

**ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL BRANDING ON
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE PERMANENT RECRUITMENT
INDUSTRY WITHIN THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK**

A Research Dissertation

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Declaration

I, Filda Mwenje, hereby declare that the contents of this dissertation submitted for the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Brand Leadership degree at the Vega School of Brand Leadership, represent my own original work, which excludes contributions in the form of guidance from subject experts and my supervisor. This research dissertation has not been submitted prior to any other institute towards any other qualification. All sources cited are identified and acknowledged in the comprehensive list of references. Finally this research dissertation represents my own opinions and not those of the Vega School of Brand Leadership.

Filda Mwenje

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends for their love and support. A special mention to my parents Grace and Conias Mwenje, who continuously encouraged me and pushed me through this entire journey. To my sister Farirai and brother Rodney you are very special and your insights were invaluable.

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I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff of the Johannesburg based permanent recruitment agency for allowing me to conduct my research and providing assistance when requested.

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List of Abbreviations

JSM	Journal of Services Marketing
POS	Perceived Organisational Support
SET	Social Exchange Framework
IBM	Internal Brand Marketing

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Abstract

Although it is widely perceived that the attraction and retention of staff is the greatest aspect of strategy implementation, O'Reilly and Pfeffer (2000) argue that it is important for brands to create internal cultures and systems that permit employees to use their talents. King and Grace (2008) conclude that a key factor in determining customer experience of a brand is reliant on employees own internal experiences with the organisation. This draws attention to the need and importance of internal branding within organisations and its relationship to developing engaged employees.

Therefore, the problem of this study was to determine if there is a correlation between internal branding programs and employee engagement at the anonymous recruitment agency.

This empirical research was conducted in the social world and took the form of an iterative inductive approach as the author sought to generate theory related to internal branding and its impact on employee engagement after having analysed the findings in the field of study. Mixed method research which was both qualitative and quantitative was employed and more specifically the triangulation classification as the qualitative data was used to validate the findings from the quantitative data. The research instruments took the form of focus group interviews and self- completion questionnaires.

The results from this study showed that internal branding and employee engagement are areas that require attention within the studied property. It was uncovered that open feedback systems should be implemented for the employers to stay in tune with employees in order to assist them in achieving a "work- life" balance which is the greatest pain area. Ultimately the social exchange theory must be used simultaneously by the mutually dependant themes of internal branding and employee engagement to alleviate low levels of employee engagement attributed to the poor internal branding programs. This study highlights the importance of leadership teams paying particular attention to the state of their brand internally as determined by staff engagement without only looking to measure their external brand performance.

1. Introduction

South Africa is a country with a well-developed market for recruitment agencies both in the permanent and temporary staffing categories. According to LA Intronet (2015), there are more than 3000 agencies in the country. This great number of agencies is due to the high levels of unemployment and the skilled talent shortage being experienced (Adcorp, 2015). The average statistic is that for every 100 job assignments received by an agency only 15 assignments are actually filled, meaning that agencies are being paid for 15% success rate (LA Intronet, 2015). This seemingly low statistic is due to the great amounts of competition in the market, this means that one client is able to send one vacancy to multiple agencies. Recruitment agencies, as with other services industry organisations must differentiate themselves with their clients to avoid being given non-committed job assignment and aim to become the service provider of choice.

The services industry commands high levels of interaction between an organisation's employees and its customers, which means that employees of this industry serve as brand ambassadors and brand contact points for their organisations (Laclé, 2013). From this premise the author determines that each interaction an employee has with a customer is extremely important. Due to the intangible nature of the industry, the researcher must determine the key drivers that motivate employees to offer service that is reflective of the brands they work for and the extent to which employees believe in their organisation's vision, mission and values.

As a result the author intends to provide insight into the correlation between internal brand management practices and employee engagement at a selected recruitment agency in Johannesburg, which has opted to remain anonymous.

Although it is widely perceived that the attraction and retention of employees is the greatest aspect of strategy implementation, O'Reilly and Pfeffer (2000) argue that it is important for brands to create internal cultures and systems that permit employees to use their talents.

King and Grace (2008) conclude that a key factor in determining customer experience of a brand is reliant on employees own internal experiences with the organisation. This draws attention to the need and importance of internal branding within organisations and its relationship to developing engaged employees.

The results from this study aim to provide guidance to management in the greater services industry to compare and contrast their own internal branding practices against levels of employee engagement. The results from this research will support the concept of evidence based management as suggested by Bryman et al. (2014) in that the managers of recruitment agencies may be able to make managerial decisions for the betterment of the organisation based on research conducted not subjective preferences (Rousseau, 2006).

This study will also highlight the importance of leadership teams paying particular attention to the state of their brand internally as determined by employee engagement without only looking to measure their external brand performance. The author aims to highlight the needs for service industries, which have high levels of staff and customer interaction, to recognise that the service customers receive is a direct reflection of the organisations internal efforts on their staff.

This research will detail the field of research specialisation undertaken by the author and the proposed research topic. A justification of the study is followed by the problem statement and its questions. The objectives of the study and its demarcation are detailed leading into the literature review which will provide background on the existing knowledge in the field of specialisation. The methodology of what study will be undertaken and how it will be conducted preceded the data validity and ethical considerations. The data analysis and findings will highlight the key findings of the research and contribute to final chapter of conclusions and recommendations.

1.1. Field of Specialisation

1.1.1. Research Topic

Analysing the impact of internal branding on employee engagement in Johannesburg based permanent recruitment agency within the social exchange framework.

1.2. Research Problem

1.2.1. Problem Statement

To determine if there is a correlation between internal branding programs and employee engagement at the anonymous recruitment agency.

1.2.2. Research Questions

- To examine the concept of internal branding
- To analyse the internal branding programs of the selected recruitment agency
- To examine the employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency, within the social exchange framework

1.3. Objectives of the study

This study aims to uncover the key drivers of employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency focusing on how current internal branding practices affect the levels of employee engagement. This research will draw light to importance of the social exchange framework within the working environment and its interdependence with employee engagement.

The conclusions drawn from this research will not only have an academic application but also a real- world application to inform and guide management teams in the recruitment and overall services industry on the importance and correlation between internal brand management and employee engagement.

1.4. Delimitation/ demarcation of the field of study

This study will not research the impact of employee engagement on customer service levels. Although there is a close correlation between internal branding and customer service throughout literature, this study will only focus on internal branding in relation to employee engagement. This study will also focus on the permanent recruitment industry in Johannesburg only and not take into account the overall services industry.

Employer branding is another paradigm that is closely tied to internal branding, however the author will not delve into the strategies that employers use to differentiate themselves from their competitors as this would be too broad an area of study for the purposes of this paper.

1.5. Abbreviated Methodology

This empirical research will be conducted in the social world and take the form of an iterative inductive approach as the author seeks to generate theory related to internal branding and its impact on employee engagement after having analysed the findings in the field of study. Further to this the approach will be iterative as the author will have to determine the specific conditions in which internal branding impacts employee engagement in recruitment agencies (Bryman et al. 2014).

Mixed method research which is both qualitative and quantitative will be employed and more specifically the triangulation classification as the qualitative data will be used to validate the findings from the quantitative data (Hammersley, 1996). The research instruments will take the form of focus group interviews and self-completion questionnaires. Focus groups will grant the author greater insight into the respondents areas of emphasis and their feelings (Bryman et al. 2014) on the impact of internal branding in their agency and what they determine to be employee engagement. The focus group will seek to alleviate the limitation of an inability to probe of the social survey design (Bryman et al. 2014). The findings of the focus groups will be validated by the self-completion questionnaires.

The author will implement the stratified random sampling method, which is a form of probability sampling, to ensure that there is accurate and proportional representation of the agency staff population per department as described by Bryman et al. (2014). This will help to determine any variables related to an employee's department and their levels of employee engagement as impacted by internal branding efforts. The sample will be selected at all levels of organisational employment from entry level to senior management, with greater emphasis on the sales and support staff.

1.6. Planned division of Chapters

The below list is the proposed outline of the study to be undertaken per chapter:

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3.4.1 Sampling

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3.5 Data Validity & Reliability

3.6 Data Analysis

3.7 Ethics

Chapter 4: Findings & Data Analysis

Chapter 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

The following chapter is a review of the existing body of literature regarding the themes relevant to this study as well as an analysis on the literature concerning the selected theoretical framework which was applied to the study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to provide an in-depth analysis of the existing literature concerning themes of branding in the services industry, internal branding and employee engagement. This chapter also studies the theoretical framework of the social exchange theory which was applied to this study. In the context of this study only the elements of the social exchange theory regarding the theory of reciprocity and perceived organisational support (POS) were analysed and deemed relevant to this study.

2.2. Brand

Lindström, (2011) determines a brand to be form of identification (ID), for all tangible and intangible services and products and concludes by defining a brand overall as a “statement of who we are or who we wish to be.” Ultimately brands provide a set of benefits most of which are intangible as the brand benefits are often felt (Oosthuizen, 2013).

Upon further investigation, a brand is also viewed as “an experience living at the intersection of promise and expectation” as defined by Gallagher and Savard, (2009). With a more people centric approach, Neumeier (2006) defines a brand as the perception a brand holds in the mind of consumers, which suggests that it is not companies who determine what their brands are but rather consumers. Building upon this Barlow and Stewart (2004), base their definition to include staff stating that, a brand can be described as what your staff and consumers think about you. This definition offered by Barlow and Stewart (2004) is corroborated by the definition of Jacobs (2003) which states that a brand is a full representation of relationships that organizations have with both their staff and customers, in equal measure of importance.

Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000) determine that in order for a brand to influence its consumers, an emphasis must be placed on its internal and external communication programs. Strong brands deliver high profits consistently which attributed to their

consistent brand experience for consumers internationally (Oosthuizen, 2013), of which communication is a foundation. Based on this premise, internal communications is an area of study in the selected agency in order to determine its level of influence on the staff members. The author will further investigate the scope of communications within the framework of internal branding.

2.3. Internal Branding

Internal branding is described as branding that's focuses on the internal customer of an organisation who are the employees; the purpose of internal branding is to ensure that employees are able to deliver the brand promise to external customers (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010). Mackay et al., (2006) determine an organisation's employees to be the most powerful assets in the organisation's marketing toolbox. However, as Mitchell (2002) uncovered, most organisations are focused on marketing their brands externally and not internally to their employees and that those who do try internal branding do it poorly.

Gummesson (1991) demonstrates that the overall practices which are key to internal branding include recruiting the right employees, rewarding high performing employees, retaining good employees as well as continued training. This premise confirms Mackay et al., (2006) statement that internal branding is a practice that should be owned by both marketing and human resource teams. However according to (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010) most literature on internal branding focuses on communication and training as being the most important attributes, which will be maintained for the purpose of the study.

Jacobs (2003) advocates the adoption of internal branding by organisations as it will cause employees to deliver greater service to customers, build employee job longevity and ultimately employee commitment to the brand. This is especially relevant as Schultz and de Chernatony (2002) determine that companies rely on their staff to deliver on their brand promise to customers. This is because the behavior of an organization's staff has a major impact on the perception of the brand to its external customers or stakeholders (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010).

Interbrand (2004) highlight the shift from manufacturing output to the services industry which has in turn drawn a greater focus to branding. With this in mind Interbrand (2004) highlight the importance of the brand focusing internally- on the staff of the brand. The need for an internal focus is derived from the premise that companies in the services industry have struggled to clearly differentiate themselves (Interbrand, 2004). An employee in the service industry's performance is of paramount importance in determining the success or failure of a service exchange (Bowen, 1990).

Services brands must strive to create "brand champions" out of their employees who directly impact the brand image due to the intangible nature of their offerings (Morhart, Herzog, and Tomczak 2009). A brand champion has been described by (Scott and Media, 2008) as a person whose focus is on promoting their organisation products or services that stands out from the competition; this is fostered by the commitment and loyalty of the employee to their employer.

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) further this by determining that for effective brand building to occur there must be knowledge sharing focused on the brands own identity with its employees. A great focus has to be placed on organisation employees and their understanding and connection with the brand as they wield the power to influence the organisations customer's perceptions and knowledge of the brand as described by Barlow and Steward (2004). Mitchell (2002) asserts that once employees are aligned with their brand identity, the customers will have a uniform brand experience of what is marketed externally against their actual experience with the brand's employees.

The delivery of branded customer service is hinged heavily on the staff particularly in the services industry as demonstrated by the ServQual model proposed by Barlow and Steward (2004), which denotes the fact that all five factors of the model are dependant solely on the staff of the organisation. The five elements are the staff's reliability, assuredness, tangibility, empathy and responsiveness.

As a guideline for good brand management, Interbrand (2004) highlights the factor of honouring stakeholders which include the employees of an organisation. Internal

brand management in the form of training and internal communication is highlighted a key factor that will translate to increased customer satisfaction due to the staff delivering experiences that are aligned to the overall brand promise (Interbrand, 2004). Miles and Magold (2004) introduced the term of “employee brand building behaviours” which refer to the activities which employees engage in to increase their employers brand image. Thus one can deduce that employees who positively engage in these employee brand building behaviours could be termed brand champions (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014).

2.4. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined by Forbes (2013) as “the emotional commitment the employees have to their organisation and its goals.” Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as the extent to which employees are submerged in their duties. As a study that has gained traction over the past ten years, CIPD (2014) determines employee engagement to include the effort in work of employees, their commitment to the organisation, levels of job satisfaction and overall experience. Deloitte University Press, (2015) further discusses how the modern work places have become transparent globally as employees have access to multiple sources of information, which calls for increases feedback systems and transparency from the organisation. The definition offered by CIPD (2004) will be the most appropriate for the purposes of this study which aims to uncover the driver of employee engagement.

Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) determine employee engagement to be a critical requirement for organisations if they are to outpace their competitors. Employee engagement is stated to impact the organisations profitability, productivity, customer loyalty and satisfaction and employees retention (Coffman and Gonzalez- Molina, 2002). Andrew and Sofian (2012) support the direct positive relationship displayed between high employee engagement and positive organisational performance.

Further to this, Saks (2006) analyses employee engagement in two contexts namely, job engagement and organizational engagement. He defines job engagement to encompass the satisfaction an individual has with their specific job role, whilst the

latter is associated with the employee's psychological and active participation in the organisation. The author has determined for the purpose of this study to maintain employee engagement under one generic umbrella which houses both concepts of job and organisational commitment.

Heskett (1987) notes that to increase employee engagement by means of communication and education also results in the employees increased understanding and commitment to fulfil their roles within the organisation as well as their emotional engagement with the brand (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2001). From the preceding premise, the author deems it necessary to investigate the levels of brand engagement in the recruitment agency chosen for study and how these levels of engagement are impacted by communication and education (in the form of training) within the organisation.

2.5. The Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET) is deemed to be one of the most important paradigms that explains and grants greater insight into the various workplace behaviours (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The underlying premise of the theory is that an interaction between people generates corresponding obligations (Emerson, 1976). One of the founding principles of SET is that relationships evolve with time to become loyal and trusting commitments from all parties involved based on specific rule of exchange of which reciprocity is the major one in study (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). According to Bolino, Turnley and Bloodgood (2002) the SET framework has led the front on organisational behaviour focusing on the employer and employee relationships.

2.5.1. Theory of reciprocity

Cropanzano and Mitchell, (2005) determine that reciprocity is an important factor, although not the only one in the social exchange theory. Reciprocity within context of the social exchange theory is described by Keysar et al.(2008) as the equal measure repayment of both giving and taking between people. When applied in the workplace environment, Cropanzano and Mitchell, (2005) describe the evolution of

social exchange relationships as occurring when employers look after their employees. This model is an excellent fit for this study as Heskett (1987) confirms that in the service profit chain the staff of an organisation must first receive excellent service internally for them to be able to reciprocate that service to the external customers, which is confirmed by Gergen (1969) who states that if one party supplies a benefit, the receiving party should respond in a similar manner.

2.5.2. Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

Perceived organisational support (POS) is a long standing model of SET (Eisenberger et al. 2002) and is aligned with the aforementioned premise of reciprocity. POS is related to the perceptions employees generate regarding their level of value and importance to their organisations (Choi et al., 2014). Research conducted goes as far to state that companies who have a high POS have a greater percentage of employees who will be brand champions (Moorman et al. 1998). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) confirm this as they argue that POS result in employees being obliged to care for their organisations welfare and the attainment of its objectives.

For the purpose of this study brand champions have been aforementioned as employees who are highly engaged with their organisation, this research paper will further investigate POS in the recruitment agency selected and how it in fact relates to levels of employee engagement.

2.6. Conclusion

Baldoni (2004) states that that as an organisations external brand represents its identity, image and values to its customers, so too must it for its internal stakeholders. It must therefore educate employees on its culture, values, mission and vision (Baldoni, 2004). Ultimately brands must first deliver their brand promise to their employees before their customers (Mitchell, 2002) as internal branding is the communication to employees which communicates the promise made to customers (Mitchell, 2002). It is the role of internal branding to ensure that employees understand the organisations goals and objectives (Mahnert and Torres, 2005) to

ensure the employees have a passion for work which has been described as employee engagement (Ahmad et al., 2014). Overall engaged employees are emotionally and intellectually connected to their organisation and highly productive (Ahmad et al., 2014). It is the purpose of internal branding to deliver shared value to the employees of an organisation (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2010). The premise should be to increase the emotional commitment of employees to their organisation as their personal values become aligned with those of the organisation they work for (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2010).

Contrary to popular belief, employee engagement is not about the remuneration an employee receives it extends into their development and perceived value within the organisation (Stevebillingham.com, 2015). The SET framework supports the notion of employee engagement as stated by Rupp and Cropanzano (2002), that employees involved in social exchange relationships will not connect with parties of economic exchange relationships but rather those with whom they are engaged. This overall leads to the premise that employees who experience favourable SET environments will be highly likely to partake in activities that positively impact their organisation's well-being as they take personal responsibility for the success of the organisation (Choi et al., 2014).

For this study the author will study the inter- relationship between internal branding and employee engagement against the POS and reciprocity frameworks of the SET. A review of literature has shown that there is in fact a causal relationship between internal branding and the levels of employee engagement experienced in organisations specifically in the services industry.

The following chapter will detail the entire research methodology carried out in this study which include the sample and research design as well as the data collection methods utilised.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to outline in detail the methodology used to examine the overall research problem of this dissertation. The aim is to determine if there is a correlation between internal branding programs and employee engagement at a selected permanent recruitment agency located in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Further to this, the chapter will be categorised to follow the types of research as suggested by Collis and Hussey (2009), which are: the purpose of the research, its process and the logic, however, the outcome will be in the chapter to follow.

3.2. Background

Research methodology has been defined as "...the procedural framework within which the research is conducted" by Remenyi et al. (2009), further to this research, it serves three main purposes which are to describe, to explain and to predict phenomena (Welman and Kruger, 1999). Based on the types of research described above according to Collins and Hussey (2009), the purpose of this particular research will be to apply the research findings to solving an existing business problem, which has been described as applied research (Collins and Hussey 2009). The author deems that descriptive research must first be employed as it would be impossible to employ applied research without first having identified the characteristics pertinent to the research problem. This is based on the premise that descriptive research is used to identify and source information regarding the characteristics of a research problem (Collins and Hussey 2009). In this particular study, the author must first identify the elements of internal branding using the social exchange framework employed in the company, their effect on staff and the levels of employee engagement. It is only after these characteristics have been examined that the findings can be used to assist leadership in instilling internal branding practices that will increase the levels of employee engagement within their organisation, which

forms part of applied research. Ultimately from these two view points, this research will be a combination of descriptive and applied research.

Watkins (2012) has identified two research worlds, namely the social world and the physical and natural world. The natural and physical research worlds employ scientific methods through specified experiments in the disciplines of chemistry, physics, botany and medicine (Remenyi et al., 2009). Conversely the social research world is concerned with how things are and the reason they are that way, it seeks to understand and explain the systems in which people operate (Babbie, 2005). This study will be conducted in the social world as the company of study will serve as the system in which the employees operate. Further to this the author will investigate the correlation between internal branding and its ultimate effect on employee engagement.

This study will take on the empirical research form as the author aims to observe through experimentation the interrelation between internal branding and employee engagement. This is aligned with Bryman et al., (2014) who define empirical research to be a study of reality where knowledge gained through experience is held as valid. However, initial research would be theoretical based on the existing body of literature. Remenyi et al., (2009) state that the two methods of research are dialectically related as one may not perform empirical research without first understanding the existing theoretical evidence. As the author seeks to explore the perceptions and knowledge of the staff pertaining to their level of employee engagement within their organisation as well as their perceptions of the current internal branding practices they are exposed to, it is the phenomenological approach that is relevant (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

3.3. Research Design

Watkins (2012) articulates that the phenomenological approach is associated with qualitative research; however, Babbie (2005) asserts that neither qualitative nor quantitative research methods should be determined nor distinguished based on a

research approach alone without consideration of the complete study. This is especially relevant as the phenomenological approach is concerned with how humans interpret the world around them (Bryman et al.,2014), this a feature that is central to this study to determine how employees experience and interpret the current internal branding practices within their organisation.

Bryman et al., (2014) define a study which combines both quantitative and qualitative research as a mixed method approach. The mixed method approach for this study will see the use of quantitative data being used to facilitate qualitative data in order to generate in- depth insights (Hammersley, 1996). The greatest benefit of the mixed method approach relevant to this study is that the author will be able to study the static picture of the employees drawn from quantitative research which would then provide general patterns or themes. The qualitative approach would then allow the author to further investigate processes and reasoning ideologies within the emergent patterns (Bryman et al., 2014).

3.4. Data Collection Methods

A unit of analysis is the simplest element of research, it is the main subject or idea of the study being conducted (Long, 2013). Collins and Hussey (2009) suggest that a unit of analysis could take the form of an individual, an event, an object, a body of individuals, a relationship or an aggregate. In this particular study the unit of analysis will be a body of individuals, who in essence are the staff members of the selected recruitment consultancy, working across various departments.

A variable is the measurable characteristic of a study (Collins and Hussey, 2009). Watkins (2012) explains the presence of both qualitative and quantitative variables in which the first refers to non- numerical attributes whilst the latter refers to numerical attribute of the unit of analysis. In this particular study the independent variable will be the internal branding as Collins and Hussey (2009) describe this variable as the one which can be changed to influence the dependant variable which is levels of employee engagement. The dependant variable is pre-determined or assumed by the independent variable (Collins and Hussey, 2009).

3.4.1. Sampling

According to Watkins (2012) a population is made up of the targeted people or collective items in consideration for the purpose of the study or simply the units of the universe (Bryman et al., 2014). The sample is then deduced from the population as it is made up of members from the population (Collins and Hussey, 2009). The sampling frame for this study from which the sample will be selected is an employee list of the selected recruitment agency as it is defined by Watkins (2012) as a record of the target population. The population of the organisation, which is the target population, is currently made up of ninety people. Watkins (2012) provides guidelines on appropriate sample size and deems that if the population is close to one hundred then the sample size should be seventy-five percent of the population.

As this study takes on the mixed methods form, the samples will be described as related to each study- the qualitative and quantitative.

For the quantitative part of this research, the author employed the stratified sampling method, which is a type of probability sampling, which meant the researcher was able to pre-determine the representation of all segments of the population in the sample (Watkins, 2012) ensuring the participation of respondents from the various departments of the organisation. As the author required proportional representation of the staff in the various departments, the stratified random sampling method was used (Bryman et al., 2014). This was determined from the accessible population of forty-five people. The accessible population was defined by Younter (2006) as the population which the researcher had access to, given time and resource constraints. Further to the guidance from Watkins (2012), Bryman et al., (2014) suggest smaller samples for the more homogenous populations as they would have less variation.

Purposive sampling, which is a form of non-probability sampling, was used for the qualitative part of this study. DuPlooy- Cilliers et al., (2014) defined purposive sampling as a method of sampling where the author purposefully selects the respondents based on required characteristics. The purposive method was selected as the author had to ensure that the sample of the qualitative study had participated

in the initial quantitative study as this study sought to gain greater insights into the responses from the initial quantitative study.

3.4.2. Research Instruments

As this particular study was a mixed method study, two different research instruments were employed. For the quantitative section of the study, self-administered questionnaires were utilised whilst for the qualitative study, focus group interviews were conducted.

In the quantitative study, the research instrument administered was the self-administered questionnaire also known as the self-completion questionnaire, whereby members of the sample answered questions independently (Bryman et al., 2014). These questionnaires were distributed to the accessible sample directly by the author on site. This instrument was selected by the author as self-administered questionnaires are relatively cheap and fast to administer as well as being convenient to complete for respondents as confirmed by Bryman et al., (2014). Most importantly these questionnaires were necessary to provide the general patterns of the study.

The limitations of the self-administered questionnaires were around the inability for the author to probe and gain greater insight into the responses received as there were no open ended questions in the questionnaire. Secondly this method made it difficult to collect in depth information as the number of questions was limited to prevent respondent fatigue (Bryman et al., 2014). The questionnaire was simple to understand catered for all levels of literacy and English language command of the staff members to ensure respondents were able to actually complete the questionnaire (Bryman et al. 2014). With these factors being brought light the author deemed it imperative to add in focus group interviews as the self-administered questionnaires alone would not provide sufficient findings for the research in question, thus confirming the need for this study to take on the mixed method approach. The self-administered questionnaire was pre-tested initially with the

expert review of the supervising professor as well as through the conduction of a pilot study.

For the qualitative study, the research instrument utilised was a focus group interviews. Focus groups which are a form of qualitative research (Bryman et al, 2014) were required in this study to grant the author a greater understanding of the staff members' perceptions on internal branding practices in their organisation as well their personal feelings towards employee engagement, which could not be determined through the questionnaires. The focus group interviews provided an environment where the various respondents were able to question each other's feelings and articulate matters of greater priority to them as the author partially relinquished control of the interview (Bryman et al. 2014). The previous premise was particularly important for the author to be able to determine the exact drivers and motivators for the staff members in order to increase the levels of engagement within the business as well really understand the impact internal branding has on them.

The author conducted one focus group interview with ten participants based on the accessible sample to the author. The author was the facilitator of the interviews. The size of the focus group was guided by Morgan's(1998) suggestion to have between six and ten participants per group to ensure increased data quality. The stratifying criterion used out of the accessible population was the department of the staff members distinguishing between sales staff and support staff, this criterion was selected to ensure members of a particular group were able to articulate relevant information based on their experiences (Bryman et al., 2015). The focus groups were instrumental in highlighting areas for the organisation's leaders to focus on as well as providing diagnostics for the team to address (Watkins, 2012).

3.5. Data Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

In the quantitative study, the validity initially focused on face validity in that the author sought the verification of the questionnaire by the author's supervisor to ensure that the questionnaire drafted, measured the concepts required.

The use of the Likert scale, in the self-administered questionnaire, to measure levels of staff engagement was to increase the concurrent validity of the study as people are different and are affected in varying degrees by certain criteria (Bryman et al., 2014). The author aimed to increase the amount of internal reliability for the focus group interview by assigning only one observer; this reduced the disparities of views which occur when there are multiple observers (Bryman et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a pilot study with a sample of eight people was conducted by the author in order to test the design of the questionnaire. From the pilot study conducted and the review offered by the supervisor, the questions in Section 1 of the self-completion questionnaire were revisited. The author made an amendment to specify the exact type of training respondents received in order to gain more specific information by offering specific categories. The author also re-worded a question on notice boards to remove any assumptions on behalf of the author as to whether notices boards were actually present. One question in the same section was divided to create two separate questions as it had addressed two differing aspects.

In the qualitative study, the trustworthiness of the data had to be assessed as Du Plooy- Cilliers et al., (2014) confirms the focus of qualitative studies to be the attainment of understanding of the assessed phenomena. The credibility of the study was affirmed by the use of triangulation, that is, the use of the mixed method approach to this study as suggested by Du Plooy- Cilliers et al., (2014) which saw the incorporation of the self – administered questionnaires first then the focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were also recorded to ensure credibility in the interpretation of the data from the respondents.

The dependability of the study was also based on the continuous integration by the author of both the quantitative study and the qualitative study. At each point in the research process the author had to affirm that the data collection methods for the studies as well as the samples remained congruent. The data gathered from the quantitative study asserted the dependability of the qualitative data gathered.

3.6. Data Analysis Methods

This section will briefly highlight the methods of data analysis employed by the author as the detailed data analysis will be in the following chapter along with the findings. This study is a mixed method study comprising of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative study, which was conducted through self-administered questionnaires was analysed through the means of an excel table and various graphs. Due to the design of the questionnaire the author was able to work through the three identified areas separately- section 1 of the questionnaire dealt with internal branding whilst section 2 addressed staff engagement and the final section, section 3 addressed the demographics of the respondents. For each question, the author had to ensure that the total response options given totalled 40, which was the sample size. Further to this the response for each category was converted into a percentage of that sample. It is important to note that these methods were not applied to questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 of section 1 as these questions allowed for multiple choices from the respondents. Instead these questions were rated for their popularity as a response. The author was able to develop pie charts for visual representation of the statistics. Bar charts were also used for questions that had a related theme or a comparison element to visually represent the similarities or disparities in the corresponding data.

For the qualitative study which took the form of a focus group, the author adhered to the steps for data analysis recommended by Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014), which are to prepare the data, defining the coding unit, developing coding scheme, testing the coding scheme, coding all the transcribed text, data interpretation and reporting of findings. The author had developed 13 open ended questions for the focus group to ensure a discussion ensued between participants (Bryman et al, 2014). The questions were developed based on the themes that emerged from the quantitative study.

During the focus group, the author recorded all the audio of the discussions and made manual notes. Thus the first step was for the author to transcribe the entire audio recording (see appendix D), of which the full response version has been

utilised to ensure there was no overlooked information as suggested by Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014). The author did not include the entire range of non-verbal cues, only those that were deemed as outstanding.

The author used complete sentences as the coding unit which represented one complete idea; the reason for this was to ensure that detailed insights are gathered as the main purpose of the qualitative study was for corroborating the quantitative data gathered. The author developed a coding scheme of which the thematic coding method was applied to the transcribed interview, this involved the process of deducting themes derived from the literature review and research questions (Bezuidenhout and Cronje 2014).

In the presentation for the findings, direct speech snippets have been used by the author, however to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, their names have not been mentioned rather their demographic and job function

Regarding the qualitative data gathered, the data will first be transcribed to a great level of detail and accuracy. Further to the transcription of the data, coding will follow according to the selective coding method as the author has identified the core category to be around levels of employee engagement.

3.7. Ethics

This research was fully funded personally by the author. With regards to the consent of information, the author sought permission from the Human Resources Manager of the property to conduct surveys and focus groups on their staff members. The organisation was given an official letter from the Vega School of Brand leadership, detailing the study, its purpose and the requirements. Further to this the name of the participating organisation was not disclosed as per their request. The organisation will also be granted a copy of the results of the research as well as a full copy of the final dissertation. In the interest of privacy, no employee names were recorded on the response sheets. The anonymous nature of the responses ensured the honesty of the responses from employees without the fear of being exposed to their leaders.

The surveys did not require the employees to disclose their names for privacy concerns to allow them to answer in a free manner without fear of prejudice. On the cover page of the questionnaires there was detailed information provided regarding the right to not participate in the study as well confidentiality.

The following chapter will give an in-depth presentation of the findings from the study as well as analysis of the data gathered.

4. Findings and Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the study as well as analyse the data, with the objective of addressing the research problem which was stated as “to determine if there is a correlation between internal branding programs and employee engagement at the anonymous recruitment agency.” The chapter also considers the findings in relation to the below stated research questions discussed in chapter 1:

1. To examine the concept of internal branding
2. To analyse the internal branding programs of the selected recruitment agency
3. To examine the employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency, within the social exchange framework

As the study took on the mixed method approach, the author presented the findings and analysis in the below format to ensure a clear flow of the information:

4.2. Study background and Sample demographics

4.2.1. Quantitative Study

4.2.1a. Response Rate

4.2.1b. Sample Demographics

4.2.2 Qualitative Study

4.2.2a. Response Rate

4.2.2b. Sample Demographics

4.3. Research Questions 1 & 2: The Concept of Internal Branding & Current internal brand programs at the selected recruitment agency

4.3.1 Quantitative data findings and analysis

4.3.2 Qualitative data findings and analysis

4.4: Research Question 3: To examine the employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency, within the social exchange framework

4.4.1 Employee Engagement

4.4.1a. Quantitative data findings and analysis

4.4.1b. Qualitative data findings and analysis

4.4.2. Social Exchange Framework (SET)

4.4.2a. Quantitative data findings and analysis

4.4.2b. Qualitative data findings and analysis

4.4.2.1. Theory of Reciprocity data findings and analysis

4.4.2.1. Perceived Organisation Support (POS) data findings and analysis

4.2. Study Background and Sample Demographics

4.2.1. Quantitative Study

4.2.1a. Response Rate

In the quantitative study, where data was collected in the form of self-administered questionnaires, an 88% response rate was achieved from the accessible sample of forty-five people. Out of the 45 surveys distributed, 43 were returned to the author, however out of the 43, only 40 were deemed as usable by the author as the remaining three had large amounts of data missing. The author did not seek to follow up on the two unreturned surveys as the author deemed this as the respondents right to not want to participate, as clearly indicated on the questionnaires.

4.2.1b. Sample demographics

The sample consisted of 40 staff members of the selected recruitment agency. The sample distribution of the participants is illustrated in table 1 below.

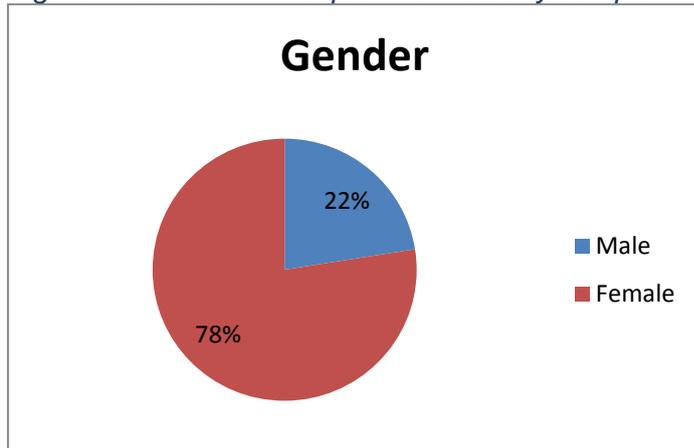
Table 1: attributes of the quantitative study sample

Questionnaires	Categories	Number of employees	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	9	22
	Female	31	78
Race	Asian	0	0
	Black	17	42
	Coloured	5	13
	Indian	1	3
	White	17	42
Age	Under 20	2	5

	21-30	23	57
	31-40	13	33
	41-50	2	5
	over 50	0	0
Level of education	Lower than grade 12	0	0
	Grade 12	11	27
	Grade with diploma/certificate	11	27
	Diploma/Certificate without grade 12	4	11
	Undergraduate degree	11	27
	Post graduate degree	3	8
	Doctorate	0	0
Dept. of work	Sales	21	53
	Support	19	47
Changed depts.	Yes	10	25
	No	30	75
Work category	Staff	23	58
	Assistant	7	17
	Team Leader	10	25
	Exec Head	0	0
Length of Service	less than 1 year	10	25
	1-3 years	21	52
	3-5 years	5	11
	5-7 years	1	3
	7-9 years	1	3
	9-11 years	0	0
	over 11 years	2	6

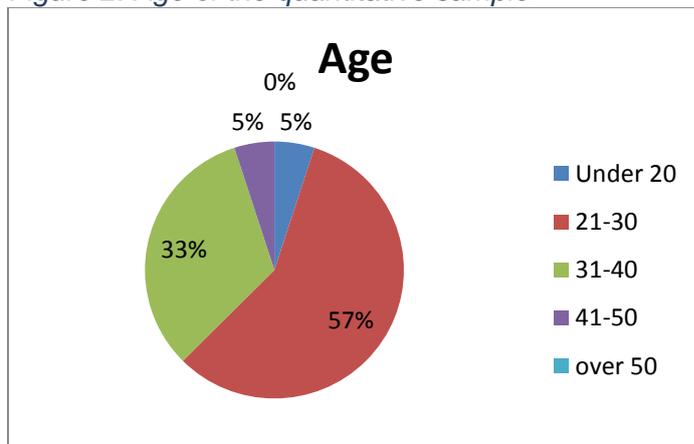
Figure 1 shows that of the 40 respondents, more than half were females (78 %) whilst 9 were males (22%). This is an acceptable ratio as throughout the organisation the ratio of females to males is 5:1, based on the staffing list provided to the author at the commencement of this study.

Figure 1: Gender of the quantitative study sample



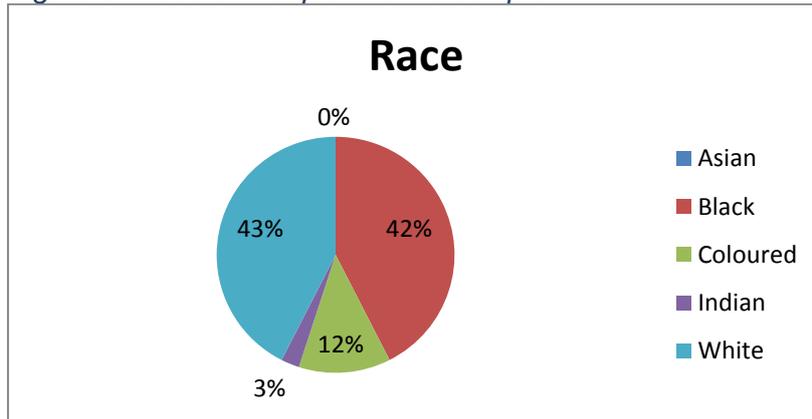
The majority of the respondents (57%) fell within the 21- 30 years of age range, followed by 33% in the 31-40 years old range, the minorities were the under 20 (5%) and the 41-50 (5%) whilst the over 50 was not represented as illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Age of the quantitative sample



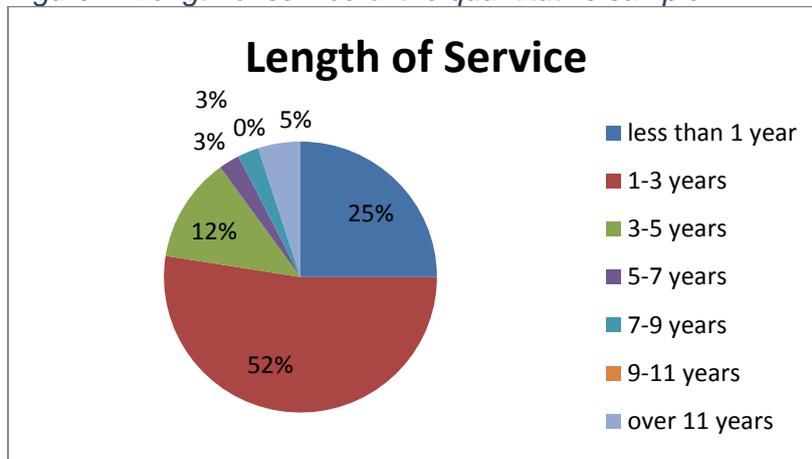
The race of the respondents, illustrated in figure 3 was investigated by the author to ensure that all racial spheres of the company were represented, the participants were divided as follows: both black and white staff members were equally represented whilst there were no Asians as the company doesn't currently employ any. The Coloured and Indian race were the minority at 13% and 3% respectively.

Figure 3: Race of the quantitative sample



For matters related to staff engagement, it was important for the author to understand the length of service of the respondents which interesting enough highlighted low staff tenure as 21 respondents who constituted 52% of the sample had been with company for between 1 and 3 years only and only 9% which is 3 respondents had served in the company for over 7 years as shown in figure 4

Figure 4: Length of service of the quantitative sample



In the accessible sample, the author was able to maintain a relative balance between the sales staff (53%) and support staff (47%) as this was important in gauging the varying perceptions and perspectives of the business from the commission earning employees (sales staff) and the non- commission earners (support staff) as highlighted in figure 5.

Figure 5: Job function of the quantitative sample

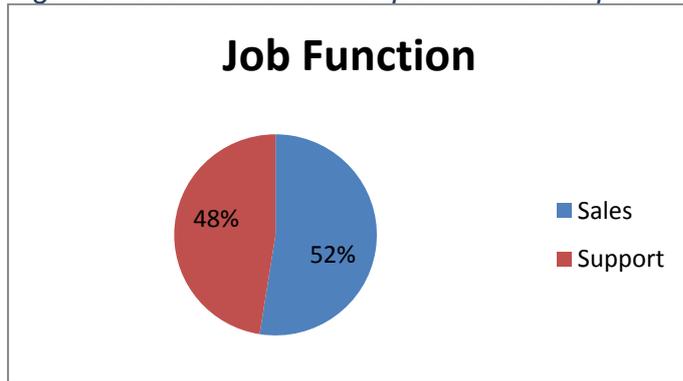
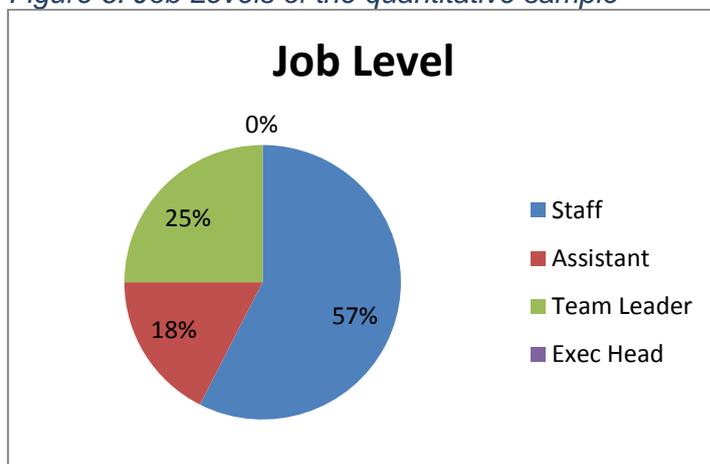


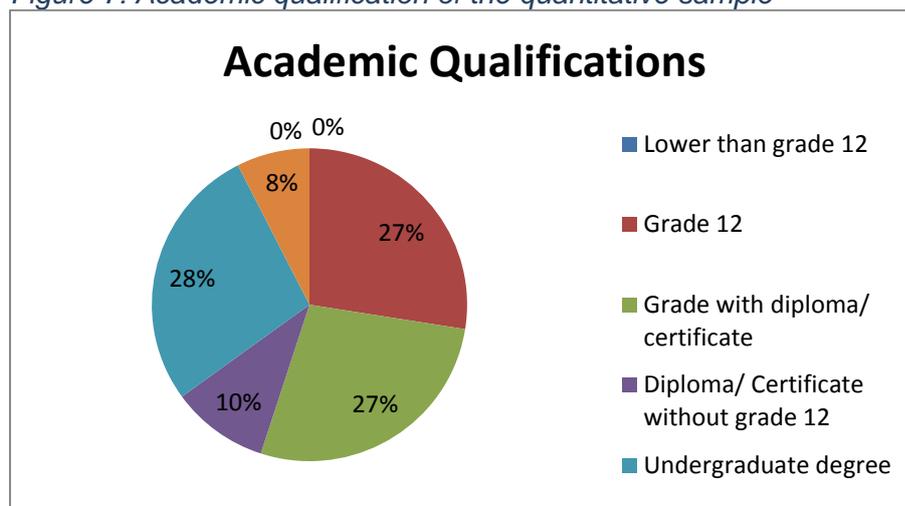
Figure 6 highlights the job levels/ seniority of the staff within the organisation. This was necessary to investigate as this study focused on internal branding and employee engagement on the employees, so it was important to trace any variances based on level of employment. Executive Heads did not make the accessible sample as the findings of this study will be presented to them for recommendations within their workplace. Team Leaders made up 25% of the sample, whilst assistants were 17% and the majority being regular staff members at 58%.

Figure 6: Job Levels of the quantitative sample



The academic qualifications of the accessible sample are broken down in figure 7, below. All of the respondents held a Grade / Matric or higher qualification, whilst none of the respondents held a Doctorate qualification.

Figure 7: Academic qualification of the quantitative sample



4.2.2. Qualitative Study

4.2.2a. Response Rate

A focus group interview was conducted with 10 participants as selected through the purposive sampling method implemented by the author. The focus group formed the qualitative study for this research. It was conducted in private and pre-booked training room in the Sandton area.

4.2.2b. Sample Demographics

Table 2 shows the breakdown and attributes of the focus group participants. As in the quantitative study respondents chose to remain anonymous by not having their identities tracked but were willing to share their demographic information.

Table 2: attributes of the qualitative study sample

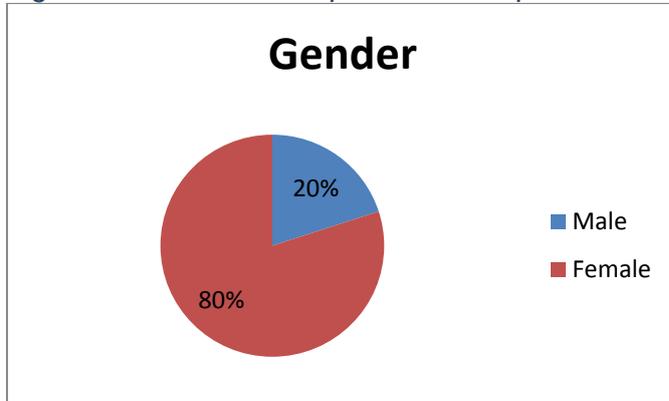
Focus Group Interview	Categories	Number of employees	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	2	20
	Female	8	80
Race	Asian	0	0
	Black	2	20
	Coloured	1	10
	Indian	0	0
	White	7	70

Age	Under 20	0	0
	21-30	8	80
	31-40	1	10
	41-50	1	10
	over 50	0	0
Level of education	Lower than grade 12	0	0
	Grade 12	1	10
	Grade 12 with diploma/certificate	3	30
	Diploma/ Certificate without grade 12	0	0
	Undergraduate degree	5	50
	Post graduate degree	1	10
	Doctorate	0	0
Dept. of work	Sales	7	70
	Support	3	30
Changed depts.	Yes	1	10
	No	9	90
Work category	Staff	7	70
	Assistant	2	20
	Team Leader	1	10
	Exec Head	0	0
Length of Service	less than 1 year	1	10
	1-3 years	3	30
	3-5 years	4	40
	5-7 years	1	10
	7-9 years	0	0
	9-11 years	0	0
	over 11 years	1	10

The purpose for the sampling method selected was to ensure a representation of key individuals in the focus group interviews as this study served to gain further insights on the quantitative data received.

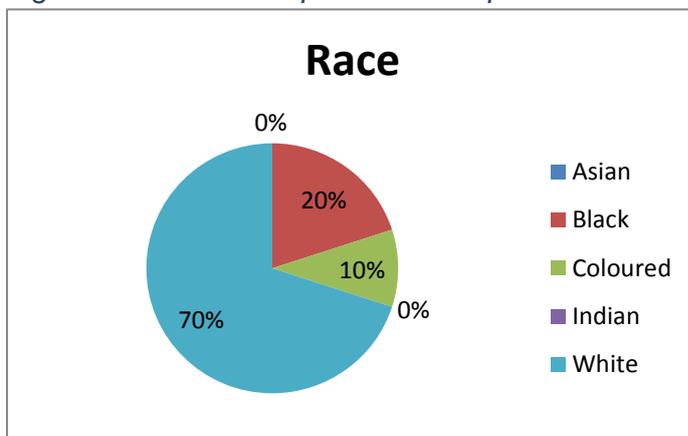
There were only 2 males in the focus group as illustrated below in figure 8, with 80% being females. From data gathered in the quantitative study, the author had to ensure the presence of male respondents in a predominantly female environment.

Figure 8: Gender of the qualitative sample



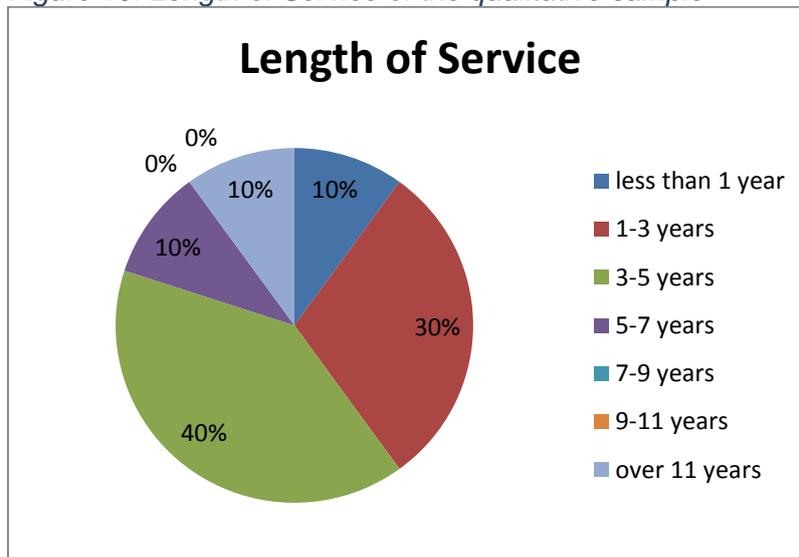
The focus group was very closely representative of the racial demographic of the company, however no Indian participants could avail themselves for participation. Figure 9, below illustrates their distribution.

Figure 9: Race of the qualitative sample



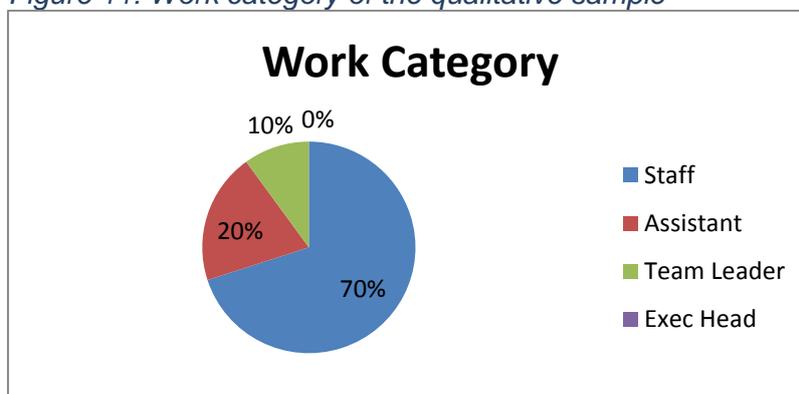
80% of the participants were aged between 21-30 years of age and there was a participant from the 31-40 years and 41-50 years category. The other ranges were not represented. The length of service of the participants, illustrated in figure 10, below, was mainly of the group that had worked at the organisation for between 3-5 years, closely followed by those who had been there for over 1 year. A newbie (less than 1 year of service) was included as well as 2 long serving employees with over 5 years' experience at the company.

Figure 10: Length of Service of the qualitative sample



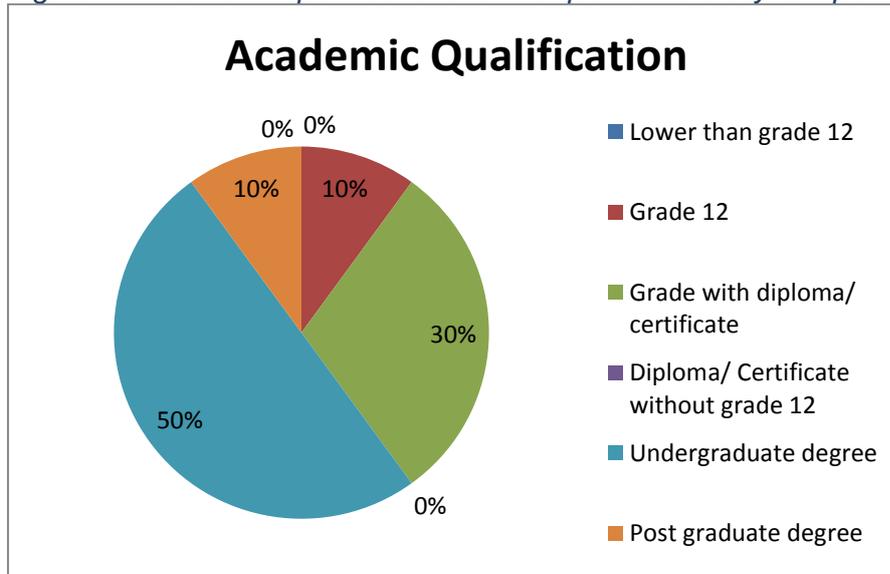
As in the quantitative study, it was important for the author to ensure the presence of both sales and support staff; a 60%-40% split was achieved respectively. The job levels of the participants is shown below in figure 11, where the majority were staff members (70%) along with 2 assistants and one team leader.

Figure 11: Work category of the qualitative sample



With regards to the level of academic qualifications, there were no participants who did not hold a Grade 12 as a minimum qualification. Figure 12 on the following page shows the distribution amongst the participants and their academic qualifications.

Figure 12: Academic qualifications for the qualitative study sample



4.3. Research Questions 1 & 2: The concept of internal branding & current internal branding programs at the selected recruitment agency

This section will provide the findings and analysis collected that was used to answer the 1st two research questions of this study which were:

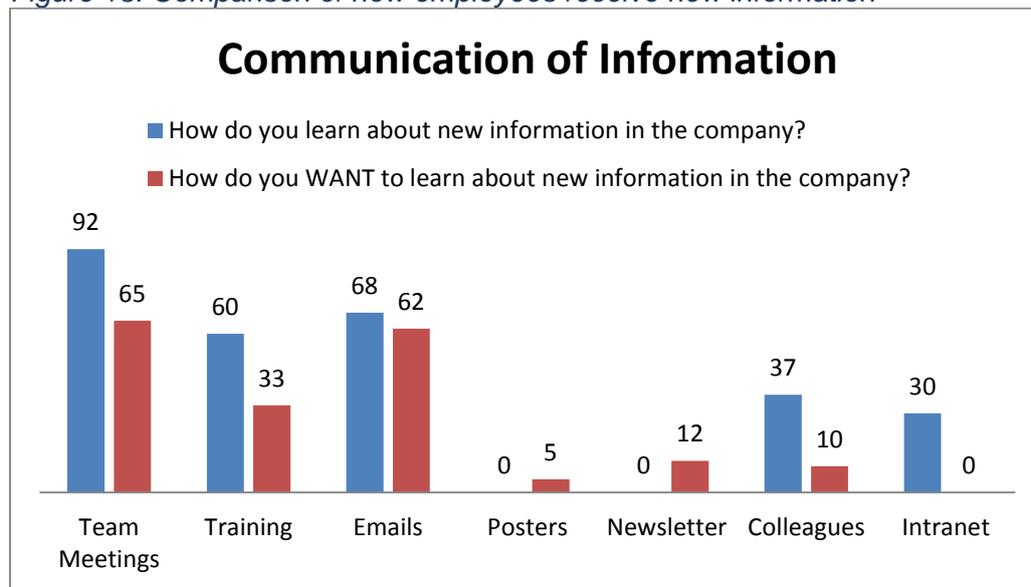
1. To examine the concept of internal branding
2. To analyse the internal branding programs of the selected recruitment agency

4.3.1. Quantitative data findings and analysis

Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, (2010) assert that communication coupled with training are the most critical and predominant elements to achieve success in internal branding. In the studied organisation it is proven that communication and training are constant methods of internal branding. 100% of the respondents have access to a computer during their work day, Further to this, as illustrated in figure 13 below, the most popular method of the employees receiving information from the company is in team meetings (92%) followed by emails (68%) and in training sessions at 60%. No information is received on posters nor newsletters by the employees. The data also showed that employees rely more on information from colleagues than the intranet by 7%.

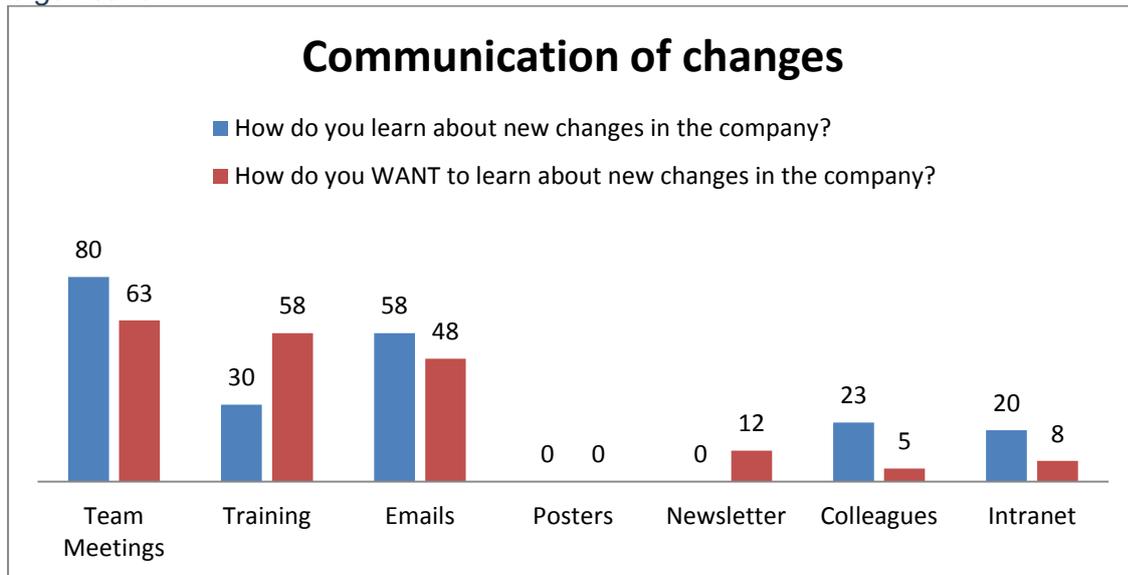
The data sought to uncover how employees actually prefer to receive information from their employer. Ranking the highest again was team meetings (65%) closely followed by emails (62%). Conversely employees indicated that they would like a few newsletters and posters as a means of communication as these were rated at 12% and 5% respectively.

Figure 13: Comparison of how employees receive new information



The study also sought to uncover how employees receive information related specifically to changes in the organisation, the results are illustrated in figure 14. Team meetings ranked highest at 80%, followed by emails (58%). Training sessions (30%), colleagues (23%) and the intranet(20%) all ranked very low in the mode of communication of changes in the view of the employees. Currently changes are not communicated on poster nor newsletters. The employees do not expect nor want any changes to be communicated on posters. The most preferred method for the respondents was team meetings (63%), training sessions (58%) followed closely by emails (48%). There is a low preference for communication via newsletters(12%), intranet(8%) and colleagues (5%).

Figure 14: Comparison of how employees receive new information on changes in the organisation



The data revealed that team meetings across the company are mainly held more than once a week (58%) or once a week (38%) as shown in figure 15. The main focus of these meetings (illustrated in figure 16) was operational procedures that are job related (65%) and then followed by discussions of new processes or products across the company (29%). Incentives and personal upskilling only constitute (3%) each of the meeting time whilst there are no discussions on the company values.

Figure 15: Frequency of team meetings

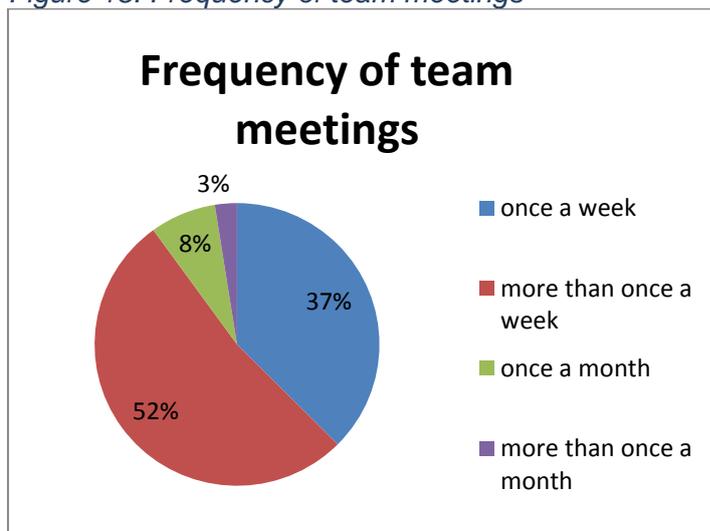
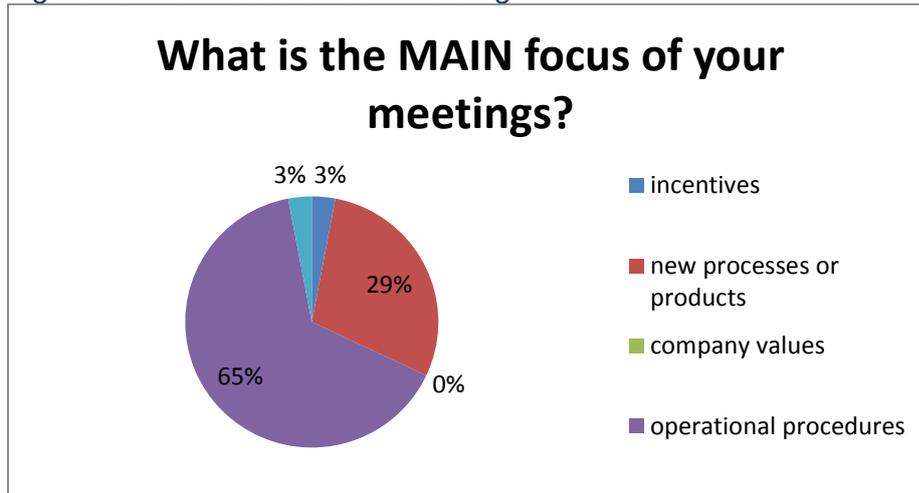
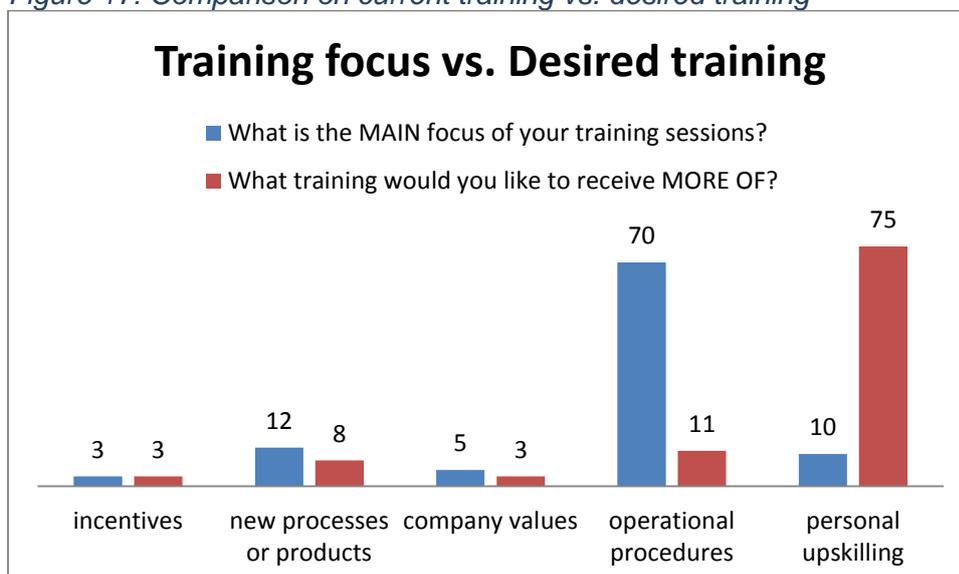


Figure 16: Main focus of team meetings



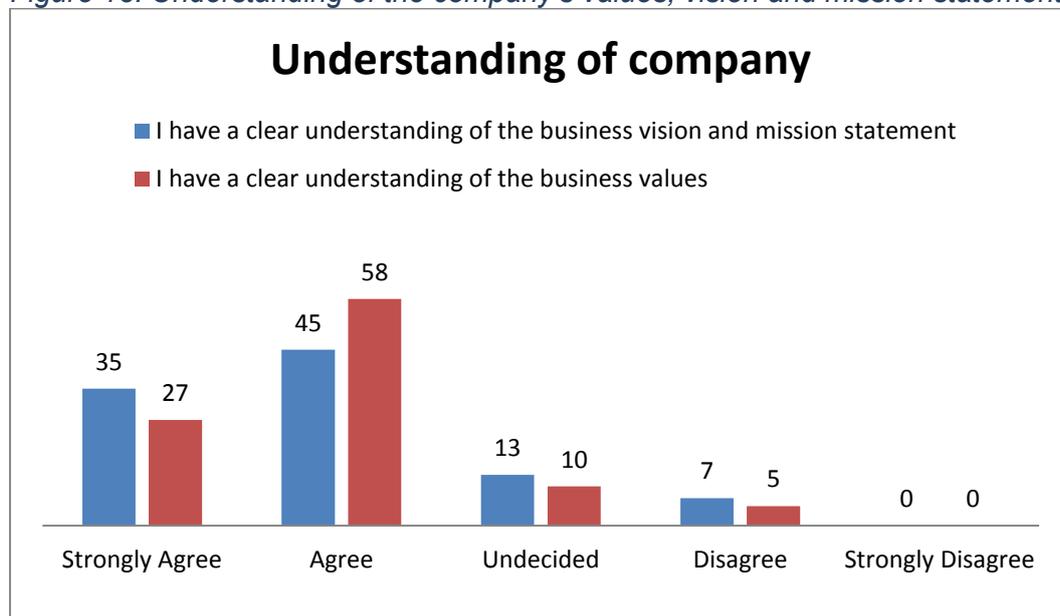
As the author decided to analyse the data between training sessions and team meetings separately, the data uncovered the following information regarding training sessions in the company (illustrated in figure 17): Training sessions are predominantly on operational procedures related to the job (70%) and only 12% on new processes and products, personal upskilling is on 10% of the training whilst training on the company values and incentives is at 5% and 3% respectively. In the converse, the respondents indicated that the training they would most desire to have is on personal upskilling (70%) whilst they feel operational procedures should only constitute 11% of their training sessions. There seems to be little desire or interest for training on the company values (3%).

Figure 17: Comparison on current training vs. desired training



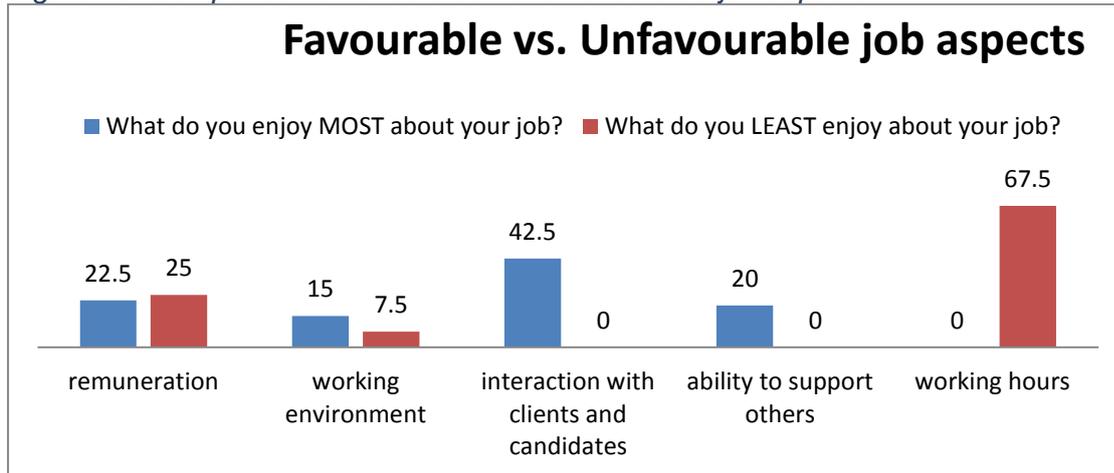
Of the respondents 83% given the choice would not increase the amount of time nor the frequency of team meetings, however 65% indicated that they would increase the number of training sessions they currently have. Another aspect of internal branding that is crucial to the development of brand champions is insurance that employees are fully aware of and understand their organisations values, mission and strategies (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000). There was an overall agreement with the respondents in that they have a clear understanding of the company’s vision and mission statements as well as the company values as detailed in figure 18. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statements.

Figure 18: Understanding of the company’s values, vision and mission statement



In data regarding the aspects of their jobs that respondents most enjoy, it was the interaction with clients and candidates that 42.5% staff ranked highest whilst 67.5% of the respondents rated the least enjoyable aspect of their jobs as the working hours, this area is discussed in greater detail from the data gathered in the focus group.

Figure 19: Comparison of favourable vs. unfavourable job aspects



4.3.2. Qualitative data findings and analysis

From the qualitative study it emerged that the participants were not too familiar with the term of internal branding as only 2 respondents had a comment with regards to what internal branding is. However, the author could determine from the response that there is a lack of distinction between internal and external branding. This is in agreement with Mitchell (2002) who found that employers place a greater focus of their marketing efforts on customers rather than employees.

Furthermore, in analysing the brand itself, the respondents came up with the below words:

“Professional, colourful, niche, creative and dynamic”

“I think niche, I’m proud to say that I am a specialist in what I do, I can say I am from Louis Vuitton, we are like Louis Vuitton...”(Coloured female, sales staff)

Further to the descriptors used for the company, it emerged from the reflective group that some behavioural patterns are actually internally contradictory to what is portrayed externally to customers (as discussed above). This is the same premise that Interbrand (2004) and Mitchell (2002) advise companies to avoid, having a disparity between the internal and external brand identities. The below statement captures the disparity referred to:

“Well this is more from an organizational psychology perspective for example when I look at all our numbers and how they listed on the board... it reminds me a little bit of school or university (group agreement nods) when you have

your marks on the board, this a professional environment we are adults and who really wants everyone to see where they are at? I don't think this speaks to a professional brand, I'm really not sure it does." (Black female, sales staff).

The author could interpret from the discussions that the company values are well engrained in the organisation, as there is a specific training held by the MD that all new employees must attend, it is a compulsory training. In the converse there was disparity with regards to the company having a well understood and communicated strategy, this was conferred by the below statement:

"I think having a strategy would be good for a start... coz I don't see an actual strategy."(White female, support staff).

The lack of strategy understanding by the participants almost seemed acceptable initially as it was described as being the nature of the industry and there were some long pauses (of thought) before respondents could answer the question. Subsequently the respondents started giving some ideas as to the types of strategies they would find useful:

"I think it's the nature of the business though, in recruitment I think the strategy will always be short term focused."(White female, sales staff).

Regarding brand differentiation, the respondents had varying opinions depending on their area of specialisation. The staff working in less technical environments found themselves to not be differentiated from the industry competitors however, the team from the more specialised business area found themselves to have a great differentiation in the marketplace. Yet, Interbrand (2004) advocates extensive internal branding for the services industry for them to generate clear brand differentiation in the marketplace.

From the qualitative study, it emerged that the sales staff noted their remuneration as their favourite aspect of the job given its demands as they work on a commission structure, however the support staff did not agree.

"I agree its soo stressful; this job is soo hard so you have to make that commission to appreciate the job like the MD says."(White female, sales staff)

"The money no doubt (group laughter) the financial rewards obviously."(Black female, sales staff).

In addition to the financial rewards the team environment was mentioned. There was a debate as to whether the job was autonomous or challenging as it changes daily. In all respects the respondents felt their exposure to the business world was dynamic, through the interactions they have with both their clients and candidates, however, the day to day activities were mundane.

A negative factor that arose was the long working hours. All the respondents on the sales frontline conclusively indicated their dis-approval of the working hours. Consequently the hours are not dictated to the respondents, they voluntarily work the hours to ensure they are successful in their roles. The working hours are mainly caused by what they deem to be non- essential tasks or irrelevant training sessions. Statements that captured the above sentiments are below:

“No seriously the long hours aren’t great; it’s really taking a toll on me. Look in the beginning I did them but now I need balance, I need time with my family. I’m over it. I’m all about my family and my kids, I’m torn in between because I have to do them but it’s clear that my family are the priority.”(Black female, sales staff).

“I’m exhausted by the time I see my husband and I’m moody and grumpy, this environment has made me soo different in terms of a lack of time that you have to work extra hard on your personal relationships”(White female, sales staff).

“I can’t remember when I last read a book” (White male, sales staff).

“I don’t have time for hobbies.”(Black male, support staff).

The respondents felt that too much time is spent in training, which they believe should be voluntary. Although it is apparently voluntary the respondents indicated that not attending the training sessions almost paints you in a bad light with the management team. The trainings which are predominantly operationally related to their jobs. Although generally useful the respondents indicated that they are often forgotten by the employees meaning they need re-training at a later stage.

“You are right that training we get is useful but some of it is useless or common sense.”(Black male, support staff).

“In any case we hardly remember all these training sessions we have on a weekly basis.”(White female, support staff).

“That’s soo true how many times does the training team come to our meetings tell us something and give us the papers but we still phone them to ask what it was?”(coloured female, sales staff).

“Oh yes I always phone to ask, I have never ever gone back to any of their manuals to look, I just call them.”(Black female, sales staff).

“So they waste time making you sit in a training anyways” (White male, sales staff).

4.4. Research Question 3: To examine the employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency, within the social exchange framework

This section serves to present the data findings and analysis from the study for the purpose of the third and final research question, which was stated as:

“To examine the employee engagement within the selected recruitment agency, within the social exchange framework.”

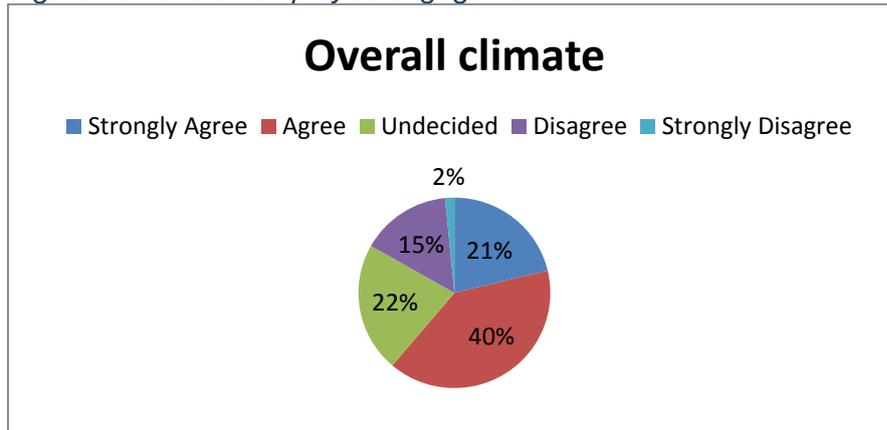
The findings related to the social exchange framework against which the employee engagement is discussed are presented separately in the following section.

4.4.1 Employee Engagement

4.4.1a. Quantitative data findings and analysis

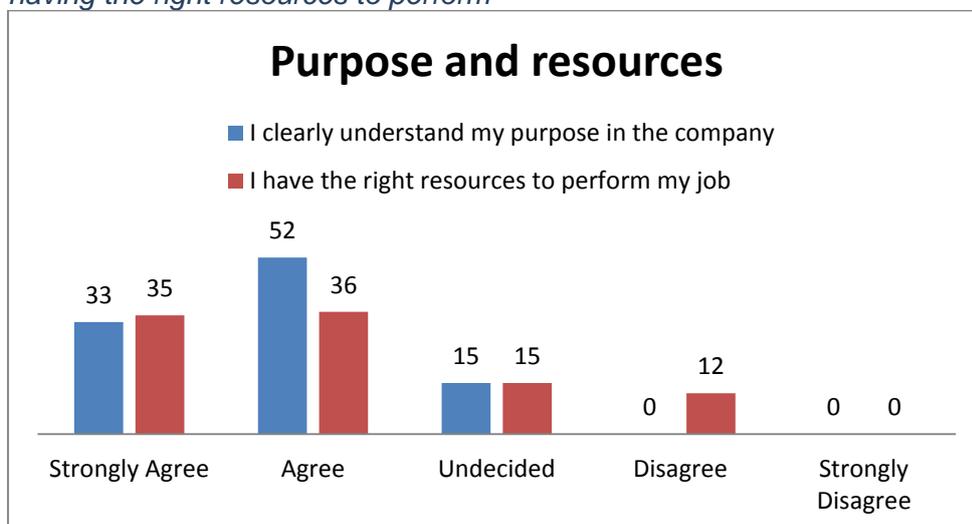
For the quantitative study in this area questions 14-26 addressed the staff engagement, with the incorporation of the Likert scale on the questions. Based on the self- administered questionnaires, it emerged that over 60% of the respondents are engaged or strongly engaged within their organisation; however 22% are undecided about their engagement with the organisation. Figure 20 details the various levels of engagement. This is a positive factor to consider as determined by Forbes (2013).

Figure 20: Overall employee engagement



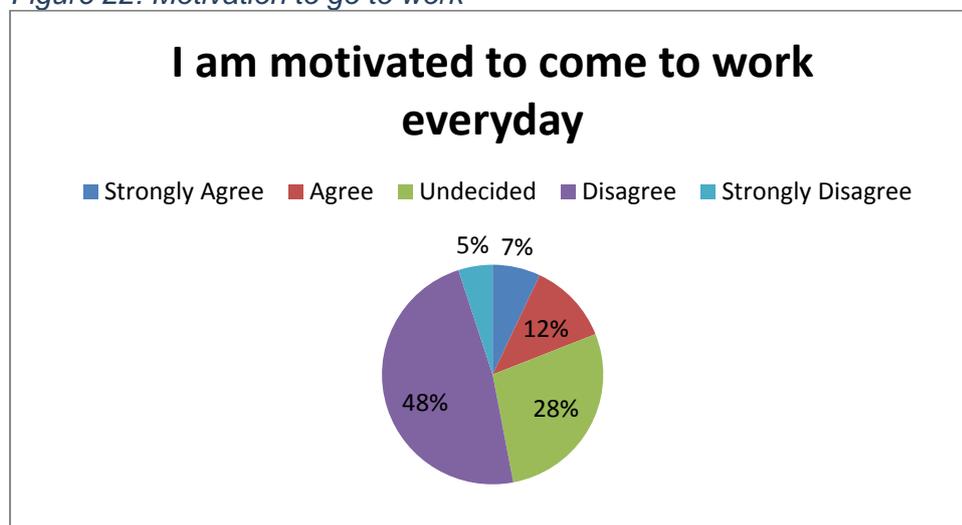
In order for employees to be able to do their jobs and do them well and thus become engaged with their organisations, it was discovered that they must understand their role within the organisation as well be equipped with the necessary tools to undertake their duties, which done through education and training (Heskett, 1987). Figure 21 describes the staff sentiments regarding their understanding of their personal roles in the organisation as well as their preparedness to undertake their duties. Overall 85% of the respondents either agreed or agreed strongly with the statement that they clearly understood their role within the organisation, however, 71% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the right resources to perform their duties. Conversely 12% felt they do not have the right resources to conduct their duties, which is an area that must be addressed to promote job engagement.

Figure 21: Comparison between the understandings of one purpose in the organisation vs. having the right resources to perform



The last area to be studied in the questionnaires was regarding the employees sentiments on their levels of motivation in going to work every day, the results are illustrated below in figure 22. A resounding 53% of the respondents are not motivated to go to work every day, whilst 28% were undecided. Only 12% of the respondents agreed at the least that each day they are self-motivated to go to work. This is an area of concern as Forbes (2013) determines that for employees to be engaged they must be submerged in their organisation and duties. The focus group provided a platform for the author to investigate this finding in greater detail; the results are discussed in future sections

Figure 22: Motivation to go to work



4.4.1b. Qualitative data findings and analysis

From the qualitative study, it emerged that there is no set employee feedback system in place, at this question; the respondents were confused as to what was being referred to. Further to this, it can be determined that there is not a culture of openness as most respondents indicated that they would not be interested in participating in such a survey unless it were confidential for fear of retribution as indicated by the below statement:

“I’m saying only if it was completely anonymous, but you would still wonder hmm what if they knew I really said that... maybe it’s safer not to say.”(White female, sales staff).

This finding is misaligned to the notion Deloitte University Press, (2015) highlights that continuous feedback systems in this modern and transparent business world are a non-negotiable for employees to have, as a part of their engagement to the organisation.

The respondents did indicate that the low staff tenure in the organisation is due to the great pressure experienced on the job, the respondents described the strained relationships they have in their personal lives which have been caused by the demanding nature of the job as well as the lack of time to pursue personal interests such as hobbies or personal upskilling. The lack of motivation to come to work is driven by the exhaustion experienced by the employees.

“...P1 mentioned you are forced to spend time in the day doing something that isn't working when I could actually then leave earlier and go home and rest, that's why I get soo exhausted coming to work is a schlep the next day.”(coloured female, sales staff)

4.4.2 The Social Exchange Framework (SET)

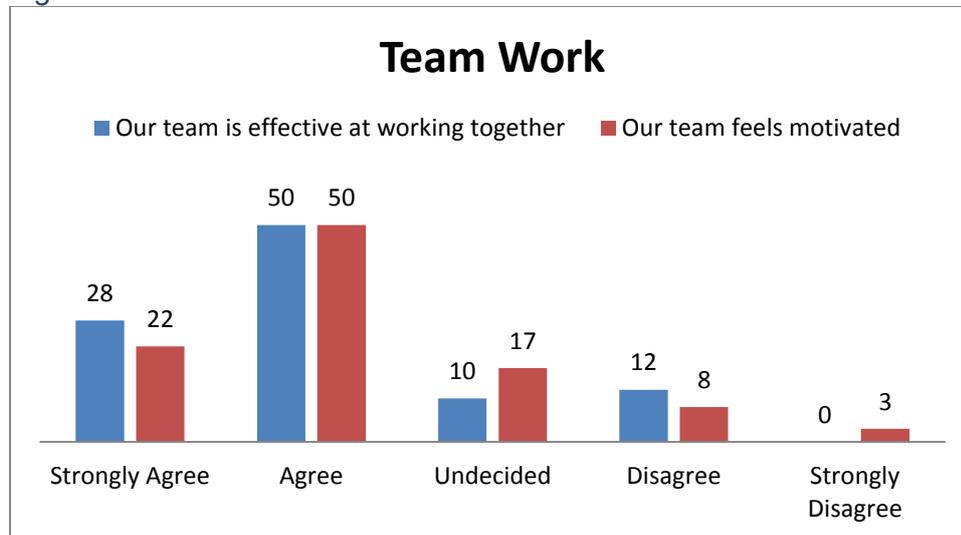
Emerson (1976) determined the SET is founded on the notion that interaction between people in organizations generates corresponding obligations. For this study the questions tested these corresponding relationships through the measurement of length of service at the company, team work efficiencies and the relationship between workers. It is important for employees to thrive within the teams they belong to and operate an efficient unit (Keysar et al.2008).

As earlier discussed, the study uncovered a general trend of low tenure within the organisation as 21 respondents who constituted 52% of the sample had been with company for between 1 and 3 years only and only 9% which is 3 respondents had served in the company for over 7 years as shown in figure 4 previously.

In the context of team work in the company environment, two statements were issued related to the team working dynamic and the team motivation. The responses are illustrated below in figure 23. 50% of the respondents agree that their team is

both efficient and motivated. There are a small proportion of respondents who feel that their teams are inefficient and unmotivated.

Figure 23: Teamwork



From the focus group discussion, it emerged that the smaller teams function well with each other; there is a general sense of camaraderie between the team members. It was expressed that the team members find solace with each other regarding the work constraints, which at times the people in the team members' personal lives do not understand.

“I won’t even lie, I’m not sucking up but I do enjoy my immediate team, it’s a good working environment, we communicate well between ourselves I really enjoy it.” (white male, sales staff).

“I’ve only been here two months but what I have come to learn is that this company actually cares about your performance, you can get help, and if you are struggling you are always told to seek help across all the teams. In my short time here you can see that the people care and want you to do well yah.” (Black male, support staff).

From the data one can see that indeed in the workplace relationships are an important factor and although the team working relationships are predominantly positive, they cannot be assessed against the SET in conjunction with the employer-employee relationship which is not predominately positive.

4.4.2.1 Theory of reciprocity

Keysar et al., (2008) described this theory as the equal repayment of actions between people and more specifically in a work environment refers to the way employers look after their employees (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

For this study , the questions in the survey that addressed employer relationships focused on how well remunerated employees believe they are for the jobs they perform, how receptive employees are to sharing their ideas with their supervisors and how often they receive praise from their supervisors if they have performed well.

In figure 24 it is shown that 54% of the respondents agree at the least that their ideas and opinions matter to their supervisors and colleagues, however, only 12% and 22% strongly agree and agree, respectively, that they can give honest feedback to their supervisors without the ear of getting into trouble. As discussed in the literature, it is important for employees to operate in an open culture where feedback and interaction with superior is welcome (Keysar et al, 2008).

Figure 24: Employee feedback and involvement

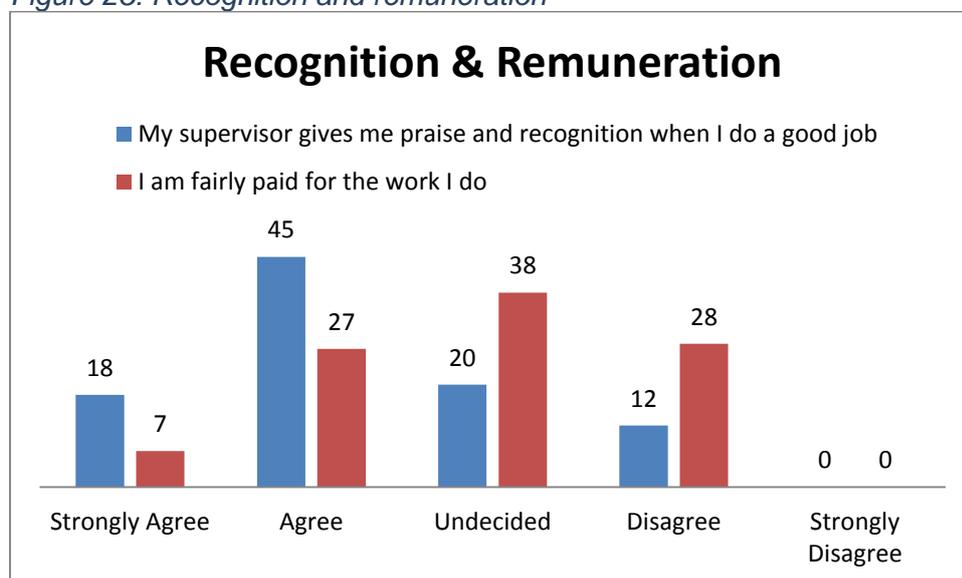


In the theory of reciprocity, the employees must feel that their organisations are concerned about them and their well-being (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). With regards to the individual sentiment of their importance within their team, 20% indicated that they strongly agreed with the notion that they feel like they matter in

their team, whilst 47% agreed, 20% were undecided, 10 % felt they did not matter in their team and the remaining 3% felt strongly that they did not matter in their teams.

Figure 25 illustrates the respondent’s thoughts on their remuneration for the work they do and recognition for performance. Overall 63% agree or strongly agree that they receive due recognition from their supervisors, however, only 34% believe they are fairly remunerated for the work they do, which is an element that would affect the theory of reciprocity, regarding how employees feel towards their employers.

Figure 25: Recognition and remuneration



In the interview, only the support staff indicated unhappiness with remuneration, as they do not receive commission over and above their basic salary unlike the sales staff.

Another theme that emerged from the focus group was around personal upskilling in training parameters. The respondents feel that although they receive great amounts of training, it is not transferrable nor something that builds up their personal skills. Instead the training is geared to their job and very specific to their organisation. The training measure was not isolated as the respondents also felt that the organisational structure needs to change to support employees who want to pursue personal educational goals. The below snippets highlight the perceptions:

“I think that only counts if it’s a professional qualification that aids you personally.” (Coloured female, sales staff).

“I agree, only that counts and can we get provisions for that? Like study leave and funding?” (White female, sales staff).

“Don’t we get study leave?” (Black male, support staff).

“It’s 2 days the whole year; the rest has to come out of your personal leave” (Black female, sales staff”

“What? No.” (Black male, support staff).

“There’s no study support.” (Coloured female, sales staff).

“I need more basic training with things like EQ, learning about myself and time management those personal things, I want as personal upskilling.” (White male, sales staff).

Furthermore, there is a concern that emerged from an in-depth analysis by the author, regarding the overall company culture. The respondents became quite passionate in implying that the company culture pushes them or rather “indoctrinates” to continuously be focused on their work. The indication became very clear that they see the company as quite inflexible and unwilling to adapt its structure and culture regarding initiatives that promote a work life balance.

“Yes and no that goes back to the company’s rigid ways...” (White female, sales staff).

“But you can’t ever think of doing that, you are conditioned to think you have to be at your desk all the time, so instead of taking a nap to feel refreshed you walk around the office wasting the same time chatting to your colleagues. So it’s time wasted that’s why that flexibility would be great.” (Black female, sales staff).

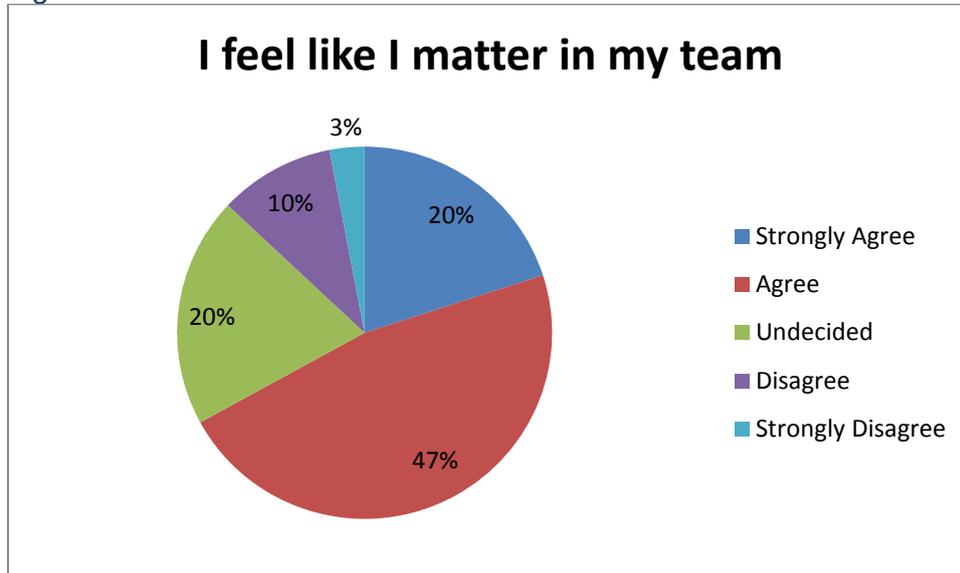
“That is classical conditioning from the company; you are feeling guilty for having downtime.” (Coloured female, sales staff).

4.4.2.2 Perceived Organisational Support (POS)

It is important for employees to feel that they are important and valued within their organisations (Choi et al, 2014) as this would yield a greater number of employees who represent their brands well (Moorman et al. 1998). From the questionnaire, it was determined that 67% of the respondents agree at the least that they do matter

within their teams as illustrated below in figure 26. However, as discussed in the previous section, elements of supervisory support must be considered.

Figure 26: Presence in team



The following chapter will draw conclusions from this study based on the main findings and insights uncovered as well as provide recommendations.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will draw conclusions from only the main findings of the study in answering the posed research questions. The chapter will provide recommendations for areas of improvement in the business setting for the leadership team of the selected organisation as well as provide recommendations on areas of future study. Internal branding is indeed an area in the business community that deserves more organisational leadership attention, as much as is commanded by external branding as confirmed by the literature reviewed. As uncovered in the company of study, although the employees receive copious amounts of business operations communication and product training (chapter 4.3.1), this is not good enough for internal branding. Rather, as suggested by the secondary research, employees must be made fully aware of the organisational strategy, vision and mission; they must align themselves to them and buy into the employer brand overall.

Internal branding programs in the studied organisation are not efficient as they are concerned predominantly with team meetings and training sessions. They must be expanded to ensure they are not resented by employees as they currently are, creative measures to incorporate internal branding programs that are not seen to be wasting employees' time in working hours must be developed.

Employee engagement in the studied organisation is indeed an overarching theme as confirmed in the secondary research and as discussed in (chapter 4.4.1a) it is positive overall. However, upon closer examination there are red flags which relate to the rigid organisational culture (chapter 4.4.2.1) that influence employees and consequently affect their personal lives (chapter 4.3.2). This factor is contradictory to the positive brand image held by the employees. This contradiction arises from the fact that the view of the company's brand when considered from a customer's (external) point of view is different from the employees (internal) point of view which the secondary literature warns against.

The SET framework is very relevant to the study of both internal branding and employee engagement. The organisation studied, as discussed in the previous chapter, confirmed the relevance of the SET premise that discusses how interactions

between employees and employers generate corresponding obligations growing over a period of time. In this case, the lack of perceived organisational support from the employees' supervisors generates feelings of resentment and detachment from the organisation, resulting in the reduced years of tenure with the company. However, the positive relationships between team members observed generate a spirit of camaraderie between employees. Therefore the leadership should aim to improve the level of support employees receive from management, through the effective communication and feedback systems to develop the same open and comrade like relationship with employees.

In the studied company there is low result in the theory of reciprocity in that the employees are straining personal commitments and relationships for their work, yet they are not receiving a beneficial investment from the organisation. The investments highlighted included perceived inadequate remuneration as well as concern for the employee's personal development and growth (chapter4.3.1 and 4.3.2),.

It is clear from the primary and secondary research conducted that the areas of internal branding, employee engagement and the SET are intertwined and cannot be studied nor reviewed in isolation, which answers the main research problem of this paper. From an analysis of the company studied, a critical area needing immediate focus from leadership is to do with reciprocity, specifically around the working hours of employees to achieve a work life balance (chapter 4.3.2) and feedback mechanisms to address the perceived inflexible organisational culture (chapter4.4.2.1) especially around training policies. This is important to address so that the employees feel that they actually matter, their opinions matters and are valuable to their organisations. If this is rectified then the engagement will increase and efforts of internal branding will be appreciated not resented.

This study has confirmed that the inter-relationship between the elements exists and that they are dependent upon each other. So in order to have successful internal branding programs, the staff level of engagement must be high as determined by the factors of the social exchange framework.

Due to the limited time and resource scope, the author was unable to study the variances in levels of employee organisational engagement against their job engagement. This is a recommended area of study as the study showed that although employees may enjoy their job function in relation to client and candidate interaction, the organisational culture coupled with their supervisor interaction may cause them to be dissatisfied overall. Further study must also be conducted to include variables such as company values and strategy alignment in the determination of what constitutes successful internal branding to expand past the sphere of just communication and training.

As this was an applied study, the recommendations below are for the leadership team so of service organisation, specifically the one in study for practical business application. The leadership team must invest in a system that measure and monitors levels of employee engagement. However the launch of such a tool should be done in a positive manner that will promote confidentiality and no repercussions for the staff who participate. This will be the starting point for the management to start determine critical business areas.

It is important for further study to be conducted by the company leadership to uncover the exact reasons for the low service tenure within the company as this will direct the areas of great focus required to improve staff engagement. From the study, another recommendation is that the leadership must be seen to be following suit of other multinational brands who are working to create programs that 'force' their employees to achieve a work life balance. This work life balance speaks to the SET in that if employers can invest in their employee's well-being the employees will invest in their organisations. In this particular organisation the areas needing attention are the working hours, lack of personal upskilling training programs and support policies. Finally there has to be more consistence and transparent communication to the employees in goal setting.

Appendices

Appendix A- Vega Letter of Permission to conduct study at the selected institution



Date: 8 April 2015

Dear

Request to conduct research on the

This letter serves as a formal request to conduct focus group questionnaires/surveys on the staff at the

Fida is currently a registered student at the Vega School of Brand Leadership conducting research for her final research report and her research topic is: *Internal brand and its effect on staff/customers/service in the service industry.*

Kindly note that the information gathered for this research assignment will not be published in any way or used for any purpose other than for this assignment.

The IIE is a private higher education institution, which is registered by the Department of Higher Education and Training under the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Registration no. 2007/HE07/002). Vega is an educational brand of The IIE.

Your support and assistance is greatly appreciated.
Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Linda Meyfwa
Relationship Navigator
VEGA Bordeaux
Email: lmeyfwa@vegaschool.com
Website: www.vegaschool.com



Diplomas &
Certificates



Degrees



Honours &
Masters

Appendix B- Copy of the Self-Administered Questionnaire

Dear respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Filda Mwenje an Honours student with Vega- School of Brand Leadership. The objective of this study is to determine the effect that hotel internal branding efforts have on the levels of staff engagement. The results from this study will not be published but used for academic purposes only.

Should you have any questions or comments you are welcome to contact Filda Mwenje telephonically at 0810484367 or via email at fildamw@yahoo.com. Alternatively you may contact my lecturer Ms. Helena van Wyk via email at xtacam@mweb.co.za

This questionnaire is anonymous. Please do not write your name on the survey. The responses cannot be traced back to any individual and will be treated as strictly confidential. There are no right or wrong answers to any items in this questionnaire. It is your honest opinion in each of the statement that is important.

Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

When you have completed all the items, place the questionnaire in the envelope provided and hand it back to the person who delivered the questionnaire. Please check your questionnaire to ensure that you have answered all the questions.

Completion of the survey will mean that you have read and understood the information provided above and that you give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Section 1 & 3:

You are requested to respond to each of the statements by placing a CIRCLE in the square that accurately fits your response. *(See the example below)*

Example

Do you understand the company values?

Yes	1
No	2

Section 2:

You are requested to respond to each of the statements by placing a CIRCLE in the space which most accurately fits **the extent to which you agree to the statement**. *(See the example below)*

If you strongly **agree** with the statement you would CIRCLE **number1**. If you are **undecided** you would circle **number 3** and so on.

Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like my manager understands me	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 1:- INTERNAL BRANDING

Q1. Do you have access to a computer during working hours?

Yes	1
No	2

Q2. How do you learn about new information in the company? *(You may circle more than one option)*

Team Meetings	1
Training	2
Emails	3
Posters	4
Newsletter	5
Colleagues	6
Intranet	7

Q3. How do you learn about new changes in the company? *(You may circle more than one option)*

Team Meetings	1
Training	2
Emails	3
Posters	4
Newsletter	5
Colleagues	6
Intranet	7

Q4. How do you WANT to learn about new information in the company? *(You may circle more than one option)*

Team Meetings	1
Training	2
Emails	3
Posters	4
Newsletter	5
Colleagues	6

Q5. How do you WANT to learn about new changes in the company? *(You may circle more than one option)*

Team Meetings	1
Training	2
Emails	3
Posters	4
Newsletter	5
Colleagues	6

Q6. How often do you have team meetings?

Once a week	1
More than once a week	2
Once a month	3
More than once a month	4

Q7. What is the MAIN focus of your meetings?

Incentives	1
New processes or products in other departments	2
The company values	3
Operational procedures related to your job & department	4
Up-skilling your skills	5

Q8. If you had the choice would you increase the number of meetings you have?

Yes	1
No	2

Q9. What is the MAIN focus of your training sessions?

Incentives	1
New processes or products in other departments	2
The company values	3
Operational procedures related to your job & department	4
Up-skilling your skills	5

Q10. What training would you like to receive MORE OF? *(You may circle more than one option)*

Incentives	1
New processes or products in other departments	2
The company values	3
Operational procedures related to your job & department	4
Up-skilling your skills	5

Q11. If you had the choice would you increase the number of training sessions you have?

Yes	1
No	2

Q12. What do you enjoy MOST about your job?

Remuneration	1
Environment I work in	2
Interaction with candidates & Clients	3
Ability to support others	4
Working hours	5

Q13. What do you LEAST enjoy about your job?

Remuneration	1
Environment I work in	2
Interaction with candidates & Clients	3
Ability to support others	4
Working hours	5

SECTION 2:- STAFF ENGAGEMENT

	Aspect	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Q14	I feel like I matter in my team	1	2	3	4	5
Q15	I clearly understand my purpose in the company	1	2	3	4	5
Q16	I have the right resources to perform my job	1	2	3	4	5
Q17	I have a clear understanding of the business vision and mission statement	1	2	3	4	5
Q18	I have a clear understanding of the business values	1	2	3	4	5
Q19	Staff performance evaluations are fair and a good reflection of my performance					
Q20	My supervisor gives me praise and recognition when I do a good job	1	2	3	4	5
Q21	Our team is effective at working together	1	2	3	4	5
Q22	Our team feels motivated	1	2	3	4	5
Q23	I am motivated to come to work everyday	1	2	3	4	5
Q24	I am fairly paid for the work I do	1	2	3	4	5
Q25	I can give honest feedback to my manager without fear of getting in trouble	1	2	3	4	5
Q26	My ideas and opinions matter to my managers and colleagues	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 3:- DEMOGRAPHICS**Q27. Please indicate your gender:**

Male	1
Female	2

Q28. Please indicate your race:

Asian	1
Black	2
Coloured	3
Indian	4
White	5

Q29. Please indicate your age:

Under 20	1
20-30	2
31-40	3
41-50	4
Over 50	5

Q30. Please indicate the department you work in:

Sales Consultants	1	Please specify:
Service Delivery	2	Please specify:

Q31. Have you changed departments before?

Yes	1
No	2

Q32. Please indicate your work category

Staff	1
Assistant	2
Team Leader	3
Exec Head	4

Q33. How long you have been employed at the institution?

Less than 1 year	1
1- 3 years	2
3-5 years	3
5-7 years	4
7- 9 years	5
9- 11 years	6
Over 11 years	7

Q34. What is your highest academic qualification?

Lower than grade 12 e.g. grade 8	1
Grade 12	2
Grade 12 with diploma/ certificate	3
Diploma/ Certificate without grade 12	4
Undergraduate degree e.g. BTech/ BCom/ BA	5
Post Graduate Degree e.g. Honours/ Masters	6
Doctorate	7

Thank you for completing the survey.

We appreciate your efforts in assisting with this research project.

Appendix C- Focus Group Question Guideline

Focus Group Interview questions

1. Internal branding- what comes to mind? (training, communication, training)
2. How well do you know the company values? How would you describe the company brand?
3. If anything what would you change about the company's vision or strategy?
4. How well do you think DAV employees are branded? And why?
5. How familiar are you with staff engagement within the organisation?
6. Have you had staff surveys? And what is your opinion on them and their purpose?
7. What do you love about your job?
8. How do you feel about the incentives?
9. At times people aren't motivated to come to work- what would you say are the biggest reasons for that?
10. Between remuneration and long working hours what would you say is the least attractive feature of your job?
11. Why are working hours an issue? How does it affect you overall?
12. How could you change the working hours to improve them? (What would you suggest?)
13. Of course we have enough meetings and no one would want more, personal development training came up quite a bit... what kind of upskilling training would you like?

Appendix D- Focus Group Transcription

Focus Group Location: Sandton City, Johannesburg - booked out private training room

Date: 23 June 2015

Number of Attendees: 10

Name of Transcriber: Filda Mwenje

Number of Tapes: 1 (audio recorder on iPhone and Samsung used simultaneously)

General Guidelines implemented by the transcriber:

1. Comments by the Interviewer are indicated by **I** at the left margin followed with the indented question
2. Comments by the participants are indicated by **P** at the left margin followed with the indented response
3. Comments by an additional participant are indicated by **P** at the left margin, on a new line, followed with the indented response
4. The audio recording was transcribed verbatim with the inclusion of non-verbal cues. Nonverbal cues are typed in parenthesis
5. In cases where there is mutual affirmation of statements and so as to maintain the level of confidentiality of the focus group respondent's names are not mentioned but indicated with P1, P2 etc.
6. In cases where there was overlapping speech where it became difficult for the transcriber to distinguish which respondent was speaking a [cross talk] is inserted.
7. The transcriber incorporated the three pass system of listening to the audio recording three times to ensure accuracy in the transcription.
8. Pauses are indicated by ... if it is a long pause the word pause is inserted in parenthesis (pause)

I: I would like to thank you for coming to join me and to reiterate that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary

P: Yes, thank you

P: No worries

I: The first thing I wanted to ask you guys is when you hear the word internal branding what comes to mind?

P: So I think of it from the perspective of the employees, what they see your organization as, how they see it and also things to do with our marketing and how we communicate, the branding we put on our collateral and documents

I: Would you guys think training, information sharing and knowledge would impact you with regards to internal branding? Well how the company reaches out to you?

P: Definitely, the company brand makes us feel proud

P: Yes it's a total combination but I would say that the information we know about the company is most important, about what's going on in the company

P: I also agree with P2

I: Ok continuing on that note, how would you describe the company brand? Different words that come to mind

P: Very professional

P: I would say colourful (group laughter)

P: Definitely dynamic

P: I agree with P3 indeed very dynamic and creative

P: I think niche, I'm proud to say that I am a specialist in what I do, it's like I can say I'm from Louis Vuitton (laughs) when I go to multiple agency briefings

I: How well do you guys feel like you understand the company values? Do you live them?

P: Very well

P: Yes very well

P: Yah

P: They are very well enforced, they are around us and people talk about them all the time

P: (short group laughter) yes indeed enforced

P: The values training adds a lot of value, coz your MD runs it and she also tries to be an example, not just a piece of paper

I: What is values training?

P: It is training for new people where they are taught each one of the five company values, its run by our MD

P: You actually get a certificate after you complete the training

I: If you could change anything about the company vision or strategy what would it be?

P: (long pause) I think having a strategy would be good for a start ... coz I don't see an actual strategy

P: P1, Do you feel there isn't a strategy with us?

P: Yes, well it's not clear nor is it long term [cross talk] its only about this year, we are doing this and this and that, we don't have a five year plan, what's the ten year plan?

P: Yah ok

P: It is true

P: I think it is the nature of the business though, in recruitment I think the strategy will always be short term focused [cross talk]

P: But we could say I really want to specialize in executive search only [cross talk] so in five years' time we will not have a commercial division for example not just changing direction all the time

P: Oh yes ok I hear you that makes sense

P: Yah (nods in agreement)

- P:** With SLA agreements I would then say ok I need to produce this amount over five years but in two years this is what I should have done
- P:** Yah
- I:** Is there anything else that comes to mind?
- P:** Well this is more from an organizational psychology perspective for example when I look at all our numbers and how they listed on the board... it reminds me a little bit of school or university (group agreement nods) when you have your marks on the board, this a professional environment we are adults and who really wants everyone to see where they are at? I don't think this speaks to a professional brand, I'm really not sure it does
- P:** I completely agree with P1
- I:** So basically you wouldn't want public sought of display...not sure what to call it
- P:** It's like a manner that brings dis-moral, especially if you look at the figures and see that you are far behind, it's not a good feeling to have, and it's not motivating
- P:** Yah it has the opposite effect of being motivation [cross talk]
- P:** Oh of course
- P:** Or it can create like a collective umm negative psyche coz you feel bad and see you aren't doing well but then it's like it's ok coz these other people are also behind [cross talk] (group laughter)
- P:** (group laughter) that's soo true you feel less bad about yourself
- I:** So do you guys feel like you stand out when you go to agency briefings like you are proud of the organization you work for?
- P:** No I don't notice any difference
- P:** I do, more so now than when I started, for example a friend of mine who works at a competitor said when he knew that if he was competing with us on a placement he didn't worry at all aargghh yah so that was his feedback and in financial markets also
- P:** Oh really? How rude (laughs)
- P:** But I feel now, like that perception has changed it seems people do look at us and think wow company XX. Generally we are very well dressed which also helps
- P:** I also think we differentiate ourselves from the questions we ask, I'm always the one asking the most questions and a lot of the time you see the responses of the others like (nodding head) they didn't think of it, we are soo technical so I follow in detail our JA matrix form which keeps us informed
- I:** Do you think that's the case because your team is very specialized?
- P:** I can't say it's hard to compare
- P:** I think from the less technical commercial point of view I feel the opposite we don't stand out because most of the other people are also well dressed, I'm actually quiet in the meetings, I don't know how you guys are but I don't ask questions coz most of the time I listen to the others ask ridiculous questions (Laughs)
- P:** Oh yes and you can see the clients getting irritated so I also just sit back
- P:** I think we come across very dynamic coz we are generally very young against our competitors
- I:** The next area I wanted to touch on is the staff engagement area. Have any of you been part of or done a staff survey? Like a climate test in the company
- P:** I think we once did a 360 degree like appraisal off of survey monkey
- P:** Do we have them?
- P:** I only know the appraisals but not a survey no
- I:** Ok then (short laugh) is that something that you guys feel would help the organization gauge how you feel about it?
- P:** hmmh (shaking head)
- P:** nooooo
- P:** umm nah (shaking head)
- I:** Would you be honest in your responses if you had a staff survey?
- P:** Definitely not

- P: [cross talk] not likely
- P: I'm saying only if it were completely anonymous but you would still wonder hmm what if they knew I really said that... maybe it's safer not to say
- I: Ok, the reason I ask is because with staff surveys ummm once you speak to HR professionals they tell you how they have conducted these climate surveys to curb things such as employee turnover and improve retention as well as engagement, to find out how staff is motivated. So as P1 said if it was anonymous would you think it would be beneficial?
(group laughter as new participant enters the room)
- P: Yes
- P: Pause yes definitely
- P: I think so
- P: Uhuh
- P: Only if confidential (group laughter)
- P: If my name isn't on it yes
- P: It also all depends on what they are going to do with the information, if it just sits there then it's a waste of time
- P: Oh yes good point it's pointless if they don't actually do anything with the information
- I: So what you each say you love the most about your job?
- P: My colleagues
(group aww)
I won't even lie, I'm not sucking up but I do enjoy my immediate team, it's a good working environment, we communicate well between ourselves I really enjoy it
- P: I've only been here two months but what I have come to learn is that this company actually cares about your performance, you can get help, if you are struggling you are always told to seek help across all the teams. In my short time here you can see that the people care and want you to do well yah
- P: The money no doubt (group laughter) the financial rewards obviously
- P: Excuse me you are a consultant so that's yours
- P: I agree its soo stressful; this job is soo hard so you have to make that commission to appreciate the job like the MD says
- P: For me I like my clients
- I: Oh ok is that your client interactions?
- P: Yes very much I learn soo much from them
- P: Candidates and clients together
- P: I had someone ask me why people stay in this job soo long yet there is no growth, well unless you want to become a team leader, but I said I think its coz every single day is soo different, no two days are the same
- P: I would say so as well, it is stimulating, you have way too much going on at any given moment
- P: Noo guys I think my days are the same (some heads are nodding) for me it's the same, I don't understand you people when you say it's different (group laughter)
- P: Oh you think it's the same?
- P: Yes I mean hey I'm always back to zero aren't I, every single month (laughter)
Maybe it's the people element but the work definitely is routine
- P: But the work is the same, all industries deal with different people
- P: Ok to an extent I hear what P1 is saying you do get into a routine, my change comes from the interactions, which have given me tremendous emotional growth. I have grown soo much
- P: I also wanted to say that (laughter)
- P: What that you cry soo much (group laughter)
- P: No, that you are pushed beyond your limits, it's never the same, you think you've done a great job but then you haven't. I have a story- you walk into a village and the people don't have shoes, there are two types of businessmen, one will say I can't do business here or the other sees an opportunity, that's how it is here you have to struggle through and see the opportunity. It's either for you or not in this company
- P: They really kick you into motion

- P:** What was your original question again? We talk too much
(group laughter)
- I:** What you love most about your job?
- P:** hahaha wow we digress
- I:** How do you guys feel about the incentives in general?
- P:** I love them (giggles)
- P:** I think they are great motivators aside from the commission it's all the little things
- P:** It adds a little dynamic in the mix
- P:** I agree but I'm over the small things they don't make me go extra I want the wow
- I:** Good point, so if I say incentive like do you job and get the small reward vs incentive go above and beyond
- P:** Oh yeah, I mean we need the short term gratifications so we are good on that coz at times that commission takes forever
- P:** in the support teams we can't really say coz our incentives are dependent on you sales people performing
(group laughs)
- I:** Ok so then on the reverse about what you love about your job what would you say you like the least?
- P:** Most of us will say the long hours hands down
- I:** Why is that?
- P:** It affects our lives overall, personally and socially
- P:** I'm exhausted by the time I see my husband and I'm moody and grumpy, this environment has made me soo different in terms of a lack of time that you have to work extra hard on your personal relationships
- P:** The way I'm hard here as a person translates to my personal life, I'm harder on them too and push them but it's not a nice aspect of me and I don't enjoy the long hours at all
- P:** I find that all day I've been at work exhausted on the phone or whatever I get home and I don't want to talk I'm silent
- P:** I'm also the same coz on weekend I don't want to go to events and talk to strangers; I mean I do this all week so really I'm not making small talk
- P:** Oh yes
- P:** Totally agree
- P:** Even me I don't do all this talking all day but working with you guys my head goes crazy and I need silence (group laughter)
- P:** No seriously the long hours aren't great; it's really taking a toll on me. Look in the beginning I did them but now I need balance, I need time with my family. I'm over it. I'm all about my family and my kids, I'm torn in between because I have to do them but it's clear that my family are the priority (Group agreement)
- P:** I carry the laptop home but I'm not present and my husband complains and calls this job my 2nd husband
- P:** Would it help to have flexible time?
- P:** Well it depends as long as you don't carry the work home, I don't want to switch on my laptop when I get home.
- P:** I think it depends if you are married, do you have a husband or kids?
- P:** No no no it has nothing to with that I'm single and have no interest in these hours at all
(Group laughter)
I'm tired of it [cross talk] there are soo may other things I could do
- P:** like read a book
- P:** Gym dude, or run
- P:** I can't remember when I last read a book
- P:** I don't have time for hobbies
- P:** I can't imagine if I had to date get married and actually be present (short laugh)
- P:** Hobbies, I have friends that do stuff besides work and I can't, it's frustrating

- P:** I have a friend with a more demanding job she makes more money than me but leaves work every day at 16:00 and she always says she doesn't know why I work so late
- P:** That's it right there, people don't understand what we do and why it's so hard
- P:** You talk to people and they don't understand and 99.9% of my fights with my husband are caused by me working late or working at home he can't understand it at all, it's not like I'm happy whilst I am working at home
- P:** Oh gosh my wife doesn't understand the model, I try explaining but it doesn't matter coz next month we are arguing about the same thing again
- P:** It's just complicated
- P:** My favourite is when my husband says why are you so stressed? Are you kidding me?
- P:** It can become a lonely profession, coz our spouses don't understand that's why we are so close as colleagues, we are in the struggle together and that's why people do not do this long term
- P:** I used to hate it when people look down at you and think you are just a recruiter why are you working so late?
- P:** I try to explain how stressful the job gets to my husband's friends and they squint like how stressful can recruitment be, insulting I say
- P:** It's annoying
- P:** So I try manage by not engaging in emails on my phone so I keep the little time I have to myself personal
- P:** Yah you become selfish with your time
- I:** Do you think something can be done about the time?
- P:** Yes it's the extra fatty stuff, stop making me do extra things that don't add to my success. I'm so sick and tired of being made to do extra activities that don't work for me but I have to do them so I don't get into trouble and really I'm wasting 3 hours of my day when I could be doing more productive things. Then I'm not allowed to be negative about it, I mean you guys know exactly what I'm talking about but literally I'm wasting 3 hours twice a week being forced to do something because it's a company activity
- P:** It's the inflexibility
- P:** That's one thing I will say is that things aren't flexible
- P:** Yes the business has been successful for so many years but let's stay relevant don't be so rigid
- P:** Maybe admin assistants would help we get too caught up in the admin
- P:** Like a team assistant would be great to help with all the behind the scenes work
- P:** We used to have them and it worked well
- P:** That would be awesome
- P:** We can be so contradictory on this time thing, you are told do what's closest to the money but as P1 mentioned you are forced to spend time in the day doing something that isn't working when I could actually then leave earlier and go home and rest, that's why I get so exhausted coming to work is a schlep the next day
- P:** My pet peeve for example was loading so many jobs in one evening but I couldn't leave after that I was dreading writing the ads for the jobs coz our manager would have the ad report out. So yes I've done great to load jobs but then you are slapped over the wrist for not loading the ads, I mean really who has time for that?
- P:** (high pitch) There's no time to even look at the ad response you get from those adverts anyways, so you are just wasting time with these activities
- P:** I think it's a culture of making you feel bad or incompetent just to push you to work harder, so like P1 said earlier you think you've done great but you are told you suck so you have to keep trying harder and working longer
- P:** It changes weekly, the complaints
- P:** its things that don't matter – seriously
- P:** That's what really wastes my time and takes it away from my personal time
- I:** People responded that feel they spend too much time in meetings and training but they would like personal upskilling training. What do you guys determine to be personal upskilling? Only that counts and can we get provisions for that? Like study leave and funding?
- P:** Don't we get study leave?

P: It's 2 days the whole year; the rest has to come out of your personal leave

P: What? Noooooo

P: There's no study support

P: I just get exhausted, in some instances we have irrelevant operational trainings about our job, like the intranet has changed... seriously we all passed matric
(group laughter)

P: You are right that training we get is useful but some of it is useless or common sense

P: In any case we hardly remember all these training sessions we have on a weekly basis.

P: That's soo true how many times does the training team come to our meetings tell us something and give us the papers but we still phone them to ask what it was?

P: Oh yes I always phone to ask, I have never ever gone back to any of their manuals to look, I just call them

P: So they waste time making you sit in a training anyways

I: So if the training were optional would that help with your schedules? Being able to choose which session you would like to attend and which one you wouldn't?

P: Yes and no that goes back to the company's rigid ways – you can't not go to training- like it's a bad mark on you

P: But it is optional

P: No its not

P: Guys really it is voluntary, but not really optional (rolls eyes)

P: They have made training optional- by law here but for your own safety and staying with the values you better go to all training

P: Big brother is watching you better go (group laughter)

P: Training should help us bring more money into the business (rolls eyes)

P: Wait this is confidential right?
(group laughter)

P: Yes of course she told us this when she started

P: If it was genuinely optional training I think we would see more of a value add, for example the training we received from a colleague that was relevant and applicable

P: I need more basic training with things like EQ, learning about myself and time management those personal things, I want as personal upskilling

P: Not all training is bad

P: Of course not all is bad but what we want more of is the training personalized to what I need

P: We see it a lot with candidates when they do a training sponsored by their companies but its transferrable

P: Oh yes like let us say someone does a MDP whilst working at Zurich Insurance when they leave and go to Standard Bank its useful for them and applicable in that environment

P: Oh yes that would be great

P: Maybe HR related coz its relevant to your job now

I: So would something like that be motivational to you?

P: Yes

P: No I'm not trying to do any studies with these hours

I: Hold on, that's what I am asking though if you had a combined effort from the company to reduce your hours and allow you to do personal training would you?

P: Oh yes of course

P: The challenge now is that we spend soo much time in these internal operational trainings but if I put them on my CV they mean nothing to anyone outside of this company

P: Exactly

P: We soo do that on CVs you cross everything off that's not relevant

P: I like the training that focuses on recruitment coz it's applicable, please cut out the social media stuff.

P: This year the training has been cut down but other things have been added

P: I still think the training must be optional and appealing to what we need, keep it real and relevant

P: I think we should have a fun day to break away and build moral

P: But we have that

P: No it comes down to working extra hours again

P: But if it comes from the company giving us the time it's different

P: [cross talk] no no it will catch us somehow anyways

P: Yes we have happy hour

P: I don't see any of you there though

P: You are right because its back to the time issue, if I come to happy hour then I need to spend an extra hour working but if I skip happy hour then I get to go home and have a drink at home

P: [cross talk] I've seen it with a large multinational where they force a shut down for downtime not just drinks but you do what you want to do – maybe you go to gym, you have a drink, go for a walk whatever but you take that downtime because they know it improves productivity and stimulation. So they studied their staff and figured out the most productive times in the day for them so give them the break

P: That's when companies have come up with creative ways to keep their staff going, like the flexi hours, pause areas where you can take a nap, play areas with pool tables and game stations. Places to just relax. All the large multinationals are doing this now, this is the future

P: With us here, they can't do the taking away time from our desks, it doesn't work. We had Pilates here at some point

I: But what is it that makes you think you can't take that time away? Do you not think it's more of a company culture?

P: Well maybe it is because there are other companies where people work very hard but they find ways to make it work like people who rather start work mid-morning and through the night? So why can't we?

P: It's a culture that's been in engrained

P: No it's not about management it's about me and my performance, so I will force myself to work and being productive

P: That is classical conditioning from the company; you are feeling guilty for having downtime

P: No its not

P: Of course it is because the psychology has been done soo well you are like indoctrinated you must just be working so even if you work a short day you feel guilty

P: There are companies in the industry that are doing as well as we are and better but their people aren't working such long hours

P: Exactly

P: What I wanted to say is that it comes down to being smart and efficient. For example the days we knew we had to work late into the evening we were all soo tired and not as efficient in doing what needed to be done coz we were tired? What If you were given two hours during the day to go take a nap and come back refreshed?

P: That's true

P: But you can't ever think of doing that, you are conditioned to think you have to be at your desk all the time, so instead of taking a nap to feel refreshed I walk around the office wasting the same time chatting to my colleagues. So it's time wasted that's why that flexibility would be great

P: Yah you are right it's better for me to use an hour taking a nap or at gym rather than walking around and talking to people, I would definitely appreciate that

I: Well that's it guys, is there anything else you would like to add?

(Pause)

P: No nope

P: I think that's it

I: well thank you very much for your time, i really appreciate it

P: Thank you its been great

P: Thanks

P: Thank you

END OF INTERVIEW—

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