

The Role of Personal Narratives in City Branding

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Research Report

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Abstract

This research report is an exploratory study into the role of *authentic personal narratives* in city branding, which is a new field of academic inquiry. This research expands upon city branding by looking at the role of residents and their *authentic personal narratives* in contributing to city brands. This research report drew upon studies of storytelling projects *Humans of New York* and *The Moth* to examine the roles of authentic and personal stories and how they impact city brands. The research set out to explore whether *authentic personal narratives* could have an impact on the field of city branding, with a special emphasis upon brand Cape Town. The researcher believed that the role of the personal and authentic roles of citizens could lead to more authentic city brands. The data that was gathered for this report was collected through in-depth participant interviews which was then analyzed using a thematic analysis which was correlated with the core themes identified in the literature review—namely narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity*, and city branding. The importance of this paper, and for future researchers, lies in the findings that it is the collective narrative, a summation of individual narratives, has the most profound impact on city brands. The implication of the collective narrative renders a new field of inquiry for research to build upon.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

In the context of branding, there has been seemingly little scholarly attention paid to *authentic personal narratives*, and the function thereof, in creating, building, contributing to and sustaining brands. There is myriad literature to be found on brand narratives (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010), and books and scholarly articles on the theory of narratives in a more general sense (Bratberg, 2011). Narratives have been used in the context of branding for some decades now and have been employed as a way of fostering connections with consumers, and of building sustainable brands, through a brand narrative strategy (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010). This study will focus on how citizens, through their *authentic personal narratives*, can contribute to the overarching brand narrative of city branding, with a focus on the physical space of cities and the conceptual (the online context/technological domain). There is minimal literature to be found with regards to *authentic personal narratives* in a general sense and this is even more acute in a South African context. This study, through analysing secondary resources pertaining to the topic at hand, and through a primary research approach, utilising quantitative in-depth interviews, will set out to investigate the role of stakeholders, in this case citizens, in creating authentic city brands through the use of *authentic personal narratives*. The online environment/digital contexts within which these narratives exist will also be further taken into consideration, as narratives exist in the physical as well as virtual realms. Cities are a physical space and these spaces are further branded identities that are conveyed and communicated through a multiplicity of factors to stakeholders and consumers.

Humans as a species are storytelling animals, and it is through the use of narratives that we are able to make connections, make sense of, find meaning, and communicate with one another (Bratberg, 2011). At the core of every brand there is a narrative and brands use narratives to convey their story to stakeholders. One, therefore, cannot deny the inherent power of narratives in branded communications (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). This study was partly inspired by the concept of how citizens, in their role as stakeholders, contribute to the branding of cities - as seen in the work of Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker's (2013) article "My City – My Brand: The Role of Residents in Place Branding". People, in their role as citizens, make up and contribute to the space that a city brand is founded upon, and therefore are pivotal actors in contributing to narrative of city branding, whether this be through conscious or subconscious actions. The study was, however, primarily inspired by Stephanie Ballard's (2015) work, which was a qualitative thematic analysis of *Humans of New York* and Maria Garcia's (2013) study of *The Moth*, which employed an ethnographic approach (discussed below).

This study will aim to investigate how brand *utilisations*- or extensions, through the use of *authentic personal narratives*, contribute to the overarching brand narrative of the city brand New York City.

Cities are spaces that are populated by people, and city brands have stakeholders. Some brands like *Humans of New York* use the city as part of their brand and subsequently feed back into the city brand of New York City—the place and the brand. This is how brand *utilisations*- extensions are defined in the context of this research. This study will further be developed with regards to how Cape Town may learn from this interplay between city branding and the contribution of personal narratives. This concept will be explored in the context of the importance of consumers in contributing to branding, and how consumers authenticate brands. These brands, through the utilisation and extension of brand New York City, unwittingly or consciously, contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand New York City through the espousal of personal narratives (Ballard, 2015; Garcia, 2013). It is essential to identify how *authenticity* can exist in an age where humans are increasingly spending the majority of their time online and using technology, and furthermore show how *authenticity* can be communicated and created via online platforms. This study will reimagine the contribution that people can make through their *authentic personal narratives* to city branding and how they can communicate, authenticate and sustain a city brand.

One cannot deny the online and digital environment that *Humans of New York* and *The Moth* exist in. Cities are physical locations as well as being branded identities that speak to and connect with stakeholders and consumers. City brands exist as conceptual identities as well as locations. People are no longer confined to defined spaces and their individual voices now create and permeate the online environment. Defining and creating *authenticity* in this environment is a dubious endeavour, but it is one nevertheless that the researcher will argue for. In a world that is becoming increasingly physically disassociated through online platforms, there has been a surge of groups, and interest, in the antithesis to this environment, and in navigating authentic connections. The researcher is not arguing that *authenticity* does exist online but rather that there has been a noticeable surge in interest towards real people with real stories. *Humans of New York* and *The Moth* both exist in online environments as well as the physical world. Both aforementioned brands/organisations have been successful, the researcher will argue, because people long for real connections in their daily lives, even though they are spending more and more time in online environments.

1.2 Problem statement

This study is premised upon the idea of *authenticity*, specifically as seen through the lens of personal narratives and how they can create a sense of empathy through the dissemination of them, in online and offline environments. This is of particular importance in our present age, as we live in a global context where people are spending more and more time online (behind computers, on cellphones, and on social media), spending increasingly less time being ‘unplugged’ from these online/technological/social platforms, and much less time engaged in authentic (intimate, face-to-face, real world) means of connections and communication. This study will explore how *authentic*

personal narratives can be reclaimed and reimagined in this online environment and digital context, focusing on how personal narratives contribute to city branding and how, through *authenticity* and empathy, build city brands. This study aims to explore whether *authenticity* can lead to greater understanding and empathy in an increasingly digital world and, if so, how this *authenticity* would be imagined and defined.

Humans of New York has been met with widespread success online, through Brandon Stanton's blog, and is a representation of personal narratives portrayed in a digital context (Ballard, 2015). This study aims to analyse and explore the power of these narratives and their ability to connect with those who interact with them, and how they further contribute to brand New York City. *Humans of New York* is premised upon real stories of real people, and this study argues and assumes that people are looking for real and authentic connections in their daily lives. The analysis will stem from the work of Stephanie Ballard (2015) who did a qualitative in-depth analysis of the *Humans of New York* brand. Furthermore this study will look at the live storytelling event known as *The Moth*, a New York non-profit organisation, building on the work of Maria Garcia (2013), who argues that *The Moth's* "popularity is intrinsically linked to an ever-growing need for live community in today's digitalized society" (Garcia, 2013, p. iv).

By focusing on *authentic personal narratives* and how they contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand New York City, through the use of *authentic personal narratives*, this research aims to uncover how *authenticity* may, and can, be reimagined and communicated in our online and digital age. The online environment and digital context (regarding the technology that people use to connect with information and to one another online) are integral environments and means of connection to take into account as they form the very fabric that this study is weaved from. Creating and identifying authenticity in an online environment would not exist if it were not for these environments to begin with, and the interplay between offline/online is also integral to this study. In conclusion this study will show how brand Cape Town, from looking at personal narratives and their impact on New York City's branding, can adapt particular design principles and techniques to engage, and involve, with their stakeholders more empathetically and authentically.

This research is worth conducting because in a world that is increasingly becoming dissociative/disconnected, in a social context that seems to offer more 'connection' than ever, it is an imperative to reclaim authenticity in how we relate, communicate, and connect with one another. This is especially important for brands that may be able to see the power of espousing authenticity in influencing ideas, actions, ideologies, and how they communicate with stakeholders, especially, and in this case, with city brands. In a country as diverse as South Africa, focusing on the city of

Cape Town, this study will show the power of authentic narratives in creating empathy and understanding with brand Cape Town's citizens and, furthermore, how they contribute to the city of Cape Town and its overarching brand narrative.

As a problem has been found in identifying the role of citizens and their narratives in contributing to city branding, this has led to the formulation of the following research questions:

1.3 Primary and secondary research question

1.3.1 Research question

How can *authentic personal narratives* contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand Cape Town?

1.3.2 Secondary research questions

- How and can *authentic personal narratives* strategies, as identified in New York City narratives, be adapted to a Cape Town context?
- Are *authentic personal narratives* used in brand Cape Town?
- How are *authentic personal narratives* in brand Cape Town similar to brand New York?
- Who are the specific groups/tribes that drive these narratives in order to enhance the city brand's identity and image?

1.4 Objectives

More specifically the objectives of the research will be:

- To show how *authentic personal narratives* can contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand Cape Town
- To show how *authentic personal narratives* can be implemented in brand Cape Town
- To uncover whether *authentic personal narratives* are used in brand Cape Town
- To show how *authentic personal narratives* are similar/dissimilar to brand New York City
- To show who the tribes of people are in Cape Town that add to brand Cape Town

1.5 Rationale

This study is useful because it will have myriad social, personal and political significances in how we interact, represent, connect and communicate with one another in today's digital context. By drawing on platforms and brands such as *Humans of New York* and *The Moth*, this research will show how empathy and *authenticity* can contribute to a better understanding of one another and to city branding in a digital age. As humans we connect best with one another, and forge more empathetic understandings, when we communicate things authentically. This is why brands like *Humans*

of *New York* and *The Moth* have been able to capture millions of people's attention, because people have been looking to interact and see real people communicated through their authentic personal experiences.

A city such as Cape Town can learn from these case studies by exploring how *authentic personal narratives* can contribute to its brand personality and value set, and create a more personable and appealing city brand - a brand that attracts people because the narratives are premised upon *authenticity* and not just upon the physical space and beautiful attractions. This study will show how *authentic personal narratives*, via a case study and analysis of *Humans of New York* and *The Moth*, contribute to the overarching brand narrative that is brand New York City. Furthermore, platforms like this do not exist in a Cape Town context, or at least not of the same nature, and therefore these ideas could be utilised and simulated in creating a more authentic and multifarious brand Cape Town - one that is symbolic of its people and one that makes its people more empathetic to one another and to stakeholders of the brand. This whole model can be likened to a thriving eco-system where the people contribute and feed into the brand and the brand can furthermore harness these narratives to feed back to in an empathetic way towards its stakeholders.

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Design

The research design incorporated into this study consisted of interviews of a qualitative, in-depth, and semi-structured nature. The research design was focused around a set of roughly predetermined interview questions that set up the framework for the interviews, which were of a one-on-one nature with each of the 4 participants. The preliminary methodology that was employed included, but was not limited to, an ethnographic approach showing "the link between human behaviours and culture" (O'Grady and O'Grady, 2009, p. 26). This was done through the practice of immersion and observation through in-depth interviews (Maree, 2007). The research aim was to collect data and to group it into themes that were analysed for points of convergence. These points of convergence were used to confirm or deny the researcher's hypothesis with regards to the power of *authentic personal narratives* in city branding. The research design also utilised a triangulation method to find themes of convergence and divergence between participants.

The ontological assumption of the researcher was of a nominalist position, as the researcher believed that "words and names created by the mind and within levels of individual consciousness" are integral to the qualitative nature of the study (Maree, 2007, p. 33). The researcher's epistemological assumption is of an interpretive and anti-positivist nature as it offers a social lens through which to examine the research and it is of a "softer, more subjective" nature (Maree, 2007, p. 37). Due to the previously alluded limitations the researcher faced, they did not use ethnography as a

mode of immersion but adopted an ethnographic approach (qualitative techniques used by ethnographers). As the research was of a qualitative nature it was important for the researcher to be able to gain an insider's perspective into the minds of participants.

1.6.2 Intervention

The research intervention consisted of in-depth interviews with participants who were identified and chosen as key informants with regards to the topic at hand. Every informant was briefed about the background of the study, and the argument thereof, and was asked a set of questions relating to the role of stakeholders and their narratives in successful city branding. All participants were asked the same set of questions, but each conversation was also semi-structured, allowing for respondents to comment and expand on topics as was necessary.

1.6.3 Instruments

The research instrument that was used was that of a semi-formal interview with predetermined questions, which was further expanded upon with regards to the context in a semi-structured nature.

1.6.4 Process

The process for the data collection consisted of formulating a set of questions, which were used to guide each interview with each of the selected participants. Each participant was specifically chosen as they each represented professionals in their given field and were thus able to give an informed perspective to the research at hand. The participant was chosen with regards to whether they had a background in narratives, branding, city branding, personal narratives, and so forth.

1.6.5 Analysis and interpretation of data

The data that was generated was retrieved from in-depth interviews with participants. A recording device, as stated above in the data collection strategy, was used to gather the necessary data from the interviews of the participants. This data was then listened to and analysed for themes by the researcher. Not all the data was transcribed from every interview but specific themes and relevant content was drawn upon. As the research is a part of the interpretivist paradigm the researcher was using inductive analysis to analyse the data. This implies that the researcher allowed themes "to emerge from the data itself" (Maree, 2007: 39). The data was analysed for the repetition of words used by participants, for the concepts and themes that they alluded to based on the interview questions and what transpired organically in the moment. Once the data was analysed it was related back to answering the research questions and core themes of the research.

1.7 Concepts

1.7.1 Narratives

The concept of narratives forms the basis for this study. Narratives, Arthur Asa Berger (1997, p. x) has argued, “provide a powerful way of teaching people lessons and transmitting ideas.” The very act of branding itself is a transmission of ideas through the receptacle of narrative, and in for brands to communicate with their stakeholders successfully they need to understand the narratives that are the fabric of their existence

1.7.2 Personal Narratives

Humans are a part of this “increasingly ritualistic and public ways by telling our stories and consuming the stories of others” (Langellier, 2009, p. 125). Our stories are the very facets of our beings and inform how we relate and interpret the world. The concept of personal narratives builds further upon the conception of narratives by delving into the personal stories that we use to communicate with one another in our personal jurisdiction.

1.7.3 Authenticity and brand narratives

True and authentic connection, this study will argue, is founded upon narratives, and furthermore personal narratives that are grounded in *authenticity*. Communication represented in an authentic form leads to stronger and deeper connections. If brands can utilise the idea of *authenticity* in their brand narratives, which can further be explicated from narratives and personal narratives, they can develop more authentic connections with their stakeholders. Beverland (2005, pp. 17) states that “*authenticity* refers to the manifestation of the search for what is real (Berger 1973).” Branding, over the years, has been consumed in its pursuit to exemplify *authenticity*, but as Gilmore and Pine (2007, pp.88) have observed, “Nothing offered by any business is authentic; it’s all artificial and utterly fake, being manmade, mechanical, and monetary.” Realness is therefore created in the minds of the consumer and cannot exist without their involvement in the process of meaning making.

1.7.4 City branding

Insch (2011, p. 14) has said that residents are an embodiment of a city’s culture and are representative of the nature of the brand. If the residents form a fundamental foundation of what the city communicates it is important to have their voices heard and to be integrated in the branding process. This is becoming increasingly clearer in today’s present context where online voices and communities are becoming more emphasised, and therefore impactful, in the participation and co-creation of creating city brands (Kavaratzis, 2012, p. 15). City branding, in the context of this study, builds upon and utilises the aforementioned concepts to form a foundation and starting point for the exploration of this research.

1.7.5 Archetypes

City brands have stakeholders which are represented by the citizens of the space and therefore of the brand. A city is not one giant mass of individuals but is rather an assemblage of individuals that can be interpreted as inhabiting separate and myriad cultural, social and spacial facets of a city. These individuals as a collective represent what the city espouses, but when one looks underneath the surface it is possible to see the separate and diverse segments that the city is founded upon. The idea of archetypes can be defined, for example, by Carl Jung who developed the notion of the collective unconscious, which poses the idea that “the class of ideas that people at first find strange but soon come to possess and use as familiar conceptions” (Jung, 2014, p. 3). Archetypes in this instance refer to the different sub-groups that make up the collective of what constitutes brand Cape Town. The archetypes in their separateness form the total collective that constitutes brand Cape Town.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

In the conducting of this research there were particular limitations and constraints placed upon the researcher and these limitations therefore need to be taken into consideration with regards to the broader implications of the study. Firstly, the researcher did not have physical access to New York City and all data about New York City was of a secondary, and not of a primary, nature. While this in itself may not be considered a limitation per se it is, however, necessary to factor this in in the wider sense of the research. The researcher built their argument upon the work of previous scholars, many of whom did have access to New York City, and therefore believes that these are reliable points of reference on which to base his study. Therefore all data and arguments based on brand New York and New York City relied on secondary literature. The researcher was not able to conduct primary research in New York City, as there was a lack of time and resources in accessing New York City. A limitation therefore will be that all data about New York City is founded upon secondary literature.

The researcher is also a citizen of Cape Town and therefore this, while not intentionally so, may have had an an affect on the outcome of the research. Because of the use of qualitative data collections methods the researcher may or may not have been able to separate themselves from the research process (Maree, 2007). The researcher was aware of his self-reflexive standing in the research and how subjectivity may have influenced the research. The study was also conducted within a limited time frame, with a small number of participants, and limited access to financial resources. The research also only pertained to Cape Town and not the rest of South Africa. The participants also only reflected a professional and experienced demographic and not the population at large and therefore a further limitation exists in generalising to brand Cape Town as a whole.

1.9 Outline of chapter contents

- Chapter 2: Literature review
- Chapter 3: Research Methodology
- Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings
- Chapter 5: Conclusion
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- Addenda

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will be an exploratory analysis in the themes and the questions that have already been discovered in relation to the subject of *authentic personal narratives* and how, as stakeholders, they contribute to city branding. The following themes that are comprised of narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity* and branding, and city branding have been identified in pertaining to the research at hand in creating a foundation for the exploration of the topic. The following literature review will show that other scholars hold the views of the researcher as well and that it is not purely their view. The researcher will draw on previous research and identify gaps in the literature to contextualise their argument. Brands are an ecosystem, and they do not exist in opposition to, but rather in accordance with their stakeholders. The research and the literature review will therefore be focused upon the role of the stakeholder in the co-creation of brands.

2.2 Narratives

The concept of narratives is the first theme that this literature review will be addressing. Narratives form the very foundation upon which this study is developed from and are therefore an integral facet in contextualising how the research report will be set out and take its form. Narratives are the ground upon which all the subsequent themes will follow, grow into, and weave with. Narratives are the very basis that branding is founded upon. Brands tell stories that are used to communicated with consumers and stakeholders and without narratives brands cannot connect with and sell to their potential audience. In this section I will briefly expound upon what the concept of narratives represents and how it fits into the overarching thesis as a whole.

“The universe is made of stories, not of atoms” (Kaufman, Hetzer, & Levi, 2006, p. 20). Our everyday lives are immersed and permeated by the proliferation of narratives that surround us. Arthur Asa Berger (1997, p. x) has argued, “Narratives provide a powerful way of teaching people lessons and transmitting ideas.” The very act of branding itself is a transmission of ideas through the receptacle of narrative, and in for brands to communicate with their stakeholders successfully they need to understand the narratives that are the fabric of their existence. People are constantly trying to make sense of the world surrounding them and to interpret and find meaning in their daily lives. Berger (1997, pg. 7) has called humans “homo fabulans” and Benjamin (2006, pg. 159) “homo narrans” which encapsulates the human desire we all have to tell and interpret narratives. Our lives are a constant stream of narratives, to which Berger, (1997, pg. 1) noted “Every day we swim in a sea of stories and tales that we hear or read or listen to or see, from our earliest days to our deaths.” In specific relation to branding initiatives, and to show the importance of narratives in a branding context, Boje (1991, p. 106) states that narratives are the “preferred sensemaking currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders.” Narratives are therefore inextricably linked to humans.

Narratives make up the very fabric of our existence and our society and are prevalent in a multiplicity of mediums that we use to communicate with one another (Bratberg, 2011, p. vi). Narratives have the power to restore, to reconnect, to bridge gaps in understanding, to re-imagine and to renew (Bratberg, 2011). Without narratives our lives would be devoid of meaning and our sense of connection and understanding would be diminished. There has been numerous literature written on the power of narratives and their ability in facilitating and conveying messages, and changing perceptions and ideas, as seen via the above cited scholars and authors such as Seymour Chatman (1975) and Walter Fisher (1989), who spoke of the narrative structure, and the “narrative paradigm of narrative probability” (Bratberg, 2011, p. vi). Narrative studies is a wide and rich theoretical area, it is an important theme in grounding the literature, but it will not be explored in too much depth. It will instead be used as a foundation from which to build and contextualise the researcher’s argument in relation to branding and the narratives that brands employ.

Walter Fisher (1989, p. 64), speaks of the concept of “narrative fidelity” which he defines as whether the stories that humans participate in “ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives.” This, the researcher will argue, forms the basis and foundation of successful branding initiatives. In order for a brand to communicate successfully with their target audience what they are saying must resonate with them. Brands use narratives to sell their products/services and these narratives, therefore, must be true to the nature of their audience. Boje (1991, p. 125) says, “Training managers to be storytellers may thus result in training them to be more effective in organizations.” While this may not relate to the context of branding specifically there is however a connecting truth to the milieu of branding. If brands are more internally aware of the narratives they employ internally, and employees are involved in the narratives process, this can lead to a more authentic narrative environment.

Personal narratives, which will be explored in the subsequent section, are central to the success of brands. In the context of the digital environment in which we now live it is not possible to silence the voices in the brand narrative process. The audience are now constituent parts of the branding process as a whole. Polkinghorne (1988, p. 36, cited in Barry and Elmes, 1997, p. 431) says “Narrative recognizes the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts of the whole.”

Now that we know this about narratives it leads us to the following section and sub-concept of narratives that this study will be utilising — personal narratives. While narratives form the basis and premise of this thesis there is, however, a further element that the researcher would like to inquire

into. The following section details a sub-conceptualisation of narratives that the researcher believes has not been explored enough in the context of branding, and, furthermore, that of city branding.

2.3 Personal narratives: democratising individual voices

Now that a better understanding of what narratives constitutes is in place, the next step in this literature review is that of personal narratives, which are an extension of, and a building block upon, the narratives theme. Personal narratives are an integral theme with regards to this research as it defines and delves into the importance of the stakeholders' stories. Personal stories, this research will argue for, are a further development upon narratives in the development of building *authentic personal narratives* in the greater context of city branding.

Our lives are essentially entangled in stories. They weave in and form the very fabric of our daily lives. We are a part of this "increasingly ritualistic and public ways by telling our stories and consuming the stories of others" (Langellier, 2009, p. 125). Our stories are the very facets of our beings and inform how we relate and interpret the world. Stephanie Ballard's (2015, p. 2), thesis, which focused upon the American blog *Humans of New York*, is a thematic analysis in "the construction of meaningful personal narratives from posts found within *Humans of New York* UN World Tour section." *Humans of New York* is a photo blog that was created by Brandon Stanton in 2010 whose tagline is "New York City, one story at a time." (Ballard, 2015, p. 2). Stanton's *Humans of New York* project sets out to capture the multiplicity of voices that are found on the streets of New York. He does this by capturing participants with a photograph and an accompanying text, showcasing the lives of the people that make up the fabric of New York City, and showcases these encounters on his blog. Stanton, through his use of capturing people's portraits on the streets and supplementing them with a unique personal narrative pertaining to the individual/s (occasionally more than one person will be in a photograph) of each post, has been a catalyst in translating personal narratives, found on the streets of New York City, to the digital world. *Humans of New York* has been met with incredible success worldwide and it is the researcher's belief that people are searching for authenticity in a world that is increasingly becoming dissociative because of the multiplicity of digital and technological mediums that are permeating our daily lives. Stanton's project represents an anomaly in a world where the individual, in representing what is real and found online, is becoming a scarce commodity.

The researcher will therefore be drawing upon Ballard's study in order to bridge the gap between personal stories, how they relate and contribute to brands, in this instance that of *Humans of New York* and how it can be applied to city brands, and furthermore, what brands can learn from the personal stories of their stakeholders in creating meaning. The advent of the Internet and blogging platforms such as *Humans of New York* has contributed "to restoring the lost voice of the ordinary

citizen in our culture” (Ballard, 2015, p. 8). The context of the internet is an important context to take into consideration because it is a space where people’s lost voices have been restored, and its up to brands to listen, because whether they want them to or not, personal stakeholder narratives have a fundamental impact on the success of brands.

Kline and Burnstein (2005, p. 22), in relation to blogging, have said that it is “contributing to restoring the lost voice of the ordinary citizen in our culture.” Blogging, however, can be seen as just one manifestation of the increasingly egalitarian world the Internet has created. The Internet represents a community of people who all have their own voices and opinions, and the importance of listening to personal narratives cannot go unnoticed. People, as stakeholders, have the ability to create, articulate, capture, sustain, interpret and translate brand meaning, and their active involvement and engagement in the process cannot be dismissed. Personal narratives, now more so than ever, and in the context of branding, can no longer be silenced or ignored. People are no longer passive receivers of information but are active participants in the dissemination, dismissal and interpretation of it. In this sense personal narratives are now more important than ever. “Narratives are fundamental to the way in which we think about ourselves and how we interact with one another” and people’s personal stories are a continuous source in establishing meaningful connections (Grant et al., 2004, p. 6). Furthermore, “our personal knowledge determines what we assert and believe (Polanyi, 1962), in effect forcing a personal narrative imprint on all our stories” (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012, p. 210). If the information that people receive undermines their values and belief systems they now have the means to represent their voices and concerns through online and social platforms. All individuals are unique and want different things, and therefore an industrial model approach cannot work in today’s consumer society where all voices contribute to authenticating meaning.

Ballard (2015, p. 41) in her analysis of *Humans of New York* employed a “qualitative thematic and textual analysis of posts within the *Humans of New York* photo blog” and this “illuminated the ways in which meaningful stories are created and told.” The researcher will be drawing upon Ballard’s qualitative approach in their data collection methods and will also analyse primary (from transcribed interviews and notes) and secondary textual data to disseminate how meaning is created and transmitted through personal storytelling. The researcher has found that in the field of narrative and personal narratives that a qualitative method of data collection is the most ubiquitous method employed.

Humans are essentially sense-making creatures who are continuously trying to apprehend meaning from their surroundings. Brown et al. (2008, p. 1038) state “Sensemaking is a search for plausibility and coherence . . . which embodies past experience and expectations, and maintains the self

while resonating with others.” An essential component for brands is how to resonate with consumers, and in order to understand that they also need to know how their consumers make sense of things, and on a personal level. Ballard (2015, p. 38) observed through her findings “every aspect of our individuality is intertwined with the societies in which we live.” Brands also are intertwined within the societies we live, as brands are storytellers and employ narrative techniques, and within those societies personal narratives are further embedded. The personal narrative is therefore an essential part in the translation and acceptance of meaningful branding, and the co-creation process of brand meaning amongst stakeholders cannot be forgotten or ignored.

The Moth, a non-profit organisation, founded by the author George Dawes Green in 1997 in New York City, is a live storytelling event that focuses upon the performance of personal narratives. Since its inception it has hosted storytelling events all around America, has gone on to release “a weekly radio program,” and, subsequently, a highly successful podcast (Garcia, 2013, p. iv and 2). The stories have turned out to be the “most popular among radio listeners,” even though the live storytelling remains the core and central facet of the organisation (Garcia, 2013, p. 2). *The Moth* is about community. It is about the representation of personal narratives in creating a sense of understanding between the performer and the audience, which can be seen as a parallel to the brand (the performer) and stakeholders (the audience). Garcia (2013, p. 24) has said, “the audience responds to stories that do not sound prewritten, those told in a voice that invites, not distances, the audience.” A storytelling event may seem asynchronous with the concept of branding, but branding uses narratives to connect with their stakeholders (the audience) and successful brands don’t distance themselves from their audience. *The Moth* events are “an exchange, not a monologue,” and, what is more, “The audience response is crucial to the process: . . .the audience expresses whether or not a story is “true” to them” (Garcia, 2013, p. 25). A brand cannot exist without a stakeholder (audience) and it’s up to the stakeholder (audience) to decide whether the brand is true. *The Moth* represents a lens through which personal stories can be analysed as their impact permeates far beyond the event itself because of its word-of-mouth dissemination and subsequent digital presence.

Maria Garcia’s (2013) study of *The Moth* is thus another scholar’s work that the researcher will be drawing upon. Garcia (2013, p. iv) set out to study the “the impact of technology on liveness and community building” in a world that is increasingly becoming more and more digitized. While a trend has been noted in a shift towards people spending more of their time on social media platforms and living online lives, Garcia says that *The Moth*’s popularity “is intrinsically linked to an ever-growing need for live community in today’s digitalized society” (Garcia, 2015, p. iv). “Something about truer personal stories,” Garcia (2015) argues, “appealed to New York City” (Garcia, 2015, p. 4). People are actively seeking to make personal connections and to engage in something

that is real, that transcends superficial barriers are found through the media and brands. The researcher has found a gap in the literature with regards to how personal voices that are further represented through digital platforms can authenticate brands.

The Moth's success, as previously noted, does not just pertain to a live storytelling event, and much of its success has happened online. This may seem at first glance a paradox; a contrast to what the core values of the organisation is founded upon. *The Moth* has however been able to retain their sense of community connection while representing and showcasing personal narratives in a digital context. While *The Moth* may now have an online component its main focus is still the live storytelling events (Garcia, 2013, p. 5). *The Moth* is a showcase for the diversity of perspectives and voices to be found in our everyday lives that we may otherwise have not come into connection with. *The Moth's* "primary goal is to dissolve socio-economic barriers" (Garcia, 2013, p. 3) and brands can adopt a similar model by encouraging stakeholder engagement and participation through the act of personal narratives.

Garcia employed an ethnographic method in the collection of her data, immersing herself in *The Moth's* live events, taking notes, interviewing participants and spectators, and making observations to find patterns that emerged from the stories (Garcia, 2013, p. 6). In addition to the collection of her primary data she also used content analysis to "analyze audience responses to the organization" (Garcia, 2013, p. 8). Her main research participants were people found within *The Moth's* organisation itself and she "prepared specific questions for each person prior to the interview, but allowed them to flow in a conversational manner" (Garcia, 2013, p. 6). The researcher will be adopting similar qualitative methods as used by Garcia (2013) to analyse their interview data to find patterns and will also be preparing specific questions for participants.

Even though we are living in an increasingly digital age this does not mean that authentic and meaningful connection cannot be created. There is no research that suggests that technology and our online lives are going to be heading into decline. It is therefore important to navigate a compromise and *The Moth* is doing that by "fulfilling the lack of community felt in today's society" (Garcia, 2013, p. 23). Community does not have to exist offline in a physical form, and *The Moth* has shown this by communicating liveness, and transmitting it through online platforms, to spread and authenticate personal and real connections. The researcher of the present study, especially in relation to the context of branding, is a firm believer in Garcia's observation that in *The Moth* "inclusivity leads to power" (Garcia, 2013, p. 28).

The Moth as a storytelling organisation may be seen to be a far cry from brands, but there are however strong parallels to be found. Garcia (2013, p. 47) observed that a big part of *The Moth's*

success is sense of community it creates and “the ability of its fans to engage fully in the experience” (Garcia, 2013, p.47). No one is left out or left behind, and all voices are of equal importance in the success of the reception of the events and narratives. While it cannot be ignored that a fundamental part of *The Moth*’s expansion has been related to their decision to expand their presence online “the undercurrent of it is that people want to hear stories” (Garcia, 2013, p. 65). In order for brands to be successful, this research will argue, they need to be more inclusive with their relevant stakeholders in the process and to take their views, values, beliefs, voices and personal narratives into account. Garcia (2013, p. 65) said “The need for of *authenticity* has paved the way for expansion,” and brands can therefore learn from an organisation such as *The Moth* to co-create *authenticity* in a participatory manner with its audience.

In order for brands to engage authentically with their stakeholders they also need to connect with them empathetically. Narratives have the power to stimulate empathy and to create connection and understanding, which “provides a basis for both cognitive and emotional responses to the experiences and world-views of other people” (Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006, p. 107).

Personal narratives form a part of the substructure of this research report. In the context of branding, however, because this is what this thesis is arguing for, narratives and personal narratives will be further expounded upon with regards to the subject of *authenticity* and brand narratives. This research report is calling for and arguing for a conceptualisation of ideas and themes that form a comprehensive whole but that do need to be understood in isolation at first. *Authenticity*, in this context, is linked and embedded in the concept of narratives and moreover personal narratives. Now that those themes have been explored, it is important to see them through a subsequent lens - that of *authenticity* and how this subject further applies to brand narratives.

2.4 Authenticity and brand narratives

Authenticity is the filter that will further be applied to the concept of narratives and personal narratives. While narratives and personal narratives are a way of forming connections and communicating and transmitting information by, this thesis will argue for the authentic transmission of the communication of ideas through the use of narratives and personal narratives. What follows is an exploration into the meaning of *authenticity*, in the context of narratives and brand narratives, and what it could potentially mean in the greater context of branding in general.

Beverland (2005, pp. 17) states “*authenticity* refers to the manifestation of the search for what is real (Berger 1973).” Branding, over the years, has been consumed in its pursuit to exemplify *authenticity*, but as Gilmore and Pine (2007, pp.88) have observed, “Nothing offered by any business is authentic; it’s all artificial and utterly fake, being manmade, mechanical, and monetary.” Realness is therefore created in the minds of the consumer and cannot exist without their involvement

in the process of meaning making. Brands can no longer choose to neglect stakeholders anymore as they are now more connected than ever through online communities and through technology (Beverland, 2009, pp. 20). *Authenticity* can thus not be something that is sold to a consumer or created without the consumer being involved in the process. Meaning making is subsequently a collaborative effort. While *authenticity* has a plethora of meanings, it is important to note, that “meaning resides in the mind of the consumer” (Beverland, 2009, pp. 17). In the context of city branding the primary consumers are the residents themselves as they live the brand and represent and authenticate its value set, and are essentially the primary consumers of the brand. The *authentic personal narratives* of residents are therefore a component that cannot be neglected in order for city branding to be successful. If the narratives of the residents are real, if they are involved in the city branding process, and if the city brand espouses the core values of its people, then a more successful and authentic city brand can be established. Branding and the creation of *authenticity* cannot be established without an interactive partnership.

Communication, in its many and diverse forms, is subject to “contestation, translation and reinterpretation” (Land and Taylor, 2011, p. 44). *Authenticity*, like communication, is subject to the same criteria. It is invariably open to interpretation, because it is socially created, and consistently needs to be revisited, reevaluated and “reinterpreted” (Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R., 2011, p. 107). Defining *authenticity* is consequently a dubious endeavour because of the multiplicity of meanings ascribed to it and furthermore by how the meaning shifts through time and context (Beverland, 2005, pp. 1006; Visconti, 2010, p. 236). Morgan, Pritchard & Pride (2011, p. 106) state “branding has always been concerned with *authenticity*. There is a deep current of interest within the branding field in what lies behind; in what is persistent, real and enduring.” In the context of this study it is important to explore what lies behind the image that the brand creates, which in this case will be stakeholder narratives and how they inform the meaning making process and authenticate city branding.

The traditional view of authenticity is understood in relation to the characteristics of a product, but it has been argued, “people make authenticity” (Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride, 2011, p. 106). In the traditional and objective view of authenticity it must be noted that “in conferring authenticity to an object” the role of people are ignored (Beverland, 2009, p. 16). Stakeholder engagement is thus a crucial component in the creation of authentic brand narratives, especially in the context of city branding where the people of the place are an internal and physical representation of the external brand values. Authenticity is a multilayered concept and for the purposes of this research the academic disputes surrounding its etymology and interpretation will not be addressed. Authenticity in the field of branding, however, has two broadly understood and agreed upon applications: internal

and external consistency (Spiggle, Nguyen, Caravella, 2012, p. 968). If a brand “maintains its essential core” and “is what it appears to be,” it has fulfilled this criteria (Spiggle, Nguyen, Caravella, 2012, p. 968).

Brown et al. (2003, pp. 21 cited in Beverland, 2005, pp. 21) state, “The search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing.” Visconti (2010, pp. 235) further notes, “Contemporary markets are characterized by the quest for authenticity.” Authenticity and authentic narratives, however, are not concepts that are created by brand managers, but are rather the result of an iterative process that exist between companies and stakeholders (Visconti, 2010, p. 232).

Brands do not exist in absentia of their consumers and stakeholders. Stakeholders are now more than ever connected through the medium of technology, which has amplified their voices and has led to their involvement in the co-creation process of brands (Beverland, 2009, p. 20).

Nicholas Ind (2007 cited in Land and Taylor 2011, p. 44) says brands must transform their “organization’s members into ‘brand champions’ by ensuring that they really believe in the brand and serve as the embodied guarantor of the authenticity of its values.” In the context of *authentic personal narratives* and the impact and relationship they have on city branding cannot therefore be ignored. Residents as stakeholders are essentially ‘brand champions’ of a city brand, and they therefore verify and authenticate a city brand’s values. Their narratives cannot, therefore, be ignored and neither can their involvement in the co-creation of authentic city brands. This research would like to add to the field of authenticity in brand narratives by looking at how *authentic personal narratives*, in their digital form, can contribute to more holistically authentic branding. Most importantly, however, this research will be explored in a South African, specifically Cape Town, context, which will direct the research aims.

Now that a better understanding of what authenticity constitutes, and what it further illustrates in the context of branding narratives and personal branding, a further layer will be explored and added to the existing literature—city branding.

2.5 City branding

City branding is the next theme, which builds upon and coalesces with the preceding sections. City branding in the context of this study needs to be seen as part of a greater picture and structure that weaves and merges with narratives, personal narratives, narratives in branding, and authenticity. What follows is an exploration of city branding and how it is understood and positioned.

City branding, as a discipline, in terms of its theory and its application, is still in its early developmental phases (Dinnie, 2011, p. 7; Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013, p.1; Kotler et al., 1993; O’Leary and Iredale, 1976 cited in Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013, p. 2). The concept of city

branding, however, is nothing new (Houghton and Stevens, 2011, p. 52). Kavaratzis (2004, p. 59), a seminal and prolific author on city branding, says city branding has existed since the beginning of the 19th century, but the conscious application of marketing approaches to city branding, as witnessed in the last three decades, however, is new. Harkinson (2001, p. 29 cited in Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 65) states that academic literature with regards to the concept of locations as brands remains under-explored territory. Houghton and Steven (2011, p. 46) have stated that there remains “a gap in the literature” in relation to the branding of cities in general. City branding has however seen a steady and burgeoning rise in recent years as seen in journal articles exploring this new field (De Carlo et al., 2009; Evans, 2003; Gaggiotti et al., 2008; Harmaakorpi et al., 2008; Kavaratzis, 2004; Russell et al., 2009 cited in Dinnie, 2011, p. 3). While city branding itself is a new field of academic inquiry, a further gap in the literature has been found in the role that residents as stakeholders play in the successful outcome of city branding initiatives (Kavaratzis, 2012; Insch, 2011; Houghton and Stevens, 2011; Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013).

The author and researcher of this paper has identified a gap in the literature, in a general sense, pertaining to the field of city branding as a whole, but has more specifically found a gap to be found with regards to role of stakeholder engagement in successful city branding projects. In order for city branding to be successful it is an imperative that citizens, as stakeholders, are engaged in the process, as it is citizens who legitimise the branding of the city, who articulate its essence and create its meaning and, therefore, “own the brand” (Kavaratzis, 2012, p. 7 and 15). The role of residents should therefore not go unnoticed and neither should the contribution of their personal narratives. City branding cannot be accomplished successfully with a top-down approach, and with the rise of participatory stakeholder engagement in the field of branding in general, it is an imperative that city branding becomes a “co-creational” process (Ind and Bjerke, 2007; Gregory, 2007; Kavaratzis 2012, p. 15; Insch, 2011, p. 8).

Insch (2011, p. 14) has said that residents are an embodiment of a city’s culture and are representative of the nature of the brand. If the residents form a fundamental foundation of what the city communicates it is important to have their voices heard and to be integrated in the branding process. This is becoming increasingly clearer in today’s present context where online voices and communities are becoming more emphasised, and therefore impactful, in the participation and co-creation of creating city brands (Kavaratzis, 2012, p. 15). Houghton and Stevens (2011: 46) have found that the role of stakeholder engagement is a “under-explored aspect of the literature on city branding.” If residents are fundamental components in the realisation and implementation of successful city branding they need to be integrated and engaged in the process (Houghton and Stevens, 2011, p. 45; Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013, p. 1).

Peggy Bendel (2011, p. 179) has commented on the “multifarious identity” of New York City as a brand and the diversity of constituent attributes that communicate the brand’s identity. The people of New York City are just as diverse and multifarious as the attributes that make up New York City as a brand, and their narratives expressed in an online and digital context can be seen as intrinsic communicators of brand New York City, as seen with *Humans of New York* and *The Moth*. New York City and its ‘I Love New York’ marketing campaign is perhaps the primary and most memorable example of a successful city branding initiative (Bendel, 2011, p. 183). Kapferer (2011, p. 188) has called the campaign a “citizen success” as the residents have claimed the terms as their own. Residents are the primary audience of city branding as they form a part of it, they are ambassadors for it, and are primary constituents in the authentication of it (Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013, p. 1). Kapferer (2011, p. 185) has further observed that while the things that are communicated about it through outside branding create a city’s image, it is also influenced by the internal — “the people we meet.”

Cities do not exist without their stakeholders. The aim of this research is to further explore the importance of stakeholders’ personal narratives in creating more meaningful and authentic city brands. Cities are spaces that are made up of a multifarious array of people and there is a gap in the literature to explore the purpose of people in the creation of city brands.

City branding is the final building block in the structure and formation of this literature review and will be seen as part of, rather than in isolation, with regards to the following study. This research represents themes that are symbolised by the intermingling of diverse subject matter in creating and exploring an authentic representation of a city and its brand through the narratives of its stakeholders.

2.5 Concluding remarks

But beyond the multifarious identity of the city brand New Yorkers themselves are multifarious, and this further contributes to the brand identity that is brand New York. *Humans of New York* can be seen as a brand that uses personal narratives to communicate through an online medium (Ballard, 2015). Not much has been written on fostering *authentic personal narratives* on online platforms, apart from Ballard’s thesis, yet *Humans of New York* has been met with widespread success. At its core it communicates personal, real and authentic narratives, which are often devoid of meaning in an online environment. Furthermore, nothing has been written on brands that utilise brand New York, such as *Humans of New York*, and how they feed back into the brand narrative of brand New York.

By looking at citizen narratives in the context of a city brand people may be better able to understand the impact that people and their stories have on brand New York City or city branding in general. *Humans of New York* as a brand most certainly contributes to what people perceive, on the strategic brand identity of a city brand, as brand New York City because it showcases the authentic narratives of the eclectic and diverse range of the people that make up the fabric of city brand. People, real and authentic people, are therefore integral in creating brand New York City. Personal stories are universal, and it is through these personal stories that people can better connect to a space and the communication of it. New York is heralded as a world city because of the intermingling narratives and identities that contribute to its overall brand. Garcia (2013: iv) is also important in this regard as her study of *The Moth*, which is ethnographic and qualitative in nature (methods the researcher will be employing), showcases “the relationship between technology and liveness and community building” - and a city is, or has the potential to be, a community.

This study will therefore be looking at city branding, drawing on the literature that has previously been written, and the role of authentic narratives in the development and communication of that brand. The concept of authentic narratives will be explored through brands that utilise the identity of brand New York City (*Humans of New York*) to showcase how they feed into and sustain brand New York City, and how citizen narratives contribute to brand New York City (*The Moth*). This will further be explored through the lens of city branding and the role of stakeholder engagement as identified by Houghton & Stevens (2011). Through identifying New York City’s personality one can see how authentic narratives help craft the identity of New York City, as it is its people’s stories that craft the space. This study will be standing on the shoulders of the literature that the researcher has read and finds relevant to the topic at hand. The researcher will be employing these insights and employing them to a South African context of the city brand of Cape Town and how, through the use of *authentic personal narratives*, the city brand can benefit from the inclusivity of its stakeholders.

Now that I have looked at the preceding literature and themes they will form the structure and the foundation upon which the data analysis and finding will be formed. While in the context of the literature review they may appear as self-standing themes they will however coalesce in the data analysis and findings to form a comprehensive whole that will guide the researcher and their argument. These themes will not stand in isolation but will rather form the harmony upon which the research is based. Narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity* and branding narratives, and city branding, will now come together to create and pull together the argument of the conceptualisation of *authentic personal narratives* in city branding.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

The research problem was of an exploratory and investigative nature and, therefore, a qualitative research method was chosen as the relevant means to collect data for analysis.

3.1.1 Research Design

The research design employed for this study was qualitative in nature as the research was grounded in the thoughts, feelings and emotions of people and how they connect and communicate with one another and the world. The primary methodology that was employed included, but was not limited to, an ethnographic approach showing “the link between human behaviours and culture” (O’Grady and O’Grady, 2009, p. 26). This was done through the practice of immersion and observation and through in-depth interviews with participants (Maree, 2007). The research sample pool was limited in this study, as the researcher did not have sufficient time, access to resources, and scope to conduct a full analysis (see limitations). The research aim was to do a thematic analysis—to collect data, to analyse the data into the themes which were previously identified in the literature review (narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity*, and city branding) and to find and identify points of convergence. These points of convergence and similarity were used to confirm and/or deny the researcher’s hypothesis with regards to the power of *authentic personal narratives* and their effect on city branding.

The ontological assumption of the researcher is of a nominalist position, as the researcher believes, “words and names created by the mind and within levels of individual consciousness” are integral to the qualitative nature of the study (Maree, 2007, p. 33). The researcher’s epistemological assumption was of an interpretive and anti-positivist nature as it offered a social lens through which to examine the research and it was of a “softer, more subjective” nature (Maree, 2007, p. 37). Due to the previously alluded to limitations the researcher faces, they will not be using ethnography as a mode of immersion but will rather be adopting an ethnographic approach (qualitative techniques used by ethnographers). As the research was of a qualitative nature it was important for the researcher to have the ability to gain an insider’s perspective into the minds of participants.

Besides the primary data that was collected the researcher also used secondary research, that of Ballard (2015) and Garcia (2013), in analysing the data and in confirming/denying their argument.

3.1.2 Data collection methods used and description of their application, relevance, strengths and weaknesses

In order to answer the research question the researcher drew upon the research methods and designs discussed in the literature review—qualitative, exploratory, and that of an ethnographic nature. Taking into account that this study had constraints on it with regards to time, scope, and resources, the researcher employed in-depth interview techniques, which consisted of four interviews with four selected participants, to collect primary research data (see below). For the purposes of this research formal in-depth interviews were conducted with each individual participant, of which there were 4. The authors of the literature that the researcher has drawn upon used ethnographic approaches for their research and for the purposes of this research the researcher did the same. Data was collected from experts in the field of narrative studies, storytelling, authenticity, and city branding, in the city of Cape Town, through in-depth recorded interviews with participants that the researcher already knew beforehand. As the researcher was limited by the scope of the study and by time and financial constraints a “document analysis” (Maree, 2007: 37) was used as secondary research in collecting data to answer the research question as described above.

The strength in this data collection method is inherent in the people that the data was drawn from. They are all experts in their chosen fields and therefore were able to give an informed view with regards to the research argument at hand. This research is not easily replicable, as most qualitative research is, but the the research instrument the researcher used is. The number of participants that took part in the study was rather small (as previously mentioned there were only four participants) and each interview/conversation that the researcher had with participants would not be able to be replicated, specifically with regards to context (time, space, place, questions, atmosphere, and so forth). The methods that the researcher employed (in-depth, qualitative, long-form recorded conversations, transcription analysis, and so forth) are, however, replicable if further research is to be conducted.

Each participant was asked his or her own specific set of predetermined questions. This could be seen as a strength or a weakness as one could argue that the researcher asked specific questions to get the answers that they wanted. Each interview was transcribed out in its entirety and was then analysed and scanned by the researcher who chose specific parts and sections of each interview that would thematically answer the questions and themes at hand. While full transcriptions of each interview are not present in this data the researcher has the full transcripts of each interview should a reader wish to analyse the data for themselves. Qualitative research is also of an interpretive nature and therefore the data collected may have been interpreted differently if another researcher may have had to view the data.

Maree (2007, p. 121) says, “What we are dealing with is therefore not so much an exact, measurable finding, but an emerging reality that we are analysing and describing.” Interpretive research can also be likened to crystals (crystalisation process) as they “grow, change and alter, but are not

amorphous” (Maree, 2007. p. 121). Crystals, like people and their perceptions, have “far more than three sides” (Maree, 2007, p. 121) and therefore there are many interpretations to be found in qualitative research.

3.2 Population and sampling method used and its application, including details pertaining to unit of analysis and sample group and size

The population size for this study consisted of four South Africans, all based in Cape Town, who were each chosen for their expertise related to the themes at hand. None of the participants were experts, or versed, in all the themes present in the study, but were nevertheless experts in their chosen fields. The four participants selected do not reflect the population of the study at large but rather represent important insider information from which the researcher used to gather insight to apply to the broader social milieu in which the research falls into.

3.3. Procedures used during the collection of data

Each participant that was chosen for the research was unique and came from different backgrounds. As the research is qualitative in nature it was an imperative that the questions asked were not replicated from participant to participant. The researcher therefore chose to predetermine a list of questions related to the themes at hand that were most relevant to the person being interviewed. This did not mean that some of the themes did not overlap or spill into each other, or that certain participants did not speak on a topic that they were not chosen for.

The researcher booked an interview with each participant individually. This took the form of one Skype conversation, and three face-to-face interviews done at different places and spaces around Cape Town. Each participant was told beforehand, via email, that the interview was for a research project but they were not told what the study was about as a whole.

Each interview was created specifically, tailor-made, for the participant at hand, and consisted of roughly 10 predetermined questions. The researcher used a semi-formal structure for the interview of which the participants were permitted not to talk to just the questions at hand but could also choose to speak about whatever came to their mind. The researcher preferred to act as a guide for the interview rather than asking questions to fulfill a specific prerogative.

3.4 Analysis and interpretation of data

The data was generated from in-depth interviews with participants. The data collection strategy utilised a recording device to gather the necessary data from the interviews with the participants, and notes were also taken during session. This data was then listened to and analysed for converging and emerging themes by the researcher. Not all data from the interviews was transcribed, but specific themes and important content from each interview was noted, phrased or paraphrased. As the

research is a part of the interpretivist paradigm the researcher used inductive analysis to analyse the data. This implies that the researcher allowed themes “to emerge from the data itself” (Maree, 2007, p. 39). The data was then analysed for the repetition of words used by participants, the concepts and themes they alluded to, based on the interview questions and what transpired organically in the moment. Once the data was analysed it was related back to answering the main research questions and core themes of the research as present in the next chapter.

3.5 Details of materials/ resources used during data collection

During the data collection process the researcher used an iPhone 5s and employed its voice memo function, with consent from the participant, to record each interview. The researcher further used a notebook and pen to take down additional notes during the process.

3.6 Research Ethics and Participant Identities

Each participant that took part in this study was presented with a participant consent form/ethical clearance application that detailed their involvement in the research and what ethical liberties the research would protect. Each participant was presented with an introduction to the study and what was required of them, the nature of the study, the framework and structure of the interview process, the possible benefits that could emerge from the study, the option to withdraw from the study if they so wished, the protection and confidentiality of their identities, and finally a section with regards to their consent to participate in the study which they were duly noted to sign if all the previous measures were found to be suitable to them.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Data analysis technique(s) used

The researcher, as previously explored in the preceding section, used the four complete transcriptions of each interview to analyse the data that follows. Each interview was analysed to find the appropriate themes that pertained to the research at hand. The interviews were of a qualitative nature and the researcher employed an interpretivist lens to better understand and organise the data into analysable sections.

4.2 Details pertaining to the analysed data

The analysed data was then grouped into four sections which related to each of the four participants and furthermore to the themes that emerged from the literature review—namely that of narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity* and brand narratives, and city branding. The data was thus grouped into a narrative that was further condensed into a thematic structure and narrative flow. Once the following narrative was established a qualitative coding technique was applied in order to analyse the data more effectively.

4.3 Findings based on analysed data

4.3.1 Introduction

The following narrative was compiled from the analysis of data collected from conversations the researcher had with four participants who were a part of, or who have had previous experience in, the branding industry. The researcher's aim was to explore whether the *authentic personal narratives* of citizens and residents of Cape Town could contribute to a more authentic brand Cape Town, as previously explored and alluded to in the introduction, the main research question (How can the *authentic personal narratives* contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand Cape Town?), and literature review. Narratives, personal narratives, authenticity and branding narratives, and city branding represent the themes that were explored in the literature review, and that will form the basis of the following analysis.

The following analysis will be broken down into themes that were previously identified in the literature review and that came up during the interviews. Furthermore, the final and concluding chapter will be linked to answering the main research question posed by the researcher through the data collected. What follows are the views of the participants in the data collection process to which the researcher will give their own opinion and analysis in the concluding chapter. The data that follows is a recapitulation of the data that was analysed and collected, and therefore does not represent the researcher's own personal assumptions or biases. One cannot, however, deny that qualitative analysis still always has some degree of interpretation, and therefore, even though the researcher

may intend to be impartial there always may be a discrepancy towards objectivity.

4.3.2 Authenticity: a two-way relationship

Martin Logan¹— “Participant 1”—is a strategic planner, who has expertise and experience in branding and has an academic background with regards to *authenticity*. *Authenticity* as a concept was previously explored in the literature review and the researcher’s aim was to see how, and if, it could be linked to brand Cape Town and the narratives of its citizens in creating a more holistic city brand.

Authenticity, in terms of a city brand, is realised starting from the outside in. People’s perceptions from the outside play a fundamental role in how a city brand is received. If a city “can take the Mickey out of itself”, Martin observed, it could then be viewed as authentic. If a city can reflect on its own idiosyncrasies—its value system, —and if it does not take itself too seriously, then it can be seen as being authentic. An important question to ask with regards to Cape Town being a more authentic version of itself, is what is the purpose of the place? What does it stand for and is its purpose realised in all that it does? This will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Cape Town is a port city and is, furthermore, a port city with a unique history. One cannot escape its historical legacy and the narratives that have shaped and contributed to the city and to the city brand. The city itself is made up of “clusters of people” and one can see this by how the physical space is characterised by archetypes. Martin noted a map that he saw of Cape Town where the city was laid out by archetypes. He believed that we have the most archetypes of any city by far. While Cape Town is fragmented into clusters of people and spaces, which all have their very own archetypes and communities, they nevertheless are components that make up a part of a bigger organism, a part of the collective narrative of Cape Town. Each of the archetypes has stories, and each of the archetypes contributes to what brand Cape Town is. There is no singular story that is therefore the “authentic” Cape Town, rather Cape Town is made up of collectives of narratives that lead to its *authenticity*.

One cannot deny the impact that history, and the narratives thereof, have had on how Cape Town is received and perceived. Martin noted that history has played such an important role in crafting Cape Town as a city and as a brand. He noted the history of District Six as an example of what he believes is “real” to Cape Town and as an example of one of the many multifaceted stories that lead to function as part of the brand. The historical narratives that are a part of the history, and that are openly embraced, are therefore integral in how brand Cape Town can be a more authentic version of itself. Another intrinsic aspect of *authenticity* is the emotional meaning that people attach to

¹ Respondent’s name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

things. Martin says “the emotional meaning is the stuff that really sits at the essence of what people feel,” and people connect to a space if it communicates an authentic version of itself in all that it does.

One of the most important aspects to remember is that a city is made up of space (the physical setting) and people (residents, visitors, tourists) and as Martin, and the other participants in the study, noted “narratives craft a city as the city crafts narratives. It is actually a two-way thing.” The city as a space is made up of a rich and diverse history, as seen in its architecture and the stories that the physical space tells. The attraction of Table Mountain, for instance, and the oceans that surround the city further exemplify this. Cape Town is a favoured tourist destination “because of the beauty.” Authenticity is thus realised through the convergence of space and people. Authenticity is a multi-layered concept that is brought together through myriad facets.

Authenticity, for Martin, is realised in the merging of space and people, an observation he concluded by saying that “that is the most real that you are going to get.” While the researcher set out with the assumption that the individual *authentic personal narratives* of citizens had the most profound impact on brand Cape Town, it was becoming clear that a different narrative was beginning to emerge.

Diversity was a recurring theme that came up in the data and was becoming an emerging core theme of what brand Cape Town stood for. In recognition of the inquiry into what the purpose of Cape Town was Martin said, “Perhaps it is a celebration in diversity. Perhaps it saying that despite everything, everyone has good and bad stories, but it is seeing the beauty in all of it.” Even though there are different clusters of people, spaces, and archetypes, he still believed that there was a sense of inclusivity to it all. An example of all these stories coming together was when the 2010 FIFA World Cup came to South Africa where “a lot of the diversity came together under one umbrella” - a collective narrative so to speak. Michael Weissman further witnessed this insight—“Participant 2”—who spoke of city branding. It was in this coming together that “all of a sudden you are not a Jew in Sea Point. You are not a sakkie-sakkie guy. All of a sudden you are a Capetonian and I think there is pride in that.”

In conclusion to his conceptualisation of the meaning of authenticity Martin said:

“There are two types of *authenticity*. The one is a moral bound authenticity. To say that you do the right thing because in your brain and gut there is a right and wrong value system. The second one is identity. It is to craft a certain identity around something. I think for any brand, I think especially city brands, there is a certain value system... from a moral *authenticity* point of view – the sense of liberalness is the common narrative here... I think in terms

of Cape Town's ideology we are damn close to nailing it, being authentic and in the aligning of an identity and brand image that gel together."

In conclusion, do stakeholders create *authenticity* in creating brand narratives for cities? The answer Martin gave is "yes, the answer is yes. [laughing]." *Authenticity* was thus realised in the amalgamation of space, history and the people. It was the collective narrative. It was the city. It was the history that created and led to an authentic city brand. It was the authentic collective narratives, as noted by Martin, that are the main contributors to an authentic city brand.

4.3.3 City branding: A multi-layered concept

Michael Weissman²—"Participant 2"—has a background and works in branding and advertising and he did destination/city branding for Cape Town—an account he worked on for 3 years. The researcher set out to discover whether, in the field of city branding, personal citizen narratives were used in the realisation of brand Cape Town.

Originally Cape Town Tourism, which is the organisation that looks after tourism in Cape Town, was responsible for marketing the series and attractions that tourists enjoyed while they were in the city. Their job was to sell Cape Town as a destination. Was the role of citizens and their *authentic personal narratives* taken into account in the context of city branding, tourism and the World Cup for instance? Or were there other factors that played into the branding of Cape Town?

In order to sell Cape Town as a brand it was once again important to understand what Cape Town stood for. During the 3 years Michael's agency had the account it was important for them to distinguish between Cape Town as tourism and Cape Town as brand as "those are two separate things." In terms of the positioning for setting up brand Cape Town Michael noted three kinds of explorations: the people of Cape Town, the citizens of Cape Town, and the physical space. The branding of Cape Town was about "a sense of place, a sense of city, and a sense of history and social context." These 3 things together lead to a positioning for brand Cape Town. In creating and establishing a brand Cape Town it was noted that different facets lead to the authentication of the brand and different perspectives. A city brand is a thriving ecosystem created out of different variables that converge together. It is as Michael said a "multi-layered" concept with no clear answer.

Michael and his team ran the campaign for the city with regards to the FIFA World Cup in 2010. Their exploration centred on answering the question of how do the citizens of Cape Town enjoy soccer. Through their research process they discovered an insight that the characteristic of South African football was the vuvuzela. This became a symbol of the World Cup in South Africa. The

² Respondent's name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

marketing of the World Cup was multi-layered, just as the idea of creating *authenticity* is multi-layered. In advertising brand Cape Town and South Africa as the World Cup destination, they used, for examples, contextual photographs of the citizens and the landscapes and the mountains and the city, because brand Cape Town is the sum of so many and distinct parts. In order to realise brand Cape Town Michael stated “The biggest impact that people can have, that brand Cape Town can have, is if we mobilise the citizens of Cape Town behind this brand.” In order for a brand to be authentic, therefore, people have to believe in the brand.

The citizens are an essential part in promoting a city brand. With the branding of Cape Town during the World Cup “the citizens became an integral part of the message and the key vehicle... for spreading the word about what a football tournament experience would be like in Cape Town.” This highlights the importance of citizens believing in brand South Africa.

Cape Town as a city is made up of “two sides.” One theme that has emerged throughout the data is that a dialectic always emerges with regards to all the themes. They are the result of a set of convergence points. Michael said that “There is the postcard side and then there is what is really going on. I think that probably – tourism is probably a postcard image of the place. This is a very beautiful place, but what people really want to know is – what is Cape Town really like to live in.”

Michael had the following to say about Cape Town, the effect it has had on its people, and ideas for future change:

“You could see in the design of buildings and the design of spaces and maybe the design of the mind and the way people thought – it was all about separation. The pitch spoke about how design was now being used to break down these barriers of separation to create a more unified city.”

The purpose of the campaign was designing a way to bring the city together, as a space, and the perception thereof, and how it has an influence on people. While it doesn’t pertain to Cape Town in particular, Michael spoke of an advertising campaign for Amarula, which he called “a nice piece of storytelling.” It involved bartenders with a cocktail that used Amarula that further told the story of them and their bar. This was an example of “bringing a city to life through citizens.” Michael said “at least it is interesting when you are telling a human story – it does bring it to life in a way that it is more powerful.”

One of the problems that Michael noted is that city brands are quite difficult things to shift quickly (just like Matthew Friend³ said - “Participant 3”). In line with what Martin previously noted “Cape

³ Respondent’s name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

Town is very much a collection of villages ... everyone seems quite in their little pockets.” For Michael it was more about the collective stories that have an impact on brand Cape Town, as the collective stories lead to something that is bigger than the individual. It needs to be about more than just the individual narratives - “If it is only about the individual stories then it is nice, but it is perhaps not quite as inspiring.” The narratives of individuals are just the building block; there are also archetypes as Martin said. For instance, “the French archetype is different to the German archetype and cities are sometimes perhaps where those archetypes are most kind of realised or most tangible.” Cape Town’s archetype is a little more difficult to define when the historical narrative is taken into perspective. In creating a distinctive and authentic brand Cape Town it would be essential to draw on the different archetypes that make up Cape Town’s unique brand identity. Cape Town, in some senses, is a melting ground of cultural diversity, a place like no other in the world, and can therefore be characterised by its archetypes that are plentiful and hard to define—something which gives brand Cape Town its unique identity.

In creating an authentic city brand, in creating an identity that is different from another city, it is about finding the stories that are uniquely one’s own and about telling them in an idiosyncratic and distinctive way. It is about creating a distinctive brand identity

4.3.4 Cape Town branding: A creative African narrative perspective

Annie Naxyelo⁴—“Participant 4”—has a professional background in marketing, branding, and has a special interest in the African creative luxury sector. While South Africa, and specifically Cape Town, is associated with an arts and craft sector, Annie is a proponent of the emerging creative African luxury sector. This has to do with art, design, fashion and changing the African narrative. Because of her expertise in these sectors she was chosen as a participant to give a perspective of the African voice in Cape Town branding. This “voice” per se, as her interview suggests, does not have to be a verbal communication, but can rather be symbolised and communicated through the creative sectors.

Annie believes that in order for Cape Town as a brand to be a more authentic version of itself “it is important to change the story, to change the narrative of who we are and how we are,” and this can be done through communicating through the arts, and the narratives that come as a result of this field. This is especially true because Cape Town was named the World Design Capital in 2014. This has given a new language to how brand Cape Town articulates itself on a world stage and the narratives that it tells.

⁴ Respondent’s name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

The concept of Cape Town existing as a space and as Cape Town existing because of people has come up earlier in the data that was collected. In relation to this Annie believes that “the two depend on each other. They can also, however, work independently of each other. And they can also destroy each other.” The people create the space, and the space creates the people, this theme is therefore formed from a dialectic, an interaction that needs to be understood from both perspectives. In terms of the spacial dynamics of Cape Town and creating an authentic space she said, “I think Cape Town communities are just too fragmented.”

A sentiment that Annie echoed was that “a lot of people don’t have voices” in brand Cape Town. A lot of people are left out of what the brand constitutes. Could Cape Town as a brand then learn from incorporating more of the authentic and personal citizen narratives into the value system and construction of brand Cape Town? While she believes that there is no reason that Cape Town can’t be a world-class city she also believes that it needs to become more critical of itself for this to happen.

The subject of space has become a recurring theme throughout the analysis of the data. If you look at the transport system, for instance, “it is being created to keep people out of the city,” another relation to the apartheid legacy. A lot of people live and work in the city but they can’t necessarily enjoy the city because the space is created to keep them out. In further elaboration of the theme of space she says, “You don’t have to interact with poverty. You don’t have to interact with suffering. You don’t have to interact with the reality of Cape Town.” This goes back to what Michael was saying with regards to the postcard side of Cape Town and the actual true reality of Cape Town. Is Cape Town’s purpose thus served in all that it does? Are all voices included in the narrative?

As a solution to this narrative, and in brand Cape Town representing a more holistic representation of itself, a solution could be the act of creation as “Creativity is the one language that everybody can understand” and “the city itself can use creativity to write its wrong.” Furthermore, in Cape Town communicating its purpose more truthfully and honestly it is important that it starts listening to people’s stories, to not shut people, voices and narratives out of the equation, and to not treat people like they are outsiders. As Annie says, “the voices are there, it is just about listening to the voices... and getting people to become stakeholders of their own city.”

Annie had the following to say with regards to the way forward for brand Cape Town:

“I think it has to be more inclusive. I think it has to be real. It is not real right now. It says it is one thing and then it is another. It needs to stop seeing itself as different. I think it works too hard to be different.”

Annie believes that Cape Town is a city that needs to wake up to its own unique identity and that once it has accepted and embraced its history and legacy that a process of healing may begin to occur. And this she thinks will happen in the art and design sectors, to which she says “I am excited about the art and design spaces, because I think that is where the change is happening.” Art and design, beyond just being aesthetic and physical representations are symptomatic of “What the society is thinking and feeling at that moment. It is that thing of checking the temperature of a nation. That is what art does. It gives you a sense of this is where people are.” In her concluding remark she stated that art and design “reflect the time and it has to reflect the time”.

4.3.5 Changing A City

Would engaging with people’s narratives lead to a more authentic conceptualisation of the space, the perception and reception of brand Cape Town? The answer so far has been that there are myriad and diverse aspects that lead to creating a successful and authentic city brand, and many different ideas as to how this can successfully be achieved. While some have worked, there does not seem to be a holistic plan that has been put into creating a unique and authentic brand Cape Town identity.

According to Matthew Friend⁵ - “Participant 3”, a branding expert with more than 40 years experience in branding, and echoing Michael’s sentiments, said, “it takes 20 years to change a city.” To which he further stated that “we shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us.” One cannot deny the importance and convergence of people and space in the authentication of city spaces and the narratives they shape and create. Branding, Mike says, is a relationship, “it is like a horse and cart. The brand is the horse. If it is untagged from the cart it is a problem.”

With regards to how a brand like Cape Town should be communicated and regulated he had the following to say:

“I think it should be aimed internally first. When one picks up an avocado the pip is the culture. The flesh is the external factors. You may throw the pip away, but that creates another avocado. The brand is created from the inside in the end. You have got to lead it. If you forget the inside it won’t work.”

While he believes that brands should start internally with the stakeholders as the key factors in creating a successful city brand. In creating an authentic city brand Matthew believes that “there has to be coordinated voices. There has to be voices by the community.” This feeds back into the idea of the importance of the collective narrative and the importance of community. Feeding back into the idea of archetypes and the spaces that make up Cape Town Mike said that “I think the one

⁵ Respondent’s name has been changed for confidentiality purposes

thing I have realised about Cape Town – first it is the only city in the world that calls itself a town. It is not a town. It is 100 villages.” He doesn’t believe that Cape Town is an authentic whole but is rather a city made up of “different spaces.”

For a city to become a more authentic version of itself he says, “it is not a quick fix.” While he believes that change is a slow process he does believe in the contrary as well. In alluding to the problems that he thinks brand Cape Town faces he said “You know what... what makes humans great is that they can believe in two things at once without going mad. They believe it is impossible to change and at the same time believe they are going to change it.” He ended off the interview on an optimistic note stating that “Yes and you know what? Of course it can change in your lifetime. Of course it can.”

The following table is a collection of the themes that were previously identified in the literature review and that have been correlated with the corresponding data that was collected from participants:

Table 4.1

	"Participant 1" - Martin	"Participant 2" - Michael	"Participant 4" - Matthew	"Participant 3" - Annie
Theme 1: Narratives	Collective narratives e.g. FIFA World Cup 2010 Sense of liberalism is the common narrative here.	Collective stories having an impact		Interested in changing the African narrative. Changing the African narrative through the creative spheres. "Creativity is the one language that everybody can understand" and "the city itself can use creativity to write its wrong." Art and design "reflect the time and it has to reflect the time"
Theme 2: Personal Narratives	Refers to collective narratives rather than personal narratives.	Refers to collective narratives rather than personal narratives. Collective stories are bigger than the individual.	Cape Town is a collective of archetypes and collective narratives.	

Theme 3: <i>Authenticity</i>	<i>Authenticity</i> is being able to laugh at oneself. <i>Authenticity</i> is not a singular concept but is made up of a multiplicity of factors. Collective narratives lead to Cape Town's <i>authenticity</i>. History relates to what is "real" in Cape Town. The emotional meaning attached to a place renders <i>authenticity</i>. <i>Authenticity</i> is the merging of space and people. Moral bound a then-<i>ticity</i>; identity. <i>Authenticity</i> is the aligning of an identity and brand image that gel together. Stakeholders create <i>authenticity</i> in creating brand narratives for cities.	Different facets lead to the authentication of the brand and different perspectives. <i>Authenticity</i> is multi-layered. <i>Authenticity</i> is finding the stories that are uniquely one's own and about telling them in a idiosyncratic and distinctive way	The convergence of people and space creates <i>authenticity</i>.	In order for Cape Town as a brand to be a more authentic version of itself "it is important to change the story, to change the narrative of who we are and how we are" "Creativity is the one language that everybody can understand" and "The city itself can use creativity to write its wrong." "I think it has to be more inclusive. I think it has to be real. It is not real right now. It says it is one thing and then it is another. It needs to stop seeing itself as different. I think it works too hard to be different."
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Theme 4: City branding	History has contributed to brand Cape Town. Diversity as core theme for brand Cape Town.	City branding: the people of Cape Town, the citizens of Cape Town, and the physical space. Cape Town: a sense of place, a sense of city, and a sense of history and social context. a “multi-layered” concept with no clear answer. mobilise the citizens of Cape Town behind brand. City brands are quite difficult things to shift quickly	City brands are quite difficult things to shift quickly. We shape our buildings and thereafter they shape us. City brands need to be aimed internally at first in order to function.	Cape Town as a space and the people: “the two depend on each other. They can also, however, work independent of each other. And they can also destroy each other.” — forms a dialectic “a lot of people don’t have voices” in brand Cape Town. A lot of people are left out of what the brand constitutes” “I think it has to be more inclusive. I think it has to be real. It is not real right now. It says it is one thing and then it is another. It needs to stop seeing itself as different. I think it works too hard to be different.
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Theme 4: City branding		The citizens are an essential part in promoting a city brand. “Cape Town is very much a collection of villages ... everyone seems quite in their little pockets.” Collective stories that have an impact on brand Cape Town.	City brands are quite difficult things to shift quickly.	
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(Image: Jesse Navarre Vos, 2016)

Conclusive summary

This data that was collected and that emerged from the participants along with the themes that formed the foundation of the literature review will be used to draw conclusions with regards to the study at hand. An important theme that emerged from the data is the importance of the collective narrative. The researcher originally set out with the presumption that personal narratives, if they were authentic, could have the power to change and shift the ideals of city brands. The data, however, has shown that citizens in their collective capacity are more likely to bring about real change. A city is a physical space—a collection of spaces, it has its citizens—a collective, and all these stories and places intermingle and weave together to create brand Cape Town. City brands do not shift quickly, and it is not an easy process to shift perceptions, but embracing the collective stories of the citizens of brand Cape Town, a more authentic version of the city brand can be portrayed. This study was of an exploratory nature and therefore does not aim or proclaim to give forth any answers. The previous data that was collected can be used as a better way to conceptualise and portray cities. The most pertinent theme that arrived from the data was the power of the authentic

collective narrative in creating a city brand that is true to its roots and identity. Chapter 5 will present an interpretation on these data analysis and findings and suggests ways forward for future researchers.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Interpretation, discussion and insights of the findings in terms of the broader context of the research problem

The researcher set out at the beginning of this study to explore, identify and discover the implications for the incorporation of *authentic personal narratives*, the role thereof, in the context of city branding. The researcher had a passion for the art, the act and expression of storytelling, especially that of personal storytelling, which is why the projects *The Moth* and *Humans of New York* were drawn upon, and set out to investigate whether citizens and their stories had broader implications, and impact, in the field of branding, with a specific focus upon city branding.

Through the researcher's own qualitative research it became evident that the original assumptions that were held with regards to the research question at hand were being challenged and reconstituted. While the researcher set out with the assumption that there was an importance that could be gleaned from the power of the individual, and the individual story in the forming of a city brand, they soon became challenged to confront that their original proposition had to be reinterpreted and re-contextualised.

The original discussion, as presented in the literature review and further outlined in the data analysis and findings section, was premised upon the core themes of narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity*, and city branding. The researcher explored these themes in detail, and formed a paradigm for further analysis based upon the research that came before and what the researcher believed could be investigated in further detail.

From the in-depth qualitative interviews that the researcher conducted it is clear that the act of the individual personal narrative was not a core theme amongst the participants that were interviewed. Instead, what emerged was a story and argument that drew upon the collective narratives of citizens and residents that are the constituents of a city brand. The collective, in this instance, is formed from a multiplicity of further collectives, which can be noted as being founded upon different archetypes within the broader context of brand Cape Town.

5.2 Link to prior literature and/or theory

The literature review was premised upon the basis of narratives, personal narratives, *authenticity* and city branding, which formed the foundation of exploration in the data analysis and findings section. The research participants were specifically chosen with regards to their expertise and relation to the themes at hand. In order for the study to be successful it was of utmost importance that a link was created between the literature review, the emerging data and the analysis thereof. The themes that emerged from the literature review were mostly of a qualitative and explorative nature,

and many of the core scholarly articles were grounded with an ethnographic approach, which the researcher utilised in their exploration of data collection.

5.3 Research question answered

The research question that was posed by the researcher at the beginning of this study, to reiterate, was “How can *authentic personal narratives* contribute to the overarching brand narrative of brand Cape Town?” It is now an imperative to explore whether this question was, and can, be answered. As the literature review suggested there was no prior research, or at least an obvious enough gap, to the exact topic at hand, which is why the researcher drew on topics that had previously been investigated and then wove them to form a new narrative and field of inquiry.

The hypothesis and presumption that the researcher set out with was founded upon the role of the individual. The researcher drew upon the projects and brands *The Moth* and *Humans of New York* to explore the impact that personal narratives have on a city brand, in this instance, Cape Town. Through conducting personal primary research the researcher and author of this study has reinterpreted their original presumption. Yes, *The Moth* and *Humans of New York* are predicated upon individual and personal narratives, but in hindsight, and perhaps a necessary blindspot the researcher must admit to at this point, is that these personal and individual stories did not exist in isolation. *The Moth* and *Humans of New York* are both collectives that are formed by individual narratives. While one cannot deny the function and form of the individual narratives that are created from and for these platforms it is in their collective essence where the true power is seen. As the researcher came to understand through his qualitative analysis it became clear that it is through the power of the collective that true change and substance can ensue.

The question that still begs to be answered is “what does this mean for brands?” The act of a narrative approach is nothing new in the field of branding as this is a technique that has been employed for many a decade. One corollary that the researcher did notice from their analysis of *The Moth* and *Humans of New York* is that people do connect and relate to real and authentic stories. The reasons why the aforementioned projects/brands have been so successful is because they fulfill a need that is held deeply by humans. As previously stated these *authentic personal narratives* make up a piece that fits into a much larger puzzle. The individual narratives fit into a wider sub-collective narrative that further fits into an overarching collective narrative. The sub-collective narrative can be understood as what was previously understood as archetypes, which the researcher uses to refer to collective patterns of stories that coalesce and co-create. The researcher believes that this can hold incredible meaning for brands, and especially brand Cape Town. A market is made up of segments and target populaces. There is not one great hegemonic narrative that can be created to resonate with everyone. The power of the collective, and of collective archetypes, are therefore powerful instruments in reaching stakeholders, in making residents believe in

the brand, and in appealing to potential consumers. In this age and context, a period of intense digital connection, people are connecting and searching for something real, as the researcher argued for the reason being of the success of *The Moth* and *Humans of New York*.

5.4 Implications of findings for future practices

The research findings that have been presented in this study serve to illustrate the changes that brands and city brands could utilise in order to better connect with their stakeholders and consumers. The power of the narrative, with a special focus on the collective archetypal narratives in this context, has been explored in this study to demonstrate the power of these vehicles in the branding world. Brands and scholars could spend more time drawing upon the power of stakeholders and their respective collectives in the involvement and realisation of city brands. The research presented within this study is merely but a step forward in igniting thoughts and ideas towards a re-envisioning of brands and city branding.

5.5 Final conclusions including an evaluation of the success of the research and possible future actions and/or research

The researcher believes that the research was a success with regards to the data that was able to emerge from the research. It is one thing to have a hypothetical assumption or ideology and it is another thing having to prove that assumption with data. The researcher was pleasantly surprised with the data that emerged and is more than willing to change the original presupposition with regards to the role of *authentic personal narratives* in city branding. As the data suggested from the data analysis and findings chapter there was widespread agreement with regards to the power of collectivising and the collective in creating an authentic representation of a city brand. While all the participants came from different professional backgrounds there was most certainly a thread that reached between all of them - that of the power of the collective. This research is by no means conclusive and is merely a starting block with which further research can build upon. The researcher would advise the involvement of citizens and their narratives in the successful evaluation of cities and their brands. The researcher believes that the power of *authentic personal narratives* in relation with city branding was a subject that was not previously explored and therefore deserves more attention from future researches.

5.6 Ethical implications and how they were addressed

As previously discussed in Chapter Three there were no ethical implications for anyone involved in this study. All participants' names were changed and their identities were kept confidential. The researcher did their best to represent the participants in as accurate a way as possible, interpreting what they said in a way that did not skew the data towards their preliminary assumptions. Ethical implications were addressed via a signed ethical clearance form that outlined the purposes of the

research and what the data collected would be used for.

5.7 Limitations of the study

The researcher believes that this is merely an introductory exploration into the research of this topic and will serve merely as a foothold for future research to be drawn upon. A wider and more diverse pool of participants could have potentially led to more in-depth, and possibly different, results. This does not mean that the data collected at hand is insufficient or that it doesn't hold any weight, it just means that there is much more than can be explored in the context of this topic. Interviewing people from different backgrounds such as Cape Town residents, branding experts, tourists, journalists, the Cape Town Tourism department, and so forth, would have created a more holistic, nuanced and rich study.

5.8 Future research

The researcher believes that there is a lot more to be done with regards to exploring the incorporation of *authentic personal narratives* within the context of creating and contributing to city brands. Cape Town is a multifarious city with many diverse people, identities and voices. The researcher believes that future research can delve more into incorporating a wider array of participants into the research process and to showcase the diversity that is a part of Cape Town's distinctive identity. The researcher also believes that there are many perspectives that create and add to a city brand and it would be beneficial for future studies to give voice to as many people as possible to create a more viable and holistic representation of how brand Cape Town can, and should, use *authentic personal narratives* in order to communicate to stakeholders and consumers.

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