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Iconic branding and profitable brand awareness: A case study of the African Development Bank

By
Karen A. Gantsho

909027009

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I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Miriam Smith, for her steadfast love and fervent prayers in her life and I believe even in her death. May her memory be honoured by the completion of this dissertation.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation which I submit for the Magister Artium degree in Marketing Communications to the University of Johannesburg is my own work and has not been submitted by me to any other university.

Karen A. Gantsho

Student Number: 909027009
ABSTRACT

Communication in the 21st century has been defined as a practice through which members of society achieve shared meanings through the exchange of information, so that the making and managing of meaning creates a shared understanding of a social reality. Recent research emphasises the strong influence of communication platforms such as the media which encapsulates social thought, social discourse and reflects social reality, notwithstanding the prolific digital media as one of the most intriguing benefits of 21st century communication, specifically in the arena of brands and brand awareness. As such, a brand is a promise made by its owners to its consumers, creating brand perceptions and expectations as conveyed by the story of the brand through its various forms of communication. More specifically, media content significantly contributes to consumer perceptions and aspirations to interact with a brand because 21st century media in collaboration with the brand and media-savvy 21st century consumer creates awareness of a social reality such as brand consumption, by influencing public interest on specific characteristics such as the iconicity of a brand, thus setting the agenda for public discourse on the brand. As such the brand achieves an optimal competitive advantage, which contributes to its iconicity or collective high regard that the media find difficult to ignore, thus the application of the principles of the agenda-setting theory, which implies that the media is a fundamental contributor to social thought and discourse, creating public conversation and interest in the brand, ideally infusing the market with profitable awareness of the brand. In acknowledgement of the recognition of the African Development Bank as Africa’s premier development finance institution and as such, an iconic brand, this study addresses the research problem which explores how the African Development Bank uses its iconic branding in order to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

**Keywords:** agenda-setting, brand, iconic brand, brand story, identity-value, brand culture, profitable brand awareness.
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Guzman (2005:1) describes the 21st century as a social order characterised by a shift from linear relationships and limitations in all spheres of life including communication, media and branding, to an era of increased globalisation, unlimited market boundaries and a more sophisticated, informed, participating consumer (Clift, 2012; Glynn, 2013 & Masting, 2011). With regards to the shift in communication specifically, Dion (2012), McLeod and Lee (2012), Robert (2013) as well as Waisbord (2013) note that 20th century communication has evolved from simply being a linear process that entailed the transfer of information between the sender of a message and the receiver of that message, to a non-linear process that is influenced by the dynamic 21st century social environment in which communication takes place in a global, multifaceted and interconnected digital space with minimal constraints. As such, Gunning (2003) notes that the internet became known as new media when it became deregulated and received unprecedented exposure by other mass media such as television, radio and newspapers, which inadvertently then assumed the label of old or traditional media. Hence, Kugel, Blechman and Frazier (2012) observe that 21st century communication occurs among multiple members of society with access to a wide spectrum of information sources and diverse perspectives and opinions on social realities. Thus, Taylor (2010) describes social realities as real life experiences of individuals or common experiences shared by communities within society. In addition, Hui Kyong Chun (2006:7), Sood and Lathigra (2009) as well as Southgate (2012) point out digital platforms as a social reality of the 21st century that is characterised by social networks with large amounts of varied content for continuous, vibrant public conversation and speedy collection of information. Therefore, individuals have become active contributors to an information society where information and subsequently communication has become a currency which is socially driven and socially engaging because it is relevant, high impact and immediate (Gauntlet, 2009).

Furthermore, Fisher (2013), Goldstuck (2013) and Rappaport (2007) observe that individuals are now producers as well as consumers of a very dynamic media landscape, as citizen journalists or non-traditional media experts on digital platforms such as blogging, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, with the mobile phone market growing exponentially as more and younger people have access to it.
To confirm this rapid mobile phone growth, Meeker (2013) observes that mobile traffic has increased by fifteen percent of global internet traffic in May 2013, up from ten percent in May 2012 and six percent in May 2011. For this reason, Gane and Beer (2008:98); Moeller (2008) purport that in the 21st century the media environment has become more vibrant and as a result of new technologies and fewer barriers to access and contribute to media content, thereby transferring the role of determining the salience or importance of issues and the power to frame and shape media content to a wide spectrum of media consumers rather than a few media owners as was the case in the 20th century (McLeod & Lee, 2012; Sood & Lathigra, 2009; Wu & Coleman, 2009:776). Therefore, Beckett (2013) and Lagerkvist (2009) acknowledge the transition in the media landscape and as such, the transition in the agenda-setting theory of the 20th century where the public of traditional media was a passive audience of information controlled by powerful media owners, who determined social discourse, to the 21st century consumer who now has the power to contribute to media content and co-produce their own social discourse.

Nonetheless, Coleman and McCombs (2007:503); Tom (2009); Unerman (2012) argue that social discourse is influenced by issues covered in traditional as well as new media that resonate with the real life experiences of individuals, thereby reinforcing the dynamic impact and relevance of a 21st century agenda-setting theory that embraces media content as a collaboration between both old and new media. Moreover, Eadie (2009) confirms that as a communication theory, agenda-setting has proven to be robust and resilient because of its relevance to the 21st century media-driven society as digitally driven new media fulfils its 21st century role as contributor rather than only a shaper of diverse public opinion and awareness of social realities (Eadie & Goret, 2013:17; Wiesenfeld, Wurthman & Hambrick, 2008:234). Thus, Bergan and Risner (2012), Hartley (2010) as well as Mayumi and Paiva (2009), argue that integration between old and new media is the strategic answer for the longevity of old media and the relevance of the agenda-setting theory in the 21st century. Confirming this relevance of the agenda-setting theory in 21st century, Boaden (2008) acknowledges that sharing information from a traditional media perspective no longer sets the agenda for what people should think and talk about as was the case in the 20th century, but instead a collaboration between traditional media content and user generated media content, “fully embraces the experiences of audiences, sharing their stories, using their knowledge, hosting their opinions and being more open and transparent than ever.
before”, emphasising the fundamental shift in a 20th century agenda-setting in which traditional media determined what society should think and talk about to a 21st century agenda-setting in which members of society decide for themselves what to think, talk and contribute to media content about. As such, Hartley (2010) cites the example of launching The Times, a South African daily newspaper that was launched in 2007 amid widespread misgivings about its success in a digital era. Nonetheless, in 2013 the newspaper remains a success story as a result of its business model which includes integration with the newspaper’s website at every level, directing readers to multimedia content and encouraging readers to provide feedback online, accurate, fair and visual appeal that is relevant for a generation of consumers that are accustomed to being part of the story, as they co-create content in new media.

In relation to the 21st century social reality in which people co-create media content and freely contribute to social discourse, Crawford-Brown and Strong (2013); Frampton (2011) observe that in the 21st century brands have become integral to the digital-era society, such that people’s thoughts, conversations and even their values are influenced by brands on a daily basis. Thus Mootee (2008) observes that the contemporary brand stretches beyond its functionality and expands itself into the life of the consumer in a ground-breaking wave of branded media content, branded entertainment, branded convenience and branded space. Furthermore, Conley (2007:199) adds that in the 21st century brands exist in every sphere of life, so much so that branding has moved to steer society into excessive branded lifestyles as consumers attempt to create customised brand realities. Hence Masting (2011) notes that the 21st century brand is no longer just the label of a brand owner or a product, but a driver of social discourse between brand owners, brand users as well as non-brand users. Therefore, Bettes (2009); Edelman (2010) and Solis (2012) emphasise the strong effect of 21st century social media which capture social thought and social discourse in real time as the contemporary generation of consumers who are constantly connected (generation C), seamlessly multitask on various digital platforms, communicating their exact whereabouts, their current activity and their in-the-moment interactions with brands; leading to communities, collaborating and sharing brand experiences (Nelson-Field & Klose, 2010; Trendwatching, 2010). Thus, Loehnis (2012) notes that a 21st century social reality in relation to the branded lifestyles of 21st century consumers has become a measure of the value shared between fellow brand consumers as they interact with their brand and with one another, because they embrace a common understanding of a
social experience. In addition, (Berenger, 2012; Carroll, 2011: xi) acknowledge that agenda-setting in relation to branding is a new domain because by the year 2010, agenda-setting as a communication theory had not been used to study an organisation or brand’s prominence in respect of public awareness of the brand; therefore the agenda-setting communication theory, which is largely related to journalism and not readily used in branding will be applied to this study, making a contribution to existing literature.

Furthermore, Campbell, Conare, Hernandez (2010), Dunn and Davies (2004) as well as Scola (2011) argue that the brand of the 21st century is much more than visual and tangible representations as was the case in the 20th century. A more contemporary description of a brand goes beyond the name, logo, and other tangible factors of the brand to include a much more brand-savvy, and empowered consumer or brand activist with intangible expectations such as new societal values which embrace spontaneity, authenticity and open discourse between brand owners, channels of brand information such as the media and stakeholders that are both for and against the brand. Thus Friedman and Miles, (2006), Wu (2007) as well as Heath (2006:95) note that stakeholders may be groups or individuals such as brand owners, suppliers, employees, social communities as well as the media with both a positive or negative interest in the performance of the brand. Most importantly, the 21st century consumer wants to contribute to the creation of the contemporary brand and as such have meaningful interaction with the brand (Brandchannel, 2011). Hence, Luoma-aho and Vos (2010:316) observe that as a result of social media platforms of the 21st century, interacting with stakeholders has evolved from being controlled by brand and media owners towards topics of stakeholder interest or ‘issue arenas’, such as the reason for a brand’s positive or negative reputation (Kiousis, Popescu & Mitrook, 2007). As such Luoma-aho and Vos (2010:315) describe ‘issue arenas’ as places of interaction where an issue is discussed by stakeholders and brand owners both digitally and within traditional media. An example of ‘issue arenas’ is the rise in consumer demand for the authentic, personal, memorable and engaging (Kay 2007:1) as contemporary consumers or New Realists as Boyle (2005) calls them, now research brands for real products, organic vegetables, clothes made of organic fabrics and ultimately, brand experiences that make them feel rooted and in touch with who they are as individuals. Thus, Dion (2012), Flavian and Gurrea (2009), John, Mariano and Moore (2012) recommend that brand owners should constantly strive to find opportunities for
interaction and co-operation with stakeholders in order to stay relevant and connected to their specific stakeholder groups; by positively contributing and influencing brand conversations in digital platforms where large amounts of unregulated user generated content contribute to diverse consumer perspectives which are speedily collected, constituting continuous, vibrant public conversation (Kugel, Blechman & Frazer, 2012), which could benefit or harm the brand (Findlay & Louw, 2010).

Furthermore, Keller (2009) proposes that the brand of the 21st century has become increasingly significant for what it stands for, what benefits it provides and what needs it satisfies. Such that, Chang (2010), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as well as Owen (2010) observe that a need that the 21st century brand has to meet is the facilitation of social discourse and non-traditional public opinion as the public profile of the brand is now largely shaped by consumers and non-consumers who readily and in real time explore, discover and share information about brands, giving rise to brand conversations which the brand owner is no longer in control of, but has to facilitate in order to ensure a strategic fit between a brand’s strategy and constructive awareness of the brand (Dion, 2012), (Flavian & Gurrea, 2009) and (John, Mariano & Moore, 2012). In relation to constructive awareness of a brand, Mcdowell (2012) notes that in a world of hyper transparency, 24/7 communications and limitless options, consumers are drawn to brands with ‘purposeful intent’, brands that exist for a reason beyond making profits.

As such, Lee, Haley and Yang (2013), Southgate (2012) as well as Chaturvedi (2012) note that an essential difference in the 20th century and the 21st century brand is that the brand of the 21st century has to pay careful attention to the brand’s value and dynamic brand conversations in both old and new media content about the brand, which constantly needs to be monitored and protected by the brand owner, especially because the role of gatekeeping of brand information has shifted from brand owner to a wide spectrum of stakeholders that are for and against the brand, taking into consideration what appeals to the scrutinising 21st century stakeholder. For this reason, Edelman (2010) in the Harvard Business Review of December 2010 and Kirby (2009) remind that the 21st century stakeholder and not the brand owner determines how s/he will relate to a brand and ultimately when and where s/he will engage with a brand’s points of influence or forms of brand communication and their ultimate brand reality. Hence Bull (2010) highlights 21st century branding professional portfolios such as ‘Chief Listening Officer’ at computer brand Dell, whose job is to constantly listen to and talk to stakeholders in order to facilitate the social discourse about the brand in both old and
new media and sincerely and actively respond to the many stakeholder opinions about the brand, specifically the very immediate brand conversations held online (Sorour, 2013). Thus, Asscher (2013) and Bailie (2012) and Thomson (2011) refer to a brand’s speedy and appropriate response to stakeholder opinions as ‘feedback loops’ which can reinforce positive opinion and high regard for the brand so as to minimise or change negative media content about the brand.

Therefore, Kotelnikov (2007), McMullen and Rattray (2013) point out that for a brand to succeed in the 21st century, it is crucial that it is widely held in high regard by the very demanding 21st century stakeholders so that even in tough times, stakeholders will believe in a brand’s resilience because of the brand’s reputation as transparent and engaging. Thus, Eisenegger (2009) describes brand reputation as the way a brand or organisation appeals to stakeholders on a functional level through its business performance, socially through the norms and values which the brand upholds and emotionally through the way it relates to its stakeholders. In addition Arnoould (2005) points out that brand reputation in the 21st century is what consumers perceive to be true about a brand and how they share their perceptions of the brand in social discourse with fellow consumers. As such, Caru and Cova (2007) note that if a truth about a brand is socially relevant, people think and talk about it thereby confirming the brand’s reputation through social discourse about their individual experiences of the brand as reputable. Hence, Brown (2011) observes that the 21st century presents a brand environment called the Reputation Economy in which positive brand conversation, specifically in collaboration with brand owners and stakeholders generates opportunity to build trust and a good reputation, contributing to highly valued reputational capital (Flynn & Bourque, 2009). Research undertaken by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2010, found that the risk of losing reputation capital is the greatest risk to brands in the Reputation Economy of the 21st century (Aula, 2010:44). In agreement, highly reputable brand personality Branson (2013) asserts that the brand’s reputation is contained in positive public perception and social discourse about the brand and as soon as these become negative, the brand may be destroyed if it does not respond appropriately to restore its reputation. Therefore Brandt, Pahud de Mortanges, Blumelhuber, Van Riel (2011) and Chaturvedi (2012) observe that in the 21st century Reputation Economy, there is less concern about the price or function of a brand than the consumer showing sound judgement, by participating in the reputation or acknowledging the widespread high regard for the brand, by truly experiencing the brand. To illustrate the importance of
a brand’s reputation, the Mail and Guardian’s Top Companies Reputation Index (2013) in conjunction with the Reputation Institute observed that South African banking brands earned the highest regard for good brand reputations overall in 2013 as a result of their reputation as robust brands during the 2008 global financial crisis, even though they received a lot of criticism in both old and new media in the last few years.

Hollis (2012) notes that strongly associated with a brand’s reputation and the subsequent brand reality for the stakeholder of the complex and dynamic world of the 21st century is the iconic brand; a brand that is highly valued and admired because of its reputation as a symbol of what is meaningful and inspires loyalty among stakeholders, specifically consumers of the brand. Thus Holt (2004:20) as well as Skotadis and Pugh (2008:30) purport that brands can be described as iconic, because of their appeal to stakeholders, contributing to the brand on three levels: the brand story or its heritage, history and origin, the superior manner in which the brand captures the imagination and aspiration of the discerning 21st century consumer to associate or identify with the brand, as well as its cultural resonance which attracts consumers to incorporate the brand into their lifestyles. Therefore stakeholders, especially the 21st century brand activist who demands participation in the building of iconic brands, relates strongly to brands that portray values such as acknowledgement of the consumer’s role in co-creating the brand story of the 21st century iconic brand (Glynn, 2013), the consumer’s identity with the iconic brand (Hollis, 2012) and the consumer’s choice to embrace the culture of the iconic brand (Austin & Ware, 2012). Thus, Clift (2011) is of the view that iconic branding, a process of designing the brand’s offer and image for positive impact, affirms the salient and valued place that the brand already occupies in the target stakeholder’s mind, thereby reinforcing the iconicity of the brand.

Hence, Hollis (2012) adds that Millward Brown research found that iconic brands have little significance if they are not instantly recognisable, inferring that the public should not only be aware of the brand’s existence, but the brand’s presence must be felt so that consumers are very familiar with its attributes, benefits and value of the iconic brand. It follows therefore that a clear effect of a brand’s use of its iconicity should be to establish knowledge of a brand’s positive reputation and salience thereby resulting in proliferate trust in the brand to contribute to future earnings (Atkinson, 2010). Thus, Castree and Wolfe (2013) concur that for any given entity therefore, the intention of branding strategies should be to build iconic brands that ensure future sustainability, by growing ubiquitous, positive awareness of the brand, which leads to consumer
preference and saliency that contributes to dynamic social discourse about the brand.

Therefore, Tiltman (2012) asserts that for the contemporary consumer, digital platforms' role as contributor to positive social discourse, not only creates iconic value for brands, resulting in universal brand awareness, but also contributes to the brand's reputation, resonance and relationship with the very demanding contemporary consumer. Thus, Carroll (2011) observes that salience of the brand in both old and new media as applied in the 21st century agenda-setting theory gives rise to a high level of prominence of the brand on the consumer agenda, enforcing the iconic value of a brand in the market, thus establishing strong awareness of the brand. As such, Berthon, Pitt, Chakrabati, Berthon and Simon (2011) observe that in a vast media economy and society: a) consumers create their own social reality in co-operation with new and old media; b) iconic brands offer various advantages such as compelling brand stories or brand heritage, identity-value and brand culture for both consumers and owners of brands; and c) brands, specifically iconic brands facilitate access to new markets by representing trusted product names and attributes, and ultimately constructive brand awareness.

Jain and Sharma (2012) propose that awareness of the social world which in the 21st century is largely a branded world gives new meaning to brand awareness. Hence, Brandchannel (2011) and Chang (2011) highlight the transition of a 20th century brand awareness which focused on recall and recognition of a brand within a product category to a 21st century notion of brand awareness which goes beyond only knowing about the existence of a brand to include thinking, talking, sharing and meaningful interaction between many different stakeholders and the brand, with every media and consumption opportunity. Similarly Merz, He, and Vargo (2009) propose that profitable brand awareness is not achieved by a brand just being noticed because of its positive media profile, but by a brand which draws stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to get to know more about the brand and develop a lifestyle relationship with the brand. Therefore, Ballester, Navarro and Sicilla (2011) are of the opinion that in the 21st century economy, establishing positive brand recognition and the process of creating profitable brand awareness has evolved from being a company-focused activity to being a stakeholder-focused activity because 21st century profitable brand awareness has become a network of positive associations, favourable attitudes and constructive responses to the brand from a wide range of stakeholders.
Furthermore, in the 21st century economy, globalisation, the rise of informed consumerism, increasing awareness of environmental and ethical issues assisted by pressure groups or brand activists and the understanding by brand owners that profitable brand awareness depends on contemporary branding factors such as a brand’s salience, innovation, reputation and meaning; brand owners have had to reconsider their branding communication strategies, specifically with regards to the brand’s contribution to media content, as this strongly relates to stakeholder-driven awareness of the brand (Chandna & Mehra, 2013; Wood, Parry, Breeze, Wormald, 2009). Therefore, communicating the 21st century brand to the brand activist consumer has implications for branding, brand awareness and the 21st century agenda setting process of the media, which no longer involves top-down communication structures in which the brand owner and the media create brand awareness but a bottom-up, co-operative engagement in which the consumer and the brand owner, buoyed by the technological advances of 21st century media, work together for the ultimate, holistic experience of the brand reality (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010).

An illustration of how multiple stakeholders drive brand awareness in the bottom up society and economy of the 21st century is the social network Wildfire, a platform for ‘open source’ branding, where stakeholders from anywhere on the globe can share positive or negative stories, pictures and brand experiences (Wildfire, 2011; Freeman & Chapman, 2009). Hence Cohen (2010) and Skolnick and Baron (2013) note that within the fast and continually changing global economy of the 21st century, positive brand conversation has become a fundamental asset for brands to survive and maintain profitable brand awareness.

Thus, Christie (2013) and Li (2012) and Phillips (2011) as well as Schultz and Block (2011) argue that in the more discerning and brand-conscious world of the 21st century, positive brand conversations and high brand recognition in today’s digital ecosphere, significantly contribute to profitable brand awareness by facilitating stakeholder interaction with a brand and impacting social discourse on the brand in innovative ways, so as to find influencer insights that can be leveraged to resonate with a wide range of stakeholders as optimally as possible. As such, Chang (2010), Keller and Fay (2009) and Unerman (2012) describe influencer insights as the views of stakeholders who intentionally seek out information, share ideas, recommendations and their opinions with others, as fellow stakeholder opinions are more trusted than those of media and brand owners. Moreover, Braun (2004:20) and Kotler, Pfoertsch and Michi (2006:5)
assert that as consumers do place importance on the opinions of other stakeholders or brand influencers (Shearman, 2013), based on their experiences with the brand as well as endorsement from the brand’s proliferation in brand conversations in both old and new media, a climate of opinion as reflected in robust social discourse is co-created, giving rise to brand prominence and ideally, profitable brand awareness. Therefore, Carr (2012), Nikolopoulos (2012), Palmer (2009) and Reid (2012) refer to this practice of sharing brand experiences through brand conversations as the Referral Economy and encourage brand owners not to undermine the value of such stakeholder insights for profitable brand awareness.

In light of brand owners taking heed of stakeholder insights and constructive brand conversations for profitable brand awareness, Angus (2010) notes that research conducted by Millward Brown in 2010 found that the continent of Africa as a brand offers untapped sources of stakeholder insights and innovation. Notwithstanding, Wainaina (2005) reminds that traditionally, media content about Africa has typically been framed in negative terms; therefore globally, awareness of brand Africa has been negative, regardless of the existence of numerous positive stories. Nonetheless, Stocking (2012) argues that Africa has come a long way from the negative media content about Africa’s floods, drought, poverty and conflicts to the present, where Maritz (2012) notes that since The Economist of 13 May 2000 regretfully labelled Africa ‘the hopeless continent’ a decade ago, a profound change has taken hold,” as reflected in a 2011 Economist article headlined, ‘Africa’s hopeful economies: The sun shines bright’. This profound change that has taken place refers to a transition from a widespread 20th century view that post-colonial Africa was a dark and hopeless continent, characterised by Afro-Pessimism (Swift, 2010), to a renewed 21st century outlook of Afro-Optimism which highlights the present positive perspectives on Africa (Onwudiwe & Ibelema, 2002). As such, Fengler (2013) concurs that, “Africa is in a much better economic position today than it was at the turn of the century,” as current developments are introductory displays of strong long-term transitions which can speed up Africa’s development. As such, according to The Economist of 3rd December 2011, Afro-Optimism largely stems from the robust economic growth in Africa over the last decade, as a result of more stable and peaceful governments, higher revenues from the continent’s natural resources, a fast growing middle class, and Africa’s enthusiasm for technology.
In agreement the bestselling Pan-African Business Magazine, African Business (June 2012), emphasises that in the last decade, Africa has been hailed as a beacon of significant economic growth and political maturity. In addition, former United Nations Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Laureate, Kofi Annan (2011), confirms that the current Afro-Optimism shown by the number of businesses and countries flocking to invest in the continent illustrates that Africa as a brand is once again seen as a continent of opportunity for development and prosperity. Therefore, Birrell (2012) in The Observer of Sunday 26 August 2012 acknowledges that as a continent, Africa is emerging as a new brand, powered by collaboration between brand-aware consumers as members of a vibrant, global society and economies worldwide, embracing Africa as the new destination of choice for profitable investment. Thus, from a branding perspective, the Wall Street Journal of 14 October 2011 acknowledges critical drivers of continental brand Africa’s recent positive outlook, with particular interest in authentic African brands that contribute to the global optimistic outlook towards Africa, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB).

Moreover, The Annual Development Effectiveness Review (2012), the African Business Review (2012) and AllAfrica Global Media June 2013 acknowledge the AfDB as “The leading development finance institution in Africa” because the AfDB is ranked as Africa’s Premium Development Institution as well as Africa’s highest authority on development knowledge and finance. In addition, Featherstone (2013), the UK International development Minister responsible for Africa acknowledges that as “Africa’s premier economic development institution, the AfDB is in a unique position to lead Africa’s economic transformation”. Ben Yaiche (2012), in the African Business Magazine (June, 2012) concurs that as a brand, the AfDB is the continent’s most dynamic agent of economic transformation since it has worked to adapt to the fast changing global and African economic and social circumstances, as displayed by the AfDB signing a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations University, “to foster research and knowledge exchange on sustainable development in Africa” (Elaheebocus, 2013). This illustrates how the AfDB strives to meet the demands of the 21st century consumer of development finance for an authentic African brand experience, delivered with clarity and credibility, collaborating with all who share their vision for a prosperous African continent (Kaberuka, 2013). Furthermore, Ben Yaiche (2012) observes that the AfDB has emerged as not only the most significant development finance institution in Africa, but it is widely recognised as “the continent’s
prime think-tank and Africa’s most important economic research and knowledge bank, which enjoys wide respect and support on the African continent and internationally”.

Thus the choice of the AfDB as the chosen brand for this study is based on its impressive reputation as an iconic brand, as acknowledged by the first women African President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2013) of Liberia who on an official visit to the AfDB in February 2013 stated that “The African Development Bank has always been a first-rate financial institution”. Furthermore, Akukwe (2013), an internationally recognised leader in public and global health from the George Washington University Centre for Global Health acknowledges that, “The AfDB enjoys strong technical leadership” in Africa. Moreover, referring to the AfDB’s iconicity, The World Resources Institute (2012) acknowledge the AfDB as “one of the world’s largest development banks”, as well as by Akpederi (2013) in the African Economy Publication of 22 April (2013) who noted that in 2010 the board of the AfDB articulated that, “They want the Bank to focus on its mission of remaining and improving on its status as the premier development finance institution of the African continent”. In addition, the AfDB has consistently had conferred on it, the highest possible credit rating, i.e. AAA rating for long term borrowings in the international capital markets, by Moody’s Investor Services and Standard and Poor’s, the two major international rating agencies, as observed by The African Business Magazine (2013), Mugwe (2012) in The Business Daily Africa (2012), the Technology Banker of 9 September 2012 and the AfDB Annual Reports (2011, 2010, 2009). Furthermore, the AfDB is also held in high regard by other development institutions such as the World Bank, perceiving the AfDB as a leading financial institution managed by Africans for Africans in Africa.

Furthermore, to reinforce the recognition of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the bank is described by the bestselling Pan-African business magazine, African Business (June 2012) as the most important development financial institution in Africa because it is Africa’s most dynamic agent of economic transformation, which has swiftly adjusted to the rapidly changing demands of the 21st century consumer of development finance by becoming less bureaucratic and being more stakeholder focused (Ben Yaiche, 2012); as expressed in the AfDB’s vision statement (1999) which emphasizes the importance of a “bottom-up participatory approach” and a “client-responsive approach” to ensure stakeholder commitment and ownership. As such, the iconicity of the AfDB is well established, notwithstanding its critical role as Africa’s development finance authority (Africa Competitiveness Report 2013), which is essential for its experience in the
African development landscape as well as its collaborating capacity with any other stakeholders who share the AfDB’s vision for poverty alleviation and sustainable growth in Africa, such as its collaborating capacity with newly emerging development finance institutions such as the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) development bank which could channel significant resources into all the countries concerned. As such, the president of the AfDB, Kaberuka (2013), observes that the proposition of a BRICS development bank will be a welcome partner in development finance and mutually beneficial for all the countries in the developing world; as the BRICS countries are already contributing to the African development solution, bolstering the AfDB’s vision for poverty alleviation and sustainable growth in Africa.

Notwithstanding the fact that the AfDB is highly regarded as Africa’s premier development finance institution (Ben Yaiche, 2012), a National Research Foundation (NRF) search in both 2008 and 2013 confirmed that no research study has been undertaken to explore how the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness, thus this study aims to make a contribution to the fields of agenda-setting, branding, iconic branding and brand awareness. Moreover, the AfDB is a large organisation with a wide range of client groups such as the public sector, the private sector and Not-for-Profit organisations. According to the AfDB’s Annual Reports (2011, 2010, 2009), the public sector stratum of its clientele constitutes the majority of its market.

Therefore the problem statement is: How does the AfDB use its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

The research questions are:

- How does the AfDB use its brand story to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?
- How does the AfDB use its identity-value to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?
- How does the AfDB use its culture to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?

The research aims are:

- To explore how the AfDB uses its brand story to establish brand awareness among
its public sector clients.

- To explore how the AfDB uses its identity-value to establish brand awareness among its public sector clients.
- To explore how the AfDB uses its culture to establish brand awareness among its public sector clients.

1.2. OPERATIONALISING KEYWORDS

According to Goertz (2006) and Gerring (2001), one of the critical initial steps in research is to operationalise keywords by defining and clarifying the scope of their application to the study. The keywords in this study are: agenda-setting, brand, iconic brand, brand story, identity-value, brand culture, profitable brand awareness.

1.2.1 Defining the keyword: agenda-setting

Moeller (2008) defines the agenda-setting theory as the role that the media plays in influencing how the public thinks and talks about media content as a result of the way and frequency that stories are reported. It therefore focuses on how news reporters decide on which stories matter, how to portray the stories that are covered in the news and how the public responds to the stories. As such, Griffin (2006) purports that traditionally the agenda-setting theory focuses on two elements of the media: the creation of information that is of interest to the public and the creation of public awareness of social realities. However, since the advent of the internet the agenda-setting theory has had to consider not only the role of traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television in creating information and awareness, but also the prolific contributions of new electronic media to public discourse (Moeller, 2008). Therefore, Boaden (2008) acknowledges that sharing information from a traditional media perspective no longer sets the agenda for what people should think and talk about as was the case in the 20th century, but instead a collaboration between traditional media content and user generated media content, “fully embraces the experiences of audiences, sharing their stories, using their knowledge, hosting their opinions and being more open and transparent than ever before”, emphasising the fundamental shift in a 20th century agenda-setting in which traditional media determined what society should think and talk about to a 21st century agenda-setting in which members of society decide for themselves what to think, talk and contribute to media content about.
1.2.2 The application and scope of the agenda setting as a metatheory is set out in:

- Chap 1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 2: This chapter is dedicated to the agenda-setting theory
- Chap 5.5: The first theoretical statement is on agenda-setting

1.2.3 Defining the keyword: brand

Keller (2003:3) explains that traditionally the brand of the 20th century was defined as a name, a symbol, a design, a tagline or combination of these that identified the owner of a product or a service and differentiated it from those of competitors. However, in the 21st century, this definition has been criticised for being too focused on the owner and the product, emphasising visual features and tangible marketing communication elements, such as a name or a logo as distinguishing factors, with little regard for the consumer who in the 21st century, has emerged as an all knowing, all seeing, globally vocal media contributor to what constitutes a brand and subsequent brand awareness (Bosman, 2010; Interbrand & Business Week, 2006). As such, Dunn and Davies (2004) argue that the brand of the 21st century is much more than visual and tangible representations. A more contemporary definition of a brand goes beyond the name, logo, and other tangible factors of the brand to include a much more brand-savvy, knowledgeable and empowered consumer. Most importantly, the 21st century consumer demands participation in the creation of the contemporary brand and as such meaningful interaction with the brand.

1.2.4 The application and scope of branding is set out in:

- Chap 1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 3: This chapter is dedicated to branding and profitable brand awareness
- Chap 5.5: The second theoretical statement is on branding

1.2.5 Defining the keywords: iconic brand

Neumeier (2006:19) explains that a brand becomes iconic when it is regarded as a most salient symbol of a set of values that society deems significant. Furthermore, Holt (2004:20) defines iconic brands as brands that hold strong appeal because of their reputation as told by their brand story, their identity-value or resonance with the 21st century consumer and their culture or intense relationship that takes the consumer from
merely consuming the brand to sharing the branded lifestyle with like-minded consumers.

1.2.6 The application and scope of the iconic brand is set out in:

- Chap1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 4: This chapter is dedicated iconic branding for profitable brand awareness in the 21st century
- Chap 5.5: The third theoretical statement is on iconic branding

1.2.7 Defining the keywords: brand story

Pandey (2003) purports that the shared, common understanding about a brand’s reputation and history among consumers and non-consumers alike, as a consequence of consistent communication with the market, is what constitutes the brand story. Holt (2004:3) notes that the brand story is typically based on the brand’s unique history, culture and underlying philosophy, offering consumers a convincing reason to elevate the brand beyond its functional role in the market, into a widely admired icon. As such, Chapin (2012) contends that the role of the brand story is to make the brand’s reason for being clearly understood whenever stakeholders interact with the brand so that the essence of the brand is seen, heard and felt at every consumption opportunity.

1.2.8 The application and scope of the brand story is set out in:

- Chap1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 4.2.1 This section is dedicated to the story of the iconic brand
- Chap 5.5: The fourth theoretical statement is on brand story of the iconic brand

1.2.9 Defining the keyword: identity-value

Keller (2008) explains that the identity-value that the iconic brand creates is not only about the extrinsic properties of a brand, but it includes the ways in which the brand attempts to meet the intrinsic psychological and social needs of the consumer. Thus it is Aaker’s (2002) view that iconicity begins with the core identity or the essence of the brand. Therefore, the iconic brand uses its identity, or the way that brand owners would like to be perceived as well as its image, or the way it is actually perceived and experienced by consumers to inspire all stakeholders to create compelling identity-value for the brand.
1.2.10 The application and scope of identity-value is set out in:

- Chap 1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 4.2.2 This section is dedicated to the identity-value of the iconic brand
- Chap 5.5: The fifth theoretical statement is on identity-value of the iconic brand

1.2.11 Defining the keyword: culture

According to Waisbord (2001), the culture of the iconic brand is defined by the core beliefs and values of the brand that drive socially shared meaning and discourse, appealing to consumers who share a similar value system, thus producing a brand culture.

1.2.12 The application and scope of culture is set out in:

- Chap 1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 4.2.3 This section is dedicated to the culture of the iconic brand
- Chap 5.5: The sixth theoretical statement is on culture of the iconic brand

1.2.13 Defining the keywords: profitable brand awareness

Thus Boaz (2007) proposes that profitable brand awareness can be defined as an outcome of a brand’s place in the consumer’s mind as a result of a brand’s successful communication strategies that draw stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to get to know more about the brand. Therefore, Merz, He, and Vargo (2009) observe that that in the 21st century economy, establishing a positive brand presence or the process of creating profitable brand awareness has evolved from being a company-focused activity to being a consumer-focused activity.

1.2.14 The application and scope of profitable brand awareness is set out in:

- Chap 1.3: The Framework of the study
- Chap 3: This chapter is dedicated to branding and profitable brand awareness
- Chap 4: This chapter is dedicated iconic branding for profitable brand awareness in the 21st century
- Chap 5.5: The seventh theoretical statement is on profitable brand awareness
1.3 FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY

The framework for the study is to provide an orientation for the purpose of the chapters to follow and to indicate the key words in each chapter which are: agenda-setting, brand, iconic brand, brand story, identity-value, brand culture, profitable brand awareness, in order to explore the problem statement which is: How does the AfDB use its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?

1.3.1 Chapter 2: Agenda-setting and the creation of public awareness

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the shift in communication from the 20th century to the 21st century and to show its subsequent significance for agenda-setting which has also had to shift from being prescriptive to being strategically inclusive, integrated and interactive with the contemporary consumer (Ihator, 2004:243). As such as a result of new media, 21st century agenda-setting theory has had move from determining social reality to co-creating (Bilgram, Bartl & Biel, 2010) social realities as determined by the always connected 21st century consumer influencing social discourse (Carroll, 2011). Thus the significance of the shift for the 21st consumer was highlighted by Mc Quaid (2008) who found that the transition from the 20th century to the 21st century economy grew out of technologically driven social changes that eroded the authority of traditional media and brand owners as communication and subsequent social and brand realities between organisations and consumers had shifted due to a more vocal and active consumer society, enhanced connectivity, changing brand values and information technology (Ihator, 2004:243).

1.3.2 Chapter 3: Branding and profitable brand awareness in the 21st century.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the shift in branding and brand awareness of the 20th century and the contribution that such a shift has made to the 21st century economy. As Dion (2012) notes that the focus has been transferred from the powerful brand owner to the powerful brand-savvy consumer who seeks out more information about the strategies and activities of the organisation, is more involved in the production of goods and services, individualistic and independent, devoting more energy and time to companies that strive to improve the world by taking an ethical stand (Lee, Haley & Yang, 2013). As such, Trendwatching (March 2013) observes these consumers as ‘presumers’, consumers who want to assured of emotional rewards before they spend time or money interacting with the brand.
Thus, Tiltman (2012) observes that in addition to the traditional tangible, communication factors such as the name, symbol, design, or tagline that are associated with the brand, the 21st century brand is strongly influenced by an overall branding strategy comprising four intangible attributes of the brand. These include salience or prominent distinction, innovation, reputation and meaning or emotional connection to the brand; all factors which culminate in the consumer’s ultimate thoughts and contribution to social discourse, as a result of strategic agenda-setting of diverse positive media content for the 21st century brand. Sarre and Treuren (2001) as well as Devine and Halpern (2001) posit that the brand of the 21st century has taken on a much more complex role than a name, to a fundamental participant in the 21st century economy where a brand’s reputation is built on economic value and social presence as a result of its history, credibility and business strategy.

Furthermore, Dew (2013) notes that branding has evolved from the brand owner dictating to the brand user into a strategy of brand engagement based on shared values and collaboration between brand owner and brand stakeholder as a result of new digital platforms. In addition, Dinghile (2013) emphasises the importance for brand owners to consider the value of every opportunity to interact with stakeholders in order to engage specifically with the empowered 21st century brand consumers, in order to know what is important to them and what will drive their loyalty and enthusiasm to share the brand experiences with others. The International Finance Corporation Handbook for Companies doing business in Emerging Markets (2007) acknowledges this interaction and communication between brand owners and stakeholders of the 21st century as Stakeholder Engagement, which as a branding strategy aims to improve relations between brand owners and stakeholders so that key stakeholders such as consumers are allowed to co-own the brand not just because they’ve bought and used the brand, but because they gave cognitive and verbal input towards the profitability of the brand (Li, 2012; Blowfield, 2005). Li (2012) concurs that the 21st century brand is a collection of all cognitive and emotional impressions or brand meanings received by consumers, resulting in a salient position in their minds, based on perceived emotional as well as functional benefits. Hence, Castree and Wolfe (2013) observe that the contemporary brand is significant for more than its functionality because it has become an inherent lifestyle partner in the life of the 21st century consumer and reflects the individual’s life and priorities. Thus, Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quillam and Hove (2011); Lorenzo and Pilotti (2008) highlight the branding strategy called brand ecology which is a multifaceted
approach to branding that embraces the multiple stakeholders and multiple brand engagement opportunities which is characteristic of the 21st century society in which the more brand-savvy, knowledgeable and empowered consumer has expectations such as transparency, spontaneity, authenticity and open discourse between brand owners, channels of brand information such as the media, brand users as well as non-brand users (Scola, 2011) and (Bosman, 2010). Most importantly, the 21st century consumer demands participation in the creation of the contemporary brand and as such meaningful interaction with the brand is crucial for positive awareness of the brand (Brandchannel, 2011).

1.3.3 Chapter 4: Iconic branding and profitable brand awareness in the 21st century

The intent of this chapter is to show the value of the brand’s reputation for a brand’s iconicity and brand awareness as Neumeier (2006:19) posits that brands that have a good reputation with a salient, competitive stance and a sense of integrity exert a magnetic or mythic influence over their stakeholders which give rise to iconic brands. Furthermore, Holt (2004:20) expounds that iconic brands hold strong appeal because of their reputation as told by their brand story, their identity-value or resonance with the 21st century consumer and their culture or intense relationship that takes specifically the consumer from merely consuming the brand to sharing the branded lifestyle with like-minded consumers. In addition, Edwards and Day (2005) and Godin (2005) confirm that iconic brands have the reputation of being superior quality products, persons or services with winning branding strategies because they resonate with stakeholders, communicating the iconicity of the brand with imagination, integrity and determination. With regards to a brand’s good reputation, Swystun (2007) highlights a 21st century branding strategy called Consistency of Purpose which focuses on the ubiquity and uniformity of a brand, while encouraging flexibility to maintain relevance and saliency, simultaneously upholding the brand’s credibility and consistently guarding stakeholder trust in the brand. Pandey (2003) postulates that credibility is of fundamental value to the story of the iconic brand as the brand story of the 21st century is typically based on the brand's unique heritage and underlying philosophy, enhanced by consistent, vigorous communication with the market through strategic story tellers such as the media, offering consumers a convincing reason to contribute to the brand story by elevating the brand beyond its functional role in the market, into a widely admired icon.

- **Brand story**
Rogers and Dearing (2007:2) propose that the significance of the ubiquitous nature of both old and new media and its ability to tell the brand story and create social discourse, supports the strategy of iconic branding in that when multiple media content contributors give consistent prominence to an attribute of a brand such as its iconicity, collaborated media content from both stakeholders and brand owners presents brand information that conveys compelling stories about the brand, touching people’s lives and evoking emotion within members of society (Du Plessis, 2005). Thus, the 21st century agenda-setting process of media content collaboration for the brand remains driven by influence as opposed to manipulation, competition and negotiation, as carried out by advocates who tell the brand story as authentically and as spontaneously as the brand is experienced. As such, Pandey (2003) purports that the shared, common understanding about a brand’s reputation and history among consumers and non-consumers alike, as a consequence of consistent communication with the multiple stakeholders, is what constitutes the brand story. Holt (2004:3) reminds that the brand story is typically based on the brand’s unique history, culture and underlying philosophy, offering consumers a convincing reason to elevate the brand beyond its functional role in the market, into a widely admired icon. Furthermore, Holt (2004:3-9) observes that specifically the brand-savvy consumers of the 21st century are drawn to iconic brands largely for the brand stories that embody the ideals that they admire, offering them the choice to identify with such a highly regarded brand and giving them a sense of belonging to a significant brand culture, as digital new media allows for instant connection and a sense of belonging to a community of other brand enthusiasts (Dew, 2013). As such, Kapferer (2004:15) holds the view that iconic brands attract positive media content from a variety of sources, which may lead to profitable brand awareness because the digital media landscape allows for proliferate social conversation about the brand and gives the brand premier positioning in the mind of the consumer. In agreement Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) note that profitable brand awareness is a logical process that follows positive media content and brand conversation which is reinforced when the market experiences constant, constructive recognition of the brand by thinking and talking positively about a brand.

Lindstrom (2007:158) observes that the perceived iconic status of the brand resonates with 21st century consumers, eliciting spontaneous opinions and social interactions, as consumers find fulfilment as they interact with the brand. For
example, iconic brand Virgin is perceived as a lifestyle brand that enjoys universal resonance with consumers as it is globally admired as a symbol of individualism, innovation and endless possibilities, attributes that hold strong appeal for the 21st century consumer. Hence, Neumeier (2006:19) supports Lindstrom’s view that resonance is an important characteristic of an iconic brand, hypothesizing that the core of iconicity is that the organization, person or thing is widely regarded as a most compelling symbol of a set of values that society deems so significant that it is worth aspiring to and it merits consistent favourable thought and social discourse. As such, Virgin’s reputation of value for money, quality products, innovation, fun and non-conformist spirit that embraces consumer co-authorship of the iconic branding agenda are factors which baffle the competition as Virgin is non-traditionalist, in touch with the 21st century consumer, thereby creating a real and tangible brand experience, earning the brand highly acclaimed iconicity and highly profitable brand awareness (Virgin.com, 2010). The story of Virgin illustrates Calder’s (2008:189) point that iconic brands are publicly admired for their great reputations and their ability to consistently tell intriguing, credible brand stories that touch the lives of consumers in meaningful ways. As such, Chapin (2012) contends that the role of the brand story is to make the brand’s reason for being clearly understood whenever stakeholders interact with the brand so that the essence of the brand is seen, heard and felt at every consumption opportunity. Hence, Barcesat and Gruart (2005) propose that actively telling the story of the iconic brand is called Brand Activation, which can be defined as the seamless agenda-setting of all available brand communication in a creative platform in order to inspire consumers to take an active interest in a brand, consume the brand and ultimately, form a loyal relationship with the brand. As such, Aaker (2004:6-18) as well as Gossen and Gresham (2002:1) believe that iconic brands are inextricably related to the brand’s worth and reputation as it relates to its market. Therefore, agenda-setting for the iconic brand is essential for an organisation, so as to maximize the business strategic goals, generating leverage and synergy, while communicating the brand story with clarity, imagination and consistency.

According to Clifton et al. (2003), from a financial perspective, a brand’s value is underpinned by the ability of the brand story to instil confidence and trust in both stakeholders and shareholders so that the brand’s iconicity leverages the brand’s strength as achieved by wide-ranging competitive benchmarking and a structured
costing of the brand’s market, stability, positioning, growth trend, geographic reach and ability to protect the brand legally. As such Brown (2011) reiterates that the 21st century presents a brand environment in which positive visibility or salience generates opportunity and a good reputation builds trust and that this social and branding reality is called the Reputation Economy. Simões and Dibb (2001:218) concur with Brown (2011), adding that telling the brand story intentionally through positive media content of a reputable iconic brand gives an organisation a substantial, differentiated advantage or reputation capital that distinguishes a brand from its competitors, as well as defining to shareholders in particular, what return on investment an iconic brand represents and what stakeholders may expect from their interaction with the brand. Hence Plummer (2002) highlights the value of the identity-value of the iconic brand as the essence of a brand’s image and reputation that the consumer is captivated by and can relate to such that the consumer’s purchase decision is heavily informed by a sense of identity with the brand through impactful interaction with the brand.

- **Identity Value**

With regards to the identity-value of the iconic brand, Van Gelder (2005:4) posits that the fundamental role of the captivating brand is to meet more than just an emotional need but to complement the emotional with the cognitive, thereby reinforcing resonance with the brand, as the consumer experiences a sense that the brand understands the consumer in a real and practical way. Lederman (2008) explains that understanding the consumer in a real and practical way involves maintaining a brand’s integrity by identifying points of interaction between the brand and the consumer, understanding exactly what the consumer desires from the brand and making sure that the consumer feels like the brand identifies with the consumer. As such, Fiorini and Titterton (2008) observe that as the brand has pervaded human existence, the contemporary consumer is increasingly rejecting superfluous brands in favour of the more fulfilling identity-value of iconic brands, which offer a lifestyle of meaning and authenticity. For this reason, Bamert and Wehrli (2005) purport that the 21st century economy presents brands and brand owners with stringent competition, so that the identity-value of the iconic brand is crucial for establishing a “sweet spot” or strategic place in the mind and heart of the consumer. Nhan (2011) describes the “sweet spot” as the place where the brand’s identity and the consumer’s identity meet. As such, Kotler and Keller (2006) describe
a brand’s strategic place in the consumer’s mind and heart and as such its identity-value, as resonance, implying that resonance points to the familiarity and appeal of the brand. Thus Kotler and Keller (2006) explain that resonance is a measure of the way that the consumer identifies with the iconic brand as it lends itself to a personalised, authentic brand experience. Hence, the identity-value as captured in the compelling high regard that the consumer already has for the iconic brand, facilitates real resonance with the consumer, which leads to consumers not only identifying with the brand and expressing themselves through consuming the brand, but actively engaging the brand and campaigning for the brand, thereby vigorously establishing brand awareness (Atilgan, Aksoy & Akinci, 2005). In agreement, Kapferer (2005:7) maintains that the familiarity and appeal of a brand are crucial indicators of the identity-value of the iconic brand for brand awareness because it refers to the highly favourable reputation of the iconic brand with which consumers choose to be identified with. Added to the identity-value of the iconic brand is the contribution is the culture of the brand Brandchannel (2009) describes the culture of the iconic brand as that which is fundamental, enduring and uniquely characteristic to the brand as contained in a framework of inherited beliefs expressed in the symbolic ways in which people communicate, maintain and develop their understanding of life and their attitudes toward it.

- **Culture**

In relation to the culture of the iconic brand, Zhu, Liu and Lam (2007) assert that in a 21\textsuperscript{st} century society consumers have assigned brands to act as representatives of the individual in society, thereby co-ordinating a framework of symbols, a culture of consumption and a language of social interaction. Thus, for the contemporary consumer, the iconic brand symbolises what is real for the consumer and how that reality is expressed to the rest of a community within the broader society. Therefore Temporal (2002) argues that the culture of the iconic brand is about what is fundamental, enduring and uniquely characteristic to the brand. Hence, Brandchannel (2009) is of the opinion that in order for a brand to be relevant and sustainable in a 21\textsuperscript{st} century society and economy, it must be perceived as a culture, a framework of inherited beliefs expressed in the symbolic ways in which people communicate, maintain and develop their understanding of life and their attitudes toward it. To establish a culture therefore, an iconic brand must develop an ethos and a worldview that it absolutely believes in and consistently behave in accordance
with its culture. As such Elliot and Davies (2006) posit that the culture of the iconic brand takes the brand beyond functionality into a belief system and symbolic reality of meaning that the consumer can relate to and believe in. Thus, Burnier (2005:502) proposes that the social dimension of the brand experience is contained in the brand meaning which emerges from social interaction with fellow consumers specifically; in order to form the framework from which understanding of the brand experience flows and develops. Hence, Waisbord (2001) emphasises the concept of meaning in the culture of the iconic brand, arguing that communicating the culture of the brand is not simply a transfer of information from brand owner to brand consumer, but it also takes into account the concept of systematic action and reaction between individuals or groups in order to create meaning or a common understanding among stakeholders of the brand. It therefore observes a process which is influenced by the dynamic, social framework in which meaning takes place, affecting the attitudes and behaviours of the stakeholders that are participating in the branding process, thus establishing a culture.

Furthermore, Day and Van Auken (2008), note that one of the important results of developing the culture of an iconic brand is the establishment and growth of brand communities. Bush (2008) describes brand communities as communities that represent a form of human association contained within a consumption context. As such new media and digital platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and MySpace provide fertile ground for brand communities to thrive as collections of active, loyal users of a brand who are committed, conscientious and passionate about the brand. Within these cultural groups based on shared commitment towards a brand, there is an inherent connection between members of the group and the collective sense of difference from others not in the same brand community. For example, the Harley Davidson brand community find a unique, authentic fulfilment from living the brand as a community that is not possible to find outside of such a brand community. As such, members of such a brand community practice rituals and traditions that perpetuate the community’s shared history of the brand. Hence, Roll (2008) acknowledges that brand communities are liberated from limitations as they possess communal self-awareness and share a commitment that facilitates the brand to attain long term acceptability in the society and ensures that the brand maintains its iconic status.

1.3.4 Chapter 5: Research Methodology
This qualitative research study takes the form of an exploratory once-off intrinsic case study. As such, Yin (2009:18) explains the value of the case study method when the researcher examines how a phenomenon unfolds in depth and within its real-life context. As the research problem in this study explores how the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients. According to Damon and Holloway (2002:105) a once off case study is an in-depth study of occurrences of a phenomenon in a specific context and from the perspective of the participants as they experience their social realities. Hence, Yin (2003) observes that the case study method is appropriate when the researcher’s aim is to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of social realities as expressed by respondents. Therefore, an essential characteristic of case study research is that the unit or phenomena be clearly defined. Thus, Berg (2001:225) reiterates that the intent of an exploratory, case study involves systematic gathering of data about a particular person, social setting, event, or group in order to allow the researcher to effectively learn how it operates in order to fully understand how it functions, therefore it is an intrinsic or in-depth case study.

The population will be the public sector clients of the the AfDB as they constitute the majority of the AfDB’s clientele. The sample will be representatives from the the individual countries as well as the Regional Economic Communities which together make up the public sector clients of the AfDB. The data will be collected by means of an interview guide which will be tested for reliability and validity with regard to its content and the procedure that will be followed in conducting the interview, by means of a pilot study which will be conducted before the main study gets executed. In order to reinforce an in-depth understanding and to achieve a complete analysis of the data, the Morse and Field system in conjunction with the Thematic Content Analysis approach will be applied.

Notwithstanding the focus of obtaining holistic data that reflects the meaning that the respondents ascribe to their experience of the AfDB as an iconic brand, a limitation of the study could be that the findings are only relevant to the public sector clients of the AfDB and may not be useful to generalise to a wider audience such as the private sector, NGOs and research institutions which are also clients of the AfDB and would thus require a subsequent study.

1.3.5 Chapter 6: Findings and Interpretations
The findings will be obtained through interviews which will be conducted with the aid of an interview guide that will be divided into seven sections. Section A explores 21st century branding and iconic branding theory specifically in relation to brand reputation, brand salience and brand experience. Sections B, C, and D addresses the three contributing factors that make up an iconic brand, i.e. the brand story, identity-value, and culture of the brand respectively. Section E seeks to determine how these contributing factors are used by the African Development Bank to establish profitable brand awareness among the public sector clients of the AfDB. Sections F and G, gathered biographic and contact information of the respondents. Throughout the analysis of the relevant sections, responses will be bench-marked against literature pertaining to the concepts of branding, iconic branding, and profitable brand awareness as well as how agenda-setting relates to the study. The outcomes of the analysed responses give rise to the interpretations set out in this chapter.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the qualitative nature of this case study, it cannot be generalised to a larger population. Therefore the same study cannot be applied to the other client sectors of the African Development Bank which include the private sector and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The case study assumes an interpretive paradigm; therefore the knowledge gained from the study can be varied because it is determined by the quality of subjective interpretation as displayed by social discourse of the individual participants.

The research findings cannot be tested to determine whether they are statistically significant or due to chance.

1.5 CONCLUSION

According to Hollis (2007), Millward Brown brand’s research found that iconic brands have little significance if they are not instantly recognisable, inferring that the public should not only be aware of the brand’s existence, but the brand must be so easily recognisable such that consumers are very familiar with its attributes, specifically its iconicity. It follows therefore that a clear effect of a brand’s use of its iconicity should be to establish knowledge of a brand’s presence and salience resulting in profitable brand awareness. Thus, Interbrand and Business Week (2006) conclude that for any given
entity, the intention of branding strategies should be to build iconic brands that ensure future earnings, by growing ubiquitous brand awareness and positive prominence, which leads to customer preference and loyalty that eliminates the competition. In this regard, Kapferer (2004:15) is of the opinion that positive collaboration of media content between brand owners, brand users as well as non-brand-users gives the brand premier positioning in the mind of the public, resulting in proliferate brand conversation about the iconicity of such a brand and reinforcing informed familiarity with the brand. Therefore, Braun (2004:20), Keller (2001:3), Kotler, Pfoertsch and Michi (2006:5) assert that for the contemporary consumer, the media’s role as contributor to positive social discourse, not only creates iconic value for brands, resulting in universal brand awareness, but also contributes to the brand’s reputation, resonance and relationship with the very demanding contemporary consumer, allowing consumers to customise their own brand realities. Therefore, Kapferer (2004:9) observes that salience of the brand in old and new media as applied in the agenda-setting theory gives rise to a high level of prominence of the brand in stakeholder conversations of the brand, enforcing the iconic value of a brand in the market, thus establishing profitable brand awareness.
2.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically, Ruben and Stewart (2006:35) as well as Miller (2005:22) found that communication theory has had a wide-ranging and significant influence in the world, as over time many scholars have made different attempts at explaining the nature of communication theory, based on their philosophical views of the social world and the standards by which they wish their theories to be guided. Philosophers of communication, Walter Lippman (1922) and Bernard Cohen (1963) theorised that the media plays a fundamental role in communication theory as it has the ability to affect people’s perceptions and ultimate awareness of the social world, thereby influencing their thoughts, conversations and awareness of their surroundings, all essential elements of the communication process. Moeller (2008) explains that the word media refers to mainstream mass news outlets, government-owned and sponsored television, community news services, satellite radio as well as hyper-local vernacular radio, online blogs, podcasting and messaging via cell phones as well as VOIP (voice over internet protocols) outlets; all types of media with the general aim of getting people to talk about the media content. In 1972, based on the empirical evidence presented by the results of the American presidential campaign and the Watergate scandal of 1968, which received unprecedented media attention and subsequent high public awareness, communication scholars Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) confirmed the agenda of the media to create public awareness as well as the theory of Lippman (1922) and Cohen (1963), that the media sets the agenda for public discourse, thus the emergence of the agenda-setting theory (McCombs, 2004:97).

Fischer, Miller and Sidney (2007:63) describe an agenda as a list of bills before a legislature, but it may also include a series of beliefs about issues concerning society and how they should be addressed by governments, organisations and in particular, the media. McQuail (2005) therefore observes that the media has been crucial in disseminating the agendas of politics, economics and immensely influential in the formation of public opinion, thus the relevance of the agenda-setting theory. Griffin (2006:396) therefore reiterates that the agenda-setting theory centres on the role of the media in creating social discourse as it influences what people think, talk about and eventually act on, based on social awareness created by the media. With regards to the matter of the public's thoughts and conversations, Allan in Matheson (2005:ix) observes that the role of the agenda-setting theory is not just an observation of communication scholars but affirmations of people that they are suffering from information overload as
a society. This observation points to the hypothesis of the agenda-setting theory, that the content of daily conversations and social interactions is strongly influenced by a wide spectrum of media that define social realities for the public on a daily basis.

Saugstad (2000) therefore purports that because people’s lives are pervaded by the media in their role of dominating human culture, it should be the media’s duty to contribute to enlightenment, reflection, discourse and a broad awareness of the environment of the ordinary citizen. For example in 2008, taking advantage of the media’s ability to effectively create widespread public awareness of social issues as and when they occur, Barack Obama’s electronic media campaign won him the American presidency, because he was able to reach a wide audience with his message of change through a variety of media in real time, so that especially young voters quickly became aware of his message and in addition to enthusiastically thinking and talking about it, they were moved into action to vote for him (Cain Miller, 2008). In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI validates the agenda-setting theory, pontificating that while the media and especially electronic media creates new, dynamic opportunities to share information and create public awareness, it carries the risk of controlled public thoughts and conversations because as a result of issues highlighted in the media, an environment is created in which people throughout the world are able to think and talk about the same social issue at any one point in time (News 24.com), thus the creation of widespread social awareness as a result of the agenda-setting theory.

Klyukanov (2008) infers that with the evolution of communication theory over time, and as communication theory spans over multiple theories, in order to clarify the different viewpoints, scholars have compartmentalised the different perspectives of communication theory into specific traditions of communication (Craig, 2000). Hence the approach to use communication theory to illuminate the agenda-setting theory will start by taking a broad and brief overview of a number of communication traditions, followed by a more in-depth look at the socio-cultural tradition which houses the agenda-setting theory; a theory which focuses on the role that the media plays in the way that members of society become aware of their social surroundings, based on the way that the media influences people’s thoughts and conversations about the social world.

2.2 USING COMMUNICATION THEORY TO ILLUMINATE THE AGENDA-SETTING THEORY
Littlejohn (2002:2) defines communication theory as any systematic explanation that focuses attention on specific aspects such as the creation and sharing of information as it relates to communication, clarifying observations about such aspects and predicting how communication affects personal and social dynamics that occur in society. Furthermore, Young (2009) notes that all types of media and in particular the proliferation of electronic media as a social dynamic, has become a momentous communicative tool for individuals, as society has instant access to a wide array of media and geographical barriers are no longer a limitation. Hence Littlejohn and Foss (2008:15) postulate that the term communication theory can be used as an all-encompassing term to portray all the theories that describe the different social dynamics, the media being a prominent one and their influence on the discipline of communication. Communication theory is therefore significant for society because an understanding and appreciation of communication theory educates people towards being more informed and pro-active about the critical role that social dynamics such as the media play in communication (Littlejohn, 2008:2). As the term communication theory is comprised of the concepts communication and theory, for greater insight and a more complete understanding of communication theory, it is useful to first define each concept separately.

With regards to the definition of communication, Bettes (2009) found that within literature there are varied definitions and models of communication such as the Shannon-Weaver Model, the Osgood and Schramm Circular Model and others explaining communication, however the Tubbs and Moss Communication Model accommodates a wide range of communication settings which includes a sender and receiver of information both verbally and non-verbally. Tubbs and Moss (2006:24) therefore conclude that effective communication occurs when the message as initiated and determined by the sender or source matches strongly with the message as it is perceived and responded to by the recipient. Therefore Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman (2001:308) as well as Miller (2005:6) purport that communication is a fundamental, indispensable, universal process of social interaction in which information as contained in thoughts, words, attitudes, values, opinions and facts, is conveyed and exchanged as well as understood as a result of shared meaning from one person to another, through meaningful words, symbols and actions. As such the process starts with a sender and is completed by a receiver when understanding and feedback takes place. Thus, the process of communication involves three aspects which include social
interaction, understanding or shared meaning and meaningful expressions such as words, symbols and actions, with which people make and manage meaning as well as share their understanding of social reality (Rubin, Rubin & Haridakis, 2010:3).

John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (2004:3) postulate that social interaction is the first aspect of communication that plays the critical role of assisting people to communicate effectively by forming language through shared activity, thus the process of social interaction creates a platform for communication. Therefore, Heath and Bryant (2000) as well as Klyunov (2002) explain that social interaction as it occurs in the process of communication should not be viewed as a linear course of action, but as a dynamic human process of successful and successive occurrences and an integral part of everyday life that facilitates people's attempts at expressing themselves as they move from one life experience to the next. Consequently, Klyukanov (2002) proposes that the dynamic process of social interaction in communication makes it possible for people to make the adjustment from being passive participants of traditional media such as radio, television and print, to being active explorers and participants of new media, such as the different social platforms of modern electronic media. In agreement with Klyukanov (2002), Heath and Bryant (2000) note that traditional forms of mediated communication with large, heterogeneous and unknown audiences as is the case with television, radio and print have largely been substituted by communication in which audiences have more potential for dynamic, meaningful feedback and much more influence as social communicators because there exists a larger network of shared meaning as a result of the multiple media platforms of the modern age.

De Vito (2001:153) defines meaning, the second aspect of communication, as a vigorous process between source and receiver, speaker and listener, writer and reader. Hence Burnier (2005:502) describes shared meaning as the way that individuals understand the wide spectrum of physical, social and cultural dimensions that contribute to the individual's environment and these meanings emerge through social interaction with others in order to form the framework from which communication flows and develops. Waisbord (2001) also underscores the concept of shared meaning in communication, arguing that communication is not simply a transfer of information from sender to receiver but it also takes into account the concept of systematic action and reaction between individuals or groups in order to create meaning or a common understanding. It therefore does not occur in a vacuum but observes a process which is influenced by the dynamic, social environment in which it takes place, affecting the
attitudes and behaviours of the people that are participating in the communication process. Consequently, Littlejohn (2002:145,154) purports that the third aspect of communication is portrayed by the way that individuals create meaningful expressions such as words and symbols to name things and situations and to use these expressions for both verbal and non-verbal communication. Communication therefore facilitates social interaction and meaning through meaningful expressions thereby creating and upholding consensually shared rules such as roles and norms which are needed for a well-functioning society in which the process of communication succeeds.

As such Conrad and Poole (2004) conclude that communication creates an environment for vibrant social interaction in which meaning is defined as well as understood and suggests that communication is the link that holds society together and the medium through which information is distributed throughout generations. Communication therefore has the double function of creating the world and reflecting it at the same time. Hence Dainton and Zelley (2005) postulate that communication is not merely one of the many things that happen in people’s lives, it is an inherent platform on which social relationships and experiences occur, encompassing the diverse ways in which human interaction is understood, realized and developed. It is the human efforts at understanding and developing social relationships and experiences, that give rise to the concept of theories which have come about to describe and explain diverse human interactions, such as the different forms of communication.

Severin and Tankard (2000:11) define theory as a proposition that takes the shape of a set of ideas, descriptions or standards that have been thought through systematically and can be applied to a wide range of life experiences. As such Asatryan (2008) explains that a proposition that has been thought through systematically, points to a way of thinking that channels humans towards exploring and understanding their natural, physical and social environments because it includes words, symbols and numbers that are used as tools to identify a wide spectrum of ideas, descriptions or standards that help people give expression to their experiences and enable them to connect events together as they create, translate and share information systematically. Mc Quail (2005:5) therefore describes a theory as an all-encompassing proposition, based on observation and logical argument that states the relationship between phenomena and seeks to envisage an association which aims to make sense of the observed phenomena. Asatryan (2008) agrees with Mc Quail’s (2005:5) notion of a theory being a proposition that endeavours to give a complete description of a sequence of events,
based on observation or what can be seen and explained in simple steps in order for people to understand how, why and when events are likely to take place. For Littlejohn (2006:2) the logical argument and relationship or association between phenomena aspects of a theory, indicates that a theory describes a pattern of experiences or occurrences that can be clustered together in ways that help people think clearly about what happens in their lives in order to relate to others how events unfold and to predict what may happen in future, providing guidelines for appropriate responses and reactions to situations as they occur.

Christensen and Raynor (2003) disagree with Mc Quail (2005:5) arguing that a theory is not simply a generic portrayal and depiction of events based on past observation, but it is scientific, implying that it is an informed truth of a pattern of events which aims to facilitate an understanding of the events, through a systemized structure that enables people to envisage future events and plan appropriately for them. Elaborating on a theory as an informed truth, Helmenstine (2009) argues that a theory can only be justified as a scientific, true and informed proposition, if it has been sustained by regular testing of a phenomenon, so that such a proposition can be accepted as a convincing explanation of the phenomenon. Helmenstine (2009) therefore comes to the conclusion that a theory is a widely tested, acknowledged, scientific explanation of the cause and outcomes of events. In agreement with Helmenstein (2009), Whaley and Samter (2007) suggest that a theory assists people to connect perceptions or communicate experiences to one another, but in order for a theory to be a useful guide of human behaviour, it must have been verified to be a true reflection of reality. Stacks and Salwen (2009:4) confirm Helmenstein’s (2009) and Whaley and Samter’s (2007) argument, asserting that excellent theory development demands excellent verification. Consequently Littlejohn (2008:18) posits that a theory is a set of concepts which can be defined, applied consistently and evaluated with the same results on a recurring basis. Littlejohn (2008:18) asserts though that a theory should not only be viewed as an explanation of a process or discipline but as an affirmation or argument in favour of or against a particular discipline, for example, a specific approach to the discipline of communication. Furthermore, Littlejohn and Foss (2008:15) postulate that in order for a theory to be valid, it must be based on an underlying ideological supposition or metatheory that will determine the outcome of the theory. As such Littlejohn (2002:26) defines metatheory as assumptions that establish a basis for clarifying how theories relate to each other and are generally divided into categories of epistemology or how
knowledge is acquired, ontology or the phenomenon of existence and axiology, which examines the nature of a theory’s value (Talja, Tuominen & Savolainen, 2005:93).

According to Bonjour (2002), epistemology produces a context for understanding how experience works and how knowledge can be certain. Conrad and Poole (2004) explain that understanding is achieved when people who communicate experience shared meaning which produces common knowledge. Gunter (2000) purports that epistemology is about people taking an active role or bringing about personal experience by creating knowledge which is not simply acquired but is created by interaction between the person who wishes to know whatever can be thought through and tested as truth. As such Iverson and Mc Phee (2002) describe knowledge as intrinsically related to community oriented phenomena which involves a knower and is a facet of a broader network of knowledge as a result of people sharing what they have experienced to be true with each other. As such Nastasia and Rakow (2004:14) purport that epistemology investigates theories that describe the relationship between objective and subjective knowledge as well as what is certain and what may be probable. Fumerton (2006) however, views epistemology as a philosophical assumption that deals with matters concerning different aspects of knowledge, proof of what is known, reasons for accepting knowledge as truth as well as rationalization for what is believed to be true. As such Fumerton (2006) found that not all epistemologists agree that rationalizing is a concept of epistemology, however Steup and Sosa (2005) challenge this notion as they are of the opinion that knowledge can be defined as rationalized belief, guided by evidence or reliable information that has already been established. Williamson (2000:186) concurs with Steup and Sosa (2005), adding that knowledge is evidence of every experience that has ever been articulated, therefore epistemology lends itself to evermore rationalizing of information so that humankind can continually make sense of their existence. Steup (2005) however offers an alternative view to epistemology, suggesting that not everything that is believed to be true can be attributed to knowledge and rationalization, as sometimes what people believe to be true can be accidental or coincidental. Steup (2005) therefore questions the foundations of epistemology, suggesting that the philosophy of epistemology is open to further research so as to take into account all aspects of how knowledge is acquired and what determines good quality knowledge.

Hetherington (2002:3) also highlights a flaw in the philosophy of epistemology, arguing that the quality of knowledge is determined by the quality of justification or rationalized
true belief, implying therefore that knowledge is relative and therefore cannot be absolute. De Rose (2005) disagrees with Steup (2005) and Hetherington (2002) postulating that it is exactly the goal of epistemology or the theory of knowledge to deal with questions addressing the character, range and causes of what can ultimately be viewed as knowledge. Cruz (2009) holds a similar opinion to De Rose (2005) as he believes that epistemology endeavours to make sense of the prospect, character and boundaries of what humans have accomplished intellectually and accepted as knowledge. It seeks to answer questions such as when does it make sense to base knowledge on specific principles, what does it mean to be certain of one’s knowledge as opposed to having an opinion of something and what validates scientific knowledge. Johnson (2002) found that as scholars have looked for answers about what exactly constitutes knowledge they have inevitably been taken back to the question of being or existence as is captured in the philosophy of ontology, therefore he proposes that theories of epistemology are produced to support theories of ontology.

Littlejohn (2002:28) proposes that ontology is directed at the realm of what is or what exists and therefore deals with the concept of what exists for humans to acquire as knowledge. Corazzon (2009) therefore defines ontology as a means of studying what constitutes existence or reality. Littlejohn and Foss (2008:28) believe that in communication, ontology highlights the existence and nature of human social interaction, therefore Gadomski (2002) purports that ontology studies the language that people use to describe the nature and structure of the world that exists around them. Littlejohn and Foss (2008:28) found that although numerous ontological positions exist in communication theory, they can generally be grouped into two basic contrasting perspectives which include the actional and the non-actional. Actional theory assumes that individuals create meanings, have intentions and make choices about what is real for them while non-actional theory assumes that behaviour is basically determined by an individual’s surroundings with the individual having little or no influence. Gunter (2000) therefore concludes that both actional and non-actional perspectives of ontology are characterised by general assumptions about the existence of concepts related to human interaction as opposed to the values of concepts which affect human interaction, as is the case with axiology of human behaviour.

Axiology in theory relates to the value content of theories, indicating how recipients of information interpret and react in different social and cultural situations, as well as how judgements are made about people’s responses to information (Littlejohn and Foss
2008:18). As such Baran and Davis (2009:14) purport that for the communication theorist; axiology is concerned with whether theory can be produced with or without values or whether the theorist is ultimately guided by his or her individual objectivity. Griffin (2006:3) believes that with regards to communication, theories can be seen as perspectives of real life that portray objective or subjective truths with or without values about the information that exists in society, so as to guide individuals through the intricacies and nuances of the phenomenon of communication.

Craig (2000) therefore hypothesises that the field of communication will always be represented by different theories and perspectives; consequently he divided communication theory into seven traditions, as he believes that because they tend to fundamentally overlap, packaging them in different traditions, makes it easier to grasp communication as an organised field of study. Littlejohn & Foss (2005:35) explain that Craig’s (2000) effort at grouping these theories together, helps to organise communication theory by its assumptions and helps researchers to understand the reasons why some theories may appear to be incompatible while others are complimentary. Nastasia and Rakow (2004:9) however, argue that Craig’s (2000) model of seven traditions is chaotic as it strains to collate widely varied outlooks such as the scientific tradition of cybernetics, the philosophical traditions of rhetoric and phenomenology, the sociological traditions of socioculture and sociopsychology, the linguistic, literary tradition of semiotics and the contemporary nature of the critical tradition into an apparent, organised presentation. Craig (2000) differs with Littlejohn and Foss (2005:35) on the point that some theories are incompatible and challenges Nastasia and Rakow’s (2004:9) view that the model of the seven traditions is chaotic, asserting that the discipline of communication can be viewed as a coherent field, when it is approached as the seven traditions of communication theory.

2.3 THE SEVEN TRADITIONS OF COMMUNICATION THEORY

Craig and Muller (2007:x) describe the traditions of communication theory as well developed ways of thinking and talking about matters that arise from different observations of how people have communicated over time and how these methods of interaction have been passed through generations. This has resulted in the choice of the term ‘traditions’ of communication theory. It is also Craig’s (2007: x) view that all communication theories are mutually relevant when viewed from a realistic perspective in a world in which the term communication is very broadly defined. Each tradition of
communication therefore draws from and appeals to certain widespread beliefs about communication, while questioning the views of others, causing the similarities and differences among traditions to produce a theoretical discussion that supports and informs ongoing discourse on the topic of communication theory. The seven traditions are labelled as the semiotic, the phenomenological, the cybernetic, the socio-psychological, the rhetorical, the critical and the socio-cultural traditions of communication theory (Craig & Muller, 2007:78). The following is a discussion of the various traditions of communication:

- Thwaites, Davis and Mules (2002:2) define semiotics as an analytical approach aimed at examining how communication is an outcome of the use of signs, symbols and language as well as how people’s interpretation of symbols causes them to make mental and emotional projections. Pinto (2009) holds the view that in modern communication, semiotic theories will increasingly assist in addressing various challenges of an information society dominated by the progress of science and technology, because contemporary society is challenged by various symbolisms and representations of the truth as portrayed by the various forms of media. Subsequently semiotics provides society with the means with which to view the media world constructively so as to be objective about the media’s influence on social discourse. Littlejohn and Foss (2008:288) therefore purport that media messages are particularly fascinating from a semiotic perspective, because they typically consist of a captivating structure of symbols that are categorized sequentially to create an impact, convey an idea or build meaning for an audience. Subsequently the semiotic tradition concentrates on the means by which media producers create signs and the ways that audiences understand them, making semiotics a valuable tool for examining the impact of mass media on audiences. Craig and Muller (2007:163) observe however that while the semiotic tradition suggests that communication occurs as a process in which language and sign systems have shared meanings and thereby serve as a medium for common understanding among audiences, the rhetorical tradition portrays communication essentially as creative and strategic use of signs or words used by speakers to address and create particular consciousness or persuasion among audiences.

- Walker (2003:1) hypothesizes that theories within the rhetorical tradition underline the persuasive attribute of communication; a fundamental characteristic for effective
debates and arguments. Littlejohn and Foss (2005:50) purport however that because of the persuasive nature of rhetorical communication, it is often viewed as incredulous, meaningless, ornamental words with no intent on concrete action. Craig and Muller (2007:73) disagree with Littlejohn and Foss (2005:50), arguing that the rhetorical tradition is credible and functional because it appeals to many basic believes about communication and is a powerful social force which challenges the belief that mere words are less important than actions, that real knowledge is more than just a matter of opinion and that the truth is something other than the strategic adaptation of the message to the audience. Nonetheless, Littlejohn and Foss (2005:51) concede to Craig and Muller (2007:80) noting that the rhetorical tradition has had different meanings in different time periods, such as classical, medieval, renaissance, enlightenment, contemporary and post-modern and over time has shared with the phenomenological tradition, an inclination to explore common ground among people with differing points of view about what constitutes the truth.

- Littlejohn and Foss (2005:39) indicate that the phenomenological tradition is founded on the individual’s view of the world as opposed to a collective world view, therefore phenomenological theories address the ways that human beings communicate, based on how they become aware and ultimately understand their specific situations. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000:36) describe Husserl (1859-1938) as the originator of phenomenology which emerged as a defensive response to reductionism, a philosophy which undermined subjective human knowledge in favour of the notion that knowledge can only be scientific and objective. Thompson et al. (2003:50) are of the opinion that the goal of phenomenology is to emphasise the social needs of the individual, such as the need to interact with other humans, to be acknowledged and respected as an individual with particular experiences, as well as the basic human need for a sense of belonging. Littlejohn and Foss (2005:42), observe that the phenomenological tradition is fundamental for the study of communication in society because it guides individuals to apply their minds to the different aspects of life through subjective interpretation first, so as to make a valuable contribution to the broader community. This view lays the foundation for the cybernetic tradition, which focuses on how different dimensions of society work together for the objective good of all mankind.
In contrast to the phenomenological tradition which focuses on the individual, Craig (2000) found that the cybernetic tradition theorises about the role of communication and how the different parts of a whole contribute to the information processing of all systems, including the way that members of society behave in a group. Craig and Muller (2007:81) add to Craig’s (2000) view the idea that the cybernetic tradition is communication theory based on collective information processing and aims to clarify why all kinds of complex as well as simple social systems are able to function or malfunction. Littlejohn and Foss (2005:42) conclude that although the theories of the cybernetic tradition are valuable for understanding relationships; they are less useful in promoting the understanding of individual differences among the separate parts that make up a system or group because a system can only function effectively if each part conforms to the specified rules. Poole (2009) concurs, making the observation that in order to structure social systems, people introduce rules for effective interaction and therefore the theories in the cybernetic tradition are fundamental for the understanding of how groups function as regulated systems. In contrast, the socio-psychological tradition has been more effective in bringing about an understanding of the complexities involved in the way that humans behave as individual communicators because the theories in this tradition are based on the individual’s social behaviour as influenced by personal characteristics and perceptions of the world.

Podgorecki (2004) purports that the socio-psychological tradition provides a scientific perspective on interpersonal effects in communication which emphasises message processing such as how individuals plan message strategies, how receivers process information, and the effects of messages on society in general. Theories in this tradition concentrate on ways that the thought processes of individuals can be challenged. For example, it questions how people can be persuaded to process and perceive messages in novel and diverse ways, as opposed to simply sending and receiving information without applying their minds to the content of the information. As such the socio-psychological effect is at work in the way that receivers of communicated messages especially media messages view the credibility of the sender of information in the communication process, for example, how society views the reliability of the sources of information in the media. Unlike socio-psychological theories of communication which are numerous but fairly universal in their social approach, the critical tradition takes on an elitist approach to communication with less effective social impact (Craig & Muller, 2007:77).
Littlejohn and Foss (2005:47) posit that the critical theory accentuates the narrow dynamics of privilege and power in society and how these have become significant in modern communication. From a different perspective, Severin and Tankard (2001:18) hold the view that the critical tradition is a philosophical approach to the study of communication that emphasizes the broader social structure in which communication takes place among ordinary people and focuses on the issue of who controls the communication system in society, particularly the ownership and control of the media. Craig (2007:425) agrees with Severin and Tankard (2001:18) that the critical tradition underscores ideological beliefs and relations of power that are created to maintain and control communication structures in society, thereby undermining the interests of marginalized groups. Craig (2007:425) adds that the theories in the critical tradition investigate specific aspects of communication that promote certain ideologies and exposes hidden social agendas that suppress effective communication in society. Littlejohn and Foss (2005:47) therefore found that there are several varieties of the critical tradition which include three essential features: that of the powerful elite who dominate communication in society, those who take action against such repressive social conditions and abusive communication practices as well as a conscious attempt to put constructive communication theory into place so as to affect an information culture in which the habitual consumption of the media is not as much about sending or receiving information, but about individuals having a critical view of the world and having it confirmed or challenged, thus creating an information society in which people were encouraged to not only acquire knowledge or information, but also to apply their minds and think about information in an active and persistent fashion, thereby leading to theories such as the reflective and reflexive theories.

The reflective theory of thought was introduced by philosophy of thought, John Dewey in 1910 who assumed that people get better at acquiring and retaining knowledge if they think over it or reflect on the acquired knowledge over a period of time. As such, Miettinen (2000) defines the reflective theory as a study of cognitive processes such as intentional thinking, deliberation, rumination and any other form of conscientious contemplation that people undertake in order to understand the knowledge has been acquired and to learn innovative ways of processing new information. Pesut (2004) finds Miettinen’s (2000) definition appealing as it embraces a wide range of thinking as the basis for reflection, implying that reflective thinking is a logical and perceptive process.
that aims to lead to constructive dialogue in society. However, for Freshwater and Rolfe (2001) the reflective theory goes beyond a state of contemplation or thinking, to a state of rethinking existing views with the aim of improving on them so as to not only have constructive social dialogue, but to gain new insights and awareness of better solutions towards social progress. Furthermore, Taylor (2000) describes the reflective theory as an approach to the communication process by which people learn to think or reflect, based on three dimensions namely: technical, practical and emancipatory learning or reflection. Technical reflection recognizes the influence of fast changing scientific developments on acquired knowledge in daily communication, thereby applying analytical thinking to information and daily discourse, always seeking ways for more effective social interaction, specifically with regard to the influx of modern technology on the communication process. However Strampel and Oliver (2007) found that studies have shown that although the use of technology-facilitated thinking and learning such as learning management systems, computer conferencing, email and online discussions are becoming conventional methods of teaching students in institutions of higher learning to think, they have not always been successful at cultivating high levels of reflective thinking as is the case with traditional face to face sharing of knowledge such as writing, journaling and group discussions. This is so because the technology platforms advance at a rate that is difficult for both institutions and students to sustain. From a different perspective however, practical reflection presents a means of logical thinking that leads to clearer communication because people are able to think and talk about what they know and have experienced because they can relate information to others sequentially, offering the potential for social progress based on an increased awareness of self in relation to self as a member of a modern society. Jasper (2005) concurs with Taylor (2000) indicating that based on research findings, central to practical reflective theory is the notion that learning from experience, creates the capacity to reflect on or think about matters in an analytical way thereby enabling unique associations between information from different avenues, thereby contributing to new outlooks and more innovative solutions to future social problems. Hence Brockbank and McGill (2007) argue that the theory of reflection is not particularly different from the basic human activity of thinking if it does not take into account the quality of thought because the significance of reflective thinking is that it generates opportunities where meaning or interpretation of thought is built from learning experiences by taking into account the thoughts and feelings that lead to people’s ultimate actions. Thus, Atherton (2010) argues that reflection is only relevant as a stepping stone to intentional thinking
which leads to determined action. Therefore Plack and Greenberg (2005) conclude that the practical dimension of the reflective theory refers to a method of thinking and learning that not only leads to determined action, but allows for correlations between observations, past experiences and judgements with regards to decision making, thus in addition to interpreting experiences, practical reflection promotes a deep approach to learning because it encourages attentive judgment, urging people to question their own assumptions and view situations from several angles, as they evaluate their thoughts, words and actions.

Emancipatory reflection on the other hand, equips the individual with the necessary thinking skills that prompts the individual to systematically critique the use or abuse of power in society, giving the ordinary citizen a new sense of informed consciousness in order to make a contribution towards positive social and political change. In this regard, Steenkamp (2011) observes that the media plays a critical role in emphasising the rights of the individual by constructively criticising any abuse of power by the government of the day, specifically if it claims to be a democracy. Phaahla (2010) regrets however that in Africa, governments have largely been successful in muting the media by introducing restrictive laws, thereby denying members of society the right to information, learning and thinking, while unethical media professionals have also been encouraged to promote specific political agendas, ultimately leading to a dysfunctional society. Hence, Plack and Santasier (2004) point out that the aim of reflective thinking is to enable people to identify values, assumptions and convictions that inspire constructive thought processes in order to create social discourse that gives expression to rigorous thinking, so that as a result of thinking and talking through issues, whether inspired by technical, practical or emancipatory reflection, people will progress from a point of less knowledge and understanding to a place of more knowledge and understanding that comes from logical reasoning, in order to contribute to more informed world views. Thus Fisher (2011) concludes that the reflective theory is about thinking critically in order to give a more meaningful voice to life through a spirit of exploration that leads to an innovative society.

With regards to the reflexive theory, Lipp (2008) argues that the reflexive theory is a more intense and wide-ranging component of the reflective theory in that it emphasises people’s experiences and their responses to their experiences as a result of the way that they think about things. Therefore Lipp (2008) broadly defines
reflexivity as a means of supporting the development of knowledge from experience, by evaluating how experiences influence people’s views and ultimate social behaviour. Hence, Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001) propose a framework for the reflexivity theory that includes three dimensions. The first dimension is based on how an individual thinks or reflects on a unique circumstance in order to establish a personal context which may include physical surroundings, cultural background or social orientation, thus influencing the individual’s personal view of the circumstance. The second facet of the reflexive theory builds on the first, making reference to the construction of a personal theory based on acquired knowledge and experience in order to learn from them and apply the newly acquired knowledge better in future, while the third dimension of reflexive thinking is about people’s responses to newly acquired information and how after deep consideration of the information, their responses to particular information and thus behaviour can be used to make constructive cognitive contributions to social realities. Krafft (2010) however, found that Soros (2009) has a more concise view of Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper’s (2001) types of reflexive thinkers. Soros (2009) argues that there are two categories of reflexive thinkers: The first category of reflexive thinkers are people who are essentially inward-looking, engaging in reflective thought with the aim of making appropriate but subjective, individualistic responses to information in order to benefit themselves; while a second type of reflexive thinker is more objective and outward-looking, thinking about matters with the aim of finding new and creative ways of overcoming not only personal challenges, but also those that are inherent in society as a result of the plethora of different cultures, backgrounds, orientations, personal assumptions and viewpoints that contribute to society as a whole. Hence, Finlay and Gough (2003) maintain that reflexivity is a process of critical thoughtfulness and analytical self-awareness, a notion that leads Lipp (2007) to draw the conclusion that if reflexivity indicates a measure of self-awareness of the individual, any interaction of the individual with the rest of society effects a sense of awareness among society and impacts on how society relates and reacts to the individual. Thus Solis (2010) argues that in the 21st century, as a result of technological advances, information, knowledge or thought has ceased to be an isolated or individual experience, therefore reflexivity has taken on a new dimension of connectivity as people’s ability to think, learn and experience reality has become a collective activity of social interaction. Zurita and Nussbaum (2007:211) postulate that social interaction between an individual and other individuals lays the building blocks for the
proliferation of thoughts and the development of knowledge, thereby leading to theories that are found in the socio-cultural tradition. However, Walqui (2006:161) notes that social interaction needs to be facilitated through a medium such as language which provides a means of expressing thoughts, so that what is thought, felt and experienced can be described, past experiences can be retold, future discourse can be anticipated, and social relationships can be formed, thus the value of the theories in the socio-cultural tradition.

- For clarity on the socio-cultural tradition, Leornard (2005) explains that this tradition consists of theories that address three aspects related to social interaction and culture in society, namely: context, meaning and social reality, as they occur in communication. As the two words that are central to the socio-cultural tradition are social and cultural, they will be defined separately. Ashenbrenner and Hewig (2009) state that the word social implies that an individual relates to other individuals as members of the human community called society. Hence John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith (2004:2) purport that the word socio refers to a context or environment such as a society or community of people in which a process such as communication occurs when members of society relate to one another, thus the emergence of social interaction. Van Vuuren and Seydel (2005:15) therefore posit that social interaction is the basis of learning and development that takes place when people relay information to one another or interact, implying that communication occurs as a result of social interaction that takes place in a context of socio-cultural environments that are constructed and reconstructed networks of the communication process, creating a common understanding and a sense of common identity among people, giving rise to theories such as the socialization theory (Shaefer & Lamm, 2010).

The socialization theory sheds light on the concept of social association as it addresses the process of how people become social beings (John-Steiner, Panofsky and Smith, 2004:2). According to Croteau and Hoynes (2003:13) socialization is defined as the process through which people are taught values, beliefs and norms of a culture which they make their own and in so doing construct a sense of who they are and where they fit into society as individuals. As such Campbell and Pfister (2002:6) define culture as a structure of common understandings or interpretations as portrayed by thoughts, words and attitudes that are communicated from one generation to the next, in order to develop and disseminate knowledge about the
different groups of people who make up society. Dileep (2005) agrees, adding that culture is a way of thinking, feeling, believing and perceiving reality that has been learned, agreed upon and passed down generations by a social group in which an individual has been nurtured or with whom an individual chooses to be identified with. In agreement with Dileep (2005), Hughes, Kroehler, Vander Zanden (2002) add that the function of acquiring certain values, beliefs and norms provide members of society with appropriate skills for social interaction and helps people to learn certain behaviour patterns necessary for effective participation in society. Thus Shaefer and Lamm (2010) indicate that the basic requirements for successful socialization are people and contexts or cultures in which communication occurs such as the family, community, religion and social media platforms. With regard to the requirements for successful socialization, Baxamusa (2010) has found the media to be a particularly efficient socialization tool as it may reinforce or challenge existing socially acquired political, religious or cultural views. Hence Croteau and Hoynes (2003:13) affirm that in the 21st century people generally learn most effectively about themselves and how they fit into society through the opportunities that social media provide for social interaction and socialization, notwithstanding the technical advances in social interaction such as social interfaces that have become more spontaneous, more trustworthy and less costly.

A different theory which contributes to the process of socialization is the generational theory, which Mitchley (2010) posits is based on the argument that people’s collective value systems and subsequent beliefs, wants, needs and aspirations are shaped by the particular generation in which they were born and raised. Wilson and Gerber (2008), postulate that the generational theory was initiated by Karl Manheim in 1928 and further developed by William Strauss and Neil Howe in 1992, as a theory that describes and explains the typical social behaviour patterns of generations in phases of twenty years. Wilson and Gerber (2008), however criticise Strauss and Howe’s (1992) generational theory, arguing that it is limited to the United States and therefore overlooks the rest of the world’s people who essentially experience similar social patterns and it also fails to sufficiently address the demographical and social realities of race, ethnicity and class in the United States. Notwithstanding Strauss and Howe’s (1992) limitations, Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2004) found that the word generation is a universal term that describes a group of people born anywhere in the world, over a similar period of time, indicating
particular generational profiles such as similar learning styles as well as similar reactions or responses towards the same information (Sutton, 2005). As such generations have existed since recorded history and the overwhelming advances in technology and media in addition to societal transformations over time, have provided each generation with its own distinctive set of experiences and values, consequently generational theory provides a type of generational identity and a means of measuring a timeframe in which people were born who think and act in a similar manner at a certain time, thus the emergence of generational cycles (Strauss & Howe in Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004).

Mitchley (2010) indicates that a generational cycle spans over approximately eighty years, with twenty year intervals and each twenty year period of the 20th century, has been portrayed as idealistic, reactive, civic, and adaptive, respectively. While it is true that people don’t all experience life or think and act in exactly the same way, generational cycles help society to recognize periods in history, in different countries and cultures where similar defining forces influenced families, communities and societies, thus general conclusions about the consequences this may have had on the generation of young people who were growing up at the time, can be drawn (Codrington, 2008). For example, the generational theory helps people to understand why, irrespective of their racial backgrounds, two thirty old South Africans, have more in common with each other than they do with their parents, because of the social environment in which they were raised. Thus, understanding the differences and similarities of different generations have implications for varied situations in life, such as overcoming the challenges of values, expectations, attitudes and behaviours that face parents and teachers interacting with students, marketers interacting with consumers and more specifically, media professionals communicating with a wide variety of media consuming public, because of the impact that the media have on the world view of society in general. Therefore, such knowledge about a certain generation is useful for organisations to know how best to relate to their specific audience, with what possible outcomes (Mitchley, 2010). Codrington (2008) warns however that although the generational theory is a guide for the thinking and behaviour patterns of a group of people born during a particular period, it is not necessarily able to accurately explain the unique actions of individuals, nor is it able to anticipate an individual’s behaviour in a specific situation, nonetheless, in conjunction with a person’s racial, religious, social or cultural
orientation, the generational theory does contribute significantly to a valuable framework for creating a social environment in which several generations can interact effectively as a result of understanding how individuals or groups may think and act, as a result of the generation that they may be from.

Craig and Muller (2007:365) believe that another significant dimension of the socio-cultural tradition is that it describes a group activity as opposed to a unilateral experience or an independent event within a vacuum, in which people use language to express their thoughts and experiences as members of a group or community thus providing a platform of understanding in which communication and social interaction takes place. The socio-cultural tradition therefore provides vital explanations for the effects of such shared communication within a particular community, which when repeated, perpetuate culture in society. As such Thompson, Dorsey, Miller and Parrott (2003:51) are of the opinion that the socio-cultural tradition views communication as an interactive, dynamic process that represents shared socio-cultural activities that generate institutional arrangements such as shared belief systems, values and norms, as a result of the use and understanding of the meanings of words, actions and symbols, thereby achieving dynamic social interaction in society. John-Steiner et al. (2004:3) argue that the fundamental role of social interaction is the creation of language in order to share meaning and ultimately the formation of groups who can relate to each other about a common social reality. Hence Littlejohn and Foss (2005:45) state that the socio-cultural tradition is founded on observed patterns of verbal expression and interaction between groups of people, rather than on how individuals perceive and respond to situations. They suggest that this tradition focuses on the factors at work when an individual assumes the role of a participating group member and the outcomes of such group interaction. Severin and Tankard (2001:189) explain that accepted social norms and values are formed as group members rely on language to describe previous experiences in order to apply meaning to new situations so that a group based understanding that forms a context and a basis for future social interactions is developed.

Hence Swoyer (2003) found that the origins of this tradition are based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, which states that the structure of a group’s language shapes what people think and do, thus language gives expression to people’s reality and therefore their outlook on the world. Griffin (2006:28) concurs
with Swoyer (2003), adding that the socio-cultural tradition is based on the proposition that as people converse in a language that verbalizes their life experiences, they generally look for similarities in interests and aspirations which lead to a sense of common understanding among them, so that mutual communication needs are met, giving rise to the production of a shared culture. Podgorecki (2004:87) supports Griffin’s (2006:28) viewpoint observing that the fundamental linguistic aspect of the socio-cultural tradition embraces theories that explain how persons who communicate and interrelate with understanding, together create their common social reality, because their perception of truth is influenced by their use of a common language. While taking into consideration the communication of multiple groups of people, Griffin (2006:30) confirms the views of Thompson et al. (2003:51), noting that as individuals engage in conversation with each other, they bridge their divides together, therefore, in addition to the various theories in the socio-cultural tradition which address meaning, context and social reality, it has the added function of clarifying how people overcome differences that exist between diverse cultures.

Littlejohn and Foss (2005:45) purport that the variations of the socio-cultural tradition are found in theories such as symbolic interactionism, constructionism and sociolinguistics. According to Griffin (2009), symbolic interactionism was formulated by Blumer in 1969 and is based on the notion that all communication is representative or symbolic, because people view themselves as they are viewed by others, as a result of their interaction with them, therefore the self-view that a person may have is not necessarily true but a perspective of others, thus suggesting that people have a public persona and a private persona. Griffin (2009) also found that social theorist Mead’s (1962) view of symbolic interactionism was premised on how fundamental language as a symbolic form is useful for people to express their thoughts to and about other people, things and events and how this interaction is important for the individual to experience a sense of worth in society. For Glenn (2007) symbolic interactionism had an even greater impact than creating self-worth, as it was based on how people acquire identities based on interaction with others, therefore establishing an identity became an interdependent process in which people socially construct their worlds as they communicate directly with others. White and Klein (2002:66) however purport that a fundamental assumption of symbolic interactionism is that human identity is strongly based on symbolism as the
human mind constantly grasps, assimilates and processes symbolisms, so that social reality is constructed, negotiated and changed as people interact socially, thereby constructing a dynamic society.

Littlejohn and Foss (2005:46) found that social constructionism is a significant outcome of how human knowledge is constructed and how an object is identified as a result of how people talk about that object. It also deals with the language used to describe concepts and the way social groups become accustomed to discourse on their common experiences. It appears therefore that the nature of the world is less important than the language used to name, discuss and approach the world. As such Coulmas (2005:4) is of the opinion that sociolinguistics is another influence in the socio-cultural tradition which deals with the study of language as it both mirrors and cultivates cultural and social patterns in its role as a central instrument of social organization. Littlejohn and Foss (2005:46) highlight the fact that sociolinguistics addresses the way people use language differently in different social and cultural groups, therefore language is not just seen as a neutral medium for connecting individuals, it also forms the basis for which people draw their identity as social and cultural beings. Wardaugh (2006:6) concurs with Littlejohn and Foss (2005:46) adding that language is a profound indicator of identity, much more significant than cultural symbolisms such as dress, food or etiquette. Hence Jourdan and Tuite (2006) purport that language is the primary instrument of thought for members of society because the language which people use to articulate their perceptions expresses who they are as individuals and how they view the world.

From a different perspective, Farkhan (2005:37) posits that sociolinguistics is the study of how society influences language in the formation of cultural norms and the contexts in which languages are used to categorize people according to social factors such as ethnicity, religion, status, gender, education and media consumption. Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell (2007:xvi) argue that sociolinguistics is a wide-ranging field which encompasses how and why diverse people use language to speak, write and perceive the world as specifically as they do. It is therefore the opinion of Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell (2007: xvi) that language is the means whereby groups of people express themselves and distinguish themselves from others. McNaught (2006) and Coulmas (2005:4) agree with Llamas, Mullany and Stockwell (2007: xvi), adding that the use and understanding of a common language demystifies the perspectives of social exchanges and cultural conventions so that
there is a profound interconnectivity in society, created by the powerful force of language. Pinker (2000:1) also concurs that the strategic use of language as an interpreter of reality, whether it be face to face or computer mediated communication can bridge time and space, connecting members of a community into an information-sharing network with formidable collective energy.

It is as a result of the way that language interprets reality in society that theories such as the agenda-setting theory which forms part of the socio-cultural tradition, explore the worlds of interaction in which people live, promulgating the idea that reality is not an objective set of arrangements outside of people, but is constructed through a process of subjective interaction as seen in the use of language among groups, communities and cultures. As such the power of language in society is particularly noticeable in the role that the media plays by using effective language to give people information about their world and to interpret it for them (Ronge, 2009:1, Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:45). Waddle (2005) describes information in the media as compelling stories that touch people’s lives, presents information and evokes people’s emotions. As such, it is the goal of media producers to make an impact on the reader or listener, to impart information that was not previously known or to identify a trend that defines the world for society. A good understanding of the effects of information or news in the media on society emerges with a theoretical look at the making and the character of the media as it is presented to the public and the way that individuals relate to media content, as can be seen in the application of the agenda-setting theory.

2.4 AGENDA-SETTING THEORY: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN CREATING SOCIAL DISCOURSE

Moeller (2008) defines the agenda-setting theory as the role that the media plays in influencing how the public thinks and talks about media content as a result of the way and frequency that stories are reported. It therefore focuses on how news reporters decide on which stories matter, how to portray the stories that are covered in the news and how the public responds to the stories. Griffin (2006) purports that the agenda-setting theory focuses on two elements of the media: the creation of information that is of interest to the public and the creation of public awareness of social realities. More recently the agenda-setting theory has had to consider not only the role of traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television in creating information and awareness,
but also the prolific contributions of new electronic media to public discourse (Moeller, 2008). In his critique of the agenda-setting theory, Griffin’s (2006) proposition agrees with Gleckler’s (2000), who adds that the agenda-setting theory focuses on the creation of public awareness and concern of prominent issues by the news media, therefore it explains why most people prioritize the same concerns as important, and it predicts that if people are exposed to similar media, they will feel that the same issues are of significance to them. However, Albarran et al. (2005:278) and Croteau and Hoynes (2003:7) differ with Glecker (2000) and Griffin (2006), arguing that the primary effect of the agenda-setting theory is not as simplistic as determining public opinion by presenting stories and images, since it is not just a general consumption of the media by the public, which leads to a homogenized public opinion; but the gathering and distributing of news and information in the media, so as to serve the general public, by communicating with people and enabling them to make informed and objective judgements on the issues covered by the media.

Hence Hui Kyong Chun (2006:7) observes that humanity as a collective, a community of people, the masses, the public or society is no longer just that. With the advent of the social media, people have evolved from merely being members of society, to being constituents of an information society, a knowledge people; this as a consequence of the pervasive presence of both old media and the influx of new, electronic media. In an attempt to explain why the internet and related communication media are referred to as new media, Gunning in Thorburn and Jenkins (2003), postulates that the internet became known and spoken about as new media not at the time of its invention, but when it became deregulated and received unprecedented exposure by other mass media such television, radio and newspapers, which inadvertently then assumed the label of old media. With optimism Angyal (2009) observes that for the general public new media embodies vast prospects to shape the type of public discourse that acknowledges the contributions of all members of a vibrant society. In agreement, Tom (2009) adds that it is this conversation that is ignited by issues covered in the media that resonates with the real life experiences of individuals, thereby reinforcing the dynamic impact and relevance of the agenda-setting theory as a result of the vibrant interaction between the public and the new media environment. The implications of the new media environment with distinctive features different to the old media environment as indicated in Table 2.1, highlights concerns as to whether the agenda-setting theory is still as pertinent and relevant as it was with the old media environment (Roberts et al, 2002).
Table 2.1: Adaptation from Engaging new media, challenging old assumptions Source: (A report by the Advisory Council on the impact of media on society AIMS, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Media</th>
<th>New Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper, radio, television with limited content and influence on public thinking and conversation.</td>
<td>The internet, podcasts, social networks with large amounts of varied content for continuous vibrant public conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-consuming process of gathering news stories and distribution from news agencies to public audience</td>
<td>Speedy collection of information, communication and interaction by all members of society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited source of collection, collaboration and conveyance of news stories.</td>
<td>Wide spectrum of sources for news and diversity of perspectives of stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited interpretation of world events</td>
<td>Diversity of opinion on world events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulated news sources</td>
<td>Unregulated news sources therefore limited quality control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In recent times the rapid expansion of new media has remarkably transferred the way that society accumulates information, communicates and responds to media content (Koonen & Lynch, 2008). As such new media allows people to search and discover new avenues of information, news stories and views in real time beyond their geographical borders, as people are presented with new ways of thinking and conversing with others, allowing individuals to challenge the interpretations of world events by the media. While there is still considerable dependence on old media for news and opinions, new media has developed into a major platform for people who seek diverse opinions, as opposed to old media which suggests that the media might only be focused on the outcome of its own agenda and not that of a broad base of information that may stimulate wide public debate. Another aspect of new media is that it is not regulated, emphasising the responsibility of governments in their role as policy agenda-setters to control social tension that may occur and maintain a balance between freedom of individual expression and societal values (Koonen & Lynch, 2008).
As such, Moeller (2008) observes that the media environment has become more vibrant and more crowded over the last two decades as a result of new technologies and fewer barriers that have lowered the financial and political costs of media ownership and access to media content. These trends have also pressurised old media business models that worked for newsprint, radio and television into new categories of commercial, advertising-dependent media and politically-oriented news outlets, shifting the editorial interest of many news organisations away from public service news that the public needs to know towards entertainment, profit-driven news that the public wants to know. Over the same period media ownership has become the domain of big bottom-line driven business, moving news organisations out of the hands of individuals and families and making the news more satisfying to shareholders and advertisers who award media organisations for offering media content that they deem profitable (Eilders, 2006). Moreover, Mc Chesney (2010) argues that as media ownership has systematically been taken over by large corporates, a lack of media transparency has become evident as large corporate businesses such as Rupert Murdoch, Time Warner, Disney, General Electric and Viacom, all companies who own and control the media are in the perfect position to manage public perception about, for example, topics like media ownership as this benefits their agenda of staying in control of the media, thereby suppressing any voices opposing theirs (Larson, 2010). Nonetheless, the notion of media ownership leads to a discussion of how agenda-setting as a function of the media is constituted and where the process starts.

Bucy (2002:xi) posits that the media environment in which agenda-setting research was founded and which creates an institution for the agendas of the media, the public and policy makers, was dominated by what is currently called the traditional or old media, such as newspapers, radio and television. Kwansah-Aidoo (2005:37) asserts that the features of the traditional media are the domination by a few media known as mainstream media, the ability of journalists and editors through their role as guardians or gate-keeping who determine what is included in the media and what is not and a few established sources of information for the mainstream media (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2004:1211). An alternative view is that politicians determine news content while current agenda-setting theorists believe that the agenda is set for the media by publications professionals who are employed by government agencies, corporations and a wide range of interest groups (Griffin, 2006:363). As such, McCombs and Ghanem (2001) and Soroka (2002) are of the opinion that media consumers learn what issues are
important from the priorities of the news media professionals and assign a similar sense of significance to such matters. Purvis (2001:77) as well as Dearing and Rogers (2007:92) argue however that the reverse effect of agenda-setting is also true, that issues and events that are unreported or receive little attention from the media, also do not feature in the thoughts and conversations of the public.

As such, the agenda-setting function is made up of a three-part process consisting of the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda and how these are influenced by proponents of the media, people’s personal experiences and interactions as well as the real-world indictors and the importance of an agenda issue, as depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Agenda-Setting Conceptual Model (McQuail & Windahl, 1993)

Kwansah-Aidoo (2005:42) purports that the media agenda is the set of issues addressed by media sources such as media professionals and proponents of issues for public consumption. It also takes into account the patterns, time frame and ranking order of prominent issues for media coverage. Ideally the media agenda is determined by world events and matters of interest to the public. However, Eilders (2006) found that actual media content is often influenced by governments, gatekeepers, news routines, and the ideological needs of news outlets. What constitutes newsworthiness however, is determined by factual events that carry public interest, characterised by proximity, relevance, sensationalism, controversy, iconic status of an organisation, person or event and stories that can be carried over a period of time. When based on these factors, the news value of issues or events become measurable and the effect that they have on news selection and presentation can be tested through comparative prominence over a spectrum of media (Eilders, 2006).

According to Hyun and Moon (2008), an important finding of newsworthiness studies is that media professionals from different types of media outlets often assign different
values for what is news to the same events and issues thus diluting the agenda-setting effect of a story. However, in an experiment with journalism students, Kepplinger and Ehmig (2006) found that news factors such as proximity and relevance increased the newsworthiness of stories for regional news media but not for international news media and news value such as iconic status increased the newsworthiness for all news media types. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) argue therefore that the relevance of the agenda-setting role for local or regional media essentially lies in their primary function of providing meaningful information with which media consumers can direct and structure their daily lives and relations with fellow citizens. Ronge (2009) however argues that the distinguishing characteristic of local or international news is stories that relate to the iconic status of an organisation, person or event because such stories are generally portrayed by all media as valuable information that is universally captivating and inspiring, encouraging people to want to know more about the subject of the story. Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) and Mc Combs (2004:97) as well as Littlejohn and Foss (2005:279) maintain however that more than its ability to assign meaning or tell intriguing stories, it is the ability of a wide range of media forms that permeate and characterize contemporary life as a result of its ability to influence people’s perceptions and awareness of the world that is of most significance. Thus Onyebadi (2008:37) and Bryant and Miron (2004) note the unassailable appeal of the agenda-setting theory as one of the eight most popular theories of the 21st century. Van Noije (2007) however cautions against the media’s ability to present distorted images of reality as well as the limitations of the media to determine public opinion. As such McCombs and Ghanem (2001) note that as a result of the media’s ability to influence the public agenda, through the exposure they provide a topic, researchers have pointed out that topics compete for media attention, therefore it is the attention-grabbing, newsworthy information that gets conveyed from the media agenda to the public agenda.

The public agenda embraces matters that the public consider relevant to society, including a correlation of how issues appear in the media and how important the public perceive the issues to be (McCombs, 2008:137). Comstock and Scharrer (2005:181) argue that issues feature on the public’s agenda as a consequence of media attention rather than real world signs, urgency or significance. Downing, McQuail, Wartella and Schlesinger (2004:6) as well as Druckman (2005:463-481), make the point that a contemporary consideration of the proponents of the media agenda, is a new component which consists of a shift from direct persuasion by argument, exhortations
and advocacy, to the skilful facilitation of information, especially when it comes to news which carries expectations of reliability and trust on the part of the public. Bryant and Zillman (2002:4) contend that although the correlation between the media agenda and the impact of trends in public opinion and therefore the public agenda is largely positive, factors other than media coverage, such as psychological and social issues also influence the public's perceptions and emphasize that the public mind is not a blank slate waiting to be written on by the media. In agreement, Murley and Roberts (2005:1) as well as Weaver and Drew (2001:787-798) state that the media's original agenda is often interpreted by factors that include a member of the public's political orientation, educational level, cultural interests, economic orientation and media consumption patterns. Fortunato (2005:17) and Druckman (2001) in Edwards and King (2007:430) add that cognitive psychologists have documented that media consumers’ reactions may vary to identical pieces of information, depending on their levels of trust and perceived knowledge of the media. Similarly, researchers have noted that members of the public differ not only in the way that they perceive information in the media, but also in how they relate to the information (Muniz & O’Guin, 2001:42).

Mapes (2005:273), Schudson (2005:198-214) and Slater (2007:281-303) observe therefore that the media is constantly challenged to ensure that stories that are reported grab the attention of the public as true and thought provoking, so as to avoid a deprived, lacklustre, public debate about media content. Alexander and Hanson (2007:xvii) concur, stating that the media’s audience has different uses for the media, such as a desire for information or entertainment and it displays a variety of preferences for the media content on offer. In agreement with Alexander and Hanson (2007: xvii), Baran and Davis (2009) purport that a constructive way of avoiding a lacklustre media offering is to give the public a wide variety of choice so that modern mediated communication lies on a continuum and depending on where different sources of media fall along the continuum would determine the amount of control and involvement media consuming individuals have in the communication process.

In light of the way that the media landscape is constantly changing, as a result of web platforms such as blogging, YouTube, Facebook and twitter, Gauntlet (2009) also challenges the notion of the public as a passive audience of media information, stating that people have become active producers as well as consumers of a very dynamic media environment. Chauffee and Metzer (2001:369) agree with Gauntlet (2009) adding that for the contemporary media consumer, the World Wide Web offers a
greater mass of information transfer and retrieval, creating more control over both content formation and selection in the hands of users, with the added advantage of less cost to the average consumer. As such Ray (2006) in Byrne (2006:145) argues that as a global community, society determines what is produced by the media and not the other way round. Ray (2006) substantiates the point by stating that media ratings rise significantly when there is a national or international disaster because that’s what people want to talk about. In disagreement with Ray (2006), Mc Combs (2004:97) and Scheufele and Tewsbury (2007:9-20), hypothesize that the media is in fact the cause as empirical evidence supports the notion that the media has the potential to determine issues of public concern and social discourse, thus the impact of the agenda-setting theory. Notwithstanding the viewpoints of Mc Combs (2004:97) and Scheufele and Tewsbury (2007:9-20), Knowler (2010) asserts that the 21st century is the most appropriate time for all types of media to interact with the public in a robust manner by embracing consumer journalism or citizen generated media content, thereby building strong relationships with media audiences across all divides regardless of race, gender, age or income, bolstering the significance of the agenda-setting theory. This is particularly relevant as for example in South Africa, in 2010 a new Consumer Protection Act becomes law, fundamentally transferring the balance of power from the company to the consumer, thereby giving both old and new media the key role of disseminating the information contained in the Act in simple language that explains its reality for the consumer. Moreover, Blackshaw (2005) notes that since the era of new media, in particular social media, news has become ubiquitous, so much so that people’s experience of the news has become a shared social experience as people send news stories including pictures to traditional media as breaking news stories as well as for verification of the facts of stories, highlight news stories in their tweets, exchange email links and debate about the meaning of events in discussion threads. Thus, Marsland (2010) and Taitz (2009) note that essentially, social platforms such as Facebook, give the consumer the tools to make and spread news, therefore consumer choice has become inherent in the media consumption experience as the consumer has swiftly moved from being driven by the news, to driving the news. Thus news consumption is socially driven and socially engaging as a result of the information contained in the news being targeted, relevant, high impact and immediate. Confirming the observation of Marsland (2010) and Taitz (2009), research done by Pew Internet and American life Project postulate that in 2010 approximately 44% of social media consumers contributed to the creation of digital news content, thus posing a challenge for old
media and perhaps setting the stage for the agenda-setting theory to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st century consumer.

According to Althaus and Tewksbury (2000:473), responses to the challenges of the significance of the agenda-setting theory include: embracing new media in order to address a wider, vibrant audience with objective opinions; dominant media needs to become less dominant and the priming and framing aspects of agenda-setting being used in more creative ways to overcome the effect of the layout of news on the internet that may reduce the importance of salience on stories with fragmented effects on how people notice and are influenced by the news. Hartley (2010) observes that integration between old and new media is the strategic answer for the longevity of old media in general and the agenda-setting theory in particular. Hartley (2010) cites the example of launching The Times, a South African daily newspaper that was launched in 2007 amid widespread misgivings about its success in a digital era. In 2010 the newspaper remains a success story as a result of its business model which included integration with the newspaper’s website at every level, directing readers to multimedia content and encouraging readers to provide feedback online, accurate, fair and visual appeal that is relevant for a generation of consumers that are accustomed to new media.

With regards to the policy agenda, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) purport that the policy agenda comes about as a result of a process whereby governments make decisions about which issues of policy should be the focus of public attention and action; therefore requiring the media as a facilitator for social discourse on such matters. In 1972 McCombs and Shaw conducted the Chapel Hill research in which they found a conspicuous connection between the pattern of coverage of issues in the media and the prominence of those issues among the public, which implied a significant influence of the policy agenda on the media agenda and ultimately on the public agenda.

However, Valenzuela and McCombs (2007) argue that the agenda-setting theory underlines the pervasive role of the media as performed by editors and influential opinion leaders, because it clarifies the notion that the media makes choices about what to report, which in turn advances issues more swiftly from the media agenda to the public and policy agendas. It remains nonetheless, a point of contention among researchers as to which agenda starts the process, the media, the public or advocates of social policy propelling a policy agenda. Comstock and Scharrer (2005:181) dispute
the thinking that issues rise and fall on the public’s agenda as an outcome of media attention, rather than as a result of real world issues of significance to society. In their comment on how the agenda-setting process positively affects the promotion of topics, Farmer and Kozel (2005:313-315) support the idea that agenda-setting uses interrelationships between the media, public and policy agendas to assist the creation of widespread awareness of social issues. Carroll and McCombs (2003:36-46) corroborate this view stating that the amount of news coverage that an event or organisation is afforded in the news media is positively related to the public’s awareness of the organisation as a result of the levels of agenda-setting which ensure that prominence of issues in the media lead to public awareness of those issues.

2.5 LEVELS OF AGENDA-SETTING

McCombs and Yu (2005), purport that there are three levels of agenda-setting characterised by the salience of media content. Kiousis (2004) defines media salience as that which makes media content get the attention of the media consumer as a result of its prominence and visibility. Hence, the first level of agenda-setting research focuses on issue salience or the prominence of issues about which the public have an attitude or opinion as largely guided by the media (McCombs, 2004:70). This is followed by a second level of agenda-setting which concentrates on the characteristics of prominent issues, events, people or organizations in the media or the attribute salience of stories that are covered in the media. The third level of agenda-setting is called inter-media agenda-setting and centres on transfer salience or the way that the media outlets agree among themselves to transport a positive or negative tone of prominent issues to media audiences (Coleman & Banning, 2006). McCombs and Reynolds (2002) purports that the levels of agenda-setting theory emphasize how the media and the public interact and influence one another to affect issue, attribute and transfer salience of media coverage, ultimately influencing public attitudes and opinions, as portrayed in the agenda-setting process model in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: The salience factor of the Agenda-Setting Process
Mc Combs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000:78) and Scheufele (2000) are of the opinion that first-level agenda-setting is the level that is most traditionally studied by researchers and at this level the media suggest what the public’s attitudes and opinions should be about the topic that is covered and the amount of coverage that the topic receives. Comstock and Scharrer (2005:181) are of the opinion that the public is receptive to salience as determined by media coverage because of the wide and authoritative media surveillance of pertinent issues of the day. Hence Mc Combs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000:78) purport that the first level of agenda-setting is primarily based on issue salience. Hester and Gibson (2003:74) define issue salience as the prominence and emphasis that a story is awarded by the media and how it pertains to the public’s reception of it. Kiousis (2004) assigns three dimensions to the concept of issue salience: attention, prominence and valence. Attention refers to the number of times the media publish news items on a particular matter while prominence is a measure of the display of the information in such a manner that it readily attracts attention. For example, putting the story as the lead on the front page of a newspaper or highlighting it on radio, television or the internet, would qualify as a measure of prominence. On the other hand, valence deals with whether the story is conveyed in positive, negative or neutral terms and Onyebadi (2008:42) cites the example that African stories are typically conveyed in a negative light by most media. Hester and Gibson (2003:74) conclude that in the first level agenda-setting the fundamental premise is the degree of emphasis placed on issues in the news and how it influences the priority accorded these issues by the public, while in second-level agenda-setting
both the selection of topics for attention and the selection of attributes for thinking about these topics play powerful agenda-setting roles.

As such, Mc Combs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000:78) found that the second level of agenda-setting is based on attribute salience, referring to emphasis being placed on the characteristics or features of topics highlighted in the media. Miller (2005) observes that research that has focused on attribute salience in the media with a view to measure public participation found variations in the agenda-setting effect on the public. Miller (2005) explains the variations in the agenda-setting effect by citing research done by Weaver in 1977 in which Weaver found that individual members of the public vary in their need for orientation and that such a need is a combination of the individual’s interest in the topic and uncertainty about the issue, which would lead to a measure of how the individual would be persuaded by the degree of attribute salience in media stories. This leads to the issue of transfer salience which is the subject of the third level of agenda setting.

Inter-media agenda setting or the third level agenda-setting is described by Coleman and Banning (2006) as an agreement by different media to transfer a prominent tone of news stories or ideology to the public. The agenda-setting role of media becomes more effective as the public perceives reality as positive or negative as determined by the media. Paul and Elder (2006) argue that the third level of agenda-setting is detrimental to vibrant public debate on social realities because it overlooks divergent viewpoints that are not covered by the consensus of inter-media agenda-setting. However, Eveland, Marton and Seo (2004) found that especially in a more modern media environment with a wide selection of media sources, the audience relies less on media for information, orientation or salience and is more selective in their consumption of the media and therefore selectively susceptible to the agenda-setting effect of the media. Conversely, With regard to the degree of salience transfer, Mc Combs, Lopez-Escobar and Llamas (2000:78) agree with the findings of Zucker’s 1978 study which suggest that transfer salience is most effective if members of the public have had direct contact with it and less effective if audience members have not experienced it directly; implying that agenda-setting results should be strongest for less salient issues because audience members must rely more on media for an opinion on these topics. Comstock and Scharrer (2005) explain that recent research on agenda-setting has found that not only do news media have the ability to transfer the salience of an issue to audiences; they also have the ability to bring to the foreground the specific aspects that will govern.
thinking about that issue. The influence of the news media is therefore not limited to the importance and relevance of issues, events and people, but the salience factor accorded it by the media agenda, as determined by the amount of coverage it receives. In so doing the agenda-setting function of the media goes beyond the confines of purely transferring information from the media to the public but also transfers attributes and associations of a story that may or may not influence public opinion.

The concept of transfer salience gives rise to the question of causality which has been a topic of debate among researchers. The uncertainty is whether the media agenda causes the public agenda, or vice-versa. Kim, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2002:11) note that in 1997 Inyengar and Kinder established causality with an experimental study where they identified that influencing perception, vividness of presentation and position were all variables of the salience given to a news story, the media starts the process of agenda-setting. Fortunato (2005:54), Comstock and Scharrer (2005) argue that simply accepting the mass media as the only initiator of the agenda-setting process, without recognising the important role of content providers, is to neglect a critical aspect of the other contributors to salience of media content.

Onyebadi (2008:44) suggests that the key aspect of transfer salience is that it introduces the concept of framing. According to Gitlin (2003), framing embodies the angle, the theme or justification for coverage and often implies positive or negative evaluation within the coverage itself. Wainaina (2005) cites the example that media in Africa is typically framed in negative terms; therefore globally Africa is perceived negatively regardless of the existence of numerous positive stories. As such, Reese (2001:11) defines framing as the way that the media structure established, socially structured ideas that symbolically create meaning in the world. According to Carragee (2003:203), the structuring of media content in framing refers to the patterns that journalists use to include, interpret and emphasize events or issues for the media consuming public. Hence Onyebadi, (2008:45) suggests that the social structuring of media content in framing is the presentation of an object or subject in such a way that the audience of the media is expected to perceive the issue in the way that the media intended it to be perceived. In agreement Arnold (2010) adds that the symbolic creation of meaning in framing is about the focal point around which the news content is organized so as to provide context and suggest what the issues of the day are through the use of assortment, prominence, omission and enhancement. Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001) and Shen (2004) caution however that the selection of certain news
stories to the exclusion of other potentially relevant stories, poses the risk of influencing how the topic is perceived by the public, which may lead to a manipulation of the public’s perception of reality. McQuail (2002) agrees, indicating that the media’s capacity to frame and control their message raises the issue of objectivity and credibility of the media’s selection process. McCombs (2005:546) however contends that framing is essentially putting together news content for positive assessment by the public.

Maher (2001:89) is of the opinion that the agenda-setting scholar uses framing in a restricted sense by ignoring the context of the message or frame. Maher (2001:89) contends that instead of manipulating content, framing consolidates the transfer of salience between the media content and the media consumer by highlighting the context for relevance of the story. However, McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, and Llamas (2000:78) argue that framing is one of the closest of all the communications theories to agenda-setting therefore it can be seen as a sub theory of agenda-setting. In agreement McCombs and Ghanem (2001:69) posit that agenda-setting and framing share common ground with regards to attribute salience of media content. Kim, Scheufele and Shanahan (2002:8) however argue that, while framing is about the applicability of the role of the media, agenda-setting relates to the accessibility of the media to influence public opinion. Kim, Scheufele and Shanahan (2002:10) further indicate that framing presumes that media coverage has an influence on audiences based purely on salience of an issue, while agenda-setting is based on the assumption that only the most salient issues will be transcribed from the media to a person’s mind, thus affecting his or her thoughts, conversations and actions. Scheufele (2000:298) however contend that agenda-setting and framing compliment each other and should not be viewed as one theory as they are different approaches to media effects that cannot be combined into a simple theory.

Maher (2001:89) posits that while framing is used to organize and present reality in a given form, agenda setting scholars restrict the effects of framing when they discuss frames as attributes of objects and not as strategic components of a broader process. In agreement with Scheufele (2000:298), Maher (2001:93) argues that regardless of their differences, framing and agenda-setting are complementary and both provide answers about the role of media in society. McCombs and Ghanem (2001:79) concur that both theories can benefit from a clearer theoretical structure that describes their framework and their particular features that are important to the communication process. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007:11) argue that disassociating framing from agenda-setting
concedes that priming is often understood as an extension of agenda setting. However, Scheufele (2000) reiterates that all three theories need to be viewed as individual theories in order to achieve maximum value from their contribution to the discipline of communications. Hsiang and McCombs (2004:24), Kiousis et al. (2005), conclude therefore that examining how topics are presented by the mass media through the emphasis on packaging the media content to influence the public’s evaluation of the issue, links the framing role of agenda-setting to the concept of priming.

Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2007) state that the media’s potential to prepare people’s thoughts, beliefs, judgements and behaviours for the ensuing media content is called priming. Therefore Donsbach and Traugott (2008) purport that if an issue is given extensive media coverage, it lends itself to positive thoughts, conversations and constructive judgement by the public thus McCombs and Reynolds (2002:14) explain that priming goes beyond influencing the thoughts of the public to influencing the actions of the public as a result of the frequency and presentation of media content. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) therefore concludes that priming is the process by which selected mass mediated information makes knowledge that is already present in the recipients’ memory, more easily available as a result of extensive, prominent coverage, thereby predisposing them to the reception or interpretation of subsequent information and how they might react to it. Carroll and McCombs (2003) therefore conclude that the agenda of substantive and affective attributes associated with news coverage, primes the public’s attitude and opinion about the news story. Kim, Scheufele and Shanahan (2002:8) however argue that both agenda-setting and priming relate to the accessibility of the media to influence public opinion. Kim, Scheufele and Shanahan (2002:10) further indicate that agenda-setting and priming are based on the assumption that only the most salient issues will be transcribed from the media to a person’s mind, thus affecting his or her thoughts, conversations and actions.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Scheufele (2000:298) purports that agenda-setting and priming complement each other by ultimately reinforcing the media’s role of articulating social reality, especially in light of the new media environment. However, Mutz and Martin (2001:111) make the point that both old and new media are not just a purveyor of their own interests to the public; they can also be important sources of contrary viewpoints on public issues as they provide a variety of frameworks for shaping public opinion and driving vigorous social
debate. Hence, Christodoulides, Jevons and Blackshaw (2011); Clift (2010) and Knowler (2010) assert that the 21\(^{st}\) century is the most appropriate time for old and new media to interact with the public in a robust manner by embracing consumer journalism or citizen generated media content, thereby building strong relationships with consumer and media audiences across all divides regardless of race, gender, age or income, bolstering the significance of a 21\(^{st}\) century agenda-setting theory in which the consumer has swiftly moved from being driven by information, to driving the information (Taitz, 2010). Thus, Bergan and Risner (2012); Mayumi and Paiva (2009); Hartley (2010) conclude that integration between old and new media is the strategic answer for the longevity of old media and the relevance of the agenda-setting theory in the 21\(^{st}\) century.
CHAPTER 3: BRANDING AND PROFITABLE BRAND AWARENESS IN THE 21\textsuperscript{ST} CENTURY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Keller (2009) explains that the brand of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century has become increasingly significant for what it stands for, what benefits it provides and what needs it satisfies. Therefore the brand has taken on a much more complex role than a name, to a fundamental participant in the triple bottom line era of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century where economic value, social presence as well as environmental sustainability are paramount for profitable brand awareness (Sarre & Treuren, 2001). For this reason, Keller (2003:3) notes that compared to the brand of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century which was only owner and product focused, the 21\textsuperscript{st} century brand has had to be more stakeholder-focused, holistically defining to all stakeholders what the brand represents and what consumers in particular may expect from their interaction with the brand. Hence the consumer’s perception of what a brand is and by implication, the perceptions of branding and brand awareness in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century have evolved dramatically (Trendwatching, 2011).

Furthermore, Simoes and Dibb (2001:218) argue that while the 20\textsuperscript{th} century brand was defined for the consumer by brand owners and the media, in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century of pro-brand activism and anti-brand activism in which the brand’s value is measured by its moral standing in society and its contribution to the sustainability of the natural environment, the brand is defined by the consumer for brand owners as well as the media; influencing the meaning of the brand and the meaning of profitable brand awareness (Masting, 2011). Chay-Nemeth (2001:2) reminds that brand activists are a group of stakeholders within a brand environment who are essentially preoccupied with producing and reproducing for or against the brand. Bonewits-Felder and Meisenbach (2007:17) concur, adding that brand activists have as their goal, challenging the actions of brands, specifically with regards to sound corporate governance. Thus Boaz (2007) proposes that profitable brand awareness is an outcome of a brand’s place in the consumer’s mind as a result of a brand’s communication strategies, particularly with regards to positive media exposure. Similarly Puri and Stackdale (2006) purport that profitable brand awareness is not achieved by a brand just being noticed because of its positive media profile, but by a brand which draws stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to get to know more about the brand. Therefore, Merz, He, and Vargo (2009) agree with Keller (2003:3) that in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century economy, establishing a positive brand presence or the process of creating profitable brand awareness has
evolved from being a company-focused activity to being a consumer-focused activity. As such, Smith (2002) proposes that creating brand awareness or distributing information of interest about a brand through agenda-setting by the media also has to be revised; as Griffin (2006) reminds that the agenda-setting theory focuses on two elements of the media: the creation of information that is of interest to the public and the creation of public awareness of social realities. It is for this reason that Apostolov (2004:121,127) highlights the fact that the media’s power to create information by manipulating mind sets and interpreting social realities for consumers as was the case in the 20th century, has now been transferred to the 21st century consumer who dictates to the media and brand owners what will be consumed and what constitutes consumer-inspired social realities as well as profitable brand awareness.

As such, Knox and Bickerton (2003:999) articulate that the 21st century brand encompasses the way a product, person or service is packaged for salience or distinction from the competition, real or perceived attributes that are attached to the brand’s reputation and the specific promise that is made in relation to a consumer’s experience of the brand. In agreement with Knox and Bickerton (2003:999), Knapp (2001:22) posits that the 21st century brand is a collection of all cognitive and emotional impressions or brand meanings received by consumers, resulting in a salient position in their minds, based on perceived emotional as well as functional benefits. Therefore, Ackerman (2005:1), purports that in addition to the traditional tangible, communication factors such as the name, symbol, design, or tagline that are associated with the brand, the 21st century brand is strongly influenced by an overall branding strategy comprising four intangible attributes of the brand. These include salience or prominent distinction, innovation, reputation and meaning or emotional connection to the brand; all factors which culminate in the consumer’s ultimate thoughts and social discourse, as a result of strategic agenda-setting for positive media exposure of the 21st century brand. Subsequently, communication of the 21st century brand to the brand activist consumer has implications for branding, brand awareness and the 21st century agenda setting process of the media, which no longer involves top-down communication structures in which the brand owner and the media create brand awareness but a bottom-up, cooperative engagement in which the consumer and the brand owner, buoyed by the technological advances of 21st century media, work together for the ultimate, holistic experience of the brand reality (Overton-de Klerk & Oelofse, 2010).
3.2 THE TRANSITION FROM THE 20TH CENTURY TO THE 21ST CENTURY BRAND

Keller (2003:3) explains that traditionally the brand of the 20th century was defined as a name, a symbol, a design, a tagline or combination of these that identified the owner of a product or a service and differentiated it from those of competitors. However, in the 21st century, this definition has been criticised for being too focused on the owner and the product, emphasising visual features and tangible marketing communication elements, such as a name or a logo as distinguishing factors, with little regard for the consumer who in the 21st century, has emerged as an all knowing, all seeing, globally vocal media contributor to what constitutes a brand and subsequent brand awareness (Bosman, 2010; Interbrand & Business Week, 2006). As such, Dunn and Davies (2004) argue that the brand of the 21st century is much more than visual and tangible representations. Most importantly, the 21st century consumer demands participation in the creation of the contemporary brand and as such meaningful interaction with the brand redefines brand awareness (Brandchannel, 2011). Thus the Brandchannel’s (2006) definition of brand awareness points to the level of a consumer’s knowledge of a specific brand, measured by the consumer’s interaction with the brand, as reflected by the media’s exposure of communication of the brand. Hence, Chang (2011) highlights the transition of a 20th century definition of brand awareness which focused on recall and recognition of a brand within a product category (Dolak, 2003) to a 21st century definition of brand awareness which goes beyond only knowing about the existence of a brand to include thinking, talking, sharing and meaningful interaction between the consumer and the brand, with every media and consumption opportunity.

Therefore, Stone (2010:1) observes that the concept of the brand as a product with value in its tangible attributes and its role as an identifier of a product or manufacturer was characteristic of a pre digital era or the economy of a 20th century society. As such Glick and Plisch (2004) purport that the top down economy and society of the 20th century was characterised by the manufacturing and standardisation of brands owned by powerful, bureaucratic organisations, which focused on mass production so that the value of the brand for the consumer was found in the physical attributes of the brand and the communication process between the brand owner and the consumer was tactical and one-way only (Viau, 2001:28). Similarly McQuaid (2008) in the Nieman Reports notes that owners of traditional media used their manipulative power which resulted from their economic strength and social relevance to communicate the brand to
the consumer. Furthermore, consumers of the 20th century were more easily manipulated by brand and media owners and bought and consumed brands that were available to them without question, because the society and economy were still vulnerable and beholden to brand and media owners after the 2nd World War (Lewis & Bridger, 2000:219). As a result, brand owners did not understand the importance of strategic agenda-setting or purposeful communication of the brand (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2007) with the relevant stakeholders, which created a social and economic distance between business and society, resulting in non-meaningful interpretations of social realities for consumers.

Hellriegel et al. (2001:133) define stakeholders as a wide range of groups or individuals such as brand owners, suppliers, employees, consumers, social communities as well as the media with a vested interest in the performance of the brand. Hence, Chang (2011) highlights the transition of a 20th century definition of brand awareness which focused on recall and recognition of a brand within a product category (Dolak, 2003) to a 21st century definition of brand awareness which goes beyond only knowing about the existence of a brand to include thinking, talking, sharing and meaningful interaction between the consumer and the brand, with every media and consumption opportunity. Blowfield (2005) however highlights the lack of engagement between powerful brand owners and uninformed brand stakeholders, especially consumers in the 20th century, thus the lack of substantial brand influence on society and the economy. As such Page and Herr (2002:133) describe brand influence as the positive or negative response that a brand evokes within a consumer, based on appeal and quality evaluations, both factors which 20th century consumers were deprived of by the lack of strategic vision of brand and media owners of the time, as portrayed by their lack of communicative and supportive behaviours (Ihator, 2004:243).

Mc Quaid (2008) found that the transition from the 20th century to the 21st century economy grew out of technologically driven social changes that eroded the authority of traditional media and brand owners as communication and subsequent social and brand realities between organisations and consumers had shifted due to a more vocal and active consumer society, enhanced connectivity, changing brand values and information technology (Ihator, 2004:243). Therefore, in the 21st century economy, the focus has been transferred from the powerful brand owner to the powerful brand activist consumer who seeks out more information about the strategies and activities of the organisation,
is more involved in the production of goods and services, individualistic and independent (Lewis & Bridger, 2000:2), devoting more energy and time to companies that strive to improve the world by taking an ethical stand (Boyle, 2003:38-39). The International Finance Corporation Handbook for Companies doing business in Emerging Markets (2007) acknowledges this interaction and communication between brand owners and stakeholders of the 21st century as Stakeholder Engagement, which as a branding strategy aims to improve relations between brand owners and stakeholders so that key stakeholders such as consumers are allowed to co-own the brand not just because they’ve bought and used the brand, but because they gave cognitive and verbal input towards the profitability of the brand (Blowfield, 2005). Hence, communication in the 21st century economy and subsequently, agenda-setting has also had to shift from being prescriptive to being strategically inclusive, integrated and interactive with the contemporary consumer (Ihator, 2004:243).

An example of such strategic 21st century agenda-setting is the launch of the Nissan Newsroom Brand Channel on YouTube. The Nissan Newsroom was established as a means for motor vehicle brand, Nissan to enhance its brand communication using video news from around the globe. In addition to videos that are streamed from the Nissan Global Media Centre, established in April 2011, the channel also connects visitors to other Nissan brand channels already existing in different countries throughout the world. For profitable brand awareness and to engage with the contemporary consumer most effectively in today’s digital ecosphere, video news clips and related video content have become essential tools in Nissan’s brand communication strategy (Brandchannel, 2011). Furthermore, in the 21st century economy, globalisation, the rise of consumerism, increasing awareness of environmental and ethical issues assisted by pressure groups or brand activists and the understanding by brand owners that profitable brand awareness depends on contemporary branding factors such as a brand’s salience, innovation, reputation and meaning; brand owners have had to reconsider their branding communication and agenda-setting strategies, specifically with regards to the amount and nature of media exposure that a brand receives, as this relates to the stakeholders’ awareness of the brand (Caroll & McCombs, 2003).

Hence, Phipps (2006) proposes that the role of the media in a 21st century society has evolved to facilitate a consumer-centric branding agenda as driven by consumers and not media or brand owners, who previously determined social discourse in response to
the salience or prominence of the brand and as such created awareness of the brand. Therefore, Pfohl, Van Wagenen, Arend, Brooks and Leckenby (2006:15) purport that branding for profitable brand awareness, requires a positive association between the media, consumers, brands and brand owners and thus they constitute the pillars of branding in a 21st century economy. Likewise, Farmer and Kozel (2005:313-315) support the idea that agenda-setting uses interrelationships between the media, consumers and brands to assist the creation of widespread, profitable awareness of branding issues. Therefore, Carroll and McCombs (2003:36-46) confirm that the amount of media exposure that a brand is afforded in the media is positively related to the public’s awareness of the brand. As such, in the context of the agenda-setting theory, a 21st century branding environment can be divided into a three-part process consisting of the strategically communicated brand agenda, the public or consumer agenda and the policy or brand owner agenda, with the ultimate goal of creating profitable brand awareness and meeting the consumer’s need for innovative social realities.

In light of the consumer’s search for innovative versions of a branded social reality, Littlejohn and Foss (2005:279) as well as (Smith, 2002), purport that the agenda-setting theory focuses on the fundamental role that the media plays in shaping a branded social reality and structuring social discourse in the way that media content on branding is framed and the consumer’s mind is primed to be receptive towards media influence about a brand. However, Kotler, Pfoertsch and Michi (2006:5) assert that in a 21st century society, the digital revolution and as such new media has shifted the agenda setting role from mainstream media to the 21st century consumer who now participates more actively in disseminating information, creating social discourse and interpreting the individual’s social reality, aided by new media social networking platforms such as Facebook, Linked in, Twitter and MySpace (Bush & Codrington, 2008). As such, the media’s role of opinion leader or manipulator of social thought and social discourse has shifted to influential contributor to a consumer-driven social reality (Braun, 2004:20 & Keller, 2001:3).

Nonetheless, Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) dispute the idea that the media’s role of powerful opinion leader has been diminished, arguing that traditional media exposure remains a strong determinant of the 21st century consumer’s perception and awareness of a situation, person or institution. Thus Onyebadi (2008:60) concurs that media-inspired learning as is the role of agenda-setting is more pertinent in a 21st century brand savvy society because both old and new media initiate the process of providing
the consumer with information to process and then make informed choices about what constitutes an individual reality as opposed to a collective social reality. An illustration of how the consumer drives the social reality of the brand in the bottom up society and economy of the 21st century is the social network Wildfire in which brand owners are encouraged to ensure profitable brand awareness by spreading positive social discourse about the brand on multiple social networks so that stakeholders from anywhere on the globe can share positive stories, pictures and brand experiences (Wildfire, 2011). Furthermore, Mc Combs and Reynolds (2002), in Schneider, Gruman and Coutts (2005:172), purport that the core concept of the agenda-setting theory and therefore its pertinence to 21st century branding, is the salience or prominence given to a brand that is transferred from the media agenda or branding agenda to the public or consumer agenda, as would be the case in a branding environment.

3.2.1 The 21st century brand and brand salience

Romaniuk and Sharp (2004:334) postulate that historically brand salience was defined as the prominence of a brand in a consumer’s mind when faced with the decision to buy a specific brand from a range of brands in the same product category. Thus brand salience is fundamentally linked to the quantity of memory the consumer has of a brand, based on how often the brand has portrayed itself as having a favourable reputation, as well as the quality of the memory of the brand; in other words, how strongly the consumer thinks of a brand as being great at the time of making a purchasing decision. As such, Braun-La Tour, La Tour and Zinkhan (2007) propose that brand salience originates in a consumer’s earliest and most defining memories of a brand. These memories refer to brand preferences that have had an impact on the mind of a child with lasting influences on brand choices into adulthood. Therefore Ford (2005) notes that the process of agenda setting branding communications specifically targeting the consumer’s pleasant memories of the brand is referred to as Nostalgic Branding, which plays a significant role in prompting the contemporary consumer who is bombarded with new technologies and new worldviews to reconnect with the self by rekindling previous favourable emotions that contribute and enhance current emotions towards a more complete 21st century experience of the brand. As a result of the importance of emotion in the ultimate brand experience and reality Braun-La tour et al. (2007) propose that brand owners tap into consumer feedback about the brand as personal accounts of consumer life stories provide insights into memories and associations of the brand and as such have a number of implications for the consumer agenda of a contemporary
society. These include allowing consumers to project themselves, their personalities and lifestyle preferences into their childhood recollections, which creates an opportunity for consumers to communicate why a brand is salient for them on a functional as well as an emotional level and thus help brand owners to understand consumer thoughts and feelings and ultimately, to ensure a fulfilling brand reality for the consumer. Furthermore Ford (2005) observes that contemporary technology brands such as Sony and Ericsson have succeeded in propelling consumers into future technology yet still being guided by the consumer’s branding agenda by allowing the consumer to have a fundamental interactive role in how old fond memories of the brand are merged and captured with new memories ensuring a 21st century brand reality that establishes brand salience even into the future of the brand.

Moreover Lindstrom (2008:2) is of the opinion that both old and new memories result from the way the specialised cells that form the human nervous system and the brain react to brands and branding communications. Hence Neims (2009) found that the study of how the brain responds to branding messages which is believed to lead to subsequent consumer decisions on the consumption of brands is called Neurobranding. Likewise, Pradeep (2010:122) proposes that Neurobranding explains how a consumer derives true meaning from different aspects of a brand message at a deep subconscious level because it involves thought and action that results from how brand messages are sensed or perceived by the brain and the nervous system and how the consumer subsequently responds to the way the brand message is portrayed, based on how the consumer feels about the message. To substantiate Pradeep’s (2010:122) proposition, research done by neurobiologist Damasio in 1994 explained that the human brain’s decision making regions and its emotional centres are linked by emotional reminders called somatic markers which develop from personal learning experiences or memories which help individuals to differentiate between good and bad decisions, based on positive or negative emotions. Thus emotions and subsequent somatic markers are pivotal to the consumer’s cognitive decision to consume a brand (Westaby, 2006).

To illustrate the role of somatic markers, Singer (2010) found that Neurofocus, a neuromarketing company tested the subconscious reactions of volunteer participants using brain sensors and eye trackers to measure their subconscious responses such as attention, emotion and memory to media coverage of branding communications on
websites and television commercials and concluded that media coverage contributes to emotional engagement and produces somatic markers depending on the circumstances of the media consumer and the nature of the media coverage (Westaby, 2006). Similarly, Gallop (2010) experienced another form of Neurobranding as a brand communication strategy using somatic markers targeting the senses and emotions that are stirred within consumers from the lingering coffee aroma on consumers’ clothes after willingly standing in long queues with fellow brand loyalists, anticipating the good feeling derived from the enjoyable taste of the visually attractive coffee at a Starbucks coffee shop; a branding experience which was not the case at other coffee shops (Kotler, 2008). As such Smith (2008) and Littlejohn (2006) propose that essentially Neurobranding results in the sensorial, emotional and experiential meaning or associations that are derived from the consumer’s interaction with the brand, thus suggesting that brand awareness first begins in the subconscious as an outcome of impactful Neurobranding. In agreement with Smith (2008) and Littlejohn (2006), Bargh and Morsella (2008) argue that the desire to consume a brand originates in the subconscious mind therefore Neurobranding has important implications for agenda-setting for the brand and the creation of profitable brand awareness as it forms the foundations for ideas on what influences consumer thought, emotion and behaviour. However, Neurobranding as a brand communication strategy has been criticised as brain washing or ‘brandwashing’ by critics such as Jeff Chester, executive director of the Centre for Digital Democracy because consumers are not informed that their subconscious minds are being targeted and therefore critics of the practise argue that it needs to be regulated. Notwithstanding, the implications of Neurobranding for profitable brand awareness, sceptics believe that Neurobranding has yet to prove that brain patterns in response to stimuli contribute to forming defining memories and therefore strongly relates to brand salience, influencing a consumer’s ultimate decision to consume a specific brand (Singer, 2010).

Hence Sharp (2011) asserts that with regard to brand salience, earliest and defining memories have an important influence on current and future preferences which are helpful for predicting consumer buying behaviour. These memory experiences are symbolic and evoke significant emotions because they represent why a brand matters to consumers, thus giving expression to brand salience (Rindell, 2010). Accordingly, Du Plessis (2011) concludes that it is important for brand owners and managers to recognise that brand salience is contained within a blend of earlier and contemporary
impressions, memories, associations and thoughts which are co-produced by consumers and this branding reality of the 21st century is crucial for relevant agenda-setting and the creation of profitable brand awareness in the mind of the contemporary consumer. As such Braun-La Tour et al. (2007) are proponents of the value of early and defining childhood brand memories that play a fundamental role in a consumer’s past, giving insight into what is important for the consumer currently and possibly in the future. Thus contemporary thoughts with regard to brand salience are strongly related to multiple earlier experiences and memories of the brand over time, in which the present is used as a framework for interpreting brand salience. Brand salience is therefore based on a dialogical, not just a transactional relationship between the consumer and the brand, but also based on a consumer’s social network specifically in light of multiple communication platforms in which social discourse on the brand is co-created between the brand and the consumer (Spencer & Baines, 2012).

Subsequently, based on empirical research by Jenni Romaniuk and Byron Sharp of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing in 2010, brand salience is determined by the quantity of memory of a brand or how often the consumer is reminded to buy a brand due to its distinctive communications as well as the quality of the memory of the brand; due to the distinctive emotional association related to every interaction which the consumer has with the brand. Additionally, brand salience is supported by the proliferation of recommendations of the memories and experiences of others with the brand as depicted by conversations in social media about the brand. As such, brand salience describes the strength with which a brand is thought about when a consumer is faced with buying or media consumption situations (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2004:328). Therefore, brand salience as portrayed by a brand’s positive prominence and visibility facilitates profitable brand awareness and as such unplanned or random agenda-setting which has become typical of strategically communicating the brand in the 21st century (Roumaniuk & Gaillard, 2007: 267-284). Thus, as has been established, in the highly competitive global economy of the 21st century, the consumer’s perception of the salience of the brand and its subsequent value for effective media exposure of the brand are fundamental for profitable brand awareness (Dolphin, 2004:78).

Hence, an essential difference in the definition of the 21st century brand is that it takes into consideration intangibles such as reputation to be an essential point of distinction or salience of the brand. Therefore the fundamental focus of the contemporary brand is that it focuses on distinct positive prominence or salience, specifically with regards to
media exposure, which is crucial as it has been previously ascertained that the key to survival in the 21st century wave of global political, economic, technological and social change is being able to withstand the growing global competition through acute salience and visibility, so that the brand is perceived as strongly distinct from competitors (Kotelnikov, 2007). Furthermore Botsman and Rogers (2010:xiv) observe that where historically the integrity of a brand and its owners could be masked by lack of information and a middleman such as a supplier, the contemporary brand is exposed to constant scrutiny as social sharing of knowledge and collaborative consumption are becoming inherent in the social and economic realities of the 21st century as consumers cut out the middleman by doing their own research and acquiring a brand as economically as possible.

Furthermore, for brand owners, creating a salient brand involves the intentional creation of a positive awareness of a brand’s existence or brand awareness, an important element as it has been established that globalisation and particularly new media platforms, have caused consumers to be overwhelmed with choice of information, ideas, products and services, thus making the buying decision more difficult (Kotelnikov, 2007). Hence, as a result of the multiple developments in media and the implications for media’s role of influencing social reality, Kirby (2009) suggests that the 21st century is an era in which communication and social interactions are dominated by a convergence of old and new media, enhanced by digital and mobile media platforms which allow the more informed and enquiring members of society to create their own reality online, as opposed to the pre-digital 20th century era in which society was the captive, passive audience of old media, which played a dominant role in disseminating information of social concern and interpreting social reality for members of the public. Subsequently The Deloitte Global State of the Media Democracy Survey (2010) calls the new media world a media democracy because the more empowered 21st century consumers can now make firm voting decisions about media content with regard to brands in the way that they think, talk about and interact with the brand and ultimately how they choose to experience the brand. Moreover, Chang (2010) postulates that the 21st century consumer is driven by immediate gratification as stimulated by an immediate digital media environment; therefore a 21st century branding agenda necessitates innovative and liberated brands with brand owners who team up with consumers to create greater market value and a sharper competitive edge, to engage the consumer as instantly as possible. By way of illustration, News24.com of 30 June 2010, presents research results
that show that new media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogging sites have become powerful tools that influence people’s brand awareness and ultimate purchasing decisions, with evidence suggesting that this trend is a direct result of three out of four people spending at least six hours per month on Facebook, Wikipaedia and Youtube, themselves brands that are counted as three of the seven most salient, global online brands.

Consequently, social media is having an increasingly crucial influence on agenda-setting for the brand in a 21st century society. Such that, Bushwaite (2010), chairperson and chief executive officer of online researching company Nielson, observes that at any given moment, Twitter has 145 million registered users actively using the medium and more people are using mobile devices to access the micro-blogging services, confirming that in real time, unlimited, fragmented interaction between brands and consumers is propelled and surging ahead from anywhere on the globe. Buchwaite’s (2010) research, supports Arnold and Thompson’s (2005) view that the current branding agenda which new media propels, but with consumers instead of media and brand owners determining the media content and social discourse, is taking place in a 21st century branding environment. This environment is characterised by fragmented and random brand experiences with liberated, wealthier consumers who have become accustomed to engaging, networking and customising their own brand experiences; thereby co-creating and producing brand meaning and determining a brand reality as a result of the consumer’s individual judgements and interpretations of a brand experience that is real for them (Penaloza & Mish, 2011:9). Hence, Klages (2007) notes that a fundamental strength of the 21st century branding agenda is that it is enhanced by a wide variety of branding communication options and a rejection by consumers to conform to any single norm, which leads to a consumer experience that is accentuated by a range of fragmented, instantaneous, hyper real, fulfilling brand experiences.

Thus, Mootee (2007) posits that fragmentation is a strong characteristic of a 21st century media and branding environment, which provides collections of inspiring moments that are not necessarily connected to a vital, unified theme, moments when the consumer can dictate the terms of the brand experience, as and when the consumer chooses to, by relating to associations such as touch, smell or form and function of the brand, notwithstanding the influence of satisfied brand users who in real time are constantly contributing to the contemporary branding agenda by relating their fulfilling branding moments on social media. Therefore, Blackett (2003) argues that the 21st
century brand symbolises the transition from a command-led world economy, to a demand-led economy where the brand consumer rather than the brand owner sets the branding agenda. A 21st century branding agenda is therefore underpinned by the creation of information about the brand or brand awareness which is propelled by social media platforms, large amounts of varied users or consumers contributing content, creating continuous, robust social discourse, which may either enhance or detract from the value of the brand, positively or negatively affecting brand awareness.

Moreover, Breitenbach (2010) observes the notion of fragmentation as consumers experiencing the brand on their own terms as facilitated by a global brand and media consumption trend called Time Shifted Viewing (TSV), a fragmented media consumption trend which was introduced to African consumers in 2010. With the aid of personal video recorders, TSV allows fragmented viewing, providing consumers with the opportunity to watch television when they want to, thus signalling the end of viewing television when broadcasters and brand owners determine when the consumer will consume communication about their brand, simultaneously emphasising the 21st century outlook of the nature and timing of brand consumption being decided upon and personalised by the consumer. In light of the consumer interacting with the brand in a fragmented fashion, empirical evidence by the South African Advertising Research Foundation in 2011 found that 90% of South Africans watch recorded content within seven days, with females being the main followers of this trend as they record programs for themselves and their children to suit their individual family schedules. This finding provides brand owners with the valuable information that consumers have demanding lifestyles; therefore it would be in the interest of their brands to comply with the multiple sources of what constitutes the hyper real or consumer-centric, ideal brand experience. Mootee (2008) describes the hyper real aspect of the 21st century brand experience as a result of the moving away from a media-inspired social reality which leads to an increasing tendency and willingness of consumers to search for a personalised, consumer customised reality. As such the hyper real aspect of the contemporary brand encapsulates the aspirations of the contemporary consumer for an authentic brand experience, which the consumer can ascribe to on the consumer's terms (Salzer-Morling & Strannegard, 2004).

To confirm this consumer requirement, Grayson and Martinec (2004) highlight the rise in consumer demand for the authentic, personal, memorable and engaging (Kay 2007:1) as contemporary consumers or New Realists as Boyle (2005) calls them, now
research brands for real products, organic vegetables, clothes made of organic fabrics, and ultimately, brand experiences that make them feel rooted and in touch with who they are as individuals. Attracting this new consumer requires well thought out ways of communicating the brand, particularly through media exposure of the brand so as to reflect the authenticity and uniqueness of the brand; by positioning the brand in a specific place, in time, making the brand convincing or innovative, thus distinguishing the brand from the competition and highlighting its authenticity (Lewis & Bridger, 2000:40). To illustrate how the contemporary consumer seeks an authentic brand experience, Carbone (2004:3) mentions the sights, sounds, smells and taste of the Starbucks brand experience as to the reason why the consumer assumes the brand as part of a lifestyle and an authentic brand reality. Hence, Boyle (2003) proposes that in a 21st century society, authenticity is the most compelling value that contributes to a brand being perceived as relevant because the 21st century consumer yearns for a brand experience that is captivating yet ethical, natural, sincere and real. Therefore, Yu Xie and Boggs (2006:351) add that branding in a 21st century society presents an opportunity for establishing the brand’s authenticity and uniqueness by presenting the organisation’s vision and culture unequivocally, thereby relating to the 21st century consumer on a genuine level, as a fundamental step in agenda-setting the 21st century branding process (Einwiller & Will, 2002:101).

This view is endorsed by Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) who posit that the media’s exposure of the 21st century brand is a strong determinant of the consumer’s perception of a brand as authentic because different scholars assert that for the consumer, the media’s role of positive contributor to social discourse not only disseminates information about the brand, but also contributes to conscientious consumer conversations about the brand, thereby creating brand awareness and genuine consumer interaction with the brand (Kotler, Pfoertsch & Michi, 2006:5). Mc Clure (2010) however argues that such was a top down, narrow media exposure approach of the 20th century. Thus Moerdyk (2010) found that new media exposure is a central platform for starting social discourse about the 21st century brand because the consumer trusts other users’ recommendations 95% more than brand communications from owners of the brand, once again deferring agenda-setting for the 21st century brand to the 21st century consumer, confirming a more profitable bottom up approach, with the consumer setting the tone of social discourse about a brand. Furthermore, Beverland and Farelly (2009:838) found that authentic brands offer likeminded brand users a genuine source
of social discourse and community in which the individual’s experience of the brand as real is acknowledged and held in high regard as an indication of good consumer judgement. As such, Gillmore and Pine (2007:5) purport that the authentic brand has as its aim ensuring that consumers perceive and experience the brand as recognising the consumer’s intelligence, emotions and pursuit of truthful, real brand experiences (Beverland, 2005:1003). Thus agenda-setting or communicating the 21st century brand has to be perceived as a true reflection of the consumer’s individual brand reality as opposed to a social reality characterised by commercial media hype (Grayson & Martinec, 2004:296).

Hence, the Deloitte Global State of the Media Democracy Survey (2010) highlights the fact that in a 21st century society, media exposure of the brand is largely determined by a branding agenda made up of consumer generated media content as opposed to traditional media that set the agenda by influencing how consumers think, talk and behave in relation to their branding reality. Furthermore, Chang (2010) adds that as the 21st century consumer is a member of the Net Generation or a digital society and has become used to multiple avenues of information and despite the different sources of information, there is always a link to connect to more one click shopping, more consumer reviews, allowing the consumer instead of the media to interpret his or her own brand reality. This, as a result of consumers viewing their consumption of branded products as a means of self-expression and self-identity (Holt, 2004:5). Thus, Tulleken (2010) purports that the contemporary consumer has a big propensity for self-expression and customisation, therefore, allowing the consumer to create their own brand reality, is what will make 21st century agenda-setting for the brand contribute to valuable consumer self-fulfilment. Consequently, while new media such as the internet, podcasts, social networks with large amounts of varied content for continuous vibrant social discourse, play a facilitating role, the eco-aware, techno-savvy brand activist intentionally sets the branding agenda, stipulating that brand owners be transparent, accountable and socially responsible in their branding strategies, thereby creating brands with authentic meaning for the consumer. Accordingly, Merz, He, and Vargo (2009) reiterate that in the 21st century economy, establishing profitable brand awareness has become a co-operative, highly dynamic, interactive, consumer-led social and economic activity.

Thus, with regards to the 21st century brand being a 21st century social phenomenon, Merz et al. (2009) make the assertion that the 21st century brand is a platform for social
conversation driven by social media such as Facebook and Twitter, media environments in which a brand can instantaneously be built or destroyed, depending on the evaluation of consumers who are constantly connected in a virtual, global media space. To illustrate this point, Merz et al. (2009) cite the power of exposing a brand in a consumer focused environment when the computer brand Apple whose consumers include software developers, universities, product owners, social media communities and fans that aspire to own and consume the brand cost the brand significant market share. By their widespread and immediate social interaction, all these consumers co-create the brand, so when computer brand Apple rejected a co-branding or partnership opportunity with highly regarded and salient brand Google’s voice application, Android, as a social media opinion leader, the founder of a blogging site chose Google Android over the Apple iPhone software, taking along with him his blogging community, at the expense of the Apple brand.

Therefore Cook (2005) reminds that fundamentally the value of the 21st century brand is that it has become highly significant for its power and value as a determinant of social discourse, economic strength and environmental sustainability. Conversely, Conley (2008:1) as well as Shultz, Antorini and Csabal (2005:16) disagree with the idea that a brand determines social discourse and wields such economic and environmental power, suggesting that the value of the brand and branding is overrated as the obsession with brands and the media’s proliferation of such an obsession, is leading to a global disorder that has the potential to drastically adjust human characteristics, distorting society’s sense of community and misrepresenting the way that individuals view their social reality. In reaction to the cynicism with which the brand and all that it encompasses is viewed by theorists such as Conley (2008:1) as well as Schultz et al. (2005:16), Grannell (2003) argues that a brand is not something trivial or inconsequential nor is it a superficial cosmetic exercise for a business. Grannell (2003) notes the paradox that, because a brand’s power is determined by the perceptions contemporary consumers who are conscientious brand activists, even strong, negative perceptions can inadvertently bolster a brand or cost a brand its existence. As such the brand, its power, value and leverage are created and built from the customer’s entire experience with it and is augmented by 21st century consumer generated media exposure of the brand (Knox & Bickerton, 2003:999).

Stubbs (2001) agrees with Cook (2005) that as the 21st century brand wields such social, economic and environmental power as well captures all the complex emotions.
and ideas that are packaged in a brand, agenda-setting for the brand requires strategic, collaborative framing of media content for the brand if an organisation is going to derive the maximum beneficial media exposure and profitable brand awareness from its brand. Hence, Davis (2002:3), Pitt (2002) as well as Downing et al. (2004:36) assert that a brand is a powerful, social and economic force that requires deliberate management, specifically the brand’s profile in the media and presence in the social discourse of consumers on social media. It follows therefore, that as 21st century consumers and media professionals participate in the public’s process of articulation of issues of consequence to humanity, media contents must enable people to discover what is widely considered significant for society, such as the important role that brands play in the buying behaviour of consumers, as brands signify information about a product, person or business, contributing to constructive consumer behaviour as an integral aspect of social reality (Downing et al., 2004:36 & Pitt, 2005:156). As such, the ubiquitous nature of both old and new media and its ability to facilitate social discourse about a brand, supports the strategy of a branding agenda because when the media highlights the salience of the brand (Neumeier, 2006:19), depending on competition from other sources and the ability of proponents of the brand to keep it news-worthy; the agenda-setting process for the brand remains driven by influence, competition and negotiation, as carried out by advocates as well as activists of the brand who keep the social discourse dynamic and sometimes detrimental to the brand such as destructive customer complaints on social websites such as ‘Hello Peter’ (Rogers & Dearing, 2007:2).

Thus Kapferer (2008: xv) argues that agenda-setting for 21st century brand should aim at growing profitable brand awareness and as such the business and the brand are interconnected. Therefore, in addition to being the image of the business, the brand is the business, which means that as much as the brand is consumer-based, it is also cash flow based, regardless of the thought and planning that goes into how it portrays itself to the consumer. Therefore the reality for the 21st century brand is that it is a strategic business asset and as such at every engagement with its stakeholders, it has to ensure its own success. In addition, Blackett (2003) adds that as well as being important for its function, image and cash flow value, the 21st century brand has become an essential social force because it has become a crucial item on the agendas of the media, the public and policy makers, thereby contributing to social discourse, social identity and social reality for members of a society that have become passionate
about living the brand. Capturing the thoughts of Blackett (2003) and Kapferer (2008: xv), Ioannou (2010) proposes that there exists a link between a brand’s social presence and its profitability as displayed by the brand’s genuine commitment to its social responsibility. As such Ioannou (2010) observes a typical characteristic of the 21st century economy is significant media exposure of the social responsibility efforts of a brand that not only engages society for profit, but actively gives resources such as skills, education and financial support to make a real difference to the economy of its community. Therefore, Ioannou (2010) found a positive link between high media exposure of a brand’s social responsibility efforts and profitable brand awareness, suggesting that the social responsibility benefits are perceived as being great for more salient brands, because these are the kinds of brands that 21st century brand activist consumer wants to be associated with.

Thus, Lewis and Bridger (2000:219) propose that brands that strive to captivate the passionate consumer, who lives the brand, are the ones that will endure the challenges of the 21st century society. According to Yoon (2009), these challenges include “super consumers” who know what brand they want, are passionate about the brand, engage the brand and are willing to pay a premium for the brand. For this reason, Holt (2004:19) hypothesizes that brands that captivate these consumers are awarded high, positive media exposure because captivating brands are regarded as highly compelling media content that society deems significant, therefore it resonates with the 21st century consumer and social media platforms are abuzz with social discourse on salient brands. Lewis and Bridger (2000:11) note that the brand that portrays compelling salience holds qualities that impress consumers, as opposed to qualities that are anticipated. Therefore, the 21st century salient brand must communicate its promise and deliver a captivating and fulfilling brand experience, in order to maintain the consumer’s high regard for the brand.

3.3 COMMUNICATING THE 21ST CENTURY BRAND

Tubbs and Moss (2006:24) postulate that traditionally, effective communication occurs when information as initiated and determined by the sender or source matches strongly with the message as it is perceived and responded to by the recipient. Therefore Miller (2005:6) purports that communication is a fundamental, indispensable, universal process of social interaction in which information as contained in thoughts, words, attitudes, values, opinions and facts, is conveyed and exchanged as well as understood.
as a result of shared meaning from one person to another, through meaningful words, symbols and actions. However, in a 21st century society, in which the brand is a crucial facet of society and consumers are not only overloaded with information, but very critical of information, communication of the brand and as such agenda-setting in a branding environment, has taken on a more strategic, multifaceted role. This implies that the agenda-setting for communication of the brand has to be aligned with an organisation’s priorities with regards its brand and all communication has to be executed with integrity and credibility in order to get the attention, time and money of the 21st century consumer (Goodman, 2001:118). It is for this reason that Brodie, Glynn and Little (2006:373) submit that in the 21st century society, the brand and as such the business or corporation has emerged from relative obscurity to become the world’s most dominant institution. For brand owners on the other hand, the brand is a strategic business asset and fundamental communication platform. As such Van Gelder (2005:4) is of the opinion that managing such a brand requires a balance of the elements of strategic communication and planning as contained in an organisation’s business strategy on one hand, as well as competitive forces, market structures, cultural factors, consumer motivation and in particular, management of the brand in the technologically driven new media environment. Therefore, communicating about such a dominant institution or establishing profitable brand awareness requires strategic communication of the brand (Reuber & Fischer, 2009).

Holtshausen and Zerfass (2010) define strategic communication of the brand as a process of interaction with all stakeholders of the brand with the focused intent to proactively identify branding opportunities and monitor competitors, as well as strategically using information and communication technologies to identify perceptions of the brand in society and to ensure a salient space in the thoughts and conversations of the consumer (Bizcommunity, 2007). As such, Hallahan et al. (2007:4) reiterate that strategic communication involves brand owners intentionally engaging in conscientious conversation with stakeholders in order to incorporate their thoughts and opinions so as to intrigue and captivate consumers in particular. Thus, Goodman (2001:118) posits that in the 21st century the role of communication has become more multifaceted and strategic, which means that all communication efforts have to be aligned with a company’s internal and external priorities which are highly dependent on a brand’s integrity and credibility. Aaker (2002) agrees that it is the strategic building of the brand towards success or a felt social and economic presence that creates the value of the
brand, and ultimately sets the brand up as a strategic asset of the organisation. Hence Ray (2012) is of the opinion that in a 21st century economy, strategic communication has had to make a paradigm shift from one way communications towards integrated brand communications which is a more holistic communications strategy integrating all communications of the brand so as to optimize the value of the brand. Therefore, Dawson (2010) proposes that in the context of strategic, integrated communication of the 21st century brand, value creation is built on speed of access and innovation. As such, speed of access is an important feature of value creation because the saliency or prominence of the brand has to be a paramount feature in the instantaneous world of the social media space. It is for this reason that Niemann (2005:97) observes that a strategic branding management plan is the implementation of the branding agenda which includes an integrated communication approach that aims to achieve beneficial relationships with all stakeholders of the brand. Similarly, Reuber and Fischer (2009) are of the view that strategic brand communication centres on the way that a brand promotes its character through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees and brand communicators.

Hence, Braun (2004:20) posits that for all stakeholders, the brand is perceived to symbolise or stand for something that goes much further than superficial or service attributes, because it encapsulates values and characteristics together in a recognisable package for which consumers have regard, with different levels of trust and approval. Hence, Elliot and Percy (2007:4), Klein (2001:175) and Stanier (2001:29) purport that agenda-setting for the 21st century brand encompasses the totality of perceptions, which includes everything that is seen, heard, read, known, felt, thought and experienced about a brand and as such there needs to be an understanding of how perceptions are ordered and how they influence the way that members of society think about brands and conduct social discourse about brands. Elliot and Percy (2007:4), Gossen and Gresham (2002:2) and Amon (2004) are in agreement that agenda-setting for communicating the brand is therefore the management of perceptions and can be described as the creation of the multifaceted environment in which the 21st century brand operates. Consequently (Conley 2008:3; Davis (2002:3); Grimaldi, 2003:1) assert that the branding process is inextricable from the business strategy, thus it can easily be transferred from industry practise within an economy to social phenomenon, as can be seen by the way that members of society consume the brand by embracing, remembering and relating to information about a brand. Therefore, Brodie, Glynn and
Little (2006:373) purport that branding in the 21st century encompasses the building of a brand from an ordinary product, service, place or person, to a reputable, valuable participant within a working economy. Thus, setting the agenda for communicating the brand and nurturing the subsequent relationship between the brand owners, the media and the contemporary consumer who is a vigilant brand activist, have become paramount to branding and the creation of profitable brand awareness of the 21st century brand. As such, researchers have taken multiple approaches to communicating the brand, ranging from branding as a process of manipulation by brand owners and the media, to branding as a process of influence and its ultimate effect on society and the economy. Therefore, Overton-de Klerk and Oelofse (2010) suggest that in the 21st century the brand needs to be communicated strategically and purposefully (Hallahan et al., 2007:4).

As such, Conley (2008:1) argues that communicating the brand focuses on strategic manipulation and visual perceptions of society therefore it appears to be shallow and inconsequential because brand owners concentrate more on strategic communication or manipulated media exposure of the brand and less on strategic focus and impact of the brand’s purpose in the economy. However, Nkosi (2010), general manager, business marketing for salient cell phone brand, MTN South Africa, disputes Conley’s (2008:1) thinking, arguing that branding in the branded world of the 21st century economy is precisely an outcome of strategic focus and impact as a result of influence rather than manipulation, as the society of brand activists of the 21st century is acutely characterised by a rejection of any form of manipulation, in favour of collaboration and active participation in dialogue (Stroh, 2007:134), with new media in particular, being a pertinent platform for social interaction and influence regarding brands. As such, the Deloitte Global State of the Media Democracy Survey (2010) highlights the fact that in a 21st century society, media exposure of the brand is largely determined by a branding agenda made up of consumer generated media content as opposed to traditional media that set the agenda by framing or manipulating media content for specific consumer perception and interpretation of a social reality. Therefore the agenda-setting role of 21st century media is to contribute to new, diverse social thinking and conscientious conversation regarding brands, instead of manipulating society into fabricated branded realities. As such, Godin (2009) describes conscientious conversation as truthful social discourse about a brand, based on constructive consumer experience, which leads to one of the sharpest mechanisms for distinction and competition that a brand can have to establish profitable brand awareness. Consequently, Hulsmann and Pfeffermann
(2011) are of the opinion that a brand that is perceived to be innovative by intelligently using new media to interact with and engage its stakeholders through its creative ideas and knowledge, communicates its distinct value to stakeholders, thereby highlighting its relevance as an innovative brand of the 21st century.

3.3.1 The innovation of the 21st century brand

Another aspect of communicating the 21st century brand and creating profitable brand awareness is innovation or novelty with authentic appeal, as the brand activist consumer of the 21st century wants to move away from prolific consumption and accumulation of possessions to reconnect with what is human, rooted and real in creative and innovative ways (Boyle, 2003). Hence Cohen (2010) notes that within the fast and continually changing global economy of the 21st century, innovation has become a fundamental asset for brands to survive and maintain distinction. As such Lumsdaine and Binks (2003:23) describe innovation as the introduction of new information, new products and services as well as new ways of communication characterized by creativity, uniqueness and usefulness. As such, Likierman (2011), dean of the London Business School, confirms that innovation as opposed to domination of the 20th century, is a key approach to agenda-setting for branding in the 21st century because it is about creating value in unusual and inspiring ways, in collaboration with stakeholders. Thus Chesbrough (2003:4) notes that innovation in the highly competitive global and technological economy of the 21st century has necessitated a move from closed innovation which focuses on new ideas controlled from within the organisation, towards open innovation and open sourcing, concepts of collaboration with stakeholders from outside the organisation through licensing agreements in which information is allowed to flow freely even among competitors, to facilitate smarter and more profitable brand value and more widespread brand awareness. This form of innovation was illustrated in the Economist Intelligence Unit survey of October 2006, which found that personal care brand Procter & Gamble sourced half of all its innovations from external sources offering its patents up for licencing to external organisations in order to accelerate the process of innovation in return for royalties, while saving time and money as well creating profitable brand awareness. Hence, Phipps (2006) posits that in line with 21st century agenda-setting for the brand, innovation releases all the stakeholders of the brand from limitations allowing brands to be proactive and stakeholders, specifically consumers to take charge of their own brand reality. For example, the Apple Ipad has produced an innovative branding
and media experience which allows the consumer to be immersed in a branding reality which lends itself to more self-expression as the consumer has more control over the choice, content and quality of brand consumption, leading to longer and stronger relationships between the brand and the consumer. This gives rise to the contemporary consumer experiencing fuller meaning and relevance in interaction with the brand, the brand owner and fellow consumers. As such Apple has demonstrated that branding communication that is mutually beneficial, needs to be insightful as consumers are faced with multiple sources of information clamouring for their mind space, attention, time and money as Kelly (2011) notices that the phenomenon of innovative rather than dominating agenda-setting for brands is specifically highlighted as fundamental for economic survival by the Global Index 2011.

Another example of the shift from dominant agenda-setting of the brand to tangible, meaningful experience of brand innovation is the radio broadcaster, 702. The 702 Eyewitness News traffic desk uses a combination of new technology, social networks and real-time contributions from listeners to guide motorists to and from their destinations, ensuring a relevant, meaningful, innovative brand experience (Advantage, 2010:20). Thus Gregory (2004:4) agrees with Klintworth (2009:30) that in addition to establishing a symbol of relevant, meaningful experience, innovative branding allows companies to create an idea of who they are in the minds of the public, using the media to communicate their unique, innovative character and convey the ideas that are fundamental to their reason for being. Paramount to agenda-setting for the 21st century brand therefore, is the building of a highly innovative and recommendable brand that is known for its efforts at nurturing its relationships with its multiple stakeholders in new and meaningful ways, specifically its relationship with the media and consumers of the brand (Greyser, 2009; Mark-Herbet & Von Schantz, 2007). Hence Christoudoulides (2009:141) and Yordanf (2007) reiterate that in the 21st century, digital economy, financial power and influence have firmly shifted from the brand owner to the contemporary consumer who has assumed new, more spontaneous behaviour patterns and attitudes brought about by a sense of empowerment. For that reason Thomas and Brain (2008) note that brand owners have essentially had to submit to 21st century phenomenon of ‘crowd surfing’ in which stakeholders, especially consumers intentionally create media content by thinking about brands, talking about brands, blogging about brands as well as sharing and customising creative messages about brands. Thus, in line with the agenda-setting theory, the public agenda translates to the
consumer agenda which forms the branding environment or context which frames contemporary social discourse about the brand (Chandler & Vargo, 2011:35). Therefore, Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels (2007), purport that the consumer agenda is underpinned by a three-way influence of the consumer on the brand.

Firstly, the consumer influences the nature of brand consumption, based on the consumer’s goal or reason for consuming the brand. Secondly, the consumer, specifically the brand activist assumes the role of quality controller of the brand, demanding that the brand lives up to its promise and expectations and thirdly, the consumer’s decision making process influences market share of the brand as in a 21st century economy, market share is strongly linked to the mind share of the market as brand owners vie for an exclusive, highly reputable place in the mind of the consumer (Aaker, 2004). While innovation is essential for distinction and survival in the 21st century, Dawson (2010) argues that, the fundamental component required for value creation of the 21st century brand, is the brand’s reputation as trustworthy and reliable. To that end, Urde, Greyser & Balmer, 2007 remind once again that the brand reputation is strongly determined by the brand activist consumer’s perception of the brand.

3.3.2 The reputation of the 21st century brand

Eisenegger in Köhler (2009) argues that reputation can be defined as the way a brand or organisation appeals to stakeholders on a functional level through its business performance, socially through the norms and values which the brand upholds and emotionally through the way it relates to its stakeholders. Thus Arnould (2005) describes brand reputation of the 21st century as what consumers perceive to be true about a brand and how they share their perceptions of the brand in social discourse with fellow consumers, because Caru and Cova (2007) note that if a truth about a brand is socially relevant, people think and talk about it and as such confirm the brand’s reputation through social discourse about their individual experiences of the brand as reputable. Hence, Brown (2011) reminds that the 21st century presents a brand environment in which positive visibility or salience generates opportunity and a good reputation builds trust and that this social and branding reality is called the Reputation Economy. Simões and Dibb (2001:218) concur with Brown (2011), adding that intentional agenda-setting of the brand through positive media exposure of a reputable brand gives an organisation a substantial, differentiated advantage or reputation capital that distinguishes a brand from its competitors, as well as defining to its stakeholders
what it represents and what consumers may expect from their interaction with the brand. Research undertaken by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2010, found that the risk of losing reputation capital is the greatest risk to brands in the Reputation Economy of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century (Aula, 2010:44).

Thus, highly reputable brand personality Branson (2013), commenting on the fall of well-known media brand News of the World, asserts that the brand’s reputation is contained in positive public perception and social discourse of the brand and as soon as these become negative, the brand is destroyed. Therefore, with regards to the influence of the consumer on agenda-setting for the brand, Wiedmann, Hennigs and Siebels (2007) theorize that for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century consumer, the nature of brand consumption is comparable to a holistic experience as derived from acknowledgement of the favourable reputation of the brand. Therefore there is less concern about the price or function of a brand than the consumer showing sound judgement, by participating in the reputation or acknowledging the widespread high regard for the brand, by truly experiencing the brand (Boyle, 2003:15). Hence, Hatch and Schulz (2008:10) concur with Luedicke (2006) that agenda-setting for the 21\textsuperscript{st} century branding process involves identifying avenues for consumer participation and competitive advantages with a view to co-create a branding agenda that consistently infuses its audience with everything that the brand is, says and does, thereby creating inspiring knowledge and favourable social discourse about the reputation of the brand. Thus, Shultz et al. (2005:16) highlight the reality that the media and particularly the internet has provided a platform for consumers across time and space to bolster or undermine the reputation of the brand, providing feedback in the form of valuable viewpoints and experiences back to the owners of the brand in real time, highlighting the shift in agenda-setting within a contemporary branding environment in which consumers instead of media or brand owners determine the branding reality. This represents a contemporary brand’s social presence as the brand activist consumers of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century are no longer passive observers of how a brand portrays its reputation, because consumers have increasingly become co-creators of a brand’s reputation and important contributors towards establishing awareness of a brand’s reputation, based on their personal experience of the brand. Hence, Luedicke (2006) holds the view that communicating or agenda-setting for the contemporary brand is more than creating generic attributes for the brand, but developing qualities that lead to a set of consumer-inspired outcomes or the results of constructive ‘crowd sourcing’ (Howe, 2006); adding to the brand’s reputation and
positive media profile, because it is aligned with the organisation’s strategy, core capabilities and values. As such, Rose, Needham and Parker (2010) found that when skincare brand Axe used constructive ‘crowd sourcing’ with their stakeholders, in addition to widespread profitable brand awareness being achieved, multiple positive outcomes included consumer needs and brand aspirations being met, enhancing the reputation of the brand as a result of constructive collaboration with the ‘crowd’. Accordingly, Luedicke (2006) affirms that agenda-setting for the 21st century brand encompasses and captures a variety of consumer perspectives and activities specific to the way a brand portrays itself as highly, reputable, relevant and meaningful to the brand activist consumer of the 21st century.

3.3.3 The meaning of the 21st century brand

Klintworth (2010:30) explains that the brand becomes a symbol of what is meaningful for the consumer as it is associated with consistent values that the consumer can relate to, values that set the brand apart from its competitors and contribute to a fulfilling consumer experience, highlighting the shift in branding from giving the consumer reason to believe what brand owners and the media say about a brand, to giving consumers reason to experience the brand as meaningful for themselves. Franzen (2006) agrees with Klintworth (2010:30) adding that consumers find symbolic meaning in the brand based on how the brand makes them feel, how they can relate to the character of the brand, personal ideals which consumers associate with the brand and the social values which satisfy specifically the brand activist consumer of the 21st century. Thus Kapferer (2005) asserts that fundamentally, branding is the creation and nurturing of a brand’s meaning as determined by how consumers think, feel and talk about the brand, therefore branding or meaningful communication of the brand, specifically through high positive media exposure, is essential for ensuring that the brand holds a meaningful place in the mind of the brand activist consumer of the 21st century who contributes to what defines the meaning of the brand. Jones (2005) cautions however that it is not the desire of a brand to be the casualty of the fickle fortunes of consumer behaviour, as a result of it being inadvertently misrepresented by a company that is not cognisant of how it is perceived by society because what customers think about the brand strongly influences the language that they use to talk about the brand and how they perceive the brand to be meaningful. Therefore, Klintworth (2009:30) reminds that in the 21st century branding is a social, interactive communication or agenda-setting exercise between brand owners and consumers.
about what the brand stands for and why customers should trust the brand, essentially establishing how the brand creates meaning and reality for the consumer. As such, Kapferer (2005) purports that a deeply fulfilling exercise in good judgement is the fundamental reason for the consumption process, which leads the contemporary consumer or brand activist to shape every interaction with the brand to lead to the consumer’s interpretation of meaningful brand experience. Hence the consumption experience is no longer only driven by the brand’s reputation, but by how the brand is perceived to be meaningful to the consumer as an individual, as well as how the consumer can work with the brand to co-produce the ultimate meaningful brand experience while contributing to a sustainable future environment (Masting, 2011).

Therefore, Yordanf (2007) argues that essentially the first influence of the consumer on the brand is the goal of the consumer to derive meaning from the brand experience. Thus, De Vito (2001:153) describes brand meaning as the way that all stakeholders of the brand understand the wide spectrum of physical, social and cultural dimensions that contribute to the brand experience. As such Kapferer (2004:15) and Day (2005) found that traditionally fundamental constituents of the brand experience were the visual elements such as a name, a logo and the function of the brand. Therefore Swystun (2007) posits that the physical dimension of the brand experience is contained in what the brand is, does and what it looks like. Furthermore, Burnier (2005:502) proposes that the social dimension of the brand experience is contained in the brand meaning which emerges from social interaction with fellow consumers specifically in order to form the framework from which understanding of the brand experience flows and develops. Hence, Waisbord (2001) emphasises the concept of meaning in contemporary branding, arguing that communicating the brand is not simply a transfer of information from brand owner to brand consumer, but it also takes into account the concept of systematic action and reaction between individuals or groups in order to create meaning or a common understanding among stakeholders of the brand. It therefore observes a process which is influenced by the dynamic, social environment in which meaning takes place, affecting the attitudes and behaviours of the stakeholders that are participating in the branding process.

As such, Chigamba and Fatoki (2011) concede that in a contemporary branding environment, it’s easy to give information and receive feedback but it’s more challenging to establish understanding or shared brand meaning with the consumer because the consumer wants to be in control of the creation of the brand meaning process. Hence,
Wijland (2008) agrees that co-imagination and co-active mental and spiritual engagement with the brand is essential for the consumer’s interpretation of brand meaning. As such the meaning of brands plays a fundamental role in contemporary consumer choices because in addition to their functional qualities, brands frequently contribute to social identity indicators such as status, competence as well as social consciousness. Hence, with numerous, diverse meanings and symbols available to consumers, Solomon (2003) suggests that consumers constantly need to be given opportunities to discover brands in new and captivating ways. Therefore brand owners and managers need to be creative and innovative in their branding strategies so as to ensure that brands appeal to contemporary consumers with vigour, thus the need for a relevant, flexible framework that consumers can relate to and interpret what a brand means for them.

With regard to a relevant framework from which to create brand meaning and understanding, Silverstein and Fiske (2005) advocate that brand personality, a branding concept that refers to human characteristics attributed to the brand and a core contemporary branding dynamic which fulfils a function as a branding perspective which helps brand owners to identify even concealed consumer perceptions of a brand and also aids in defining the meaning of the brands for consumers. Moreover Keller (2003) explains that brand personality makes the meaning of the brand easier to relate to for all stakeholders of the brand, while Simonson (2003) takes the concept of brand personality further by suggesting that it helps brand owners realize market-oriented as well as consumer-empowered brand management, which are the most essential components of establishing a brand’s meaning and presence in a 21st century economy. Hence, Arnould and Thompson (2005) indicate that a better understanding of brand personality and its economy-oriented mechanisms can be followed when it is viewed from the perspective of the theory of consumption symbolism. Holt (2004) and Kates (2002) explain that the theory of consumption symbolism aims at identifying the ways of interpreting brand meaning in the 21st century branding environment and its influence on consumer behaviour. As such the theory has a context-oriented perspective and a consumer-oriented perspective. The context-oriented perspective refers to how a brand takes on meaning for consumers when they feel that the brand relates to their real life situations, thus providing a context in which meaning is created and understood. The consumer-oriented perspective refers to meaning of the brand being understood by the consumer because according to the theory, meaning is generated and interpreted by
consumers, not by brand owners as Collison (2003:29) found how Fortune 500 company websites assist brand owners and journalists in gathering consumer opinions and information about brands. Swystun (2007) proposes that brand meaning carries value because it is a blend of material and non-material qualities represented in a trade name which can create worth and influence if managed in a manner that grabs the attention of everyone who comes into contact with the brand. For Kohli and Leuthesser (2001:6), this value is founded on the brand’s attributes and associations which include all the components by which the brand communicates with the world around it. Du Plessis (2008:90) and Lindstrom (2008:132), remind that these associations have emotional, sensory and experiential dimensions which originate in the subconscious as a result of Neurobranding, which leads to reminders or somatic markers that the brain creates in order to aid decision-making when a consumer is faced with making a choice between brands. Therefore Grimaldi (2003:1) is of the opinion that the value of the brand exists in the subconscious promise that the person, product or service delivers. Blumenthal (2001:1) echoes Grimaldi’s (2003:1) sentiment, stating that branding adds a spirit and a soul to what would otherwise be a lifeless proposition with no value for all stakeholders of the brand.

This leads to the notion of Soul branding, which, according to Durgee (2001), is what happens when consumers experience a spiritual or a soul connection with a brand, implying that brands that go beyond functionality and evoke deep feelings of aspirational and spiritual meaning in consumers, translate into strong brands for which consumers believe there are no substitutes (Maio, 2003). Thus, Wood (2000:662) agrees with Durgee’s (2001) proposition of Soul Branding, adding that Soul branding is crucial for profitable brand awareness in the market as it fulfils a surreal function of meeting a fundamental yearning for meaning in the consumer and provides a strong point of distinction between brands that are competing for the contemporary consumer’s soul. As such Schultz et al. (2005:26) posit that in a contemporary society, a brand that is uniquely placed to represent meaning or clarify symbolism is The Body Shop, a brand that is holistically environmentally-friendly and is not only perceived to be a conscientious and innovative brand, it also appeals to the consumer’s sense of being in harmony with self and with nature, thereby meeting the contemporary consumer’s need for meaningful brand realities. As such, the digital age has empowered society to monitor a brand’s sense of meaning and symbolism as reflected by the brand’s ethics, good governance, corporate responsibility and spirituality. Technology, therefore has
contributed to brands and branding being more transparent, more visible and more vulnerable, therefore a brand that does not portray itself as soulful or spiritual is quickly exposed, with detrimental consequences for the impact of the brand on society’s search for meaning (Maio, 2003). Another way in which The Body Shop as a brand portrays itself as being soulful or spiritual by contributing to an individual’s sense of meaning, is how it lends itself to emotional consumerism (Danziger, 2004) or the Gift Economy. Vaughan (2002) describes the Gift Economy as a move from consumer satisfaction based on self to satisfy the specific need of another. It may be a gift of goods, time, money or any transfer of value which serves the greater good of others. As such, brands that make good gifts are able to give meaning by creating a branding reality which is emotionally satisfying and gratifying for both the giver and the recipient. Thus Danziger (2004) is of the opinion that brands that participate well in the Gift Economy of the 21st century present an emotionally charged opportunity for the brand to immediately connect with two target audiences and doubles its chance to create profitable brand awareness. Hence, Knapp (2001:22) maintains that a brand is the ultimate expression of all impressions received by multiple stakeholders, resulting in a unique sense of individual meaning, based on its perceived, poignant functional and emotional advantages. Braun (2004:20) concludes therefore that a brand is the critical culmination of what it is physically and what it represents symbolically and spiritually, thereby functioning as a reference point for consumers in an ever-changing digital world, where technological innovation is great and the number of media messages about what is good for the consumer is overwhelming.

As a result of the great amount of brand information available to the consumer in the digital age of the 21st century economy, Shultz et al. (2005:26) found that the consumer demands more than information from the brand therefore leading to the second influence of the consumer on the brand, that of ensuring that brands live up to consumer expectations. In the contemporary economy the more informed and involved consumer introduced an element of high expectation from the meaning and symbolism embodied in the brand. Thus, on a deeper level, the symbolism of the brand is found in the promise and mental associations which people who interact with the brand may have become accustomed to, and therefore expect from the brand. In an era where a much more informed and demanding consumer co-creates information about the brand, the brand is no longer limited to a product with a promise, but a product which creates an even greater expectation every time it delivers on its promise. Ackerman (2005) as
well as Kapferer (2004:15) agree, adding that the brand garners its value and its power from a set of expectations and associations that are attributed to it as a result of experiences which all stakeholders, especially the more demanding brand activist consumer has come to expect from it. Dunn and Davies (2005:1) assert that it is about the way consumers think, talk and feel about how the brand portrays itself in the market, what the brand does for them, how they relate to it, why they choose to consume it, encourage others to use it and feel a kinship with other consumers who share their passion for a brand. Keller (2003:38) therefore concludes that the symbolic embodiment of the brand lies in the consumer’s role to demand that the brand meets or exceeds consumer expectation by delivering on its promise in an original and relevant way. Cozens (2001) concurs, observing that The Economist of September 2001 argues that instead of exploiting members of the public as was a practice of brand owners of the 20th century economy, the brand activist consumers of the 21st century have become more demanding of good citizenship from brand owners, therefore brands have to live up to or exceed consumer expectations, entrenching the agenda-setting role of the contemporary consumer.

With regards to the demanding brand activist consumer of the 21st century, Adkins (2005:73) infers that exceeding consumer expectation has developed into what is called the Expectation Economy. Trendwatching (2008) defines the Expectation economy as an economy in which the experienced, highly brand conscious consumer consistently has high expectations of the brand in order to ensure a more real, fulfilling brand experience. In an Expectation Economy top performing brands are immediately rewarded with interest and endorsement by consumers who enjoy doing their own brand research and competitive analysis of the best brands and tell their friends about it, thus transferring the agenda-setting function from brand owners to consumers, thereby minimising brand-owner bias. An example of brands creating high expectations for their consumers of the best, the cheapest, the first, the most original and the most relevant is a media and publishing brand called the Daily Lit which offers more than five hundred classic and contemporary works free of charge, along with a smaller range of pay per read titles at a nominal price, with books being sent to consumers by email or directly from the internet, when they are required, for example, at 08:00 a.m. daily and they are sent in small amounts that can be read in less than 5 minutes. This is an example of an expectation being created and met in a 21st century, Snack Culture which is definitely pervasive and open to any complementing brand to communicate with its
target market. Snack culture refers to an existing consumer behavioural culture which is characterised by immediate gratification, such as a snack on the go, implying that brand owners have to transparently cater for consumers who need a collection of quick, fulfilling, transient brand experiences, as often as possible and whenever they want it (Trendwatching, 2008). A such, the expectations are generally founded on the consumer’s over indulgence in a branded lifestyle, the endorsements of likeminded consumers and a host of brand related information immediately available on line about which brands are best at meeting consumer expectations. With regards to likeminded consumers knowing how good brands are at meeting the expectations of other individual consumers, Smith (2008) argues that Trendwatching’s definition of Expectation Economy should be viewed as an inflated notion of what real consumers expect from real brands because especially in a contemporary economy where the individual interprets brand meaning, no two consumers would like to be perceived as having similar brand realities.

Notwithstanding Smith’s (2008) view of an inflated Expectation Economy, Interbrand (2010) found that intricately linked to the individual consumer’s expectation of the brand is the contemporary consumer’s quest for self-preservation, therefore broadly included in the list of consumer expectations are the following: brand owners who acknowledge that the value of the contemporary brand lies with the consumer, therefore co-producing the brand experience with the consumer is in the interest of the profitability and longevity of the brand (Chang, 2010). According to Nichol (2010), a report from the Global Industry Analyst found that increasing consumer expectation of the physical characteristics of the brand is advancing responsible innovation and creativity in the research and development of the brand. As such, Shayon (2010) also observes another fundamental consumer expectation is that the brand must constantly strive to live up to or go beyond the brand promise as well as being triple bottom line compliant in as far as being environmentally socially and economically responsible. A brand which has effectively succeeded in living up to the consumer’s expectation with regards to the triple bottom line is a South African printing company called Paarlmedia. This brand has succeeded in exceeding the expectation of not only the consumer but the whole stakeholder community of the brand, by portraying the brand as deeply committed to conserving the environment as every effort is made to minimise the carbon footprint of the brand. This has been achieved by eliminating carbon emissions and recycling waste products so effectively that they were the first brand in Africa to achieve the international
FSC Chain of Custody certification, an award granted to brands for minimal negative impact on the environment, without compromising the esteemed quality of the brand while practising good Brand Citizenship (The Media, 2010:47).

DeJongh (2008) defines Brand Citizenship as the intentional strategies that brand owners take with regards to society, the natural environment and ethical branding practices to ensure that the physical world remains sustainable for future generations of consumers. As such, Padoch and Sears (2005:41) define sustainability as the choices that citizens make in their interactions with the natural environment to ensure its longevity. Furthermore Newell (2008) adds that sustaining the environment reflects good governance on the part of brand owners as it contributes to the brands economic value and improves a brand’s positive image so that consumers intentionally consume the brand because of its compelling values. Trendwatching (2007) agrees that a brand owner’s approach to sustainability of the brand, the branding environment and the natural environment, hold high appeal for the brand activist consumer. Thus, Adamson (2008) and Tan (2003) remark that branding in the digital era has become the platform on which the motivation behind a brand owner’s branding efforts and ethos towards sustainability can be articulated and its significance may be appreciated, by all stakeholders of the brand, in real time, with minimal limitations. As such the goal of brand citizenship leads brand owners to strive towards an ethical reputation which largely contributes to a brand’s perceived ranking as sustainable in the face of strong competition from other brands also competing for stakeholder recognition and the consumer’s ultimate decision to consume the brand.

Furthermore, Beard (2010) asserts that the third influence of the contemporary consumer on the brand is encapsulated in the consumer’s decision making process which is largely linked to the exclusive, salient position that the brand holds in the mind of the consumer, due to its valuable reputation. As many brands are similar on a functional or tangible level, the image a salient brand develops may well be the only way for consumers to perceive the brand as distinct, as Adkins (2005:27) observes that distinction of a brand’s image is a crucial aspect and this may be achieved through reputation and increasingly, through investment in and communication of reputation through the reinforcement and projection of the values and vision of the brand as well as through building long-term relationships with consumers. Moreover, reputation impacts upon consumers’ perception of the brand and the meaning that consumers
attribute to it, as Simões & Dibb (2001:217) note that these perceptions of a brand create brand value, which is defined as the set of associations that are built in the consumer’s perception of the brand that allows the brand to generate a greater turnover than it would if the product did not have the appeal of a highly reputable brand and hence, the 21st century consumer and not the brand owner, determines the value of the brand. Thus, in support of the media’s relevance to the value that the reputation of the 21st century brand garners, Ronge (2009) opines that the distinguishing characteristic of the multiple avenues of both old and new media, is the communication of valuable content about a brand, through universally captivating and inspiring interaction with the consumer, contributing to more diversity of thought and conscientious brand conversation, as would be the aspiration of the value-seeking 21st century consumer.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Aaker (2004) reiterates that the contemporary consumer is constantly faced with multiple media and brand options therefore the value of agenda-setting for contemporary brands and brand awareness, is that the brand must vividly captivate a consumer’s memory, imagination and intellect in order to be counted as relevant social thought and discourse. Hence Beard (2010) argues that in a 21st century economy, brand salience, innovation, reputation and meaning contribute to what makes a brand and gives the brand the ability to be most captivating and intriguing. These fundamental intangible brand attributes contribute to the brand being the most thought of and talked about and as such highly prominent brand in a digital media environment, where brand-savvy consumers co-create media content about what’s great about a brand and why they will not hesitate to consume it. As such Moeller (2008) adds that agenda-setting the branding environment of a digital society is underpinned by the speedy collection of brand information, interaction of consumers with the brand and likeminded consumers as well as a wide spectrum of sources for brand information and diversity of perspectives on brand experiences.

Hence, Christensen and Askegaard (2001:297) observe that the implication for 21st century agenda-setting is that brand owners should make an impactful impression on consumers quickly and clearly because the contemporary consumer does not have time or patients to absorb uninspiring brand communications or have unfulfilling brand experiences. Thus Rindell (2010) reminds that fond memories of interactions and experiences with a brand are paramount to the consumer’s decision to buy a brand,
therefore brand owners should invite the consumer’s input in creating flexibility between upholding a brand’s authentic heritage and making the heritage relevant to the contemporary consumer, thereby contributing to the value and relevance of the 21st century brand. Hence Aaker (2004:7) highlights the fact that the contemporary consumer constantly searches for a meaningful brand experience thus brand owners should keep the brand experience real for the consumer by consistently questioning what originally fascinated the consumer about the brand. Therefore brand salience, reputation, innovation and meaning remain critical agenda-setting brand attributes for brand owners and deciding factors for consumers, who are constantly faced with multiple buying and media opportunities. Tulleken (2010) asserts however that regardless of the number and avenues of branding and media opportunities of the 21st century society, of great benefit to the process of setting the agenda for communicating the brand, is that there’s always a thread of connectivity between brand owners, the brand, consumers and the media so that consumers are always prompted to think of and conduct social discourse on the brand. To illustrate Tulleken’s (2010) point, Pampalone (2010) comments that the Daily Maverick, an electronic newspaper which communicates with its audience in real time, strives to optimise the benefits of brand salience, innovation, reputation, meaning and authenticity, to the contemporary consumer, by reporting real news as it occurs, probing the opinions of their global audience as they are presenting the news, ensuring that the consumer participates in the authenticity and excitement of a holistic, live media and brand reality.

Therefore, with regards to agenda-setting for the contemporary brand and brand awareness Pfohl, Van Wagenen, Arend, Brooks and Leckenby (2006:15) as well as Carroll and McCombs (2003:36-46) conclude that agenda-setting is a positive association between the media, the brand and the consumer, thus in the 21st century, the agenda-setting theory comprises a communication process between media professionals, brand owners and contemporary consumers who participate in the public’s process of articulation of issues of consequence to the 21st century society and economy, therefore, media contents must enable people to discover what is widely considered significant for society, such as the important role that brands play in the buying behaviour of consumers, as brands serve as symbols that signify information about a product, person or business, contributing to constructive consumer behaviour as an integral aspect of 21st century social reality (Downing et al., 2004:36 & Pitt, 2005:156).
CHAPTER 4: ICONIC BRANDING FOR PROFITABLE BRAND AWARENESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Neumeier (2006:19) explains that a brand becomes iconic when it is regarded as a most salient symbol of a set of values that society deems significant. Furthermore, Holt (2004:20) expounds that iconic brands hold strong appeal because of their reputation as told by their brand story, their identity-value or resonance with the 21st century consumer and their culture or intense relationship that takes the consumer from merely consuming the brand to sharing the branded lifestyle with like-minded consumers. Thus, Keller (2003:38) is of the view that iconic branding is a process of designing the brand’s offer and image for positive impact, affirms the salient and valued place that the brand already occupies in the target stakeholders’ mind, thereby establishing profitable brand awareness.

Furthermore, in line with the agenda setting theory, iconic branding entails not only making a once-off impact on the consumer, but maintaining a high positive, media profile, matched with consistent positive stakeholder experiences which lead to widespread social discourse on the brand and the assurance that the brand will consistently meet future expectations (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2007:253). Hence, Kotler (2006) and Spicer (2007) purport that in a 21st century economy, brands that have succeeded at collaborative partnerships with stakeholders have become icons because they have strategic communication and media platforms at their disposal with which to interact with their stakeholders, building relationships between the brand and the consumer in particular, that are thought provoking, entertaining and innovative (Chang, 2011). As such, Holtzhauzen and Zerfass (2010) reiterate that strategic communication and positive media exposure, is the way that brand owners intentionally engage with their consumers in order to reach goals such as iconic brands with impressive reputations, which intrigue the discerning consumer of the 21st century. Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) concur with Holtzhauzen and Zerfass (2010), adding that agenda-setting for iconic brands is a form of strategic communication that succeeds when it taps into an audience of consumers who share a positive worldview in the way that they engage with the brand (Godin, 2005:36), aligning it to the significance of iconic branding which arises out of building brands that captivate the 21st century consumer in compelling ways. As such, Hytner (2010), deputy chairperson of the global advertising...
agency, Saatchi & Saatchi, describes compelling ways that captivate the 21st century consumer as powerful values such as passion, flexibility, integrity and authenticity that sharpens the brand's competitive edge. Hence, Boyle (2003) reiterates that in a 21st century society, authentic resonance is the most compelling value that contributes to a brand being perceived as iconic because the 21st century consumer yearns for a brand experience that is captivating yet ethical, natural, sincere and real. Thus, Holt (2004:19) confirms that iconic brands most strategically portray their authenticity through their heritage, identity and culture.

Furthermore, building iconic brands in the 21st century has necessitated collaboration with the brand activist consumer who has become a key participant in setting the agenda for successful iconic branding. A look at some of the most iconic brands in history such as Coca-Cola, Virgin, Google and Apple reveals some essential characteristics of importance to the brand owner's iconic branding strategy. Thus, Holt (2004:19-20) found that all these iconic brands fulfilled three important requirements for being iconic. These brands told stories that symbolize the ideals that consumers admire, established identity-value that consumers could relate and aspire to and produced a culture that consumers chose to embrace. As such, Lindstrom (2007:175) observes that these iconic brands also happen to be the most cited best practice examples in 21st century branding because they command a tremendous amount of respect in the minds of brand stakeholders globally. Thus De Legge (2002) sums up the significance of iconic branding, by stating that great iconic brands connect with consumers, deliver on promises that matter to the 21st century consumer, exceed expectations and contribute to extensive social discourse, thus ensuring a shared common understanding about a brand's reputation and relevance that leads to the iconic brand and consumer relationship. Hence the reputation, resonance and relationship of the iconic brand will be explored to ascertain the role that the brand story, the identity value and the culture of the iconic brand play in establishing profitable brand awareness.

4.2 THE ICONIC BRAND OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Lindstrom (2007:175) defines the iconic brand of the 21st century as a brand that holds universal high appeal because of the way it effectively communicates its favourable reputation through its brand story, the way it resonates with the 21st century consumer through its identity-value and the way it forms lasting relationships with consumers who
embrace its culture. Thus, Tan (2003) purports that for any brand to attain iconic status, it has to make an impact on its consumers by reflecting its heritage, direction and focus through its brand story. Holt (2004:5) concurs, adding that an iconic brand also has to establish an image that its consumers can identify with and its brand activities should add value to the social culture of its market. Moreover, Holt (2004:3) posits that agenda-setting for the iconic brand, or the communication of brand information through the many participants within society is also critical for an iconic brand, therefore it involves multiple story tellers, notwithstanding the numerous avenues of telling the brand story through new media. Holt (2004:3) notes therefore that the four major authors of these brand stories are brand owners, industries that promote social and economic culture such as development agencies, intermediaries such as the media and most importantly, the 21st century consumers who conduct social discourse on the brand, enhancing the reputation and relevance of the iconic brand.

Hence Lindstrom (2007:175) advocates that brands don’t just acquire iconic status by themselves. It is the role of persistent, positive media exposure, augmented by vibrant social discourse, which inspires confidence, loyalty and universal high regard for the brand. Interbrand and Business Week (2006) and Keller (2008:450) agree, adding that strategic management of an iconic brand necessitates the maintenance of a high media profile, in order to keep the story of the brand alive and to ensure a relevant connection to the customer’s thoughts and social discourse, as suggested by the agenda setting theory (Mc Combs, 2004:97). Thus, Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) reiterate that both old and new media exposure are strong determinants of the consumer’s perceived imagery of a brand as each of the story tellers of the iconic brand reinforces society’s fascination and perceived reputation of the brand, so that meaningful social discourse about the brand is widely prevalent, contributing to profitable brand awareness.

Moreover, Kaputa (2006:85) observes that perceived imagery imbues a brand with meaning which when particularly strong among a wide group of people can become an iconic brand that is universally understood, with an enduring presence. Therefore Lindstrom (2007:158) observes that the perceived iconic status of the brand resonates with 21st century consumers, eliciting spontaneous opinions and social interactions, as consumers find fulfilment as they interact with the brand. For example, iconic brand Virgin is perceived as a lifestyle brand that enjoys universal resonance with consumers as it is globally admired as a symbol of individualism, innovation and endless possibilities, attributes that hold strong appeal for the 21st century consumer. Hence,
Neumeier (2006:19) supports Lindstrom’s view that resonance is an important characteristic of an iconic brand, hypothesizing that the core of iconicity is that the organization, person or thing is widely regarded as a most compelling symbol of a set of values that society deems so significant that it is worth aspiring to and it merits consistent favourable thought and social discourse. As such, Virgin’s reputation of value for money, quality products, innovation, fun and non-conformist spirit that embraces consumer co-authorship of the iconic branding agenda are factors which baffle the competition as Virgin is non-traditionalist, in touch with the 21st century consumer, thereby creating a real and tangible brand experience, earning the brand highly acclaimed iconicity and highly profitable brand awareness (Clark, 2013). The story of Virgin illustrates Calder’s (2008:189) point that iconic brands are publicly admired for their great reputations and their ability to consistently tell intriguing, credible brand stories that touch the lives of consumers in meaningful ways.

Thus Braun (2004) maintains that in busy markets with multiple media exposure opportunities, brand-savvy participating consumers, admire brands that have achieved distinctiveness and iconicity by creating their own value systems in a social environment in which they can exemplify for consumers the ultimate expression of whatever value consumers have chosen to respond to and have successfully achieved the goal of both the brand owner and the 21st century consumer’s branding agenda. In agreement, Kohli and Leuthesser (2001:5) add that iconic brands often claim the dominant position in their categories, with high market shares, commanding the highest price premiums of up to 40% more than generic products or services. This is attributed to their reputation of a clear, competitive stance and a sense of integrity, which consistently exerts a magnetic influence over their consumers, unmatched by regular brands. Furthermore, Neumeier (2006:19) observes that brands that have acquired the skill to bridge the communication gap between themselves and their market and have succeeded at creating a natural barrier to competition, have succeeded in establishing iconic brands and using their iconic branding agenda-setting strategies to effectively establish profitable brand awareness. Moreover, Neumeier (2006:19) purports that consumers award brands iconic status because they represent emotions that people desire, such as joy, intelligence, strength, success, comfort, style and imagination. Edwards and Day (2005) concur with Neumeier (2006:19) that iconic brands have the ability to resonate with the consumer. These are the brands that are perceived as the best at what they do and emotionally engaging with their consumers, using imagination, innovation, integrity
and fortitude so that they are constant topics in consumers’ thoughts and conversations, becoming essential consumer lifestyle partners.

Silverstein (2008) observes that iconic brands can be described as mega brands that are markedly salient and distinguishable from the competition, therefore completely in a league of their own, thus the universal strong admiration from consumers. Kelly and Silverstein (2005:2) agree, adding that iconic brands are exceptional brands because they invest in memorable branding communication through smartly integrated media exposure and strategic engagement with the 21st century consumer. Thus, in light of iconic brands strategically engaging the consumer, a study by George and Jones (2002:191) indicate that there are different types of iconic brands. George and Jones (2002:191) refer to iconic brands as power brands or authoritative brands that own a central category benefit and make continual improvements to maintain dominance on the agendas of both the media facilitated branding agenda as well as the 21st century consumer agenda. These central category benefits may also present the brands as explorer brands which appeal to the consumer’s sense of personal development, people’s desire to grow and learn as well as to achieve their potential and reach a level of self-actualisation or authentic brand reality (George and Jones, 2002:191). Iconic brands may therefore symbolize some aspect of the market’s image and history that customers share emotionally (Koekemoer, 2004:94). As such, associations connected to a brand’s image as iconic can provide the basis for brand distinction, brand extensions and competitive advantage can be considerable when the image is based on a variable such as technological leadership, unique style or perceived value. It is therefore the function of iconic brands to add value as they specifically grasp leadership opportunities in the market so as to displace mediocre brand offerings and embrace the 21st century consumer’s diverse mental and emotional somatic markers (Westaby, 2006) that lead to widespread favourable social discourse on the brand (Thompson, 2003:83).

According to Kapferer (2004:9) and Braun (2004:20) the significance of the iconic brand lies in the way that as a brand it creates associations and stands for something that goes much further than superficial or service attributes in a more impactful way than the ordinary brand because it is seen to have a functional and a sentimental or symbolic dimension that is captivating. Thus Beyers (2005) proposes that iconic brands are significant because they excel at accurately delivering the benefits that consumers expect and desire, fulfilling the requirements of the Expectation Economy trend of the
21st century society. Therefore Beyers (2005) purports that when an iconic status is awarded to a brand by the market, it should be guarded as an honour because the market has voted with its feet and financial resources, therefore the stewards of the brand must ensure that it lives up to the market's expectation in order to maintain leverage of the iconic brand. It is for this reason that Aaker (2004:6) adds that building iconic brands not only provides leverage for brand owners, but it also provides shared meaning, a context which facilitates the communication of business strategy and a way of keeping social discourse on the brand alive and relevant. Hence, Rindova, Petkova and Kotha (2007) observe that a crucial aspect to consider when building iconic brands is that perception can be more critical than reality as these lead to beliefs about a brand that can have significant consequences for the brand. The management of iconic brands is therefore about the management of perceptions, as the power of a brand to influence perceptions can transform the experience of using the brand from an ordinary experience to an exceptional one. Neumeier (2006) is therefore of the opinion that as a result of multiple media and purchasing choices, society decides to interact with a brand based on significant, symbolic attributes or differentiators that contribute to the salience of the brand. These brand differentiators or attribute salience factors of the brand owner's agenda, may be the products appearance, where it is sold, what kind of people buy it, what group will the person be joining, what does the cost say about its desirability, who makes it and what are other likeminded consumers' thoughts and opinions about it. This quality in a brand is what brand philosopher, Nietzche calls its 'will to power' (Braun, 2004:136). Brands that exhibit the will to deny competition the ability to compete, by defining the market as being the space that only a specific brand occupies, is an accomplished iconic brand. (Braun, 2004:136). Thus Murdock (2012) and Cain (2012) describe branded media such as a brand's website in particular as content marketing in which clean, crisp and consistent brand communication is critical to nurture a relationship with a consumer or convert a potential consumer. As such for many customers, an iconic brand provides reassurance, while for others it implies quality or innovation that translates into solid, useful benefits. Buying and using a true iconic brand also delivers self-fulfilling rewards for the consumer, such as a feeling of achieving authenticity and the satisfaction of having contributed to and determined the authentic brand experience by being a participating character in the story of the brand (Boyle, 2003).
4.2.1 The story of the iconic brand

Pandey (2003) purports that the shared, common understanding about a brand’s reputation and history among consumers and non-consumers alike, as a consequence of consistent communication with the market, is what constitutes the brand story, which is typically based on the brand’s unique history, culture and underlying philosophy, offering consumers a convincing reason to elevate the brand beyond its functional role in the market, into a widely admired icon (Holt, 2004:3). As such, Chapin (2012) contends that the role of the brand story is to make the brand’s reason for being clearly understood whenever stakeholders interact with the brand so that the essence of the brand is seen, heard and felt at every consumption opportunity. Hence, Barcesat and Gruart (2005) propose that actively telling the story of the iconic brand is called Brand Activation, which can be defined as the seamless agenda-setting of all available brand communication in a creative platform in order to inspire consumers to take an active interest in a brand, consume the brand and ultimately, form a loyal relationship with the brand. As such, Aaker (2004:6-18) as well as Gossen and Gresham (2002:1) believe that iconic brands are inextricably related to the brand’s worth and reputation as it relates to its market, therefore agenda-setting for the iconic brand is essential for an organisation, so as to maximize the business strategic goals, generating leverage and synergy, while communicating the brand story with clarity, imagination and consistency.

With regards to an iconic brand’s reputation as consistent and reliable, Swystun (2007) highlights a 21st century branding strategy called Consistency of Purpose which focuses on the ubiquity and uniformity of a brand, while encouraging flexibility to maintain relevance and distinction, simultaneously upholding the brand’s credibility and consistently guarding stakeholder trust in the brand. Hence, Rogers and Dearing (2007:2) propose that the ubiquitous nature of both old and new media and its ability to tell the brand story and create social discourse, supports the strategy of iconic branding in that when the media gives consistent prominence to brand’s iconicity, the media presents brand information that conveys compelling stories about the brand, touching people’s lives and evoking emotion within members of society (Du Plessis, 2005). Thus, the agenda-setting process for the brand remains driven by influence as opposed to manipulation, competition and negotiation, as carried out by advocates who tell the brand story. As such, Neumeier (2006:31) believes that the role of the brand story is to answer three simple questions that express particularly compelling distinction and by implication, iconicity of the brand. They are: What is the brand, what is its role in the
economy and society and why does it matter? They provide a litmus test for what gives a brand the competitive edge and ultimately intelligently engaging stakeholders, especially the brand activist consumer who constantly monitors and contributes to media content about the brand.

Pulizzi (2012), founder of the Content Marketing Institute describes engaging with the 21st century consumer intelligently as Content Marketing which is defined as the ability of a brand to understand exactly what information the consumer needs to know and how to communicate this information in a relevant and compelling manner so as to establish profitable brand awareness. In other words, telling the brand story in a way that matters to all stakeholders. Thus, Wilk (2006) explains that the brand story is contained in the identity-myth of the brand (Holt, 2004), which encompasses the ideological influence that brands have on society. Therefore Anderson and Narus (2004:136) concur that the brand story does not only communicate what the market wants to know about iconic brands, such as its phenomenal distinction from the competition, it also increases the perceived value of the brand to the customer, reducing the risk associated with the complexity of the buying decision and affirms the consumer’s judgement of good value. Kitchen and Laurence (2003) concur with Anderson and Narus (2004:136), emphasizing that what contributes to a brand’s salience as an icon that elicits emotion and ultimate loyalty from its consumers, depends largely on the story that the brand tells about its history, credibility and future direction. Hence Barr and Kopervas (2008) posit that the brand story is an asset that has as its aim the building and communicating of a uniquely, compelling brand position, setting out distinguishing truths that project a brand’s virtues in a meaningful way.

To illustrate Barr and Kopervas’s (2008) point, Wilk (2006) observes that in the 21st century context of heightened consumer concern about health, there is an increase in the consumption of branded bottled water even in countries where clean, potable water is free or not very costly. It is Wilk’s (2006) view that this is as a result of the rich, cultural meanings of water and thus emotional appeal and shared meaning about the value of water that is represented in the identity-myth that is used to tell the brand story of bottled water that has led to this phenomenon. For example, iconic brand, Evian tells a story of natural spring water that is bottled at source in the French Alps, repeatedly tested in pursuit of purity, quality and consistency (www.evian.com). Hence, Pandey (2003) acknowledges that such a brand story captures the 21st century consumer’s aspiration for authenticity, quality and consistency, adding that the shared common
understanding about a brand’s reputation among consumers and non-consumers alike, as a consequence of consistent, relevant communication about the brand, is what leads to the brand’s iconicity. As such iconic brands are intrinsically attention-grabbing and influential brands that create a more interesting story for all stakeholders because iconic brand stories elicit an emotional response from the consumer, consequently wielding immense leverage as a market partner for brand owners and a lifestyle partner for consumers.

As such, Joachimsthaler and Aaker (2001) in the Harvard Business Review (2001) posit that iconic brands have inspiring brand stories that articulate their values with a vision and a mission, expressing social consciousness and public appeal at every brand contact opportunity. In addition, Collins (2012) purports that iconic brands are run by brand owners with “big hairy audacious goals” (BHAG); defined as bold, clear and compelling visions that grab the attention and imagination of all stakeholders so that they are inspired to participate in the creation of such iconic brands (Ambler, 2009). Thus, Vise (2006) credits strategic agenda-setting with BHAG for the iconic brand Google being perceived as the most acclaimed business, media and technology success story of the 21st century economy. Therefore, Kohli and Leuthesser (2001) note that the brand story is essential as the brand’s iconicity needs to be communicated intelligently and consistently so as to present an accurate sense of what makes its values distinctive and relevant. Hence Kotler and Pfoertsch (2007) assert that creating an iconic brand by establishing the leading edge among competing brands and constantly conversing with the consumer by telling the brand story with vigour and imagination, thereby reminding consumers about what makes the brand exceptional, is the only way to maintain the interest of increasingly sophisticated consumers.

However, De Legge (2002) warns that misrepresenting the brand story in branding communications or through excessive media exposure can be hugely detrimental to the iconicity of the brand. Thus, Cheney and Christensen (2001) warn that brand owners can become so absorbed by the expression of the brand story that they may overlook the relevance of the story to the target audience, leading to questions about the integrity of the brand. Therefore Calder (2008: viii), posits that it is imperative that owners of iconic brands think strategically about the story and the outcome that is created from media exposure of the brand, because Davis (2004:42) argues that the media frames the story or provides the tone in which stories are heard, thereby influencing consumers’ perceptions and social discourse of the brand. Thus, Holt (2004:3) purports that a brand
story has successfully been told when a brand truly begins to exist as an icon, taking on meaning as a result of its positive profile in the media and the positive experiences which customers have come to expect from it. Therefore the agenda-setting theory in its 21st century role of partnering with the consumer in interpreting personalised branded realities and influencing social discourse, proposes that the media and especially the vibrant platform of digital media can effectively be used as a vehicle to harness the story of the iconic brand and to position the iconic brand for profitable brand awareness (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:279).

As such, Keller (2003:38) describes positioning of the iconic brand as a process of telling the story of the brand’s offer and image so that it affirms and reinforces the distinct and valued place that it already occupies in the target consumer’s mind. Furthermore, it entails maintaining a high positive, media profile, consistent positive experiences and associations and the assurance of meeting future expectations. Hence businesses with a strong brand positioning benefit from clarity of focus that provides them with more effectiveness, efficiency and competitive advantage (Kotler et al, 2006). Within the agenda-setting context of the 21st century, framing is the telling of the brand story with the participation of the target audience so that the individual consumer determines the brand reality based on the personalized experience of the brand as iconic (Onyebadi, 2008:45). Therefore, within the iconic branding agenda, the fundamental aim of brand owners in their efforts to maintain salient brand positioning in the consumer’s mind, is to tell the brand story with credibility and authenticity in order to add value to the brand over time as consumers consistently think, talk about and encourage others to use the brand, thereby, establishing profitable brand awareness (Clifton & Simmons, 2003:86).

The story of the brand’s value continues as Swystun (2007:14) indicates that from an economic perspective, a brand’s value can be interpreted from a three dimensional perspective. The brand has a financial perspective, a legal perspective and it carries a market or consumer perspective, as shown in the model presented in Figure 4.1.
Figure 4.1: Benefits of the iconic brand Model

Source: Own compilation based on the definition of a brand by Swystun (2007:14).

Kapferer (2004:15) suggests that from a business or financial perspective, the building of a valuable iconic brand has as its aim the development of long term relationships with stakeholders, creating emotional bonds such as brand loyalty, ensuring future income, so that brands can be listed on company balance sheets along with other intangible assets such as patents and databases. Legally, Bannock et al (2003:37) found that a brand holds value as a separable piece of intellectual property which bears consequence when brands are being bought, sold, and licensed, as well as when corporate mergers or acquisitions occur. For the consumer therefore, the value that the brand yields, differentiates offerings, representing an assurance of quality and presenting a relevant, credible choice among competing brands, thereby simplifying the decision making process. In addition, the value of an iconic brand not only holds promise, but the delivery of an experience and the benefits that customers truly desire (Kotler, Pfoertsch, Michi, 2006:5, Braun, 2004:20 & Keller, 2001:3).

Aaker (2002:7) observes that the brand’s value is an aspect of its story that is expressed in a set of assets linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to the value provided by a product or service to an organisation and its customers. The brand asset categories may include the brand’s iconicity as told by the stories of its highly regarded brand associations as reflected in the media, brand presence and ultimate competitive advantage. Thus, Temporal (2002) maintains that a brand’s economic value is contained in its book value as told by the financial value or brand equity of the brand as
well as the brand’s story as told by the intangible value of the brand that is universally recognised as iconic. Supporting Temporal’s (2002) viewpoint, Sinclair (2004) argues that a brand as represented by its intangible value, specifically its iconicity is fundamental for generating future economic benefits. Hence, Thompson (2003:79) notes that if a brand is to be a source of value for an organisation, its salience in the market and the minds of consumers will be critical to the actual financial worth that is created for the company. As depicted in the brand valuation process model in Figure 4.1, the brand value plays a significant role in agenda-setting strategies for telling the story of the brand, legal matters such as mergers and acquisitions, fair trading litigation and other fundamental business decisions that include finance reporting, tax planning, licensing and franchising (Interbrand, 2007).

Figure 4.2: Brand Valuation Process Model

Source: Clifton and Simmons (2003:37).

Figure 4.2 presents an economic approach to the story of the iconic brand’s value that is based on fundamental marketing and financial principles for brand sustainability. As such, Ronnestam (2009) defines brand sustainability as a brand’s capacity to endure and posits that endurance or sustainability of the brand is ultimately the agenda-setting goal of brand owners. Therefore, Ronnestam (2009) argues that in a 21st century society, brand sustainability refers to brands that actively take responsibility for making sure their branding activities contribute to the world being a better place for future generations, making sure that the iconic brand is appreciated by contemporary brand
activist consumers and future generations of consumers alike. Thus from an agenda-setting perspective, the role of iconic branding is to tell a brand story that will generate long-term customer demand that translates into earnings through purchase volumes, price, repurchase and ultimate brand loyalty.

According to Clifton, Simmons, Ahmad and Anholt (2003), from a financial perspective, the brand value is underpinned by the brand story instilling confidence and trust in both stakeholders and shareholders that the brand’s iconicity leverages the brand’s strength as achieved by wide-ranging competitive benchmarking and a structured costing of the brand’s market, stability, positioning, growth trend, geographic reach and ability to protect the brand legally. As such Brown (2011) reiterates that the 21st century presents a brand environment in which positive visibility or salience generates opportunity and a good reputation builds trust and that this social and branding reality is called the Reputation Economy. Simões and Dibb (2001:218) concur with Brown (2011), adding that telling the brand story intentionally through positive media exposure of a reputable iconic brand gives an organisation a substantial, differentiated advantage or reputation capital that distinguishes a brand from its competitors, as well as defining to shareholders in particular, what return on investment an iconic brand represents and what stakeholders may expect from their interaction with the brand. Champniss and Rodés Vilá (2011) describe interaction by stakeholders as members of society who transact with the brand as social capital in which the social currency of social discourse based on strong trust in the brand is the basis of profitable transaction. Furthermore, Quelch and Jocz (2009) add that within a branding environment, social capital is raised within a society by the intangible associations of the brand, specifically a good reputation, as stakeholder communities are connected by shared high regard and trust for the brand. Thus the durable trust that is generated by the iconic brand eases business and social transactions because the mutual the brand and stakeholder reduces the need for costly contracts, laws and regulations, leading to enhanced information flow, easier transaction and profitable brand awareness. Subsequently, research undertaken by the Economist Intelligence Unit in 2010, found that the risk of losing reputation and social capital is the greatest risk to brands in the Reputation Economy of the 21st century (Aula, 2010:44).

It can therefore be deduced that iconic brands are imbued with stories that consumers find valuable in constructing their own identities as they aspire to be seen as high value consumers or premier consumers of iconic brands (Elliot & Percy, 2007:52). Braun
(2004:104) therefore asserts that iconic brand stories must be powerful expressions of people’s aspirations, because only that will ensure that they really meet deeply felt needs that resonate with consumers. Interbrand and Business Week (2006) agrees that strategic agenda-setting for telling the story of valuable iconic brands entails the design and implementation of marketing programs and activities to manage and grow a brand’s worth. This process involves identifying and establishing the brand’s position in the consumer’s mind, planning and implementing brand communication programs, measuring and interpreting brand performance and growing and sustaining the brand’s iconic value in order to establish profitable brand awareness.

As such, Boaz (2007) postulates that effective brand awareness is an outcome of a brand’s positioning or space in the consumer’s mind as a result of the brand owners’ efforts at ensuring that the brand story is socially engaging, relevant, high impact and immediate, in order to build mindshare of the brand (Marsland, 2010). Therefore, Dolak (2003) is of the opinion that in the increasingly competitive, global market landscape, both mind share as well as market share leadership are fundamental for sustainable growth and profitable brand awareness. Thus Dolak (2003) explains that while market share leadership provides the benefit of volume and is driven by low cost manufacturing advantage, efficient supply chain management, strategic outsourcing and strong channel partnerships, mind share describes the amount of collective attention which a brand enjoys from a specific target market (Shamdasani, 2005:14). Therefore, the bigger mind share a brand enjoys, the stronger and deeper are the associations between the brand and the consumer, thus the value of the brand story to establish brand awareness. Consequently, if a brand enjoys strong mind share, the implication is that generally, the brand comes to mind more quickly and more strongly than competing brands.

Shamdasani (2005:14) continues his argument by suggesting that strong mind share provides the benefit of positive brand awareness as it is driven by product innovation, design leadership, ownership of a dominant technological platform and openness to consumer participation on the research and development of the brand. Therefore, Shamdasani (2005:14) strongly believes that the brand story should capture the creative imagination of the consumer in order to create a repeat purchase relationship with the contemporary consumer who when impressed by the brand, does not hesitate to tell others about the brand, thereby contributing to the brand awareness efforts of the brand. A good example that illustrates Shamdasani’s (2005:14) viewpoint about mind
share leadership is the iconic sports brand, Nike. The owners of Nike invested heavily in strategies for consumer intimacy such as Nike Towns or a physical space where the consumer can experience the brand in a real, tangible way. Nike has also embraced new media strategies with its interactive online website that allows customers to personalize their shoe designs and colours as well as Nike’s high media profile with regards to the brand’s corporate social responsiveness and brand activation initiatives of generous sponsorships for grassroots organisations and community events (Shamdasani, 2005:15). Jones (2010) concurs, adding that the mind share of a brand is strongly related to the salience of the brand in the market. However, notwithstanding the strong salience of a brand, it does not automatically follow that the brand is preferred as the 21st century consumer demands alignment of the brand with the consumer agenda which covers the nature of consumption, meeting consumer expectations as well as the salience of a brand that successfully initiates a purchase decision.

Confirmation of the role of the iconic brand story to create mind share and establish brand awareness is illustrated by a study of twenty-three product categories, led by the advertising agency DMB&B in the United States in 2002, which found that iconic brands were not only perceived as icons because they have high market share, although some are high-share brands, but because their brand stories were typically characterised by strategic vision, competence and superior media and branding strategies. These strategies ensure a salient brand presence and affirmations of the consumer’s judgement, reinforced by universal high regard for the brand (Shamdasani, 2005). As such Neumeier (2006) observes that the brand story confirms for consumers that a brand is established and focused and will consistently deliver on its promise for a long time into the future. However, Braun (2006) asserts that as consumers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, they are driven by instant gratification, therefore the brand story must be fascinating and highly credible, to create significant social discourse and widespread, positive awareness of the brand (Sweeney & Swait, 2008).

As such, Braun (2004:20), purports that in order for the iconic brand to gain profitable brand awareness from its brand story, it must be aligned with what the consumer perceives as real and relevant. The iconic brand needs to remain relevant and true to its promise at all costs or cease to exist as the only dominant choice for the consumer. Thus, Beyers (2005) observes that a relevant iconic brand is one that connects with its customers, not only meeting functional needs, but also tapping into and satisfying emotional needs and desires such as is achieved by ownership of the brand by the
customers, with whom interaction and activation of the brand has added meaning and value to their lives. Therefore, Thompson (2003) is of the opinion that it is imperative for narrator of the brand story to understand how existing and potential customers define ideal experiences and perceives insight driven brand content in order to be relevant to the contemporary consumer. Thus the relevance of a brand’s story in establishing brand awareness can be measured when consumers not only readily recognise the brand, but also understand the distinctive qualities that set it apart from the competition and how the brand meets the demands of the contemporary consumer (Aaker, 2002:330).

Furthermore, Kapferer (2005:2) observes that in a 21st century economy, brand awareness is achieved when a brand is recognised in terms of its worth as captured in its emotional value for the consumer, its salience and its pervasive presence in the market as well as the mind of the consumer. As such, trademarks such as distinctive colours, shapes, sounds and other characteristic expressions of what a brand is and represents, prime the consumer’s mind by laying memory tracks, reminding consumers to have specific expectations about the promise of the brand, such as a guarantee of special quality, an exceptional brand experience or personal association with the brand. Therefore, Grimaldi (2003:1) found that brand awareness essentially relies on the consumer’s storage and recollection of information about a specific brand. In agreement with Grimaldi (2003:1), Kohli and Leuthesser (2001:6) add that building strong brand associations and ensuring strategic media exposure of the brand, contributes to brand awareness by creating a strong, favourable presence in the minds of consumers, assisting in easy retrieval of brand information and speeding up the purchasing decision. Hence, research by Du Plessis (2005) suggests that as a result of the way that the human brain functions, emotion is a crucial factor in establishing a firm memory of the brand, predisposing or priming the consumer’s mind for favourable or unfavourable thoughts about the brand. Therefore Dunn and Davis (2004:24) argue that an iconic brand encompasses the exceptional way a product, person or service is packaged, real or perceived attributes that are attached to the brand and the distinct promise that is made in relation to a consumer’s experience and future expectations of the brand, giving rise not only to an exceptional brand experience but contributing to a consumer’s creation of what makes life meaningful for the consumer. In addition to creating meaning, as a result of the favourable place that iconic brands hold in the mind of the consumer, iconic brands contribute towards perpetuating positive thoughts in the mind of the consumer, thus producing positive social discourse and profitable awareness of
the brand. Nonetheless, Brody and Bernstein (2007) argue that in a contemporary society, it’s no longer good enough to create profitable brand awareness by only telling the brand story through traditional media and hope that consumers will be sufficiently inspired to consume it and tell others about it. As such Klein (2001) reinforces the notion of the ubiquitous presence of brands by stating that society is consumed by brands because of the power of the media’s effectiveness in fulfilling its role of creating public awareness of brands by pointing out the salience and the relevance of the brand, thus confirming the agenda-setting role of the media in creating brand awareness, by finding creative ways of framing the brand story and allowing the brand to be its own story teller.

With regards to the brand story or heritage of the iconic brand, Fetell (2006) asserts that the brand story remains a fundamental contributor to the familiarity and appeal in relation to the longevity and awareness of a brand, because it offers consumers the opportunity to form a mental picture of the non-tangible attributes of the brand, constantly reminding consumers about what makes the brand iconic. To illustrate the strategic value of the brand story for brand awareness, in 2010 iconic motor brand Mini reappeared onto the market after a long absence, capitalising on residual positive awareness of the iconicity of the brand, thereby gaining a strong competitive edge. Trendwatching (2003) explains that the reappearance of a brand as a result of leveraging its iconicity is called dormandise, which means that strong brand awareness represents real value especially for brand owners as a great amount of resources are saved because the iconic brand benefits from instant recognition, familiarity and appeal, even after a long absence from the market. Kaputa (2006:85) therefore postulates that iconic branding permeates the market with the salience of the brand, which when transferred successfully between the agendas of the brand, consumers and brand owners, creates universally understood, shared meaning of the brand with an enduring presence and relevance, thus creating pervasive brand awareness that requires minimal effort for captivated consumers to identify with.

4.2.2 The identity-value of the iconic brand

Keller (2008) explains that the identity-value that the iconic brand creates is not only about the extrinsic properties of a brand, but it includes the ways in which the brand attempts to meet the intrinsic psychological and social needs of the consumer. As consumers are socially, strongly influenced by a high, positive, public profile of a brand,
media exposure is a strong contributor to the consumer’s cognitive processes that arise from somatic markers and subsequent social discourse about a brand. Thus it is Aaker’s (2002) view that iconicity begins with the core identity or the essence of the brand. Therefore, the brand uses its identity, or the way that brand owners would like to be perceived as well as its image, or the way it is actually perceived and experienced by consumers to inspire all stakeholders to create compelling identity-value for the brand. In agreement with Aaker (2002), Elliot and Percy (2007:52) suggest that brands with strong identity-value make it possible for consumers to draw on them as resources for the symbolic construction of both social identity and self-identity because such brands resonate with who they are as people and what they’d like to be associated with. They feel therefore, that they share a commonly understood language about the relevance and importance of the brand.

Furthermore, Bengtsson and Fuat (2006: 375) found that another aspect of identity-value of iconic brands is the user imagery which is built on the connection which the consumer has with the brand through use of the brand, as an expression of their personal identity. Expanding on the beneficial attributes of iconic brands, Holt (2004:20) reiterates the idea that user imagery and identity-value are significant traits of iconic brands because they hold meaning for their consumers that is not merely relevant to the times, but also make a statement about the value system that the consumer upholds by using the iconic brand. For example, an iconic brand such as Timberland epitomises nature-orientated, environmentally friendly values and lifestyle which appeals to the 21st century consumers for which such values are fundamental to their identity as members of society who add value to the sustainability of the environment for future generations.

Hence, Dawson (2013) describes identity-value as the expression and reflection of a brand’s image and reputation (Holt, 2004), that consumers are captivated by and can relate to. For example, iconic brand Disney epitomises childhood magic, Coca Cola symbolises universal thirst quencher and McDonald’s represents family values. Therefore Du Plessis (2005) suggests that the significance of iconic branding through its identity-value is that it triggers a strong emotional resonance with the consumer. As such, research by Du Plessis (2005) on the brain’s responses to strategic agenda-setting for iconic branding, in collaboration with consumer input, found that emotion is a crucial factor in establishing a firm memory of the brand, predisposing or priming consumers’ minds towards favourable thoughts which grows the consumer from being a brand advocate to campaigning for the brand as a brand activist. Based on research by
Deloitte (2009), Conroy and Narula (2009) describe a brand advocate as a valuable consumer who consumes a favourite brand, is willing to spend a lot of money on the brand, actively engages the brand, but is open to trying competing brands, on the recommendations of fellow consumers. Brand activists however, are consumers who passionately believe in a specific brand and form lifelong relationships with a brand with a view to actively convey the value of the brand to others (Breitinger, 2010). An example of brand activism has been illustrated by iconic financial brand Rand Merchant Bank who actively conveyed the value of iconic dairy brand Clover by contributing to its iconicity, when it assisted Clover to be listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and also to build on Clover’s corporate social responsibility initiatives that benefit the South African society. Thus, with regards to the consumer’s emotional involvement with brand advocacy and brand activism, Du Plessis (2005) theorizes that emotion guides the individual towards external stimuli such as media exposure, particularly the media exposure of highly salient brands. Therefore any compelling media content about the brand should aim to captivate the consumer in a way that appeals to the 21\textsuperscript{st} century consumer’s emotional need for instantaneous, fragmented, authentic brand experiences (Kotler & Pfoertch, 2007:357). Hence, Thompson (2003:83) argues that the 21\textsuperscript{st} century consumer relates to and embraces captivating media exposure of iconic brands, thus successful framing of the identity-value of the iconic brand through media exposure drives the value of a brand and successfully connects with the consumer on an emotional level.

Van Gelder (2005:4) however, argues that the identity-value of the iconic brand refers to the fundamental role of the captivating brand to meet more than just an emotional need but to complement the emotional with the cognitive, thereby reinforcing resonance with the brand, as the consumer experiences a sense that the brand understands the consumer in a real and practical way. Lederman (2008) explains that understanding the consumer in a real and practical way involves maintaining a brand’s integrity by identifying points of interaction between the brand and the consumer, understanding exactly what the consumer desires from the brand and making sure that the consumer feels like the brand identifies with the consumer. This sense of identity-value is illustrated by the iconic financial services brand, Hollard with their ‘We get you’ media exposure campaign in which consumers are depicted in ways that shows how clearly the brand relates to the aspirations of the consumer and therefore the iconic brand truly appeals to the head and the heart of the consumer by cleverly framing the identity-value.
of the iconic brand Hence, Grayson and Martinec (2004) highlight the rise in the 21st century consumer demand for intellectual, emotional and authentic appeal, as people research brands for real brand experiences that make them feel in touch with who they are as well as who they aspire to be, thus the significance of the identity-value of the iconic brand.

In support of Van Gelder's (2005:4) argument that identity-value relates to the consumer’s personal need, Hatch and Schultz (2002) purport that the building of a brand's identity is comparable to the building of an individual person’s identity because it is driven by social relationships which include others’ perceptions of who people are as individuals. As such Locke (2004) observes that a holistic, authentic experience of a brand suggests that everything people know, believe and hold dear about the brand is based upon their perception of a brand. Therefore, consumers perceive one brand as better than another as a result of their direct or indirect experience, based on what they see, how they feel and ultimately how strongly they identity with the brand, much more than the function of the brand. To illustrate this point, Hathway (2010) describes the Montblanc iconic pen as not a mere writing instrument, but as an extension of the signature style of the writer, a self-expression of the writer, thereby confirming the identity-value of the iconic brand for the consumer. As such, Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002) posit that the increased contemporary use of brands to communicate personal identity, can be ascribed to the framing or packaging of an individual’s identity, as brands have over time become important contributors to a person’s expression of self. Therefore, Elliot and Davies (2006) in Schroeder and Salzer-Morling (2006) hold a similar view to that of Hatch and Schultz (2002), as well as that of Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002), as they point out that in pursuit of the authentic, the contemporary consumer no longer consumes brands for merely functional satisfaction, but consumption has become meaning-based as brands are often used as dynamic resources for the creation and preservation of the identity of the individual.

Notwithstanding the views of Van Gelder (2005:4) as well as Grayson and Martinec (2004), Braun (2004:83) holds the view that the identity–value of a brand should be seen in terms of its function rather than on an emotional level, so as not to become a casualty of the vacillating tendencies of consumer behaviour. Rousseau in Braun (2004:83) differs with this view arguing that a brand’s identity-value is defined entirely in terms of consumer emotion as consumers identify much more with the emotionally based intangible values of a specific brand in a product category than on a set of
functional characteristics. Therefore, depending on what a brand stands for, for example, ‘status’ or ‘cool’ or ‘fun’; the range of products or services can be anything that enables consumers to identify with a brand that exudes such emotional values. In agreement with both the opposing philosophical perspectives of Rouseau in Braun (2004:83) and Aristotle in Braun (2004:83), Kotler et al. (2006) argue that identity-value of iconic brands are particularly compelling because they capture both the hearts and minds of consumers, as they effectively meet both their emotional and functional needs. Hence Nadeau (2007:4) finds that iconic brands have evolved from being products with purely functional benefits into highly emotionalized personalities that represent an entire intimate lifestyle to consumers. Furthermore, Holt (2004:20) and Conley (2008:76) confirm that iconic brands hold enormous identity-value for the individual consumer because they succeed at portraying traits that consumers want to identify with, as individuals are drawn to brands that embody highly respected ideals, brands that help them express who they want to be, brands that are aligned with their personal goals and make them feel in control in a spontaneous, fast changing world, loaded with media and consumption opportunities.

Hence, Lydecker (2010) posits that the emotional appeal and subsequent identity-value that iconic brands hold for consumers is linked to what is called neurobranding. According to Lydecker (2010), neurobranding focuses on what happens in the brain and sensory organs of a consumer when s/he sees a particular brand which holds such strong emotional appeal, that the consumer is moved to buy and use the brand, thus decisions to buy iconic brands are first made emotionally. This is most obviously seen in the way iconic brand labels are applied to everything related to lifestyle such as clothes, fragrances or accessories. An example of this is the South African designer brand Stoned Cherrie, an iconic African lifestyle brand that represents afro-urban culture by creating a platform for self-expression and African identity that is authentic and truthful and effectively meets the need for the young urban South African woman to express her African identity in a trendy, fashionable way that defies the norm of generally accepted Eurocentric fashion (Stonedcherrie, 2010). Such an iconic brand epitomises Grannell’s (2003) view on the emotional aspect of a brand’s identity-value, adding that a consumer purchase decision is heavily informed by factors such as a sense of identity with the brand, based on an appealing story about the brand, a perception of good brand citizenship and an overall strong personal resonance with the brand.
With regards to great worth of identity-value, Nadeau (2007:143) notes that the iconic brand, Virgin, has proven that making a concerted effort to identify with the consumer, is imperative for the agenda-setting of successful iconic branding. Hence Virgin’s endeavours to identify with its consumer has been reciprocated by its loyal fan base, which is why Virgin, originally a record label, has been able to seamlessly and successfully differentiate its iconic brand into a lifestyle partner for consumers. Hence Hume in Braun (2004:95) suggests that the consumer makes choices based on connections that are experienced, connections that are ‘felt’ to be right rather than ‘known’ to be right. Brands therefore are experiences and sensations that cannot be managed rationally. Contrary to the rationalist who would assume that consumers would choose a brand because they are persuaded by the logic and supporting evidence of its usefulness, Hume in Braun (2004:95) believes that the consumer’s rational understanding is to reinforce the emotional identity that the consumers already shares with the brand.

As a result of the consumer’s emotional identity with the iconic brand, Neumeier (2006:19) posits that attention to aesthetics is critical because it’s the language of feeling which the brand communicates to the consumer. In a society that is constantly bombarded with information, and where people are always lacking enough time, consumers value how they feel about a brand, more than the information that they have about the brand. Thus Kaputa (2006) expands on the notion of people’s feelings when they make purchases by purporting that brands are about intangibles like the good will of the brand which is contained in the brand’s reputation, intellectual capital, consumer relationships and business partnerships that have the most value. Iconic brands are therefore chosen for what they represent, for example, status, good judgement, etc. As such an iconic brand’s strength lies in harnessing the good will that is encompassed in its strategy, its image and identity, its reputation, and most importantly, its visibility and credibility in the media. Kaputa (2006) observes therefore that if people think a brand is dynamic, it is, regardless of the objective reality, until the perception is changed, because perception is reality. Thus, Nadeau (2007:5) maintains that contemporary consumers demand more personal contact from highly emotionalized, living brands that represent passion, innovation, entrepreneurship, respect, honesty and collaboration.

Neumeier (2006:38) therefore argues that brand managers need to develop customised, authentic brands that are co-produced by consumers in order for consumers to relate to the brand on a personal level, for example a Blackberry mobile
phone consumer feedback comment implied that the brand delivers a fast, enjoyable media experience to which the consumer can relate (Milchaluk, 2010), instead of homogenised, global brands with monolithic strategies because, branding has moved from being about features, to benefits, to experience, to identification, which is what appears to be of most value to the 21st century consumer. Stated differently, Keller (2004) and Swystun (2006) purport that iconic branding has evolved from an emphasis on what it possesses, to what it can do, to what is ‘felt’, to who the consumer perceives her/himself to be. Identifying with a brand’s image therefore refers to pictures or somatic markers that are evoked by exposure to a brand. Good brand images are thus instantly evoked and are generally unique among competitive brands, leading to the proposition that contemporary consumers do not only buy a product, but also the image associations of the product such as power, wealth, sophistication and identification with other users of the brand. Hence Gobé (2007:100) observes that the identity-value of the iconic brand can be reinforced by brand communications such as packaging, advertising, promotion, customer service, word-of-mouth and most effectively, by extensive positive media exposure; because the media harnesses visual expression of the brand so that the more people collectively identify with the brand in an insightful way, the more easily the brand’s identity-value is useful for the creation of profitable brand awareness.

Fiorini and Titterton (2008) observe that as the brand has pervaded human existence, the contemporary consumer is increasingly rejecting superfluous brands in favour of the more fulfilling identity-value of iconic brands, which offer a lifestyle of meaning and authenticity. For this reason, Bamert and Wehrli (2005) purport that the 21st century economy presents brands and brand owners with stringent competition, so that the identity-value of the iconic brand is crucial for establishing a “sweet spot” or strategic place in the mind and heart of the consumer. Nhan (2011) describes the “sweet spot” as the place where the brand’s identity and the consumer’s identity meet. As such, Kotler and Keller (2006) describe a brand’s strategic place in the consumer’s mind and heart and as such its identity-value, as resonance, implying that resonance points to the familiarity and appeal of the brand. Kotler and Keller (2006) explain that resonance is a measure of the way that the consumer identifies with the iconic brand as it lends itself to a personalised, authentic brand experience. Hence, the identity-value as captured in the compelling high regard that the consumer already has for the iconic brand, facilitates real resonance with the consumer, which leads to consumers not only identifying with
the brand and expressing themselves through consuming the brand, but actively engaging the brand and campaigning for the brand, thereby vigorously establishing brand awareness (Atilgan, Aksoy & Akinci, 2005). In agreement, Kapferer (2005:7) maintains that the familiarity and appeal of a brand are crucial indicators of the identity-value of the iconic brand for brand awareness because it refers to the highly favourable reputation of the iconic brand with which consumers choose to be identified with.

New York based branding company, Tipping Sprung, refers to such a highly favourable reputation as the Halo effect, a consumer response to a brand which infers that if the brand is highly regarded in the market, whatever that brand is associated with is regarded as highly favourable, awarding weight to the identity-value of the brand and confirming superior consumer judgment in identifying with the brand. To support this view, research has shown that the familiar brand, the brand which offers the consumer identity-value, is always chosen above the unfamiliar. For example the Pepsi Challenge, a controlled experiment by McClure, Li, Tomlin, Cypert, Montague and Montague (2004), testing the consumer’s recognition and identification of competing brands Pepsi and Coca Cola, found that participants responded emotionally more favourably when they believed they were drinking Coca Cola as a result of iconic brand Coca Cola’s trusted reputation and positive salience in the mind of the consumer. Coca Cola elicited a more favourable response as participants were more familiar with the Coca Cola brand. Therefore, familiarity, appeal and high regard for the brand complements the brand’s identity-value which leads to unquestionable credibility, as the brand owners are perceived to be spending resources on what is believed to be an exceptional brand offering. In light of the agenda-setting theory, the familiarity and appeal factors are crucial contributors to brand awareness, because they are indicators of the salience of a brand in the market as a result of widespread media exposure which leads to widespread social discourse, thus relevance and leverage of identity-value for creating profitable brand awareness in the mind of the consumer.

To augment Kapferer’s (2005:7) view on the importance of familiarity and appeal and as such identity-value; empirical evidence from a study conducted over a period of one and a half years by Walvis (2008), found that the decision to consume a brand is generally a subconscious process brought about by a set of physiological actions of the brain that determines the best way that a brand will meet an emotional and functional need at the point of purchase. As such, choosing a brand has three dimensions: Firstly, the brain selects the brand that it is familiar with, having learnt and experienced that it is best able
to identify with the brand on both a physical and emotional level and that the brand is the most rewarding, based on its associations with consumer goals and the brain’s reward centres. Secondly, the brain chooses the brand that has shown most frequently in the past that it is able to most adequately fulfil the needs of the consumer. Thus, iconic brands that have proven that they are consistently committed to their promise are more likely to be chosen because consumers can identify with them. An example of such consistent commitment to the brand promise is the iconic brand Rolex, which recognises and awards pioneering projects that demonstrate innovative thinking and contributions to human progress, in alignment with the brand’s values of unwavering innovative excellence and precision within the realm of improving humanity and identifying with the human quest for self-actualisation (Carrier, 2010 & Cheng, 2010). Thirdly, the brain chooses the brand it has interacted with most intensely in the past because brand participation creates numerous new connections in the brain, facilitating the brand’s retrieval. An example of such intense connection and collaboration between the brand and consumer took place during the 2010 Tour de France when iconic sports brand Nike ran the Nike Livestrong campaign, when a giant robotic writing tool was created which used digital text and Twitter to convey messages of support to the participants, not only connecting with consumers emotionally, but also creating global awareness of the relevance and authenticity of the iconic brand immediately and spontaneously, with great appeal to the 21st century consumer (Weir, 2010).

Furthermore, with regard to recognition, familiarity and appeal of the iconic brand, Hatch and Schulz (2008:10) postulate that the identity-value of the iconic brand is crucial for creating brand awareness because it involves identifying core competencies and competitive advantages with a view to influence all organisational activities, consistently infusing the market with compelling high regard for the brand, with everything that the brand is and does, creating identity-value for the consumer and everything iconicity does as it elevates the brand beyond quality, features and price by creating a way of life that a consumer can ascribe to (Elliot & Davies, 2006).

4.2.3 The culture of the iconic brand

Zhu, Liu and Lam (2007) assert that in a 21st century society consumers have assigned brands to act as representatives of the individual in society, thereby co-ordinating a framework of symbols, a culture of consumption and a language of social interaction. Consequently, for the contemporary consumer, the iconic brand symbolises what is real for the consumer and how that reality is expressed to the rest of a community within the
broader society. Thus Temporal (2002) argues that the culture of the iconic brand is about what is fundamental, enduring and uniquely characteristic to the brand. Hence, Thompson (2009), commenting on Brandchannel’s Brandjunkie Awards, observes that in order for a brand to be relevant and sustainable in a 21st century society and economy, it must be perceived as a culture, a framework of inherited beliefs expressed in the symbolic ways in which people communicate, maintain and develop their understanding of life and their attitudes toward it. To establish a culture therefore, an iconic brand must develop an ethos and a worldview that it absolutely believes in and consistently behave in accordance with its culture. As such Elliot and Davies (2006) posit that the culture of the iconic brand takes the brand beyond functionality into a belief system and symbolic reality of meaning that the consumer can relate to and believe in. Thus, Burnier (2005:502) proposes that the social dimension of the brand experience is contained in the brand meaning which emerges from social interaction with fellow consumers specifically; in order to form the framework from which understanding of the brand experience flows and develops. Hence, Waisbord (2001) emphasises the concept of meaning in the culture of the iconic brand, arguing that communicating the culture of the brand is not simply a transfer of information from brand owner to brand consumer, but it also takes into account the concept of systematic action and reaction between individuals or groups in order to create meaning or a common understanding among stakeholders of the brand. It therefore observes a process which is influenced by the dynamic, social framework in which meaning takes place, affecting the attitudes and behaviours of the stakeholders that are participating in the branding process, thus establishing a culture.

As such, the culture that the brand produces draws upon the core beliefs and values of the brand to highlight central truths about the brand; beliefs about the brand that drive socially shared meaning and discourse, attracting consumers who share similar value systems, thus producing a brand culture. Thus, Braun (2004:104) agrees with Elliot and Davies (2006), commenting that the creation of a culture is intrinsic to iconic brands as it focuses on society’s need to associate with other people in sharing big feelings, important values and strong emotions of life. Thus Braun (2004:137) suggests that an iconic brand has succeeded in establishing a culture when the market consciously chooses a brand and is defined by what the iconic brand is, does and symbolises. In agreement with Braun (2004:104) as well as Elliot and Davies (2006), Roll (2008) suggests that owners of iconic brands therefore aspire to build iconic brands such as
the Apple computer brand or the Nike sports brand that are so overwhelmingly embraced by consumers that they get assimilated into the culture of the society and become cultural icons that are not only recognised as contemporary lifestyle brands, but as critical contributors to a vibrant society and economy. Neumeier (2006:19) also agrees, referring to an iconic brand as a charismatic brand, which is any product, person or place for which people believe there is no substitute because it inspires popular brand loyalty and enthusiasm, resulting in a vibrant brand culture. Thus, Fetell (2006) reiterates that brand meaning is a combination of brand owner initiatives to engage the consumer as well as the thoughts, discourses and experiences of consumers with the brand and fellow brand enthusiasts. In support of Neumeier’s (2006:19) and Shamdasani’s (2005:14) views, an exclusive trend agency report by Sputnik, Inc. in Nadeau (2007:13), found that there exists among consumers a meta-sense which is a cultural quest to experience more of a brand. Consequently, as the world becomes more virtual, people desire to feel more real. Hence, consumers increasingly expect brands to provide them with fully evolved, entertaining cultural experiences imbued with real meaning and instant gratification.

As such Roll (2010) observes Apple computers as a true iconic brand that embraces the advances of the digital age, effortlessly integrating technology and constantly introducing innovative products that captivate the consumer, always challenging the rules set by bigger competitors, appealing to the contemporary consumer’s disregard for hierarchy and structure, thereby attracting a strong, loyal following, making Apple the ideal iconic brand defined by its culture of challenging the norm and stretching the imagination. The brand owners of Apple attribute the brand’s success as a cultural icon to branding strategies that include constant innovation, collaboration with consumers and consistent communication with all loyalists of the of the brand culture (Appel, 2010).

Furthermore, Day and Van Auken (2008), note that one of the important results of developing the culture of an iconic brand is the establishment and growth of brand communities. Brand communities are broadly defined as communities that represent a form of human association contained within a consumption context. As such new media and digital platforms such as Facebook, Linked in, Twitter and My Space provide fertile ground for brand communities to thrive as collections of active, loyal users of a brand who are committed, conscientious and passionate about the brand (Bush, 2008). Within these cultural groups based on shared commitment towards a brand, there is an inherent connection between members of the group and the collective sense of
difference from others not in the same brand community. For example, the Harley Davidson brand community find a unique, authentic fulfilment from living the brand as a community that is not possible to find outside of such a brand community. Members of such a brand community practice rituals and traditions that perpetuate the community's shared history of the brand. Hence, Roll (2008) acknowledges that brand communities are liberated from limitations as they possess communal self-awareness and share a commitment that facilitates the brand to attain long term acceptability in the society and ensures that the brand maintains its iconic status. By being an important frame of reference for consumers, brand communities provide wider social benefits to consumers through interaction and relationship with the brand as well as fellow consumers and provide a social, cultural structure of benefit to the society and economy of the 21st century.

With regard to brand communities being an important frame of reference for consumers, Wanta and Ghanem (2006:37) reaffirm the value of iconic branding which succeeds when it taps into an audience of consumers who share a positive worldview in the way that they think and talk about a brand. Thus, Godin (2005:36) highlights the significance of the culture of the iconic brand, which arises out of building brands that captivate the contemporary consumer in compelling ways, so that the value of the iconic brand culture is that consumers become so deeply inspired by the brand that they voluntarily embrace the brand’s culture, thus living the brand and passionately publicising the brand in order to establish brand awareness. To complement Godin’s (2005:36) view, Webber (2009) asserts that the most effective and contemporary form of brand awareness, takes place when satisfied consumers assume a brand’s culture as a lifestyle, taking on the role of brand activists and conscientiously perpetuate the brand in everything they think, say and do, contributing to a lifestyle of shared meaning. Thus, using the consumer’s willingness to epitomise and publicise the iconic brand, acknowledges the contemporary consumer as an individual with a desire to actively participate in the drive to establish brand awareness in the market, by contributing to the research and development of a brand’s iconicity, thereby ensuring that fellow consumers and other stakeholders embrace the brand culture. Furthermore, Day and Van Auken (2008) reiterate that agenda-setting for iconic branding is crucial for creating profitable brand awareness because it cultivates brands which are etched into the culture of society. As such, iconic branding elevates the brand to a critical component of what makes belonging to a unique society a fulfilling brand reality.
Therefore, Ballard (2009) proposes that creating profitable brand awareness in a 21st century society calls for brand owners to embrace social networking sites in order to create a relevant impact with consumers by participating in the branded lifestyles of consumers and contributing to social discourse on brands, dispelling any unfounded misgivings about the brand. In line with Weber (2009) and Ballard's (2009) contemporary views of brand awareness, Miller (2009) observes that the most effective form of creating brand awareness in the 21st century, is the conveying of brand messages to consumers and potential consumers with effective interactive media to allow consumers to engage and interact with the brand, presenting consumers with the option to embrace the brand’s culture. For example, in 2009, a Millward Brown study found that online videos are better at imparting brand awareness than traditional television, creating 82% dominant brand awareness and 77% brand recall versus only 54% dominant brand awareness and 18% brand recall for similar traditional television brand communications. Experts agree that this high measure of dominant brand awareness is because online viewers are more engaged than television viewers (Miller, 2009). Furthermore, Day and Van Auken (2008) argue that new media and digital platforms provide fertile ground for consumers who share a high regard for a brand to form brand communities which thrive in social media environments because the consumers are able to engage and interact with the brand, brand owners, as well as other likeminded brand consumers as they participate in brand discussions, consumer reviews, price comparisons and online shopping (Ikeler & Jackson, 2010). Therefore, the reality of the role of the culture of the iconic brand to establish brand awareness in a contemporary society, is that brands have become interfaces where the consumer engages the brand so that the interaction between the consumer and the brand becomes significant for profitable brand awareness as consumer dissatisfaction is swiftly replaced by brand engagement and brand owner control is replaced by collaborative relationship with the consumer (Day & Van Auken, 2008).

Notwithstanding Day and Van Auken's (2008) view, Johansson (2010) observes that with the many varied and fragmented avenues of branding information and the numerous media options available to the 21st century consumer, establishing brand awareness is becoming increasingly challenging. Therefore a strategic outlook for brand owners is to co-ordinate branding messages and to integrate both old and new media for the most impactful and widest, profitable brand awareness. Nonetheless, Carlsson (2010) notes that globally, branding professionals postulate that 2010 would be the year...
that as the fastest communication medium, social networking, would have entrenched itself as the leading medium through which the brand owner agenda and by implication, brand awareness agenda, would be set. To substantiate this thought, The 2010 Exceptional Web Experience Conference found that 25% of search results for the world’s largest iconic brands are related to online user generated content; 90% of consumers who participate in online brand discussions trust brand recommendations from brand loyalists whom they know share and understand the brand culture, 70% trust opinions of fellow brand loyalists who they don’t know personally and only 4% trust brand communications from brand owners. In light of the agenda setting theory, this implies that the brand culture and subsequent brand awareness agenda describes the extent to which the salience of a brand dominates and determines social discourse, thus interpreting a brand awareness reality for both brand owners and consumers.

Iconic brands with high positive media exposure therefore play a pivotal role in consumers’ sense of culture and ultimate consumer behaviour; resulting in strong brand awareness, real experience and deep commitment to the brand (Holt 2004:20). Thus Elliot and Percy (2007:53) posit that the culture of the iconic brand attains deep meaning, trust and the development of personal fulfilment for the consumer by the encouragement of social interaction with like-minded brand loyalists, e.g. through participation in brand rituals at brand festivals, organised by brand communities as an acknowledgment of the brand culture. Well publicized iconic brands therefore play a pivotal role in consumers’ sense of culture and ultimate consumer behaviour; resulting in strong brand awareness, real experience and deep commitment to the brand (Holt, 2004:20). Thus, when the media’s agenda-setting role has successfully created social discourse about a brand and consumers willingly convert to a specific brand, they may be rewarded with a sense of belonging and connection for converting to the brand. This phenomenon of conversion to a brand culture, argues Conley (2008:197), has the potential to permeate social culture by promoting a sense of belonging to the brand and fellow consumers of the brand, as well as a real experience of the brand. Hence Holt (2004:3) concludes that the perspectives on brands and branding which includes a brands highly recommendable reputation, distinctive and compelling consumer preference, create a brand culture that emerges as an iconic brand when these collective understandings among consumers become firmly entrenched in society so as to create a culture that establishes informed awareness of the brand. Johnston (2010:6) concurs that the iconic brand that succeeds in addressing the consumer’s need to
belong to a culture, is the brand that has successfully established profitable brand awareness.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Kathman (2002) reminds that the 21\textsuperscript{st} century society and economy is bolstered by a plethora of communication and information sources, characterised by electronic, social media platforms, unlimited market boundaries, a more sophisticated, informed, participating consumer and a brand which has taken on a much more complex role than identifier or functional product, to a brand which constitutes economic value as well as social presence and consumer lifestyle partner. Furthermore, Windschuttle (2002) describes the 21\textsuperscript{st} century as a contemporary social order which indicates a shift from linear relationships and limitations in all spheres of life including communication, media and branding, to an era which celebrates instead of frowns upon a fragmented, decentralised, spontaneous society in which the individual determines what is real, meaningful and true even if it appears to be ambiguous and unstructured. As such, Mootee (2008) observes that the 21\textsuperscript{st} century brand stretches beyond its functionality and expands itself into the life of the contemporary, brand-savvy consumer in a ground-breaking wave of branded media content, branded entertainment, branded convenience and branded space. Thus, as the brand has become such an integral constituent of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century society and economy, Smith (2002) concludes that the 21\textsuperscript{st} century is a search by members of society for novel and more innovative versions of a branded social reality.

Thus, in light of the brand having extended itself into the lives of the contemporary consumer, the salience of the brand and subsequently its iconicity becomes significant for the establishment of profitable brand awareness. Therefore Neumeier (2006:19) explains that an iconic brand is widely regarded as a most compelling symbol of a set of values that society deems significant, therefore stakeholders, especially the contemporary consumer who demands participation in the building of iconic brands, relates strongly to brands that portray values such as consumer co-operation, regard for the environment, heritage, identity and culture. Moreover, Aaker (2004) found that scholars with differing perspectives agree that iconic brands are significant for 21\textsuperscript{st} century agenda-setting because of the compelling way their owners have tapped into and maximised the power of old and new media exposure to engage the more demanding consumer who determines the rules of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century branding agenda.
Thus, Mc Combs and Reynolds (2002), in Schneider, Gruman and Coutts (2005:172), remind that the core concept of the agenda-setting theory and therefore its pertinence and relevance to iconic branding and brand awareness, is the issue salience or prominence conferred on a topic that is transferred from the media agenda to the public or consumer agenda.

Hence, Hollis (2007) adds that the Millward Brown brands research found that iconic brands have little significance if they are not instantly recognisable, inferring that the public should not only be aware of the brand’s existence, but the brand’s presence must be felt so that consumers are very familiar with its attributes. It follows therefore that a clear effect of a brand’s use of its iconicity should be to establish knowledge of a brand’s presence and salience resulting in profitable brand awareness. Thus, Interbrand and Businessweek (2006) concurs that for any given entity therefore, the intention of branding strategies should be to build iconic brands that ensure future earnings, by growing ubiquitous brand awareness and positive prominence, which leads to customer preference and loyalty that eliminates the competition. In this regard, Kapferer (2004:15) is of the opinion that positive media exposure gives the brand premier positioning in the mind of the public, resulting in the iconicity of such a brand and informed familiarity with the brand. Therefore, Braun (2004:20), Keller (2001:3), Kotler, Pfoertsch & Michi (2006:5) assert that for the contemporary consumer, the media’s role as contributor to positive social discourse, not only creates iconic value for brands, resulting in universal brand awareness, but also contributes to the brand’s reputation, resonance and relationship with the very demanding contemporary consumer, allowing consumers to customise their own brand realities. Therefore, Kapferer (2004:9) observes that salience of the brand in old and new media as applied in the agenda-setting theory gives rise to a high level of prominence of the brand on the consumer agenda, enforcing the iconic value of a brand in the market, thus establishing profitable brand awareness.

Moreover, Braun (2004:20), Kotler, Pfoertsch and Michi (2006:5) assert that as consumers do place importance on the opinions of other consumers based on their experiences with the brand as well as endorsement from the brand’s proliferation in the media, a climate of opinion as reflected in positive social discourse is created, giving rise to brand prominence and profitable brand awareness. However, Conley (2008:199) laments the fact that as brands and branding exists in every sphere of life, branding has moved to steer society into excessive branded lifestyles as consumers attempt to create customised brand realities, the surge of branding has become overbearing and
intrusive, creating obsessive branding disorder. However, submitting to the reality of branding in the 21st century, Conley (2008:199) concludes that as brands have become inherent constituents of the contemporary society and economy, instead of assuming a denialist approach towards the branded social reality of the 21st century, a smarter approach might be to embrace iconic brands in particular and apply personal judgement to ensure meaningful, authentic branded lifestyles that contribute to a vibrant society and economy.

As such, Khermouch, Holmes and Ilwan (2001) observe that in a vast media economy and society: a) consumers create their own social reality in co-operation with new and old media; b) iconic brands offer various advantages such as compelling brand stories or brand heritage, identity-value and brand culture for both consumers and owners of brands; and c) brands and specifically iconic brands facilitate access to new markets by representing trusted product names and attributes, and ultimately profitable brand awareness. Godin (2005:36) therefore confirms that iconic branding succeeds when it taps into an audience of consumers who share a positive worldview in the way that they think and talk about a brand, aligning it to the significance of iconic branding that arises out of positive media exposure of the brand (Wanta and Ghanem, 2006:37). It can therefore be concluded from the branding literature examined in this chapter that agenda-setting and iconicity play a significant role in establishing profitable brand awareness in a 21st century economy and society.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Alipour, Davabi, Mehrabi and Moshtaghi (2010) purport that research is essentially concerned with the gathering of knowledge and in the world of branding, Puri and Stackdale (2006) emphasise that profitable brand awareness is established by a brand which draws stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to gain as much knowledge about the brand as possible, specifically researching the brand in order to make informed consumption choices. Thus Scapens (2008) theorises that excellent research must be firmly grounded in clearly understood theory so as to improve on theoretical knowledge and also to be useful for society and the economy. As the theory on agenda-setting, iconic branding and brand awareness has been researched and well understood in previous chapters, this chapter seeks to expand on the research by addressing the research problem which questions how the African Development Bank (AfDB) uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness, incorporating the communications theory of agenda-setting. The research questions and research aims thus deal with the components of an iconic brand i.e. the brand story, identity-value and the culture of the brand and how these concepts are related to the research problem. Subsequent to this is a discussion on the theoretical statements that support the research.

This is followed by a section which presents the research design which is characterised by the qualitative method in the form of a once-off, intrinsic case study, that was used to achieve an in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2007) of how the population which in this case is made up of the public sector clients of the AfDB, experience the way that the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness. The population was represented by a non-probability, purposive sample due to the fact that an exploratory, research method was used. Hence, the interpretive research approach was applied through the use of semi-structured interviews to provide the information for the data that was gathered. Furthermore, the Morse and Field technique was applied to explain the process of data analysis involving the four steps of comprehending, synthesising, theorising and recontextualising in order to transfer the data into findings which could communicate the collected data clearly. Finally, to confirm the reliability of the study and the validity of the findings, a pilot study was conducted as a test-run for the data collection process.
5.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Elliot and Percy (2007:133) as well as Koekemoer (2004:94) purport that strategic communication of branding that ensures a high public profile, results in profitable brand awareness which focuses on the extent and ease with which consumers are able to recall and recognize a brand, as well as identify the attributes that are associated with the brand. An attribute that has been ascribed to the African Development Bank (AfDB), is that of an iconic brand as Africa’s premier development finance institution (Nordick Development Fund Report, 2009). According to The Africa Competitiveness Report (2012), the AfDB is ranked as Africa’s highest authority on development knowledge and finance as well as Africa’s Premium Development Institution. The choice of the AfDB as the chosen population for this study is thus based on its extremely impressive reputation as an iconic brand as acknowledged by the World Resources Institute (2012). Furthermore, the AfDB has consistently had conferred on it, the highest possible credit rating, i.e. AAA rating for long term borrowings in the international capital markets, by Moody’s Investor Services and Standard and Poor’s, the two major international rating agencies, (AfDB Annual Reports, 2011, 2010, 2009). The AfDB is also held in high regard by other development institutions such as the The Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (NORFUND, 2009), as a leading financial institution managed by Africans for Africans in Africa. To reinforce the recognition of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the bank is described by the bestselling Pan-African business magazine, African Business (June 2012) as the most important development financial institution in Africa because it is Africa’s most dynamic agent of economic transformation, which has swiftly adjusted to the rapidly changing demands of the 21st century consumer of development finance. In addition to being acknowledged for its financial power as an iconic brand, the AfDB is also widely regarded as the continent’s prime think-tank with regards to development and Africa’s most influential research and knowledge source (Ben Yaiche, 2012). As such, the universal high regard (Lindstrom, 2007:175) of the AfDB as an iconic brand is well established.

According to the AfDB Annual Reports (2011, 2010, 2009) the clientele of the AfDB consists of the public sector, the private sector, Not-for-Profit organisations and research institutions, with the public sector segment constituting the majority of its market. The public sector clients are the 53 African governments and the Regional Economic Communities or countries from the same region that group together for economic benefit, that are eligible for development assistance from the AfDB. As they
make up the greater majority of consumers of the AfDB products and services, the study will focus on them as the target population. Furthermore, as National Research Foundation (NRF, 2008 & 2013) searches support evidence that no study that applies the agenda-setting theory to iconic branding and profitable brand awareness has previously been conducted, this study aims to employ the exploratory qualitative research method to explore the research problem which is to explore how the African Development Bank uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the AfDB use its brand story to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?
2. How does the AfDB use its identity-value to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?
3. How does the AfDB use its culture to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients?

5.4 RESEARCH AIMS

1. To explore how the AfDB utilizes its brand story to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.
2. To explore how the AfDB utilizes its identity-value to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.
3. To explore how the AfDB utilizes its culture to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

5.5 THEORETICAL STATEMENTS

- Taitz (2009) purports that as a result of the internet and the worldwide web of the 21st century, the implication of new media for the agenda-setting theory is that the consumer has swiftly moved from being driven by media content to driving media content, hence the role of shaping social reality and structuring social discourse has moved from media owner-led content in the 20th century, to 21st century consumer-led content which is targeted, relevant, high impact and immediate.
• Kotler, Pfoertsch, Michi (2006:5) and Braun (2004:20) postulate that for the consumer, the value that is generated by the brand and branding, differentiates offerings, representing an assurance of quality and presenting a relevant, credible choice among competing offerings.

• Edwards and Day (2005) as well as Godin (2005) observe that iconic brands have the reputation of being superior quality products, persons or services with winning branding and communication strategies; because they connect with their consumers, giving identity-value to the consumer and allowing the consumer to consistently experience the culture of the brand (Holt, 2004:3-9).

• Rindell (2010) reiterates that positive associations created by a brand story because it embodies ideals admired by the 21st century consumer are paramount to the consumer's decision to use a brand.

• Holt (2004:20) postulates that identity-value is a significant trait of iconic brands because it holds shared meaning between the brand and the consumer.

• Braun (2004:137) suggests that an iconic brand has succeeded in establishing a culture when the market consciously chooses a brand because it relates to what the iconic brand is, does and how the brand partners with the consumer in achieving a fulfilling brand reality.

• Puri and Stackdale (2006) purport that profitable brand awareness is not achieved by a brand just being noticed because of its positive media profile, but by a brand which draws stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to get to know more about the brand and ultimately incorporate the brand into their lifestyles.

5.6 METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Stakes (2010:83) purports that within a research study a methodological orientation or research paradigm is required because the data that is observed or the knowledge that is systematically gathered needs to be done according to a specific process. As such, Mertens (2005:2) describes a methodological orientation as the theoretical framework or perspective from which knowledge is gathered and interpreted. Thus, Du Plooy
(2009:85) notes that methodological orientation or a research paradigm guides the research study by defining the context in which the study is conducted and provides the relationship between research objectives, determining the motivation and goal of the research activities. Hence, Bassey (2003:42) notes that paradigms or methodologies take on different forms, with the most common ones being positivist and interpretivist.

Mertens (2005:8) explains that positivism can be used to study the social world because a cause that results in an effect can be observed, measured and explained, allowing members of society to predict and control forces (O’Leary, 2004:5), therefore the positivist paradigm is described as quantitative. As such positivist researchers observe the world as objective, thus the use of deductive reasoning and hypothesis testing (Scapens, 2004:261) so that new knowledge is acquired by measuring observations and applying methodical, systematic and controlled approaches so that valid and reliable conclusions can be drawn about the knowledge gained (Marczyk et al., 2005:4). Subsequently, Bruce et al. (2008:3-5) conclude that positivism is of the view that the truth about knowledge can only be scientific and objective.

However, from a different perspective, Bruce, Pope and Stanistreet (2008:5) found that the interpretivist paradigm relies more on how research participants use language, emotion and meaning to interpret their surroundings. Thus, Corbin and Strauss (2008:297) observe that the interpretive approach is defined as the organized analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in social settings, in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their own social realities. Therefore the interpretive paradigm is described as qualitative since the truth that is gained about the knowledge that is acquired can be varied, because it is determined by the quality of subjective interpretation as displayed by social discourse of the individual. Consequently, research methodologies or paradigms can be categorized as quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (words, pictures or objects) with the distinction between the two methodologies applicable to the whole research process and not only a specific part of it (Neuman, 2000:7). As such, Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) as well as Du Plooy (2001:29) describe qualitative research as a method that allows the researcher an opportunity to understand how people really feel about their social realities, although Charney (2004) criticises qualitative research as inherently subjective therefore it is not widely perceived as scientific research. Thus Neumann (2000:123) posits that quantitative methodology is a scientific research approach that is formalised and clearly controlled with specifically
defined parameters and therefore more widely applicable. Hence, Swann and Pratt (2003:90) highlight the point that there exists among scholars the tendency to polarise the two methods of research with the emphasis on their incompatibility, by weighing the strengths of each method against the other and claiming that quantitative research is scientific while qualitative is non-scientific. Macmillan and Schumacher (2006:12) agree with Swann and Pratt’s (2003:90) observation that qualitative and quantitative indicates differences in the nature of knowledge as described by how the individual understands the world, as opposed to the ultimate measurable goal of the researcher, thus researchers are seldom trained in the skills required to conduct studies from more than one paradigm, as individuals learn either a quantitative or qualitative paradigm; which is the perspective which becomes the dominant view in a particular research study (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2006:12).

However, Mayer (2000) cautions that the division into quantitative and qualitative should not be considered as scientific and non-scientific, but that both quantitative and qualitative can be scientific or non-scientific depending on other requirements of a particular situation. To overcome the division in literature about scientific quantitative and non-scientific qualitative research methods, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003:5) published a handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research, so that over time, researchers have come to agree that both quantitative and qualitative research techniques are relevant in order to clarify research methods that are applied to a study and that they can complement each other for the most compelling research outcomes (Hocking, Stacks & McDermott, 2003:105). Du Plooy (2002:39) supports this view and suggests that instead of choosing between two paradigms, future communication research should merge both methods, depending on the project requirements. It follows however, that both qualitative and quantitative researchers generally have varying assumptions about social life and have different objectives. Hence, quantitative researchers try to convert concepts about various aspects of social life into variables that can be precisely measured with numbers. Thus, the way they approach research and gather data will differ.

Neuman (2000:66) defines quantitative methodology as a systematic way of merging presumptive reasoning with absolute empirical observation of individual behaviour so as to determine and verify a set of probable causal laws that can be used to calculate common patterns of human activity as observed in a formalised, clearly controlled and defined range. Thus, Koerber and McMichael (2008:470) theorise that quantitative
methodology is a formalized, scientific approach with specific parameters, with the aim to predict, test and validate theory. In agreement, Du Plooy (2005:16) and Keyton (2006:36) purport that quantitative research is essentially concerned with testing propositions as a result of theories that result from observing and calculating communication phenomena according to quantities, frequencies, degrees, values and intensities. Thomas (2003) also observes that quantitative methodology underscores impartiality, values a preference for measurement and quantification of observable measures and a search for statistical regularities that can be observed, tested and explained as causal laws.

Neuman (2000:125) further theorises that quantitative researchers subscribe to a technocratic outlook, where the researcher is the authority and the research goal is to ascertain general overviews, with a leaning towards increasing efficiency through the use of clear, technical research procedures. This signifies that findings can be spread to a larger population, and direct associations can be made between two cases, as long as valid sampling and considerable procedures have been applied. Baines and Chansarkar (2002:23) concur, pointing out that researchers categorise features, calculate them and construct more complex statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed. Hence, scholars such as Fouché and Delport (2002:81) are of the opinion that quantitative research addresses the issue of integrity by relying on objective technology such as benchmark techniques, statistical data, duplication and mathematical measures. Furthermore, Neuman (2000:126) adds that in quantitative research, cases are typically the same as a unit of analysis, which is the unit on which variables are measured. Thus Neill (2007) purports that quantitative analysis allows researchers to discover which phenomena are likely to be measurable manifestations of the performance of a population and which are appear to be opportunistic occurrences. Consequently, an important aspect of quantitative research is that it disregards the human factor, which implies that quantitative researchers look for meaning in numerical relationships without highlighting the participants’ perspectives. Few (2004) and Tufte (2001) observe that another characteristic of quantitative research, is the graphical representation of data which is often applied and serves as a tool to make the information easier to process and comprehend. Tufte (2001) explains that graphical data are pictures used to clarify quantitative information, often the most effective way to describe, explore and summarize even a very large set of numbers. Thus Few (2004) adds that quantitative data that is presented in well-designed graphics help to structure
data and enable the reader to grasp and process information more quickly and efficiently, leading to increased information retention and improved decision making. As a result of the success of graphical data as a visual display method, it has been used for centuries. Furthermore, Few (2004) states that data presented in the form of pictures helps the reader to understand numerous points of interest from a single collection of information. Therefore, if quantitative information is skillfully presented in the form of graphics it tends to deliver certain types of information more successfully. Highlighting the advantage of quantitative research over qualitative research, Tufte (2001:91) observes that much of the contemporary world is observed and assessed quantitatively and as such, well-designed graphics are far more effective than words in showing such observations, therefore, pictures are more effective at conveying information than words.

Hence, Neuman (2000:22) concludes that quantitative research stresses the importance of the general laws of cause and effect and is based on an explanatory perspective, where truth consists of a world of verifiably defined facts that are characterized by explanatory research. According to Gratton and Jones (2010:7), explanatory research explains the reasons why events take place and assess causal relationships between the aspects that work together to bring about the events. Therefore, explanatory research requires a theoretical context so that explanation will be deduced from the data gathered. As such, Neumann (2000:22) observes that the characteristics of explanatory research are the following:

- Tests a theory’s predictions or principles.
- Elaborates and enriches a theory’s explanation.
- Extends a theory to new issues or topics.
- Supports or refutes an explanation or predication.
- Links issues or topics with a general principle.
- Determines which of several explanations is best.

Based on the discussion on quantitative research which leads up to the characteristics of explanatory research, the following are advantages of quantitative research as observed by Wimmer and Dominick (2005:50):

- Impartiality of researcher
- Accurate measurement and quantification
- Observable measures
Statistical regularities can be observed
Hypotheses can be tested and explained
Various methods of mathematical analysis

Notwithstanding the advantages of quantitative research, Palmquist (2005) posits that there are disadvantages as well. Quantitative research compels responses or people into categories that might not fit in any particular category, in order to make sense of results. Hence, the picture of data that might emerge from quantitative analysis therefore may be less inclusive than that obtained from qualitative analysis. Thus, for statistical purposes, classifications have to be exact, which means that an item either belongs to a specific category or it does not, therefore, in some cases quantitative analysis may materialize as data which is in fact not a true reflection of the reality (Palmquist, 2005). Another disadvantage of quantitative analysis is its tendency to marginalize exceptional incidents so as to ensure that statistical tests provide consistent results which does not always allow for the presentation of holistic data which is known as a strong feature of qualitative research.

Flick (2007:x) defines qualitative research as an approach which aims to understand, describe and explain factors within social realities from the inside by analysing the experiences of individuals or groups, by investigating interactions and social discourse in order to understand how individuals shape their environments in ways that create meaning for them. Furthermore, Shank (2002:5) explains that while qualitative research is a logical, empirical form of inquiry into meaning, it is not clinical or calculated; therefore it is driven by how participants interpret what creates meaning and reality for them. As such, Kapferer (2005) reminds that fundamentally, meaning is determined by how participants think, feel and talk about the way they experience their social realities. Thus, Fouche and Delport (2006:74) reiterate that the qualitative paradigm aims to understand the research participant’s perspective of experience and meaning. Hence, Elharidy, Nicholson and Scapens (2008:144) as well as Henning (2004:3) describe qualitative research as a framework that allows the researcher to describe and then understand meaningful social realities, as opposed to merely explaining research results as understood through calculated variables, as would be the case in quantitative research. Therefore Wood (2004:64) found that qualitative research aims not only to explore a social reality, but also to understand it. Moreover, Fourie (2007:145) adds that the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and explain, to explore and interpret, in order to build holistic theory. Klotz and Lynch (2007) concur adding that qualitative
approaches are regarded as exploratory because it aims to explore the research topic as widely as possible. As such, the goal of exploratory research is to formulate more precise questions that future research can answer. Hence Neuman (2000:21) argues that exploratory research could be the first stage in a sequence of studies which may be conducted in order to know enough to design and execute a second, more systematic and extensive study. Moreover, exploratory research rarely yields definitive answers and is difficult to conduct, as there are few guidelines to follow. Therefore, within exploratory, qualitative research, everything about a topic is potentially important. In agreement, Du Plooy (2005:83) adds that exploratory qualitative research seeks to explore participants' thoughts, attitudes, motivations and behaviours by using methods that seek to reach understanding through social discourse instead of measurement in order to describe behaviours, themes, trends or relationships that are applicable to the study. Additionally, Wilkinson, Joffe and Yardley (2004:39) are of the opinion that qualitative research aims to gain an appreciation for the factors that influence people's social realities as it allows participants to express themselves truthfully without limitations set by the researcher. As such, the qualitative research method is in tandem with the exploratory research design as it is often paralleled with authentic humanistic studies, avoiding numerical measures in favour of descriptive data. Hence, it is Babbie and Mouton's (2001:79) view that a large segment of social research is done to explore a topic or to establish a fundamental acquaintance with the topic. Therefore Babbie (2002:79) puts forward the idea that exploratory research is largely done to satisfy the researcher's desire for knowledge, to clarify the central concepts and constructs of a study, to test the viability of undertaking a more extensive study subsequently, to build up on the methods to be applied to a later study and to present new propositions about an existing occurrence (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:80). As an NRF (2008) and an NRF (2013) study found that a study to explore how the African Development bank uses its iconicity to establish profitable brand awareness using the principles of agenda-setting, has not been done before, the development of new propositions or recommendations has been deemed appropriate for this study. Furthermore, Miller and Brewer (2003:302) argue that the most crucial research design factor that applies to exploratory research is the requirement to apply an open and adaptable research strategy using methods such as literature reviews, interviews and case studies, which will lead to holistic insight and understanding of this study thus exploratory research fits strategically with qualitative research.
In addition, Neuman (2000:21) is of the opinion that the procedures for gathering qualitative data are not specifically linked to a definite theory or research question because essentially, qualitative research tends to be more open to using a range of evidence and discovering new issues. As such, Hennink (2007) purports that qualitative researchers generally depend on interpretive or critical social science as it endeavours to understand human behaviour and social realities from the perspective of the individual. Neuman (2000:76) describes critical social science as an essential process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real issues in the social environment in order to help people to be more authentic members of society, as Miller and Brewer (2003:193) found that the qualitative approach is based on the intensive study of as many features as possible to which people attach meaning in their lives. Thus, Neuman (2000:122) expands on Miller and Brewer’s (2003:193) view indicating that qualitative research seeks depth and meaning, rather than generality and contributes to theory development by analysing data holistically. As such meaning is attained not only by looking at specific features of many instances of a phenomenon but instead by approaching all aspects of the same phenomenon to observe interrelationships and establish how they contribute to the whole (Henning, 2004:10). Fouché (2002:272) concurs and indicates that the aim of qualitative analysis is a complete, detailed description. Hence, qualitative analysis allows for fine distinctions to be observed, because it is not necessary to categorise the data into a finite number of classifications. Due to the fact that the researcher only rarely discusses variables or hypotheses and prefers to interpret the soft data (words, impressions and symbols) collected, researcher integrity is a critical issue in qualitative research. Therefore, Henning (2004:10) is of the opinion that qualitative data provides quantitative researchers with useful information regarding the social processes in specific settings, as well as enables critical researchers to break through technocratic assumptions implicit in quantitative approaches. Expanding on Henning’s (2004:100) view, Bevir and Kedar (2008) add that the human factor and intimate first-hand knowledge of the research setting is emphasized by qualitative researchers, thus taking advantage of personal insight and human perspectives to understand social realities more fully. Prasad (2005) further notes that qualitative researchers aim to use participants’ own understandings of events in analysing social realities. In agreement, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006) indicate that qualitative researchers usually seek to clarify the meaning of reality from the participants’ perspectives. Moreover, the qualitative research process is an all-inclusive process that deals with unknown variables, uses
flexible guidelines, is context-bound, subjective and allows for an emergent design (Fouché, 2002:272). Furthermore, research conducted by Neuman (2000:145) reveals that qualitative data is empirical, as it involves documenting real events and recording what people say in order to explore and understand how individuals interpret their social realities (Chang & Aaker, 2009). Therefore, in order to determine the appropriateness of qualitative research methodologies, it is essential to document the advantages and disadvantages thereof, as suggested by (Alam & Hoque, 2010). The following are advantages of qualitative research:

- The researcher is able to view behaviour in a relaxed setting without the artificiality that surrounds experimental research.
- Qualitative research has the ability to enhance a researcher’s depth of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This is appropriate, as the implementation of this methodology will increase the range of understanding of this specific research topic, as there is a lack of information available on the topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
- Qualitative methods are characterised as being flexible and allow the researcher to pursue new areas of interest. This flexibility is crucial due to the fact that branding, iconic branding and profitable brand awareness within the communication theory of agenda-setting has not been widely explored. If new ideas arise during the research, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007:25) postulate that the study can be adapted to enhance the meaningfulness and quality of the results.

The following are disadvantages of qualitative research:

- Sample sizes are generally too small to allow the researcher to generalise the data beyond the sample selected for the specific study.
- Yin (2003) concurs with Wimmer and Dominick (2005) indicating that the reliability of data can be difficult to ascertain as single observers are describing unique events which could lead to a lack of objectivity and vigour.
- If qualitative research is not properly planned, a risk exists that the project may produce nothing of value.
- The findings of qualitative research cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can. This is due to the fact that the research findings are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Alam & Hoque, 2010).
Although both quantitative and qualitative methodologies share basic principles of science, the two approaches differ in significant ways as is presented in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Research Methods (Verification-based)</th>
<th>Qualitative Research Methods (Discovery-based)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure objective facts, such as test hypothesis that the researcher begins with.</td>
<td>Construct social reality, so as to capture and discover meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on variables, due to the fact that concepts are in the form of distinct variables.</td>
<td>Focus on interactive processes, events, due to the fact that concepts are in the form of themes or topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability is essential.</td>
<td>Authenticity is essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value free.</td>
<td>Values are present and explicit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent by context.</td>
<td>Context-based.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many cases or subjects.</td>
<td>Few cases or subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical analysis.</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher is detached.</td>
<td>Researcher is involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardized.</td>
<td>Measures are created in a flexible manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures are standard and replication is assumed.</td>
<td>Research procedures are particular and replication is rare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables or charts and discussing how what they show</td>
<td>Analysis proceeds by extracting themes from evidence and organising data to present a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the characteristics of qualitative research which explores context, social reality and meaning as expressed by the research respondent, Atagana (2009) notes that true to the 21st century communication, qualitative research allows participants to be active producers of meaning; hence it is appropriate for this study which explores how iconicity is used to establish profitable brand awareness within an agenda-setting context. Hence, the qualitative approach was found to be most suitable for this study because it is flexible, allowing the researcher and respondent to be interactive in order to pursue as much information as possible as participants get to feel that they are part of the process of adding to existing knowledge because they actively respond to and comment on matters that are of interest to the study. This flexibility is crucial due to the fact that branding, iconic branding and profitable brand awareness within the communication theory of agenda-setting has not been widely explored. Thus, if new ideas arise during the research, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007:25) postulate that the study can be adapted to enhance the meaningfulness and quality of the results. Qualitative research also has the ability to enhance a researcher’s depth of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation which is appropriate as the implementation of this methodology will increase the range of understanding of this specific research inquiry, as there is a lack of information available on the topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The qualitative research method was also chosen because it allowed the researcher to explore and understand the research topic as authentically expressed by the participants in order to understand how individuals shape their social realities in ways which create meaning for them. McNaught (2006) and Coulmas (2005:4) remind that the use and understanding of people’s actual interpretations of a situation demystifies the perspectives of social exchanges and cultural conventions so that there is a profound interconnectivity in society, created by the powerful force of language rather than numbers. In agreement with McNaught (2006) and Coulmas (2005:4), Pinker (2000:1) reiterates that the strategic use of language as an interpreter of reality, whether it is face to face or computer mediated communication as is a strong focus of 21st century qualitative research can bridge time and space, connecting society into an information-sharing network with positive impact for contributing to new knowledge.
about the research topic. Qualitative research is also synergistic with the agenda-setting theory because it focuses on how individuals think, feel and talk about their social realities from a holistic perspective, seeking meaning rather than generalization, categories or classifications, thereby contributing to respondent-driven rather than researcher-driven outcomes which are inherent in the agenda-setting theory of the 21st century. Neuman (2000:125) further theorizes that qualitative research subscribes to a contemporary collaborative approach where the researcher is not the authority and the research goal is not to ascertain general overviews but the researcher and respondent are co-authors of the message which ultimately contributes to the most holistic research outcome (Pavlik, 2001:31).

5.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Polit and Beck (2008:168) note that once the research objectives have been established, the next stage is to design a project that will enable the researcher to attain the research objectives, thus the determination of a population and a sample. As such, Du Plooy (2005:53) and Keyton (2006:119) refer to the population as a collection of objects, events or individuals that have a common attribute which is of interest to the researcher. The population therefore refers to a complete set of elements and their distinguishing features about which an inference can be drawn, based on a subset or sample of the population. According to The Africa Competitiveness Report (2013), a characteristic that has been attributed to the African Development Bank (AfDB) is that of an iconic status as Africa’s premier development bank. Edwards and Day (2005) as well as Godin (2005) observe that iconic brands have the reputation of being superior quality products, persons or services which enjoy widespread high regard because they inspire their consumers, telling brand stories that embody admired ideals, giving identity-value to the consumer and allowing the consumer to consistently experience the culture of the brand (Holt, 2004:3-9). In line with Edwards and Day (2005) as well as Holt (2004:3-9), the AfDB as a recognised iconic brand was chosen as the subject for this study, which aims to explore how the AfDB uses its iconicity to establish profitable brand awareness. However, the AfDB is a large organisation with a wide range of client groups such as the public sector, the private sector and Not-for-Profit organisations. According to the AfDB’s Annual Reports (2011, 2010, 2009), the public sector stratum of its clientele constitutes the majority of its market. Therefore, based upon this information, the chosen population for this study was made up of the public sector clients of the AfDB which include the 53 African governments as well as the Regional Economic
Communities (RECs) that are eligible for development assistance from the AfDB. The RECs are countries from a specific region that group together to foster economic integration among their constituent member countries and collaborate in development projects that are of mutual benefit to them as a region. An example of such collaboration is the Maputo Corridor that services the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The individual governments that constitute the public sector are: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkino Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d’voire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that make up part of the public sector clients of the AfDB are the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) which consists of Burundi, Comores, DRC, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda; the East African Community (EAC) which is made up of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda,Tanzania, Uganda; the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS) which consists of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Ivory Coast, The Gambia Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and the Southern African Development Community which is made up of Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagasgar, Malawi Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania,Zambia and Zimbabwe

Du Plooy (2005:53) and Keyton (2006:119) reiterate that a population is a collection of objects, individuals or countries as is the case in this study which share common features about which a conclusion can be drawn, based on a subset or sample of the population. Nieswiadomy (2008:50) posits that due to the fact that the population of interest is typically very large, it is not feasible to observe all of the population’s members, thus the researcher uses a sample from the population to study that population. As such, the sample is a relatively small subgroup of individuals from the population. The researcher observes a sample of the population and is able to extract valuable knowledge about the characteristics of the population (Taylor et al., 2007:2002). Sampling therefore enables a reduction of data so as to make data
analysis and interpretation easily understood (Polit & Beck, 2008:339). As a sample refers to a group that is representative of the larger population Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), note that there are two main methods of sampling, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Hocking et al, (2003:218) concur, adding that probability sampling has a statistical basis and relies on random selection of participants while non-probability sampling adopts a purposive selection which relies on non-random selection criteria, therefore non-probability samples are best used when conducting exploratory, qualitative research as is the case in this study (Mertens, 2005:237).

5.7.1 Probability sampling methods

With regards to probability sampling, Strydom (2005:198) indicates that units are selected randomly, therefore the chance of each unit of a population being selected for a sample can be calculated and every unit of a population has an equal chance of being selected. The distinguishing characteristic of probability sampling is that the researcher can specify for each element of the population the probability that it will be included in the sample. In essence, probability sampling increases the possibility that the selection of elements from the population provides an accurate reflection of the population parameters. However, notwithstanding the fact that several forms of probability sampling exist, each of them involves consideration of two issues: defining a population and identifying a sampling frame (Taylor et al., 2007:202). As already indicated, the population of a sector of research is not constant as it is defined by research objectives. Thus, defining a population provides the foundation for deciding upon an adequate and appropriate sampling strategy and determines how broadly the findings can be extrapolated. Thus, a sampling frame is a list that contains all of the elements of the population the researcher wishes to sample. Examples of probability (random) sampling are simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling (Buglear, 2005:470).

- **Simple Random Sampling** - De Marrais and Lapan (2004:337) posit that simple random sampling is the most basic kind of sampling and the one on which other types are based. Within this sampling, each subject or unit in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Buglear (2005:470) adds that before a researcher can undertake simple random sampling, the researcher needs to establish a clear definition of the population and compile a list of the elements in it, where the population list is the basis or framework of the sample.
selection known as a sampling frame. As such, each sample unit is selected on a random basis from the sampling frame by giving each unit on the sampling frame a unique number and then randomly selecting numbers between the top and bottom value, until the researcher has the requisite number of sample units.

- **Systematic Sampling** - This sampling method is simple random sampling with a short cut for random selection. Instead of using a list of random numbers, a sampling interval is calculated and the interval becomes the researcher’s quasi-random selection method (Neuman, 2000:206). In systematic sampling, for example, every 5th name on the list of names in the sampling frame is systematically chosen for inclusion in the sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). A sampling rate is then selected, after which the starting point and the interval are randomly selected (Creswell, 2009). However, Neuman (2000:206) argues that a major disadvantage of systematic sampling lies in the possibility that the sampling process may be biased due to periodicity.

- **Stratified Random Sampling** - Strydom (2005:200) argues that it is necessary in certain communication studies not only to draw a representative sample, but also to have certain strata or sub-groups included in the same proportion as they occur in the population. As such, the population is first subdivided into two or more mutually exclusive strata based on any characteristic or variable as simple random samples are drawn from each stratum. Subsequently, each of these samples is joined to form the complete, stratified sample (Neuman, 2000:208). Stratified random sampling is a popular sampling technique due to its cost-effectiveness and the control it provides the researcher; however, it is most effective with homogenous groups with regards to a specific characteristic such a gender, age or religious affiliation (Buglear, 2005:472).

- **Cluster Sampling** - Grinnell and Unrau (2005:162) observe that in some instances, the units of a population are not listed or known, therefore the population is divided into groups or clusters and a sample of clusters is randomly selected. Instead of sampling individual units the researcher samples groups, which saves time and is cost effective. However, the possibility of sampling errors increases in cluster sampling as there is a possibility that the randomly selected clusters, and the individual units that make up these clusters, are not necessarily representative of the whole population (Bruce et al., 2008:138).

Multi-stage sampling - Bruce et al. (2008:139) posit that multi-stage sampling is a method that is carried out in phases, so that if the target population covers a wide
geographical area then the area to be surveyed is divided into smaller areas and a number of these smaller areas are then randomly selected (Oakshott, 2006:70). This procedure is continued until the area is small enough for a simple random sample or stratified sample to be selected.

5.7.2 Non-probability sampling methods

Bryman (2004:87) found that qualitative researchers tend to employ non-probability or a non-random sample, which implies that they rarely determine the sample size in advance and have limited knowledge about the larger group or population from which the sample is taken. As such, units are chosen gradually with the specific content of a unit determining whether it is chosen (Neuman, 2000:196). It is the unit’s relevance to the research topic rather than the representativeness which determines the manner in which the people or units to be studied are selected. According to Buglear (2005:475), researchers intentionally select sample units in non-probability sampling so that a selection chance is unknown to each unit of a selected population and it cannot be guaranteed that every unit of a population has an equal chance of being selected. In non-probability sampling, there is no way to estimate the probability each element has of being included in the sample and no assurance that every element has an equal chance of being included. Hence, the chance for bias is higher within non-probability sampling, thus generalizations that are derived from these samples are regarded as being less accurate than those that are based on probability samples. As such, Bowling and Ebrahim (2005:226) note that there are four main types of non-probability sampling, namely a convenience sample, quota sample, snowball sample and a purposive sample:

- **Convenience Sampling** - In convenience sampling (also known as hazard or accidental sampling) sample selection is less preconceived and directed, and more the product of expediency, chance and opportunity than of deliberate intent (Marczyk, Dematteo & Festinger, 2005:84). Thus, convenience sampling occurs when cases are selected that are convenient, such as randomly choosing a person on the street (Strydom, 2005:202). However, this method is criticised due to the fact that it may misrepresent the population (Neuman, 2000:196).

- **Quota sampling** - Buglear (2005:476) describes a quota sample as similar to a stratified random sample, as the researcher determines what proportion of the
population is to be included in the sample and then applies that proportion to the sections of the population to work out the quota of participants needed from each section in the population. This method allows for finding a suitable amount of elements from each section of the population to fill each quota. Hence and Bruce et al. (2008:140) observe that quota sampling is often used by market research organisations for obtaining stakeholder views on brands or for political opinion polls. However, quota sampling has been criticised by Castillo (2009) for not being completely representative of the sample as well as being open to bias from the researcher.

Purposive or judgemental sampling uses the judgement of the researcher in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind (Strydom, 2005:202), such that the sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population, leading to certain members of the population being purposefully chosen (Oakshott, 2006:75). As such, Wallen and Fraenkel (2001:139) contend that the researcher uses previous knowledge of a population to judge whether a particular sample will be representative. Silverman (2000:104) agrees, adding that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it demonstrates some feature or process in which the researcher is interested and adds that purposive sampling demands that the researcher thinks critically about the parameters of the population that the researcher is interested in and choses the sample case carefully on this basis. Although for the purposes of this study, a non-probability, purposive sample is used due to the fact an exploratory, qualitative research methodology is being applied. Moreover, a purposive sample is pertinent as the chosen sample does not represent the general population, but instead, it attempts to represent a specific portion of the population (Neuman, 2003:213) such as the public sector client segment of the African Development Bank. The sample for the current study included representatives from the public sector clientele of the AfDB. They are: Mauritania, Zambia, Senegal, Ethiopia, Cameroon, The Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan and Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Guine Conakry and Lesotho. In addition to the single countries that made up the sample were some representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which are economic groupings constituted to foster economic integration among their constituent member countries. The RECs that made up part of the sample were: Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) and East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).
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5.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

Scheffer (2005:166) notes that a well-defined research design is a precondition for any research study. Schoonraad (2003:130) agrees, adding that a research design denotes what actions need to be taken in order to most effectively achieve the research objectives of the study. Therefore Marczyk, Dematteo and Festinger (2005:123) posit that a research design is the overall framework of a study set out to answer research questions and to obtain empirical evidence in relation to the research problem, thus Cooper and Schindler (2003:146) lay out the essentials of research design below:

- An activity and time-based plan.
- Always based on the research question.
- Guides the selection of sources and types of information.
- A framework for specifying the relationship among the study’s variables.
- Outlines procedures for every research activity including what kind of approach should be used.

Furthermore, Cooper and Schindler (2003:146) observe that at the beginning of any research study, the researcher has to choose a specific design to use as a range of different designs exist but no simple classification system defines all the variations that require consideration. Thus, Scapens (2004) observes that qualitative case studies are
more often used to develop and extend theory as it generally offers the most effective results (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:146). As such, Damon and Holloway (2002:105) define a once off case study as an in-depth study of occurrences of a phenomenon in a specific context and from the perspective of the participants as they experience their social realities. Hence, Yin (2003) observes that the case study method is appropriate when the researcher’s aim is to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristic of social realities as expressed by participants. Therefore, an essential characteristic of case study research is that the unit or phenomena be clearly defined.

Moreover, Daymon and Holloway (2002:105) describe a case study as an intensive investigation of a location, an organisation, community, event, or process using multiple sources of evidence of a single entity in order to increase knowledge about actual contemporary communication dynamics of its operations. Thus Gratton and Jones (2003:6-7) purport that there are at least four different applications of a case study, namely: exploratory, explanatory, descriptive and predictive, depending on the purpose of the research, the degree to which the research design has been structured, the method of data collection and how that data is analysed (Cooper & Schindler, 2003:147). As such, Bassey (2003:29) explains that the goal of an exploratory case study is to acquire knowledge by directly observing a social phenomenon within a specific context, while an explanatory case study presents data bearing on cause-effect relationships by explaining which causes produce which effects. Furthermore, Yin (2003:15) notes that a descriptive case study describes a situation and the real-life context in which it occurred, focusing on what is happening as opposed to why it is happening (Gratton & Jones, 2003:6). Hence, a predictive case study forecasts future phenomena based on the interpretations suggested by explanatory research (Gratton & Jones, 2003:7) and Yin (2003:15) argues that a fifth application can also be considered, the illustrative case study, where case studies can illustrate certain topics within an evaluation.

Berg (2001:225) reiterates that an exploratory, case study involves systematic gathering of data about a particular person, social setting, event, or group in order to allow the researcher to effectively learn how it operates in order to fully understand how it functions, therefore it is an intrinsic or in-depth case study. As such, the present case study is exploratory and intrinsic in nature, as it sets out to explore how the public sector clients of the AfDB experience the way the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness. Hence, a first justification for choosing the exploratory,
The intrinsic case study method includes the aspiration of the researcher to understand complex social and economic phenomena such as iconic branding and profitable brand awareness within a specific context as well as the belief that the case study approach allows the researcher to explore the actual environment related to the phenomena from a holistic and meaningful perspective of contemporary events (Yin, 2003:1). Nonetheless, Flyvbjerg (2004) observes the following disadvantages of the case study research design:

- The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory-building.
- The case study contains a bias towards verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions.
- It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of a specific case study.
- The case study cannot contribute to scientific development, implying that one cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case.

In agreement with Flyvbjerg (2004), Lum (2002:170) reiterates the difficulty to generalize a specific case study to other cases, due to the small number of individuals examined in these studies which makes it unlikely that the findings will generalize to other people with similar issues or problems (Marczyk et al., 2005:149). However, Shank (2002:53) argues that the basic purpose of the intrinsic case study is not to evaluate nor generalize to a larger population but rather to make its own case. Hence, Neuman (2000:21) reminds that exploratory research seeks to explore the specific case-study under investigation in order to argue towards a logical conclusion and not necessarily to prove it. Therefore, DeMarrais and Lapan (2004:218-219) confirm a second justification for the use of an intrinsic case study for this particular study because the importance is not based on whether the findings can be generalized to a wider universe but on how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings as it relates to a specific case within a particular context.

Regardless of Flyvbjerg’s (2004) and Lum’s (2002:170) criticism of case study research design not contributing to scientific development, Anderson, Crabtree, Steel and McDaniel (2005:673-680) have listed a number of advantages for case study data collection within a complex scientific framework. These advantages include:
understanding the historical background of the entity under study; focusing on the gap between ideals and practice; focusing on unexpected outcomes; emphasizing a shared understanding among participants; emphasizing the unit under study as an organized unit as opposed to a random selection and emphasis on holistic outcomes as major as well as minor relationships among participants are taken into consideration. Further advantages of the case study design according to Knight (2002:41) include that these designs tend to be small-scale works, are not artificial like experiments and surveys and encourage researchers to work in-depth by going beyond superficial research approaches, thereby compelling researchers to look for meaning and acquire deep understanding of the subject being researched. Daymon and Holloway (2002:106) explain that this is possible because case study research presents a unique opportunity for the researcher to collect rich, detailed information about one particular case. Hence McKee (2004) concludes that within case study research there is no standardization as the case study can be simple or complex. It can focus on a single individual, a group of individuals, organisations, processes, neighbourhoods, institutions and events. Thus it is used extensively in social science research such as the present study. Moreover, Cutler (2004:367) reiterates that case study research as it may be applied in the social sciences is for the purpose of investigating activities or complex processes that are not easily separated from the social context within which they occur. Bassey (2003:23) adds that case studies recognise the complexity and embedded nature of social truths so that by carefully attending to social situations, case studies are able to represent the discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants and as a result, may form an archive of descriptive material suitably informative, for subsequent reinterpretation.

Stakes (2010) discusses the following characteristics of qualitative case study research, which are useful when considering case study as a methodology.

- It is holistic, focusing on the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon or single unit with deep contextual detail.
- It is empirical. The researcher maintains a realistic, first-hand orientation towards the process of data collection.
- It is interpretive. The researcher acknowledges the importance of researcher-subject interaction; therefore the researcher needs to be aware of preconceived ideas and biases.
• It is emphatic. Qualitative case study research as a human science maintains the value and respect for persons.
• It offers flexibility in choosing data gathering processes with the aim of understanding the phenomenon embedded within its contextual background.

Once the researcher has decided on the type of application for the case study, the determination has to be made whether a single or multi-case design will be used to address the research question and this must be decided prior to any data collection (Yin, 2003:39). Subsequently, the paramount research design for this study is a single, once-off, intrinsic, explorative case study because it represents a unique case in which the researcher did an in-depth study in order to answer the research question on how the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness.

5.9 DATA COLLECTION
Baines and Chansarkar (2002:24) name the interview as one of the most common methods of collecting data for qualitative research as the researcher is guided by a number of basic issues to address with a small group of participants, focusing on acquiring comprehensive information rather than asking a stringent set of questions with predictive outcomes. Wilkinson et al. (2004:39) agree, adding that interviews have become the most widely used method of obtaining the viewpoint of participants for qualitative analysis, as the descriptions and opinions produced by this method potentially produces unanticipated knowledge into aspects which previously may not have appeared relevant as well as offering valuable information with regards to the personal and social realities which impact upon the meaning ascribed to the experiences. Hence, the data required for the purposes of this once-off intrinsic case study was collected by means of the interview method. Kvale (2007:7) defines an interview as a structured interaction rather than a casual exchange of views between an interviewer and an interviewee, which entails a careful questioning and listening approach with the aim of obtaining thoroughly explored knowledge. Kvale (2007:9) further points out that the interview is a key opportunity for exploring the ways in which research participants experience and understand their world, as it provides a unique access to the real-life world of the participants, who in their own words describe their activities, experiences and opinions. Thus the focus of the interview is built on significant values in the world of the respondent. Moreover, the analysis of the interview can highlight the values in the life of the respondent and give insight to its holistic meaning. In the interviews conducted for the purposes of this study it was important to
establish the participants’ expression and experience of how the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients. The interview method of data collection was chosen to explore the research problem of this study because understanding of the particular and respective experiences of each respondent was essential for the interpretation of the outcome of this study. According to Strydom (2002:213), interviews should take place against the background of a broad perspective gained from the literature review. The explorative, qualitative research method that is implemented in this once-off intrinsic case study employed the face-to-face, telephone and email interview with questions based upon the literature review (Heaton, 2004:37).

Wilkinson et al. (2004:40-41) posit that there are three different types of interviews, namely the structured interview, unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview. The structured interview utilises a structured schedule that contains a fixed number of questions, where most have fixed choice answers that are coded in a standardised manner and in some cases, the structured interviews are accompanied by a written interview guide that contains demographic information. Knight (2002:61) continues that highly structured, fixed-response interviews are often used for purposes when reliability (regarding consistency of interviewing practice) is a necessity and in those cases where the aim is to collect data from many participants so as to be captured in numerical form and statistically analysed, the interview schedule will have been very carefully designed and piloted. Bryman (2001:107) clarifies that because structured interviews ask each respondent the same questions, there is no room for elaboration although the data from such interviews are much easier to process than unstructured or semi-structured interviews.

In addition, Wilkinson et al. (2004:41) postulate that unstructured interviews cover one or two key issues in great detail and the interviewee’s perspective shapes what the interviewer follows up. Hence, Patton (2002) notes that unstructured interviews, often start with a very broad, open question, so that each interview conducted may have different answers and there is no guarantee that the participants will talk about the same thing and as a result, this can be both time consuming and difficult. Knight (2002:62), who refers to the unstructured as the conversational interview, warns that one of the pitfalls is that good rapport, plenty of empathy and skilled listening may distract the researcher from gaining valuable information. Nonetheless, informal questioning techniques are intended to encourage interactive dialogue. Thus, Daymon and
Holloway (2002:166) add that interviewing is more than just conversation, as there is always a purpose and usually some form of structure where the purpose and the degree of structure are conceived by the researcher, who directs the conversation in order to address topics of interest to the research.

The semi-structured or interview is described by Kvale (2007:8,11) as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena and although it resembles an everyday conversation, it is a professional interview that has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique. Greeff (2005:292) agrees that the semi-structured interview is a conversation with the purpose of understanding the experience of other people and the meaning that these people gain from their experiences. Wilkinson et al. (2004:41) further explain that a semi-structured interview is based on an interview guide with typically five to eight broad questions, including probes to supplement the questions if the participants have difficulty in elaborating on their perspectives. Corbetta (2003:270) concurs that a semi-structured interview is one in which either the interviewer refers to prepared key areas to be covered in the interview, or uses a set of questions with the option of adding other questions into the interview so as to capture elaborations and adds that of the three types of interviews used in qualitative research, the semi-structured interview is the most common. As such, Bryman (2004:27) notes that this method is viewed as being particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case. Nonetheless, Knight (2002:62) argues that even when interviews are likely to be exploratory, conversational and free flowing, the interview still needs to be carefully planned by having a list of prompts or key questions. Hence, Donalek (2005:124) observes that in the semi-structured interview, the researcher has planned a series of open-ended questions focusing on different parts of the particular research issue. With the semi-structured interview, Greef (2002:302) reiterates that the researcher has a set of predetermined open-ended questions that are guided by an interview schedule. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview seeks to promote an active, open-ended dialogue where the interviewer controls the discussion by referring to an interview guide that sets out the topic to be covered during the exchange (Corbetta, 2003:270). Unlike the structured interview, the semi-structured interview implies that the researcher purposefully deviates from detached observation in order to experience the world of the participant. Thus non-verbal behaviours are taken into account. Greef (2002:292) concurs and notes that semi-structured interviews are
interactive events and the interviewers are inherently part of creating meanings that reside within the participants. As such Kapferer (2005) reminds that meaning is determined by how individuals think, feel and talk about what constitutes a social reality for them.

Babbie and Mouton (2004:289) describe the face to face interview as a verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interview in the same physical space, where the purpose is to understand the interviewee’s life experience from his/her point of view. Thus the face to face interview has the goal of gathering information from another individual during a structured conversation guided by the interviewer. A recording of the interview may be useful for the interviewer if permission is granted by the interviewee, therefore Hayes and Mattimoe (2004:363) remind that the interviewer should explain the reason for the use of a tape and ensure the interviewee of confidentiality so that the respondent is clear about why the data is required, how it will be used and the purpose of the research. Neuman (2003:290) observes that the advantages of the face to face interview includes: producing the highest response rate, permitting the longest interview guide which may contain visual aids, allows the observation of the surroundings and non-verbal communication, as well as allowing for the elaboration and investigation of important issues and concepts that may arise during the interview. Nonetheless, according to Robson (2002:273) and Neuman, (2003:290), the disadvantages of face to face interviewing are the high cost of training, travel and supervision of interviewers as well as interviewer bias through appearance, tone of voice; question wording and personality.

With regards to email interviews, McAuliffe (2003:59) describes computer mediated interviewing such as email interviews a challenge to the boundaries of more traditional means of face to face data collection, while Meho (2006) finds qualitative interviewing by email a viable alternative to face to face or telephone interviews as it transcends time and space. However, as with all interviews, the researcher first has to obtain consent from the participant as well as give the assurance that the privacy of the participant and the confidentiality of data will be maintained. The researcher also has to give the participant a full explanation as to the scope and reason for the research. Hence, advantages of email interviewing include: reaching participants that are geographically out of reach of the researcher at a considerably lower cost than travelling or telephoning them. Data collected by electronic format also needs minimal editing or formatting before being processed for analysis. In addition, email interviewing enables the
researcher to interview more than one respondent at a time because a standard list of questions can be sent individually to several interviewees at the same time regardless of geographical location or time zone. Karchmer (2001) also notes that email interviews may also overcome the problem of interviewers and interviewees who may not be able to express themselves verbally as well as they might do in writing. Another strong advantage of the email interview is that it allows participants to answer questions in a relaxed manner, in a familiar environment and they may take as much time as they may need to answer the questions (Lehu, 2004). Hence email interviewing empowers the participant who is essentially in control of the flow of the interview to disclose information more freely unlike in face to face or telephone interviews in which the researcher manages the conversation (Kennedy, 2000). Notwithstanding the advantages of email interviews, Bowker and Tuffin (2004) state that disadvantages of email interviews include: lack of access to the internet, online communication skills required from both interviewer and interviewee, a strong degree of commitment and motivation from participants to the study, it may take a long time to collect responses from participants; invitation for participation may be deleted before interview is read due to information overload as well as the lack of non-verbal and inaudible cues that contribute to the data collection experience of face to face or telephone interviews.

Within telephone interviews, the researcher initiates a dialogue with another person and engages the interviewee as a human being, not a research subject (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Thus, the interviewer does not utilise a structured interview, but rather constructs a guide of open-ended questions. Telephonic question administration offers some important advantages such as: relative low cost, short data collection time, response rate is usually good, questions can be clarified, participants don’t have to be literate and participants are comfortable in their own surroundings (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006:399). However, the disadvantages of telephone interviews included difficulty in gaining access to certain samples of participants and non-verbal behaviour cannot be observed (Novick, 2008). Nunkoosing (2005) also notes that when the interviewer and the interviewee are not in the same physical space and cannot see each other, they may misrepresent themselves and researchers might not able to detect misleading information which may lead to distorted data (Garbett & McCormac, 2001:101).

The data gathering process took place while the researcher lived in Tunisia where the African Development Bank headquarters is based. After the research proposal was approved by the University of Johannesburg, the researcher made an appointment with
the head of Corporate Communications of the AfDB, Ms Arunma Oteh to discuss the proposal and the value that such a study would add to the bank. Ms Oteh granted verbal permission for the research to be done and a member from the Communications Department, Ms Onike assisted the researcher in gaining access to public sector client representatives who would attend AfDB meetings relevant to the study and who would be willing to make a contribution by participating in the interviews. The researcher then participated in as many official meetings which were either organised by the AfDB or where the AfDB and its public sector clients were participants. The majority of the participants who participated in interviews for the study were present at the Regional Integration Strategy Workshop which took place in January 2009 in Tunis, Tunisia to formulate the AfDB group Regional Integration Strategy 2009-2012. Three of the participants were met at the AfDB Annual Meeting in Senegal and three were met at the World Water Forum in which the AfDB participated in Turkey 2009.

For the face to face interviews the researcher met with participants during lunch breaks, asked for permission to tape the interview and later transcribed the information obtained from the respondent. As not all willing participants were able to do face to face interviews due to time or language constraints (some participants were French speaking), the researcher collected their business cards to follow up the initial introduction which was made at the meeting by email or telephone. With the assistance of Ms Onike, the interview guide was translated into French and emailed to the participants from Guinea Conakry and The Ivory Coast.

Table 5.2 Participants interviewed by email.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional member country</th>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Position and designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Conakry</td>
<td>Mr. M. Barry</td>
<td>Advisor: Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>Mr A. Kanga</td>
<td>Advisor: Ministry of Planning and Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.3 Participants interviewed face to face.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional member country</th>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Position and designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Ms. K.P. Sayinzoga</td>
<td>Director: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning Macro Economic Policy Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>Mr. Oumar Coulibaly</td>
<td>Director: Ministry of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Mr. K. Konga</td>
<td>Minister: Water and Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Mrs. A. Seck</td>
<td>Director: Water Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Mr. Minelik Alemu</td>
<td>Legal advisor: Foreign Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Dr. Samuel Menbohan</td>
<td>Ministry of Energy and Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Mr. Bai-Maas Taal</td>
<td>Sec. Gen.: African Ministers Council on Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Mr. Joachim Ezeji</td>
<td>CEO: Rural African Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Mr J. Atta-Mensah</td>
<td>Chief: Regional Integration Economic Commission for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Dr. Abdalla Hamdock</td>
<td>Director: Regional Integration Economic Commission for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Mr. R. Randriamandrato</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Officer: COMESA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East African Community (EAC)</td>
<td>Ambassador J. B. Onen</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary General: Projects and Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS)</td>
<td>Mr. L. B. Kamara</td>
<td>Director: Transport and Telecommunication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Mrs. P. Lekholoane</td>
<td>Senior Economic Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Mr S. S. Sesay</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance &amp; Economic Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Participants interviewed by telephone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional member country</th>
<th>Name of participant</th>
<th>Position and designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Mr K. Muhakanizi</td>
<td>Deputy Sec. Treasury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)</td>
<td>Mr. S. R. Karangizi</td>
<td>Assist. Sec. General: Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern African Development Community (SADC)</td>
<td>Mr. R. Makumbe</td>
<td>Director: Infrastructure and Services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5 represents a tabulation of the four Regional Economic Communities that were interviewed and the countries that they represent. As can be seen from the table, COMESA represents 19 countries, ECOWAS represents 15 countries, SADC represents 15 countries and EAC represents 5 countries. Adjusting for the overlaps between COMESA, EAC and SADC, the total number of countries represented by all the RECs interviewed is 41.
Table 5.5 Regional Economic Communities and the countries they represent

|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

The researcher conducted the interviews with the assistance of an interview guide. As an introduction to the interviews, the participants were informed as to what the research was about and that their honest viewpoint was of value to outcome of the research,
therefore there were no right or wrong answers. A selection of open-ended questions based on the theory on agenda-setting, branding, iconic branding and brand awareness were used as a guideline. The theoretical concepts served as the premise on which the actual questions in each section and sub-section of the interview guide were set. The interview guide was divided into seven sections. Section A covered the generic branding and iconic branding theory. Sections B, C, and D addressed the three contributing factors that make up an iconic brand, i.e. the brand story, identity–value, and culture of the brand respectively. Section E sought to determine how these contributing factors were used by the African Development Bank to establish profitable brand awareness. Sections F and G, gathered biographic and contact information of the participants. When participants gave yes or no answers they were prompted to elaborate by the use of follow up questions and for some questions the researcher rephrased the answer to ensure that the respondent was clearly understood. At the end of the interviews the participants were thanked for their valuable time and input and asked if they would like to receive feedback on the research.

5.10 DATA ANALYSIS

According to research conducted by De Vos (2002:339), data analysis is the process of bringing structure, order and meaning to the collection of gathered data. Traditionally, research study separates data collection from data analysis. However De Vos (2002:339) argues that qualitative research study involves an inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis because qualitative analysis assists with changing collected data into findings, which involves reducing the volume of gathered information, separating significant information from the insignificant, identifying important patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveals. In agreement with De Vos (2002:346), Fouché (2002:273) states that data collection and data analysis within the qualitative research approach stand in a reciprocal relationship with one another as the process of data analysis brings order, structure and meaning to the collected data. As such, Anderson (2007) posits that Thematic Content Analysis as a useful data analysis tool because it results in a descriptive presentation of qualitative data that may have been obtained from interview transcripts of research participants. The goal of this form of data analysis is to identify common themes in the responses to the interviews. In this instance, each section of the interview guide was based on a theme of the study. The themed sections were demarcated as follows:
Section A of the interview guide addressed questions on the theme of 21st century branding. The responses to the interviews were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Brand reputation
- Brand salience
- Brand experience.

The sub-themes were then presented in tabular form to show similarities and differences in responses to the interviews.

Section B of the interview guide addressed questions on the theme of the brand story as one of the three components of the iconic brand. The responses to the interviews were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell brand story
- Use of media to tell the AfDB’s brand story

The sub-themes were then presented in tabular form to show similarities and differences in responses to the interviews.

Section C of the interview guide addressed questions on the theme of identity-value as one of the three components of the iconic brand. The responses to the interviews were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Admired values
- Relevance

The sub-themes were then presented in tabular form to show similarities and differences in responses to the interviews.

Section D of the interview guide as one of the three components of the iconic brand. The responses to the interviews were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Resonance
- Framework for African development partnerships

The sub-themes were then presented in tabular form to show similarities and differences in responses to the interviews.
Section E of the interview guide addressed questions on the theme of brand awareness and explored how the AfDB uses its iconicity to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients. The responses to the interviews were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Stakeholder awareness
- Media exposure

The sub-themes were then presented in tabular form to show similarities and differences in responses to the interviews.

Sections F and G, gathered biographic and contact information of the participants.

Moreover, within the field of qualitative data analysis, Daymon and Holloway (2002:231) postulate that the Morse and Field approach can also be utilised. This approach consists of four cognitive processes integral to all qualitative data analysis methods, namely comprehending, synthesising, theorising and re-contextualising. As such, both the Thematic Content Analysis and the Morse and Field approaches to qualitative data analysis were applied to this study.

Step 1: Comprehending

De Vos (2005:337) theorises that the first process of comprehending, involves making sense of the data collected from each interview by repeatedly reading the completed transcript so as to get a sense of the whole interview before transcribing, checking and coding the data. Thus, Walker, Cooke and Mcallister (2008:86) state that the comprehension stage is reached when the researcher has sufficient data to compile a complete, detailed, coherent description of the data gathered so that it is possible to identify patterns, parallels and distinctions in order to predict an outcome (Morse & Field, 2002). Therefore, after the interviews were conducted, the tapes were listened to again and the interview notes that the researcher made during the interviews were reread in order to fully comprehend and transcribe the information received from the participants. The researcher was then able to identify recurring themes, fully appreciate related stories and begin to synthesise the data (Borland & Kenneth, 2001:11).

Step 2: Synthesising

According to Borland and Kenneth (2001:11) synthesising involves the evaluation of categories, which are sorted by common themes which consist of segments of notes.
compiled from the transcripts of several participants. Furthermore, De Vos (2005:338) posits that effective synthesising of the data into categories or coding of the acquired information requires the researcher to take careful note of nuances and use of verbal and non-verbal language by the participants as this contributes to a full understanding of the responses (Henning, 2004:3). As such the information can be analysed for relevance to the study by themes so that similarities and differences could easily be identified and tabulated for a comprehensive layout of the researched data.

Step 3: Theorising

Morse and Richards (2002:169) indicate that the third process of theorising involves benchmarking the collected data against existing theory so as to give the qualitative results gained from the research a framework within which to be applied and identify any new information that can be added to established theory. Thus the researcher needs to be well acquainted with the literature on the research topic so as to recognise and appropriately acknowledge data that can be linked to existing theoretical concepts or to identify any variations between what already exists and the data that the researcher has collected. As the questions in the interview guide were based on theoretical concepts, it was easy for the researcher to relate the responses back to theory or note any responses that differed strongly with theory.

Step 4: Recontextualising

The fourth stage, in turn, is characterised by the re-contextualising of the data. In essence, Daymon and Holloway (2002:239) purport that the results are placed within the context of established knowledge and the results which support the literature or detect unique contributions which can be added to the existing body of knowledge (Gratton & Jones, 2003:35). Throughout the analysis of the relevant sections, references were linked back to the literature pertaining to the concepts of branding, iconic branding and brand awareness and how agenda-setting, with regards to the role of the media in society, relates to the study. In order to further re-contextualise (De Vos, 2005:337) the findings obtained, a correlation was made between the theoretical evidence pertaining to media exposure, branding, iconic branding and profitable brand awareness, with the results from the interviews extrapolated into sub-themes set out in tabular form in order to present similarities and differences in responses.
According to Delport (2002:168), reliability refers to the extent to which independent application of the same instrument consistently yields the same or similar results under comparable conditions. As such, Zikmund (2003:375) explains that this means that similar outcomes are achieved over time and across situations. Hence the results are consistent and therefore reliable (Neuman, 2003:185). Furthermore, McBurney (2001:169) defines validity as a measure of accuracy with regard to the degree to which a research result relates to reality. Therefore, Delport (2002:166) adds that a valid measuring instrument must be appropriate in order to accurately reach the researcher's goals, thus the use of a pilot study. Strydom (2002:211) defines a pilot study as a miniature research study conducted prior to a larger study to test whether the methodology, sampling instruments and analysis are suitable, offering the researcher the opportunity to acquire practical experience and awareness of the complexity and dynamics of the particular field of research. Thus, Robson (2002:185) is of the opinion that the purpose of a pilot study is to investigate the reliability and validity of the proposed study and to detect possible errors in the instrument used for data collection. Moreover, Neuman (2003:181) purports that the rationale for conducting a pilot study is to improve the success and effectiveness of the interview guide in case modifications to the questions are required to ensure clarity of the questions and goals of the study, before engaging more participants. In alignment with Strydom's (2002:211) view, the pilot study constituted the test-run phase of the data collection process of this study to ensure the achievement of successful and effective interviews that would ultimately contribute to the reliability of the study. As such, the pilot study can be analysed in the same way that the main data will be analysed in order to ascertain whether the responses show sufficient understanding to answer the research question accurately and to reflect whether the findings are valid (Niemann, 2005:196).

The pilot study was done at a Regional Integration Strategy workshop, a meeting of Regional Economic Communities, held in Tunis on 19 and 20 January 2009 in order to validate the in-depth interview guide for the final study. Regional Economic Communities are two or more African countries that partner to implement development projects that are of common interest to them, e.g. the Maputo Corridor between Mozambique and South Africa. As they are public sector clients of the AfDB this was a meeting to consult with the Regional Economic Communities and discuss a strategy to best meet their needs. Three representatives participated in the one on one in-depth
interview, individually. The participants were Mr David Kamara from the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS), Ambassador Onen from the East African Community (EAC) and Mr. Richard Ranriamandrato from The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). It was found that the questions were clear, but the answers were not adequate (Cooper and Schindler 2003:392).

Therefore, a further test on respondent, Mr Emmanuel Nwainiubi, was done where the researcher probed and asked more follow up questions in order to obtain more in-depth answers. The result confirmed that the primary goal of the interview questions were valid and adequate to solicit more informative answers. This concluded the pilot study which was done to validate the semi structured, interview as an appropriate data collection instrument for the final study.

Notwithstanding the reliability and validity of the means of data collection which was achieved by the pilot study, research conducted by De Vos (2002:351-352) reveals additional concepts that contribute to accurate reflection of the qualitative paradigm. These four concepts are identified by De Vos (2002:351-352) as:

a) Credibility

The goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted so as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Moreover, the strength of the exploratory, qualitative study will be its validity, within the parameters of the setting, population and theoretical framework, ensuring that the research will be valid.

b) Transferability

With regards to the transferability, the actual generalisation of qualitative findings to other populations and settings could be difficult, however, in order to counter this challenge, the researcher could refer back to the original theoretical framework to illustrate how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models; thereby setting the theoretical parameters of the study.

c) Dependability

Dependability is viewed as the alternate to reliability. In attempting to prove dependability the researcher endeavours to account for changing conditions in the
occurrence chosen for review and the changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the research setting.

d) Confirm-ability

The researcher needs to determine if the findings could be confirmed by an independent researcher, thereby basing the evaluation on the data and not having to be influenced by the researcher’s objectivity.

Within the once-off case study, the validity is presented due to the fact that the parameters of the case-study are clearly stated, the population is known and the sample identified. Thus, according to the guidelines set out by De Vos (2002:351-352), the validity and reliability have been confirmed.

5.12 CONCLUSION

The subject of the case study research was the African Development Bank based on its iconic status as Africa’s premier development finance institution as recognised by multiple stakeholders such as The World Bank and The Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (NORFUND, 2009) as well as demonstrated by its successive AAA credit rating by Moody’s Investor Services and Standard and Poors, two of the top international rating agencies. According to the AfDB’s Annual Reports (2011, 2010, 2009) the public sector stratum of its clientele consists of its 53 Regional Member Countries which constitutes the majority of its market. The governments of these 53 African countries are eligible for development assistance from the AfDB, therefore they were chosen as the population for the study. The qualitative research approach was found to be a favourable research methodology because the research question was to explore how the AfDB uses its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients and the aims of the research study were to explore how the public sector clients of the AfDB experience the brand story, the identity value and the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand.

Furthermore the qualitative research approach focused on understanding the research participant’s perspective of how they experience the AfDB as an iconic brand and what this means for them as public sector clients of the AfDB. As such, Elharidy, Nicholson and Scapens (2008:144) as well as Henning (2004:3) reiterate that qualitative research allows the researcher to describe holistically and understand fully, meaningful social
realities as expressed by the participants, as opposed to merely explaining research results as understood through calculated variables which may not be a true reflection of actual, real-life experiences. Thus the qualitative approach was used in conjunction with an exploratory once-off, intrinsic case study and the data was collected by means of an interview guide which was tested for reliability and validity with regard to its content and the procedure that was followed in conducting the interview by means of a pilot study which was conducted before the main study was executed. In order to reinforce an in-depth understanding and to achieve a complete analysis of the data, the Morse and Field system was applied. According to this system, comprehension is achieved by: reading and absorbing the data; synthesising by means of tabulating the data to show similarities, differences and odds; theorising by linking the collected data back to the theory on which the study is based; and recontextualising any new contributions that may have been made to the study by benchmarking them against established literature. Notwithstanding the focus of obtaining holistic data that reflects the meaning that the participants ascribe to their experience of the AfDB as an iconic brand, a limitation of the study could be that the findings are only relevant to the public sector clients of the AfDB and may not be useful to generalise to a wider audience such as the private sector, NGOs and research institutions which are also clients of the AfDB and would thus require a subsequent study. Nonetheless the public sector clients represent the majority of the clients of the AfDB, and the results of the data analysis are considered relevant to draw final conclusions from, which are presented as findings and interpretations in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As it has been established that the AfDB is an iconic brand, chapters 2, 3 and 4 explored literature on 21st century branding, iconic branding and profitable brand awareness grounded in agenda-setting, with the aim of addressing the research problem which is: How does the African Development Bank use its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients? The participants who participated in the study consisted of representatives from the public sector clientele of the AfDB which included people from individual countries such as Mauritania, Zambia, Senegal, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Sudan and Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Uganda, Guinea Conakry and Lesotho. In addition to participants from the single countries that made up the sample were some representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), which are economic groupings constituted to foster economic integration among their constituent member countries. The participants who represented the RECs were from: The Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) and East African Community (EAC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

The findings in this chapter were obtained through interviews which were conducted with the aid of an interview guide that was divided into seven sections. Section A explored 21st century branding and iconic branding theory specifically in relation to brand reputation, brand salience and brand experience. Sections B, C, and D addressed the three contributing factors that make up an iconic brand, i.e. the brand story, identity-value, and culture of the brand respectively. Section E sought to determine how these contributing factors were used by the African Development Bank to establish profitable brand awareness among the public sector clients of the AfDB. Sections F and G, gathered biographic and contact information of the participants. Throughout the analysis of the relevant sections, responses were bench-marked against literature pertaining to the concepts of branding, iconic branding, and profitable brand awareness as well as how agenda-setting relates to the study. The outcomes of the analysed responses gave rise to the interpretations set out in this chapter.
6.2 BRANDING OF THE AfDB

Table 6.2 presents a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews that were held with AfDB public sector participants to Section A of the interview guide which addressed questions on the AfDB as a brand as presented in literature on 21st century branding. The questions were categorised into the sub-themes:

- Brand reputation
- Brand salience
- Brand experience.

The questions which addressed brand reputation were:

- What comes to mind when you think of the AfDB (products, projects, logo, colours, and reputation)?
- Does the AfDB present an image of a premier development institution? In what way?

The questions which addressed brand salience were:

- When considering development finance, which donor comes to mind first?
- Why is the AfDB uppermost or not uppermost in your mind?
- Which other development finance institution do you use besides the AfDB? Why?

The question which addressed brand experience was:

- In which way is dealing with the AfDB a positive experience or, not a positive experience?


Table 6.2 Summary of public sector responses: Branding of the AfDB

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
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| Brand reputation    | • Africa’s premier development finance institution  
                        • Financial resourcefulness  
                        • In-depth knowledge of Africa’s development challenges | • Limited media exposure                    |
| Brand salience      | • Not top-of-mind  
                        • Tedious consulting process  
                        • Not proactive            |                                             |
| Brand experience    | • Positive brand experience  |
                        | • Brand experience starts out positive but ends negative |                                             |

6.2.1 Brand reputation

Sarre and Treuren (2001) as well as Devine and Halpern (2001) posit that the brand of the 21st century has taken on a much more complex role than a name, to a fundamental participant in the 21st century economy where a brand’s reputation is built on economic value and social presence as a result of its history, credibility and business strategy. With regards to the brand reputation of the AfDB, the overriding finding from eighteen of the participants from the individual countries who were interviewed was that they associated the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance
institution. All four participants from the Regional Economic Communities also agreed that they definitely associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution. This finding was best articulated by respondent Seck (2009) from Senegal who categorically stated that the AfDB has the reputation of being THE development finance institution in Africa. In agreement, respondent Hamdock (2009) from Sudan substantiated this view putting forward the opinion that, “In Africa the AfDB presents the history of a premier development institution, primarily because it was the creation of Africa’s leadership after the independence of a few African countries in the 1960’s”. Respondent Konga (2009) from Zambia also confirmed that the AfDB is associated with its reputation as Africa’s premier development institution because “The AfDB was set up for the purpose of financing Africa’s development.” Furthermore, from the perspective of the Regional Economic Communities (REC’s), respondent Makumbe (2009) mentioned that the AfDB is associated with its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution because, “The AfDB has enhanced its credibility, especially in respect of the REC’s programs and now assumes its premier status, more so given its involvement with the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Financing Support Program”. In addition, respondent Randriamandrato (2009) remarked that, “In Madagascar the AfDB is perceived as having a clear vision of where Africa should go in terms of its development strategy. It is seen as not just another bank, but a bank oriented towards Africa’s development and as such it is known to have Africa as its only territory of focus.” Therefore the public sector clients associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development bank as a result of its:

- History
- Credibility
- Business strategy

History

The majority of public sector clients associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution because of its historical significance as the creation of insightful African leadership for Africa’s development. As such, the AfDB as a brand is a widely admired symbol of hope for Africa’s development and progress as it stands for African freedom and African competence, ready and able to develop Africa. It is therefore historically seen as a visionary brand with an unequivocal vision for Africa’s development because it was established by independent, forward thinking Africans who
had overcome colonial oppression. Hence, the history of the AfDB as an African brand strongly reflects the heritage and pride of the empowered African development consumer and as such it is a unique brand, distinct from any other development finance institution because of its singular focus on Africa. Thus it is seen as an insightful and inspiring brand as reflected in the expression by respondent Seck (2009) as THE development finance institution which understands first-hand, what is important for the African consumer of development finance and as such it is supported in literature as Neumeier (2006:19) explains that a brand is recognised as iconic when it is widely regarded as a most admired symbol of a set of values that society deems significant. Hence, as the AfDB’s reputation as Africa’s premier development bank is strongly and passionately recognised, it can be argued that historically AfDB has an emotional connection with the people of Africa, which is an important value of the brand which drives the competitive advantage of the AfDB as a development finance institution in Africa. As such, the emotional connection which the public sector has with the AfDB as a result of its history is in line with literature as Plummer (2002) purports that iconic brands symbolise some aspect of a brand’s image and history that customers share emotionally. For this reason, the uniquely African heritage of the AfDB appeals to the public sector clients’ emotional need for the authentic and the real as noted by respondent Randriamandrato (2009) that, “The AfDB is not just another development bank, it is Africa’s development bank, oriented towards Africa’s development and as such it is known to have Africa as its only territory of focus.” Thus the authenticity of the AfDB as a brand is personal for the public sector consumer because as an African consumer of development finance, the public sector client can relate to the AfDB in a real way and is not made to feel patronised as sometimes happens when the public sector clients interact with other development finance institutions, as was mentioned by respondent Kanga (2009) from the Ivory Coast. Instead, the public sector client embraces the AfDB as an African brand because they feel understood by the brand. Therefore, the AfDB as a brand emotionally engages the African development consumer as it appeals to the feelings and conversations of the public sector clients as they speak proudly of the AfDB as Africa’s development bank.

Moreover, because the history of the AfDB encapsulates the resilience of the African spirit, African values and African victory over domination, the AfDB holds the position of a superior African brand in the hearts of the public sector clients as it was established to achieve economic development and social progress in Africa, thus it evokes strong
emotional responses about its positive reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution. The strong emotional responses from the public sector clients in relation to the history of the AfDB show the complex role of the AfDB as an African brand as it resonates with the public sector clients on a social level because it was established to fund Africa’s development. Moreover, as THE African Development Bank, the AfDB is an authentic African brand led by Africans who are motivated to contribute to the development and advancement of fellow Africans. As such it is stakeholder focused as displayed by its African leadership, African staff, African consumers and it operates in Africa’s development environment to benefit Africa’s people.

Credibility

An admired value of the AfDB base on its reputation as Africa’s premier development institution is its credibility as an African brand. Thus the recognition by the public sector clients of the AfDB’s credibility highlights the significance of the AfDB as a brand which is trustworthy and reliable and as such it stands strong as an African symbol of credibility as confirmed by respondent Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria who reiterated that the AfDB is highly admired as a trustworthy brand as reflected in its “straightforwardness and transparency”. Hence the AfDB appeals to the 21st century brand consumer and it concurs with the Expectation Economy (Trendwatching 2008) in which the brand activist consumer holds the brand accountable for the way it conducts itself in the society, in the economy and in the environment. In addition, the recognition of the AfDB as a transparent brand correlates with literature as Scola (2011) reminds that the brand of the 21st century goes beyond the name, logo, and other tangible factors of the brand to include a much more brand-savvy, knowledgeable and empowered consumer or brand activist with expectations such as transparency, authenticity and trust between brand owners, channels of brand information such as the media and brand users. As such, the good reputation of the AfDB as Africa’s premier development institution is built on trust which is a social and branding reality of the 21st century Reputation Economy (Brown, 2011). Therefore, as such a highly reputable brand the AfDB has valuable reputation capital contained in its strong integrity and the trust that the public sector clients have of its substantial, differentiated advantage that distinguishes it from its competitors, as well as outlines to its public sector clients that it is truly a credible African brand on which African consumers of development can rely for constructive assistance. Furthermore, a fundamental expectation of the brand activist 21st century consumer is the brand’s
strategic response to the sustainability of the environment and the improvement of the lives of ordinary members of society, as reflected in the AfDB’s focus on poverty alleviation and the AfDB’s strategic involvement in supplying financial and technical assistance to the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Support Program, as was mentioned by respondent Makumbe (2009) from SADC. Hence, as a credible African brand the AfDB displays good Brand Citizenship (De Jongh, 2008) through its intentional business strategy to contribute to the progress of African society, the natural environment and ethical branding practices to ensure that the physical world remains sustainable for future generations. As such the credibility of the AfDB is emotionally and cognitively engaging to its public sector clients because they think, feel and talk about the brand as reliable and trustworthy as well as actively interact with the brand, thus the AfDB’s social and economic value as a credible African brand. Moreover, the widely acknowledged credibility of the AfDB as a brand can be analysed as a measure of the brand’s value in society and as such, the emotional impression on the public sector clients is confirmed by their high regard for the AfDB as a credible African brand. This finding can be compared to literature as Simoes and Dibb (2001:218) argue that in the 21st century economy the brand’s value is measured by its moral standing in society and its contribution to the sustainability of the natural environment, because brand owners are held accountable by the more informed, more demanding brand activist consumer of the 21st century.

Business strategy

Another inference that can be made from the finding that the public sector clients associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development institution is the admired value of the AfDB as an African brand with a clear business strategy to finance development and to eradicate poverty in Africa, as respondent Kanga from the Ivory Coast indicated that, “The AfDB as a business is the leader in reducing poverty in Africa”. Hence, in addition to presenting the image of a premier development institution, the AfDB as an African brand with its complex role as a historical premier, credible brand and as a such a fundamental participant in the 21st century economy, is acknowledged by its public sector clients as a well-run business, which means that as much as the brand is consumer-based, it is also cash flow based, emphasising the economic dimension of the complex role that the AfDB plays as a brand. Therefore the reality for the AfDB is that as a brand it is a strategic business asset and as such at every engagement with its stakeholders, it ensures its own success as it mobilises and
allocates financial resources to its public sector clients and provides policy and technical assistance to make a development impact in Africa. Thus the very nature of the business of the AfDB as a brand is characterised by it being stakeholder-focused as it collaborates with its public sector clients to achieve its business goal of financing Africa’s development. Therefore the brand is not only company-focused but also focused on the public sector clients, contributing to its relevance as a 21st century brand that collaborates with the consumer to achieve the brand agenda. Hence the AfDB as a brand is not just the label of its owners but is a brand with a business strategy that is purposefully intent on finding and funding solutions to Africa’s development problems, thereby practically meeting the needs of its public sector clients. Hence the AfDB is well aligned with the 21st century branding agenda as it follows a stakeholder-driven agenda that aims to provide a brand reality for the African development consumer that is a partnership with the AfDB as an African brand as acknowledged by respondent Muhakanizi (2009) from Uganda who mentioned that the fundamental reason for their association with AfDB’s status as Africa’s premier development finance institution is because, “The AfDB allows clients to determine their own priorities and then they work with you to finance those priorities.” This sentiment about the AfDB’s partnership with the public sector consumer was echoed by respondent Onen (2009) from the East African Community (EAC) who stated that, The AfDB is their first funding source because they are partnership friendly.”

In light of its business strategy as clear and consistent, the AfDB once again portrays the image of a premier development institution that as a brand correlates with a 21st century branding strategy called Consistency of Purpose (Swystun, 2007) which focuses on the good governance of a brand, while encouraging flexibility to maintain relevance and distinction, simultaneously upholding the brand’s credibility and consistently, guarding stakeholder interest in the brand. The attribute that has been ascribed to the AfDB as a brand with a clear focus on Africa’s development highlights the brand as distinct with a competitive advantage that cannot be replicated by other development finance institutions because it is Africa’s premier development finance institution as distinguished from other development finance institutions such as the World Bank which are not solely focused on Africa. As such this finding underscores the AfDB as a brand that is significant for the economic role it plays in driving Africa’s development agenda based on its clear business strategy. Therefore, the finding that the public sector clients of the AfDB associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s
premier development finance institution is emulated in literature where Lindstrom (2007:175) describes the iconic brand of the 21st century as a brand that holds universal high appeal because of its widely recognised favourable reputation.

With regards to the agenda-setting theory of the 21st century which emphasizes positive media content from multiple stakeholder sources, the overriding finding from the majority of public sector participants was that regardless of the AfDB’s reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution, this is not well publicised in the media, therefore the AfDB can improve on the media exposure of its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution, as was expressed by respondent Taal (2009) from Gambia who mentioned that, “The AfDB does not market itself well enough.” This response was reiterated by respondent Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia who said that, “The AfDB has to do more about its public presence in media discussions to enlighten people about its work so as to be better known by ordinary people in Africa, not just by the governments of Africa.” As such, the finding that ordinary people who are the ultimate public sector clients of the AfDB are not aware of the AfDB does not correspond with literature as Hollis (2007) posits that iconic brands with strong favourable reputations have little significance if they are not instantly recognisable by all stakeholders, inferring that the public should not only be aware of the brand’s existence, but the brand’s presence must be felt so that people are very familiar with the attributes that are attached to the brand’s reputation.

Two distinct reasons for the overriding finding that the public sector clients associate the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution were firstly, the AfDB’s financial resourcefulness to meet the needs of the public sector clients by financing critical development projects in Africa and secondly, the AfDB’s in-depth knowledge of Africa’s development challenges. Both these findings were acknowledged by respondent Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon who stated that, “The AfDB is the best development finance institution in Africa because it has more financial resources than other development finance institutions in Africa and they finance big development projects in Africa. Besides, the AfDB focuses on reducing poverty and improving the living conditions of people in Africa, therefore it has the reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution”. Also in support of the AfDB’s financial resourcefulness, respondent Kamara (2009) from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) stated that, “The AfDB is central to Africa’s development because of its financial resources to address poverty in Africa”. Consequently it can be gathered from
the participants’ reference to the AfDB’s financial resourcefulness, that the AfDB is recognised for its financial resourcefulness as a result of its prudent financial management, reinforcing the admired attribute that has been ascribed to the AfDB by its public sector clients as a credible African brand.

Furthermore, the prudent financial resourcefulness of the AfDB emphasises the admiration from its public sector clients for its transparent business strategy, making it clear to the public sector clients that the AfDB is poised to carry out its mandate to make a substantial financial contribution to development projects in Africa. Moreover, the fact that the AfDB is recognised as a financially resourceful brand points to it being a responsible brand that has proven to its public sector clients that it is always driven by the best interest of its clients as it fulfils its complex role in maintaining its economic and social significance in the African development landscape.

Thus, from the finding that the participants recognize the strong financial resourcefulness of the AfDB, it can also be proposed that the AfDB is a financially strategic resource for Africa’s development, emphasising the economic and social impact of the AfDB as a brand with a more complex role than the name of a brand as it presents the image of a fundamental partner which is stakeholder-focused in meeting Africa’s development needs. Hence the finding that the AfDB is recognised by its public sector clients as a financially competent and responsive brand, can be related to literature as Keller (2003:3) reminds that in the 21st century economy, in order for the brand to be sustainable, it has had to evolve from being a company-focused activity to being a consumer-focused activity, clearly embracing the consumer as a partner in the branding experience. Thus it can also be proposed that the financial resourcefulness of the AfDB shows that the AfDB conducts itself as a superior 21st century brand which connects and collaborates with its public sector clients on how best to use their financial resources as emphasised by respondent Muhakanizi (2009) who emphasised that the AfDB allows them as clients to determine their own priorities and then work alongside them to achieve their development goals. Furthermore, due to the AfDB’s credibility as a sound development finance institution the AfDB has proven itself to be a resilient 21st century brand that has been able to withstand the global economic crises as noted by respondent Kamara (2009) from the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS), who observed that the AfDB is so focused on Africa’s development that at the beginning of the global financial crisis, “the AfDB was even proactively putting in place a financial crisis response strategy in order to be a key
partner with us, as we don’t know what the impact will be on us as African countries”. Hence the finding shows that the AfDB as an iconic brand consistently presents itself as a strong African brand that continues to stand for Africa’s development and triumph over poverty. This finding is commensurate with literature as Edwards and Day (2005) observe that iconic brands have the reputation of being superior quality products, persons or services with winning branding and communication strategies; because they connect with their consumers, allowing the clients to determine their own brand reality by collaborating with the brand in setting the functional branding agenda. This finding also indicates that as a brand the AfDB’s stakeholder engagement emphasises to its public sector clients that as Africa’s premier development finance institution, the AfDB’s reputation as a sound financial resource shows to its clients that it can be trusted to ensure optimal financial and economic benefits for its public sector clients.

In addition to being acknowledged for its financial resourcefulness as an iconic brand, the AfDB is also widely regarded as the continent’s prime think-tank with regards to development and Africa’s most influential research and knowledge source (Ben Yaiche, 2012). This was confirmed by respondent Kanga (2009) from the Ivory Coast who emphasised that, “The AfDB understands the development challenges of Africa, so in addition to funding a project, they are also able to give technical advice because of their experience in development in Africa”. Respondent Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana agreed that the AfDB is “knowledgeable and authoritative about issues of development in Africa.” Therefore, this finding that the AfDB is associated with its reputation as having in-depth knowledge of Africa’s development challenges can be interpreted as true and therefore a brand reality for public sector clients as the AfDB is known to not only mobilise financial resources but has a positive and constructive approach to working with the public sector clients to overcome Africa’s development challenges. Hence, the AfDB is known to generate and share knowledge about the development of areas such as climate change, infrastructure and agricultural development in Africa, as mentioned by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania. As such, this finding can be reflected against literature with regards agenda-setting for the iconic brand in the 21st century economy, because Griffin (2006) reminds that agenda-setting for the brand does not only involve creating information about the brand, but it also creates awareness about the brand information. As such, the AfDB as an iconic brand does not only generate development knowledge, but it generates awareness of development knowledge by sharing the knowledge with its public sector clients. Furthermore, this
finding can be understood as an acknowledgement of the AfDB’s reputation as a competent brand that not only has experience and expertise in addressing Africa’s development needs but offers the public sector clients a distinct value proposition as the AfDB’s in-depth knowledge about Africa’s development is uniquely African. This uniquely African knowledge provides a competitive edge that cannot be imitated by competitors because they are not African, thus the public sector clients’ association with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution, as mentioned by respondent Lekholoane (2009) from Lesotho who emphasised that, “The AfDB is not just a financier, but a valuable knowledge partner in Africa’s development”. Thus, this finding once again highlights the AfDB as an insightful brand that embarks on stakeholder engagement as it shares its skills and competencies with the public sector clients, thereby engaging in intentional collaboration with the consumer as confirmed by respondent Muhakanizi (2009) from Uganda, who emphasised that the AfDB allows them as clients to determine their own priorities and then works alongside them to achieve their development goals. Therefore, this finding can be is supported in literature as Hallahan et al. (2007:4) reiterate that strategic communication of the brand offering involves brand owners intentionally engaging in conscientious conversation with stakeholders in order to incorporate their thoughts and opinions so as to deliver a holistic brand reality, in collaboration with the consumer. Hence, the in-depth knowledge of the AfDB is a fundamental contributor to the complex role which the AfDB plays as a 21st century iconic brand, thus the public sector’s association of the AfDB with its reputation as Africa’s premier development institution.

6.2.2 Brand salience

Romaniuk and Sharp (2004:334) postulate that brand salience can be described as the sharp prominence or how top-of-mind a brand is in a consumer’s mind, when faced with the decision to buy a specific brand from a range of brands in the same product category. From the semi-structured interviews it was found that for eleven of the sixteen participants from the individual countries and three of the four participants from Regional Economic Communities, the AfDB is not top-of-mind for them as public sector clients of development finance. Hence, the dominant similarity in responses with regards to the salience of the AfDB as a brand is that the AfDB is not as top-of-mind as competitors such as the World Bank in clients’ minds, for three distinct reasons:
Firstly, the AfDB does not communicate strategically or set an assertive branding agenda by using the media as effectively as its competitors do, to ensure that it is top-of-mind for public sector clients considering development finance in Africa. This view was most poignantly stated by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania who said that, “There is a perception that the AfDB does not have a relationship with the media as there is no publicity or media coverage of the work of the AfDB in Mauritania; which is starkly different from the perception that people have of competitors such as the Kuwait Fund which is so well publicised that it is even known by children in Mauritania”. In support of this view, respondent Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria mentioned that, “The World Bank has a much more effective communication strategy than the AfDB, because they are more noticeable in the media”. In addition, the perception that there is little or no relationship between the AfDB and the media was reiterated by respondent Karangizi (2009) from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) who noted that, “There is not sufficient media exposure of the AfDB.” This view was repeated by respondent Onen (2009) from the East African Community who also stated that, “There is not enough publicity of the AfDB in the media.” Thus, respondent Muhakanizi (2009) from Uganda suggested that, “The relationship between the AfDB and the media should be improved.” In agreement, respondent Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry explained that as a result of the lack of media exposure of the AfDB, “There is a tendency for us as public sector clients to think of other more publicised development finance institutions first, even though the AfDB is Africa’s premier development finance institution; because the AfDB does not communicate its position as Africa’s premier development institution as effectively as its competitors do”. As such, Romaniuk and Sharp (2004:334) remind that brand salience refers to the prominence of a brand in a consumer’s mind when faced with the decision to buy a specific brand from a range of brands in the same product category. It can thus be contended that despite the public sector clients’ association with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development bank, the AfDB is not necessarily salient in the minds of these clients, because according to respondent Barry, “there is a tendency for them as public sector clients to think of other more publicised development finance institutions first, even though the AfDB is Africa’s premier development finance institution”. Therefore, it can be argued that the AfDB is not taking advantage of its status as Africa’s premier development institution because it does not seem to have a strategic communication agenda to intentionally inform its public sector clients of the bank’s premier status and what this means for their economic and social reality as consumers of development finance. Hence, this finding implies that
there is not a very strong positive memory of the AfDB brand in the minds of the public sector clients as Braun-La Tour, La Tour and Zinkhan (2007) remind that brand salience originates in a consumer’s earliest and most defining memories of a brand. It is therefore in conflict with literature regarding brand salience as Du Plessis (2011) maintains that it is important for brand owners and managers to recognise that brand salience is contained within a blend of earlier and contemporary impressions, memories, associations and thoughts which are co-produced by consumers and this branding reality of the 21st century is crucial for relevant agenda-setting and the creation of brand salience in the mind of the contemporary consumer. As such, the finding that for the public sector clients the AfDB is not top-of-mind because of its lack of media exposure, is in stark contrast with the finding that the AfDB holds a more emotional prominence in the minds of the public sector clients in respect of its reputation as THE premier development finance institution as acknowledged by respondent Seck (2009) from Senegal, than a cognitive prominence as a reflection of its media exposure. Furthermore, the implication can be made that the lack of media exposure of the AfDB may have led to a brand message that did not make an impact on the minds of the public sector clients, specifically the African youth, as it is not widely publicised in the multiple forms of media available to all stakeholders of the brand. Thus it can be deduced that the public sector clients carry little memory of the AfDB because they don’t see or hear about the AfDB often enough, in a 21st century environment where media and consumption opportunities are overwhelming, therefore agenda-setting for the brand has to be aggressive so as to get and keep the attention of the 21st century consumer. Consequently, at the time of approaching development finance institutions for funding, the AfDB does not always stand out in the minds of the public sector clients, therefore the fact that the AfDB is not top-of-mind for the public sector clients influences their minds away from the AfDB and steers their brand choice towards other more prominent development finance institutions. Thus, the lack of brand salience further accentuates the 21st century branding reality that the media is a fundamental influence for social thought and discourse and as such is an essential partner in communicating the brand’s distinction from the competition. Furthermore, media exposure is important for leveraging the status of a brand, thereby enforcing its brand salience. However, according to the finding from the public sector participants, it can be interpreted that the AfDB does not communicate its premier status through strategic media exposure and thus goes against literature as Hallahan et al. (2007:4) state that the strategic and
purposeful use of the media to communicate the branding agenda is critical to grasp the attention, emotion and favourable memory of the 21st century consumer, thereby contributing to the salience of the brand. Furthermore, Trendwatching (2009) reminds that in the 21st century stakeholder engagement economy, salient brands are immediately rewarded with interest and endorsement by consumers who enjoy doing their own brand research and competitive analysis of the best brands and tell their friends about it, thus collaborating with the brand owner in the agenda-setting function of creating value for the brand by creating information and ensuring brand salience.

Secondly, the general consensus from twelve of the sixteen participants from the individual countries and three of the four participants from the Regional Economic Communities is that the consulting or due diligence process that is required in order to obtain financial assistance from the AfDB is too tedious. This view was repeatedly mentioned by participants and strongly emphasised by respondent Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry who indicated that, “The lengthy due diligence process causes us to go to other development finance institutions that follow a more expedient procedure in offering funding”. Respondent Makumbe (2009) from Southern African Development Community (SADC) concurred, stating that, “It takes too long for the AfDB to finalize projects and meet conditions of effectiveness in Africa.” In addition, Respondent Kamara (2009) from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also explained that the rules for obtaining funding from the AfDB are very restrictive and frustrating because their systems for monitoring and controlling projects are too slow and Africa’s development needs are urgent.” From the finding that the process for obtaining finance from the AfDB is too long, it can be put forward that good governance as reflected in the control systems of the AfDB need to be managed strategically so as not to undermine the AfDB’s position as Africa’s premier development institution, in the minds the public sector clients, leading them not to think of the AfDB first for development finance, for fear of the process being too long. It can further be reasoned that the implementation of the branding agenda which includes a swift, compelling, communication approach to all stakeholders of the brand is not prevalent at the AfDB. Therefore, according to the responses from the public sector clients, any efforts by the AfDB to heighten the saliency of the brand and to deny the competition a prominent space in the mind of the consumer seem not to be very successful. In addition, from this finding it can be proposed that the branding reality for the public sector clients does not include captivating brand salience in the mind of the contemporary consumer because
brand salience is contained within a blend of earlier and contemporary impressions, memories, associations and thoughts which are co-produced by consumers and in this case the strongest impression that the public sector clients have of interacting with the AfDB is that of a frustrating, protracted process. Besides, in literature, Dawson (2010) reminds that in the context of strategic communication of the 21st century brand, value creation and salience of the brand is built on speed of access. Therefore, speed of access as a feature of the saliency of the brand is paramount in the instantaneous world of 21st century branding. As such, the lack of salience of the AfDB in the minds of the public sector clients does not correspond with literature as Du Plessis (2011) purports that it is important for brand owners to recognise that brand salience is contained within a blend of impressions, memories associations and thoughts which are co-produced by consumers and this branding reality of the 21st century is crucial to ensure that the brand is top-of-mind for the consumer.

The third distinct reason highlighted by the public sector participants is that competitors such as the World Bank are more salient than the AfDB because they are seen to have a more pro-active approach to funding development projects in Africa. Respondent Bai-Maas (2009) from Gambia specifically noted that, “The AfDB is not pro-active in marketing themselves.” In agreement respondent Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria stated that, “The AfDB is not proactive in taking bold steps about Africa’s development.” Respondent Sesay (2009) from Sierra Leone also mentioned that, “As much as the AfDB is involved in development policy and dialogue, they are not proactive in initiating the process. They are more comfortable in partnering with other development finance institutions in development projects.” It can therefore be postulated that the AfDB is not seen to be energetic and aggressive enough in attracting and engaging the public sector clients on development projects. Hence, regardless of the distinct competitive edge that the AfDB has because of its focus on Africa’s development, it is not perceived to be a step ahead of other development finance institutions that are active in Africa. Therefore it can be implied that the AfDB does not add extra or more meaningful value as a result of the lack of proactivity experienced by the public sector clients. Furthermore, with regards to agenda-setting for the brand, it can be proposed that the AfDB can be more proactive in interacting with the public sector clients in order to ensure a more salient space than that of competitors in their thoughts and conversations, so that the public sector clients can be more inclined to approach the AfDB first for development assistance. As such, this finding is not in alignment with
literature as Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2010) observe that a strategy of being pro-active and enhancing a brand’s salience is a process of strategic communication and interaction with all stakeholders of the brand with the focused intent to proactively identify branding opportunities, monitor competitors, as well as strategically use information and communication technologies to identify perceptions of the brand in society.

Based on the reasons given by the participants, that as a brand the AfDB is not as top-of-mind as development finance institutions such as the World Bank, it can be put forward that the AfDB does not make optimal use of the media to communicate its iconic status as Africa’s premier development institution, the lengthy consultation process to obtain funding and the lack of proactivity in approaching public sector clients with assistance, it can be interpreted that AfDB is not the most salient brand in the minds of public sector clients. Moreover, this finding does not correlate with the 21st century agenda-setting theory in which Kotelnikov (2007) indicates that creating a salient brand involves the strategic creation of positive awareness of a brand’s existence in the competitive 21st century economy and society of instantaneous media opportunities to communicate and connect with the 21st century contemporary consumers who are overwhelmed with choice of information, products and services, thus making brand salience efforts by brand owners vital so as to make the buying decision easier for consumers.

6.2.3 Brand experience

Klintworth (2010:30) posits that 21st century consumers find fulfilment in their experience of a brand, based on how the brand makes them feel, what the brand does for them as individual consumers and how the brand benefits them in relation to other stakeholders of the brand. Therefore, when considering the brand’s overall impact as determined by the client’s experience of the AfDB as a brand, the dominant similarity from nine of the sixteen public sector clients from individual countries and one of the four participants from the REC’s was that the times when they have approached the AfDB for funding, their brand experience with the AfDB has largely been positive and meaningful. Respondent Onen (2009) from the East African Community (EAC) commented that, “Dealing with the AfDB was a positive experience because of the accessibility of AfDB staff, the non-patronising commitment of the AfDB to Africa’s development and the benefit of collaboration with the AfDB as a highly reputable
development finance institution." Participants Konga (2009) from Zambia and Seck (2009) from Senegal also explained that the reason for their positive experience as consumers of the AfDB is because, “The AfDB is very responsive and conscientiously assumes the role of Africa’s premier development finance institution by seeing development projects through from beginning to end with the client”. Hence, it can be inferred that the concept of creating meaning in agenda-setting for the AfDB as a brand is not simply a transfer of information or funding from the AfDB to the public sector clients, but it also takes into account the nature of interaction between brand owner and brand user in order to create a positive brand experience. Hence, for the public sector clients, the positive brand experience stems from a common understanding among them and the AfDB which is influenced by the dynamic, social environment in which meaningful interaction takes place, affecting the attitudes and behaviours of all the stakeholders that are participating in the branding process. Therefore, in this case the responsive attitude from the AfDB towards the public sector clients as noted by participants reflects a deep understanding and a sharing of meaning that results in a positive experience for all stakeholders, specifically the consumer participating in the brand experience.

The emotion of a positive brand experience was further substantiated by respondent Randriamandrato (2009) from Madagascar, who mentioned that, “A major benefit of the experience of the AfDB as a brand was that partnering with the AfDB provided leverage in discussions with other development finance institutions who become more keen to participate in a venture when they know that the highly renowned AfDB is also a partner in a particular project”. Therefore, the deduction can be made that because of the AfDB’s strong stakeholder approach, partnering with the AfDB benefits the public sector clients because as Africa’s premier development finance institution, the AfDB is recognised as a strong partner in addressing the challenges of development in Africa. Hence the brand experience is driven by the way the AfDB as a brand is experienced as meaningful for the public sector clients, as well as how the public sector clients are acknowledged as partners in respect of the AfDB consulting with the clients on their development needs, so as to co-produce a meaningful brand experience. Moreover, it can be inferred that the brand experience for the public sector clients is satisfying because the public sector clients feel that the AfDB is more empathetic to Africa’s needs than other development finance institutions, as a result of the AfDB’s focus on Africa’s development and non-patronising engagement with the public sector clients. It can also
be interpreted that collaborating with the AfDB creates added value to the brand experience for the public sector clients because their partnership with the AfDB as a credible partner that enjoys high regard from other development finance institutions, provides leverage for clients when approaching other development finance institutions for projects that may be less attractive because they carry some risk as respondent Sayingoza (2009) from Rwanda mentioned that, “The AfDB understands the risks associated with financing projects in African countries”. As such, the AfDB is a significant co-producer with the public sector clients of the brand reality because they recognise the challenges associated with developing Africa and they are willing to partner with the public sector clients to overcome them. Thus, the partnership between the public sector client and the AfDB is supported in literature as Klintworth (2009:30) posits that 21st century branding is a social and economic, co-operative exercise between brand owners and consumers about what the brand stands for and how the brand and the brand user collaborate to create a meaningful brand experience.

A dominant difference from six individual countries and three of the four Regional Economic Communities was that the brand experience with the AfDB starts out positive but ends negatively. The distinct reason for this finding was once again that the due diligence process that is required in order to obtain financial assistance from the AfDB is too tedious as respondent Lekholoane (2009) relates that, “Lesotho’s experience with the AfDB starts out positive but it becomes negative during the process, because of the tedious consulting procedures which ultimately greatly undermines the work of the AfDB in Lesotho”. The deterioration of the brand experience due to the tedious consultation process was reiterated by respondent Hamdock (2009) from Sudan who expressed that, “The project cycle is too long, the implementation efficiency is lacking and the process to get projects off the ground is too lengthy”. Respondent Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry also voiced the disappointment experienced by the public sector clients as a result of “the process being long and complicated.” Thus, it can be extrapolated that the drawn out, due diligence process of the AfDB has led public sector clients to look to competitors who follow a more expedient process and a more gratifying brand experience as intimated by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania who said that, “Finance from the AfDB is too difficult. Finance from the World Bank is much easier.” As such, this finding relates to the lack of time and patience of the 21st century consumer who exists in a digital society which is characterised by the speedy collection of brand information, swift interaction of consumers with the brand and likeminded consumers as
well as a wide spectrum of sources for brand information and diversity of perspectives on brand experiences. Hence, the finding that the brand experience starts out positive but ends negative is not in line with literature as Christensen and Askegaard (2001:297) observe that the implication for 21st century agenda-setting for the brand means that brand owners should make an impactful impression on consumers quickly and clearly because the contemporary consumer who is constantly presented with a wide range of brands to choose from, does not have time or patience to absorb uninspiring brand communications or have unfulfilling brand experiences.

Thus, from the findings with regards to the brand reputation, the brand salience and the brand experience, it appears that the brand reputation of the AfDB is characterised by two types of reputation capital (Brown, 2011), namely emotional and cognitive reputation capital. From the responses it emerged that for the public sector clients there exists a strong, emotional association with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution as a result of its history, credibility and business strategy. Nonetheless, the strong emotional facet of the reputation capital (Brown, 2011), is not complemented by a strong cognitive facet of reputation capital (Brown, 2011), as the findings indicate that the AfDB has not leveraged its status as a premier brand by strategic and intentional agenda-setting of brand communication and optimal use of both old and new media to ensure that public sector clients think and talk more about the AfDB. In addition, the tedious consulting process for obtaining development finance from the AfDB, appears to be a major undermining factor of the brand salience of the AfDB as a 21st century brand, further weakening the positive associations and minimizing the public sector clients’ experience of the AfDB as a highly regarded brand. As such, from the perspective of the public sector clients, the disconnect between the emotional and cognitive reputation capital (Brown, 2011) negatively impacts the complex role of the AfDB as a brand with economic value and social presence. Moreover, Kotler, Pfoertsch, Michi (2006:5) and Braun (2004:20) postulate that for the contemporary consumer, the value that is generated by the brand and branding, as reflected in its brand reputation, brand salience and brand experience differentiates brands, representing the assurance of the value of the complex role of the 21st century brand and presenting a relevant, credible choice among competing offerings.
6.3 USE OF THE BRAND STORY TO ESTABLISH BRAND AWARENESS

Table 6.3 presents a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews which were held with AfDB public sector participants to Section B of the interview guide which addressed the research question: How does the AfDB use its brand story to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

The specific questions in the interview guide which addressed the AfD’s brand story were:

- Do you think the AFDB uses its reputation as a premier development institution to establish awareness of its projects? If so, how?
- Do you think that when compared with other donors, the AfDB offers a unique value-add to development finance? What is it?
- In your opinion, is it widely known in your country that the AfDB is the premier development finance institution in Africa? How so?
- In your opinion, is the AfDB a long-term development partner?
- Do you think that the media plays a role in creating awareness of the work of the AfDB? Why?

The responses from the public sector clients were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell brand story
- Use of media to tell the AfDB’s brand story

Table 6.3 Summary of public sector responses: Use of brand story to establish profitable brand awareness.

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<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell brand story</td>
<td>• Lack of leverage of brand reputation to tell brand story</td>
<td>• Not enough talk</td>
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Pandey (2003) postulates that the brand story of the 21st century is typically based on the brand's unique heritage and underlying philosophy, enhanced by consistent, vigorous communication with the market through strategic story tellers such as the media, offering consumers a convincing reason to contribute to the brand story by elevating the brand beyond its functional role in the market, into a widely admired icon. The AfDB’s brand story is contained in its heritage as Africa’s premier development finance institution and its compelling philosophy to alleviate poverty and ensure the development of Africa. As such the brand story is portrayed by its highly regarded reputation as Africa’s premier development institution. Notwithstanding, the high regard for the AfDB’s reputation, the overriding finding with regards to the use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell the brand story of the AfDB from twelve of the participants from individual countries and two of the participants from the Regional Economic Communities was that the reputation of the AfDB was not used often enough to tell the brand story as captured by respondent Onen's (2009) opinion from the East African Community that, “The work of the AfDB is a good news African story that is not told often enough.” This sentiment was echoed by respondent Makumbe (2009) from SADC who mentioned that, “The AfDB needs to do more to tell people what it does, its funding portfolios on offer and its achievements.” In agreement, respondent Sayingozi (2009) from Rwanda mentioned that, “People should be encouraged to know more about the AfDB and to talk more about the work of the AfDB.” Thus the overwhelming similarity from responses about the use of the reputation of the AfDB to tell the brand story was that the story of the AfDB is not told often enough. As such the implication is that the significant, symbolic attributes such as the history, the credibility, the financial resourcefulness and the in-depth development knowledge of the AfDB is not told enough and subsequently, not talked about enough. Thus, the deduction can be made

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<th>Use of media to tell the AfDB’s brand story</th>
<th>Lack of media exposure</th>
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<td>Lack of consumer collaboration to tell brand story</td>
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the limited use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell its brand story is not supported in literature as Chapin (2012) contends that the role of the brand story is to make the brand’s reason for being clearly understood whenever stakeholders interact with the brand so that the essence of the brand is seen, heard and felt at every consumption opportunity is not optimally implemented. In addition, Holt (2004:3) reminds that agenda-setting for the iconic brand, or the communication of brand information through the many participants within society is also critical for an iconic brand, therefore it involves multiple story tellers, notwithstanding the numerous avenues of telling the brand story through new media. Holt (2004:3) notes therefore that the four major authors of these brand stories are brand owners, industries that promote social and economic culture such as development agencies, intermediaries such as the media and most importantly, the 21st century consumers who conduct social discourse on the brand, enhancing the reputation and relevance of the iconic brand. In this case it has been found that the AfDB as a Africa’s premier development finance institution does not tell its brand story often enough. Subsequently, the finding that the AfDB’s reputation is not used enough gave rise to a second sub-theme which related to the use of the media to tell the brand story of the AfDB.

The second sub-theme that emerged from the public sector participants regarding the AfDB’s brand story and its value for the brand and its consumers was the lack of media exposure of the brand story of the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution. Hence, the second dominant similarity from the eleven of the sixteen public sector participants from the individual countries and all four of the Regional Economic Communities was once again that despite the reputation of the AfDB as Africa’s premier development bank, there is not enough media exposure of the AfDB’s brand story for two distinct reasons: Firstly, there is little strategic use of both old and new media to inform consumers of the brand story of the AfDB. This lack of media exposure and as such, the role of agenda-setting to tell the brand story of the AfDB was confirmed by participants Taal (2009) from The Gambia, Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana, Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria and Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon and Onen (2009) from the East African Community who said that the brand story of the AfDB is not affirmed by the media in their countries as only their governments are aware of the AfDB’s brand story as Africa’s premier development institution, therefore they are of the opinion that the AfDB could use the media more effectively to tell its brand story. Respondent Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry specifically mentioned that, “Only the elite know about the
AfDB. There is no representative, no publicity and nothing is mentioned in the media at all about the AfDB in Guinea Conakry.” Respondent Makumbe (2009) from Southern African Development Community (SADC) agreed with fellow public sector clients that, “Deliberate efforts need to be made to tell the AfDB’s story through the media.” Thus, it can be argued that the lack of “deliberate efforts” to tell the brand story effectively deprives the AfDB of leveraging its premier reputation. As the media is also a platform for communicating the shared meaning of the AfDB to share its vision for Africa with its public sector clients who represent Africa’s people, this finding also implies a lost opportunity to facilitate the communication of the AfDB’s reputation, the AfDB’s business strategy and a way of keeping the brand story of the AfDB alive and relevant. A further interpretation that can be made is that the seamless agenda-setting of all available brand communication platforms specifically the media may not have been actively and optimally pursued to tell the brand story of the AfDB and inspire ordinary Africans who are the ultimate public sector beneficiaries of the AfDB, to get to know more about the AfDB.

With regards to the communication of the brand story of the 21st iconic brand, Kelly and Silverstein (2005:2) posit that iconic brands are exceptional brands because they tell their brand story by investing in memorable and as such salient branding communications through smartly integrated media exposure and strategic engagement with the 21st century consumer. As such the finding that emerged from the majority of participants was contrary to literature which states that a brand’s iconicity, as told by its brand story and associations is maintained by communication through persistent, positive media exposure, inspiring interaction and high public opinion by the clients of such a brand. Hence, as a result of not enough use of the media to tell the brand story of the AfDB, the majority of 21st century consumers who are beneficiaries of the brand story of the AfDB are not aware of this social reality and as such are not participating in the brand story by contributing to social media content about the brand story of the AfDB in their countries. This finding is confirmed by the majority of participants who said that they were only aware of the brand story of the AfDB because of their interaction with the AfDB as development finance professionals as commented by respondent Randriamandrato (2009) who said that, “The AfDB is very well known in development finance circles but not by the general public in Africa”.

Hence, the finding that the AfDB is only well known in development finance circles reinforces the inference that there is no strategic collaboration with the ordinary public
sector client who does not work in development to tell the AfDB’s brand story; specifically Africa’s youth who according to The Population Reference Bureau (2009) are the fastest growing segment of the population and spend a lot of time interacting with new media such as social sites, are not thinking or talking about the AfDB’s brand story as emphasised by respondent Konga (2009) from Zambia, who repeatedly expressed that, “There is a real need for people, especially young people in Africa to know about the AfDB”. Thus it can be put forward that according to the agenda-setting theory, compelling information about the AfDB is not widely available and visible, therefore ordinary public sector clients are not readily interacting with the brand because they are not strategically informed of the brand story of the AfDB and hence they are not aware of their social reality as participants in the brand story.

The interpretation of the finding of not enough media exposure of the AfDB’s brand story as a result of minimal, ineffective use of strategic media coverage and little interaction with the 21st century consumer who co-creates the brand shows that the brand story of the AfDB is not effectively told. This observation was clearly confirmed by respondent Sayinzoga (2009) from Rwanda who captured the lack of strategic communication of the brand story of the AfDB through the media by saying that, “The AfDB’s media strategy is weak.” As such, it can be interpreted that because media exposure is a strong contributor to the consumer’s cognitive processes that arise from somatic markers or psychological reminders and subsequent social discourse about a brand, the ordinary public sector clients who are not development finance professionals are not socially, strongly influenced by a high, positive, public profile of the AfDB, reiterating the finding that the AfDB’s brand story is not thought about or talked about enough. Furthermore, this finding that the ordinary public sector clients do not experience optimal media exposure to the brand story of the AfDB is not in alignment with literature which states that the agenda-setting theory in its 21st century role of partnering with the consumer in interpreting personalised branded realities and influencing social discourse, proposes that the media and especially the vibrant platform of digital media can effectively be used as a vehicle to tell the story of the iconic brand to ensure that consumers of the brand know the story of the brand and actively contribute to the story of the brand as proposed by Brandchannel (2011). Moreover, Carroll and McCombs (2003:36-46) conclude that agenda-setting for the brand in the 21st century is the strategic communication of the brand story through a positive association between the media, the brand and the consumer. In addition, Rindell (2010)
reiterates that positive associations created by a brand story because it embodies ideals admired by the 21st century consumer are paramount to the consumer’s decision to use a brand, therefore brand owners are encouraged to invite the contemporary consumer’s input in creating flexibility between upholding a brand’s authentic heritage and philosophy as contained in the brand story and the relevance of the brand. As such the lack of leverage of the AfDB’s brand reputation to tell its brand story and the lack of media exposure to tell the brand story, weakens the AfDB’s position in the minds of the public sector clients, detracting from the value and relevance of the AfDB as a 21st century brand.

6.4 USE OF IDENTITY-VALUE TO ESTABLISH BRAND AWARENESS

Table 6.4 presents a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews which were held with AfDB public sector participants to Section C of the interview guide which addressed the question: How does the AfDB use its identity-value to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients.

The specific questions in the interview guide which addressed the AfDB’s identity-value were:

- What are the values of the AfDB as a brand (e.g. good governance, reliability, responsiveness, clarity of strategy) that you admire?
- As an African consumer of development finance, do you feel that the image of the AfDB resonates with your development objectives? Why or why not?
- Do you think the AfDB represents an African voice in the international development arena? Why?
- Do you believe that the AfDB is a relevant institution? Why?
- Do you believe that the AfDB is a dynamic development donor that you’d like to be associated with? Why?

The responses from the public sector clients were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Admired values
- Relevance
Table 6.4 Summary of public sector findings: Use of identity-value for brand awareness

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<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Admired values</td>
<td>• Sense of belonging because AfDB is African (emotional)</td>
<td>• Tedious process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategic commitment to Africa (functional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>• African voice</td>
<td>• Diluted African-ness</td>
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Plummer (2002) describes identity-value as the essence of a brand’s image and reputation that the consumer is captivated by and can relate to such that the consumer’s purchase decision is heavily informed by a sense of identity with the brand through a remembered story, a perception of admired values or through a good consumer experience. From the public sector interviews regarding the identity-value of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the overriding similarity from twelve of the sixteen participants from the individual countries and all four participants from the Regional Economic Communities was that they feel a sense of belonging to the AfDB as a result of its African heritage, credibility and business strategy and as such a symbol of African pride, as reflected in its brand reputation and brand story; because as African consumers of development they identify with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution. The admired value in relation to a sense of belonging to the AfDB because of its African-ness was mentioned by respondent Seck (2009) from Sudan who stated that, “I admire the AfDB because it is Africa’s bank and as an African, I feel a sense of belonging to the AfDB.” In addition, respondent Randriamandrato (2009) from Madagascar noted that, “The identity-value that the AfDB holds for us as public sector clients is not just a sense of belonging, but a symbol of pride which is not felt when dealing with other development finance institutions”. Respondent Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia also commented that, “As an African, one feels a sense of identity with the AfDB, because Africa’s development is the main concern of the AfDB and the
development of Ethiopia is crucial and urgent.” Furthermore, respondent Kamara (2009) from the Economic Community of West African States Commission (ECOWAS) pointed out that, “There is no other development finance institution which we as African public sector clients can identify with more than the AfDB, because the AfDB was designed to fill the role of premier development finance institution in Africa, for us, the people of Africa.” Thus, the overwhelming finding from the public sector participants was that they absolutely gain identity-value as African clients of the AfDB. Therefore, the predominant sub-themes that emerged from the responses about the identity-value of the AfDB were the public sector clients’ sense of identity with the AfDB as an African brand and the AfDB’s strategic focus on Africa. Hence, the inference can be made that the public sector clients admire the AfDB for two distinct reasons. The first reason for the admiration from the public sector clients stems from an emotional connection which they feel when interacting with the AfDB. Secondly, the public sector clients admire the AfDB because of its functional or cognitive value, based on its strategic focus and commitment to Africa’s development, which relates to what the public sector clients think of the AfDB. Thus, it can deduced from the emotional identity-value that the AfDB offers the public sector clients that the AfDB as an iconic brand grasps who they are as African people and the admired values that they’d like to be associated with, such as the emotional connection which they have with the brand as a symbol of African pride, thus the strong sense of belonging to the AfDB. In addition to symbolizing African pride, the AfDB’s strategic focus on Africa’s development also symbolises the will of Africans to bring about African solutions to Africa’s development problems. Thus it can be proposed that as an iconic African brand the AfDB represents something that goes much further than superficial or service attributes in a more impactful way than the ordinary brand because it is seen to have and an emotional or symbolic dimension as well as a cognitive or functional dimension that is captivating to the public sector clients.

Furthermore, with regards to the AfDB as an iconic brand which offers its public sector clients cognitive identity-value that appeals to their thoughts and in light of its brand offering as focused and committed, it can once again be deduced that the AfDB has been successful in implementing the 21st century branding strategy called Consistency of Purpose (Swystun, 2007) which emphasises single-mindedness or focus of a brand, while encouraging flexibility to maintain relevance and distinction, simultaneously upholding the brand’s credibility and consistently guarding stakeholder identity with the brand. Therefore, the observation can be made that the sense of belonging which the
public sector clients feel as a result of the emotional identity-value as well as the cognitive identity-value translate into a sentiment of resonance with the brand because the consumer feels understood and embraced by the brand. Accordingly, the emotional and cognitive connection contained in the identity-value that the public sector clients share with the AfDB is mirrored in literature as Keller (2008) explains that the identity-value that the iconic brand creates is not only about the extrinsic properties of a brand, but it includes the ways in which the brand attempts to meet the intrinsic psychological and social needs of the consumer such as how the consumer feels when thinking, talking or interacting with the brand. Hence it can be interpreted that the public sector clients admire the AfDB because as a brand it has achieved distinctiveness and iconicity by creating its own value system in a social environment in which it exemplifies for the public sector clients the ultimate expression of African leadership in development, thereby successfully achieving the goal of both the AfDB’s development agenda as a brand as well as the public sector clients’ development agenda as consumers. This finding was confirmed by all the public sector clients agreed that as a result of the identity-value that the AfDB holds for them and their mutual pursuit for Africa’s development, the AfDB is definitely a long-term partner in their brand reality. In addition, this finding that the public sector clients admire the AfDB and feel a sense of belonging and resonance with the AfDB finds further congruence in literature as Neumeier (2006:19) postulates that iconic brands relate to consumers because they are perceived as being the best at what they do and emotionally engaging with their consumers, using, integrity and fortitude so that they become essential lifestyle partners.

Regrettably though, for the majority of participants, the AfDB’s strategy for Africa’s development is focused and as such characterised by good governance, but for them as public sector clients their admiration for the AfDB’s development strategy is marred by the tedious process involved in obtaining finance from the AfDB. The evidence of this admiration which is dampened by the frustration of the lengthy process was expressed by respondent Konga (2009) from Zambia who said that, “The AfDB’s strategy of responsiveness and competence is critical for the constructive development of Africa but unfortunately the process just takes too long”. This negative sentiment was expressed by an overwhelming majority of participants and further emphasised by respondent Taal (2009) from Gambia who said that, “Good governance is a compelling and admired value which is an aspect of identity-value that as public sector clients we
would like to be associated with, but, the financing process is too long, thus it impedes a dynamic sense of identity for us as African clients of the African Development Bank”. This finding therefore can be interpreted as both emotional and cognitive identity-value lost by the public sector because it does not correlate with literature as noted by Van Gelder (2005:4) who argues that the identity-value of the iconic brand refers to the essence of a brand’s image and reputation, enhanced by how the consumer thinks and feels about the brand; therefore the fundamental role of identity-value of the iconic brand is to meet more than just an emotional need but to complement the emotional with the practical, thereby reinforcing the client’s sense of identity with the brand, because the client feels that the brand meets the consumer need in a real and tangible way. It can further be deduced that according to the agenda-setting theory which highlights how the brand communicates with the consumer in relation to how the consumer thinks and talks about the brand reality, the public sector clients’ admired value of the AfDB’s commitment to Africa translates into a negative brand reality for the consumer as it appears that regardless of the AfDB’s focus, the consumer ultimately does not feel that the AfDB meets the needs of the public sector client in a real and practical way. Hence the finding that the tedious funding process undermines the identity-value for public sector clients is not supported in literature as Klintworth (2010:30) explains that the iconic brand becomes a symbol of identity-value for the consumer as it is associated with consistent values that the consumer can relate to, values that set the brand apart from its competitors and contribute to a fulfilling brand reality, highlighting the shift in branding from giving the consumer reason to believe what brand owners say about a brand, to giving consumers reason to identify with the brand because the brand meets the consumer’s need as optimally as possible.

Notwithstanding the tedious process that weakens the public sector clients’ admiration for the AfDB, another subtheme that emerged from the overwhelming majority of public sector responses in relation to the identity-value of the AfDB as an iconic brand was its relevance a compelling African voice. As such the overriding finding from fourteen of the individual countries and all four of the participants from the Regional Economic Communities was the identity-value represented by the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution and its relevance as an authentic African voice. The evidence for this finding was articulated by respondent Hamdock (2009) from Sudan who proudly recounted that, “The AfDB is inherently African as it was the creation of African leadership after the independence of a few African countries in the 1960s”. This
finding of the inherent relevance of the AfDB is supported in literature as a fundamental requirement of the 21st century consumer is to identify with the authenticity of the brand (Boyle, 2003). As such the overriding similarity in responses was that the AfDB is the most significant voice for Africa’s development because of its authoritative knowledge about the development landscape in Africa and its financial resources to meet the development needs of Africa. Evidence for this finding was found by the general consensus from the vast majority of participants who agreed that the AfDB represents an international presence in the development arena because the AfDB has Africans representing an African voice at forums all over the world as expressed by respondent Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia who explained that as public sector clients they find identity-value with the AfDB because, “The AfDB is a relevant institution which is receptive to African needs and it has significant accumulative experience in Africa’s development. Also, the AfDB is more critical currently in Africa because of the economic meltdown and therefore more pertinent to the times than ever before”. Additionally, the relevance of the identity-value of the AfDB as a significant African voice, relevant to the times was further emphasised by respondent Sayinzoga (2009) from Rwanda who reiterated that, “The AfDB definitely represents an African voice in the international development arena as can be seen by its contribution and advocacy for an effective African strategy to overcome the international financial crisis”. This finding correlates with literature as Elliot and Percy (2007:52) suggests that brands with strong identity-value make it possible for consumers to draw on them as resources for creating both a social identity and a self-identity because such brands relates to who they are as people and what they’d like to be associated with. They feel therefore, that they share a commonly understood identity with regards the relevance of the brand. Respondent Sayingozi’s (2009) reference to the AfDB’s role as an advocate for Africa also concurs with literature on brand activism where Holt (2004) notes that the activist iconic brand is aware of social changes that impact the way that the consumer identifies with the brand so that the brand reality continues to be relevant to the consumer. As such it can be reasoned that the AfDB offers public sector clients such as the development finance professionals who know about the AfDB substantial identity-value because the AfDB excels at delivering the emotional benefits that they as consumers of development finance expect and desire, fulfilling the requirements of the Expectation Economy (Trendwatching, 2008) of the 21st century society and providing identity-value for the public sector clients in a way that is relevant for them, thus they feel that they share a commonly understood language about the relevance and importance of the brand.
As such it can be reiterated that as the public sector clients and the AfDB share the same language with regards Africa’s development, the AfDB represents a relevant voice on Africa’s development. Furthermore, this finding was highlighted by respondent Sesay (2009) from Sierra Leone who stated that as a public sector client he feels that, “The development needs of Africa are represented by the AfDB because the AfDB is a recognised voice in most international forums on development.” Similarly, Respondent Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana agreed that, “The AfDB played a major role as an African voice with regards the effect of the Financial Crisis on African countries.” In agreement, respondent Hamdock (2009) from the Sudan pointed out that, “The AfDB absolutely represents an African voice because it raises African development issues internationally with other development stakeholders.” In addition, respondent Makumbe (2009) from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) reiterated that, “The AfDB definitely represents an African voice because the AfDB projects Africa’s views and aspirations in the international development arena.” Participants Muhakanizi (2009) from Uganda, Sayinzoga (2009) and Kanga (2009) from the Ivory Coast concurred that the AfDB’s significant voice at forums such as the G20 Summit meeting is proof that the AfDB represents Africa’s voice in the development arena. Hence, it can be interpreted that its distinct competitive advantage as an African development finance institution run by African leaders for the development of Africa’s people allows the AfDB to establish an understanding or shared identity-value with the public sector clients because the clients have the assurance that as Africans who have lived in Africa, the AfDB staff have first-hand experience of Africa’s needs and thus are most suitably qualified to speak for them. Hence, the deduction can be made that as Africa’s voice of development, the AfDB is a strong influence that consistently represents the public sector clients, infusing the development market with the compelling agenda for Africa’s development with everything that the AfDB is and does, creating identity-value for the consumer as suggested by Holt (2004) and elevating the brand beyond quality, features and price by creating a significant voice for the public sector clients globally. Thus, from this finding the inference can also be made that because of the AfDB’s distinct competitive edge as African, the AfDB can be described as an authoritative brand that owns a central category benefit (Braun, 2004) for the public sector clients as African consumers of development, thereby maintaining a dominant voice regarding the development agendas of the public sector clients in development circles on the continent and internationally.
Moreover, the finding that the AfDB represents a shared understanding and therefore represents a voice for the public sector clients is reflected in literature as Wijland (2008) posits that a shared understanding with the brand is essential for the consumer’s feeling of identity with the brand. Therefore, it can also be added that the identity-value of the AfDB as an iconic brand plays a fundamental role in the public sector clients’ choice of development finance institution because in addition to its functional qualities, the AfDB contributes to social identity indicators such as a sense of belonging, a sense of pride as well as a shared social consciousness. Hence, with numerous, diverse meanings and symbols available to consumers, it can be proposed that the AfDB gives the public sector clients opportunities to relate to the brand in a familial and meaningful way as related by respondent Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon who stated that as a public sector client he strongly identifies with the AfDB’s efforts to overcome Africa’s development challenges and, “it is meaningful to me as an African consumer because I’d like to see Cameroon developed.”

Notwithstanding the identity-value that was gained by the majority of public sector clients of the AfDB as an African voice, a difference in opinion did emerge from two of the participants with regards identity-value of the AfDB as a relevant African voice, for the distinct reason that the AfDB’s voice is more known globally than to the ordinary African public sector client who is the ultimate beneficiary of the AfDB. This finding was emphasised by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania and Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia who acknowledged that, “While the AfDB is an African voice internationally, it is regrettable that Africans are not aware that they are represented by such an authoritative voice”. This finding, though from a minority of public participants is not corroborated in literature as George and Jones (2002:191) as well as Holt (2004:20) are of the opinion that brands with strong identity-value consistently build a connection with all stakeholders giving specifically consumers, a voice to express who they are and what they want their brand reality to be. Moreover, according to the agenda-setting theory, that the consumer needs to be aware of the brand reality as a result of strategic communication by the brand, this finding shows a disconnect with literature, once again emphasising the weak communication strategy that was highlighted by public sector clients, thus the lack of awareness of the AfDB as a compelling African voice by ordinary Africans who are not development finance professionals.

Another difference in opinion from participants in relation to the identity-value of the AfDB as an iconic African brand was an indifference to the AfDB being an African
brand. This response was expressed by participants Randriamato (2009) from Madagascar, Coulibaly from Mauritania, Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria and Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana who shared the opinion that they do not necessarily gain identity-value from the AfDB being African because, “the fact that the AfDB is managed by Africans merely provides the perception that the bank is an authentic African brand, but the support and influence from America and the World Bank as well as a board of directors made up of international donors, fundamentally dilutes the African flavour”. As such, this finding albeit from a minority of public sector participants, highlights the fact that the AfDB does depend on essential partnerships with non-African stakeholders to provide finances to assist its public sector clients in achieving the goal of developing Africa. Notwithstanding, the difference in opinion by some participants who are indifferent to the identity-value offered by the AfDB because of what they call the AfDB’s diluted African-ness, the finding is still commensurate with the stakeholder theory as Jensen (2001) posits that the stakeholder theory examines the role of the brand strategy as it embraces the contributions of every interested party in which a brand operates so as to maximise the value and impact of the brand. Moreover, Holt (2004:20) postulates that identity-value is a significant trait of iconic brands because it holds meaning for the consumer and as has been established, for the 21st century consumers meaning is relative because the consumer is a co-producer of the brand reality and chooses identity value as it relates to them.

6.5 USE OF CULTURE TO ESTABLISH PROFITABLE BRAND AWARENESS

Table 6.5 presents a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews which were held with AfDB public sector participants to Section D of the interview guide which addressed questions on how the AfDB uses its culture to establish profitable brand awareness amongst its public sector clients.

The specific questions in the interview guide which addressed the AfDB’s culture as an iconic brand were:

- How do you feel about the AfDB as an African focused donor led by an African elected President? Why?
- Are there times when you consciously choose to use the AfDB above other donors? Why?
- Do you get the distinct impression that the AfDB:
- Understands your needs as an African consumer of development finance? Why?
Adequately meets your needs as African consumer of development finance? Why?

If the AfDB were to establish a Development Partners Network, would you like to participate in it? Why or why not?

Do you believe that the AfDB has maximized the power of media exposure to ensure awareness of its existence as an African donor for the development of Africa? Why do you believe this?

The responses from the public sector clients were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Resonance
- Framework for African development partnerships

Table 6.5 Summary of public sector findings: Use of culture to establish brand awareness

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td>Resonance</td>
<td>• Share inherent understanding of Africa’s development needs&lt;br&gt;• Share positive outlook for Africa’s development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Framework for African development partnerships</td>
<td>• Practical development solutions</td>
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Brandchannel (2009) describes the culture of the iconic brand as that which is fundamental, enduring and uniquely characteristic to the brand as contained in a framework of inherited beliefs expressed in the symbolic ways in which people communicate, maintain and develop their understanding of life and their attitudes.
toward it. From the public sector interviews regarding the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the overriding finding from all sixteen participants from the individual countries and all four participants from the Regional Economic Communities was that as African consumers of development they feel a sense of resonance with the AfDB for two distinct reasons. Firstly they share an inherent understanding of Africa’s development needs, as expressed by respondent Lekholoane (2009) from Lesotho who mentioned that the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand resonates with them as public sector clients because, “As an African focused development finance institution, the AfDB has an inherent understanding of the development needs of Africa.” Respondent Atta Mensah (2009) from Ghana concurred that the AfDB’s brand culture of focusing on Africa’s development resonates with their development objectives as public sector clients because they “share the deep desire to overcome poverty in Africa.”

The second distinct reason for the resonance that the public sector clients feel with the culture of the AfDB was articulated by respondent Onen (2009) from the East African Community (ECA) who said that the culture of the AfDB resonates with them as public sector clients because, “We share a positive outlook with the AfDB about Africa’s development, driven by a common desire to see Africa free of poverty”. Therefore, as Africans, both the AfDB and the public sector clients have a mutual understanding of Africa’s need for development and a mutual desire to meet the need, culminating in a shared culture which is fundamental, enduring and uniquely African as expressed in their collective determination to develop Africa. Hence, the AfDB’s culture of focusing their financial resources and development knowledge on Africa’s development takes the AfDB as an iconic brand beyond its functionality into a belief system and a brand reality that the public sector clients can relate to and believe in. Therefore, it can be put forward that the significance of the AfDB’s culture for the consumer of development, lies in the way that as a true iconic brand the AfDB has successfully set a branding agenda by creating associations such as the will to overcome poverty in Africa, thus promoting thoughts and conversations of social and economic progress for the public sector clients as African consumers of development finance. Moreover, from the finding that the public sector clients experience a resonance with the culture of the AfDB, it can be deduced that as an iconic brand, the AfDB stands for something that goes much further than superficial or service attributes in a more impactful way than other development finance institutions do, because of its strategic focus on Africa’s development.
Thus, the proposition can also be made that the culture of the AfDB to develop Africa is fundamental to the unique brand reality that is contained in the relationship between the AfDB and the public sector clients in their shared quest to constructively participate in Africa’s development. Therefore, it can also be put forward that the AfDB and the public sector clients share a similar drive and thus a culture to develop Africa that is mirrored in literature as Braun (2004:104) postulates that the creation of a culture is intrinsic to iconic brands as it focuses on the consumer’s need to associate with the brand in sharing big feelings, important values and strong emotions of life. As such, the important values and strong emotions of being African and working towards Africa’s development is reflected in the second finding about the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand, which is that the AfDB’s culture of focusing on Africa’s development plays a key role in providing a framework for stakeholders of development with an interest in Africa’s development, to find practical solutions to Africa’s development as was expressed by respondent Kanga (2009) from the Ivory Coast who commented that, “Partnering with the AfDB in our development efforts is beneficial for us as public sector clients because, the AfDB goes with us all the way to implement development projects”. Furthermore, respondent Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon noted that, “The AfDB is a dynamic development resource because it can be partnered with to achieve successful projects.” In agreement, respondent Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria also mentioned that, “Partnering with the AfDB in addressing Africa’s development problems is a team effort and therefore a shared burden that makes success more achievable.” In addition, respondent Karangizi (2009) from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) articulated that, “Partnering with the AfDB in responding to Africa’s development needs is important because the AfDB is a supportive and complementary partner, which is useful when approaching other development stakeholders for the achievement of specific projects.”

Additionally, the interpretation can also be made that the culture of the AfDB which is characterised by stakeholder engagement, resonates with the public sector clients, allowing the clients to determine their own brand reality by partnering with the AfDB in setting the branding agenda as acknowledged by respondent Muhakanizi (2009) from Uganda who mentioned that, “The fundamental reason why the AfDB’s brand culture of partnerships for Africa’s development works for us, is because the AfDB allows us as clients to determine our own priorities and then they work with us to finance those priorities.” Therefore, the AfDB’s role of providing a framework for development
partnerships with the public sector clients also indicates that as an iconic brand the AfDB’s stakeholder engagement emphasises to its public sector clients that the AfDB’s culture is that of partnerships with its public sector clients for optimal achievement of its development objectives for Africa, thus connecting with them as consumers in a practical way, allowing them to determine their own brand reality by partnering with the AfDB in setting a shared branding agenda. Therefore, from an agenda-setting point of view, the AfDB’s culture of providing a framework for development partnerships with the public sector clients to achieve development goals, correlates with literature as Griffin (2006) refers to the culture of the brand which provides a context in which to achieve branding objectives for both brand owners and consumers. As such, the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand is characterised by its context or framework of development objectives which centres on creating information and partnerships towards practical solutions to Africa’s development problems and to create awareness of the solutions among the public sector clients. Hence, the partnerships between the AfDB and the public sector clients wields immense leverage in the development market for the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution and the public sector clients as participants in Africa’s development. As such this finding is supported in literature as Braun (2004:137) reminds that the empowered 21st century consumer consciously chooses to be affiliated with a brand’s culture because of what the brand is, how the brand connects with what the consumer believes and most importantly, how the brand partners with the consumer in achieving a fulfilling brand reality.

6.6 PROFITABLE BRAND AWARENESS OF THE AfDB

Table 6.6 presents a summary of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews which were held with AfDB public sector participants to Section E of the interview guide which addressed questions on how the AfDB establishes profitable brand awareness amongst its public sector clients.

The specific questions in the interview guide which addressed brand awareness of the AfDB were:

- How did you get to know about the AfDB?
- Did you know that for the last three years the AfDB has consistently been awarded a AAA rating for long term borrowings in the international capital
markets, by Moody’s Investor Services and Standard and Poors – two of the top rating agencies internationally?

- How often do you read or hear about the AfDB?
- In what way is the work of the AfDB evident in your country?
- Is the AfDB a positive topic of discussion in your conversations with:
  a) Colleagues?
  b) Other development partners?
- Do you believe that there exists a positive relationship between the AfDB and the media? Why?

The responses from the public sector clients were collated, analysed and synthesised into the sub-themes:

- Stakeholder awareness
- Media exposure

Table 6.6 Summary of public sector findings: Profitable Brand awareness of the AfDB

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<tr>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder awareness</td>
<td>• Only development professionals aware of AfDB</td>
<td>• Lack of awareness by ultimate beneficiaries of AfDB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of awareness by ultimate beneficiaries of AfDB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media exposure</td>
<td>• Lack of strategic media exposure</td>
<td>• Lack of exposure of economic and social value of AfDB</td>
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Kapferer (2005:2) observes that in a 21st century economy, profitable brand awareness is achieved when a brand is recognised in terms of its worth as captured in its functional and symbolic value for the consumer. These are enhanced by the amount of positive media exposure of the brand, as reflected in the positive presence of the brand in the market as well as in the mind of the consumer. From the public sector interviews regarding profitable brand awareness of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the overriding similarity from ten of the sixteen participants from the individual countries was that they first became aware of the AfDB through their work in development, while the remaining six first became aware of the AfDB from media such as television, radio, newspaper and the internet. All four participants from the Regional Economic Communities first became aware of the AfDB through their work in development. As such, the overwhelming majority of participants said that members of society who do not work in development are not aware of the AfDB as a brand in Africa because they believe that the AfDB has not capitalized on the media in their respective countries. The lack of media exposure of the AfDB was repeatedly mentioned by the participants and very strongly expressed by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania who stated that, “One practically never reads or hears about the AfDB in Mauritania. There is no publicity, no publication. If you're involved in a development project you'll be aware of the AfDB. Otherwise you will not be aware of the AfDB.” Respondent Ezeji (2009) from Nigeria concurred, specifically mentioning that, “Ordinary Nigerians are not aware of the AfDB projects in Nigeria because the AfDB keeps a very low profile.” Moreover, in light of the AfDB’s limited media exposure, participants Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry, Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia, Bai Maas (2009) from Gambia reiterated that they do not believe that the AfDB uses the media optimally to create awareness of its brand offering to the ordinary citizens who are the ultimate public sector clients of the AfDB. This is important because as Africa’s premier development institution and a 21st century iconic brand, it is imperative for the AfDB to be recognised for its worth as captured in its complex role as a functional brand based on its economic value in the development finance market and its symbolic role, based on its social presence as Africa’s symbol of triumph over poverty. Thus, participants Seck (2009) from Senegal, Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana, Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon and Randriamato (2009) from Madagascar recommended that the AfDB make more strategic use of the media to create profitable
awareness of its admiral brand offering, notwithstanding the multiple new and captivating 21st century media platforms available to the AfDB.

With regards to whether participants were aware of the AfDB’s admirable AAA rating, only six participants replied in the affirmative. Therefore, it can be deduced that the AfDB has not succeeded in communicating its success as a highly reputable brand at every engagement with its stakeholders. In addition this finding also shows that the role of agenda-setting as reflected by the amount of media exposure of the brand is positively related to the public’s awareness of the brand. Thus, the media’s role of disseminating information about the AfDB and contributing to widespread consumer thoughts and conversations about the AfDB has not been strategically used to create profitable awareness of the AfDB. Hence, this finding does not correlate with literature because according to Knox and Bickerton (2003:999) the brand, its power, value and leverage are created and built from all stakeholders’ consistent positive exposure to the brand, which appears not to be the case between the AfDB and the public sector clients. As such, the inference can once again be made that there is a lack of strategic agenda-setting by the AfDB as a brand, because of the limited public profile in the multiple media which is available in real time, without geographic limitations to establish profitable brand awareness of the AfDB. As such, this finding suggests that the AfDB can consider more compelling ways to maximise the power of old and new media exposure to engage the more demanding consumer who determines the rules of the 21st century branding agenda by exploring not only the function of the brand but also the attributes that add value to the brand, so as to have a holistic appreciation and awareness of the brand. Hence, Godin (2005:36) reiterates that the process of the brand communicating with the consumer for profitable brand awareness succeeds when it taps into an audience of consumers who share a positive worldview in the way that they think and talk about a brand, aligning it to the significance of iconic branding that arises out of positive media exposure and the principal of agenda-setting. As such, this finding confirms that communication in the 21st century economy and subsequently, agenda-setting is a strategically inclusive, integrated and interactive with the contemporary consumer in order to ensure profitable brand awareness. Furthermore, it can be argued that the lack of profitable brand awareness points to the low level of knowledge of the AfDB by ordinary African citizens who are the ultimate public sector beneficiaries of the AfDB, as a measure of their limited interaction with the AfDB, as well as a reflection of the limited media’s exposure of the AfDB as an iconic brand. As such,
this finding is not supported in literature as Chang (2011) describes profitable brand awareness as stakeholder involvement with a brand by all stakeholders which goes beyond only knowing about the existence of a brand to include thinking, talking, sharing and meaningful interaction between specifically the consumer and the brand, with every media and consumption opportunity. Thus Puri and Stackdale (2006) contend that profitable brand awareness is not achieved by a brand just being noticed because of its positive media profile, but by a brand which draws stakeholders to want to engage the brand so as to get to know more about the brand and ultimately incorporate the brand into their lifestyles. As such the finding that only development professionals are aware of the AfDB as Africa’s premier development institution provides greater opportunities for the AfDB to enhance its strategy towards profitable brand awareness by ensuring stakeholder engagement with all the its stakeholders.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Holt (2004:20) expounds that iconic brands hold strong appeal because of their reputation as told by their brand story, their identity-value or resonance with the 21st century consumer and their culture or intense relationship that takes specifically the consumer from merely consuming the brand to sharing the branded lifestyle with like-minded consumers. Therefore, the problem statement of this study is: How does the AfDB use its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients? As the goal was to explore how the AfDB uses its iconic branding as reflected in its brand story, identity-value and culture to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The AfDB’s reputation as Africa’s premier development bank is strongly and passionately recognised by the majority of public sector clients, because the history of the AfDB encapsulates the resilience of the African spirit, African values and the sustaining of African independence. Therefore, the AfDB holds the position of an iconic African brand in the hearts of the public sector clients as it was established to achieve economic development and social progress in Africa. Thus the AfDB evokes strong emotional responses about its iconic reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution as a result of its history, credibility and business strategy. As such, the emotional connection which the public sector clients have with the AfDB as a result of its history is in line with literature as Plummer (2002) purports that iconic brands symbolise some aspect of a brand’s image and history that customers share
emotionally. It can therefore be concluded that historically the AfDB has an emotional connection with its public sector clients, which is an important value which drives the competitive advantage of the AfDB as an iconic development finance institution in Africa.

Notwithstanding, the high regard for the AfDB’s reputation, the overriding finding with regards to the use of the AfDB’s reputation to tell the brand story of the AfDB was that the reputation of the AfDB was not used often enough to tell the brand story as captured by respondent Onen’s (2009) opinion from the East African Community that, “The work of the AfDB is a good news African story that is not told often enough.” This sentiment was echoed by respondent Makumbe (2009) from SADC who mentioned that, “The AfDB needs to do more to tell people what it does, its funding portfolios on offer and its achievements.” Nonetheless, the strong emotional facet of the public sector clients’ association with the AfDB as an iconic brand is not complemented by a strong cognitive facet of association with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development finance institution. This is so because the findings indicate that the AfDB has not leveraged its status as Africa’s premier development finance institution by strategic and intentional agenda-setting of brand communication and optimal use of both old and new media to ensure that public sector clients are not only aware of the history, credibility and brand strategy of the AfDB, but more importantly, they need to be more aware of the products and services that the AfDB has to offer to them as public sector clients. This is crucial for profitable brand awareness, so that when they need development assistance, they should first think and talk about the AfDB before other development finance institutions, which is not the case as pointed out by respondent Coulibaly (2009) from Mauritania who said that, “There is a perception that the AfDB does not have a relationship with the media as there is no publicity or media coverage of the work of the AfDB in Mauritania; which is starkly different from the perception that people have of competitors such as the Kuwait Fund which is so well publicised that it is even known by children in Mauritania”. Furthermore, while the public sector clients are very aware of the history and as such the first dimension of the iconic brand, the brand story of the AfDB, the tedious consulting process for obtaining development assistance from the AfDB appears to be a major undermining factor of the brand story and as such the salience of the AfDB in the minds of the public sector clients, further weakening the positive associations and minimizing the public sector clients’ experience of the AfDB as an iconic brand. As such, from the perspective of the public sector clients, the disconnect
between the emotional and cognitive salience of the AfDB in their minds, negatively impacts the way that the AfDB uses its brand story to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients, based on the public sectors’ lack of awareness about AfDB’s brand offering and their criticism of the tedious processes for obtaining development assistance from the AfDB.

In relation to the second dimension of an iconic brand, its identity-value, Van Gelder (2005:4) argues that the identity-value of the iconic brand refers to the essence of a brand’s image and reputation, enhanced by how the consumer thinks, feels and experiences the brand. Therefore, the fundamental role of the identity-value of the iconic brand is to make the consumer feel understood by the brand. As such, based on the emotional admiration that the public sector clients have for the AfDB, the majority of public sector felt a sense of belonging to the AfDB because it is African and they strongly identify with the AfDB’s strategic commitment to Africa’s development. Additionally, the majority of public sector responses in relation to the identity-value of the AfDB as an iconic brand are its relevance as a compelling and authentic African voice in the development arena. Evidence for this finding was found by the general consensus from the vast majority of participants who agreed that the AfDB represents an international presence in the development discourse because the AfDB has Africans representing an African voice at forums all over the world. Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia explained that, as public sector clients, they find identity-value with the AfDB because, “The AfDB is a relevant institution which is receptive to African needs and it has significant accumulative experience in Africa’s development. Also, the AfDB’s role in Africa is currently more important than ever before because of the global economic meltdown”. Additionally, the relevance of the identity-value of the AfDB as a significant African voice, relevant to the times was further emphasised by respondent Sayinzoga (2009) from Rwanda who reiterated that, “The AfDB definitely represents an African voice in the international development arena as can be seen by its contribution and advocacy for an effective African strategy to overcome the international financial crisis”. This finding correlates with literature as Elliot and Percy (2007:52) suggests that brands with strong identity-value make it possible for consumers to draw on them as resources for creating both a social identity and a self-identity because such brands relate to who they are as people and what they’d like to be associated with. They feel therefore, that they share a commonly understood identity with regards the relevance of the brand. As such, respondent Sayingozi’s (2009) reference to the AfDB’s role as an advocate for
Africa concurs with literature on brand activism where Holt (2004) notes that the activist iconic brand is aware of social changes that impact the way that the consumer identifies with the brand so that the brand reality continues to be relevant to the consumer. Hence, it can be concluded that the AfDB offers public sector clients such as the development finance professionals who know about the AfDB substantial identity-value because the AfDB excels at delivering the emotional benefits that they as consumers of development finance expect and desire. It can therefore be concluded that the AfDB does use its identity-value to create brand awareness among its public sector clients.

The third level of an iconic brand is the culture of the brand. Brandchannel (2009) describes the culture of the iconic brand as that which is fundamental, enduring and uniquely characteristic to the brand as contained in a framework of inherited beliefs expressed in the symbolic ways in which people communicate, maintain and develop their understanding of the brand and their attitudes toward it. From the public sector interviews regarding the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand, the overriding finding from all the participants was that as African consumers of development they feel a sense of resonance with the brand culture of the AfDB’s focus on developing and alleviating poverty in Africa. Firstly they share an inherent understanding of Africa’s development needs, as expressed by respondent Lekholoane (2009) from Lesotho who mentioned that the culture of the AfDB as an iconic brand resonates with them as public sector clients because, “As an African focused development finance institution, the AfDB has an inherent understanding of the development needs of Africa.” Respondent Atta Mensah (2009) from Ghana concurred that the AfDB’s brand culture of focusing on Africa’s development resonates with their development objectives as public sector clients because they “share the deep desire to overcome poverty in Africa.” Therefore, as Africans, both the AfDB and the public sector clients have a mutual understanding of Africa’s need for development and a mutual desire to meet the need, culminating in a shared culture which is fundamental, enduring and uniquely African as expressed in their collective determination to develop Africa. As such the very nature of the business of the AfDB as a brand is characterised by it being stakeholder-focused as it collaborates with its public sector clients to achieve its business goal of financing Africa’s development. Furthermore, the prudent manner in which the AfDB manages its financial resourcefulness and sustainability highlights the admiration from its public sector clients for its transparent business strategy, making it clear to the public sector clients that the AfDB is poised to carry out its mandate to make a substantial
development impact in Africa. Moreover, the fact that the AfDB is recognised as a financially resourceful brand points to it being a responsible brand that has proven to its public sector clients that it is always driven by the development interests of its clients as it fulfils its complex role in maintaining its economic and social significance in the African development arena.

Hence, the AfDB’s brand culture of focusing their financial resources and development knowledge on Africa’s development takes the AfDB as an iconic brand beyond its functionality into a belief system and a brand reality that the public sector clients can relate to and believe in. Therefore, it can be concluded that the significance of the AfDB’s brand culture for the consumer of development, lies in the way that as an iconic brand the AfDB has successfully set a branding agenda by creating associations such as the will to overcome poverty in Africa, thus promoting ideas of social and economic progress for the public sector clients as African consumers of development finance. Thus, the finding that the public sector clients of the AfDB associate the AfDB with its culture as a well-run African development finance institution is emulated in literature where Lindstrom (2007:175) describes the iconic brand of the 21st century as a brand that holds universal high appeal because of its strongly recognised brand culture as reflected in how the brand portrays its reason for being. Therefore it can be concluded that the AfDB does use its culture as an iconic brand to establish awareness of the brand.

With regards to the agenda-setting theory of the 21st century which emphasizes positive media content from multiple stakeholder sources, as Carroll (2011) observes that salience of the brand in both old and new media gives rise to a high level of prominence of the brand on the consumer agenda, enforcing the iconic value of a brand in the market, thus establishing strong awareness of the brand. However, the overriding finding from the majority of public sector participants was that regardless of the AfDB’s reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution, the AfDB’s brand offering is not well publicised in the media, therefore the AfDB can improve on the media exposure of its reputation as Africa’s premier development finance institution. This finding was reiterated by respondent Alemu (2009) from Ethiopia who said that, “The AfDB has to do more about its public presence in media discussions to enlighten people about its work so as to be better known by ordinary people in Africa, not just by the governments of Africa.” It can thus be contended that despite the public sector clients’ association with the AfDB as Africa’s premier development bank, the AfDB is not
necessarily salient in the minds of these clients, because according to respondent Barry, “there is a tendency for them as public sector clients to think of other more publicised development finance institutions first, even though the AfDB is Africa’s premier development finance institution”. Therefore, it can once again be concluded that the AfDB is not leveraging its status as Africa’s premier development institution and as such, not using its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness. This conclusion can be drawn because according to the majority of public sector clients, the AfDB does not seem to have a strategic communication agenda to intentionally inform its public sector clients of the bank’s premier status, the bank’s brand offering and what this means for their economic and social reality as consumers of development finance in Africa. Hence, this finding highlights the disconnect that while the majority of public sector clients associate the AfDB with its status as Africa’s premier development bank, there is not a very strong salience of the AfDB brand in the minds of the public sector clients.

Furthermore, in relation to agenda-setting for the brand, it can be proposed that the AfDB can be more proactive in interacting with the public sector clients in order to ensure a more salient space than that of competitors in their thoughts and conversations, so that the public sector clients can be more inclined to approach the AfDB first for development assistance. As such, this finding is not in alignment with literature as Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2010) observe that a strategy of being pro-active and enhancing a brand’s salience is a process of strategic communication and interaction with all stakeholders of the brand, with the focused intention to proactively identify branding opportunities, monitor competitors as well as strategically use information and communication technologies to identify perceptions of the brand in society so as to create profitable awareness of the brand.

In relation to profitable brand awareness, Kapferer (2005:2) observes that in a 21st century economy, profitable brand awareness is achieved when a brand is recognised in terms of its worth as captured in its functional and symbolic value for the consumer. These are enhanced by the amount of positive media exposure of the brand, as reflected in the positive presence of the brand in the market as well as in the mind of the consumer, leading to the consume intentionally choosing the brand above other brands in its category. According to the findings, the majority of public sector participants reiterated that they do not believe that the AfDB uses the media optimally to create profitable awareness of its brand offering to its public sector clients as illustrated by
respondent Barry (2009) from Guinea Conakry who explained that as a result of the lack of media exposure of the AfDB, “There is a tendency for us as public sector clients to think of other more publicised development finance institutions first, even though the AfDB is Africa’s premier development finance institution, because the AfDB does not communicate its position as Africa’s premier development institution as effectively as its competitors do”. This is important because as Africa’s premier development institution and a 21st century iconic brand, it is imperative for the AfDB to be recognised for its worth as captured in its complex role as a functional iconic brand based on its economic value in the development finance market and its symbolic role based on its social presence as Africa’s symbol of triumph over poverty. Thus, participants Seck (2009) from Senegal, Atta-Mensah (2009) from Ghana, Menbohan (2009) from Cameroon and Randriamato (2009) from Madagascar believe that the AfDB has not capitalized on the media in their respective countries to create profitable brand awareness so that the AfDB comes to mind first when they require development assistance. It can therefore be concluded that the AfDB is not seen to be energetic and aggressive enough in attracting and engaging the public sector clients on development projects in their respective countries. Hence, regardless of the distinct competitive edge that the AfDB has because of its focus on Africa’s development, it is not perceived to be a step ahead of other development finance institutions that are active in Africa. Therefore it can be implied that the AfDB does not add extra or more meaningful value as an iconic brand because of the lack of proactivity from the AfDB as experienced by the public sector clients. As such, the public sector clients recommend that the AfDB make more strategic use of the media to create profitable awareness of its admiral brand offering, notwithstanding the multiple new and captivating 21st century digital platforms available to the AfDB to establish profitable brand awareness.

As the lack of media exposure of the AfDB was repeatedly mentioned by the public sector clients, it can be concluded that the AfDB has not succeeded in communicating its status as Africa’s premier development finance institution at every engagement with its stakeholders. In addition this finding reiterates the lack of strategic use of agenda-setting of brand communication by the AfDB as the lack of public awareness of the brand relates to the lack of media exposure of the brand. Thus, the media’s role of disseminating information about the AfDB and contributing to widespread consumer thoughts, conversations and experiences of the AfDB, has not been optimally used to create profitable awareness of the AfDB by the public sector clients. Hence, this finding
does not correlate with literature because according to Knox and Bickerton (2003:999) the brand, its power, value and leverage are created and built from all stakeholders’ consistent positive exposure and interaction with the brand, which appears not to be the case between the AfDB and its public sector clients. As such, the conclusion can be reiterated that there is a lack of strategic agenda-setting of brand communication by the AfDB as an iconic brand, because of its limited public profile in the multiple media platforms which are available in real time, without geographic limitations to establish profitable brand awareness of the AfDB among its public sector clients. Hence, the finding that there is a lack of brand salience of the AfDB in the media suggests that the AfDB can consider more compelling ways to maximise the power of old and new media exposure to engage the more demanding consumer who determines the rules of the 21st century branding agenda by exploring not only the function of the brand but also the attributes that add value to the brand, so as to have a holistic awareness, experience and appreciation and of the AfDB as an iconic brand.

Furthermore, based on the findings that the AfDB does not make optimal use of the media to communicate its iconic status as Africa’s premier development institution, the lengthy consultation process to obtain funding and the lack of proactivity in approaching public sector clients with their brand offering, it can be concluded that AfDB is not as salient in the minds of public sector clients such as other development finance institutions like the World Bank, therefore it can be concluded that the AFDB does not use its iconic branding to establish profitable brand awareness among its public sector clients. Moreover, this finding does not correlate with the 21st century agenda-setting theory in which Kotelnikov (2007) indicates that creating a salient brand involves the strategic creation of positive awareness of a brand’s existence in the competitive 21st century economy and society of instantaneous media opportunities to communicate and connect with the 21st century contemporary consumers who are overwhelmed with choice of information, products and services, thus making brand salience efforts by brand owners vital so as to make the buying decision easier for consumers. Therefore, the recommendation can be made that agenda-setting for brand communications of the AfDB requires a more aggressive approach, to give rise to a stronger level of valuable awareness of the brand in public sector interactions with the AfDB, so as to use the iconic branding of the AfDB optimally, to establish profitable brand awareness among the public sector clients of the AfDB.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

ICONIC BRANDING AND BRAND AWARENESS OPINION SURVEY ON
THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the iconic branding and brand-awareness Opinion Survey/ In-depth Interview?</th>
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<tr>
<td>It is a research tool to measure the opinions and feelings of the public sector</td>
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<td>clientele, stakeholders or beneficiaries of the AfDB, on how the AfDB uses its</td>
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<td>iconic branding to establish brand awareness.</td>
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<th>Who should participate in the survey?</th>
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<tr>
<td>The participants are senior officials and politicians from the public sector</td>
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<td>stakeholders of the Bank, i.e. RMCs, REC, Public Utilities, National DFIs and</td>
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<td>sub-regional Development Banks.</td>
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<th>Why is it important for you as a Stakeholder to participate?</th>
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<td>The level of brand awareness is positively correlated with: a) the extent of</td>
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<td>utilisation of the Bank’s products and services by its stakeholders; and b) the</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks ability to access local knowledge and human capital; and c) the Bank’s</td>
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<td>ability to adapt, anticipate or respond to stakeholder needs.</td>
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<th>Are there any right or wrong answers?</th>
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<tr>
<td>No, there are no right or wrong answers. The questions are intended to explore your general, but honest impressions or perceptions.</td>
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<th>This interview guide will take about 20 minutes to complete.</th>
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SECTION A: Generic branding and iconic branding

1. When considering development finance, which donor comes to mind first?

2. Why is the AfDB uppermost or not uppermost in your mind?
What comes to mind when you think of the AfDB (products, projects, logo, colours and reputation)?

2. Does the AfDB present an image of a premier development institution? In what way?

3. Which other development finance institutions do you use for assistance such as infrastructure programs, budget support and sector-wide assistance programs? Why do you choose them above the AfDB?
4. In which way is dealing with the AfDB a positive experience or not a positive experience?
SECTION B: How does the AfDB use its brand story to establish brand awareness?

1. Do you think the AfDB uses its reputation as a premier development institution to establish awareness of its projects? If so, how?

2. Do you believe that when compared with other donors, the AfDB offers a unique value-add to development finance? What is it?

3. In your opinion is it widely known in your country that the AfDB is the premier development finance institution in Africa? How so?
4. In your opinion, is the AfDB a long-term development partner (or only in specific areas in which it has a competitive advantage)?
5. Do you think that the media plays a role in creating awareness of the work of the AfDB? Why?

SECTION C: How does the AfDB use its identity-value to establish brand awareness?

1. What do you think are the values of the AfDB as a brand (e.g. good governance, reliability, responsiveness, clarity of strategy)?

2. As an African consumer of development finance, do you feel that the image of the AfDB resonates with your development objectives? Why or why not?
1. Do you believe that AfDB represents an African voice in the international development arena? Why?
2. Do you believe that the AfDB is a relevant institution? Why?

5. Do you believe the AfDB is a dynamic development donor that you’d like to be associated with? Why?

SECTION D: HOW DOES THE AfDB USE ITS CULTURE TO ESTABLISH PROFITABLE BRAND AWARENESS?

1. How do you feel about the AfDB as an African focused donor led by an African elected President? Why?
2. Are there times when you consciously choose to use the AfDB above other donors? Why?

3. Do you get the distinct impression that the AfDB:
   a) Understands your needs as an African consumer of development finance? Why?
   b) Adequately meets your needs as an African consumer of development finance? Why?
4. If the AfDB were to establish a Development Partners Network, would you like to participate in it? Why or why not?

5. Do you believe that the AfDB has maximized the power of media exposure to ensure awareness of its existence as an African donor for the development of Africa? Why do you believe this?
SECTION E: Profitible Brand Awareness of the AfDB

1. How did you get to know about the AfDB?

2. Did you know that for the last three years the AfDB has consistently been awarded an AAA rating for long term borrowings in the international capital markets, by Moody’s Investor Services and Standard and Poors – two of the top rating agencies internationally?
3. How often do you read or hear about the AfDB?

4. In what way is the work of the AfDB evident in your country?

5. Is the AfDB a positive topic of discussion in your conversations with:
   a) Colleagues
   b) Other development partners
6. Do you believe that there exists a positive relationship between the AfDB and the media? Why?

Section F: Biographic Information

1. Which country or sub-region do you represent?

2. Which department do you work in?
3. How long have you worked in your present capacity?

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Section G: Optional Information

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Thank you for your time and participation