that "a lot of our assignments are related to sustainability as well as ethics. It's good as it makes you want to be a good person in society and help each other." (MMUS3) Interviewees articulated that actually "it's a responsibility of universities to commit, and then demonstrate their commitment to be a sustainable and responsible brand." (MMUS3)

Students recognised MMU "has strong brand values" (MMUS3) and learning in an environment which lives by strong core values can be more valuable to some students than social standing. MMUS1 stated:

> "Some people consider the prestige of their university to be everything to them, and worth more than the degree itself. Their university might be better academically, but the university probably doesn't have such good values as I have experienced here. Which to me is the most important thing." (MMUS1)

Diversity was considered to be a clear component of the university's core values and that MMU is "recognised for our diversity. We have such a diverse population from all over the world." (MMUA1) MMU's culture was felt to demonstrate a friendly, approachable and supportive environment which was also closely embedded in society; making it real and grounded. Furthermore, commitment to delivering consistent brand values over time was noted to be important, especially for an institution with such a long heritage and tradition.

“Even though there have been a lot of changes during our existence, there has been a lot of consistency. We have always been a busy, urban, energetic place. We have always been diverse. So, whilst certain areas of activities have increased in importance to reflect what society expects, our vision, mission and values have stayed the same.” (MMUA1)

4.7.2.2 Nature of brand success in HE

This section presents the nature of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the second case study.

4.7.2.2.1 Identity alignment

A strong identity alignment between the university brand promise, values and personality with the various stakeholders was considered to be a fundamental theme of HE brand success.

All participants recognised the strategic priority MMU had placed in aligning its brand. The data from MMU showed that the university brand (for the most part) reflects the shared ethos of its various stakeholders. MMUHoB/MM1 felt the brand had “worked hard to understand each of its stakeholder groups and has sought to find areas of commonality” in the process of and bringing together the university community as one.

Furthermore, participants considered MMU has worked hard to encourage “greater connection” (MMUA1) between the brand and its stakeholder community because it was considered that those who are interacting and living the brand should always feel they have been a part of and influenced its development. MMUHoB/MM2 recognised that it is “fundamental that the MMU brand shares their own core values and beliefs.”

MMU students discussed feeling a “warmth of values” (MMUS1) which for the most part “corresponds” (MMUS2). Furthermore, it was felt that its identity alignment needs to filter through into all areas of the HEI and not just the academic. The data suggests that it is essential that an HEI brand is seen as one that welcomes all and empowers everyone to make a contribution. For this to be believed as a value it needs to extend to all areas of a university’s activity – from the social to the pedagogic.

4.7.2.2.2 Co-creation

The data shows that a HEI who co-creates with all its stakeholders to be a successful brand.

Participants reflected on this being a strategic priority for MMU asserting the institution has “a key message for students that coming to university is not like checking into a hotel. You don’t just pay for a service. It’s like signing up for a gym membership. In other words, you pay but you have to work hard. (MMUA2)

Communicating this need for a co-dependent relationship between the HEI and its students in order for both parties to reach their potential and objectives has been a strategic brand priority for MMU. However, it was recognised that communicating the expectations for this co-creation is fundamental as expressed by MMUA2:

> “Whilst the students are paying a tuition fee that means they have the right to expect a good service, and I think the university should provide this good service, of course. However, they also need the student to work hard, to put the sweat in and get a good degree.”

MMUA1 considered the institution’s efforts to embed employees at the heart of the institution as a key co-creation activity recognising: It’s not the easiest thing to do and it’s particularly challenging in the current competitive condition. But there are plenty of philanthropic organisations who put their staff first, so it is transferable to HE organisations.

Furthermore, the added values of effective relationships, co-creation and co-production with local industry partners were all identified as fundamental activities for MMU. Participants recognised this may lead to placement year and longer-term graduate employment opportunities. MMUA3 articulated that “being linked to professionals is very strong here and having strong employability and work placements is important.”

4.7.2.2.3 Inspirational

Participants from MMU articulated that a successful HE brand will be inspirational. Brand characteristics such as “being entrepreneurial and trying new ideas” (MMUA2) was noted as important in the process of being an inspirational HE brand. Participants reflected on examples of MMU pushing boundaries and being inspirational through “entrepreneurism and leadership” (MMUS3). The student participants in particular recognised the importance of this for their generation.

With today’s HE consumer subjected to more advertising-related messages than any previous generation, competition for awareness is strong. Data participants recognised that it stands to reason that those HE brands who succeed in achieving brand awareness tend to be more exciting and dynamic in nature and activity than their competitors. However, it was noted during interviews that the HE context is not always a “particularly risk-taking environment” (MMUHoB/MM2). However, the findings suggests that it is essential for an HE brand to stand out in an increasingly crowded marketplace, “in whatever way they can be it their teaching approaches, their research, or their work with employers” (MMUA2) as it is those HE brands that are more willing to push boundaries that have the greatest chance of being noticed by consumers who may already feel saturated by messages.
MMU participants again drew on their geographical location, the heritage of the area, and the commitment they make to their local community as one output of their inspirational activity. MMU reflected on the influence they have made, and the lives changed by their commitment to supporting local young people who want to stay local for their university experience. They also reflected on the work placement opportunities they offer with local organisations as being inspirational for bringing the student and local workforce community together.

MMUA2 reflected on how storytelling around their research impact on “behavioural change and positive impact on society” can draw attention to their brand where more traditional generic recruitment approaches may struggle. In response to a recent campaign MMUS1 reflected: They amaze me at what they are trying to accomplish. I am inspired by them and their values, so they make me fascinated to be a part of it all.

4.7.2.3 Consequences of brand success in HE

This section presents the consequences of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the second case study.

4.7.2.3.1 Impact

The data presents the theme of making a positive impact on society, as participants considered HE "an enabler for great change. It's a powerful catalyst for shaping and educating the next generation." (MMUA3) This notion of 'making a mark' on society was considered as a consequence of brand success. "Making a change for the positive. This is what progressing knowledge inevitably contributing towards" (MMUA3) which MMUHoB/MM2 reflected they "like being a part of providing for our future generation." The data however poses the view that the impact of the HE brand may be perceived differently between post-1992 universities and Russell Group universities, however.

> "Traditional universities are perceived as part of the elite and there can be the perception that universities are doing obscure work especially in the social sciences, and it's not relevant. Which is very dangerous." (MMUA1)

Therefore, the need for equality in education to enable collective change as "everyone should have the same level of education, and therefore, to be part of this change in society." (MMUS1) was asserted in the data. Furthermore, members of the academic community considered HEIs "actually have a responsibility to contribute to society." (MMUA1) Indeed, participants noted that "making a difference is what it's all about actually." (MMUA1)
Dissemination of this contribution to society was considered a key focus for universities to ensure society understands the relevance of HE to global economic and cultural growth.

Participants felt universities have a responsibility to demonstrate the positive impact the institution makes on a regional and global level. Participants reflected that "gone are the days of the ivory towers" (MMUA3), as modern-day universities have "additional pressures due to the marketised system" (MMUHoB/MM2). Universities now have to clearly demonstrate their value and worth to society. Again, the theme of being a socially integrated brand was raised, with MMU participants suggesting that the HE brand has “many structures within it, and likability is important because of the sector it is in.” (MMUA1)

4.7.2.3.2 Reputation

Participants noted that a consequence of brand success is having a "reputation for excellence." (MMUA1) However, it was felt that a reputation for excellence "could be in a lot of different things." (MMUA1) Numerous examples of MMU demonstrating reputation were provided such as "a reputation for widening participation with a lot of first-generation students, and the opportunity it gives those students, and then they return to the community more educated." (MMUA1) A further suggestion was "having excellence in a leading faculty, and in innovation." (MMUA3)

The data makes frequent reference to "modern universities demonstrating their reputation in several areas." (MMUA1). The data shows that many "older unis" (MMUA2) focus predominantly on achieving their reputation through "excellence in achieving the highest level in some sort of education activity" however for newer universities a strong reputation can't be "just down to one thing." (MMUA1) as "having the best academic reputation isn't always the most important focus for a newer institution." (MMUS1)

It was suggested by MMUA1 that students themselves contribute significantly to MMU's reputation for excellence as it relies on co-creation. "It's both the role of education in society, and then also leading to personal success for the student – an enabler to personal success" (MMUA1).

Whilst the data suggested that reputational excellence will vary between institutions, it was suggested that stakeholders will all internalise the reputation to explore "how they fit into that excellence" (MMUA1) regardless of which university they belong to. MMUA2 proposed that due to the many characteristics of reputation, measuring reputation is difficult and so often the case is that actually "what is a lot more dominant in today's conversations surrounding universities reputation for excellence is demonstrating retention and progression**" (**MMUA2)

4.7.2.3.3 Brand community and belonging

The data demonstrates that being "part of something and making everyone feel part of the community is ultimately the consequence of a successful brand." (MMUS2) Experiencing a sense of belonging was considered important for the staff community as much as the student population, because "if they know a university has a strong identity and therefore a strong brand, they will be more engaged." (MMUS2)
Pride was mentioned frequently through the course of MMU interviews. Pride was referred to for both a personal sense of pride (based on achievement of undertaking a degree), but also the sense of pride felt from belonging to the student community at this university, based on the reputation and perception of others. Students said they wore their "student hoody with pride." (MMUS1)

Interviewees suggested a consequence of HE brand success takes place when a student is "wanting to identify with a university brand which reflects their own identity." (MMUA1)
The data suggests this sense of belonging is a lifetime concept which doesn't leave once a student graduates, with comments such as "this will only continue to grow after graduation" (MMUS2) and "they will go through life with it and be proud. They will keep referring back to it." (MMUA1)

Brand community in a wider context was deemed important, particularly so with the local community. This was voiced by student interviewees who asserted they "feel integrated into the wider community and not just within a university bubble." (MMUS3) Academics also recognised that "the city the university is in and the relationship it has with the city are embedded." (MMUA3)

Community partnerships were recognised as a "key aspect to the success of our brand." (MMUHoB/MM1) The theme of communication was again discussed; this time in the context of being a crucial component for nurturing and enhancing a sense of belonging.
Not only was a need for clear communication identified, but also the need for a steady flow of consistent messaging so that "the communication makes you feel part of it." (MMUS3) Therefore, investment into student communication was well-advised for universities to ensure brand success.

4.7.2.3.4 Employability

The data shows that a consequence of brand success is to demonstrate strong graduate employment rates. MMUS1 felt MMU to be “a university that is focused on getting students employed, rather than focusing only on research.” (MMUS1) In support of this finding, evidence of student employability was noted as a key consideration for applicants when choosing their university. MMUS1 commented: “I wanted to get a degree that when I finished would help me get a good job. And that my future employers would be reassured knowing I had the knowledge necessary to do the job.” (MMUS1)

MMU’s commitment to graduate employment was further recognised within the academic community during interviews with comments such as MMUA2 saying “we obviously need to show we are committed to equipping students with the tools they need for the workplace.” (MMUA2)

The data suggests that newer universities who don’t have the heritage that older universities do, can carve out differentiation by offering students an array of employability guidance and support. Referring to “younger, lower-ranked institutions,” (MMUS1) as “under-dog universities” MMUS1 articulated the view that there is opportunity by “offering something which a higher ranked university doesn’t or can’t as post 92s can’t be academically stronger, so they have to shift their position to attract a different type of student.” (MMUS1) Accordingly, MMUS3 reflected on the additional skills support offered at MMU such as “workshops with how to do your CV and how not to be shy and stuff like that,” (MMUS3) which proves to be “real and helpful.” (MMUS3)

Again, the theme of effective communication was raised during interviews; this time in reference to the need for regular communication about prospective career opportunities such as “the employability hub and the weekly emails they send out to students about the sort of jobs for students here in Manchester. That’s really helpful.” (MMUS3) Evidence of MMU’s pride in their alumni community was clear. MMUHoB/MM2 referred to their alumni as being “what makes the university brand successful.” Student interviewees explained how they want to see examples of alumni success during their search for university as it is “important to see where

graduates have got jobs.” (MMUS2) Marketing services reinforced this commenting how success stories from alumni were a key activity for the university brand in “demonstrating that our students go on to be successful.” (MMUHoB/MM1)
At this stage the data from MMU has followed steps 1- 5 of recursive abstraction analysis for all research objectives. The data has been extracted, tabularised, and paraphrased. These paraphrased comments have been grouped into themes and then coded.

The following figure presents the synthesis of these themes and codes identified from data participants for RO4 at MMU (step 6). The following chapter (chapter 5) will discuss these themes in depth, apply across case, and present the conceptual framework this data provides the scaffolding for.

Table 13: Synthesis of brand success in HE. Recursive abstraction step 6. MMU key findings

		Data Participant		
Stage 6: Themes	**Stage 6: Codes**	**MMUA1 MMUA2 MMUA3**	**MMUHoB/MM1 MMUHoB/MM2**	**MMUS1 MMUS2 MMUS3**
Location	Image	**	**	***
(antecedent)	Engaging with local community	*	**	**
	Synergy of personalities	*	**	*
	Offers uniqueness	*	**	

Effective brand communication (antecedent)	Demonstrating values	*	*	
	Reinforcing co-creation	**	*	
	Demonstrate successes	*	*	
Servicescape (antecedent)	Green space	*	*	*
	Facilities	**		*
	Innovation	**		**
Brand identity (antecedent)	Reflecting own identity (Fit)	***	**	***
	Belonging	***	**	***
	Individual leaners	***	**	***
	Personality			**
Strong brand ethics and values (antecedent)	Sustainability	*	**	**
	Inclusivity	**	*	**
	Diversity	**	*	**
	Inspire, inform and educate	**		
Identity alignment (nature)	Shared values	*	*	**
	Warmth of values			*
	Helping society challenges			***
Co-creation (nature)	Effective partnerships	***	*	*
	Communicate expectations	**		
	Internal and external stakeholder partnerships	*		**
Inspirational (nature)	Entrepreneurial	*	*	**
	Exciting	*	*	*
	Dynamic	*	*	**

Impact (consequence)	Benefiting society	**	**	**
	Responsibility of HEIs.		*	***
	Key driver for change	*		**
Reputation (consequence)	Range of areas	*	*	**
	Co-creation	*		
	Retention and progression	*		
Brand community and belonging (consequence)	Pride	***	*	***
	Unity			*
	Community partnerships		**	**
Employability (consequence)	Future proofing	***	**	***
	Opportunity for differentiation		*	*
	Use of alumni to inspire	***	*	**
	Encourage employers to work in partnership	**	*	***

4.7.3 CASE STUDY 3: UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH (UoP)

4.7.3.1 Antecedents of brand success in HE

This section presents the antecedents of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the third case study.

4.7.3.1.1 Servicescape

Investment into the campus servicescape was deemed crucial “because it’s what you are communicating to the outside world.” (UoPA1) Participants described the visual identity of the university as “so important. Not only for first impressions such as open days, but to also to demonstrate that the university is investing and being innovative.” (UoPS2) However, it was suggested this is particularly challenging for post-1992 universities due to “some of the buildings still communicate polytechnic colleagues.” (UoPA1) Interviewees suggested the physicality and structure of the UoP campus encouraged “a stronger inclusive community feel.” (UoPS2) Furthermore, UoPS1 reflected that “the buildings and environment also make us part of the university community, because it’s vibrant, and modern.” (UoPS1)

The data shows the UoP’s servicescape reinforces the brand values; specifically, surrounding themes of being agile and innovative. UoP students articulated that the facilities and buildings are crucial because “if I don’t enjoy coming to my lectures and it’s not up to date, then it goes against the brand values.” (UoPS3)

In fact, there was actually a strong sense of expectation from students during interviews for the university to be investing into the campus. UoPS2 said that “we want to see the university investing in innovation and the student community, and our learning environment. It’s important to see the university is thinking about what tomorrow’s students will want and is being innovative.” (UoPS2)
Futureproofing for the next generation of students through innovation in its servicescape was extremely prominent during interviews with all participants. Marketing services colleagues stated they too “want to see the university being forward thinking and doing what it says it will by physically representing its value.” (UoPHoB/MM2)

4.7.3.1.2 Location

Interviewees suggested that the location is “undoubtedly connected to the brand success of a university.” (UoPA2) The data suggests the location of the university is an integral consideration for not only the applicant but also their parents and other influencers.

> “The geographic location is crucial for brand success. I always talk about our location being near the sea as well as near to London when I go to recruitment events. People care about where they live and where their kids live.” (UoPA3)

As well as the location of UoP helping to “make the HEI more recognisable,” (UoPA1) participants noted that location “will be more connected to some people than others, and not necessarily for a host of sensible reasons.” (UoPHoB/MM2) The data showed that the location runs deeper and is more influential than just being about the city or town facilities. The ethos of the locality and how it matches the ethos of the student, seems to be an important viable for choosing a university. The university location is also “an important consideration for the lifestyle of the student.” (UoPA1) Furthermore, the natural environment of the institution was also considered an antecedent of the brand success: “The surrounding environment of a university is so important. I like nature, so for me, being this close to an ocean was something what drew me here.” (UoPS3)

In addition to the aesthetics of the environment, considerations such as the location’s cost of living was deemed a “big focus for our students” (UoPA3) perhaps more relevant for post-1992 institutions. Working with local councils to offer incentives for students was therefore considered an important activity which UoP engaged in as “offering discounts and schemes for local attractions is important as it shows how the university is associated with other local brands and attractions in the area.” (UoPA1) As well as the theme of affordability raised by students, considerations such as independence were also raised from the UoP sample in so much as being “far enough away from home that I could have my own life, away from home and have my independence. But it wasn’t too far away that I couldn’t jump on a train and get home in a day.” (UoPS2)

Interviewees felt that “when cities are invested in that can be a positive thing for the university.” (UoPHoB/MM2) Furthermore, interviewees considered working in partnership with the local community a key activity for universities, as the activity is mutually beneficial as “the university can help the city and the city can help the university.” (UoPHoB/MM2)

4.7.3.1.3 Strong brand ethics and values

Participants considered that the core values of an HEI are at the centre of its brand success. The theme of living its values (UoPHoB/MM2) was again discussed, with agreement from all participants that UoP delivered on its promises, especially “regarding inclusivity and approachability.” (UoPS3) Participants felt UoP effectively communicates its inclusivity and is “bold and confident in communicating it is warm, inclusive and welcoming. It’s a family.” (UoPS1)

Particular attention was paid to demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and environmental attention within these core values of the university. UoP students described feeling “proud of this university’s brand commitment to the environment.” (UoPS1)
Furthermore, it was felt that demonstrating commitment to environmental issues is beneficial for the institution in areas such as receiving grants and funding.
UoPA1 commented:

> “We have a strong reputation for this due to a big research project we lead on plastics. So, this is a benefit across all facilities. But also, the wider public recognise that we do recognise society challenges, and this has helped to develop our brand success in the wider community, demonstrating that our research has a big effect on our brand success.” (UoPA1)

Student participants noted an “expectation of our generation is to go to a university that has strong sustainability values.” (UoPS3) Specifically, interviewees considered there was an expectation that “universities need to be leaders in sustainability to their communities.” (UoPHoB/MM2)

Again, the importance of local partnerships was reflected upon, specifically, the responsibility the HEI has to “work together with local councils and the local community to inform, inspire and educate about sustainability. So that we take responsibility for our actions that we make conscious choices to be more sustainable.” (UoPS2)

4.7.3.1.4 Brand accessibility

The data shows that a successful HE brand will be accessible to all and “anybody who is interested in higher education should be able to get a degree.” (UoPA1) However, it was suggested that tuition fees have introduced “challenges” (UoPHoB/MM1) such as “education seems not so accessible to everybody.” (UoPHoB/MM1)

The data shows UoP has worked hard to ensure that their brand is seen as accessible and welcoming to all, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or financial background. UoP students and staff felt that UoP had always been very open due to the nature of student attending but did note there had been much more focus from the brand communications over the past few years towards a more welcoming environment. They felt this has resulted in a brighter and more vibrant university campus.

UoPS1 reflected: “When I think of this university’s brand I think of a warm inclusivity and a focus on driving students towards success, no matter their background.” Interviewees considered UoP to be accessible to people from all walks of life: “Higher education should be available to everyone. Everyone, from all backgrounds and walks of life, should be able to access it.” (UoPS3)

UoPS1 reflected:

> "I'm from a background where only my sister and me have been to university. So being made to feel included and that a degree was actually feasible for someone like me is important. That is the role of a university brand." (UoPS1)

Interviewees felt diversity is a "huge variable of UoP's brand success. Questions surrounding what the university is doing in order to guarantee inclusion are frequently posed." (UoPA1)
References to UoP being "very inclusive and friendly" (UoPS1) were numerous from interviewees. Examples of inclusivity throughout UoP's communications were provided with further characteristics listed such as "extremely friendly, welcoming, helpful and inclusive." (UoPS2) Participants proposed that UoP demonstrating an inclusive culture has shaped a "transparent and safe brand," (UoPS3) which encourages trust.

UoPS1 commented the university is a "happy place to study, plus it's a happy brand because of its inclusivity." (UoPS1) It was felt that a "successful university brand will be both engaging and inclusive, but also welcoming." (UoPS2) Linking to previous remarks surrounding feeling 'safe', students felt that UoP has "created a comfortable and safe environment for people to step in to." (UoPS2)

Interviewees felt UoP had achieved a "nice balance of inclusivity" (UoPA3) in their student community; especially so when recognising the university is outside a major city such as London or Manchester which may attract a wider diversity of student: "Before, I worked in central London and so most students were international students. So, it's obviously going to be different to that, but we are doing well." (UoPA3)

4.7.3.1.5 Agile

It was recognised that an antecedent of a successful HE brand is to be agile and be able to adapt in line with demands from the marketplace. The data suggests that for many decades HEIs “haven’t been very dynamic” (UoPA3) however, participants all noted there has been an obvious shift in “behaviour in the sector in recent years witnessing HE brands which are more in tune with consumers, and more progressive. The entire landscape has shifted significantly.” (UoPA3) Perhaps, due to the dramatically shifting marketplace, the HE brand has needed to respond accordingly and change focus appropriately. The data shows UoP to be a progressive institution which consider the big issues in the landscape.” (UoPA3).

> “We are very progressive. We have not stood still; physically and emotionally we have formed and developed. The physical infrastructure, the offices, the physical campus has changed. The quality of what we deliver, the speed in which we deliver has also changed.” (UoPA2)

The data further demonstrates the demands placed within the marketplace for HEIs. UoP participants recognised how the HEI has “embraced dynamic pedagogies and diverse technologies to support learning, teaching and assessment.” (UoPA1). UoPA2 discussed the journey UoP had experienced with building their research profile which has also moved with sector demand, accordingly:

> “All the characteristics were there such as the TEF gold standard. But in research compared to the Russell Group and the red bricks, we were a little behind, so we had a strategy to increase the number of staff with PhDs, to increase the quality of outputs. So, the focus of the brand changed.” (UoPA1)

The data did however suggest that whilst having an agile brand is crucial due to many variables within an extremely competitive landscape, it can cause tension within the institution as “people don’t like change and can feel new focus might be limiting.” (UoPA1) Participants reflected on many internal structure and policy changes over the last few years at UoP in response to a more demanding marketplace, commenting that there have been a lot more standards and procedures put in place and “academics are a lot more controlled over what we can and can’t do. This is in response to students no longer being passive.” (UoPA3)

4.7.3.2 Nature of brand success in HE

This section presents the nature of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the third case study.

4.7.3.2.1 Identity alignment

Data findings from UoP showed that both the students and staff felt it important that the university's personality, image and identity are aligned to their own. The data suggested that if the university demonstrated behaviours, morals and ethics that the student or staff member identified with, it is increasingly likely that they were joining a community where they would feel at home immediately. Consequently, participants felt this would lead to greater opportunities for personal, professional and academic growth, removing the barriers to recruitment that a lack of belonging can present.

Participants presented examples of their brand acting as a "vessel to create joint identity between the institution and the student and staff community." (UoPA2). Tactical examples such as "encouraging participation in societies, clubs and inductions" were presented by UoP students, and "away days and team building" presented by UoPHoB/MM2.

The data findings suggest that UoP has used its brand as a "way of collecting people, so we feel part of the same wider team, and have a sense of joint identity." (BUA2) The data also suggests that UoP has recognised that if this sense of identity is positively nurtured, it can lead to brand loyalty. UoPA2 recognised this commitment to aligning identities has demonstrated not only added value to the current student body, but also "when they are alumni that sense of identity hopefully travels with them which means they're more likely to come back to us to then do a postgraduate or continuing professional development activity." (UoPA2).

UoP data demonstrates how commitment to understanding the identities of all their diverse stakeholder body has been a strategic priority, which has contributed significantly to their brand success.

4.7.3.2.2 Delivering on promises

UoP participants felt a successful HE brand will deliver on its promises. “It doesn’t overpromise and under deliver” (UoPA3). UoPHoB/MM1 contributed: “That’s what we do here. We do what we promise to do.” The data shows that evidence of a university delivering on its promises is expected through its brand communications. Student participants voiced the requirement of hearing about the experience of the brand from graduates through “authentic word of mouth” (UoPS3). “Word of mouth is important to me; People’s experience is important so I can also make my own evaluations” (UoPS1). Participants felt this was something UoP’s brand did exceptionally well through its alumni case studies in particular which demonstrate their careers success post-graduation.

Interviewees reflected there has been a shift in the HE landscape due to the introduction of higher tuition fees. It was felt that “recently there is a commercialisation of HE and the students are becoming more and more demanding. They are now demanding a service which of course they are paying for.” (UoPA2). A behavioural change in students and an increased focus on expectation was noted as a consequence of this. UoP emphasised they recognised that comparisons were deemed important when assessing HE brands. In response, UoPHoB/MM1 explained that the institution has prioritised understanding their consumers expectations and ensuring the brand clearly communicates the university’s expectations for student co-creation and engagement due to operating in “such marketized HE system” (UoPA2).

Furthermore, it was suggested that in order for HEIs to deliver on their promises, they should not be over-complicating their offering, and should ensure that their stakeholders’ expectations clearly match the deliverables. UoPA3 recognised the need for HEIs to understand what they are good at and not “over-complicate the brand and keep it simple.” UoPA3). The notion of keeping the HE brand simple was reinforced by UoPHoB/MM1 who noted that the UoP brand “knows what we are good at and pushes this. We don’t add unnecessary frills.”

4.7.3.2.3 Driver for change

UoP interviewees felt that a successful HE brand will “inspire, inform, and drive change, educate on issues, and to ultimately make an impact on society” (UoPA3). There was strong opinion that a successful HE brand is powerful as not only does it influence your feelings towards the brand itself, but it can also influence your thoughts on the wider world. Characteristics such as being “captivating and inspirational” (UoPS2) were deemed important in the process of making an impact to society. A sense of excitement for the future and the role of the university brand to futureproof this was considered fundamental:
“There is an air of excitement for what the world will look like in the next decade, and my generation depends on universities to inform and shape the future” (UoPS2).

UoPA1 asserted the commitment UoP prioritises to ensuring “the organisational culture is very closely linked with society” as a key brand value in order to ensure it acts as a vessel for driving societal change. Interviewees felt the UoP HE brand has focussed on being “innovative, strong and constantly move forward” (UoPHoB/MM1) in order to achieve such impact.

From the student perspective, it was considered “exciting” to witness UoP “being brave and innovative whilst impacting society” (UoPS2), and it was noted that “enticing future generations as part of this process” (UoPS1) is important. UoPS2 noted that universities are there to “entice young people to be attracted to their values. To associate themselves with the university values (UoPS2).

Whilst the data shows that the HE brand was considered to be a fundamental element to enable young people to be drivers for change, it was felt that the HE brand holds great responsibility for acting as an enabler for all stakeholders, not just its student community. UoPA2 reflected that the UoP brand promise “actually helps staff collectively to support each other to deliver our objectives.” Participants recognised the UoP brand “helps to enable us all to be better at what we do, and then collectively consider ourselves to be more successful. It’s about feeling you have made an impact with your work and successfully delivering towards the organisation’s mission and values (UoPA2)

4.7.3.3 Consequences of brand success in HE

This section presents the consequences of brand success in HE identified by the data sample from the third case study.

4.7.3.3.1 Employability

The data demonstrates perceptions around **"**university is an investment, and you want students to find a job that is in line with their study." (UoPA1) Furthermore, preparing students to "make a difference in the workplace" (UoPHoB/MM1) was considered a "fundamental consequence of a successful HE brand" (UoPHoB/MM1) Attention to producing a generation of graduates who conduct business "ethically, sensitively and responsibly" (UoPA1) was regarded as a strategic priority for HE as making a "positive impact in the world of work" (UoPS2) is essential for a modern-day HEI.

Students reflected that evidence of "employability prospects for graduates were a huge consideration for choosing a university." (UoPS1) The financial implications of undertaking HE was a clear factor in influencing these expectations for employability upon graduation. Comments from students during interviews such as: "The way I see it, I'm putting myself in debt in order to get this degree and this degree is supposed to open doors" (UoPS3) set the tone around discussions of employability. UoPS2 demonstrated how the focus on employability evolved during the student journey: "I used to be concerned with university rankings, but then once I joined university, I realised that a good job at the end of this is more important than rankings."

Interviewees considered post-1992 universities in particular focus on "future-proofing employability security for graduates," (UoPHoB/MM2) and this is clear throughout "the newer universities all communicating about trying to build up the potential employees for tomorrow." (UoPS3) Arguments for why this should be a strong focus for newer universities were proposed to be surrounding "differentiation in the absence of institutional heritage," (UoPA2) and the "type of student a post-92 attracts." (UoPHoB/MM2).

Graduate employability was deemed to be a “massive part of this university’s brand success” (UoPS1) during data collection. UoP was frequently commended during interviews for the effort invested into “equipping people for the job market.” (UoPHoB/MM2) UoPS3 praised UoP for “putting in so much effort preparing us because you can have a degree, but you might not be employable because you don’t have the right skills or experience.” (UoPS3) Students felt their “future employment is a massive consequence of this uni’s brand success.” (UoPS2)

Strong “connections with local and international employers” (UoPA1) were identified as a key activity required for successful graduate employability. Furthermore, investment into these relationships was considered strategically effective for developing grants and knowledge transfer opportunities. UoPS2 recognised the effort staff put into fostering relationships for the benefit of the student community: “The professional connections I have made are a clear consequence of this university’s brand success. Employers, academics, coaches. It’s the staff again making this happen.” (UoPS2)

Interviewees considered the university’s connections and networks with the local area to be crucial for potential long-term career plans as students may “want to stay here if we get a good job in the area.” (UoPS3)

Students felt the academic skills and “knowledge that has been passed to me, is success for this university, because it is evidencing how the university is doing its job effectively, in developing and disseminating theory.” (UoPS2) However, student interviewees also recognised the additional skills learnt during their HE journey are also important and a consequence of a successful university brand.

> “It’s the holistic skillset the graduate leaves with. Not just the lectures and seminar experience. I know universities obviously focus on the programmes in their marketing campaigns, but a real successful uni brand will equip students with additional skills.” (UoPS2)

4.7.3.3.2 Brand trust

The theme of trust was present in many branches of discussion during interviews. UoPA3 explained how achieving brand trust is “a fundamental aim for the overall success of the brand” is as it contributes to the overarching culture and experience of the institution. The brand should be trusted by external and internal stakeholders, and it should “radiate trust, security and development.” (UoPA1) UoPA1 reflected on the trust established through stakeholder relationships with UoP.

Specifically, “people sending their children to a university are trusting the staff to have a duty of care. They are trusting the university to have a duty of care with their young adults.” (UoPA1) Accordingly, it was reinforced that the human connection between academics and applicants builds trust for the brand. Participants felt the interactions with stakeholders to be fundamental for nurturing trust and building the brand. UoPA2 emphasised that “parents understand exactly when their child feels valued and not just a number,” (UoPA2) therefore, ensuring strong and supportive relationships were considered essential for brand success as the “relationships you build with the students is actually the chance to have differentiation and then to communicate and demonstrate how strong the brand is.” (UoPA3)

UoPHoB/MM1 reflected upon the brand promise, and the importance of delivering on those promises made. It was felt that delivering on promises as an institution reassures and develops trust for the brand. When reflecting on UoP specifically, participants felt reassured the institution delivered on the brand promises: “I really think that the promises we make are really quite true. I look around and see students progressing well and being happy. I think the brand really does delivers on its promises.” (UoPA3)

The data suggests that a key brand value is “facilitating staff and students” (UoPHoB/MM2) which builds trust with internal stakeholders. “We try to make sure staff and students are happy and everyone has the freedom to explore what they want.” (UoPA1) If internal stakeholders do not feel part of the brand values, then a feeling of distrust could develop which may extend to external stakeholders, which will impact the overarching brand and “if the brand fails to deliver then trust will be lost.” (UoPA2) The belief that “brand trust cannot be built overnight” (UoPHoB/MM1) and that it takes “time to develop” (UoPHoB/MM1) was clear. Participants explained that creating and building trust takes patience and “trust grows as longevity does” (UoPA1).

4.7.3.3.3 Brand community and belonging

Fundamentally, the data shows that brand success is “all about human connection.” (UoPA1) UoP participants felt that institutional investment into societies and clubs develops and enhances this human connection, which in turn shapes the university culture. UoPS1 reinforced that “this university has more societies and more students involved in societies than other universities my friends attend. And we have a far stronger culture because of that.” (UoPS1) Personal relationships were also considered an important aspect of connections and networks established during university. UoPS2 reflected that “the friendships I have formed are a consequence of the brand success.” (UoPS2) UoP students reflected upon UoP having a “massive student culture and that’s a big part of the brand’s success.” (UoPS1)

Interviewees recognised different universities have different types of student culture; but suggested whilst “some universities are known for their party culture. This isn’t like those universities. We know that you need to put in the effort to get the good grades. That’s part of the culture here.” (UoPS1) This was reinforced by UoPS2 who summarised the culture as being a “work hard, play hard culture.” (UoPS2) However, whilst the culture is “energetic, busy, fun, it is dependable. Solid. Supportive. I get so much support.” (UoPS1) Interestingly, interviewees suggested the university culture can offer an opportunity for differentiation as “all newer universities seem to offer the same. Apart from their culture. I think this is the big difference.” (UoPS3)

A sense of connection and “being integrated into the wider community” (UoPS1) has been a key priority for UoP and it was recognised that historically, universities have acted as “bubbles” (UoPS3) which have attracted criticisms of a “locals and student divide” (UoPS1) which presents a negative impression of the student community. UoPS1 recognised that due to the size of modern-day universities such as UoP, “it’s important we are part of the wider community.” (UoPS1) UoP student interviewees reflected positively on “how closely the student union work with the local community to make us feel part of this wider population.” (UoPS1) The role of the student union was viewed to be “fundamental in bridging and nurturing relationships” (UoPHoB/MM2) with local residents.

4.7.3.3.4 Staff and student recruitment

Participants from the UoP considered a consequence of their HE brand's success is the "steady recruitment numbers we see consistently" (UoPHoB/MM1).

UoP data participants considered the investment into local as well as national advertising campaigns had been a "very successful tactic" (UoPHoB/MM1) due to the amount of local students who wanted to stay "living with their parents due to increased tuition fees and cost of living" (UoPS3) and widening participation students (UoPA3) attending UoP.

Furthermore, UoP hold a lot of open campus recruitment events which attract big numbers" (UoPA2), "many of whom attend on the day and are so impressed with what we have to offer that they apply" (UoPA1).

During data collection the academic participants discussed the impact of the brand's success being very healthy staff recruitment. UoPA1 considered the "global presence of the UoP brand attracts potential staff far and wide" which was considered to further strengthen the brand by "developing our diversity further" (UoPHoB/MM2). It was felt that UoP's research profile had much responsibility for this.

At this stage the data from UoP has followed steps 1- 5 of recursive abstraction analysis for all research objectives. The data has been extracted, tabularised, and paraphrased. These paraphrased comments have been grouped into themes and then coded.

The following figure presents the synthesis of these themes and codes identified from data participants for RO4 at UoP (step 6). The following chapter (chapter 5) will discuss these themes in depth, apply across case, and present the conceptual framework this data provides the scaffolding for.

Table 14: Synthesis of brand success in HE. Recursive abstraction step 6. UoP key findings.

Stage 6: Themes	Stage 6: Codes	Data Participant		
		UoPUA1 UoPUA2 UoPUA3	UoPHoB/MM1 UoPHoB/MM2	UoPS1 UoPS2 UoPS3
Servicescape (antecedent)	More challenging for post-1992s	**	**	
	Innovative	**	**	*
	Reinforces brand values	**	**	*
	Facilities	**	*	**
Location (antecedent)	Image	**	**	***
	Synergy of personalities		**	
	Engaging with local community	**	**	**
Strong brand ethics and	Helping society challenges	**	**	***
	Expectation for university brands	*	**	***

values (antecedent)	Responsibility to inform, inspire and educate	***		
Brand accessibility (antecedent)	Tuition fees can create barriers			**
	Different for Russell Groups and Post-92s		*	
	Inclusive	*		
Agile (antecedent)	Shift in behaviour	**	*	
	Progressive Dynamic	*	**	
	pedagogies	**		
Identity alignment (nature)	Shared values	**	*	*
	Inspire, inform and educate	***		
	Helping society challenges			***
Delivering on promises (nature)	No underdelivering	*		**
	Positive word of mouth			*
	Co-creation	*		
Driver for change (nature)	Inspire	*		*
	Inform	*		*
	Educate on societal issues	**	**	**
Employability (consequence)	Future proofing employment success	***	*	**
	Ethical, sensitive, responsible graduates	***	**	*
	Encourage employers to work in partnership	***		

Brand trust (consequence)	Culture	**		
	Human connection	**		
	Valuable relationships	**		
	Delivering on promises	*		
Brand community and belonging (consequence)	Unity	*		***
	Societies and clubs		*	***
	Safety			**
Staff and student recruitment (consequence)	Local	*	**	
	Recruitment events		*	**
	Reputation	**		
	Trust	*		

4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis of findings from the three universities selected for this research and comprehensively related them to each research objective. The first three research objectives have presented the wider contextual information surrounding perceptions of success, brand success and the nature of brand in the context of higher education.

The fourth research objective has been presented case by case, presenting evidence of these institutions' brand success. Recursive abstraction was deployed as the data analysis tool due to its effectiveness in identifying patterns and trends hidden within the data (Saunders et al., 2016).

Step 6 of the recursive abstraction method has highlighted the final themes and codes for research objective 4 for each case study. This provides the foundation for the discussion in the following chapter, which presents a summary of these trends and patterns which will shape and inform the discussion and insight to enable presentation of a conceptual model.

CHAPTER 5– DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings based on the synthesis of key findings established during step 6 of recursive abstraction, identified in the previous chapter.

It considers the theoretical framework that has been crafted and presented in this thesis, based on learnings from the literature and data collection. It provides a conclusion to answer the research problem identified in section xx. The chapter demonstrates how the research progresses knowledge through presenting the implications for theory, policy and practice.

5.1 Final coding

The data at this stage has been paraphrased (Step 3), grouped into themes (Step 4), and then the paraphrased data has been replaced with appropriate codes (Step 5). The final findings of the research are presented across case, here at step 6 from which patterns and trends can be identified (Polkinghorne, 2019). These are highlighted in tables together with an indication of where the data was sourced, and which research objective is under discussion, to ensure they have been addressed effectively. As the previous section states, this forms discussion for this chapter.

5.2 Addressing the gap

Whilst there has been extensive exploration of understanding what constitutes a successful brand in the commercial setting, the literature identifies a gap in knowledge in understanding the characteristics and impact of university brand success in both the corporate branding and HE literature Fetscherin and Usunier (2012) despite the fact that ‘higher education and branding go back a long way’ (Temple, 2006, p.15). Furthermore, academic investigation in developing bespoke models to assess HE brand success has been slow and limited (Chapleo 2015a). This is seemingly the research situation a decade later.

As discussed in chapter 1, this research focuses on addressing this gap by applying a case study approach with three comparable HEIs to investigate and define their brand success with applied examples from a selection of their brand-informed stakeholders. A bespoke model to understand brand success in these case studies is presented in response to scholars such as Chapleo (2015), Melewar (2015), and Gibbs (2007) who argue that a bespoke model to understand brand success in HE is needed.

5.3 Research objective 1: To critically examine the concept of success.

Summary of insight – Contribution to knowledge

There were multiple variables identified in the data for defining the concept of success. Participants reinforced the literature identifying success to be broadly understood as the realisation of an aim or activity directed towards its fulfilment (Baczko-Dombi and WysmuŁEk 2015). The notion of success being entirely subjective was a common observation throughout the data. The data also presents success to be a task driven activity which requires commitment and motivation for working towards a goal. This reinforces the findings from Korda (1977). Furthermore, the data reinforces the literature which asserts that success is earnt and there isn't any entitlement to it (Gladstone, 2008).

Interviewees felt the concept of success is multifaceted and varies significantly between people due to individual understanding. Success is a complex concept which changes and evolves throughout a lifetime. Moreover, this individual understanding of success is often influenced through our culture and upbringing. Culture, environment and upbringing were variables listed which were deemed influential for shaping and impacting our perceptions of success. This again reinforces Gladwell (2008) who suggests that gender, education, as well as physical and emotional support from family are important internal factors affecting success. All participants considered success to be a competitive concept which can continue to become more competitive when more frequent experiences of success are experienced.

It was suggested that success can also involve benchmarking our success against peers. Again, the extent to which we engage with this can be influenced greatly by our background. Furthermore, participants considered that cultural factors will influence how success is perceived – e.g., whether it can be measured financially, emotionally or, in terms of impact on society? Indeed, this can often mean that success is a 'wolf in sheep's clothing' – that the individual pursuing it can be influenced by the dominant culture around them to achieve success in one particular way, only for the achievement not to marry with their own motivations and drivers, leading to a feeling of emptiness at what was expected to be a moment of triumph.

The data analysis demonstrates success to be a varied and complex construct where autonomy and the ownership of success are crucial. MMUS2 asserted that fundamentally, “you must feel it is yours.” Being resilient was also considered a key antecedent of success by all data participants. Furthermore, it was suggested that overcoming barriers in life to achieve success was worthy of additional admiration and praise. Participants noted that often upbringing will influence exposure to opportunity, which will further grow potential for success. This reinforces scholars such as Gladwell (2008) who proposed a person’s individual success can arise from the steady accumulation of advantages; when and where you were born and, your parents’ careers, as well as the circumstances of your upbringing.

Subjectivity was deemed a key characteristic of success by all data contributors. Consistent with the literature, participants recognised the shape of success changed during a lifetime and expectations for success also changed over time.

As expected, participants noted various interpretations of the rewards of success; and of course, financially tangible rewards were listed such a luxury cars, holidays and properties. However, more interestingly was the recognition of emotional gratification such as happiness, positive wellbeing, and making a difference to something, or someone. Everyone recognised happiness as reward of success, but students focused also on experiencing pride. Students all also noted that sometimes the reward of success is experiencing a sense of relief. This was tied in specifically of achieving milestones during their degree study; reinforcing comments that success to them was being task driven. Peer perception of success was considered a key driver for students, along with experiences of feeling safe and securing a family environment. Experiencing a sense of happiness and wellbeing were also commented on frequently from all participants.

All interviewees suggested that impacting society, contributing to a greater good, and leaving a legacy for change were key consequences of success. Furthermore, participants articulated the importance of a sense of belonging as an integral experience of success. However, as discussion continued deeper, participants noted that success was not always positive. Interviewees commented on success carrying negative connotations. Examples were presented from people’s lives when they felt something missing, or a lack of challenge once they had achieved their goal which triggered boredom

The journey to success was also noted to demand compromise and personal sacrifice; often noted to be social interaction, restricted time with loved ones, and ultimately, burn out triggering damage to mental wellbeing. Interestingly, this disconnect where what was perceived as success proved disappointing was only associated with professional success.
It was in this respect that participants felt an individual was most likely to ascribe success incorrectly, only to find that money or professional status did not always bring happiness.
In contrast, there was no mention in the data of someone achieving emotional or spiritual success in a personal context only to find it ultimately unfulfilling.

The research suggests that failure is an inevitable element of success even if it ultimately leads to abandoning an approach altogether. We can only learn something doesn’t work at all if we try it, and even in that seemingly ‘ultimate’ failure where an undertaking is abandoned, there will still be principles that can be applied to inform future ventures in seemingly different sectors. Failure, like success, is largely transferable. While success may occasionally be instantaneous and ‘easy’, such a pattern is unlikely to be repeated in an individual’s career or in the story of a brand. Instead, success is almost always borne from what is learned in failed attempts. Even an ‘immediate’ success in one arena is usually the result of failures elsewhere, with the learnings transferred into a different context. This can best be accomplished by throwing off the historical shackles of shame associated with failure – not seeing it as the end of a journey but a step along the way. Participants suggested that in more recent years, this has been demonstrated by younger, dynamic entrepreneurs bringing products and services to market. Participants suggested that innovation may increase the risk of failure, but the entrepreneurial spirit shown by many innovators means that it is seen less as a shameful episode, and more as one to be embraced as an important part of the process.

The understanding of success that this aspect of the research established, and how the concept of success is considered from a variety of perspectives, can be applied to developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of success in a brand context. By taking a step back and understanding interpretations of success in general terms those broader findings can be then applied to brands. This supports Chapleo's research (2005) which argues that the notion of success is inherently complex and further complicated when it is applied to a concept as intangible as branding. The data demonstrates that people and their opinions are not black and white. They are messy and complex, and opinions and perceptions change over time. They can be impacted by external influences and cultural factors, and their tastes and preferences will change and develop. These findings further justify the interpretivist methodological approach adopted for this research.

This section of the research has provided a foundation built on an understanding of success, from which more specific areas of investigation can be explored and established a lens in which to view and define success as a precursor to exploring brand success.

This is the first piece of research that has explored brand success in this manner; most research has focused immediately on consumers' perceptions of brand success without first exploring what those same consumers determine success to be in a broader context.

The following section shall build on these findings to examine the concept of brand success.

The following section focuses on the key themes and codes identified across cases during stages 6 of the recursive abstraction process.

Table 15: Illustration of final coding. Research objective 1

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO1: To critically examine the concept of success	**Failure**	Inevitable Learn from failed attempts Adapt to new approaches	BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU UoP
	Fluid and subjective	Upbringing & culture shapes perception Changes with age Benchmarking	BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU, UoP
	Reward	Happiness Relief Guided by values Belonging Wellbeing Making a difference	BU, MMU, UoP MMU MMU MMU, UoP BU BU, MMU, UoP
	Resilience	Challenge Adapting Work around issues	BU, MMU BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU
	Perseverance	Commitment Sacrifice Burn out Overcoming barriers	UoP UoP UoP BU, MMU, UoP
	Impact and legacy	Impact to society Greater good Lasting footprint	BU, MMU MMU, UoP MMU

5.4 Research objective 2: To critically examine the concept of brand success.
Summary of insight – Contribution to knowledge

The literature criticises the amount of variation in brand definition stating that brand is a “term that has become so over defined that its meanings are variable” (Stern 2006, p.126), and furthermore, due to it representing “a dynamic interface between an organisation’s actions and customers interpretations” (de Chernatony, 2009, p.103), can be open to various meaning. Therefore, understanding the interpretations of brand was an important consideration for the data collection. Accordingly, all data participants were asked to define their interpretation of brand meaning (appendix F).

Fundamentally, the data clearly reinforces the literature that a successful brand will offer far more than just functionality; but will offer a cluster of functional and emotional values, which promises a particular experience.” (de Chernatony, 2010, p.116) The data further identified core components of brand success – namely brand ethics and values, brand trust, brand experience, brand awareness, and brand community and belonging. The data asserts that brand values need to be enacted “all the way from the CEO down.” (UoPA2) This correlates with the literature which highlights it is fundamental for organisations to ensure their brand values are lived at every touchpoint as an identity can only be trustworthy if it is actually realised (Alsem and Kostelijk, 2008). The data reinforces stakeholders experience interactions at various touchpoints with a brand and it is during this journey they will consider ‘the extent to which it has fulfilled what it has promised’ (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012. p1051).

Focus on values, ethics and responsibility were clearly present when participants were asked to reflect on characteristics of brand success. It was felt evidence of a shared philosophy surrounding issues of sustainability would make the brand more appealing and encourage brand following. Demonstrating ethical and environmentally friendly behaviours and values was considered to be an important antecedent for brand success. Consumers want brands to demonstrate a societal benefit, rather than to simply be about making profit. Participants voiced an expectation that leading global corporations in particular have a responsibility to behave ethically. The bigger the brand, the greater the expectation is that they should behave in an ethical manner due to the power they have, and the influence brands have with younger generations, who are “drivers for change.” (BUS1)

This would explain why participants also voiced a warmth for smaller independent brands that demonstrate a commitment to ethical, sustainable practices. They were particularly concerned about ethical practices around food consumption and equality in the supply chain. Being able to clearly understand where an organisation stood on such matters made it easier for a consumer to see where they fit into the brand story and whether those values are indeed shared ones. Furthermore, academic participants voiced frustration when brands were not open and transparent about what they are doing in terms of employment policy, charitable arrangements and such like. Brands that work on community projects were favoured.

It is clear from the data that brand ethics are an important antecedent of brand success.
They must demonstrate values that are shared with consumers, but crucially they must be genuinely held values that can be backed up by actions and behaviours over time. Those brands who do not have strong brand ethics may struggle to attract loyal consumers, while those who are ‘faking it’ face significant reputational damage if and when they are found out to be concealing unethical behaviour while projecting a different public persona. Moreover, a focus on the ‘brand story’ was consistent among interviews as an important aspect of the brand’s core values. A need for the brand to communicate its journey was deemed important for the process of critiquing if it is suitable for emotional attachment. Furthermore, the brand personality was discussed by all participants, deeming this to be the essence of brand success. It was felt the brand story feeds into, and offers the foundations of, the brand personality.

However, whilst the demand for conscious branding, there was clear skepticism surrounding brand which “don’t practice what they preach.” (MMUS2) Students were very aware of Greenwashing scenarios with corporate brands; demonstrating how savvy gen z are that they cannot be convinced with words alone; they want to see evidence of brand responsibility.

The theme of consistency was present throughout; predominantly surrounding consistent values and effective communication of these values to stakeholders.

Participants all regarded a sense of strong brand community and belonging as a consequence of brand success. Staff and students alike recognised the importance for experiencing a sense of belonging and connection with the brands they follow. Moreover, it was suggested this sense of belonging contributes to the added value of the brand. The data further identified that a community can build around a brand, giving its members a sense of belonging. This is a step on from the development of a brand experience and brand loyalty, encouraging even stronger brand affiliation. By enabling and encouraging consumers to form relationships with each other as well as with the brand, organisations can begin to build feelings of connection and unity amongst consumers, with the brand itself a central component of those relationships. Interestingly, there appears a strong correlation between the data findings and the literature in suggesting that once basic needs have been satisfied, the more culturally meaningful aspects of consumption start to prevail, and people become increasingly concerned with the symbolic meanings of goods rather than with their functional use (Batey 2016).

In such a context, consumers can also find the confidence to explore their own identity alongside the brand identity – where they share values and where there are synergies, and where there are differences and what those differences may be – both between the consumer and the brand, and the consumer and other consumers of the brand. Furthermore, the literature demonstrates that not only can brand prompt an exploration of shared synergy, but also consumers have relationships with brands which mirror their relationships with other people; they feel and behave towards brands as they do people in their real lives (Kervyn et al 2012; Lanier et al, 2013).

Over time, increasing interactions of this ilk can lead to the development of a community identity where the connections between consumers become so strong that they ultimately result in a sense of unity. In such cases, any criticism of the brand or individual members of the community can be taken as a criticism of the community as a whole, leading to a strengthening of resolve and forging even closer links between members. This is especially obvious in the context of a sports brand, especially a sports team but can be the case with any brand that engenders a strong emotional connection with consumers. Once a brand community has been established, it must be maintained carefully so that it grows stronger over time. This will encourage brand affiliation, with individuals and often other organisations wanting to align themselves with the brand.

Whilst the power the brand yields was forefront in participants' minds, so was the power the consumer yields over the brand. This was particularly noted in discussion surrounding brand ethics and the expectations consumers have on modern-day brands to satisfy and even exceed consumer expectation. Participants recognised that there is pressure from consumers for brands to demonstrate ethical and responsible behaviour, so brands need to be responsive. The role of the influencer was recognised as a key driver in this process, especially from student interviewees. Student interviewees were very clear that brands do and should "influence the way people see the world." (UoPS2) The savvy nature of the student was acknowledged during discussion on brand ethics. Students were very vocal that they "couldn't be convinced by greenwashing by global organisations." (UoPS3) The brand's need for integrity and transparency of commitment to delivering on their ethical promises was resounding during interviews.

The data explains that as well as a brand needing to demonstrate reliability and competence, a successful brand will also exhibit a warmth towards its consumers. This reinforces Aaker et al, (2012) who state that organisations which exhibit both warmth and competence seduce consumers to be more willing to engage and consume from the brand.
Indeed, the emotional connection to the brand was also recognised to be a core function of the brand. Again, student interviewees in particular discussed the emotional, warm side of brand communication and how this had influenced their brand loyalty. Furthermore, the impact to brand community and feeling like "being part of something special" (UoPS1) was noted.

Identity was felt to play a role in brand choice. Interviewees suggested the brands they chose to associate with were validated against criteria of how others would view their brand loyalty. This was particularly important for the theme of brand ethics.

Interviewees commented that they wouldn't want to be seen to be "associated with brands which didn't have a moral compass as this would reflect badly on their own image." (UoPHoB/MM2)

With an understanding of the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success now established, the research now focuses on critically exploring the nature of brand in the context of HE. By understanding how a brand functions in the HE context, it may then become possible to identify common factors present in making that brand a successful one.

The following section focuses on the key themes and codes identified across cases during stages 6 of the recursive abstraction process.

Table 16: Illustration of final coding. Research objective 2

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO2: To critically examine the concept of brand success	**Brand ethics and values**	Societal benefit Shared ideology Brand story Changing perceptions and behaviour Expectation and pressure from consumers	BU, MMU, UoP MMU BU, MMU BU, UoP
	Brand trust	Deliver on promises Brand association Impacts reputation	BU, MMU, UoP BU BU
	Brand experience	Pleasure and excitement Prioritise over convenience Price premium Emotional interactions and associations Expand activities	BU, UoP BU BU BU, MMU, UoP UoP
	Brand awareness	Exciting Pushing boundaries Brand story	MMU MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP
	Brand community and belonging	Encourages brand affiliation Connection Unity Enables consumers to explore own identity	MMU BU, MMU, UoP UoP BU, MMU, UoP

5.5 Research objective 3: To critically examine the explore the nature of brand in the context of HE. Summary of insight – Contribution to knowledge

The data postulates the HE brand to be a “corporate brand” and supports Balmer and Gray (2003) in recognising that a key characteristic of a corporate brand is an orientation towards multiple stakeholders, which is an inevitable component of an HE brand.

Interviewees recognised that internal and external stakeholders play a significant role in the success of a HEI brand and accordingly, the brand needs to service many stakeholders. As such its core values need to resonate and align to all stakeholders; reinforcing Roper and Davies (2007) who emphasises the importance of ‘harmony between the different stakeholders of the brand’ (p.77). It was recognised that this is an inherently difficult proposition due to the nature of the diversity of stakeholders as the HEI brand needs to “cover a lot of bases and cover a lot of people. So, our brand has to be many things to many people.” (UoPA3)

Ali-Choudhury et al (2009) define university brands as “a manifestation of the institution’s features that distinguish it from others, reflect its capacity to satisfy students’ needs, engender trust in its ability to deliver a certain type and level of higher education, and help potential recruits to make wise enrolment decisions.” (Ali-Choudhury et al. 2009 p.85)

Whilst reinforcing Ali-Choudhury et al (2009), the data suggests that a modern HEI brand must also place a strong emphasis on developing a nurturing environment where growth and development is seen as a collaborative journey between student and HEI. The data shows that this nurturing environment is best created when knowledge is created in partnership with students and academics.

By working alongside academics and feeling consulted and encouraged in the development of their own theories, viewpoints and understandings, students expressed feeling that they are part of the institution, rather than ‘end users’ of the service. Accordingly, the data shows that co-creation is a key characteristic of the nature of HE, reinforcing the need for a stakeholder marketing approach for HE, which is founded on “activities and processes within a system of social institutions that facilitate and maintain value through exchange relationships with multiple stakeholder" (Hult et al., 2011, p.44). The data shows that the impact of this approach leads to a stronger sense of community within the universities that successfully implement such an environment. It helps staff and students see success and failure as shared experiences, allowing both sets of stakeholders to feel emboldened and empowered to contribute to a platform that enables academic discussion and debate, where differing opinions are welcomed, and where new theories can not only take root, but grow and flourish. It provides a sense of unity, a one-ness within the institution, which in turn engenders a feeling of closeness with the brand – it becomes part of the students and staff themselves, rather than something that they simply experience or contribute to.

The data shows consistent opinion that universities have "real brands" (BUA2) and validates Brown (2014) who asserts that for many, brands are viewed to be living things, with identities, anatomies and life cycles. Furthermore, whilst the data supports Veloutsou (2008) who suggests that in addition to creating a perception of product or service characteristics, the concept of modern-day branding more specifically focuses on the perception of personality and values, the data suggests HE brands "represent different values" (BUS2) to commercial brands. Rather than being merely focused on the product or service, corporate branding insists upon the use and implementation of a 'Value foundation' (Roper and Davies 2007, p.78).

These values are predominantly offering a nurturing environment for staff and students alike that seeks to "enable, support and inspire." (BUA1) Participants asserted that the spirit of the HE brand is "to create, develop and nurture a sense of unity through offering supportive collaboration and co-creation." (BUA2) Participants therefore felt universities use their brands for disseminating "the core values of the institution and what it stands for" (BUA2) in an effective and appropriate manner. It was clearly articulated therefore that certainly "the HE brand isn't just a tool for managing the reputation." (BUA1)

The importance of creativity and innovation flowing at various touchpoints was considered to be a key characteristic of the HE brand. Students discussed innovation in the physical representation of the HE brand being crucial, while academics discussed the necessity for innovative, research-led pedagogies. Marketing Services discussed the importance of integrated, innovate marketing campaigns. Huber et al (2010) suggest that creating new knowledge and finding new solutions to old problems has always been a central tenet of a university's operations, but this research highlights that innovation itself is also seen as a crucial element of a successful HE brand. The specifics of what innovation means however can vary between different types of university. The data suggests that whilst more traditional universities may trade on their heritage, their outputs remain innovative and fresh. For some universities, this is a more tangible element of their brand. Recent years have seen many universities engaged in a race to build huge glass and steel landmarks, announcing their innovation to the local area via the modernity of their architecture. Contemporary cathedrals to learning are a staple feature on many university campuses now, often coupled with green space, as students look for leafy natural spaces to provide a contrast to the urban nature of their academic surroundings.

The data demonstrates how the HE brand is constantly evolving and "never stands still." (BUS1) The essence of the HE brand is fluid, and furthermore "what the brand means to you is always evolving." (BUS1) As the HE landscape develops and changes, universities must be agile when it comes to reacting to the changes this creates in the marketplace. Participants recognised HEIs must continue to demonstrate innovation and forward-thinking, using whichever outlets for those qualities they feel work best for them. Furthermore, the nature is also subjective and will vary between stakeholders. Participants felt there to be multiple variables which influence perceptions of the nature of the HE brand, including first-hand experiences and interactions. These too are fluid throughout a lifetime. For example, the student's perception of the nature of HE will evolve during and post the student journey.

Interestingly, the data suggests the nature of the HE brand may be different for Russell Group institutions and post-1992s. This postulation was triggered based around the notion that the more "prestigious universities" (BUA2) focus their efforts on research reputation as a fundamental driver, as opposed to the newer institutions which focus more on future proofing student employability. However, irrespective of institutional heritage, interviewees agreed that the role of the HE brand is to inspire, educate and impact by providing mentoring and life tools which will shape and develop values and instill positive mindsets. Demonstrating a progressive nature which is creative, modern and innovative was deemed important for the HE brand as it represents the essence of HE itself in “always pushing boundaries and never standing still.” (UoPS3)

The data supports Huempfner and Kopf (2017) who assert that policy makers and the media have placed greater scrutiny on the higher education industry since the introduction of higher tuition fees, causing a shift in the HE landscape. Indeed, Robinson and Sykes (2014) have previously reported that “in the UK, the marketisation of HE increasingly constructs students as ‘customers’ rather than ‘learners’ (p.35). This behavioural change in students was frequently discussed during the data capture and an increased focus on expectation was noted as a consequence of this; clearly prompting feelings of contention and anxiety from the academic community. Many of whom during interviewees articulated their belief that the introduction of higher tuition fees was an integral reason for such focused branding activity within HE and has “led to increased attention on HE branding as we are competing as businesses.” (UoPA3) Furthermore, UoPA3 suggested that this has also “actively told students to demand more from their institution as the government has given the impression that universities are flush with cash and that as they are now paying more, they should be getting more.” (UoPA3) Interviewees continued to explain how the impact of this is seems to be a gap between students’ perception and expectation of what they should be getting and the service we are providing.” (UoPA3) Participants from the case studies agreed with Gibbs (2011) that these factors have led to the evolution of higher education to a more market-driven culture.

Rankings serve as indicators of excellence and reputation of educational institutions (Alcaide-Pulido, 2013; Irfan et al., 2020). Ranking reports are considered as one of the reliable measures of a university's brand equity (Kalafatis et al., 2016), help branding activity, and enhance reputation (Bowman and Bastedo, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2007; Pusser and Marginson, 2013). The literature suggests rankings influence university choice decisions (Bowman and Bastedo, 2009; Griffith and Rask, 2007; Hazelkorn, 2007; Poole et al., 2018) and also stakeholders' funding and sponsorship decisions (Hazelkorn, 2008). Thereby, securing a position at the top of the league tables provides a strong endorsement for universities and helps them attract high quality students and staff (Olcay and Bulu, 2017).

Rankings have been used to evaluate commercial reputation since the 1980s (e.g., Fortune's Most Admired Companies 1984-2011, Forbes The World's Most Reputable Companies 2011). The university world has been slightly slower to join this trend, but now rankings (league tables) have become increasingly common as a method for measuring the quality of universities at a domestic level. World rankings are now prevalent in the media; created in response to the globalisation of HE. Students, researchers and businesses want to know how a university in Australia compares with one in Sweden (for example) due to the global marketplace for HE. It is acknowledged in the literature that rankings influence key stakeholders' assessments of institutional reputation (Bowman and Bastedo, 2011).

Chapleo (2011 p.414) asserts that one cannot ignore the relationship between university brands and the league tables. The UK has a wide variety of external sources of information such as Key Information Sets, and Destination of Leavers Survey result, which together aid students to understand the differences between undergraduate programmes and institutions. Other well-known domestic rankings, including those driven by the media include: The Times Good University Guide, The Guardian Guide, and those driven by the government (the National Student Survey).

The literature however demonstrates concern within the academic community that the "success of HE is now assessed by the numbers of student it attracts, by the number of graduates securing well-paid jobs, and by research and consultancy revenue, prominently displayed in league tables used to assist consumer choice" (Naidoo and Jamieson 2005).

This research also highlights an increased insecurity and unrest within the academic community due to not only greater work demands on academics but also institutions being driven to "becoming a slave to the endless list of metrics." (UoPA1) However, Chapleo (2011 p.414) also asserts that actually "branding could be used to highlight unique selling points (USPs) to improve league table positions." Whilst this research recognises that some universities focus heavily on academic performance measurements, the data suggests this may be more apparent in older institutions; rather than post-1992s. For many, a tone that expects students to ‘be the best of the best’ is discouraging and off-putting. In many ways this reflects the discussions this thesis has presented around the wider meaning of success in general – that it is not simply about high achievement and external validation.

A school of thought also exists within the literature that rankings play a role in public accountability, as demonstrated by Polkinghorne et. al (2017).

> “If the marketisation of HE is about buyers (students deciding where to spend their time and money on studying for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gain a degree level qualification), then the marketing of HE needs to respond to this with a provision of data so that any student undertaking such a purchase can make an informed decision regarding their university choice” (p. 214).

Not all students want to progress to be the CEO of a multinational; many simply want a rewarding career that offers a good work/life balance and offers a sense of fulfilment and wellbeing. This finding reinforces Petruzzellis and Romanazzi (2010) who suggest that branding in universities actually comprises of many different and complex features including teaching, research, specialisms and consultancy described as “the whole range of criteria that go to make up the quality of a university” (Jevons, 2006, p.466). Therefore, the data clearly asserts that those universities who have ensured their measurement is fit for purpose and responsive to the stakeholders’ specific information need, will be more successful as they are comparing “apples with apples” (UoPA2).

There can be little doubt from the data that this increased attention on brands in HE has unsettled some colleagues as many have felt “left behind with the heavy focus of branding the university.” (UoPA1) Furthermore, it was suggested that skepticism regarding the nature of brand in HE may be attracted due to questions surrounding the appropriateness of brand in non-profit organisations.

> “An argument is that education should not have a brand. The university is not a company; you are a tool for future generations and equipping these generations with the critical ability to decode what they read: To be thinkers of the future.” (UoPA1)

This is reinforced in the literature, whereby scholars note that the adoption of branding strategies may be received with suspicion, even resentment (Hytti et al, 2015; Sataøen and Wæraas, 2015). The literature shows that in some cases, opponents of the introduction of such market forces in HE believe there is actually an ethical contradiction of values between the business world and the world of academia (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007). The data reinforces Chapleo and O’Sullivan, (2017) who assert “The marketisation of HE is often contentious and, for some, challenges the very essence of what HE is for.” (p.152) The way that changes in academic identity interact with the curriculum and how it is taught, along with the impact that student identities have on teaching, assessment and learning outcomes, make the HE sector one that is fundamentally challenging.

UoPA3 considered a key driver for contention surrounding the HE brand is also due to financial concern as “branding isn’t cheap. Academic colleagues who don’t buy into brands argue that the money should have been invested into facilities. So, it causes challenges.” (UoPA3) Perhaps unsurprisingly, many scholars have highlighted resistance to embracing the branding of HEIs in the literature (Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007); some more assertive in their viewpoint than others. The data suggests yet a further reason for such contention which surrounds the complexities of brand equity and measurement in HE, as “brands are very difficult to measure in HE. So, this is one reason why academics are skeptical of HE branding and marketing.” (UoPA1)

The success of brand management may be determined by reviewing and assessing measurement of brand strength and brand value (Balmer 2001), however, as the data highlights, there are significant differences between understanding brand equity from a marketing, or financial perspective. Madden et al. (2006) explain that marketers focus on creating customer value and increasing brand awareness. They go onto explain that in contrast, the finance department is primarily focused on metrics that identify improved profitability and increase shareholder value. Although scholars such as Aaker and Keller conceptualise brand equity differently, they both define brand equity based on the consumers' perceptions of the brands and the brand associations that these consumers hold in their memory (Pappu et al. 2005), this is particularity relevant for higher education. Trying to assess and measure the financial equity of the brand in higher education is extremely difficult due to the nature of the context in which it resides.

Sensitivities surrounding the terminology used for HE branding were also clear during data collection. Interesting discussion surrounding the terminology for the HE brand took place during interviews which promoted the question of the appropriateness of referring to the HE brand as a 'brand.' "Is there a good name for a brand in this sense? That's the issue – the terminology. Social enterprise perhaps?" (MMUA2) The categorisation of the HE brand and "where the brand sits" (MMUS2), was deemed important during data collection. MMUS2 commented the HE brand "should never be commercial. It's an emotional brand." (MMUS2).

The consensus of what HE stands for was consistent across all participants. An accessible "open for all" (UoPMM/HoB2) hub which develops and nurtures staff and students alike to "be the best they can be." (UoPA2) HE was considered to be a safe environment which celebrates and encourages diversity and inclusivity. It was felt that the introduction of higher tuition fees has caused challenged specifically in the widening participation arena as there is perception that education is" now too expensive" (UoPS2), which in essence challenges the demonocracy of HE.
The data demonstrates a characteristic of the nature of HE is to have a strong emotional connection between an HEI and its staff and students. At their core, universities do not exist to make money, or to make rich people richer. Their raison d'etre is a social mission to improve lives. This can be achieved through research that impacts the world around them, or through working to influence the development of professional practice. Crucially, it is also to improve lives of the students who come through their doors – whether it is to satisfy intellectual curiosity or, increasingly in the current, marketised environment, to lay the foundations for a rewarding career. It is that collaboration between staff and students that is such a distinctive element of the HEI brand.

This component of the research provides a new perspective to understanding the nature of the HE brand from a variety of differing perspectives which could lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the how the brand is similar and/or distinct from other non-HE brands such as commercial brands. Participants were united that the nature of a HE brand is distinct, and very different to that of a commercial brand. The HE brand was expressed as being a culture dependent on emotional connections and relationships, which is grounded and embedded in society. It was felt that the staff community are integral for enacting the brand values at every touchpoint.

Participants noted the essence of the brand is about being relevant and impacting society. As well as acting as a mentor for students, the themes of value added for society was fundamental. Being influential as a driver for change was noted as a key area of significance for the HE brand. It was felt that the HE brand has a responsibility to influence future generations to inspire a “transition in society.” (BUHoB/MM2) To enable this, participants recognised this relies on strong partnerships and relationships. The theme of co-creation was raised as one key characteristic for providing the distinct nature. The longevity of the brand attachment was also recognised as a key characteristic of HE which is different to commercial brands. Students will continue to feel part of the brand for a lifetime; not only whilst they experience the brand.

The following section focuses on the key themes and codes across cases identified during stages 6 of the recursive abstraction process.

Table 17: Illustration of final coding. Research objective 3

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO3: To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education	**Nurturing environment**	Enabling Unity Co-creation	BU, MMU, UoP BU BU
	Innovative	Creative, modern Pedagogical approaches Servicescape Constantly progressing	BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU,UoP
	Distinct culture	Formative phase Relies on partnerships Social mission	BU, MMU BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU
	Social value	Driver for change Inspire, inform, impact Constantly move and innovate Transition from observers to doers Shape the future	UoP MMU, UoP UoP MMU BU, MMU, UoP
	Core values	Opportunity to provide differentiation Aligned for all stakeholders Complex due to brand architecture	UoP BU, UoP BU
	Inclusive	Social inclusivity Pedagogical inclusivity Safe space	UoP BU, UoP UoP

5.6 Research objective 4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities Summary of insight – Contribution to knowledge

This research objective provides a new perspective to understanding brand success in a number of contexts and from different angles. Through understanding the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success, it may become possible to identify them in an HE environment and examine whether they are similar or distinct from the broader definition of brand success. The following section focuses on the key themes and codes identified during stages 6 of the recursive abstraction process.

5.6.1 Antecedents of brand success in HE

5.6.1.1 Servicescape

The data clearly highlights the importance of the “physical representation of the brand” (BUS1) in its servicescape. Buildings, amenities, and green space were all considered crucial factors for HEI brand success. The research demonstrates that the servicescape of the institution plays a significant role in the university brand personality, which as the literature suggest may influence decision making. (Kaplan et al. 2010).

The data demonstrates that staff and students alike expect to see their HEI being progressive and innovative (MMUA2) in terms of facilities and buildings. Investment in the servicescape, both financially and emotionally, must be ongoing, and not seen as a one-off expense.

Interestingly, there was significant focus placed on the green space of campus life. The need for open green areas was noted by all universities, despite their varied locations and settings. Spaces where tranquillity and an opportunity to engage with nature were deemed crucial. Furthermore, respondents also noted that reflecting the university’s surroundings was also important, and artwork from local artists helped to grow a sense of belonging and pride of the vicinity. This was evidenced by a student who moved to Bournemouth saying: “reinforcing the location in the servicesscape helped me to make Bournemouth my home and not feel like I was merely a visitor" (BUS1). This reinforces the literature which asserts universities use their campus attributes as a way to create a sense of attachment with potential audiences (Colomb and Kalandides, 2010).

This research and literature in the HE branding domain suggests that it may be more challenging for post-1992 universities to present a distinctive offering, denied as they are the history and heritage of their longer-established rivals as such, they are more likely to rely on modern campus spaces to entice students, which offer the opportunity to show distinctions to their competitors (Kemp et al, 2012). The data demonstrates how post-1992 institutions are very aware they are unable to replicate the grandeur of universities considered as grand seats of learning, where lecture theatres and university buildings may date back centuries and have played host to truly historical moments. Instead, the towns and cities that are home to post-1992 universities have seen the concrete efficiency of the 1960s and 70s replaced at breakneck speed by sprawling glass and steel cathedrals to learning. These modern-day monuments now impose themselves not only on the horizons of their hometowns, but also on the minds of those who live there. In an era where many provincial towns and cities have seen little capital investment in new buildings and architecture, post-19992 universities have stepped in to fill the breach in construction that was previously filled by mills, factories, office blocks and retail malls.

This research shows that as newer universities are focusing on their innovative, modern approaches to education, their buildings are more than bricks and mortar – or in many cases, metal and tempered glass. Instead, they serve as visual representations of the university brand, communicating the values held by the organisations they house before a visitor has even set a foot through the door.

5.6.1.2 Location

The data reinforces the literature that ‘location’ is a fundamental element of an institution’s brand (Bennett and Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Chapleo, 2010) and is known to be a strong influence for student choice of study destination (Angulo et al, 2010; Veloutsou, et al 2004). The theme of location image bearing significant relevance to university choice was discussed by students in relation to study location. Staff discussed place image as an important factor for their own employability, as well being a desirable city to live in. Staff and students alike recognised that Manchester is a favourable location to study, and therefore “there is a big emphasis on the city, and this influences why people study here.” (MMUHoB/MM1)

The data reinforces the literature demonstrating how destinations can be branded (Sevin 2014) which focus on ‘experiential marketing’ to provide experiences whilst building emotional relationships and connections with consumers (Hudson and Ritchie 2009), as well as create a sense of attachment with potential students and their families (Colomb and Kalandides, 2010). Accordingly, universities are using their location as a way to compete in a crowded marketplace and respond to the threat of substitution (Hanna and Rowley, 2013).

The literature suggests that the various attributes of the city or town the HEI resides (whether based on the heritage, culture or the surrounding natural environment), can be used to create distinctive brand images which enable an opportunity for differentiation from competitors (Kemp et al, 2012) similar course offerings (Rutter et al, 2017). This research shows that HEI target audiences are very aware of the sophisticated marketing around institutional locations taking place in the marketing collateral to entice applications: “The university marketing team made me aware that not only was it by the sea, it is also practical and affordable.” (UoPS2)

This research complements the literature by demonstrating how brand identity can be combined with location to create a brand personality that will be aligned to the location’s operational features as well as its emotional benefits (Morgan et al, 2003). Of particular interest also, this research reinforces literature which asserts that consumers chose to connect with locations that best enable them to create and express their own desired identity (Kemp et al., 2012). The case studies also asserted that there needs to be a synergy of personalities between the location and the institution. Warnaby and Medway, (2013) refer to this as a ‘place offer’. For example, Manchester’s status as a northern powerhouse had an impact on how students considered the university as an extension of the city. This was also an important consideration for staff when it came to considering a university’s brand – they would think of the kind of work/life balance on offer, and how they could spend their free time. A coastal university like Bournemouth, for example, would be more appealing to someone who enjoyed windsurfing than an urban university like Manchester would be.

Students and staff alike constantly referred to the location of their institution as being an integral element of the overall feel and identity of the university. All Marketing Services interviewees reinforced this insight by acknowledging they use a very specific location narrative in their marketing communications. Clearly, all participants considered the “location and heritage to be a big part of who we are” (MMUA1) and “probably one of the main antecedents of a university’s brand success for students.” (UoPS2)

Furthermore, this research suggests that in the absence of institutional heritage, the university may instead draw upon the heritage of the location in which it resides. BU staff recognised this as a marketing tactic they employ throughout their marketing communications. Interestingly, scholars suggest that marketers may even try to engage consumers on an emotional level by embellishing an existing heritage or creating a completely fictitious one (Beverland et al, 2008) This may be because longer-established brands transport consumers to their own past, making them feel part of the community that shared those brands in the past (Brown et al, 2003).

This longing for experiences or products of the past invokes a feeling of sentimentality for times gone by (Hudson and John 2013). The data validates this theory by demonstrating that where a HEI doesn’t have a sustained heritage of its own, it draws upon the heritage of the destination in which it resides.

The extent to which a university engages with the local community was also identified as important by the data. Staff and students both considered it to be important that a university is part of a community, not a community all of its own. Universities that were embedded into the fabric of their local community were seen in a more favourable light as a result. The data provides evidence of stakeholders wanting to feel a belonging to the local community and not "existing in a university vacuum" (BUS3) suggesting that "working with local councils on location awareness is important as students look for the location first and then look to see what universities are in that city." (UoPS3) The literature reinforces this by suggesting that HEIs who link their brand to other brands will actually shape stakeholders' perception (Hanna and Rowley, 2015) and could actually enhance brand equity (Hanna and Rowley 2013).

The data also shows that students also consider their university choice in the context of staying in or near their university town after graduating. Therefore, the type of employment and social opportunities a town or city offers will be an important factor. This also extends to part-time work while studying. The cost of living was also identified as important, with students looking for value for money in all areas, not just accommodation or tuition fees. The cost of living in a university town bore a close relationship to the overall image of the town, with different motivations from students influencing whether they were looking for somewhere they could keep their costs down or pay a premium for a more culturally rounded experience in a large city, for example.

All these factors combine to deliver points of differentiation for the location the university is set in, many of which will be the largest points of differentiation considered by students when it comes to their choice. In this way, all three case studies suggested that location is a key element of determining whether a university brand can succeed or not.

5.6.1.3 Effective brand management

This research reinforces the work of Gordon-Isasi, et al (2020) who suggest that HEIs send messages and signals to prospective students and their families through marketing communication to create positive cognitive responses. Furthermore, HE marketing data participants reinforced Cui, Hu and Griffith (2014) that there is little contemporary research into what constitutes effective HE brand management. The data suggests these marketing professionals feel there is limited guidance for brand managers within the HE sector, and appropriate investigation into the creation of context specific marketing tools which attempt to assess brand success in HEIs are absent and generic branding models do not ‘fit’ appropriately.

Scholars have indicated that indeed, when HE borrows marketing techniques from the commercial sector, it is often outdated and shallow versions that are imported (Kotler and Fox 1995). Branding models such as the brand value chain, (Keller 2013), Young and Rubicam’s Brand Asset Valuator (Green and Applefield 2010) and the Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer 1997) argue that identification of a clear ‘brand principle’ is important (Chapleo 2007). However, these conventional brand management techniques are argued to be inadequate in the HE market, having been borrowed from the business sector but not adapted for the context of HE (Maringe and Gibbs 2009). Kylander and Stone (2012) postulate that branding frameworks are executed in the commercial world to “boost name recognition and raise revenue” and cannot simply be imported to the non-profit remit.

Chapleo (2011) argues that “university branding is inherently complex” (p,143), and therefore the application of commercial approaches could well be over-simplistic. Keller (2013) agrees that it is important to assess brand performance but that the monitoring systems employed should be matched to the organisation being assessed. The literature suggests that these conventional brand management techniques are inadequate in HE also due to rising competition, greater scrutiny from ‘customer’ and internal resistance to the concepts (Jevons 2006). Barrett (1996) asserts that “It is both regrettable and ominous that the marketing focus, explicitly borrowed from business, should be accepted and even welcomed.” (p.70)

The data clearly presents the opinion that university brands are ‘real’ brands: “Conceptually it’s a brand. Physically it’s a brand. It communicates its brand values. It is a brand.” (UoPA1) Moreover, the data suggests successful HE brands can be as strong as commercial brands: “I would say that because universities understand brands, most universities have better brands than the vast majority of SMEs,” (UoPA1) which are “better managed than a whole heap of SMEs.” (UoPA1)
It was suggested that the agile nature of the HE brand, in addition to the “scrutiny about what universities are doing from fee-payers,” (UoPA2), has triggered the need for slick and sophisticated marketing campaigns, reinforcing Urde et al, (2007) who asserted that the integration of brand across the organisation is crucial. Recognition that as the HEI stakeholder has changed and become far more diverse is obvious in the data, so too is the need for the brand management to be as agile. “The university has so many different types of stakeholders, so the brand success needs to be so diverse to satisfy everyone” (UoPA2) reinforcing Balmer (1998) who asserts the need for a brand’s personality and identity to be understood by each stakeholder’s perspective (Balmer 1998). Both the theory and the data conclude that the role of the university brand manager can be made more difficult due to some employees who view themselves, or the department they are aligned to, as the brand rather than the overarching HEI brand (Jevons 2006).

Not only does the data recognise that “effective brand management in HE is crucial” (MMUS1) for the success of the HE brand, moreover, the data argues that the need for effective brand management is as fundamental for the internal audience as it is external and that continuous work to improve perceptions of the brand’s relevance to all employees is “crucial for the success of the HE brand.” (UoPA3) This validates the literature which informs that “an organisation needs to have a single clear corporate identity to secure its reputation in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders” (Ram et al. 2007).

An existence of gaps between differing stakeholders’ perspectives of the brand (Aaker 1996; de Chernatony 1999) is deemed to be a threat hence this data aligns with Roper and Davies (2007) who assert that shared values between stakeholders help to “unify and strengthen the corporate brand” (p77).

Branding collateral and other marketing aesthetics have immense power of persuasion and influence consumers' attitudes and perceptions towards brands. This research reinforces Poole et al., (2018) who argue that prospective students and their parents are increasingly finding university marketing communication essential for making higher education decisions.

Brakus et al (2009) asserts that marketing visuals lead consumers to think, feel and sense in a specific way, which can then change their behavioural responses. However, as the data demonstrates, effective brand management runs far deeper than purely executing a suite of marketing portfolio: which Baker and Balmer (1997) argues is actually a greater challenge for corporate brands than it is for product brands. Furthermore, as part of wider brand management, consistent messaging is crucial. Branding and marketing must also remain agile due to the speed and complexity of the HE environment. The use of corporate communications helps to communicate brand values and philosophy effectively in terms of influencing stakeholders (Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). The data therefore suggests that in order to bring academic colleagues along with a change of branding focus, evidence of the benefits and impact are crucial as "when you have clear recognition for your steps, like for example, increasing the ranking, then people will be more favourable towards the brand." (UoPA1) It was suggested that a lack of buy-in from those colleagues delivering the student experience at the front line can make the brand very vulnerable and affect the success of the brand.
"It's all about managing that brand experience at every touch point, and to try to engage everyone with the university brand. It's incredibly difficult to do." (BUHoB/MM1).

This research demonstrates how the case study institutions ensure they provide targeted, relevant experiences at appropriate times to ensure stakeholders have access to the information they need.

5.6.1.4 Brand identity

A further conclusion of this research correlating to the literature is that the brand identity is at the core of the organisational brand (Alsem and Kostelijk 2008). The literature reinforces the strength of a positive brand identity; suggesting that actually it may result in an enhanced reputation and even prompt a positive effect on the satisfaction level of students (Panda et al., 2019).

Kotler and Fox (1995) assert that stakeholders form images of HEIs with often limited and inaccurate information, which further reinforces the need for a clear and credible identity. The data reinforces the need for clear brand identity which is communicated effectively to the diverse portfolio of its stakeholders in an integrated approach.

The data reinforces that identity is a key antecedent for brand success in HEIs for staff and students alike. Moreover, it is suggested that actually, post-1992 universities need to work harder than Russell Group institutions to create a strong identity due to competitors such as Oxford and Cambridge in the marketplace.

> "You see Oxford or Cambridge and you know who they are instantly. Everyone in the world recognises them. They don't need to change, so they don't need to invest into their brand identity as other younger institutions do so aggressively." (MMUS1)

The data reinforces the importance of effectively communicating the brand identity and the need for the "visual representation of the brand to be constant." (BUS2) The data demonstrates the need for the university brand identity to be visually strong both physically within the servicescape, but also throughout its communications. UoPS3 reflected**:** "Everything about this university's brand is very visual. The imagery reminds you of the brand values all the time." The data demonstrates how hard HEIs work to develop and communicate their identity effectively. Students commented on needing to see a strong narrative on and off-line which encapsulates the excitement and sense of adventure that their HEI offers, whilst staff recognised the tone of language used, accompanied with excessive use of bright, bold imagery in prospectuses is used to convey a desirable lifestyle. This reinforces the literature in the HE marketing domain which suggests that the increasingly competitive market of HE has required HEIs to develop competency in not just their branding and reputation management but also their projected image to society (Chapleo 2015b) and it is essential to understand how the institution’s identity is formed in order to build strategies and improve management decisions (Arpan, Raney and Zivnuska,2003).

However, establishing a single identity that represents the organisation is considered to require consistency in presentation (de Chernatony and Dall-Olmo Riley 1999; Dean et al. 2016). In fact, pushing multiple brand identities can prompt confusion and cause challenges in brand implementation (Alcaide-Pulido et al 2017). However, crafting a single identity and communicating with a single voice is challenging, especially so in the complex NFO landscape (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014; Wæraas 2008).

Findings in the data from BU corroborated that experiencing a clash of identity priorities in the HEI had caused tension and even confrontation between departments. Whilst there is a clear steer in the literature that “an organisation needs a single clear corporate identity to secure its reputation in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders” (Herstein et al, 2007, p.485), Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006, p.769) suggests that actually, in an environment as diverse as HE, having a unified image would be “virtually impossible” Waeraas and Solbakk (2009, p. 459) suggest that expressing a single identity for a university “may be too complex and fragmented’ and that it is important to ‘retain multiple values and identities as it may promote uniqueness.”

Reinforcing the literature, the data shows that successful brand identity requires ‘buy-in’ (BUA3) throughout the organisation as this will lead to experiencing a sense of belonging (MMUA2). Participants felt that if stakeholders felt happy with the brand, they would be more likely to feel part of the university identity. Reinforcing research from Balmer and Gray (2003), the case studies asserted that a key tactical activity of their branding activity has been focused on achieving an alignment of identities. Furthermore, MMUA1 noted that “staff should not only have their individual identity, but also be part of the overarching university identity. If they don’t feel this, then they're less likely to promote a positive outlook." The data reinforced therefore that it is crucial that the employees "understand what the identity of the organisation is" (MMUA2) and validates Roper and Fill (2012) who assert that employees need to understand exactly what the brand identity stands for. The data further suggests that employees also need to recognise their "relevance to the brand." (MMUHoB/MM2) This reinforces He and Balmer (2007) who coin this as "organisational identity." (p.770).

5.6.1.5 Strong brand ethics and values

The literature clearly asserts that those brands which have been crafted and nurtured to correspond with the emotional needs of their consumers will be the most successful (Chapleo, 2010; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001). This was reinforced during the data collection, where it was felt to be important that shared values between the organisation and the consumer were at the heart of a brand's ethics – not just a brand paying lip service to do something it felt consumers wanted to see. Student participants were very aware of corporate greenwashing, demonstrating an astuteness that suggests they are not fooled by superficial, shallow gestures and can identify when something is being done for show, or for purely political reasons.
In addition to the expectation that universities will have an impact on the world around them, the data showed that being guided by strong brand ethics and values is also an expectation for universities.

Within the data, it was suggested that social brands (not-for-profit organisations), are more liked and trusted than commercial brands. Whilst it was considered that a successful brand does not need to be a likable brand in order to be respected by consumers, it was noted that people's affection towards successful brands will vary depending on the sector in which it operates. However, it was felt there is greater need for not-for-profit organisations to be liked by consumers. This is due to the importance these brands have on their commitment to strong social interaction and social good, rather than purely profit-making.

For an institution to hold certain values and ethical viewpoints is not in itself enough to be considered a successful brand, however. It is equally important that the brand communicates and demonstrates those values in what it says and what it does, so that consumers understand them. This enables the core values of the brand to be matched to the core values of the consumer. If a university recycles 100% of its waste, for example, it needs to make sure stakeholders know that to be the case so that they can align themselves with that university because they share that belief.
The data shows participants highlighting the importance of a strong brand story when it comes to establishing the authenticity of a brand's ethics – that behaviours and values can be demonstrated to have existed over a long period of time, ideally dating back to the founding of the brand or organisation, and strongly reflected in the

people that were involved in that process. This is reinforced in the literature by Roper and Davies (2007), who identified the perspective of corporate branding is on the long-term strategy and “values are real and not merely contrived for advertising purposes.” (p77)

5.6.1.6 Brand accessibility

Democratisation of HE has led to greater equality of opportunity for UK students, but it has also shone an increasingly brighter light on the fact that universities need to consider how accessible they are as part of their brand. The literature notes that a successful and well-known university brand possesses the ability to present itself as a “top” and/or “‘world-class” university, which will have a direct impact on prospective students as well as their families (Charles et al. 2002). However, this research highlights that for many students in post-1992 institutions, they want to see the brand communicating they are welcoming to all students and not apply pressure for being “outstanding students.” (UoPS2)

This research further questions if this has led to differences between more traditional institutions such as those in the Russell Group, and post-92 universities. The latter have had much more experience when it comes to broadening the appeal of a university education and, in the process, making it more accessible to those from non-traditional backgrounds. An accessibility divide between old and new universities was apparent in the data.

> “A lot of universities, especially the older ones, talk about their students being the best of the best. I don’t want that. I just want to be successful in what I need to be. I don’t want to be the best of the best. This university says, if I study hard, I will do well. It’s not so aggressive around being the best students, which I think can be harmful.” (MMUS1)

In more recent years there have been fears that tuition fees will create barriers for students. The literature suggests that it is estimated that modern-day graduates will leave higher education with debt of over £44,500 which is largely due to their student loan (Tetlow, 2016). Concerns for personal debt accumulated through their student journey were frequent during the data collection. In response to the marketisation of HE being drive by the introduction of tuition fees (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2016), financial inclusivity has been a key consideration for HEIs. In financial terms, the help and support a university can give to students forms a key element of their brand perception. Scholarships and bursaries are one important strand to this, while reactive and responsive support such as hardship funds can also demonstrate a genuine and ongoing commitment towards ensuring financial equality. The data shows how important it is that the brand communicates clear and informed advice. In an increasingly connected world, a university will find itself as a multicultural, multinational hub of learning and education. If part of a university's mission is to encourage debate, development and different approaches – and respecting the different conversations that will arise as a result – then it can be seen that inclusivity is an important element of the core nature of the brand. The data correlates with findings in the research asserting that different students respond to different ways of learning, with some cultures and personalities more confident in group situations and others happier working alone (Zhu and O'Sullivan 2020).

The data suggests that inclusivity has two distinct branches: Social inclusivity and pedagogical inclusivity. Participants voiced the nature of the HE brand is to understand and embrace inclusivity as one would expect on a pedagogical perspective, but also, interestingly, the need for inclusivity on a social- emotional level was deemed crucial. Participants voiced the need for students to be viewed as individual learners with individual learning styles and needs.

The days of a homogenous student body are long gone, and a university needs to feel like home to people of all races, nationalities, genders, sexualities, disabilities and social classes. Universities must be places that collect people, that bring them together and treat them equally. In so doing, HEIs are creating an inclusive environment that no longer belongs exclusively to the white, upper-class elite. This research demonstrates how this philosophy applies to staff every bit as much as it does to students. In an environment where students are encouraged to be themselves – where they feel safe to join Student Union clubs and societies that celebrate their differences – they will feel listened to and respected. Exactly the same is true for the staff at a university. If they feel consulted and listened to, then they will consider that the brand is reflective of them and their values, which makes their buy-in far more likely.

5.6.2 Nature of brand success in HE

5.6.2.1 Identity alignment

By engaging in a collaborative process, fostering a synergy of identity between HEI and stakeholder, and aligning brand identity with stakeholder perceptions, HEIs will achieve brand harmony as a means for relationship building (Alsem and Kostelijk 2008). This research corroborates with the literature that the HE brand is dependent on stakeholder perceptions, through brand experiences and interactions, stakeholders develop their perception of the organisation and its brand (Dean et al. 2016; Saleem and Iglesias 2016).

The research also corroborates the literature that the importance of aligning brand identity and stakeholder perceptions, resulting in a shared brand meaning, should not be overstated (Bélanger, Syed, and Mount 2007). Furthermore, as both Hashim, et al., (2020) and the data findings from this research demonstrate, understanding the identities that students assign to their university can offer insights into student-university relationships. However, an identity can only be trustworthy if it is actually realised, making the core competencies of the organisation a must for the foundation of its brand (Alsem and Kostelijk 2008). This is only possible at an organisational level if there are shared objectives and beliefs that cascade through all levels, and that these are seen as non-negotiable and a core part of the brand's identity. When all levels of the organisation know that senior management are committed to certain ideals, they will all work around issues to achieve those ideals, demonstrating resilience in order to do so.

This research also complements the literature by asserting that brands can embody, influence and communicate consumer identities (Fournier 1998; Lam et al. 2010). The data suggests there is a desire for synergy between the identity of the institutional brand and the identity of the stakeholder. The literature correlates with this by suggesting that owning a positive brand image can often be a key driver in influencing a student to enrol at a particular university Gutman and Miaoulis (2003). The data demonstrates that students often responded to HEI brands that mimicked their own personality characteristics. This further complements the theory that consumers make stronger connections with brands that empower them to create –

and subsequently express – their own identity (Kemp et al., 2012).
It is therefore essential for HEIs to understand how their image is formed in order to build strategies and improve management decisions (Arpan, Raney and Zivnuska,2003) as the theory states that an organisation achieves its greatest advantage when employee actions and brand identity reinforce each other (Aurand et al, 2005). Alcaide-Pulido et al (2017) however suggests that in practice, HEI strategies often focus too heavily on communicating values, building global awareness, and demonstrating the economic value of the institution, when in actual fact, strategies aimed at improving image could have a more positive effect on successful branding as there would be a greater fit. The case studies in this research certainly corroborated this with their image management.

Furthermore, the research reveals the need for HEIs to seek suitable networks with organisations which mirror their brand values. Participants identified how co- creation with brands which share synergy with their identity have developed the HEI's brand success through the association. This is reinforced in the literature which suggests that engaging in relationships with strategically selected partners, HEIs can increase their competitiveness and their ability to attract and convince stakeholders (Bozkurt, 2018). The literature also suggests that HEIs who link their brand to other brands will actually shape stakeholders' perception (Hanna and Rowley, 2015) and could actually enhance brand equity (Hanna and Rowley 2013).

The need for an environment where employees feel "consulted is crucial in HE." (BUHoB/MM2) in the process of fostering alignment and cooperation. Reinforced in the literature, Hemsley –Brown and Gonnawardana (2007) maintain that because brand consistency depends on the brand being understood by staff, then it's crucial that staff themselves are the starting point of the corporate identity. Ind (2001) suggests that employers need to engage with their employees to help them identify with the organisation. In doing so, they will be more likely to become brand champions who fully embrace the brand. All three case studies evidenced this as a key priority for their internal communications. The data further reinforces the literature (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Hatch and Schultz, 2001) in suggesting that that senior leaderships teams should play an integral role in delivering key messages to the wider institution.

This research shows that at their heart, HEIs are constructed of people working together to achieve shared goals, and it is from here that corporate resilience takes root. In a connected, consulted and empowered workforce with common goals and shared values, challenges to those goals and values are seen as something that face each and every individual, not just a problem for the organisation that need to be solved at a corporate level.

Values hold strong advantage for an HEI brand because they can display consistency and longevity. Wæraas (2008) suggests using the diversity of values is fruitful for public sector organisation branding. In a changing marketplace, the focus of an HEI can change frequently – faculties are renamed and restructured, the emphasis on research, education and professional practice can be altered, key personnel can come and go. Similarly, prestige can change in the blink of an eye. A change in how a league table is calculated, a cut in research funding, a well-publicised success by a rival institution – all these factors can quickly impact an HEI's standing almost overnight, meaning prestige is a volatile currency in which to trade. Values, however, can survive any strategic restructuring. They can provide a baseline of consistency, providing solid foundations on which other, more changeable and reactive elements of a brand, can grow and change.

However. this research highlights how internal mismatching of brand values may prompt contention among colleagues especially in the academic community. Therefore, achieving a strategically aligned brand both internally and externally needs to be priority as otherwise internal disconnect could threaten and damage the brand's future. This correlates with Chapleo (2010) who asserts that a brand will be more successful if its values correspond to stakeholders' emotional needs. Furthermore, when a value is not truly embedded into the processes and policies of an organisation and is instead viewed as a marketing strapline, different departments may easily undermine the entire effort when they behave in a way that is at odds with the values supposedly expressed by the central brand.

Furthermore, findings from this research corroborate the work of Miles and Mangold (2005) who assert that, with the mission and values being at the core of the brand management process, the brand must be supported from within as brand meaning develops from a shared understanding where internal and external stakeholders all influence the meaning of the brand (Dean et al. 2016; Merz et al., 2009; Ballantyne and Aitken 2007).

5.6.2.2 Co-creation

The data shows that for staff, the opportunity to be closely involved in helping others start that journey in a safe and inclusive environment is a source of pride. Whether the focus is education, research or professional practice, university staff are heavily motivated by changing things for the better. Sharing that mission with those around them – both fellow staff and the students – leads to a shared sense of purpose, a feeling of belonging and community, and an attachment that is about so much more than tangible outcomes. This correlates with Dollinger, Lodge and Coates' (2018) conceptual model of value co-creation in HE constitutes "the process of students' feedback, opinions, and other resources such as their intellectual capabilities and personalities, integrated alongside institutional resources" (p.38) to create shared value to both students and HEI alike.

In many ways this sums up the nature of a successful HE brand; as demonstrated through the case studies who all have shown that HE brand success is founded very much on a partnership between the students and the staff, working together on a journey of co-creation and co-production, with the connection between the two resulting in strong emotional attachments to the brand.
Furthermore, the data identified that co-creation via community partnerships had a fundamental part to play in creating a sense of belonging within the HEI sector. Students articulated that they do not want to be parachuted into a new town or city only to live in a bubble and then leave without ever interacting and co-creating with the community within which their university exists. Instead, they favoured a strong engagement with the communities that already exist in and around their university. The case studies reported on the value of forming strong partnerships with councils and other local organisations.

The data findings also demonstrate the need for co-creation in the HE brand itself – all three case studies presented examples of how they have consulted with their student community to grow their understanding of how the brand is perceived and to align accordingly. This correlates with Díaz-Méndez and Gummeson (2012) who suggested students are not just co-creators in their education, but actually co-creators in the HE brand itself and accordingly need to work with the HEI brand managers as co-contributors.

5.6.2.3 Driver for change

The data from all three case studies reinforces the literature by demonstrating how the increasingly competitive marketplace of HE has required HEIs to develop competency in not just their branding and reputation management, but also the image they project to society (Chapleo 2015b).

This research also clearly correlates with Mumby,(2016, p. 3) in highlighting that branding has great power “in the spheres of sensemaking and identity.” It seems relevant therefore for HEIs to disseminate not only the commercial efficiency of branding, but also its influence on society Alvesson, 2013; Brannan et al., 2015; Karreman & Rylander, 2008; Lair, 2005; Land & Taylor, 2010; Willmott, 2010). The data consistently presents a narrative which believes that universities should not exist in vacuum to solely produce skilled workforces for the future, but instead have a higher mission to help society. The research asserts from all case studies the dedication and commitment they have placed on their responsibility to inspire, inform and educate.

Furthermore, participants asserted that it is not enough for HEI brands to simply build on existing knowledge or continue paths that have been pre-determined by governments or powerful organisations that commission research. Instead, at the core of HE brand success, universities will using their intellectual freedom and safety to not simply develop answers to problems, but to decide whether or not the right problems are being considered – or whether they are being considered in the right way.

All case study participants felt their HEI brand has been proactively integrating into wider society and being a key driver for change who “use their brand to stop us being observers to become doers.” (MMUS1) Corroborating with the literature this research shows that the nature of a successful HE brand is powerful as not only does it influence your feelings towards the brand itself, but it can also influence your thoughts on the wider world and enable behavioural change and human progress for positive social outcomes.

The time spent at university is a formative phase for the vast majority of students – whether they are young undergraduates taking their first steps into adulthood and the world beyond, or mature students looking to change career direction or help accelerate their progress in their existing profession. The experience of university by most consumers changes them. Because it happens at such a key stage in life, and the impact of those changes will inform the rest of their life, the experience tends to stay with them long after they have graduated.
As one student articulated during data collection, their time at university is something that they will "feel for life." (UoPS2). Keller (2013) and Schmitt (2012) suggest that successful brands facilitate life enhancing experiences for the consumer. The data in this research shows this to be the same for the HE brand.

Of course, the university experience is not for everyone, and there are some students who disengage (or never fully engage) with their university; according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2022b), consistently over 7% of students on average do not continue their studies after their first year at university. Inevitably, it is the students who recognise the value of their university experience and feel it helped them to grow as people that have "formed the strongest emotional attachments to the brand." (UoPA3) as this research demonstrates.
Consequently, it is crucial that the brand touchpoints are positive and reinforce the HEI brand values. This correlates with the literature which asserts that brand experiences and interactions develop a perception of the organisational brand (Dean et al, 2016; Saleem and Iglesias, 2016).

Furthermore, throughout the data findings a key reflection from interviewees was the ability a successful HE brand has to building one's self esteem in the process of enabling a transformational experience. This corelates with Jan et al (2015) who suggests that self-esteem helps us thrive and is "linked to our sense of belonging, identity, worthiness, respect and competence" (p.53). Furthermore, the data supports the literature asserting that if the university brand embraces a culture which recognises its stakeholders as respected members of the institution community with individual contributions to make to the organisation, then its community will feel supported, motivated, and able to thrive (Dobson and Conway, 2003).

5.6.2.4 Delivering on promises

The literature clearly asserts that brands aim to promote an impression of competence and engender positive behaviour towards the organisation (Griskevicius, et al, 2007). Findings from the data reinforce this is true for HE brands; the organisation must not over-promise and under-deliver as this will be detrimental to the brand (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000).

Leijerholt et al (2019) asserted that “a strong organisational brand is dependent on a unified perception of the brand among both internal and external stakeholders” (p.276). Delivering on these brand values and promises made by the organisation is therefore crucial for the process of achieving buy-in and trust among both internal and external stakeholders.

The data suggests that due to the marketised landscape of the HE sector, the need for HE brands to deliver on their promises is paramount. Balaji, Roy and Sadeque (2016, p. 3023) contend that, with the increased scrutiny of the value offered by HEIs, branding conveys “signals of trust and excellence.” Furthermore, having a team of positive and brand aligned employees in an organisation is an extremely powerful asset as it can provide a competitive edge (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

The data findings correlate with the literature to suggest that HEIs needs to deliver on their promises in a genuine and transparent manner and inconsistencies may be considered harmful to the brand (Matthiesen and Phau, 2005) and may also undermine the brand credibility (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001).

In a demanding marketplace where universities need to demonstrate their value, it can be said that a brand which fails to deliver on its promises will fail to deliver full stop.

5.6.3 Consequences of brand success in HE

5.6.3.1 Brand community and belonging

All stakeholders of a university have a shared interest in seeing it perform well. If its research is seen to be creating positive change in the world, if its alumni are seen to be securing high profile jobs, if its students are winning awards, then everyone gains from such accolade. The profile of the university is raised by many members of the brand community, and the whole community benefits from their connections with a 'good' university. If a university's research is questioned, if its employment levels are poor, and if it seen as an "ivory tower" (BUA2), then it is the whole community that suffers as a result of their connection to the university. Therefore, a shared sense of purpose can be seen to exist amongst the university's many different communities, helping to draw them together in a series of human relationships that place the university at the very centre. The data identified that a sense of brand community and belonging therefore was a strong component of the HEI brand. This reinforces scholars such as Williams Jr & Omar (2014, p. 22) who suggest that higher education branding presents "students and graduates with a sense of identification – with a way to identify themselves as both consumers and lifelong members of a brand community."

The data further reinforces Devis-Rozental and Barron (2020) who state that for many students the transition between upper school and university is simply too great; students can feel overwhelmed and under-prepared for undergraduate study. This may be particularly prominent in post-1992 HEIs due to the demographic of the student the HEIs traditionally attract. UoPS2 reflected how "daunting it is to go to university." Therefore, encouraging a brand community and sense of belonging is crucial to aide this transition and help attrition. For many students, the move to university sees them joining a new environment that prompts an exploration of their own identity. It is a 'blank slate' moment, so that predispositions towards certain behaviour types can be discarded or at least considered and challenged. By feeling part of a wider community, stakeholders will be able to explore where they fit into that broader identity.

The research suggests that when stakeholders feel part of a single community, then feelings of pride and unity are engendered. Students and staff will take pride in the achievements of alumni, for example, seeing them as one of us. Similarly, if members of the community are attacked (for example, an academic theory discredited or negative press coverage of student behaviour) then the community can often pull together to support each other. The data also showed that student clubs and societies are an important way that universities can encourage brand community and belonging – by ensuring students are supported by the wider university to form their own groups that sit under the larger university community umbrella, they will feel empowered and connected not 'outsiders'. This could apply to niche activities that may have limited engagement – for example, newly formed or minority sports.

Safety was another key theme identified in the data, especially amongst students. This group referred to belonging to a community and being in a reference group as providing them with a sense of safety. Surrounded by people with shared values, beliefs and goals, they feel safe emotionally, physically and intellectually. This in turn gives them greater confidence to explore their own individual identity as part of the broader group.

Staff and students alike reinforced the need to feel like an individual in a community and not just a number; suggesting that this was an expectation particularly due to the nature of the HE context. The data demonstrates that as those individual identities are explored, people will form greater or lesser connections with the brand. Some may become very close to the brand community, acting as brand champions, while others may not engage as fully.

Students reported positively on their ability to manage their emotions more effectively the more they felt part of their university community. The data suggests that students felt their confidence increased with their academic ability, the more they felt a sense of belonging at their university. This is encouraging as self-esteem and confidence are key components of students' ability to thrive (Devis-Rozental 2020). What is more, this further supports the notion that knowledge gives students confidence (Devis-Rozental 2018).

It is crucial to acknowledge that data participants recognised that a successful HE brand will continue to maintain strong brand connections and a sense of belonging with the student and staff community even after their time affiliated with the institution has ended. Fundamentally, a successful university brand will “develop long-term sustainable relationships which last long after graduation. This is what builds the brand success as the strongest advertisement for a brand is when the consumers become prosumers.” (UoPA1)

5.6.3.2 Reputation

The literature suggests that reputation as an asset in HE has received increased academic research in recent years (Alcaide-Pulido,2013; Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Irfan et al.,2020; Khoshtaria et al., 2020) and the data reinforces the literature that reputation is a key strategic asset for an HEI (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012).

The data also reinforces Abratt and Kleyn, (2012) who assert that stakeholders are provided with a number of different opportunities to assess an organisation's reputation and demonstrates that a university is not home to just one reputation. It can be multi-faceted.
A university may have a very strong reputation for innovative teaching and learning but be held in low regard for the quality of its research output, for example. The data suggests that actually, stakeholders, both internal and external, are likely to only consider a university's reputation in the field in which they are interested. It is unsurprising, therefore, that academic, marketing and student participants all considered the issue of reputation from very different perspectives.

Academics considered attracting research funding to be consequence of a strong reputation for research, which indicates a component of brand success when viewed through that particular lens. Student participants considered education, employability and the general quality of life at a university as indicators of its reputation. They tended to rely on word of mouth from their peers, teachers and career advisers, demonstrating that a successful brand has to communicate its brand to a variety of stakeholders. Marketing respondents were different again, with a focus more on international reputation, referencing the requirement to attract financially lucrative international students at postgraduate level. Overarchingly however, all data participants aligned with the literature which asserts that graduating students "play a key role in defining the reputation of a university" (Huempfner and Kopf, 2017, p.254).

All participants articulated that HEIs engage in reputation management across all areas. However, this was considered likely to be successfully implemented only if the HEI had a strong identity at its core, and that identity could be leveraged across the different facets in which a university's reputation could be considered. This core identity was seen by participants as closely related to the reputation of an institution. Furthermore, the research correlates with (Hu et el. 2020) who assert that a brand's reputation may also be based on interaction with employees, 'how customers react to the service that is provided and communication practices' (p.1134) and form perceptions from the way the orgnaisation behaves and can often be in comparison to its competitors (Chapleo 2011), making corporate reputation challenging to manage. The clearer and stronger the identity therefore, the easier it is to use attributes from one reputational area to influence reputation in another. This could include the reputation of the city or town the university is in, which contributes to its identity and can therefore be applied to all different ways of considering reputation. Similarly, strong performance in research can be used to boost reputation amongst potential students if it is intrinsically linked to the HEIs reputation.

Overarchingly, the data corroborates with Dennis, et al., (2016) who assert that the perceived quality and reputation of a HEI brand are fundamental influences on students' perceptions of the HEI. Dennis, et al., (2016) lead on to explain in their research that the 'perceived quality' of a brand in this context refers to both students' and graduates' judgement of the HEI's excellence and superiority, and 'brand reputation' refers to the overall value, esteem, and character of the brand. This clearly highlights the importance of the continued relationships between HEI and student after graduation. This supports the theory which suggests that graduation "offers students a lifelong identification" (Palmer et al., 2016, p. 3034).

5.6.3.3 Impact

The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997) published findings of the correlation between graduates and economic success. Indeed, there is a “wealth of external sources such as Key Information Sets, National Student Survey and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey results” (Polkinghorne et al, 2017, p. 214) which demonstrate graduate employability success. The literature also observes scholars such as Molesworth et al (2009) who report that for many HEIs, the overriding criterion by which their value is assessed is its contribution to the economy, however, this research proposes that the value of HE brand success is actually integral to making positive societal change and development and can actually be prioritised greater than impact to economic success.

The data showed that for a university to be considered successful, it cannot operate in a vacuum. There is an expectation that a university will make a difference and have an impact on the world around it, through the graduates it produces and the things they have learned, through the research the university carries out itself and disseminates, and through direct partnerships where the university works with another organisation on a specific project or towards a specific goal. The data shows perception from key stakeholders that the HE brand is “all about the human connection and societal change.” (MMUA2)

The data shows that respondents felt having an impact on the world around them is a key consequence of brand success in HE. Students articulated the HE brand must “influence and inform and to educate on issues” (MMUS3) and “ensure the goals of a post-92 university being crucial to bringing the country together.” (UoPA1) Interviewees felt strongly that the HE brand has the potential to “expand and create great things for humanity.” (MMUA1)

With the investment of public money through grants and research awards, along with the investment by students via tuition fees, it was felt by respondents that there was a resulting moral obligation to deliver education, research and professional partnerships that show a measurable impact on the external environment.

This data shows how the impact of HE takes many different forms. Perhaps the most straightforward output is in the skillsets of the graduates a university produces, who need to have the right skills to make an impact on the industries they join – whether that is in a professional capacity as practitioners, or in an academic capacity as researchers and educators themselves. The data shows how the case study universities have created impact on a number of different levels – high impact research, applying research to 'real-word problems', producing employable graduates, encouraging involvement and volunteering within the local community, and influencing policy at all levels from global to local for example.

Fundamentally, the data asserts the strong impact the HE brand has on society: which is what sets the HE brand apart from a commercial brand. Furthermore, the data shows that the distinctiveness of the HE brand is due to it significantly shaping societal change and behaviour; therefore, triggering a different response and connection to commercial brands.

5.6.3.4 Employability

The research reinforces the literature stating that HE students depend on an efficient and effective university system to prepare them for a world-class workforce in an ever increasingly global marketplace (Huempfner and Kopf, 2017). The data determines a successful university graduate to be one who leaves the institution ready to enter their chosen profession. This was considered to be the ultimate measurement of student success by all the data participants. This is of little surprise, given the significant increase in personal financial investment that university now requires. It is no longer a life chapter, a rite of passage or an opportunity to pursue purely intellectual stimuli. The data captured from the students at the three case studies seems clear that a successful undergraduate degree is now very much about getting equipped with the skills needed to secure a good job.

Preparing students for future employment success was also prioritised as a key focus from the academic community during interviews, as well as examples of marketing campaigns tailored towards demonstrating graduate employability success, being provided by marketing services colleagues. This is consistent with the work of Ali-Choudhury et al., (2009) who report that “Universities often infer promises about a [student’s] job and career prospects on graduation” (p.88).

Work placement opportunities were shown to be an integral part of many degrees at the case study institutions. In such a landscape, employers are encouraged to work in partnership with universities in myriad ways – from offering placements and recruiting graduates, to presenting guest lectures, holding workshops and helping to develop new courses and guide the development of existing ones so that they meet the needs of industry. Reflecting modern culture and exploring similar themes to the definition of success in this research, it is also seen as important that a university produces ethical, sensitive and responsible graduates. In the employment landscape, these qualities are not mutually exclusive to high employment rates; indeed, they are all considered essential by most employers in most sectors.

The use of alumni to inspire the next generation of students is a way that universities reinforce their employability message, but also use it to guide students towards making decisions and developing qualities that will see them move in the same direction as their predecessors. This ensures not only high employment rates for graduates, but also sustains a new batch of alumni case studies that will underline similar qualities but in an increasingly contemporary context. Again, the data showed that employability was likely to be a heavy focus for post-1992 universities as it is an opportunity for differentiation. Without the brand heritage, these universities need to engender trust in their potential students and their families and demonstrating that former students have gone on to enjoy successful careers underlines those key messages.

5.6.3.6 Staff and student recruitment

The data reinforces the literature suggesting that a successful HE brand is extremely beneficial for both student and staff recruitment. Several authors suggest that branding becomes a strategic managerial decision for HE because it impacts upon the institution's capability to recruit students (Stensaker, 2005) and staff (Ivy, 2001; Belanger et al., 2002)

Perhaps not surprisingly, identity, image and brand personality were often used interchangeably throughout interviews. However, regardless of the terminology, all case studies demonstrated how they have seen a positive correlation between both the amount of student applications for degree programmes, and applications from staff interested in joining the university to further their career. However, simply increasing numbers of applications (from either students or staff) would not result in the university making progress or improving its offering – the number of degree places and academic posts that can be filled are predetermined. What is critical to deeming staff and student recruitment as being successful is that all three case studies reported that the increase in numbers was accompanied by an increase in quality – specifically that they were now attracting a higher calibre of both students and staff to join them.

This finding aligns with the literature which suggests that enhancing the university image and reputation can contribute to achieving a greater number of new students (Irfan et al., 2020; Massoud & Ayoubi, 2018). Furthermore, Cetin (2004) suggests that, in turn, this can positively enhance the image of the university among students who are already enrolled.

Furthermore, drawing on a theme previously identified through the data analysis, all three case studies recognised that tailored branding of their geographical location that promoted it as a desirable to live and study resulted in increased recruitment from a numerical perspective. Student participants certainly reinforced this as stating the location was a key factor of appeal: "If the uni has got a really good brand image, and they're putting themselves out there as being in a place the students would enjoy going to it plays a massive role in student recruitment, as well as the success of the university in general." (BUS1)

This correlates with much in the literature which suggests that the university location can play a key role in decision making and the ultimate choice (Kaplan et al, 2010).

5.7 Summary

Palmer et al. (2016) categorically state that “HEIs are conceptualised as brands,” (p. 3033) who due to the complex and competitive nature of the HE landscape, which sees UK institutions “grapple with strategies to improves National Student Survey (NSS) scores, and address Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) requirements” (Cownie, 2017, p.290), along with other performance benchmarking criteria, universities have needed to respond by developing new marketing strategies to increase brand engagement (Farhat et al., 2020).

This research shows that the HE brand is far from being a lifeless artefact, reinforcing the literature which refers to the brand as “a living entity, with a personality with which we can form a relationship and that can change and evolve over time.” (Hanby 1999, p.8). Furthermore, the data corroborates scholars who suggest that the brand management of higher education institutions involves a great level of complexity compared to managing a commercial organisation brand (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015).

Whilst the literature suggests that HE branding may presents a potential for moral contradictions of values as well as an endangerment of institutional integrity (Chapleo, 2011; Waeraas and Solbakk, 2008; Hemsley- Brown and Goonawardana, 2007), the data demonstrates that the three case study participants felt convinced their HE brand believed in the values it represented and therefore considered it is appropriate to act on these through their communications. Interestingly, no one considered their brand to be manipulative through its marketing communications, which can often be a criticism for commercial brands.

Data from staff suggested the reason for this being that after the investment from Marketing Services over the last decade particularly, BU Marketing is “trusted now” (BUA1).

It is also apparent from the research findings that antecedents, nature and consequences of HE brand success do not exist in silo from each other, and instead would often overlap – with success in one area having an impact on success in another.

One of the antecedents of brand success identified is strong brand identity. Through communicating a clear identity based on values and principles, stakeholders were able to align themselves with a brand, identifying similarities and synergies with their own identity. Strong synergies between the identity of the university and the identity of the stakeholder also played a large role in informing success in another area in which brand success was measured – namely that of brand community and belonging. The data identified that when stakeholders come to feel part of a community, they become much more than staff or consumers in that environment. A brand community encourages relationships between individual stakeholders with the brand at the centre of their interactions, rather than stakeholders communicating solely with the brand itself. Such relationships were identified as lasting much longer than the period of study, with alumni staying engaged as part of a brand community many years after they have stopped being a full-time part of it.

Two antecedents of brand success that the data identified as being closely related were location and servicescape. The newer universities were inherently linked with their geographical location, whether that was the seaside town of Bournemouth, the port city of Portsmouth famous for its maritime heritage, or the northern powerhouse of Manchester. This research validates suggestions in the literature that the institution's location can "offer a route to building a distinct identity" (Winter and Thompson-Whiteside, 2017). Furthermore, this research corroborates with scholars such as Naude and Ivy, (1999) who suggest that assets such as the geographical location of the post-1992 is heavily depended on for marketing purposes due to a lack of longstanding recognisable heritage. Furthermore, Naude and Ivy propose the marketing activities of older universities are not as aggressive as post-1992 HEIs, due to Russell Groups relying on "their traditional strengths of faculty, teaching, and research standing" (Naude & Ivy, 1999, p.132), whereas the new universities attempt to reach out to prospective students earlier in their decision-making process (Naude & Ivy, 1999).

The characteristics of the location combined with the servicescape of the university itself to provide a physical manifestation of the brand, contributed significantly towards a brand identity. In these newer universities, there was an expectation that the servicesscape should be modern and something that is continually being invested in and improved upon.

Brand accessibility was another antecedent of brand success in the context of newer universities, as the data identified that making university a realistic aspiration for students from all backgrounds was an important element of what newer universities should offer. This research shows that accessibility is not about showing a diverse ethnic mix in a prospectus – it is about ensuring transparency, genuine, true equality and making sure that students are given the help and support they need to join the university community and thrive within it – whatever their background might be. Strong brand ethics and values were also identified as an antecedent for brand success in newer universities. Respondents all expected universities to be living and breathing examples of ethical behaviour, and that they should be communicating those values as well. Similarly, it was identified that simply saying the right things and not actually embedding such behaviours into the corporate fabric of the institution would not be enough for brand success.

Many management scholars explore the concept of branding, but few have come near to defining exactly what makes a successful brand (Melewar and Walker 2003). de Chernatony (1998) argued that defining brand success is essential for understanding how effective a brand is and improving on it. Leadership support, a clear vision and employee buy-in as well as effective communication have all been listed in the literature as being required for a successful brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu 2006).

This research defines HE brand success as **Enabling a transformational experience for positive social outcomes** and identifies four key themes which support brand success in a post 1992 university brand. Having analysed the data through recursive abstraction, the themes identified are: Identity alignment, Co-creation, Driver for change, and Delivering on promises. These themes inform the conceptual framework, along with the themes identified for the antecedents and consequences of HE brand success.

There is considerable consensus in the literature on the benefits of a strong university identity, such as a source of differentiation from other competitive institutions (Iqbal et al., 2012) and the improvement of relationships with stakeholders. However, this research proposes that HE brand success manifests itself when the brand's unique, identifiable messaging meets the needs and expectations of its stakeholders. This results in the aligning of identities, where the brand becomes more than just a transactional option that the stakeholder happens to have selected on this particular occasion. Rather, it is the evolution of the relationship into one where the stakeholder sees themselves and the brand as part of the same community, engendering a sense of kinship and belonging that extends far beyond a merely transactional exchange.

This research asserts that HEI department brands should "not be competing with but rather supporting the HEI brand" (BUHoB/MM2) as the brand values are a common denominator, which provide focus and direction for departments to dock in to, as well as "a compass in employees everyday work life" (Leijerholt et al, 2019, p.287). Moreover, demonstrating the need for strong commitment for brand building effort which focuses on "growing the brand from the inside out" (BUA2) will encourage employees to "live the brand," (UoPS1) transforming the brand promise into reality. This reinforces the literature where scholars such as Ind and Bell state that organisations must have a "brand idea that employees could believe in and would be relevant to their day-to-day lives" (Ind and Bell, 1999, p.201).

Finally, it was determined that none of these elements of success could be achieved without the underpinning support of strong brand management. Newer universities need to own their brand – good, consistent brands do not appear by accident and the data showed there is an expectation that universities must be consistent in what they do, what they say they are doing, how they say what they are doing, and where they say it. As shown in this research and the wider literature, HE engages with multiple stakeholders. Whilst this adds complexity, the need for effective and transparent relationships was still recognised as essential in the mission to nurture and strengthen HE brand success as otherwise a disconnect could damage the brand's future.

The conception and nurturing of a brand community and fostering a sense of belonging was highlighted during this research as both an antecedent and consequence of a successful higher education brand. The three case studies demonstrated their commitment to pastoral activities such as societies and clubs, as opposed to purely academic focus for students. Students recognised the value of this corroborating Rutter, et al., (2017) wo suggests that HEIs need to invest in “common attributes to demonstrate belonging” as this will influence students’ portrayal of their university’s brand personality (p.24).
This research further corroborates much in the literature which states that ensuring that students have opportunities for developing their sense of identity and experiencing a sense of belonging can have a positive impact upon their student experience and ultimate learning outcomes (Devis-Rozental and Barron, 2020).

Correlating with Harris and de Chernatony (2001) who suggest that reputation is a representative indicator of a brand’s success, this research identifies reputation a consequence of brand success. Furthermore, it was observed through the data that a university’s reputation is multi-faceted and exists in different areas – research reputation versus educational reputation, for example. It was observed that those universities with a strong identity would be able to manage their reputation more effectively, using strengths from one facet of reputation to inform and enhance others, such as research-informed education, teaching and assessment.

Abratt and Kleyn (2012) reinforce that reputation creates a competitive advantage. Previous empirical research has reported that good institutional reputation results in increased market share, higher organisational sales, and loyal customer relationships.

Two more consequences of brand success were closely linked to each other, namely employability and impact. The data identified that universities cannot exist in a vacuum, learning for learning’s sake, but need to demonstrate that they are having a tangible effect on the world around them. Impact discussed the importance of the newer universities producing research and graduates that would make such changes, demonstrating a return on society’s investment that was felt to be an obligation of universities rather than simply an aspiration.

Employability was considered important because, with the increasing marketisation of HE, the data showed that participants expected that a newer university should be demonstrating that its graduates are moving into jobs, making that investment of time and money worthwhile. This clearly validates much in the literature which states education is regarded as critical to society, and knowledge economies, providing graduates with potential to earn above-average salaries post-graduation (Lewis and Bingham, 1991).

This thesis acknowledges that brands are traditionally used as a means of differentiation, or an attempt to gain a competitive position (Bélanger, Syed, and Mount 2007; Dholakia and Acciardo 2014). Since the early teachings of marketing, one of the most prominent approaches for branding strategy has been to demonstrates a unique selling point (USP) and a differentiation from its competitors. Reinforcing this, the literature asserts that HE branding has become a strategic priority for universities in order to develop a differentiated brand that enables them to communicate their strengths (Jevons, 2006).

University brand differentiation can be achieved by creating a genuinely distinct higher education service (Story, 2021). De Heer and Tandoh-Offin (2015) underline that HE branding is about finding a unique position and definition to provide differentiation, and attract students, academic staff and financial support. Many scholars including Mackelo and Druteikiene, (2010) believe demonstrating a differentiation will enable institutions to achieve a competitive advantage. According to Curtis et al (2009) those universities who do position their brand appropriately achieve a competitive edge in the marketplace. Kapferer defines this process as "emphasising the distinctive characteristics which make it different from its competitors, and appealing to the public" (Kapferer 2012, p.152).
However, this research exposes a perspective which corroborates with a branch of theory within the HE branding literature which suggests that actually the main objective for branding within HE and other public sector organisations, in contrast to commercial contexts, may not revolve around differentiation and uniqueness (Sataøen and Wæraas 2015).

Indeed, the data highlights from all cases that it is “difficult to pinpoint how we’re actually different to other universities as essentially a lot of us are saying the same thing and making the same promises, but in different ways” (BUHoB/MM1), corroborating with much of the literature which suggest the HE context operates in a “sea of brand sameness” (Rutter, et al., 2017).

This research therefore proposes that actually (Re)positioning identity over a USP as the case studies have, leads to brand success. Recent research conducted by Leijerholt et al., (2019) further reinforces the suggestion that struggling to identify a ‘USP’ may not be as detrimental as traditional branding theory suggests as non-profit brands may actually benefit from a “general positive perception of the organisation rather than achieving a differentiated and unique brand” (p,152).

The theme of presenting a uniqueness of message through carving a strong brand story rather than working endlessly, and often unsuccessfully, to create differentiation of brand was strong in the data and aligns with the findings by Sataøen and Wæraas (2015) who argue that public organisations have additional pressure to be perceived as ‘normal’ and to conform to institutional expectations.

Since some university brand attributes are completely intangible, creating a distinct HE experience, and making the stakeholder perceive the difference is not easy (Wilkins et al., 2018). A review of a sample of prospectuses during this research shows the detail of ‘what a university does’ is relatively narrow, and often replicated from one institution to another with the only difference being in specific areas of academic focus. The data suggests that focus on ‘who the university is’ provides much greater opportunity for differentiation, articulating and demonstrating a brand’s core values. This is consistent with scholars such as Dholakia and Acciardo (2014) who propose that focus on the values and diversity of the HEI brand may actually be a more fruitful approach for universities, rather than emphasising differences, and furthermore, that actually, attempting to define a university identity or brand may be too complex (Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009) to be achieved in a branding effort, and actually, crafting and presenting a uniqueness of message is fundamentally more important.

The following section focuses on the key themes and codes across cases identified during stages 6 of the recursive abstraction process.

Table 18: Illustration of final coding. Research objective 4

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities	**Servicescape** (antecedent)	Progressive Innovative More challenging for post-1992s Reinforces brand values Facilities	BU BU, MMU, UoP BU, UoP BU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP
	Location (antecedent)	Employment and social opportunities Image Engaging with local community Synergy of personalities Offers differentiation	BU BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP, BU, MMU
	Effective brand management (antecedent)	Brand architecture Stakeholder relationships Trust	BU BU BU
	Brand identity (antecedent)	Belonging Visual representation Sets communication tone Reflecting own identity Individual leaners	BU, MMU BU BU MMU MMU
	Brand accessibility (antecedent)	Tuition fees can create barriers Different for post-1992s Inclusive	UoP UoP UoP
	Strong brand ethics and values (antecedent)	Sustainability Inclusivity Diversity	MMU MMU MMU

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities	**Identity alignment** (nature)	Shared values Inspire, inform and educate Helping society challenges	BU, BU, MMU MMU
	Co-creation (nature)	Effective partnerships Communicate expectations Internal and external stakeholder partnerships	MMU MMU MMU
	Driver for change (nature)	Benefitting society Mentor Behavioural change Empowerment Influencer Self-esteem	MMU BU, MMU, UoP MMU BU, MMU, UoP BU, MMU, UoP BU
	Delivering on promises (nature)	Working collectively Accountability Trust	BU BU BU

Research objective	Themes	Codes	Data source
RO4: To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities	**Brand community and belonging** (consequence)	Identity Community partnerships Pride Unity Societies and clubs Safety	BU, BU, MMU MMU MMU, UoP BU, UoP UoP
	Reputation (consequence)	Multi-faceted Brand management Identity Range of areas Co-creation	BU, MMU BU BU BU, MMU MMU
	Impact (consequence)	Benefitting society Responsibility of HEI Key driver for change	MMU MMU MMU
	Employability (consequence)	Future proofing employment success Opportunity for differentiation Use of Alumni to inspire Ethical, sensitive, responsible graduates Encourage employers to work in partnership	MMU, UoP MMU MMU UoP MMU, UoP
	Staff and student recruitment (consequence)	Power of persuasion Reputation Trust	BU BU, UoP BU, UoP

5.8 Conceptual framework

The following section conceptualises the research findings by presenting the conceptual framework which identifies the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in comparable newer universities.

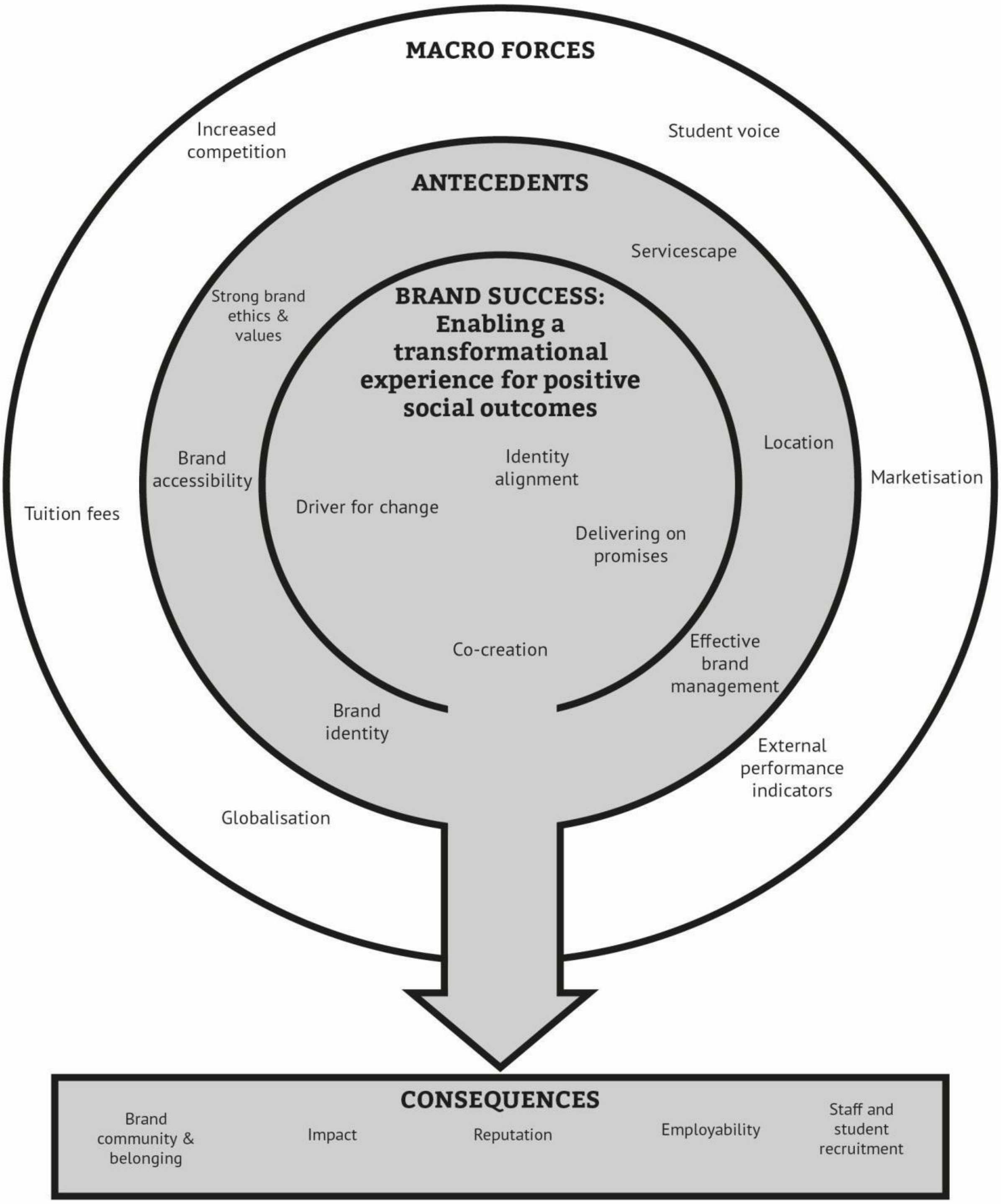
To summarize, the framework presents the overarching macro environment factors identified through the data, which have been recognised to influence the contemporary HE environment landscape. Six antecedents of HE brand success have been identified through the process of recursive analysis, four themes of defining the nature of brand success, and five consequences of brand success are presented. The research's defining term for HE brand success is also presented, which the researcher believes to be an accurate representation of the data findings across the three case studies.

This conceptual framework highlights how the key characteristics of brand success in the case studies explored have enabled deeper connections and alignment to the stakeholder need, due to the nature of HE brand which relies on emotion and belonging, and one which encourages growth in identity and enabling stakeholders to change their lives and others.

This conceptual framework introduces a new theoretical contribution to the understanding of brand success in the context of HE by offering a combination of elements which serve as guidance to how other post-1992 universities may be able to assess and develop their brand success.

Furthermore, this supports the argument identified in the literature by key authors, that bespoke models to assess HEI brand success are needed within the sector.

Figure 2: O'Sullivan Model



5.9 Contribution to policy and practice

The following section presents the implications of this research to policy and practice.

The results have important implications for both HE policy at an overarching strategic level, but also presents a suite of key tactical recommendations for HE brand managers who are seeking to develop, monitor and assess their brand.

Through understanding how key stakeholders define successful HEI brands, this study has implications for universities in developing and executing a suitable and favourable brand management strategy. Furthermore, appreciating the brand characteristics which influence key stakeholders into viewing the brand successful, may also help universities better align themselves to attract students and valuable research funding.

The literature asserts that branding evolves over time (Veloutsou and Guzmán, 2017). This research corroborates that this is also true for HE brands. HE brands need to be nurtured, but also due to the demands for the university brand to effect societal change, this requires HEIs to constantly move forward, innovating at a pace that at least matches the external environments in which they operate and, in many cases, staying ahead of the curve of change to enable true innovation and thought leadership to be demonstrated. By combining its understanding from education, research and professional practice, a university can find itself in a unique position to formulate a holistic view of where a society, industry or sector is now, but also where it is likely to move to next – and even what it should do next. The data shows that those universities that are seen to maximise these opportunities enjoy a strong reputation amongst their stakeholders, and this is a strong element of whether or not their brand is seen as a successful one.

This research reinforces much of the literature within the HE branding domain which suggests that whilst HEIs tend to concentrate on attributes leading to positive perception and organisational attractiveness in their marketing activities (Leijerholt et al. 2019), the management of HE brands is different to how commercial brands need to be managed.

The data suggests there may be a disconnect and compromise of the effectiveness of the brand’s success if this is not recognised. Therefore, the need for distinct perspectives to approaching branding in HE is fundamental.

In practice, achieving brand success in HE requires a unique messaging to match stakeholders’ needs and expectations to such an extent that it creates a sense of community between the two, taking the relationship beyond the transactional, and into the emotional realm.

The research findings led to the following recommendations. These have been presented to colleagues from the marketing services team at the researcher’s host university (BU).

5.9.1 Recommendation: Present a uniqueness of message through a brand story, rather than seeking differentiation

The literature suggests that corporate brands (including HE) often aim to share the same objective as product branding in creating differentiation and preference for consumers (Simon and David 2003). Accordingly, the literature in the HE domain corroborate that with such increased global competition, universities have begun to search for a unique definition of what they are to differentiate themselves and attract students (Chapleo 2007; Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana 2007).

Students interviewed confirmed that they indeed did have an expectation that a university would offer something unique. It became apparent through the data however that post-1992 HEIs struggle with differentiation; and indeed, this research shows that data participants agreed that the university marketing collateral made the same promises and offered broadly the same products.

Interestingly, the three case studies have strengthened their brand by searching for a uniqueness of message, rather than a differentiation. This corroborate Clark et al, (2017) who suggest that universities' marketing has moved towards more 'relational approaches' (p.40). The data demonstrates as well as having a marketing strategy that communicates the right message in the right channels at the right time to reach a target audience, these case studies have introduced a strong brand story that consumers want to hear more of in order to attract attention and gain awareness. This is consistent with Wala (2018) who argues that intertwining interesting stories in the brand narrative can set a brand apart from others, attract customers' attention and offer emotional added brand value. Whether it is a social mission, a strong story behind the birth of the brand, or ambitious and eye-catching targets and objectives, the HE brand must be about more than the services it offers if it to achieve high levels of brand awareness. It requires a synergy with its target audience that resonates strongly and invites further investigation.

Without the heritage and history of older institutions, newer universities have needed to find a way to appeal to their audiences, who often expect them to be offering something unique. These universities have focussed on incorporating location, their servicescape, local networks, partnerships and employability to ensure their uniqueness of message. Further examples that could underpin the delivery of a unique message were areas such as diversity and widening participation – the key was that brand success relied on a newer university being able to communicate some element of uniqueness in their messaging, lacking as they are of the weight of history that their older rivals can bring to bear on their brand messaging.

The data further suggests that presenting a unique message through institutional reputation is also particularly important for newer universities. This is consistent with the literature witnessing scholars such as Schofield et al (2013) who argue that newer universities need to attract students differently to more traditional institutions in the absence of an established heritage. However, as (Chapleo 2005) notes, the issue of whether branding, image and reputation are distinguishable from one another is a contentious one in HE, therefore prompting the need for an integrated approach.

Location was considered especially important by respondents from MMU, who noted that the way the university had intertwined its messaging with its location; the vibrancy and buzz of Manchester as a northern powerhouse, demonstrated a distinctive and unique offering.
The data highlights that drawing upon MMU's 'northern roots" is a fundamental characteristic of the institution's identity, which offers an opportunity for advantage in a complex and competitive marketplace.
MMUA1 presented examples of how this narrative is presented at various touchpoints to "stand out from the crowd."

> "We are northern. This is really important to our identity and differentiation. Because we are such a big university, we are a northern powerhouse. If anyone is in the north, they will understand the importance of a northern powerhouse and a northern location, so we use this to our advantage." (MMUA1)

Diversity and inclusion were other key areas that could be applied to uniqueness of message. By focusing on contemporary issues and what the university is doing today and planning for the future, post-92s remove the requirement for them to communicate their heritage (or lack thereof) as part of their brand proposition. This was particularly important to the University of Portsmouth student respondents who articulated messages tailored to students from a widening participation background had cut through the noise from other universities to appeal to them, providing the university with something unique to it without relying on history or heritage.

The data highlights the way in which the case studies have invested into new buildings as being reflective of their brand values and demonstrating ongoing investment. By showing prospective students the new buildings and facilities that they would have access to as part of their studies, the university was able to demonstrate something specific and unique to them through its servicescape. All interviewees felt that a university brand needs to demonstrate an element of difference from their competitors. However, it was noted that due to the number of institutions in “a marketplace with an awful lot of other competitors, this is extremely difficult, and the possibility is questionable.” (MMUHoB/MM2) Accordingly, the data enforces the importance of the brand “in terms of standing out in the market.” (MMUA3)

Interviewees felt that their university identity is a clear tool for demonstrating distinctiveness in the marketplace as “brands are identities which has always set them apart from one another.” (MMUA1) Furthermore, brands and identity are intertwined to the institution.

> “If you go back to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, they were founded by Kings and Archbishops, and aristocracy and so on. It was all branding and identity. It just wasn’t called it at the time. So, you can’t detach the brand from the university.” (MMUA1)

5.9.2 Recommendation: Foster identity alignment to develop a strong brand community

A brand cannot hope for cohesion if it presents as one thing to students but another to local businesses, for example. This can be a complex undertaking, given the intricate brand architecture of most universities and the devolved nature of relationship handling. A prospective student would be dealt with by the marketing team, then by the current student's team once they enrol, then the alumni department after they graduate. If those three departments don't display the same set of core values, the relationship with the brand will become confused and fractured as a result. Ensuring the core values are consistently applied in interactions with all stakeholders is a fundamental brand management tactic.

The data demonstrates how the core values of HE are vital in representing "the heart of the sector." (UoPS1) as well as demonstrating what the organisation stands for and what it offers the students and staff." (MMUA1) This is coherent with the literature which informs us that branding needs to be understood and led from within the organisation (Clark, Chapleo, and Suomi, 2020).

Whilst achieving a unified HE brand which encapsulates all stakeholders is often a challenge due to the complexity of the brand architecture, a "united approach to ensure a unified brand" (UoPA1) by "having a very structured brand architecture to protect the brand and ensure the university is singing on the same hymn sheet so that everything we are saying is experienced at all levels" (BUHoB/MM1) is deemed crucial in the data for HE brand management. Accordingly, by embedding a set of core values as an institution, an HEI can be assured it is presenting a consistent message to all its stakeholders. These values need to match those of its staff, who will only deliver on those values and behaviours if they truly believe in them. "Staff will deliver if they believe in values." (BUA1)

Internal disconnects, when individuals or departments do not share the core values of the organisation, can damage a brand's future by undermining the sincerity of the application of those values. Stakeholders will inevitably ask if an organisation can behave in a way contrary to a previously asserted value, can it really be seen to hold that value? Interviewees seemed familiar with UoP's values and examples of our teaching which have been weaved in the brand narrative with examples of being "industry connected, through our research, and our local connections" were presented by UoPA1.

The theme of HEIs deploying their brands effectively and professionally, in line with other non-profit organisations was discussed during the data collection. Academics and Marketing Services participants recognised the sophisticated and sleek marketing techniques used within the sector, as well as the professionalism of the marketing expertise. The case studies highlighted the need for effective, collegiate relationships across marketing services and the wider university in order to grow trust and cooperation. The reputation of the Marketing Team was considered to be important in the attempt to achieve this. It was felt that one of the consequences of brand success was that the Marketing Services department is seen as an enabler which will "enable colleagues to achieve their objectives, as well as strengthening the overarching institutional brand." (BUHoB/MM1) However, the data corroborated with Brønn et al, (2006), that this is only possible if there is consistency and clarity in communication.

The data shows how "protecting the name and image, ensuring that it's not misused in publications and online is important." (MMUA1), as well as demonstrating a deep awareness that HE brand management runs far deeper than just reputation management. Again, this is consistent with the literature which asserts how the characteristics of the HE sector presents additional challenges to those seeking to build successful brands.

Delivering "consistent messaging" (MMUHoB/MM2) around values and beliefs was identified as important, and through the combination of holding strong brand ethics and values, acting on them, and communicating those actions, that a university can be seen to be successful. That does not mean that the values should be sold only because they sound appealing when they are communicated, however. If the behaviour is undertaken purely for 'marketing purposes', it would lack authenticity and students in particular are quick to recognise this. When the values are authentically held, there are no such pitfalls to avoid and instead, the university brand can harness the power created when the values and ethics of the consumer are matched to the values and ethics of the brand.

This research shows that having a sense of belonging encourages positive endorsement from peers and overall positive word of mouth which in turn, aids recruitment. The literature also reveals that development of strong HEI brand communities could deepen emotional brand connections (Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006), to the extent of creating ‘fiercely loyal’ stakeholder (Lemon et al, 2001). Enabling stakeholders to engage in clubs and societies they will feel part of a community rather than excluded from it. With an increasing number of students arriving to university unprepared for the Higher Education demands (Devis-Rozental and Farquharson, 2020), embedding activities which can help students to build the resilience, confidence and self-awareness needed in order to succeed, is clearly a fundamental activity for HEIs to invest in.

5.10 Educational implications

The current university student community, commonly known as Generation Z (Gen Z), were born between 1995 and 2012 (Singh, 2014), and form approximately 60% of the current university student body in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2022a).

They have never known a life without computers, or the internet, and view technology as an integral part of their everyday existence (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). The twenty-first-century consumer is a digitally "savvy" choice maker (Bolat & O'Sullivan, 2017) whose expectations, motives and experiences are socially constructed (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013).

Furthermore, the modern-day university student body represents a student cohort that is far more diverse than previous generations (Prensky 2001). This diversity may be represented by gender, ethnicity and/or socio-economic backgrounds. In fact, in approximately two-thirds of cases, these students are the first members of their family (excluding siblings) who have been exposed to a university education (Coombs, 2021). Since these students began arriving in the sector in their droves, it has become apparent that they need and expect a different approach to learning (Phillips and Trainor, 2014).

It is a generation that has garnered significant attention for its uniqueness in comparison to previous generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2018). Together, these factors have a direct impact upon how we market Higher Education.

Concerted effort to increase the integration of digital, and social media, technologies to support contemporary pedagogic practice has been evident across the sector Seemiller & Grace, 2018). Furthermore, as identified in this research, for most universities, innovation extends beyond the superficial and forms a much bigger part of the learning environment.
Modern and innovative learning spaces are a key part of many HEI brand images now – from techno booths and extensive Wi-Fi networks to live-streamed lectures and online journal libraries, the technology available to assist the 21st century student in their learning is constantly evolving. Similarly, so are approaches to pedagogy.

Innovative pedagogy finds new approaches to imparting knowledge, where live briefs from real organisations and guest lecturers from thought leaders in industry are an integral part of most curricula.

This research shows that throughout a university education, a student will transition from an "observer to a doer." (MMUS1) In order for them to be effective as the latter, the nature of the education they receive must keep pace with the external environment; both in terms of the technical skills they are learning, and the mindset they need to challenge and innovate once they move into the next phase of their careers. Therefore, the importance of research-led teaching to break down barriers of engagement, as well as inspire, inform and impact the world around them, is fundamental.

Increasingly, research profiles are being seen as an important element of all HEI brands. Not only can they establish a university as a key influencer within a sector, but strong original research can also help to inform the curriculum thus ensuring graduates are in the best possible position to shape and change the world around them, acting as brand ambassadors for the work that the university has done.

The findings of this work have implications for learning and teaching as they can be integrated into the curriculum of units that focus on branding and brand management. This work has proposed some different considerations that can be applied to the concept of brand success, helping students to understand that the more traditional perceptions of success (profit, market share, growth and such like) are not the only measurements.

Furthermore, these considerations can be applied to brands outside the HE or not-for-profit organisations, helping students to broaden their own considerations and definitions of brand success and leading to more rounded, holistic marketers entering their industry or conducting further research.

As this research has already shown, stakeholders perceived that innovation is an antecedent of brand success. As such, encouraging innovation across all areas of the university experience, from education and assessment to estate management and the use of technology, can help a university itself to strengthen its own brand based on the motivations of students. By underlining the relationship between innovation and brand success in this context, this work can help universities look at the way they operate and educate in order to evolve their offering and gain a competitive advantage.

Since the introduction of higher education tuition fees, pedagogy has proven itself to be as malleable and responsive as HE brands themselves. As a result, there is now an expectation that pedagogy will continue to change and develop to keep pace with the demands of students and other stakeholders. By providing innovative pedagogies that continue to excite and inspire students, the university's offering will be closer matched to the students' expectations which could in turn result in increased levels of student satisfaction and retention.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The focus of this research was to explore interpretations of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities. Branding literature was explored and gaps in the current knowledge of branding strategies in the context of HE were investigated. This thesis sought to address these gaps both through developing theory and crafting practical recommendations.

A case study method was adopted as the most appropriate mechanism to provide a solid foundation for theory construction. Specifically, a multiple case study approach of three newer, broadly comparable UK HEIs was used following direction from Yin (2009), who asserts that multiple case studies are more robust than single case-study design.

The primary qualitative research method used for data collection used was semi-structured face-to-face interviews. By adopting an exploratory approach, this research has enabled rich and descriptive data (Boeije 2009) to ultimately develop strong theory-building research. A total of twenty-four interviews were undertaken.

The data analysis applied a systematic process of analysis (recursive abstraction) conforming with the six data analysis phases presented in the methodology (chapter 3). The findings were presented by themes and codes. Implications for theory, learning and teaching, as well as policy and practice have been presented. The overarching research limitations have also been critiqued.

The gap highlighted in chapter one asserts that if existing branding theories and models are insufficient and branding efforts meet resistance and criticism, the need to understand how higher education institutions should nurture and grow their brand is key. This supports the argument for bespoke models to assess HEI brand success due to the nature of HE brand which relies on emotion and belonging, and one which encourages growth in identity and enabling stakeholders to change their lives and others. The development of a conceptual framework that highlights how the key characteristics of brand success in the higher education context enables deeper connections and alignment to the stakeholder need has been presented

The findings in this research contribute to the existing theory in the domains of branding and HE by using a fresh approach to considering brand success. Through exploring the various interpretations and implications of brand success in the context of a selection of comparable newer UK universities, this research has validated much discussion in the literature.

Having identified emerging trends of the relationship between success and brand success, this research has explored interpretations and implications of brand success and highlighted how they are similar and distinct from the broader understanding of success and brand success in the context of higher education.

This research contributes to understanding the possibility to establish a specific branding tool for HEIs to identify the contributing factors leading to a successful HEI brand, and consequently assess the implications of that success. This is of value as HE is not currently well served by established commercial brand management models, which focus on market share, popularity, brand loyalty and market share.

The data demonstrates foremost that for contexts such as HE, having a successful brand is crucial due to the lack of a tangible product (Underwood et al. 2001).

This research has presented findings which validates evidence in the literature showing that a successful brand enables HEIs to influence prospective students' preferences, satisfaction, and loyalty (Alves and Raposo, 2010; Chandra et al., 2019; Teeroovengadum et al., 2019), attract relationships with companies for research and development projects (Ivy, 2001), and communicate to stakeholders what the organisation stands for (Chapleo, 2015). The data also reinforces the literature suggesting that a successful HEI brand will influences alumni behaviours (Schlesinger, et al, 2021) and helps HEIs get financial resources and increased donations (Çatı et al., 2016; Syed Alwi and Kitchen, 2014).

A sense of excitement for the future HE landscape was noted throughout this research: “There is an air of excitement for what the world will look like in the next decade, and my generation depends on universities to inform and shape the future.” (UoPS2) The data shows that a successful HE brand provides guidance for young people and demonstrates how HEIs and change lives. Effective dissemination of the value and impact of HE to younger generations is therefore crucial as it will "help young people to recognise the value of a university." (UoPA3) de Chernatony et al, (1998) argues that brand success in the commercial sector is a "complex multidimensional construct, with many different parameters contributing to it" (p.77). This research suggests this is also true for brand success in the higher education domain. The data also corroborates with the literature that due to the convoluted nature of the HE sector, branding is made even more complex than in traditional, commercial settings (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014). Chapleo and O'Sullivan (2017) assert "the issues and challenges of twenty-first higher education are significant, and enforce that universities operate in an increasingly uncertain environment," (p.152) with the value of a degree programme having increased focus and challenge (Roohr, Liu, and Liu 2017).

By evidencing the approaches the three case studies have adopted in order to craft and nurture their brand success, this research demonstrates that when the many challenges facing the branding of HEIs are overcome, they are able to succeed in a competitive environment, Moreover, the research actually corroborates with Stuart (2016) in suggesting that the difficulty of branding in the mom-profit sector actually compels these organisations to develop different, creative strategies and solutions (Stuart, 2016).

Forward-thinking and innovative approaches have had to overcome ideological hurdles from those who have regarded HE as a marketing-free zone. Reticence from such scholars (and some professionals) to accept marketing as an HE necessity can partially be explained by those early efforts to simply supplant the marketing approach adopted by business into an HE context, but it is increasingly clear that such an approach is not suitable. Innovation, globalisation and increased competition have made it imperative for universities to deploy a strong brand to attract students (de Heer and Tandoh-Offin 2015).

The marketing of the HE brand clearly shares similarities with commercial brands marketing techniques due to also operating in a competitive landscape where "universities are effectively businesses," (BUA2) and consequently HE brands are receiving attention "in the same way that a business brand does." (BUHoB/MM1) Whilst the literature also demonstrates inevitable correlation between the marketing of HE and the marketisation of HE (Nedbalova, et al Schulz, 2014), which has triggered a market-driven culture (Gibbs, 2011), this research shows the key stakeholders to be passionate that HE brands should never be considered commercial brands. MMUA2 asserted: "They are not commercial brands, and they should never be a commercial brand in the traditional sense of the word."

In the attempt to create brand evangelists, universities need to be exploring their students' brand experiences as satisfying brand experiences will, over time, result in consumer delight. This in turn can foster a feeling of brand love (Ahuvia, 1993). Achieving brand love in the context of HE could be extremely beneficial to the HEI for the purposes of recruitment, increased student engagement and an enhanced student experience, so universities need to have an appreciation for the favoured characteristics of the brand.

This research has demonstrated the power of the brand. We don't just consume and interact with brands; we engage and build deep relationships with them, and they influence and shape our lives, as this research shows. To feel love is to understand what it is to be alive, what it is to be human. Love changes worlds. It can give us everything we want, and it can take away everything we need. It can inspire us to achieve the seemingly impossible, or leave us crushed, hollow, unable to function. We can experience love in many different ways, and although we identify them all as love, their manifestations can be very different. We love and talk about love frequently; we love our friends, our family, and our pets. We love our job, our home, our favourite city…. And we love brands.

This final chapter will now detail the research limitations and the impact of the research to date. This last chapter also considers the future path for this research following the successful defense of the thesis. The researcher is excited by the potential for future research foci and the contribution to branding theory the author will be part of.

6.1 Research limitations

The boundaries of this research were outlined in section 1.8. Methodological limitations were also identified in section 3.10. Considerations for further limitations are now discussed.

6.1.1 Unit of analysis: participants limited

This was an exploratory study focused on three case studies**.** Section 3.5.1 identified the participants involved in the data collection. The benefit of the data from these key stakeholders was valuable as it provided a fuller picture of the perception of brand success. However, it is recognised a wider sample of external stakeholders would add further value for this research, moving forward. Interviews with the business community and local councils would be insightful. Especially as the data presents a strong argument for closer relationships between HEIs and local communities. Future research comprising quantitative testing of the proposed conceptual framework would attract a broader research population.

6.1.2 Number of cases

Following advice to allow for richer theory building, (Kasanen et al, 1993; Perry 1998; Stake 1995) a selection of three broadly comparable case studies were chosen to achieve a deep understanding which would ultimately enable successful execution of achieving the research objectives. Manageability of the data was a consideration for the researcher as this research adopted a qualitative approach; perception and feelings were abundant. Thus, by limiting the number of case studies the author believed data saturation would be avoided and rich, deep data acquired. It is recognised that using more cases may have strengthened the research study however, it may also have triggered greater generalisability.

6.1.3 Interviewee's perception and memory

Face –to-face interviews enhanced the value and significance of non-verbal communication (Cohen et al, 2007). The approach enabled the researcher to get a deep understanding of the themes and issues discussed, as well as establishing rapport in many cases.

During some of the earlier interviews in the research journey, some participants moved away from the focus of the questions and the researcher needed to re-direct their focus. As the data collection process continued the researcher became more experienced with interview techniques and was able to pull the respondent back into focus quicker. However, it was important at all times that the researcher didn't express their own experiences or point of view as this "can inhibit the flow of the interview." (McQueen and Knussen, 2002, p.208).

Webster et al (2014) suggest there are potential issues with data collection when a case study method has been adopted, including relationships that may exist between participants, and the richness of the data gathered. The researcher acknowledged the possibility of this early in the research journey; especially when interviewing colleagues at Bournemouth University. Therefore, various steps to manage this were put into place such as ensuring anonymity during the analysis process, and ensuring no individual was identified during the interview process. Although participants did discuss their role and experiences within the university context, this was at the opening stage of the interview and designed only to 'break the ice' rather than be a component of the questions. In keeping with protocols of confidentiality participants' real names have been substituted for pseudonyms which are used for participant quotations in this thesis (Gibbs 2007).

6.2 Impact of research to date

Throughout this research journey, the researcher has been committed to disseminating the findings and building on existing networks within both the academic and professional practice communities.

Conference papers delivered (sole author):

- The antecedents of brand success in post-1992 British universities. In: Managing uncertainty through a time of change in HE marketing colloquium, 2019. Universidad Loyola Andalucía.

- Interpretations of brand success from post-applicant students in the context of newer UK universities. *In: Innovation in HE marketing colloquium. Academy of Marketing* 3 April 2017 Kingston, University, London.

- Branding with a conscience in HE. *In: Brands' search for meaning* 28-30 March 2017 Universidad Loyola, Andalucía.

- What is Brand Success in Post-92 UK HEIs? *In: Academy of Marketing Annual Conference 2016* 4-7 July 2016 Newcastle Business School.

- Assessing and Understanding the influences on brand effectiveness in different contexts. A study of UK higher education as it moves towards marketisation. *In: 2015 Academy of Marketing Conference* 6-7 July 2015 University of Limerick.

- How do we measure successful HEI brands? *In: Bournemouth University Research Conference* 27-28 January 2015 Bournemouth University.

6.3 Research output strategy following successful defence of thesis

The researcher has identified the following channels for disseminating the findings of this thesis in order to build on existing knowledge and theory within the existing HE branding literature.

Table 19: Research output strategy

Research focus	Conference output	Journal publication targeted
Brand Love: Exploring brand communities in HE	Academy of Marketing (AoM)	Journal of Non-profit andPublic Sector Marketing (1* ABS)
Differentiation in HE: Does it exist and is it necessary. Finding the unique message in HE	Academy of Marketing (AoM)	Journal of Higher Education (2* ABS)
Understanding effective brand management in HE	Academy of Marketing Science (AMS)	Journal of Brand Management (2* ABS)

6.4 Areas for further research

This study was conducted in the context of HE. The research findings and potential implications of these findings have prompted a range of opportunities for future research which will contribute further to the body of knowledge within branding literature. We shall now review these opportunities:

6.4.1 Quantitative analysis - Verifying theory

This research is qualitative in nature. The research is theory-building and draws upon research methods that have adopted an inductive strategy. Section 3.4 presents the justification for this approach. For the next stage of this research, the researcher is keen to use an alternative methodology such as quantitative methods. It is hoped that this approach may assist in testing theoretical constructs by investigating the themes established within this research and testing the relationships between them.

6.4.2 Broader unit of analysis – other stakeholders

The primary data generated is from a selection of key stakeholders; HE staff and students. There was no representation from businesses, local partnerships or local authorities' stakeholders. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are multiple stakeholders of universities (as discussed in Chapter 3), the parameters of this study focused on gathering perceptions from the aforementioned sample population only.It is recognised that data collection from business and local community would also be potentially valuable research. This was a deliberate decision that is justified in previous sections of this thesis. However, moving forward with this research, investigation into these stakeholders' perceptions of brand success may further assist with the current gaps in knowledge as well as provide valuable theoretical contributions.

6.4.3 Broader context – Testing the framework in 'old' universities

All three cases were constrained to newer universities; this research did not capture data from Russell Group universities. Further studies should replicate the model and apply it to 'old' universities in order to further develop the agility of the framework and contribute to the body of knowledge. It is anticipated the conceptual framework created will be applied post-PhD in different HEIs to test theoretical replication. This insight will help understand the value brand heritage has on brand success as scholars assert that brand communities often form around brands with a rich heritage (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001).

6.4.4 Broader context – Testing the framework in emerging markets

The geographical scope of this research was constrained to a single country. There is potential to replicate this research in the context of the international marketplace. There are fewer students at UK HEIs than in previous years, especially in part-time study, and visa policy changes mean that international numbers are also in decline. This drop in international students presents challenges on multiple fronts. As well as contributing to their HEI economically – both through fees and the subsequent flow of labour and markets – they also contribute creatively and intellectually to a global community created from a wide range of backgrounds, where different voices can be heard, and opinions can be challenged from a completely new perspective. It therefore seems plausible that scholars and brand managers alike need to understand driving motives for HEI choice among the international markets and assess how brand success in UK HEIs are evaluated by the international market.

6.5 Concluding reflections

Whilst the researcher feels this thesis has executed the requirements of a successful PhD document by appropriately and comprehensively addressing the research problem and associated research objectives, there are further milestones which the researcher feels have been achieved.

The completion of this thesis has provided a robust platform from which the researcher can build additional empirical research to further enhance branding theory in the HE context. This PhD journey has provided the researcher with the toolkit needed to experience and enjoy a successful career in academia. The process has taught how to create authentic, ethical and relevant research which contributes to the exciting body of branding theory. It has built the researcher's confidence both in the academic scholarly community but also in the more functional requirements of academia such as the process of data collection, analysis and writing.

In addition to continuing to build a solid repository of research in the domain of HE branding, the researcher is excited to become part of a supervisory team and pass on the learning developed through this PhD journey in a mentoring role.

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Appendices

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Appendix A: Key definitions

Key definitions relevant for this thesis

Brand	'The sum total of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how they perform, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand' (Keller, 2013, p.4)
Brand Associations	'All brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs attitudes, and so on that become linked to the brand nod' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Brand Audit	'a comprehensive examination of the health of a brand in terms of its source of brand equity from the perspective of the firm and the consumer' (Keller, 2013, p.111)
Brand Contact	'Any information-bearing experience a customer or prospect has with the brand, the product category, or the market that relates to the offering' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Brand Creditability	'The extent to which the brand as a whole is seen in terms of three dimensions – perceived expertise, trust-worthiness, and likeability' (Keller 2013, p.13)
Brand Elements	'Those trademarkable devices that serve to identify and differentiate the brand such as the brand name, logo, or character' (Kotler et al. 2016)

Brand Equity	'a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by its product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers' (Aaker 1991, p.12)
Brand Image	'…consumer's perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in the consumer's memory.' (Keller 2013, p. 72)
Brand Knowledge	'All the thoughts, feelings, images, experiences, beliefs, and so on, that become associated with the brand' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Brand Loyalty	Loyalty is a biased response towards a brand or product expressed over a period of time and is defined by the purchase pattern of a decision-making unit which may be an individual, a household or a firm (Mellens, Dekimpe and Steenkamp, 1996).
Brand Personality	'The specific mix of human traits that may be attributed to a particular brand' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Brand Promise	'The marketer's vision of what the brand must be and do for consumers' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Branding	'Endowing products and services with the power of a brand' (Kotler et al. 2016)
Branding Strategy	'The number and nature of common and distinctive brand elements applied to the different products/services sold by the firm' (Kotler et al. 2016)

Corporate Brand	‘a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining favourable images and consequently a favourable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism’ (Einwiller and Will, 2002, p.101)
Corporate Branding	‘A systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining favourable images and consequently a favourable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism’ (Einwiller and Will 2002, pp.101)
Corporate Culture	‘The shared experiences, stories, beliefs, and norms that characterise an organisation’ (Kotler et al. 2016)
Logo	‘Graphic design that a company uses, with or without its name, to identify itself or its products’ (Henderson and Cote 1998, p.83)
Marketing	‘Process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organisational goals’ (Kotler et al. 2016)
Success	‘The favourable outcome of something attempted’ (Collins Dictionary 2015) or ‘the accomplishment of an aim or purpose’ (Oxford Dictionary 2015)

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet
The Business School, Bournemouth University

Antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in newer universities

You have been invited to take part in a research project conducted by Helen O'Sullivan. Before you decide whether or not to consent to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

This study is being conducted by:
Helen O'Sullivan
Position: PhD candidate
University: Bournemouth University
Phone Number: 07725049945
Email: hosullivan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Project description:
The central aim of this study was to achieve an understanding of the contemporary application of newer universities by determining the antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success. The research will involve asking you about your attitudes towards brands. You will be invited to tell the researcher about your understanding of branding and what influences your decisions when choosing a brand. We will then explore your opinions of HEI brands. The data collected will be used in a doctoral dissertation and may be published in journal articles. This project is supported by Bournemouth University.

The aim will be achieved by four research objectives:

- To critically examine the concept of success
- To critically examine the concept of brand success
- To critically explore the nature of brand in the context of higher education
- To question how brand success is perceived in the context of comparable newer universities

Protection of confidentiality: Interviews will be audio recorded and the recordings will be transcribed in full. Extracts from the interviews will be quoted in the research and used to provide evidence to support the findings. All references to individuals will be made anonymous for the purpose of data analysis and reporting. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study. Data will be held securely on a password protected computer and may also be securely copied for backup purposes. Personal data will be destroyed in 5 years.

Participation: Your participation in this research project is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time until the anonymisation of the data.

What does participation require?
If you decide to consent to take part, you will be interviewed by the researcher who is studying a part-time PhD at Bournemouth University. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted in person either at your work site or alternatively in a convenient location and agreed in advance. The interview will be recorded using an audio recorder device or smart phone in order to ensure all detail are captured. The transcription may be subsequently provided to you for review and validation, if you request this. You are free to refuse to answer any question or chose not to comment at all.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
This research study does not foresee any disadvantages or risks to taking part in the research and the researcher hopes you will find the experience interesting.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
The main benefits of the research will be for the researcher to gain a better understanding of higher education branding through the eyes of key stakeholders.

Who is organising the research?
This research project is being organised by the Faculty of Management at Bournemouth University and undertaken by a member of the academic teaching team.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information sheet.

Contact for further information
If you require any further information, please contact the researcher, Helen O'Sullivan by email hosullivan@bournemouth.ac.uk or phone 07725049945. Ethical clearance has been given to conduct this study by Bournemouth University. If you have any complaints about this research, you can contact Dr Chris Chapleo by email (cchapleo@bournemouth.ac.uk).

Appendix C: Consent form

Consent form: Antecedents, nature and consequences of brand success in newer universities

Name, position and contact details of researcher:
Helen O'Sullivan. PhD Student. Faculty of Management.
hosullivan@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor:
Dr Chris Chapleo. cchapleo@bournemouth.ac.uk

This form confirms your consent to participate in the research study conducted by Helen O'Sullivan identified in the title above. A copy of this consent form will be given to you. This consent form will remain with the researcher for their records.

	Please Initial or Tick Here
I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project	
I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary.	
I understand that I am free to withdraw up to the point where the data are processed and become anonymous, so my identity cannot be determined	
During the research, I am free to withdraw without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
Should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline	
I give permission for members of the research team to use my anonymised information for the purposes of this research project. I understand that my name or any other personal information will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of Participant　　　　Date　　　　Signature

Appendix D: Example of interview transcript

Interview with MMUHoB/MM

Interviewer:
Can you tell me about your role here at this University please?

MMUHoB/MM:
So, I am the Head of Brand here at Manchester Metropolitan University. So within that we have Faculty marketing teams and a central marketing function. Within this central marketing function we have various teams; Press and PR, design, um, design, um alumni, um internal communications, and then the brand and campaigns team which I sit under.

Interviewer:
That's very similar to the structure at BU. And how long have you been here for?

MMUHoB/MM:
So I have worked for the University for six years and have worked in my present role for a year.

Interviewer:
Ok great. In the last six years whilst you have been working here, what would be the main areas of change you have seen?

MMUHoB/MM: Um, well in general across the university, I would say that when I came into the university, the fees had just increased, so um, students became much more savvy about their rights and making sure that their lecturers turn up to lectures and they don't get kicked out of their lectures early. They have been far more vocal about getting their results back in time, um, if lectures are cancelled either due to strikes or due to illness, they have been more vocal about these sessions being rearranged. And I think also, contact time is more important as students want to know they are getting their monies worth. There has also been a much greater emphasis on industry experience um, relative to the degree, but generally, what kind of job will they get at the end of their studies. They are more focussed on work placements being offered in line with this. Students are also far more interested in the academics' background and their industry contacts. Students want to know how they bring in their industry experience to their lectures for example. Um, so I would say students, rightly so, as they spend a lot of money on their degree, want to know what they are going to get out of it, and make sure they do certainly get that. Whereas I went to university years ago and it was way different back then I wouldn't say students were anywhere near as demanding with their expectations, and they never complained if lectures were cancelled for example.

Interviewer:
Ok, so thinking about defining the concept of success, not just brand success, but actually what success is itself. So how would you define success? What is success? What does it look like to you?

MMUHoB/MM: Um, so success is linked to our aims in life, personal and professional. meeting these aims and making sure you are happy with the outcome and success can be quite personal. And it doesn't always need to be measured. It can be about how you feel about something or there can be a numerical value to it. Um, I would say overall, yes, meeting an aim or an objective. Yes.

Interviewer:
Can you think of a time in your life when you really felt success, or felt you had reached a particular aim which then made you feel successful?

MMUHoB/MM:
Um yes, overall, I would say I am really happy with my life and the achievements I have made. I have achieved what I have wanted so far - completed a university degree, um, going into a graduate level job and then being a manager for ten years.
And I have had a few promotions. I have been a chartered marketer for six years. I would say that is success. Getting married, having a baby, buying a house, um, I would include all of this as my success. And generally being happy with your lot in life.

Interviewer:
So happiness is a measure of your success? You would link happiness with success?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely, I would say happiness is a big factor. Where we live, moving from the Northwest ten years ago and settling and making friends, making it our home, this has been

success for me. I guess, actually, it's a sense of belonging. About how you feel about something

Interviewer:
Ok. Thinking now about people in the public eye or someone personal to you who do you consider being successful? Who do you look up to?

MMUHoB/MM: Um, David Attenborough for sure.

Interviewer:
Why?

MMUHoB/MM: I think he is an amazing figure, not only for being so passionate about what he does...

Interviewer: oh, so passionate is important for success?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely. He really seems to love his work, and even at the age he is he is still making a difference. The Blue Planet series last year for example. What a difference that made to society. Look at the awareness on plastics he built.

Interviewer:
So making a difference is a variable for success?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely. In the news yesterday, it said how when the BBC ran their 500 words competition, one of the main reoccurring topics was plastics. The impact that plastic is having on our lives. I think generally people are much more aware of it now and having that kind of influence throughout your career and being able to prompt those conversations and doing that and making such a change is success. Also demonstrating his knowledge as he does and being so well respected and enthusiastic is success.

Interviewer:
So making a difference to society, being passionate, knowledgeable, and commanding respect are all determinants of success?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely.

Interviewer:
Do you think that success and like ability to hand in hand or do you think it is possible to be successful but not particularly likeable?

MMUHoB/MM:
Um, I, well, if you think of apple, I don't think that Steve Jobs was particularly well liked in terms of being that good interacting with people. From what I understand. But he was hugely successful and some of the ideas he came up were very controversial so, you're not always going to be popular if you are dying to change something. Or trying to move something forward. And I think Richard Brandson is the same. Um, I think being likeable does absolutely help to motivate people and get people on board but if you um , if you have something that is successful and people want to be part of it, and even part of that brand for example then people will join up to that anyway as they want to be part of that culture. All be it not the most prop I've culture but if people see it as innovative or forward thinking then people will be persuaded. I don't necessarily agree with this because i think the best leaders are those who are good with people themselves.

Interviewer:
Ok so when we are thinking about brands, what's a brand? What does it mean to you?

MMUHoB/MM:
Ok, so it's more than a logo. It's what it means and what it stands for. So some people follow a particular brand because they agree with what it stands for.
Greenpeace or unicef for example. Um, other people will associate themselves with a brand because of what it gives them. Whether that is status. So the more luxury brands such a Bentley for example, um or reliability. So Skoda as a brand is an amazing example of how they have managed to turn themselves and their reputation around, so now I think the Octavia is the most popular family brand car for the past three years running.

Interviewer:
Yes, I remember my mother having a Skoda when I was a school child. It's embarrassing. I was mortified. But that was 25 years ago now.

MMUHoB/MM:
Exactly, and now they are so well known for being such reliable cars and that weighs quite heavily of course that they are part of the Volkswagen group. And of course, Bentley are part of that same group. Porches. Every brand has to have a luxury product but also a more data to day brand. Budget brands but reliable and well made, people will buy them. So I think it’s what you look for - either you want to associate yourself with a brand because of what it gives you whether that is status or reliability.

Interviewer:
Good, so tell me about some brands that you like? That you connect with and feel represent you as a person, your desires, values, position in life

MMUHoB/MM:
Um so, the National Trust as a brand, and I think they have had to work, and are still working hard to make sure they appeal to people of all ages. Their membership was an ageing membership and in the past five years or so they have run a lot of campaigns such as 100 things to do before you turn 11 3/4. So campaigns like this which appeals much more to families. Um, I really like that; I like the ethos of preserving our heritage and our natural spaces. Um, and being accessible and open to all. This is really important, so I like the National Trust. If we are looking at clothing brands, I quite like Fat Face, um, because the clothes are good quality and I enjoy their advertising. And it’s about being outdoors and the adventure of life. This is clearly a reoccurring theme for me. I think that’s due to my adventurous nature.

Interviewer:
Interesting, so do you feel that you can relate to that and these brands attract you due to your personality?

MMUHoB/MM: Yes, I think so. But I also like the products. These brands fit my life. Um, other brands, um, I tend to stay away and try not to associate myself with brands that are chains of eateries or accommodation. Because I quite like independent brands. Um, so things like that doesn’t appeal. From a supermarket perspective, I’m not really loyal to a particular brand and I try to buy the food from the farm locally. I do use Aldi and I like their business model and the convenience of their shops being so small. So there’s not too much choice. I like that they are innovative as in for years they have been charging consumers for plastics bags already ahead of the curve. They encourage you to shop efficiently. They only have three or four members of staff in the store. That’s an efficient business model. John

Lewis. Another brand I like. I think their products are reliable, I like their ‘Never knowingly undersold, statement. I like this concept. They know they have to be competitive and again that’s a brand that has needed to evolve to keep up with the marketplace. Um competing against amazon for example.

Interviewer:

Absolutely. Ok, so you have named a few brands you like and follow. What do you think makes a successful brand?

MMUHoB/MM:

Being memorable, reliability, quality. So when you want to buy sow thing, the first place you think of is John Lewis for example. Um, and so word of mouth and advertising is obviously crucial for this. Um, I think knowing that you are going to receive a good service, so generally if I have had any issues with John Lewis it’s been dealt with quickly and well. Um, on the flip side, I bought a car from VW and whilst I liked the car the customer service was horrendous. So that brand of garage I would never go to again. Due to the poor experience. So whilst the product was such good quality, the customer service didn’t match. It didn’t match expectations. So the two have to go hand in hand.

Interviewer:

Ok, good. So now I would like to move on to focus on about higher education and specifically brands in higher education. So how long have you worked in HE?

MMUHoB/MM: 6 years

Interviewer:

6 years. What is it about HE brands which excite you?

MMUHoB/MM:

I like that we are educating our future generations, um and I think we have an opportunity because of our main target audience, as a university as a whole to be quite flexible in the ways we teach and methods we teach. Our biggest population is undergraduates, so we are working with 18, 19, 20 year olds on the whole. I think, albeit not particularly quickly, but there is a willingness to try new types of media and different ways of communications. Um and there has been a huge emphasis on marketing since the fees increase because it has been a much more competitive marketplace.

Interviewer:
What are the main challenges you have experienced due to this?

MMUHoB/MM:
Um, speed of change, and there is still a balance between what an academic feels is important in order to market their course, and what the marketing professionals feel is important. The academics do still want brochures for example and we are more willing to try new innovative things and other options - some academics do support this but unfortunately they are in the minority. So we need to ensure our communications evolve to ensure we are relevant and fresh.

Interviewer:
Does this depend on the disciple that they teach do you think

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely. Some of our business chill academics are far more open to marketing suggestions. Our Digital Marketing academics for example. They are more willing to try a different approach rather than just traditional marketing, but that's because they are experts in the field. Um and generally academics who teach in marketing are more willing to try new marketing techniques. Those academics who are not so familiar with newer acts of technology relay heavily on paper based marketing materials. This is definitely a challenge. I think also the buy in from senior management as to who willing they are to try new techniques too and take a risk can be challenging. Whereas other much more commercial companies would be willing to try something and if it didn't work they would change tact and put it down to experience. This is a frustration and a challenge within HE. When I went to university years ago, I wouldn't say that students were anywhere near as demanding with their expectations as they are now.

Interview:
How would you define this University's brand?

MMUHoB/MM:
Um, I would say that we are known for being a friendly community and city based brand. There is big emphasis on the city we are in and this influences why people come to us and why people study here.

Interviewer:

Good, I was going to ask you about the location and how much you consider you use the location as a hook for campaigns? There seems a real buzz around Manchester and a sense of community - perhaps due to recent tragedy.

MMUHoB/MM:

We lean hugely on our location and the city. And we know this. Many of our students come to us because they want to study in Manchester - and because of the courses we offer, but generally, if they are looking at us they are looking at other city locations too. They have already decided that a city location is for them. 9/10 students say they joined us because we are in Manchester. So yes a big part of our brand is our location. Um, I think we are known for our sustainability as well. So our commitment to being an environmental friendly university, is important to students and we promote that heavily. Partnerships and community is a big part of who we are and a key aspect to the success of our brand. We have so many courses where we work very closely with schools, companies, big brands, this is all crucial now as it links back I what our students to want and expect from their degree. They are looking for real world experience.

Interviewer:

Yes. Um, what are the benefits of developing a strong university brand?

MMUHoB/MM:

You need to be able to stand out. If someone thinks I want to study a particular course, of be in Manchester then they think of MMU rather than our competitors. There is a big emphasis on the city, and this influences why people study here.

Interviewer:

So do you think it's possible to differentiate university brands?

MMUHoB/MM:

Yes I would say so because of what they are known for. So if you think of leading universities in sport most people would think of Loughborough for example.

Interviewer:

So you think it is possible to differentials the university brand through the programme portfolio,

MMUHoB/MM:

Ish – but mainly it's the reputation and location. It also depends on where students um, priorities lie. Some students chose to go to a university that month not be in an amazing location, but the course is award winning and ranks really highly so that's what they want to do because they are so focussed on their career. Other students go to a university for a certain experience, and they want a certain social life. There is always a particular element students look for but you can definitely differentiate from other universities. But then it's down to how well the universities promote their assets. Spending millions over the last few years, investing in our city campus. Demonstrating that our students go on to be successful.

Interviewer:

Yes. And do you feel that actually it's branding or reputation management in HE?

MMUHoB/MM:

Hmmm, reputation management does come under branding but I do believe it's about branding and building up what you stand for. As a result of that your reputation will come through. So you need to make sure you promote positives. Reputation management is a fall-out of university branding. Especially when you are such a large organisation- reputation needs to be managed very closely. We have worked hard to understand each of its stakeholder groups and has sought to find areas of commonality.

Interviewer:

Have you ever undertaken brand audits here?

MMUHoB/MM:

So, um we went through over the last two years a refresh of our brand. And that is still ongoing. And that was handled through stakeholder analysis including our prospective undergraduate audience as well. There is still much more work to be done in this area in terms of brand tracking for example.

Interviewer:

Do you feel that there is a place for branding in HE? Obviously within the academic community it has been contentious as to whether it is appropriate to have branding in HE and so I'm wondering what your thoughts are?

MMUHoB/MM:
I think in order to know that a certain course even exists, or the University exists, Marketing is crucial. From an academic perspective absolutely - they need to know they have an experienced professional marketing their course. Who is able to demonstrate the success of alumni for example. In my opinion Branding plays a big part in HE; more so than ever before. Declining numbers of applicants, increased competition in the marketplace and increased fees challenges everything we have previously experienced. Students want to get the most for their money. 10 years ago fees were lower and there was a steady influx of students. So branding wasn't such a priority.

Interviewer:
Absolutely. What words would you use to describe this University's brand?

MMUHoB/MM:
Friendly, community, inclusive, um, we get this feedback from students all the time. But also a willingness to invest, we have spent £400 million investing in the city centre campus. Um, our location, Manchester is a big part of who we are.

Interviewer:
If the university brand was an animal, what kind of animal would it be?

MMUHoB/MM:
Oooh, hmm, that's a great question, hmmm, I wouldn't say it would be an aggressive animal. It wouldn't be a reptile as they are cold. Um, definitely warm. Maybe a dog. Intelligent. We are powered by our academic intelligence. Energetic. As a university we have lots of energy. Dogs like to be around people. Um, hardworking. Reliable. Loyal. Good companion. That's a great question.

Interviewer:
So you have said about the university changing over the years, how would you say the university brand has had to change over the recent years?

MMUHoB/MM:
So um from a constituent point of view, and we still do have a way to go, something as straightforward as our logo, that has changed over time. We obviously have a long history. And we have had to get more control of our brand and making sure the brand messages are consistent.

Interviewer: regarding the long history of the brand - do you attempt to use this historic or nostalgic feeling?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes absolutely and we balance it between saying we have roots dating back years. We market our experience with relevant and contemporary academics, equally we are willing to invest in the city and look at more pioneering methods of teaching moving forward. We are one of the leading universities in degree apprenticeships and so I think this shows whilst we have a long history of educations, we are equally happy to move with the times and be relevant.
Interviewer:
Good. Do you feel a university can have a real brand? Is it as real as a corporate brand? Is it indeed a corporate brand itself?

MMUHoB/MM:
Oooh, I feel it has the same value to those who hold it. Our students and employees are our brand ambassadors. I see students wearing MMU clothing, I see the MMU brand all around me. Some people will view their university experience differently and probably will have varying associations of the brand. The same goes for employees. Some staff live and breathe the brand, other don't. I would say yes it is absolutely a real brand. It's all around us.

Interviewer:
What do you think makes a successful university brand?

MMUHoB/MM:
Demonstrating that our students themselves go on to be successful. This is what makes a successful university brand. The students' success. That's what we are here to do.

Interviewer:
So the success of your students. Are the success of your brand?

MMUHoB/MM:
Yes, absolutely and that's part of what we offer through the academic experience, the facilities, um students support. Academic or wellbeing support, it's all crucial to ensure they graduate.

Interviewer:
And last question, tell me about the University's future branding strategy? Where's it going? What's it going to do?

MMUHoB/MM:
So, um, we launched a series of new creatives for our brand recently with one of our postgraduate campaigns. We have been running a series of branding workshops to ensure everyone across the university is familiar with the new campaign and understand what our brand stand for. City, partnership and people are key aspects of our brand. How we get this across in our messaging is crucial. We have changed our tone of voice to make it more accessible to appropriate to all our audiences. We are now adopting just one tone of voice for all - stakeholders UG, PG, research. This is a change. We are a big institution so rolling this out takes time. But this is a big change for us.
There are more steps to take to make our brand even. Ore successful - not just visually as we have our brand all over the city. But rolling this out across all platforms is important for consistency. The brand values will stay the same but how we present ourselves will continue to evolve always to ensure we are relevant and fresh.

Interviewer:
Do you have anything you would like to add?

MMUHoB/MM:
I don't think so. I think I have covered it all.

END

Appendix E: Example of stage 3 recursive analysis

Emerging Themes from Head of Brand/Marketing Managers at Manchester Metropolitan University	
Original Narrative	**Paraphrased Data**
We enable students to be successful through their academic experience, the facilities they use and the student support available to them. This is all crucial to ensure they have the tools needed to enable them to graduate	Providing students with the tools they need
City partnerships are key aspects to the success of our brand	City partnerships are crucial for brand success
Our students and employees are our brand ambassadors. I see students and staff wearing the university branded clothing all around, I see the university brand all around me all the time. People will view their university experience differently and have varying associations of the brand. Some people live and breathe the brand, some don't. but understanding the part everyone plays in the brand is important.	Everyone needs to understand their role in the brand
Our people are key aspects to our brand. How we get this across in our messaging is crucial.	Staff and students are key for a successful brand
As we have taken more control of our brand, we have made sure the brand messages are consistent	Effective brand management. Consistent.
We have changed our tone of voice to make it more accessible to all our audiences. We are now adopting just one tone of voice for all stakeholders. This is a big change. We are a big institution so rolling this out takes time. But this is a big change for us. There are more steps to take to make our brand even more successful, not just the visibility as we have our brand already all over the city. But rolling this new approach out across all platforms is important for consistency. The brand values will say the same but how we present ourselves in our communications will continue to evolve always to ensure we are relevant and fresh	Consistent tone of voice across all platforms
We balance it between saying we have roots dating back years but are also modern. We market our experience with relevant and contemporary academics, equally we are willing to invest in the city itself, and also look at more pioneering methods of teaching moving forward. We are one of the leading universities in degree apprenticeships and so I think this shows whilst we have a long history of educating, we are equally happy to move with the times and be relevant.	Draw upon location and heritage in marketing communications

Students have become much more savvy about their rights and making sure their lecturers turn up to lectures etc. They have been far more vocal about getting their results back in time and if their lectures have been cancelled due to strikes; they have been much more vocal about getting sessions rearranged.	Respond effectively to challenging environments.
Contact time seems more important now as students want to know they are getting their money’s worth. So, I would say, rightly so, as they spend a lot of money on their degree, they want to know what they are going to get out of it. When I went to university years ago, I wouldn’t say that students were anywhere near as demanding with their expectations as they are now	Students seeking the value for money in their university experience.
Demonstrating that our students themselves go on to be successful. This is what makes a successful university brand. That’s what we are here to do	Demonstrate successful alumni.

Appendix F: Interpretations of the meaning of brand

Extrapolated qualitative data	Data source
A brand is something I feel connect to	BUA1
A brand is something I recognise, that instils values which I find positive	BUA2
A brand aligns to my own values	BUA3
A brand represents us	BUHoB/MM1
A brand is the vision of the organisation	BU/HoB/MM2
A brand is an image and an idea which you associate with	BUS1
It’s an idea which people associate with	BUS2
It’s a concept	BUS3
A brand is a representation of values	MMUA1
It’s the organisation’s philosophy	MMUA2
It’s something I connect to	MMUA3
It’s how it makes you feel	MMUHoB/MM1
It’s the values of the organisation	MMUHoB/MM2
A brand is more than just a logo	MMUS1
A brand to me is something I recognise	MMUS2
More than just a logo	MMUS3
It explains what we are and what we stand for.	UoPA1
The brand is an image both in a visual way and in the positioning.	UoPA2
The philosophy of the organisation	UoPA3
The heart and soul	UoPHoB/MM1
The representation of our values	UoPHoB/MM2
It’s a visual recognition and an ideological view	UoPS1
This is what we can do for you	UoPS2
A brand is also what you like about it, what you associate with it	UoPS3