



Design Matters:
A brand, its personality and the workspace

By

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted for the Master of Arts in Creative Brand Leadership degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a degree.



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ABSTRACT

Purpose

This research explores the role of brand personality in workspace design in order to create differentiation through the case study of an organisation. There are several studies on the future of the workspace, workspace design and linking productivity and brand identity, but few white papers that link the concepts of design and the application of brand personality within corporate workspaces. This qualitative research fills a gap in the knowledge about the application of brand personality within workspace design to create distinct brand differentiation; creating a competitive advantage and developing a culture with a sense of self-congruency and alignment of purpose through an organisation's employees and stakeholders.

Brand personality is researched within the context of the brand identity system. Brand personality forms part of the heart and soul of the brand and is the one internal attribute that helps define a brand image through the conceptualisation of an organisation's personality traits. Brands develop traits through the way in which they communicate about their products or services and mimic human characteristics (Kapferer, 2003).

The research explains why design matters in the new evolving world of work; where the physical layout of workspace has evolved to emulate the complexity of contemporary work and the transient nature of modern employment. It also discusses how interior design – and more specifically how brand personality – may be delivered through workspaces to highlight the brand values and uniqueness of an organisation. Throughout the review of the literature and the exploration of the case study, workspace branding is considered as a focused, user-centric strategy that encourages brand affiliation through positive perception and the alignment of personal aspirations. This is demonstrated by using the social identity theory and the brand personality trait model as a framework for the discussion.

Office interior design may offer the opportunity to demonstrate a customer journey or feeling. Such a narration of brand values and experiences can allow organisations the opportunity

to develop recognisable identities and distinguish themselves from the competition. Design might mirror and influence the 'pulse' of an organisation through its organisational processes and the internal culture of a brand, which in turn, can support dynamic working- and agile design. The study is an exploration of a design model overlaid against branding models, exploring the combined ability of branding and design, in enhancing the employee experience through inspirational workspaces and the role that these spaces play as catalysts of change.

The concept of brand differentiation is explored; to define its meaning and relate its importance to workspace design within an organisation.

This study further explores the reason why workspace design and branding represent critical roles of cultural maintenance, the development of relationships (socialisation), and innovation through shared, generative type work (collaboration) against a landscape of shrinking corporate spaces. Many will be working from home or will return to the office for a portion of the time that they previously spent there. Whether the workspace can provide a source of differentiation even though it might not be the primary place of work, remains a question.

Design and approach

This research explores an example of corporate workspace transformation as case study to understand the benefits of new workspace design, and to provide an understanding of how brand personality may be applied in these spaces to affect brand differentiation. In doing so, the researcher aims to show whether the application of brand personality in design will elevate the position of the brand. The study is based on a qualitative design. A focus group is used to understand the workplace experience, considering the perception of how brand personality is portrayed in the design of these spaces. The researcher has adopted a critical and reflexive approach in understanding how design and the physical implementation of brand personality in the workspace create brand differentiation. In addition, one-on-one in-depth interviews with case study participants further probe key concepts that emanated from the primary and secondary stages of research.

Findings

The results contribute to managerial, strategic and theoretical knowledge in the fields of Marketing, Branding, Human Resources and Interior Design.

Originality and Value

Brand personality and workspace design are both professionally researched constructs. However, no studies detailing the influence of brand personality on corporate workspace design to affect brand differentiation, could be found. The study fills this gap in the literature and enhances the usefulness of a brand personality model aligned with a workspace design model in providing a knowledge base for the determination of key elements in brand differentiation strategies for business. Such an overlay is particularly novel in the context of the 'new world of work' and offers practical considerations for organisations deciding on their branding, people, property and workplace strategies of the future, in post pandemic times.

Keywords: Workspace design, brand differentiation, brand narration, new world of work, brand personality.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. VOIP - Voice over internet protocol
2. Wi-fi - Wireless communication technology (Wireless Fidelity)
3. Li-fi - Wireless communication technology that utilises light to transmit data between devices
4. ABWM - Activity Based Working Model

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualisation

In corporate workspaces, design is diversifying due to the changing nature of work. Service workforces have evolved into knowledge workers and due to automation and data learning, workforces now value the creative industry. The changing nature of work also includes flexible workstyles, virtualised teams and globalisation (Oseland, 2009). These are contemporary ways of working which require greater flexibility of the design approach to buildings and space management (Greene and Myerson, 2011).

The modern workspace is changing with the introduction and implementation of digital technologies and as work becomes increasingly virtual, so workspace design becomes focused on creating an environment that enables technological change and merges aesthetics, brand presence and insights from psychology, to define these spaces. These changes introduce new ways in which work is performed in corporate spaces. In making physical design changes, business efficiencies can be unlocked, assisting brands in driving business performance and brand differentiation. Design should allow individuals and teams flexibility to work anywhere, anytime and at any place. Gillen states that design development of new workspaces can be a powerful lever of organisational change (2019).

Designers are now being entrusted to create spaces that go beyond general office work activities. Their new objectives are to create communities, facilitate team collaboration and create meaningful encounters. Even though employees have the opportunity to work from home, the corporate workspace carries an important place in an organisation's offering. Designers and business leaders are also influencing the social culture through the creation of these new workspaces, and in turn affect the organisational culture, all within the parameters of building regulations (Wagner and Watch, 2017).

There is a large volume of research pertaining to future workspace design, specifically around the exploration of the future office and what it will look like (De Bruyne and Gerritse, 2018; Gillen, 2019). Similarly, considering brand personality, various authors have analysed the concepts of brand persona's, brand storytelling, as well as employer - and internal branding as tools to ensure that they are seen as the employer of choice (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010; Potgieter & Doubell, 2018). However, research regarding the linkages between modern workspace design and the application of a set brand personality to create brand differentiation is lacking. There are models for each concept, such as the Activity Based Working Model (Arundell, Sudholz, Teychenne, Salmon, Hayward , Healy and Timperio, 2018) and the brand personality scale (Keller, and Richey (2006), but little is known with respect to linkages between the two and some ideas appear to exist in alignment in reviewing the topic of employer branding (Potgieter and Doubell, 2018).

This research explores the application of brand personality in modern workspace design to support brand differentiation. The study is an exploration of how design can help a brand present its compelling differences to the market and its internal stakeholders. It also considers design solutions supporting these new ways of working that impact on the aesthetic of workspaces.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale of this study is to understand whether a brand is differentiated through the influence of brand personality in workspace design. This topic was selected to research the application of brand personality in designing corporate workspaces within the new world of work.

This work aims to meaningfully describe how design should not only be a response to the changing world of work, but may also affect brand positioning in the market, support company culture, help attract and retain staff and enhance business processes.

Against a landscape of external factors such as competition, globalization and competitive corporate image it has become important to explore the effect of the corporate work

environment on the workforce as a point of differentiation, with further significant drivers arising from economic considerations (such large costly space affected by low daily occupancy) and organizational reasons (teamwork, part-time work, remote working) (Tagliaro and Ciaramella, 2016)

This study therefore aims to provide well-founded recommendations to both designers and business strategists by contributing to existing theory. The researcher also aims to provide insight into the interdependencies between workspace design and the application of brand personality within these spaces and how to clarify these elements to enhance brand differentiation.

1.3 Problem Statement

With the immense investment costs involved in workspace redesign it is important that organisations gain value out of their transformations, especially when younger generations see work as a 'thing' and not as a place (Gillen, 2019).

Today, expectations from the workplace are not confined to material compensation alone, but also include quality of workspace experience, organisational culture and ambience. Workspace design has become a key strategy for organisations to attract and keep the most skilled and committed employees motivated (Werning, 2019). This aspect makes brand differentiation an important attribute.

Several literature studies (Keller and Richey, 2017; Herskovitz, S. and Crystal, 2010; Freyling, Crosno and Henard, 2011; Su and Tong, 2015) indicate the advantages of owning a favourable brand personality. These advantages include amplified brand attitudes as well as elevated levels of employee allegiance and support (Freyling, Crosno and Henard, 2011). It is generally accepted that the form of the physical environment can support organisational culture. Sundstrom and Sundstrom (1986) suggest this point and state that the workspace is a platform of expression of the personality of the organisation.

With the above in mind, there is an abundance of research on the topic of the design of corporate workspaces and the practical enablers of such (Veitch, Charles, Newsham, Marquardt, and Geerts, 2003; Bodin Danielsson and Theorell, 2019, Gillen, 2019, Onem and Hasirci, 2020; Babapour Chafi, Harder, and Bodin Danielsson and Theorell, 2020. Research on brand personality also exists in abundance (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Geuens, Weijters, De Wulf, 2009; Rampl, and Kenning, 2014; Su and Tong, 2015; Su, Tong and Xu, 2018), however, there is very little research linking brand personality to the design of the corporate workspace, even though there are several research pieces on environmental design aesthetic in the workplace, linking to employee satisfaction and productivity (Vischer, 2008; Bjerke and Nicholas, 2015) but limited content demonstrating the use and benefit of brand personality in design of these workspaces, and further to this, a limited analysis on how brands can be used for the purpose of the expression of the self. This holds true even though research compiled by Munteanu and Pagalea (2014) indicates that self-expression may be a valuable influencer of brand preference, where consumers lean toward brands with preferable brand identity in order to express their own identity. Brands are therefore matched with consumer identity as a type of expression of uniqueness. This function of self-expression is considered to be one of the most important characteristics of a brand. (Keller, 2008).

This leads to the research question: *Can the use of brand personality in the workspace design positively affect the brand, enhancing its ability to draw and win talent through this means of differentiation?*

1.4 Research Purpose

The research purpose is to explore linkages between brand personality, corporate workspace design and their role in brand differentiation. These three concepts are considered throughout the research to gain a clear understanding of their effect on one another and the overall effect on brand differentiation. This research delves into the contextualisation of brand personality within brand identity theory, clarifying why brand personality may contribute to a brand's uniqueness through brand narration and design.

After reviewing the dimensions of brand personality (Aaker, 1997), it appears that there is limited reference to an organisation's culture as a dimension of applied brand personality. Further to this, brand personality is considered in some aspects of design, such as experiential architecture (Raffelt, Schmitt, Meyer, 2013), however the researcher has not found reference to any direct links to workspace design models (Arundell, Sudholz, Teychenne, Salmon, Hayward, Healy, Timperio, 2018).

The fundamental intent of this research work is to demonstrate how brand personality may be used to create meaningfully designed workspaces of the future through the linkage of branding and design models

1.5 Research Objectives

The primary research objectives were to;

1. Explore brand identity and its relationship to brand personality;
2. Understand why interior design matters in the new world of work, specifically in corporate workspaces;
3. Understand the concept of brand differentiation; and
4. Understand how brand personality plays a role in workspace design to increase brand differentiation, contributing to the limited body of knowledge relating to the inter-relation of these topics.

In addition, secondary objectives of this study were to;

1. Explore and validate the inter-relationships of these concepts (workspace design, brand differentiation, and brand identity application) through a use case analysis towards a proposed alignment of two models.
2. To provide recommendations towards inclusion of brand personality in future work design towards enhancing the employee-experience as a whole.

This research builds on previous academic literature about future corporate workspaces and highlights the subsequent effects on the brand. It further explores the concepts of brand

personality being applied to the workspace design, which may create a further layer of brand differentiation.

The case study explores a corporate organisation where workspace design was unaffected for thirty years. This resulted in an outdated and irrelevant physical space that felt misaligned to the organisation's current purpose, ways of working, values and personality. (Organisation X, focus group, 2020) The organisation recently embarked on a redesign of its workspaces to highlight its brand personality and to support internal culture along with the evolution of its brand. The review of this work has taken place through focus groups as well as interviews with employees and key stakeholders involved in the workspace transformation. This was aimed at testing concepts around workspace experience to understand how brand personality may enhance brand differentiation.

The work further aimed to assist researchers and practitioners with a view of the organisational and employee gains through the portrayal of brand personality in workspace design. The knowledge contribution of this study may be particularly helpful in cases where such changes become the basis of business case decisions when organisations are considering space modifications, reductions, or eliminations in line with new ways of work. This research also endeavours to provide practical ways for business leaders to integrate brand personality into workspaces, thereby allowing employees to 'live the brand' through the environment in which they operate.

1.6 Research Questions

In striving to address the research objectives as described above, this research study set out to obtain adequate answers to the following research questions, in

1. What is brand identity and how is it related to brand personality?
2. To what degree does design matter in the workspace?
3. What is brand differentiation?
4. How can brand personality play a role in workplace design to increase brand differentiation?

1.7 Research Paradigm

The initial research work was exploratory in nature, considering interpretivist philosophies. Exploratory studies seek new insights and assess topics in new perspectives (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

According to Henning, the interpretive paradigm emphasises the experience and interpretation of a situation (2004). This paradigm seeks meaning and allows for a discovery of how society understands situations at specific times. This research philosophy relates to the study of social occurrences, where it enacts a set of circumstances and individuals coming together to create a unique social phenomenon (Saunders and Lewis, 2012).

1.8 Research Design and Methodology

The research selection is based on a qualitative approach with a multi-method design. The primary phase of the research includes data collection in the form of current literature and a case study, where multiple sources of knowledge were considered as a contribution to the outcome of the exploration. The case study offered a best practice example, which was interesting and data rich (Noor, 2008). This type of study allows for the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Anderson, 1993). Thereafter, a secondary phase of research commenced. Focus groups were conducted to elaborate on the theory of the primary phase. The tertiary phase concluded the study with interviews that evaluated theories that were employed, and themes that emerged. This assisted in confirming the relationship between brand personality and workspace design.

The research design took on an inductive approach, where the current literature and case study data were initially analysed for key themes and observations around the topics researched. Emergent patterns from the first analysis were observed and became the basis of further exploration in the focus groups that followed. The tertiary phase aimed to analyse and validate the previously gathered data. Interviews conducted in this phase promised to facilitate a deeper understanding of data gathered during the first two phases. The interview questionnaire was generated from the results that emanated from the primary and

secondary pieces of work. This combined approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the key concepts and their meaning to employees. This research design allowed for the confirmation or rejection of key design- and branding theories. The study falls within the interpretive paradigm, as the researcher aimed to gather participants' views on the effect of the application of brand personality in workspace design, and whether this assists to differentiate the brand.

The study employed both empirical and non-empirical methods. Non-empirical research included the primary literature assessment and the case study review. Empirical research was used when the focus groups were conducted and when the employees within the case study organisation were interviewed. This design approach adds detail to what is already known through previous research on workspace design and branding. An examination of this contemporary real-life case study provided insight into the research objectives.

Multiple qualitative techniques, therefore, corroborated the data and enhanced reliability of the findings.

1.9 Conceptual framework

The study falls within the sphere of workspace design, brand identity, brand personality and brand differentiation. The figure below shows the key concepts that are used as a guideline for the study;

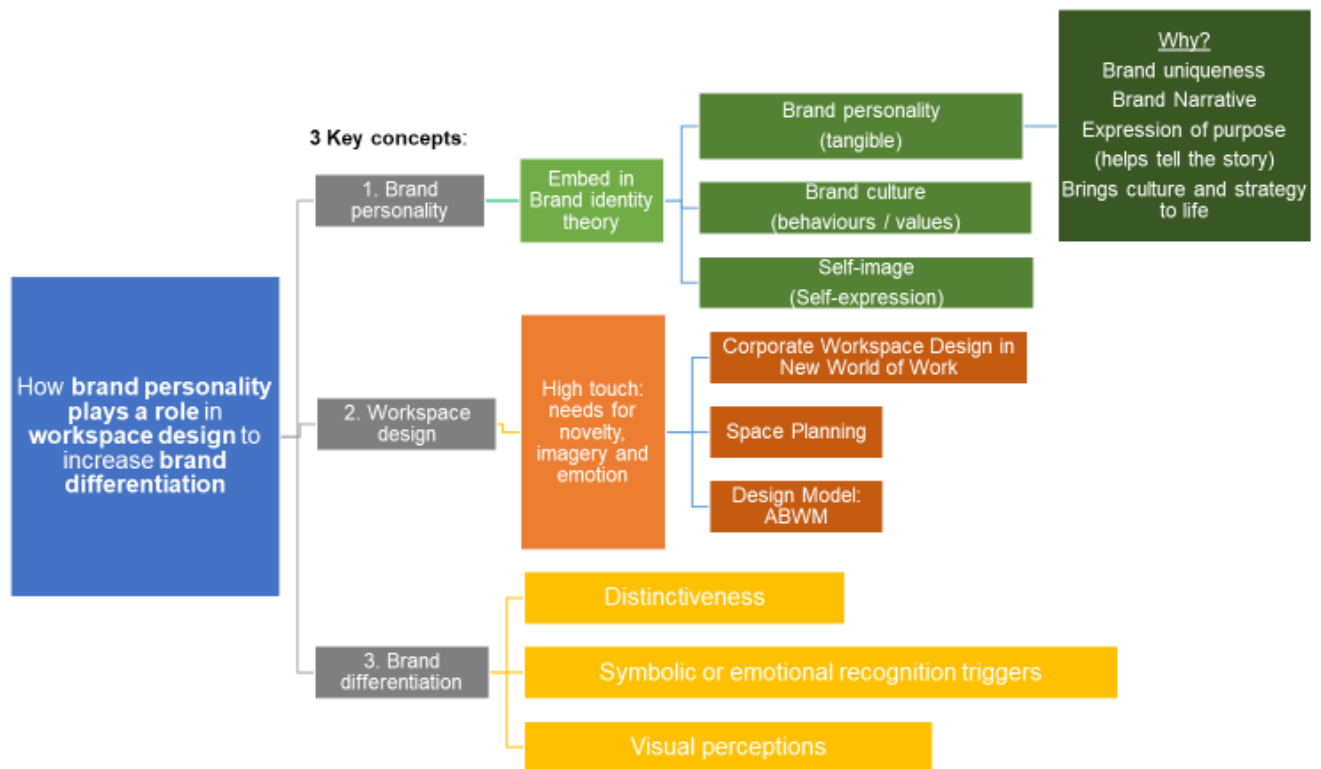


Figure 1: The outline of the study of how brand personality is portrayed through workspace design to increase brand differentiation

Source: Researcher's own guiding framework for the study

1.10 Limitations of the study

Limitations are matters and occurrences that take place outside of the researcher's control. They limit the extent to which a study might reach, and sometimes may affect the outcome or conclusions (Simon and Goes, 2013).

The following limitations impacted on this study:

- The research had to be completed within a limited timeframe with a strict deadline;
- The research was only conducted in one corporate case. As the data is qualitative, it cannot necessarily be generalisable to the population;

- The scope of the study was therefore also limited to interviews and focus groups that were conducted with limited participants in the Gauteng region, specifically within a South African context;
- The research perspective of this study focuses specifically on the application of brand personality in the context of brand identity, workspace design and differentiation resulting from these topics. Therefore, the study's research is limited to the concepts of branding and workspace design theories, which provide awareness and advancement of effective employee branding processes, in order to contribute to organisational differentiation.

1.11 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations are those aspects that arise from the limitations of the scope of the study; results from definite selections made by the researcher. (Simon and Goes, 2013)

The study is bound by the following delimitations:

- It only considers corporate workspaces and does not include other community- or co-working spaces;
- It only includes a limited population of staff from one corporate entity in the financial services field and does not cover research or case studies from other organisations;
- The research will cover brand personality, workspace design and brand differentiation, but will exclude the closely tied concept of design and workspace productivity, or employee engagement.

1.12 Assumptions

The study rests on certain pre-conceived expectations that need to be clarified from the outset. The research rests on the following assumptions:

- The participants of the study answered the focus group and interview questions honestly and truthfully;

- The inclusion criteria of the selected sample are suitable and as such will assure that the participating individuals all have experienced the same phenomenon being studied;
- The participants have a genuine interest in participating and do not have any other ulterior motives;
- The number of participants is enough to make conclusive findings.

1.13 Value of the study and proposed dissemination of results

As there is both theoretical and practical importance attached to the exploration of the impact of the physical work environment's design on its incumbents and the larger organisation, both corporate practitioners and academics should find value in this study. This research will benefit workplace strategists, interior designers, brand teams, human capital partners and any executive with the goal to create positive workplace experiences that reinforce brand purpose, culture and personality, whilst positioning the brand for differentiation in the marketplace.

The results of this research provide insights into ways of governing and maximising real estate investment for the efficient use of physical work environments in order to create or elevate brand differentiation. To do so, the researcher reviewed past literature, linked brand identity, personality and differentiation with the design of workspaces, and then examined the mechanism through which the physical work environment can enhance employee creativity and performance, all providing enabling pillars for brand differentiation.

1.14 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises of five chapters as indicated below:

Chapter 1

In the Introduction chapter the objectives of the study are formulated. The research problem as well as the aim of the study are discussed. This chapter thus sets the scene for the research by clarifying the objectives that seek to explore linkages between corporate brand personality, workspace design and brand differentiation.

Chapter 2

The reviewed literature explores the existing knowledge and models on workspace design to gain an understanding of why design is important in the new world of work, specifically in corporate workspaces. Furthermore, the application of brand personality and brand personality traits are considered in workspace design. Finally, the concept of workspace design to create brand differentiation is explored.

Chapter 3

This chapter focuses on the research methodology, analysis of the data of the case study and the benefits of such.

Chapter 4

The findings of the case study, the focus groups and in-depth interviews are discussed in this chapter. These findings address the research questions and objectives in order to understand and explain why design matters in corporate workspaces and how brand personality should be applied to create brand differentiation in corporations.

Chapter 5

The concluding chapter contains the interpretation, conclusions and applications of the findings. In addition, implications for future research will be provided, since this study focuses on one organisation in the corporate sector and further research on other organisations within the corporate sector may present interesting analysis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter identified the aim and purpose, while also providing the rationale for the study. It also set the scene for future deliberations. This chapter examines existing literature knowledge that contributes to answering the research questions.

2.2 Brand Identity and its relationship with brand Personality

In the section below, the researcher explores brand identity theory, and the position brand personality has within this context.

2.2.1 Brand identity

A powerful brand should have an expressive brand identity – through a series of clear associations which the brand strategist seeks to generate or maintain. This brand identity expresses the brand to stands for (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Brand identity is also described through modern literature (Essamri, McKechnie and Winklhofer, 2019) as a concept that is socially formulated through a multitude of interactions between several stakeholders, All of the elements that contribute to a brand being meaningful and unique are considered at the outset of the process of developing a brand identity. (Janonis, Doraliene and Virvilaite, 2007).The researchers, Aaker (1991), Kotler and Armstrong (2010) further define a brand its characteristic representations, which could be its logo, trademark, or package design that associate its goods or services with the organisation and differentiate its offerings from challengers in the marketplace.

Aaker (1997); de Chernatoni (2001), and Kapferer, (2012) have summarised the concept of brand identity as a way for a brand to express itself, a reflection of a brands unique story in order to obtain the favour of stakeholders, and an element which forms the brand image (Ilaneko, Stepanov, Miranova, 2020). As part of the brand's expression; Keller (1993) defined

the basis of brand identity through key characteristics which provide value in the form of associations that are relatable to a wide audience. de Chernatony (2001) states that a very useful theory of brand identity is shared by Kapferer (1997), this approach is known as the brand “identity prism”. His model assists in articulating differentiation between competitor brands (Kapferer 1997, 2012) and presents brand identity as a prism featuring six attributes, namely; physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. These characteristics communicate the tangible and intangible traits of the brand identity (Kapferer, 2004). There are three elements listed on the left of the paradigm (physical, relationship, and reflection) these traits personify the social and visual considerations, that give a brand its expression. The three elements on the right of the paradigm (personality, culture, and self-image) are the traits that are embedded within the brand’s fundamental nature (Berrozpe, Campo & Yagüe ,2017).

The attributes within these dimensions are described below by Kapferer (2009; 2012) for further understanding;

1. Physique – defines the brand’s physical features (What a brand looks like)
2. Personality – refers to the brand’s character and traits.
3. Culture – refers to the principles or values a brand is built on and associations.
4. Relationship – symbolises the relationship between stakeholders
5. Reflections – of a stereotypical user
6. Self-image – the perception of the customer has of themselves

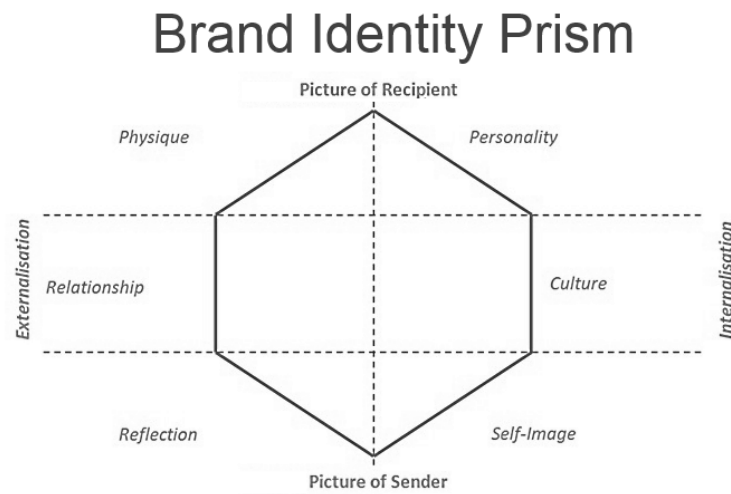


Figure 2: The Brand Identity Prism

Source: Adapted from Kapferer (2009).

Although Kapferer developed the brand identity prism there are also alternative models proposed by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) and de Chernatony (2001). There are however four dimensions that are present throughout all models. The same attributes are listed by Kapferer (1997), Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) and by de Chernatony (2001), namely; brand personality, culture and relationships. User image features as an element of the models by Kapferer (1997) and de Chernatony (2001). Elements that seem to be defined to Kapferer's Prism, are brand physique and self-image (Viot, 2011).

Brand personality, culture and consumer self-image are intrinsically attached to the brand's inner workings and are considered the soul of the brand (Janonis et al., 2007). For this reason, the researcher has selected only the three inner source elements from the Brand Identity Prism. These three elements are discussed below, however further for the purpose of the study, brand personality is specifically discussed in depth in a forthcoming section;

Brand personality;

As brands are increasingly seeking to elevate themselves in terms of a distinct brand image, a brand will therefore often conceptualise their image in terms of personality traits (Aaker,

2012). The way in which a brand communicates about its goods and services and mimics human characteristics, develops its brand traits (Kapferer, 2012). The extent to which stakeholders recognise and internalise, and relate to these brand traits, has a tangible impact on a firm's financial performance. (Oswald, and Oswald, 2012).

Recent research conducted by Bajaj & Bond (2018) explores how the impressions of brand personality are influenced by the design of brand elements. When brand personality is translated into design characteristics through the experience of space, the brand personality aids in curating a sense of belonging, whilst spatial design holds emotional influence with people (Franz, von der Heyde, and Bülthoff, 2004; Perolini, 2011). For this reason, the researcher delves further into this construct of brand personality in the section: 2.2.2.

Brand culture;

Leading brands not only possess personality, but also culture (Janonis et al., 2007). Ting (2005) explains that brand culture includes spiritual, material and behavioural culture, and Janonis et al (2007) notes that corporate brands embody the culture from which they originated. A brand is therefore representative of its culture and inspiration. Large international brands typically reveal their culture which is at the heart of their brands (*Benetton, Coca-Cola, IBM*).

Brand culture should hold a high emotional quotient, resonating and satisfying the needs of consumers. Brand culture that demonstrates this emotional awareness will gain brand popularity and elevate the value of brand culture. (Gong, Jiang and Liu, 2019).

Consumer self-image;

The user interprets a brand as the accumulation of all their experiences. The brand is constructed through these interactions with the user (Kapferer, 2012). Keller (2003) describes consumer brand awareness as descriptive brand-associated information that is drawn from the brand user's memory recall to associate the personal meaning of a brand). Aaker (2000) states that the identity of the strongest brands offers emotional benefit,

providing strength to the brand. To improve brand equity, the product or service must provide functional benefit as well. Additional brand value is obtained if the item or service provides the benefit of self-expression that reflects the image of the consumer (Aaker, 2000).

Hawkins, Best and Coney (2005) also suggest that brand identity is reinforced when there is a marriage between the consumer self-image and product brand image. A consumer may favour an item because of a trait that is regarded as an expansion of their own self-expression (Belk, 1988). Brand identity is realised by strong emotions caused by linkages to the brand which identify as brand affinity (Donavan, Janda, & Suh, 2006). The consumer's view of the brand is defined by their view of the brand image and personality.

A brief representation of Aaker's brand identity model below highlights a brand's value proposition and the effect of consumer self-expression. This model enlists twelve elements of brand identity, with one of them being the importance of the brand's value proposition, and the functional, emotional and self-expression benefits in relation to the brand's extended identity, core identity and its essence.

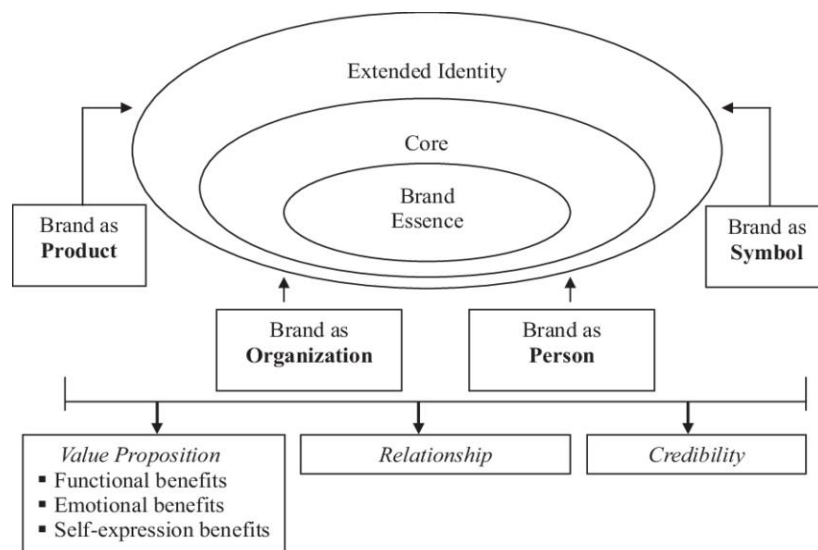


Figure 3: A shortened version of Aaker's brand identity model (2000)

Source: Aaker, and Joachimsthaler, (2000, p. 44).

A corporate brand's identity needs to demonstrate an organisation's strategy and its willingness to invest in the initiatives needed for the brand to live up to its promise to stakeholders (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). Organisations which display a well-structured, characteristic, and well-suited brand identity create preference with users that further boosts the value of their service offerings (Schmitt and Simonson, 1997). A brand's personality and reputation help it stand out in a marketplace with rife competition. An organisation can form a consistent and true brand identity through the linkage of brand attributes with an easily understandable communication style. This can result in user loyalty and brand growth stemming from brand trust (Ghodeswar, 2008). The next section will provide more clarity on the aspect of brand personality.

2.2.2. Brand personality

Goodyear (1996) states that a cohesive brand may be developed through the formation of its personality, company culture, and way of doing things. De Chernatony and McEnally (1999) argue that a brand's personality is a contemporary tool for marketing strategists to build and enhance a brand. Effective brand equity management by embracing brand personality is of utmost importance in obtaining company objectives of satisfaction, positive sentiment and profitability in the marketplace (Rajagopal, 2006). Research also demonstrated that the trait of excitement, whether attached to positive or negative sentiment may have effects on consumer behaviour (Sundar and Noseworthy, 2016).

Aaker (2000) claims that the personality of a brand encourages consumers to align with aspirational attributes of the brand, and so a desire to associate with that brand is formed which could indicate a possible link between brand personality and brand image. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) build on the views Aaker (2000) who stated that brand personality is characterised as the cluster of human traits affiliated with a brand. In addition to the original arguments of Aaker (2000) which holds that a distinguished, original brand persona can help create favourable impressions on a consumer, and thereby build and elevate a brand, Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) advocate that persona-centred storytelling is fundamental to

branding. In order to create an effective brand story, the brand personality is an expression of the brand's characteristics.

An attractive brand starts with a well-defined, quickly perceived persona – the basic connection between what a company says and what it does. This brand persona creates an enduring emotional bond with the audience because it is quickly recognized, relatable and memorable, and it is consistent. The brand persona facilitates a coherent brand theme and offers an element of reference for audiences to relate with, regardless of the exact narrative. These brand personalities will demonstrate recognisable human characteristics such as ingenuity, endurance, or tenacity, which are linked to a motive, action or aspiration (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010).

Considering Sirgy's (1982) congruence theory, if there is congruence between consumers' self-concept and the personality they perceive in a product, employer or place this results in increased desire for that object, indicating that end-users have a personal association for brands which they perceive to possess a personality that mirrors their self-identity. This personal preference is based on the idea that the personality traits associated with a brand facilitate the end-user's interpretation of their self-perception (Belk, 1988; Guan and So, 2016). When this brand identity is prominent in one's self-concept, individuals are driven to adopt their attitude to support corporate brand objectives (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014). Brand personality assists in creating a strong brand in many ways; as brand personality steers choice, where stakeholders recognise the personality of the brand as a projection of their own personalities, this role of self-expression attracts consumers (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; Aaker, 2011).

Love and Singh (2011) have found through their research that many individuals tend to associate employer workplace branding on an emotional level, as the attributes expressed are often those that the individual currently holds or wishes to possess in the future. The more complementary the personal and brand attributes are, the more attracted an individual is to the organisation.

The self-brand connection and advocacy model (Childers, Kemp and Williams, 2012) confers with the above concept, this model indicates that brand associations, such as, attitude pertaining to branding efforts, perceptions of brand quality and the novelty of the brand, are crucial in the branding efforts of an organisation. When clear brand associations exist, consumers may develop an affinity to the brand that it reflects their self-concept. When this connection takes place, a self-brand connection is formed, and users may become brand advocates.

The figure below illustrates the self-brand connection and brand advocacy model as described:

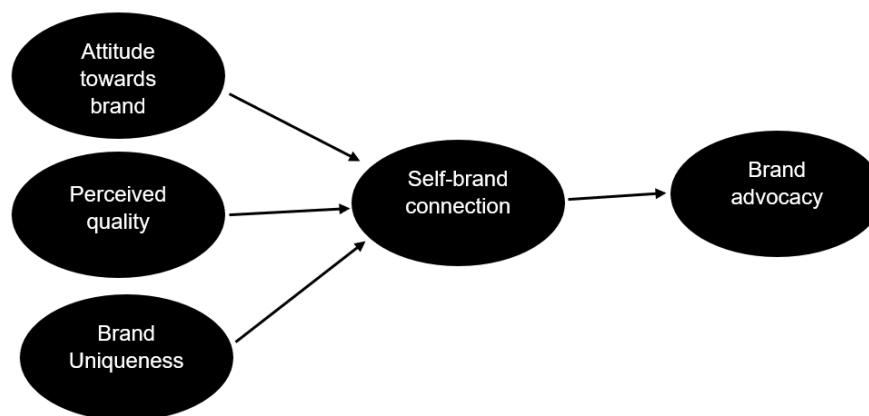


Figure 4: Self-brand Connection and Brand Advocacy Model

Source: Adapted from Kemp, Childers, and Williams. (2012).

Escalas (2004) argues that people decipher the meaning of their realities by constructing them as a story. This is known as narrative processing, which can form linkages between a brand and the self. This 'processing' takes place when a consumer associates events or experiences that form the narrative of the brand. A brand can become more meaningful through the use of narrative processing concepts when it links closer with the self-concept. Research by Escalas (2004, 2007) has shown through experiments that narrative

processing responds to narratively structured experiences through positive relations with brand attitude and behavioural intentions.

A brand's personality is perceived by its employees, customers, and associates as part of its corporate identity, where the brand's personality, spirit and emotions are tied to its brand image (Biel, 1997). Workspaces are for many organisations one of the most influential elements when 'branding' their corporate identity (Earle, 2003). These spaces have the capability to demonstrate personal characteristics of the brand (e.g., openness to novel experiences, intrinsic motivation, perseverance, ...) and are one of several considerations that contribute to increasing a firm's competitiveness (Schimpf and Stur, 2015). In the context of employer branding studies, research shows the importance of symbolic employer image dimensions, such as a brand's personality which moderates talent attractiveness (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Van Hove and Saks, 2011). Talent also assign personality characteristics to an employer that are 'personal, abstract and intangible attributes' of the organization (Lievens et al, 2007, p. 48).

Personality constructs regarding a brand have been shown to demonstrate intrinsic features with strong effects on consumer behaviour (Jahn, 2017). Consumers in modern, vogue societies align with brands not only for the physical attributes and functional benefits of the brand, but also for what they symbolise. The significant qualities of products or services are often the magnetic force for consumer attraction (Maehle, Otnes and Supphellen, 2011). This leads to an increased interest in the concept of brand personality, which offers an approach for a brand to create symbolic benefits (Heine, 2009).

Brand personality is the one tangible element that may create uniqueness through workspace design and assists in portraying an organisation's brand narrative. The research by De Chernatony (2001), Choi, Ok and Hyun (2017) argues that personality features and brand experiences translated through appealing brand imagery are the most impactful attributes in designing an appealing brand positioning. These attributes hold direct effect on brand popularity, influenced by brand quality and loyalty.

2.2.3 Corporate brand personality traits

Several authors (Balmer, Powell, Kernstock and Brexendorf, 2016; Keller and Richey, 2017) concur that corporate brand personalities are unique to corporate identities and differ from product brand personalities as the corporate brand concept is based on values held within a company, different to deliberately manufactured product brand values.

As product brand personalities are relatable to their consumers, corporate brands identify with the humanistic characteristics of the employees of that organisation and its sense of shared value that may mirror its values, promises and actions of its people. The function of internal corporate branding is to generate positive customer sentiment through its impact on employee emotions. It is an attempt to ensure synthesis of organisational brand philosophy, thought leadership, people management, and internal brand communication, since employees are key to co-creating brand equity with stakeholders (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016). Social identity theory can also offer an explanation to employee branding. The theory considers elements of psychological and sociological aspects of behaviour, through the process of categorization, identification, and comparison (Australian National University, 2006), which bolster the linkage between the organization's workplace brand and the interest to the individual (Love and Singh, 2011)

Studies suggest that brand personality has positive effects, as it influences consumer preference and brand choice (Sirgy, 1982, Su and Reynolds, 2017), boosts levels of trust and loyalty (Fournier, 1998, Mabkhot, Shaari, and Salleh, 2017) evokes consumer emotions (Biel, 1993, Trump and Newman, 2020), stimulates active information recall (Biel, 1992), aids expression of self- and personal association (Astakhova, Swimberghe, and Wooldridge, 2017) and influences brand sentiment and generates mindful associations (Freling and Forbes 2005, Setiawan and Wiet Aryanto, 2017).

For a brand to resonate with its consumers or employees, three basic dimensions of corporate brand personality traits should be considered as the blueprint for successful brand creation. These traits as illustrated in Figure 5, are framed as the 'Passionate and Compassionate (*Heart*), Creative and Disciplined (*Mind*) and Agile and Collaborative (*Body*)'

(Keller and Richey, 2017, pp. 74-81). 'Passion' relates to the organisation's shared purpose, and the alignment of the ambitions and discretionary effort of its staff based on their ability to be inspired. 'Creative and disciplined' alludes to the consistency of organisation action, its industrial strength and the culture of the brand. Finally, the 'collaborative' links to the ability to react to changes and mobilise teams to work towards common goals (Keller and Richey, 2017, pp. 74-81). The model has been selected for further consideration relating to physical design, to create a sense of community and atmosphere in workspaces.

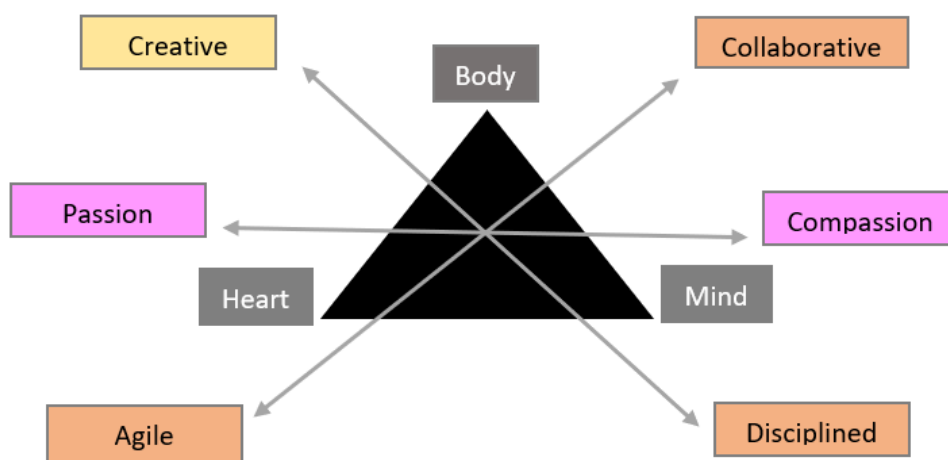


Figure 5: Corporate Personality Traits

Source: Adapted from Keller, and Richey (2006, pp. 74-81).

2.3 Why design matters in the workspace

As previously discussed, brand image is a powerful determinant of brand equity. Brand culture relates to an organisation's values and behaviours whereas self-image relates to users' self-expression. The next section describes on how brand personality can contribute to brand differentiation through workspace design. The next part of the literature review explores design enabling work, design considerations and consequences of spatial planning and relevant workspace design models.

2.3.1 Design as an enabler in the new world of work

Earlier research by Borja de Mozato (2006) on design-oriented small to medium organisations show that design can be the foundation of a benefit model to business. Design acts as a way for organisations to set themselves apart, share their sense of purpose, and transform business efficiencies. As part of this benefit model, the root of competitive advantage in the market is through design, where it creates brand equity and customer trust (Borja de Mozato ,2006).

Schein's (1990) research shows that there is a continuous process of mutual influence by the intent of management, and interpretations of the physical work environment's elements of design. Management intentions influence organisational culture, values and the physical workspace. These elements are also influenced by employee perception and interpretation of the physical workspace. Therefore, design of the workspace is both a strategic act of influence and a dynamic reaction to external processes (Vilnai-Yavetz and Rafaeli, 2011).

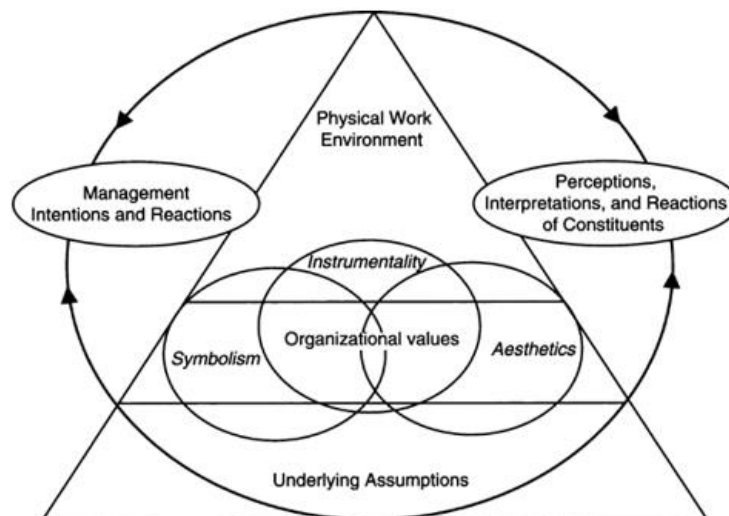


Figure 6: Three dimensions of work environment design – an adaptation of Schein's organisational culture model (1990) by Vilnai-Yavetz and Radaeli

Source: Adapted from Ashkansy, Wilderom, and Peterson (2012).

Digitalisation and technology have led to a dynamic environment demanding an agile response of workspace design that can accommodate future adaptations (De Bruyne and Gerritse, 2018). Research showing strong relationships between occupant wellbeing, increased staff engagement, productivity and enhanced brand perception prove that the success or failure of any office space is assessed by how well it responds to the expectations and needs of the people who use it (Gillen, 2019). This research links to the fact that satisfaction of the built working environment arguably correlates directly to contentment at work and levels of achievement (Carlopio, 1996; Veitch, Charles, Newsham, Marquardt and Geerts, 2003). Insights from the 2020 Future Workspace Conference share that employers, designers and researchers are continually considering ways to better understand work performance peaks, employee experience, and well-being within corporate workspaces. Based on this, there is a new consciousness regarding the spaces where different types of work get done. The communal, physical, technological, and practical service dimensions of the work environment intersect with the behaviour of workers and therefore a new multi-disciplinary approach is required in order to develop intelligence and experience around the workspaces of the future. Specialists therefore have to collectively consider practical experience and applied research to gather solid data when reviewing workspace transformation and the design thereof (Kampf-Dern and Will-Zocholl, 2020)

Peschl and Funneider (2012) suggest that workspaces of the future to be considered as enabling spaces, and that these spaces bolster and facilitate the process of innovation and new knowledge generation. They also conclude that these spaces are multi-dimensionally designed spaces that consider architecture, social values, organisational cultures, and technological enablers – all curated in a holistic manner – to support innovation, focus and teamwork. Spaces should provide enabling structures that allow knowledge processes to develop dynamically in such a way that radically new ideas can emerge. The interior design of this space must reflect one of protection, where the unknown can be explored in a space with minimal boundaries; a relaxed atmosphere and no sense of hierarchy, enabling the free flow of knowledge (2012).

In recent research conducted around remote working and the future of the workplace (Buffer, 2020), many of the employees who participated wished to continue remote work (57%) but reported that this way of working left them feeling lonely or battling with collaboration and communication. Gensler's U.S. Work From Home Survey (2020) reports that only 12% of employees want to work from home full time. Employees generally would like to work in the office for most of the week (70% of the week). Half of the employees would like to frequent the office with the core purpose of collaborating and socialising. These statistics highlight the new roles of the workplace, spaces which provide seamless ways to connect to others, specifically allowing a variation of settings to collaborate and socialise (Gensler, 2020).

The top reason employees want to come to the office: the people.

Respondents were asked to rank what they believe to be the most important reason(s) for coming into the office.

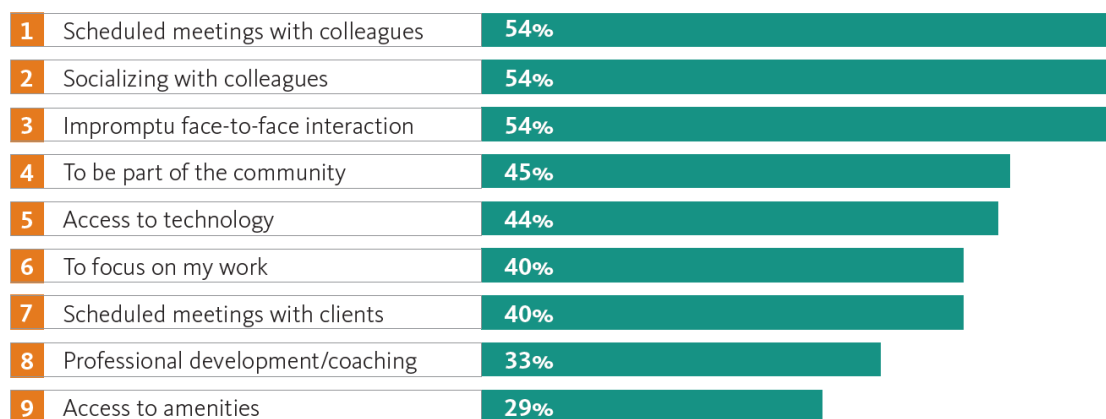


Figure 7: The top reason employees would like to come to the office

Source: Gensler U.S. Work From Home Survey (2020, p. 2)

2.3.2 Design and space planning

The design and space planning of a workspace affects how the staff feel, and influences their work performance, engagement, and ability to generate new knowledge and create innovative concepts. These are the pillars of environmental psychology of the workspace (Visser, 2008). There is a firm relationship between the interiors, spatial planning and architecture, and the social formation of its inhabitants. An organisation's space allocation

and configuration either asserts or erodes its declared philosophy, culture and strategy. The aesthetic ambit of workspace is said to encourage employees sensory experiences (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007), and it further noted that a workspace rich in visual stimulus may encourage creativity to some extent (Sternberg and Lubart, 1995).

According to a study conducted by Lin and Chang (2020), it was found that the perception of spatial planning had a beneficial relationship with the user's creativity activated by the positive mood when being in the space. Where interior designers provided a variety of settings, and occupants consider the workspace as supportive, it will most likely enhance creativity. Research completed by Dul and Ceylan (2014) confirms that creativity is one of the most important abilities that strengthens a firm's competitiveness in the knowledge-accumulated economy of today. The results demonstrate that organisations with workspaces that support creative work, launch more new products to the market, and have greater successes considering new product sales. Creative spaces can be defined as physical structures and elements of various dimensions where design has been deliberately considered to support creative work to enhance the creative process of work. The dimensions considered include furniture, the room's spatial planning and its interior design, it may also include the architectural building and a carefully considered location within a niche neighbourhood (Thoring, Mueller, Luippold, Desmet, and Badke-Schaub, 2018). Several other research case studies (Kallio, Kallio, and Bloomberg, 2015) confirm the view that spatial planning and other aesthetic details within the physical space enhance organisational culture and fosters creativity.

Open, communal spaces that remove physical boundaries can foster a culture of equality, break down hierarchy and help employees develop trust in the organisation through transparency (leadership more visible and accessible). Equity of workspace is therefore a tangible, visual symbol that develops a culture equality (Gillen, 2019).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) popularised the notion of the experience economy based on the linkage of physical goods and extraordinary experiences. Their experience economy work led to the use of the phrase 'spatial experience design' that refers to the holistic nature of

spaces. As such, spatial experience design acknowledges occupants of such spaces as being sophisticated, sentimental beings. As part of this concept, the holistic places exist both physically and virtually in the minds of its users through their memory recall. Space identity attaches interest when it is combined with the recollection of a certain experience or an elicited memory. In trying to achieve spatial experience design, design aesthetic and brand personality become major factors in stimulating positive emotions within branded spaces. Considering positive emotions generated by space and in a review of some of the best companies to work for, the Great Place to Work Institute includes a category on community that they define as the quality of hospitality and intimacy created by design and a sense of camaraderie within the workspace (Earle, 2003).

Research conducted by Rola, Kuchta and Kopczyk (2016) examines the concept of agile workspaces accommodating project teams. The results of this study indicate that changes in workspace design have a positive effect on the performance of the teams interacting within the space. The researcher further concludes that a good workspace allows for work improvement whilst interacting as a team; it allows for a change in workspace which improves team performance; and assists with increasing the focus of team members and leaders.

Further research by Orel, M., & Dvouletý, O. (2020). also reveals that workspace design needs to adapt to heightened levels of agility to remain sustainable. This is highlighted during phases of contraction and expansion of teams where the agile nature of projects encourages cross-functional teams to form, and then disband again based on special project requirements. The design should accommodate extensive technological integration that appeals to the modern worker, allowing flexibility of work and work schedules. Co-working spaces promote innovation and efficiency, allowing the best people for a project to come together quickly and affordably.

2.3.3 Design model

When considering the design of corporate workspaces, the Activity Based Working Model (ABWM), was selected, as it is a design model which has been highly regarded due to its

potential to influence health and productivity outcomes and workplace satisfaction (Arundell, et al., 2018). This model indicates that requirements regarding task-based working, choice and control, and agility and flexibility to be the most important aspects that will influence health and productivity outcomes.

Arundell, et al (2018) states that this design model departs from traditional residential type desking to introduce new open plan spaces with a selection of communal environments designed for various work tasks such as focus work, teamwork, brainstorming, virtualised meeting facilities, and formal collaboration areas. Workspaces are selected based on the task the employee needs to complete. Based on specific needs for particular tasks, employees are then required to move between the different spaces as tasks conclude. This model also incorporates central community facilities such as social hubs and stairways to connect teams. New technologies that also build efficiency and optimisation include paperless and cordless alternatives such as hybrid laptops, tablets, the removal of network cables and the increased use of in-platform messaging services, VOIP, wi-fi or li-fi technology, and application-based reservation systems for occupant reservation.

Despite the ABWM being designed at first to intensify collaboration type work while contracting office space and shrinking running costs, the ABWM has the ability to favourably impact organisational practises and facilitate production output. (Arundell et al., 2018).

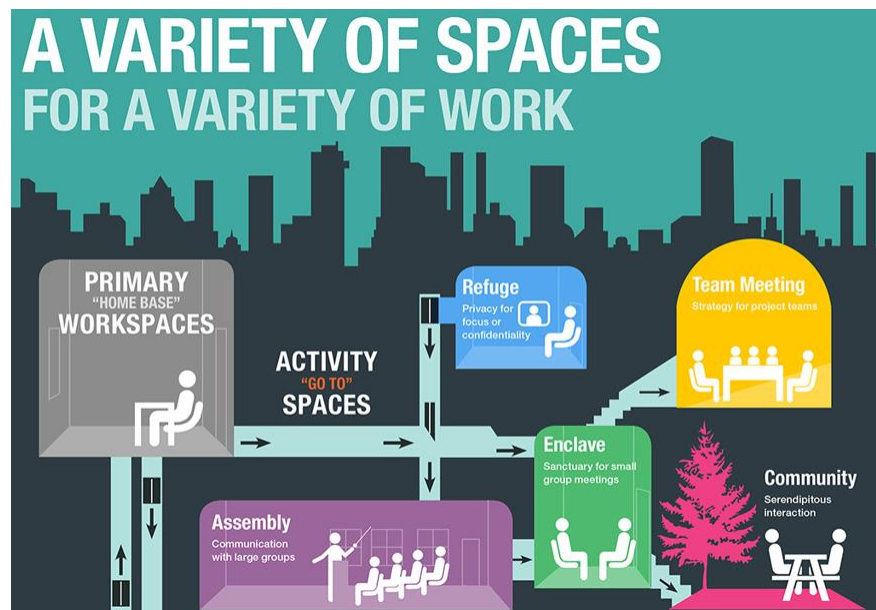


Figure 8: Visualisation of the Activity Based Working Model in a corporate workspace environment

Source: Adapted from Knoll (2013).

The ABWM applies a shared workspace concept with hot desking as shown in the figure above. A first-reserved, first-seated model is applied. Research has shown positive workspace experiences associated with this way of working even if it requires more forward planning. Positive attributes that can increase collaboration include easy accessibility and co-location of teams, offering higher quality team experiences and intergenerational mentoring opportunities (Rolfo, Eklund and Jahncke, 2015).

The American Society of Interior Designers commissioned research around the importance of workspace quality and related employee sentiment. Six hundred and sixty-three (663) participants were given an opportunity to communicate aspects that influence their decisions when considering new work opportunities or leaving jobs. Workspace design was considered a key perk, differentiating companies from one another. Further to this, participants in a 2003 study, said that a modernised workspace improved the organisation's ability to compete in the talent market, and sixty-eight per cent of employees who joined after the move to the new space said the workspace design was an important factor in their decision to accept the position. The majority, reflecting a particularly high percentage of

respondents, said that the new physical environment is a motivating factor for positive output. Some others said that the space promotes creativity and happiness (Earle, 2003). This view was tested as part of the case study during this research project to confirm whether such view is still relevant.

2.4 Brand differentiation

Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg (2007) state that differentiation is considered as one of the key principles of marketing ideologies and practices. Distinctiveness is the epicentre of brand strategy, where a brand builds novel associations that make it easily recognisable amongst other brands. Based on tougher market competition, brand differentiation has become a focused priority for organisations (Bao & Sweeney, 2009).

Additionally, brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes meaning accessible. Brand consciousness and appreciation are aided by its visual identity. This identity triggers a particular perception and unlocks associations linked to the brand (Wheeler, 2018)

Marketing literature emphasises that the differentiation should be recognised by users as unique attributes and these attributes should add value to users' lives (Ries and Trout, 1986). This valued uniqueness does not have to be a physical product feature. It may instead be a symbol, an emotional connection, or something seemingly insignificant (Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003).

A distinctive element of a brand can be anything that communicates the brand at the most basic level. Distinctive elements should be unique and compelling. Organisations can use a distinctive brand to generate, refresh or reinforce consumer memory recall in order to build brand equity (Aaker, 1996). The aim of building clear, original qualities is to enhance the number of points that become elements of recognition for the brand (Keller, 2003).

Powerful and differentiated brands naturally boost organisational effectiveness (Colucci, Montaguti, and Lago, 2008). Hulten (2017) notes that vision is the strongest human sense

and that colour, art, graphics, lighting and interior design are all visual stimuli, impacting on a brand's differentiation. Enhanced points of stimulus generate corporate brand experience (Onem and Hasirci, 2020).

Mancada (2020) states that employees are one of the organisation's most important resources for differentiation, and to create connections with stakeholders. In today's globalised and digitalised world that requires high levels of individualisation and originality, employees can assist companies to grow. Mancada (2020) further describes today's universal landscape as an opportunity to create more ways of brand consciousness and possibilities for connection. As such, corporate brands are compelled to search for more unique and fascinating ways of differentiation such as personality, identity, humanisation, transparency, and purpose (Mancada, 2020).

Employee branding unlocks value creation not only for organisations, but also for customers and employees themselves. Therefore, there is a requirement for organisations to formulate a clear branding framework in order to sway the sentiment of stakeholders and provide them with the means to reflect the organisation's values in their own unique ways (Mancada, 2020). Not only does brand differentiation unequivocally influence brand competitiveness but it also builds brand value (Gupta, Galleary, Rudd and Foroudi, 2020).

2.5 Understanding how brand personality plays a role in workspace design to increase brand differentiation

Due to the increased number of brand touchpoints between employees and consumers, a heightened demand for quality interactions, consumers' critique, and the expectation for consistent brand experience, the importance of original human-to-human interactions for workspaces has been showcased (Mancada, 2020)

2.5.1 Workspace as a visual brand statement

A brand should be seen as an ecosystem of interactions that is defined by experiential parameters (Salmeron, 2013). Considering the morphing nature of work and the demands on companies to remain ambitious and competitive, the role of the workspace serves as a catalyst of advancement and an observable way for the brand to present itself (Levin, 2005). A brand alone does not secure competitive advantage in the marketplace. A well-performing brand is the result of careful and thoughtful management of the brand, reflecting its identity and building on its unique features and equity (Janonis et al., 2007). Further to this, a brand represents the magnetic interface between an organisation's actions and customers' interpretations (Clatworthy, 2013).

Mancada's (2020) research found that in order for organisations to entice and hold onto the best employees in order to deliver a brand promise, they would need to focus on employee value propositions by creating more interesting environments and taking consideration of their health whilst at work or at home. According to Brito (2018), one of the biggest opportunities for a company to grow is through employee ambassadorship.

The physical manifestation of a company's brand can be considered in its workspace. Several top companies are creating vibrant, creative and agile work environments to convey the image that their offerings are fresh and innovative, and that the organisation is positioned as an appealing and impressive place to work, these workspaces provide resources, enable different work modes, and relay an organisation's culture. Considering this, they are a powerful resource to elevate the innovative culture of an organisation (Klooker M. et al., 2016).

Analysis by Werning (2019) has shown that new-age workspaces can be considered as visual journeys of corporate aesthetics, an extension of a company's corporate rhetoric and humanistic ideology. Myerson and Ross (2003) further state that workspaces become the stage on which the brand ethos can be communicated all day (Myerson and Ross, 2003). The success or failure of any office space is assessed by how well it responds to the expectations and needs of the people who use it, with research showing strong

relationships between occupant wellbeing, increased staff engagement, productivity, and enhanced brand perception (Gillen, 2019).

2.5.2 Brand personality implied in design

The importance of organisation branding to solicit talent in organisations is on the rise. Based on research by Backhouse and Tikoo (2004) and Gilani and Cunningham (2017) they define employer branding as the process in which a recognisable and distinct employer identity is built. In 2018, a study was conducted on employee branding as a corporate reputational tool (Potgieter and Doubell), and the outcome showed that a well-implemented employee branding programme elevates the profile of the internal organisation as well as with its other stakeholders, elevating the corporate brand and its reputation. The employer brand should be communicated through principal values, which represent the organisation's culture and brand personality, enabling attraction of new talent and motivation of existing talent (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Collins and Han, 2004).

Wagner and Watch (2017) state that brand personality can be implied in design through a company's workspace planning to create specific branding. An example is the removal of physical barriers to provide for an open work floor setting that prompts people to engage in conversations, which would be a complementary design for a brand whose personality is open, transparent, friendly, and collaborative. Schaeffer (2014) research supports the notion that the workspaces are part of organisational cultures which are made visible, and that these generate associations to what the culture is.

When a corporate brand personality is perceived as an innovative, agile player in the marketplace, it is important that the workspace design reflects the same agility and flexibility. While flexibility allows seemingly rigid spaces to change at short notice, it also allows for worker empowerment. Design is affected by the deep collaborative nature of innovation, and the spaces should be flexible and highly responsive to a range of group configurations during the innovation course (Wagner and Watch, 2017).

Insight from recent research (Klooker et al, 2016) is that designers and leaders are not the only ones that influence the design of a brand's workspace. The future workspace design process now co-operates those who will use the spaces. Employees are empowered to articulate how a space should be created to support their needs and help them to achieve their work aspirations. The organisations that have used this method of co-creation as part of the design process are considered to be on the 'cutting-edge', and have achieved greatness through aligning organisational ambition, culture and people's shared values to produce enabling design (Wagner and Watch, 2017). Such is a biometric of their brand identity clearly differentiating their brand from others.

New workspaces are quite different to the old anonymous-looking offices of the past four decades. Previously, corporate workspaces were designed as clinical solutions with standardised specifications. Design interiors betrayed the internal culture of the organisation and rarely revealed a brand's personality traits. Future workspaces should act as the so-called 'narrative' of the company and offer an experience through its interior space. 'Narrative' office projects are committed toward using the workspace as a tool of brand differentiation by linking workspace to a story of the brand. The brand is 'lived and breathed' within these spaces. Examples of this include a skatepark in Quicksilver's headquarters; a running track in Reebok's office; new model cars parked down a model street in Toyota's workplace, or walking through Amazon's forest. Notable characteristics of these new spaces are elements of playfulness and surprise. Office design and layout is being re-thought through reinforcement of brand values throughout the interior design (Myerson and Ross, 2003).

2.5.3 Linking brand personality and design models for differentiation

The most prominent satisfaction contributors of new workspace design are aesthetics and autonomy to choose a workplace (Rolfo, Eklund and Jahncke, 2018). These factors result from the implementation of an activity-based workplace model and relate to the key elements of corporate brand personality traits. These traits can reflect the values, words, and actions of people in the organization (Keller, 2015) where workspace design aesthetic

aligns to the ‘heart’ of these traits; in driving passion and discretionary effort through the creation of inspirational workspaces. The choice of where and when to work aligns to the ‘mind and body’ traits, where a need for creativity, discipline and agility align to the choice, control and flexibility (Changchenkit, 2017).

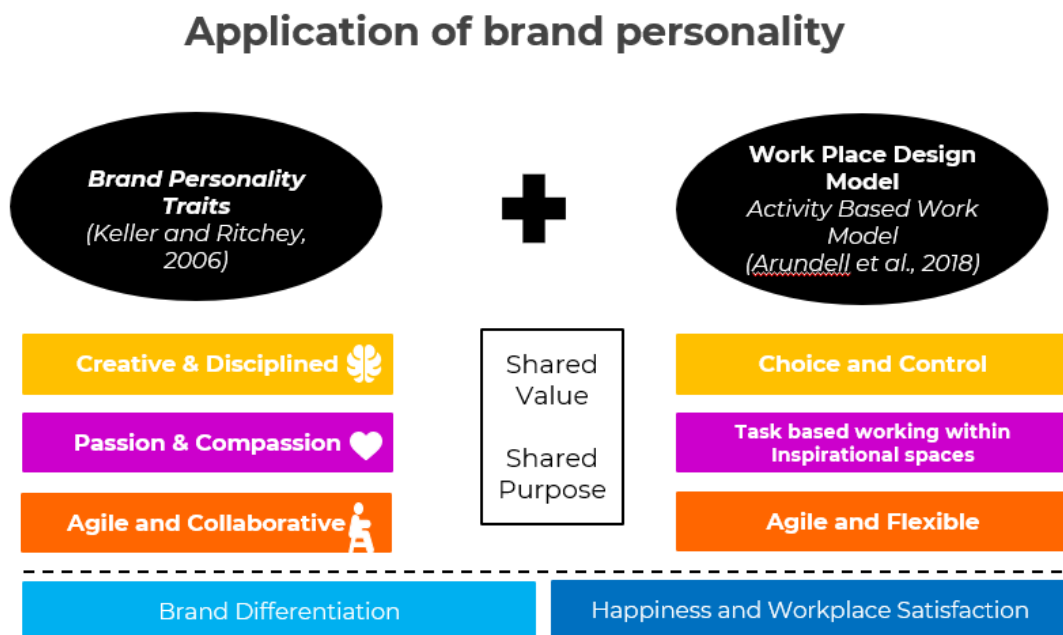


Figure 9: A representation of brand personality and design model relationships

Source: Researcher's own

The figure above was designed during this study and illustrates how Keller and Richey's brand personality scale and the Activity Based Work Model are overlaid to demonstrate alignment and through doing so, how this may create brand differentiation.

In considering the translation of brand personality into workspace design, referencing Schaeffer (2014, p.41) is appropriate; where the researcher states that “workspaces are experienced by someone who has an embodied experience of that space” and that workspaces may be considered as a tool to communicate brand personality and that

these spaces create attitudinal experiences. The workspace is therefore a visible constituent of culture that can be associated to the intrinsic values of an organisation.

Employees seek to consume new experiences daily, and the consumption of these experiences are shaped by the high touch needs for original, visually stimulating, emotionally connecting, and entertaining experiences (Schmitt, 2011). Employees' subconscious and emotional needs can only be fulfilled if brand personality is built in parallel to the implementation of sensorial strategies based on cognitive, emotional or value-based attributes. Through this approach, organisations can differentiate themselves and test personal thinking in an individualistic way, thus affecting behaviour in order to create distinct brand experiences that are multi-sensory (Rodrigues and Brito, 2011). These experiences can be translated to physical spaces that activate emotion, which in turn, assists in expressing brand personality.

“Design is the differentiation and embodiment of the intangibles – it adds emotion and offers contextual insights of the brand’s essence”

(Maira Cullen, PepsiCo) (Wheeler, 2017)

2.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter set out to uncover the meaning of the key concepts of brand personality, design in the new world of work, and how brand personality can be portrayed in design to increase brand differentiation.

It became clear that brand identity embodies all the attributes that create meaningful and unique recall of an organisation. Within the brand identity system, the internal elements of a brand are brand personality, culture and self-image. These elements are the character or soul of the brand. However, only brand personality allows for a tangible translation of human-like characteristics that a brand would like to display as part of its visual brand statement. Furthermore, brand personality linked to the corporate domain defines the corporate personality.

Workplace design is clarified as beneficial tool to business that plays a strategic role in the new world of work where the design, space planning, and design models influence stakeholder perceptions, wellness, and talent retention and acquisition.

The corporate workspace is a visual brand statement. Linking a modern design model with a brand personality model helps us to identify value and positioning for differentiation.

Chapter Three discusses the research approach and will provide an explanation for the selection of the research paradigm, as well as the methods of data collections and data analysis techniques used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical concept was defined in Chapter Two, clarifying the various key themes and parameters used throughout the study. This chapter discusses the research method and the step-by-step approach. It also elaborates on the data collection process, and notes matters of confirmability and credibility. The research takes on a multi-method design, which includes a case study review, focus groups and in depth-interviews.

This chapter begins with the research design as the guiding point of the study and then proceeds with the description of methods, instruments and the sample. The research approach is substantiated throughout the course of the discussion.

3.2 Research design

The research work was qualitative and exploratory in nature and considered interpretivist philosophies. The researcher set out to understand several topics on design and brand identity through the insights of various stakeholders and employees within corporate workspaces in line with the research questions set out in Chapter One. The model for conducting the research was based on a linear research design, indicating the stages of exploration from problem statement to the review of the theory, and finally, generating the conclusion.

Qualitative research adopts a naturalistic approach, pursuing the sense-making of phenomena in realistic contextual settings where the researcher does not try to mould the subject- or event of interest (Patton, 2002). A broad definition of qualitative research is 'any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 11). Quantitative research differs, as the objectives for such are to find a cause-and-effect measurement type, and to focus on the predictability- and generalisation of its findings. The objective of qualitative

research is to unearth explanation, enlightenment, and test and utilise the results across situations which are similar (Hoepfl, 1997).

Magilvy and Thomas (2009) hold the view that qualitative inquisition carries power through its ability to describe human experiences. They define this type of research as an analysis of the natural setting; an exploration of experiences of daily life realities. This methodology affirms lived experiences as they are conferred in thought, opinion, understanding, attitude and perceptions. In addition, the research approach focused on human behaviour and social practices. It is concerned with the value and attributes of a phenomenon and not the sum or volume. The goal of qualitative methodology is to develop new observations and awareness based on participant views and not to test hypotheses. This is key, as the researcher investigates the sentiment around the workplace experience within the case study organisation and perceptions around the portrayal of brand personality in the workspace. This method is inductive rather than deductive, and it is interpretative rather than predictive. One key assumption in qualitative methodology is that there are a multitude of realities and these are socially constructed. This means that they will vary between different groups of people and in a variety of community settings, all bound to context (Ohman, 2005).

Exploratory studies seek new insight and assess topics in new perspectives (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). Stebbins (2001) further advises that exploration is sometimes needed in research as the world has changed and the old formulae and ways of doing are no longer effective. This is particularly relevant as the research around the workplace design model and the new world of work against the backdrop of the fourth industrial revolution is new. Existing knowledge is still scarcely available, with only a few corporate companies in South Africa that have considered implementation, or that have implemented agile work settings that consider the portrayal of brand personality throughout these spaces.

This study reports on the opinions and perceptions of stakeholders who were asked open-ended questions during the focus group, and semi structured, in-depth interviews. Taken to heart that research interviewers should encourage interviewees to acknowledge their true experiences through the generation of trust and the build of rapport from the beginning of

the discussion, the research also followed the advice of Qu and Dumay (2011). The research sessions metamorphose the interviewee's sentiments and emotions into useful knowledge sources (2011). Interviewees were allowed to express their feelings in order to develop a realistic image of the topic of discussion (Fontana and Frey, 1998).

Thematic analysis was used to categorise the unstructured responses from employees and organisational stakeholders of this study. This analysis pursues any theme that becomes apparent based on the characterization of the phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear and Gliksman, 1997). This process of coding further highlights pertinent points made during the conversations, vital to understanding overall sentiments around themes.

The timeline of the study is cross-sectional. This type of study describes a phenomenon- or phenomena in a specific time (Saunders, Lewis and Tornhill, 2019). Although a longitudinal approach would provide further insight of the evaluation of the study, the cross-sectional approach provides adequate insights into the main objectives of the research when considering the time constraints involved in the study itself.

3.3. Research approach

Henning (2004) argues that the interpretive paradigm emphasises the way in which a person experiences and interprets the situation. This paradigm looks for meaning and allows for a discovery of how society understands situations at specific times. This research philosophy relates to the study of social occurrences, where it enacts a set of circumstances and individuals coming together to create a unique social phenomenon (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). The view of events and actions by people involved in the study is part of the reality that the researcher tries to understand (Maxwell, 1992). Interest lies in the way that events are carried out, the behaviour that is taking place during this event, and how the participants understand the situation and furthermore, how their comprehension affects their behaviour. Bredo and Feinberg (1982) conclude that this reflection of meaning is core to what has been developed as the 'interpretive' technique for social science.

3. 4 Research methodology

The research was conducted in several research phases defined by different research methods. Johnson (1997) states that the deployment of multiple methods such as observation, interviews and recordings, will lead to a more authentic, reliable and diverse construction of phenomena.

The primary research phase began with a detailed analysis of current literature on the topics of brand identity, workspace design, and brand differentiation. Further to this, case study research was concluded on a corporate organisation that was undergoing a workspace transformation, accessible to the researcher. Yin (2003) states that a case study allows for the examination of individuals or groups, simple or complex interventions, communities, or programs. Grandon Gill (2011) also explains that the case method is built upon the analysis of complex real work examples and that this type of study is all-inclusive and participative. The aim of the primary phase was to obtain insight into existing theories and practicalities around the topics of brand personality, workspace design, and brand differentiation. It further obtained a detailed description of the case study to provide practical insight to these themes.

Edwards (2010) further offers that cases which are selected as exemplary studies, often illustrate much more about the greater population than what a survey alone would do. In starting research with a case study, it allows the researcher to clarify the ambit and understanding of the study.

The case organisation demonstrates how brand personality traits can be applied throughout the workspace design as part of the workspace transformation. The case study provides a detailed contextual analysis of the workspaces offered, and the employees' reaction to the design.

The second phase of research entailed a focus group aimed at understanding employee sentiment of the work environment that relates to its design and their perceptions of the workplace experience before- and after the redesign. A preliminary communication about the focus groups was issued via email in order to prepare the participants for the subject

under research. The questions were not revealed beforehand to guarantee a more authentic reaction and discussion. These focus group discussions allowed individuals to convey their subjective experiences and offer a platform for valuable opinions to be shared.

Research indicates that surveys are suited for collecting information about people's attributes. Focus groups are ideal to gain an in-depth understanding and as such, can produce a wealth of information and key insights. If executed well, a focus group creates a relaxed environment in which participants can thoughtfully consider their responses to questions that add depth to their answers (Eliot and Associates, 2005). In general, focus group methodology is befitting to exploratory, interpretive, multi-method and phenomenological research questions (Fontana and Frey, 1993).

The group facilitator should be concerned with the generation of detailed conversation based on an array of open-ended questions that encourage participant involvement (Ochieng, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee, 2018). A list of questions was prepared as a guidance script for each focus group discussion session. Feedback from these sessions assisted the researcher in understanding general themes around workspace design and its associated value to the employees and the brand. The outcome of the discussions determined the baseline results for the tertiary research phase.

Interviews were conducted in the tertiary phase. Interviews provide a useful way for researchers to learn about the world of others. When executed with care, a well-facilitated interview approach can provide a rich set of data (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Once again, a positioning communication was shared in advance to the possible interview candidates via email in order to prepare the participants for the interview subject and process. Once again, in order to solicit authentic responses, the questions were not issued beforehand.

The saturation point was considered during the tertiary research process. Saturation refers to the point of the data analysis where common themes recur, and no further insights are shared through new data sources. Bowen (2008) defines saturation as the point in time in a project when there is sufficient data to ensure the research questions can be adequately answered.

Where multiple sources of data are collected and compared, triangulation is an approach used to mitigate researcher bias and to alleviate data saturation (Jonsen and Jehn, 2009). Longhurst (2010) further explains that triangulation is often used by researchers to draw on a variety of different perspectives or sources to expand their understanding of a research question. He indicates that semi-structured interviews and focus groups can both be used as so-called single methods, supplementary methods, or as a means for triangulation in multi-methods research. In a similar fashion, the tertiary phase of this research project used in-depth interviews of a smaller sample to gain deeper insight of the key themes raised through the focus groups. The questionnaire was specifically aimed at the research questions of this study.

Triangulation is a useful strategic guide to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings. Mathison (1988) elaborates by saying that triangulation has grown as an important methodological element in naturalistic and qualitative approaches, limiting bias and allowing for the confirmation of key concepts because traditional scientific techniques are unsuitable for this alternate epistemology. Additionally, several other researchers namely Patton (2001), and Fusch and Ness (2015) also advocate the use of triangulation, stating that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods, as well as adding depth to the findings.

3.4.1 Pilot study

After deciding on the methodology, the researcher embarked on a pilot study to allow method testing prior to the actual research being conducted. One of the benefits of carrying out a pilot study is that it might heed warnings about where the main research study could fail, where research protocols might not be observed or whether proposed methods or instruments are incongruent or over-complicated.

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) explain that a researcher should consider conducting pilot studies for the following reasons:

- To allow for the development and testing of research instruments, and evaluating the feasibility of the scale of study;
- To establish whether the sampling frame proposed is correct;
- To consider any challenges the recruitment of participants might bring;
- Allowing for the estimation of possible variable outcomes based on different sample sizes, and
- Allowing for the assessment of the proposed data analysis methods.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) state that a pilot study allows researchers to become more focused or take a broader view of their approach. This practice allows for further exploration or narrowing that their research topics might need, and place greater focus on key topics. The pilot exercise is critical in identifying specific methodological and epistemological matters of concern so that researchers may affirm, add further detail, or revise their data collection instruments in order to meet their research goals.

Kim informs that a pilot study highlights specific practical and methodological issues emerging in the pre-work, and points to modifications that need to be made to the main study design as a result of this work. The implementation of a pilot exercise proves to be essential in three ways. These include finding barriers related to recruiting potential participants, practicing the use of reflexivity and reflecting the importance of being unbiased throughout the process and modifying interview questions (2010).

In the pilot study the researcher tested the focus and interview guides to see if the questionnaire set could be improved and if the flow was correctly structured. Once the pilot had been run, adjustments could be made to the final research instruments based on the understanding of any challenges that might have arisen during the interview or focus group questionnaire.

The pilot study commenced on the 8th of April 2020 with three employees from the case study's organisation. Action research was conducted to remediate any issues with the study. This type research is defined as a four-factor model, where the researcher strategises, applies the plan, evaluates the results, and reflects on what could be done differently (Kim, 2008).

The pilot study indicated that the focus group category scope was too narrow and that there were many similarities between the groups. The researcher then reconsidered the number of focus groups and formalised one focus group based on all work-mode types.

It also became clear that work-mode had little to do with variances in responses around the key topics of brand personality and workspace design resulting in possible brand differentiation. The flow of the focus group questionnaire seemed to be in order and would generate adequate feedback and insight around the research questions. The flow of the interview guide needed to be adjusted based on the insight derived from the focus group questionnaire response. The final interview questionnaire was therefore adjusted before the actual research focus group and interviews commenced.

The pilot study further assisted the researcher in that it;

- Allowed for the recording of the time taken to complete the focus group and interview questionnaire, and to decide whether it was reasonable and achievable in relation to the number of questions that were to be covered in the allotted time frame;
- Assisted in the discarding of all unnecessary, difficult and ambiguous questions, and accommodated a re-wording of questions that were not answered as expected;
- Assessed whether each question allowed for adequate responses and whether participant replies could be easily interpreted regarding the information that was required, and
- Allowed for a reduction and revision of the scope of work to be carried out.

3.4.2 Data collection

To avoid any bias in the study's findings, research conducted consisted of four data collection methods and three phases of research.

The initial research phase included the primary data collection of the literature review that offered insight to the best practice in the concepts of branding and workspace design and the inter-relationships between these concepts. The case study observations yielded detailed information around user experiences and their sentiments and attitudes of the brand. The researcher was unintentionally part of the case study as the researcher is an employee at the case study organisation and was able to observe changes in sentiment around the brand as part of the workplace transformation and change process.

In the secondary phase, the researcher conducted a focus group made up of individuals from a sample for data collection. This focus group was made up of individuals who had been part of a workplace transformation, and who had personally experienced the workspace before- and after the change took place. By creating homogeneity in the focus group, it helped participants feel more comfortable expressing their opinions around the workspace experience. The focus group provided an interesting and balanced view of how staff in different work modes experience the workspace. As recommended by Blank (2016), the focus groups needed to consist of six to twelve participants. Fewer than six participants may have stifled the conversation, based on poor group diversity, and more than twelve may have become cumbersome, as it would have been challenging to listen to all participants equally. A pilot study to test the flow of the questionnaire and confirm if there were any issues in the approach, was conducted prior to executing the actual focus group.

An oversubscribed identified sample for the focus group was invited. The focus group was set to proceed only once minimum numbers were obtained. The aim was to stimulate the discussion and understand (through subsequent analysis) the patterns that developed in the group answers (Parker and Tritter, 2007). Data was collected from this group using a voice recording of the discussion, which was transcribed with auto-transcription software. Auto-transcription software known as *Transcribe* was used to obtain the first draft of the focus

group transcription, which was further validated by listening back to the recording and adjusting sentences that the software had misinterpreted. The focus group aimed to identify the perception of the workspace design changes on brand identity and obtain thoughts on whether this transformation encouraged brand differentiation.

During the tertiary phase as the fourth point of data collection, interviews were conducted with four employees selected from the group that had experienced the workplace transformation within the case study organisation. This was to gather further detail on specific themes emanating from the focus group and allowed for the validation of theories extending from the literature review. It was designed as a focused approach to explore certain themes emanating from the secondary phase.

A semi-structured discussion guide was formulated in this final phase of research. A predetermined set of questions was asked in a consistent order, however, allowing open ended responses for depth. This structure allowed the researcher the opportunity to delve further into a response, as and when this was required. A pilot interview tested the questionnaire and validated the responses against the research questions to confirm that the research problem would be sufficiently addressed. The interviews were conducted via online methods, and all responses were recorded and transcribed. Trustworthiness of the study was assured through the fact that the interview questions were directly related to the research questions, which allowed for elaboration of the focus group responses.

The diagram below summarises the three phases of research:

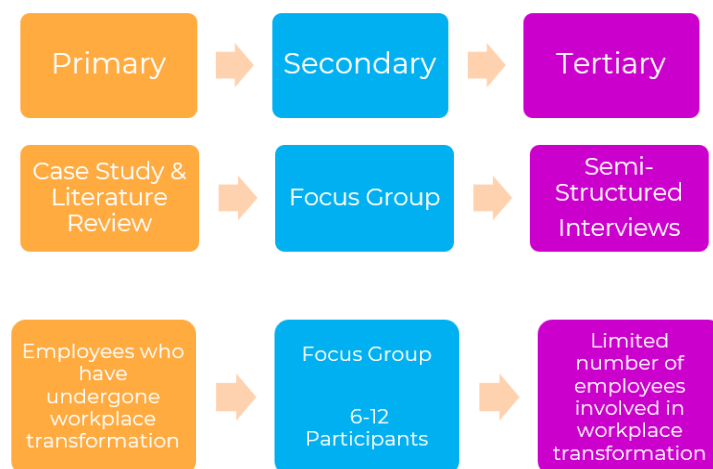


Figure 10: A representation of the three phases of the research

Source: Researcher's own

In preparation to the pre-commencement of both the focus group and interviews, participants were provided with an explanation of the study, given clarity on how they were selected to be part of the research, and assurance of anonymity as part of the process.

As this is a qualitative study, the researcher was the instrument of research. This implies that the researcher asked questions in personal interviews or focus groups, made observations, recorded notes, and reflected on this participation to generate data. Questions were open-ended and the researcher tried to acknowledge, and set aside, preconceived ideas about the answers to the question.

The data sets collected from the literature review, case study narrative and focus group were analysed through thematic coding. Data was reviewed for specific ideas, phrases and emerging patterns of similarity, difference, frequency or sequence whereby generalisations were formed. Charmaz (2001) describes coding as the diagnostic connection between data collection and the explanation of its meaning.

The data from the primary and secondary phases was tested in the tertiary phase, where detailed insight on employee sentiment relating to the brand and the impact of the design was obtained.

The representation below indicates the link between the data collection and sense making thereof.

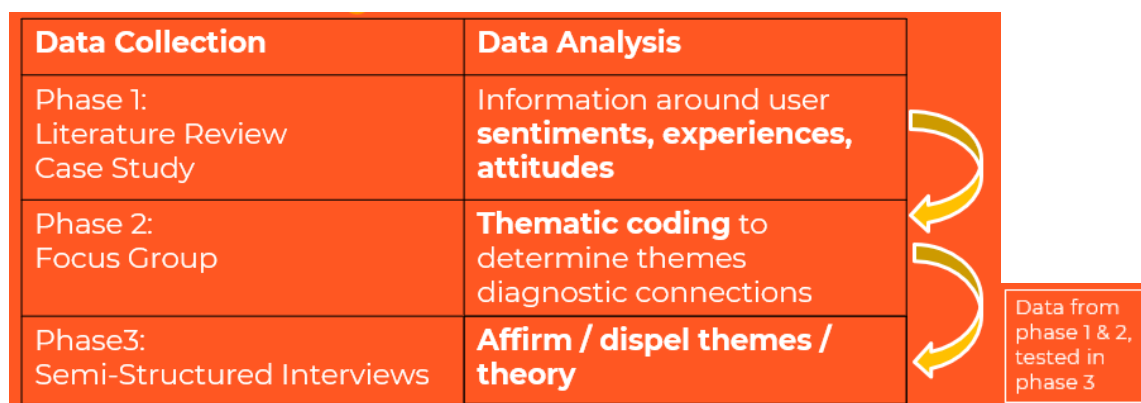


Figure 11: A representation demonstrating the linking of the research phase

Source: Researcher's own

3.4.3 Sample selection

The population of the study consisted of nine hundred employees working at the case study organisation where remote and activity-based work were deployed, and a workspace redesign completed.

The employees had to have experienced the workspace prior to the interior redesign and should have been working in the new space based on the Activity Based Working Model design.

The employees selected out of the target population, which meet the above characteristics and were available to participate in focus groups and interviews, was the accessible population.

Out of the accessible population identified, a non-probability sampling technique was used to derive a single homogenous sample of no more than twelve individuals for the focus group.

Extracted from the abovementioned samples, interviews were conducted with a limited number of employees that experienced the workspace transformation. It is, however, important to note that interviews were only concluded once saturation point in the focus group was reached. The interviews were conducted as a further exploration of the insights derived from the focus group.

The diagram below highlights the sample selection:

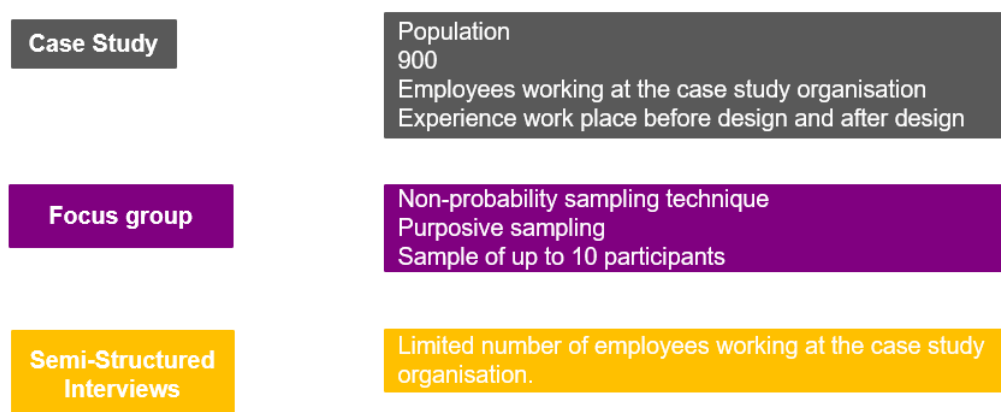


Figure 12: A visualisation of the sample selection

Source: Researcher's own

3.4.4 Sample experience

3.4.4.1 Case study

The case study organisation falls within the corporate financial services sector and the brand is seen as synonymous with innovative, first to market solutions with a strong people culture, and a diverse workforce. It was, therefore, considered a good candidate for the review of best practice. Reference is made to Company X from this point on.

A prism of brand identity explains the brand identity of Company X and offers further insight into the brand:

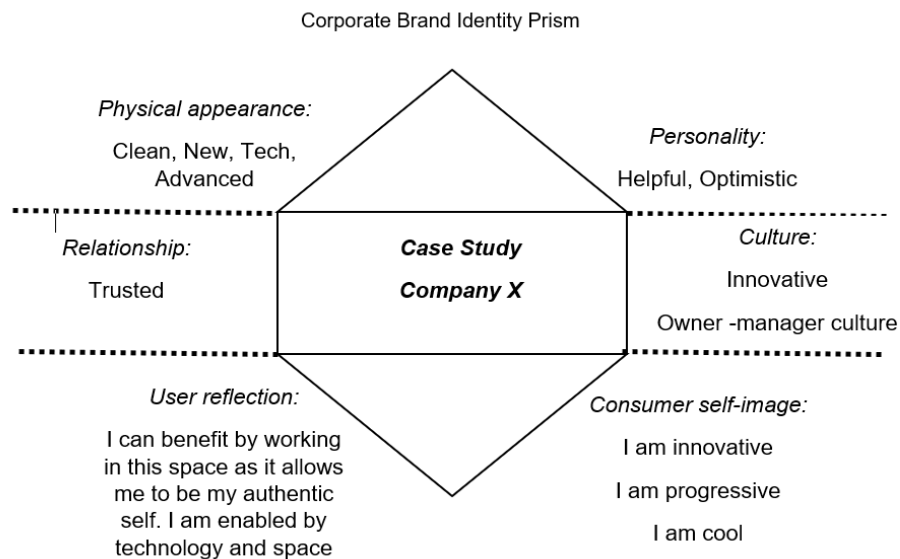


Figure 13: The prism of brand identity, adapted for the case study organisation, company X.

Source: Researcher's own

Company X considered a workspace design refresh for several reasons, one being that the organisation was experiencing post recruitment feedback from candidates stating that although they wanted to work for the organisation, they felt that the working premises were not aligned to the brand purpose and in turn their personal purposes, and therefore many of these follow-up interviews were declined by the prospective candidates.

Many visitors to Company X head office questioned the misalignment of visitor-welcome processes and the experience of attending meetings at the 'cold and old-fashioned' headquarters. This created a visitor perception that the organisation was filled with bureaucracy, hierarchy and staid protocol. Although the company was presenting itself as first to market in innovative banking and lifestyle solutions, the brand promise of helpfulness was not demonstrated through the environmental design of the headquarters. There were no formal places to welcome guests, and clients would get lost in the building trying to find

their meeting places. This was an indication of poor wayfinding and inconsistent signage systems, which were also different in all head office buildings. This visitor and employee experience did not portray the nature of the brand. There was no variation of workspace setting other than a traditional office desk.

In understanding that the way of work had changed due to the automation of many administrative roles, the organisation wanted to attract and retain top talent of highly skilled resources who were scarce in the marketplace. The employee value proposition had to be reviewed and a project stream was commenced to review stakeholder experience in relation to the brand. Three key working groups were developed to address burning issues around the topic of employee and visitor productivity, new ways of work and a design upgrade of all spaces as these were more than thirty years old. The first workstream was named 'Tools of trade', which addressed the enablement of people by technology to help them to work from any location. The second workstream was called 'People'. This stream focused on guidelines around creating flexible working conditions and guidelines for employees and leaders to adopt when considering work mode types, the context of work, and remote work. The focus of this stream ensured that performance contracting was based on output rather than time in the office. A large component of change management of how people would work in the future needed to be managed beneath this stream.

The third stream was called 'Enabling Spaces', covering the space planning, design and better utilisation of space when reconsidering workspace design strategies such as the activity-based work model. Through the process and after much research it was decided that business units would no longer be allowed to occupy a territory, and space was alternatively proposed as a community working environment with a mirage of settings for all types of work, ranging from focused to collaborative, on one floor.

The design of the spaces took more than a year of planning, as several considerations were defined as the success criteria during this time:

- The design objectives specifically included the functionality of design. Art would be functional, and utilitarian design could be art. This principle was based on the brand trait of helpfulness stemming from the brand promise; “How can we help you”
- The portrayal of its brand personality in the back of house as well as customer-welcoming spaces in order to create an atmosphere;
- How the internal values and brand culture would be supported by the design. Some of these values include to ‘build trust, not territory’, ‘always remain curious’, ‘owner-manager’ culture;
- The company’s strategic priority to be a challenger brand, where customers experience the brand through a consistent user experience on its technology platform;
- Brand positioning in which multi-tenants would occupy individually branded shared community spaces, where they previously occupied individual business units or segmented spaces;
- How the design would become a catalyst of the change. In this regard, a pre- and post-assessment of the workplace experience would be conducted to assess the change in employee sentiment;
- The visual language that needed to be developed based on brand history, culture, personality, and the latest changes that the company was experiencing. This visual language had to reinforce the abolishment of silo work structures and encourage a sense of a larger community and purpose;
- The psychology of space and colour was reviewed in line with theories around biophilia, employee engagement and happiness at work, and
- How the organisation wanted to ‘show up’ against its competitors in the marketplace and how the design could cause differentiation.

In describing the corporate workspace implementation, these included:

- Functional works of art such as hanging baffles which enhance acoustics in the open plan area, but also feature as art and light sources were installed;
- No formal offices were designed in the new workspace. Therefore, senior- and middle management, and junior employees sat at the same desks in the open plan with the option to move to other settings should they wish to meet or do focus-work;
- Additional plants were introduced in new types of pots, wall dividers and hanging macramé. These plants enhance the air quality and provide natural sound and privacy barriers, as well as adding to the positive elements of biophilia in the corporate workspace;
- Furniture on wheels to enable agility of space over time;
- Bright colour wallpapers and carpets were carefully considered based on the psychological effects of colours allowing for optimum productivity;
- Collaboration and brainstorm facilities were installed in between the desking clusters to allow for impromptu team get-together and daily team sessions so that teams could be productive and innovative within the environment;
- Technology was deployed to enable the new workspaces. One of these technologies includes a mobile application reservation system supporting the ability to reserve a workspace at any time and place. This allows employees complete flexibility to sit on a multitude of floors as cross-functional teams when requiring collaboration time, or in solitude when requiring focus time. This application also meant that space efficiency could be leveraged. Spaces can be optimally utilised and load balancing is promoted as alternate workspaces or times for booking are suggested to employees;
- Wayfinding consists of simplistic visual language with wording and custom iconography on a black and white deployment with halo lighting. This gives a futuristic effect to the space, is both highly effective, and standardised, and
- Motivational wording sharing brand values and employee purpose are shown on oversized displays against office walls.

Image gallery of the case study workspace is indicated below:

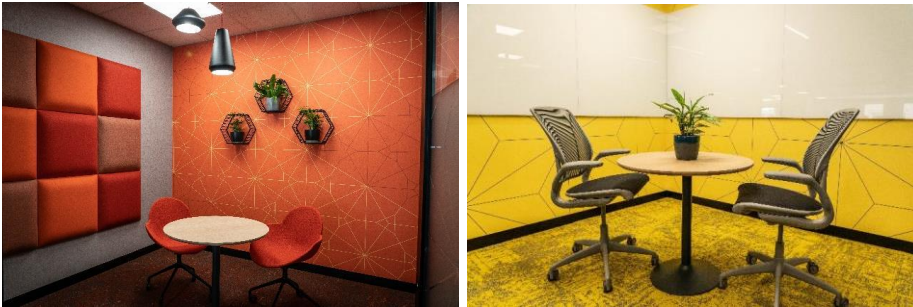


Figure 14: Brightly coloured rooms based on the psychology of space

Source: Supplied by the organisation



Figure 15: Inspirational messages and brand promises shared across the spaces

Source: Supplied by the organisation



Figure 16: General overview of the hot desks and variation settings

Source: Supplied by the organisation



Figure 17: LED lighting creates an 'innovative' feeling in the space

Source: Supplied by the organisation

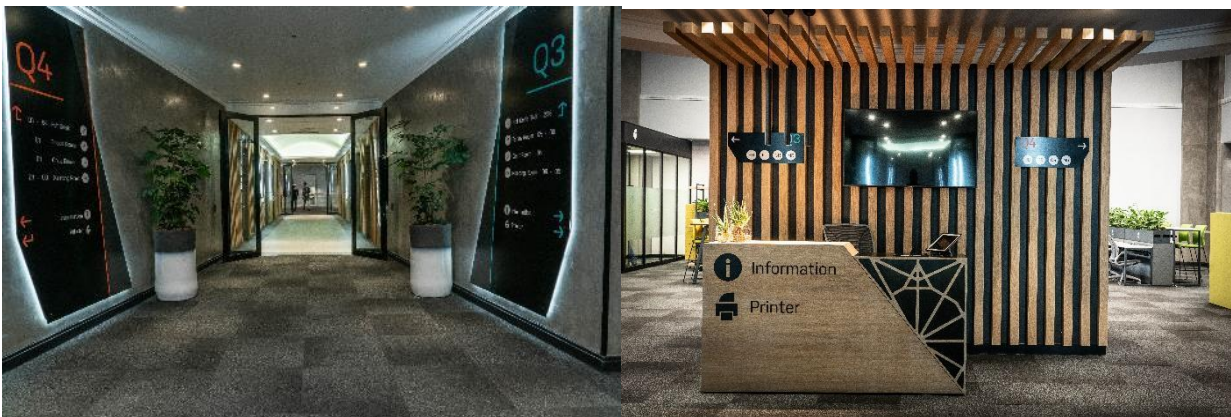


Figure 18: Wayfinding both in the physical and in the digital via the reservation system (via organisational application) demonstrates helpfulness within the workspace

Source: Supplied by the organisation

In documenting results from an employee workplace experience survey to determine employee satisfaction before- and after the workspace transformation, the following details regarding the employee experience was noted:

- The overall workplace experience score increased, post the workspace transformation, with the biggest increases in scores on the people capability;
- 36% of employees felt more aligned to the organisation (in terms of goals and work) when working in the new space, in comparison to feeling disconnected and disengaged with their leaders in the old workspace;

- Employees reported better work-life balance in the new way of working;
- 77% of people felt happier working in the new workspace;
- Employees felt that the new design aesthetic and floor layout enhanced the reflection of the organisation's brand and personality, and
- Employees also found that they could collaborate easier in the workspace, as these spaces allowed for quick, impromptu meetings.

3.4.4.2 Focus group

The focus group discussion guide was designed around three types of questions to ensure a productive session:

1. Probing questions: introducing participants to the discussion topic and making them feel more comfortable sharing their opinion with the group;
2. Follow-up questions: delving further into the discussion topic and the participants' opinions, and
3. Exit question: ensuring that the focus group mediator has covered all possible topics and opinions.

The focus group discussion guide can be viewed attached as **Appendix A**.

3.4.4.3 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with a limited number of employees involved in the workplace transformation in order to delve deeper into key themes that arose through the focus group discussions.

The researcher interviewed employees until the saturation of common themes was experienced. This was considered after four interviews. Saturation is considered the point of consistent repetitive responses in qualitative research (Bowen, 2008).

The semi-structured interview guide can be found attached as **Appendix B**.

3.4.5 Data analysis

Once the research phase was concluded the data was analysed using content analysis. This type of analysis best fits the type of study and research methods selected.

Anderson (2007) states that thematic content analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data. The researcher does this by creating a list of common themes from extracts and groupings of the data in order to give expression to the community of voices across participants.

Content analysis empowers researchers with the ability to mine through extensive amounts of data easily and with an organised approach (GAO, 1996). It can be an advantageous technique to identify and interpret the focus of individuals, groups or an institution (Weber, 1990). It has been suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) that thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool that offers rich, detailed, and complex accounts of the data. Furthermore, DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) explain that thematic analysis involves the search and identification of common threads that extend across the spectrum of interviews.

A category step model is used to explain how categories or key themes will be drawn out of the analysis process;

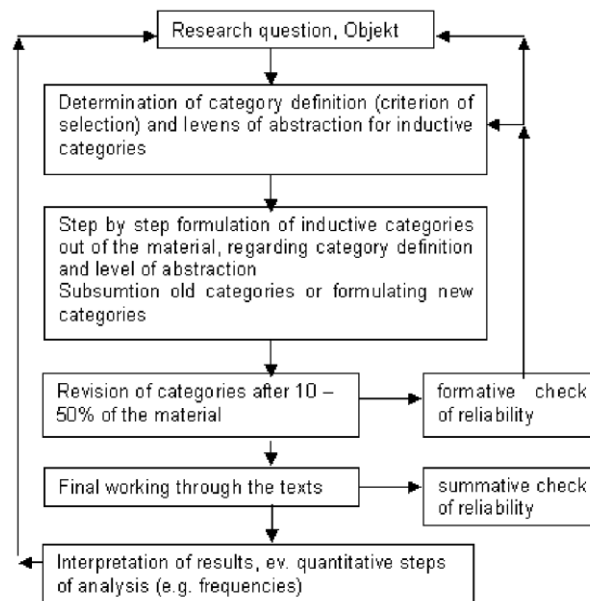


Figure 19: Step model of inductive category development (Mayring, 2000)

Source: Forum of Qualitative Research [online] Vol 1, No 2, Art. 20, June 2000. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/> . Accessed 9 April 2020.

The case study data was described in a narrative form as detailed in Chapter Four.

The unit of analysis are the views of the individuals within the case study organisation who are undergoing a workspace transformation. Based on this, the interviewer compiled a focus group and interview discussion guide to assist in a consistent questioning approach. The content was analysed against the ambit of the study's research questions to ensure clear research findings were drawn.

3.4.6 Data Interpretation

The case study was interpreted against the design and branding models to understand possible model alignment, and to identify points differentiation created by the design and branding experience.

Participants of the focus group were asked about three topics which relate directly to the research questions in accumulation of primary data.

The first discussion centred around the concept of brand identity and what that meant to participants in context to brand identity models, and the importance of this aspect in corporate workspaces. The second topic covered workspace design, and why participants felt that design mattered in a workspace environment. The third topic of conversation was around brand differentiation and how differentiation was perceived to be meaningful or competitive.

The final topic concluded with a discussion around the portrayal of brand personality in the corporate workspace to create brand differentiation.

The interview results were interpreted by the researcher who looked for alignment- or misalignment between the key themes.

3.4.7 Validity and confirmability

Researchers accept that they cannot separate themselves from qualitative research through thoughts of their own experiences, values, and perspectives. Therefore, qualitative researchers bring personal bias to the research, share their bias with the reader, and aim to mitigate this bias to ensure that they are correctly interpreting participants' comments (Jackson, 1990).

Edwards (2010) is of the view that validity is the process of being able to offer an honest depiction of the research territory as far as the research method would permit. She further states that the researcher should ensure that they offer authentic interpretations of what the study of the field imparts. Reflexivity indicates that there is an understanding of the impact of the researcher on the study. Reflexive self-awareness demands the capacity to separate the researcher's self from the field of study and gain context that allows fresh examination of studied events using the lenses offered by previous research inquiries and new theoretical perspectives. She concludes that all researchers working with qualitative designs must be mindful of the balance they want to achieve between engaged commitment to the field, and the capacity to provide an informed, unbiased analysis of the research.

Patton (2002) supports the notion of a researcher's engagement and immersion in a study through the explanation that the real world may evolve. Therefore, a qualitative researcher should be present during the changes to record an event before- and after the change takes place. This is particularly fitting for this study as the researcher has been personally exposed to the case study and has viewed the workspace before- and after the workspace transformation was completed. The researcher was also involved in drafting the case for change for the organisation.

It is noted, however, that both qualitative and quantitative researchers need to show that their studies are credible. While the credibility in quantitative research relies on instrument development, 'the researcher is the instrument' (Patton' 2001, p. 14) in qualitative research. Thus, it seems that when quantitative researchers speak of research validity and reliability, they are typically implying that a research method is credible, while the credibility of a qualitative study manifests in the ability and effort of the researcher.

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) state that pilot study procedures improve internal validity of the actual research questionnaires. The researcher considered this and administered the focus group and interview questionnaire to pilot subjects in the same way as it was going to be administered in the main study. Participants were asked for feedback to identify ambiguities and challenges in answering the questions. The study was adjusted to ensure the integrity of the data collected.

Confirmability will therefore be satisfied through the practice of reflexivity. The researcher has documented her role in the process and acknowledges personal assumptions throughout the focus group and interview processes, so as not to influence data interpretation. The study is confirmed by the findings gleaned from the resultant data. Primary data was obtained from the focus groups which influenced the interview questionnaire.

The data is dependable as the quality of the integration process between data collection, data analysis and theory are sound, with careful consideration to research methodologies.

The importance of triangulation cannot be underrated as it provides reliability and confirmability of the data and outcome of the study. Dependability exists when the data is accurate and truthful, when the interpretations have plausible probability for genuine occurrence, and can be linked back to the theoretical structure of the study (Roe and Just, 2009). Dependability further exists through the nature of a study's conclusions being transferable onto other studies irrespective of populations, environment, or instances in time (Aastrup and Halldorsson, 2013).

The use of several research phases created parity and consistency for the study.

Furthermore, the study deems credible by demonstrating the relationships the findings hold to each other and how these findings link back to the research questions. Transferability is possible, as the findings from the sample can be generalised to the full population.

3.6 Ethical Issues

The researcher was mindful of ethical conduct throughout the research process, but most specifically around the data collection from participants.

The following elements were considered;

1. The researcher obtained permission to draft a narrative of the case study;
2. The researcher obtained permission to hold a focus group with employees of the organisation and interview them;
3. Participant consent was discussed at the beginning of the focus group and recorded as introduction to the virtual focus group and interviews online;
4. The researcher clearly stated that all participant details would be kept confidential and would not be shared at any point in the research process. Names were not recorded, and responses would not be made public;
5. The case study organisation's real name was nowhere included in the research paper and no information was or will be shared with likely competitors. Research will be used for academic purposes only, and

6. The researcher did not experience any ethical concerns due to the nature of the topic, as the topic had not been found to be contentious in any way, nor did it expose any sensitive information.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the sentiment, perceptions and experiences of the case study organisation and its employees. Their answers to focus- and interview guide questions were documented and analysed in order to answer the research questions set out at the beginning of the study.

A narration of the case study provided insight to key themes of the study. The focus group and interviews were conducted to obtain primary data for further analysis.

The questionnaire guide's topics were formulated around the topics of brand identity, workspace design, and why this concept matters to employees and organisations, the meaning of brand differentiation within this corporate workspace context, and how brand personality is portrayed in workspace design to create differentiation.

The pilot study offered the researcher an indication that the scope of the focus group types should be reduced and hence only one focus group was conducted instead of three.

The chapter closes with a description of the ethical considerations, as well as the validity and confirmability of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three reported on the data analysis of the study. Various methods were used to collect data including a literary analysis, case study review, focus groups and in-depth interviews.

This chapter presents the main findings from the research and aims to answer the four research questions.

Key themes crystallised from the literary review. These themes were then explored with the information supplied from the case study through participant responses emanating from the prescribed focus groups and interviews (see appendices). The conversations with participants are reported and analysed in order to derive deeper meanings, draw conclusions and make recommendations in the final chapter. Triangulation of the data was further applied across the sources to confirm the themes.

The themes covered and discussed include brand personality in the context of brand identity; the importance of design in corporate workspace planning; brand differentiation and its meaning; and the effect of brand personality on workspace design to elevate brand differentiation. Within each of these key topics, important sub-themes emerged through this process. The sub-themes are discussed in detail below. These underlying themes help in answering the main research question, as they add depth of content, character as well as support the validity of the research.

4.2 Findings and emergent themes

Many overlapping findings emerged between the different research methods used. Findings are therefore divided into four groups to allow for thematic interpretation in terms of the research objectives:

1. Understanding brand personality in the context of brand identity;
2. The importance of corporate workspace design;
3. Understanding what brand differentiation is;
4. Understanding whether brand personality can be portrayed in workspace design to affect brand differentiation.

4.2.1 Findings on the topic of brand identity and its relationship to brand personality

The table below provides the key themes on brand identity and its relationship to brand personality.

Table 1 : Key themes on brand identity and its relationship to brand personality

	Theme	Key insights in the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
1.	Brand identity forms uniqueness	Elements that contribute to a brand make it meaningful and unique (Janonis, Doraliene and Virvilaite, 2007).	<i>Brand identity is the brand's biometric or signature</i>	<i>In an instant society, your brand needs to stand out from the others. A picture can portray a few messages in one, a picture speaks a thousand words (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>... it's how we position our brand that differentiates us, it's the type of lifestyle images we put out there... (Employee 4, 2020)</i>
2.	Brand identity is formed by a visual element that symbolises the brand	A brand's identity is formed through the culmination of several attributes, one of them being the brand's physical appearance (Kapferer, 2012). The researchers, Aaker (1991), Kotler and Armstrong (2010) further define a brand its characteristic representations, which could be its logo, trademark, or package design that associate its goods or services with the organisation	<i>Forms of colour, shapes. It is a design aesthetic.</i> <i>Colour is an identifier of the brand.</i> <i>Represents the mission of the company.</i> <i>Sets the tone of the brand.</i>	<i>We as a business stand for what we want to be recognised for, we instinctively create this experience for our customers (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>The same look and feel creates identity (consistency) (Employee 2, 2020)</i> <i>If I walk into the offices at work and I see the brand around me, the furniture, the colours, and the feeling absolutely makes me feel that this is my home or</i>

	Theme	Key insights in the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
		and differentiate its offerings from challengers in the marketplace	<i>Positions the way it has entrenched itself in the market or society</i>	<i>that I align with this. It is very much visual</i> (Employee 3, 2020)
3.	Brand identity refers to the brand experience	The user interprets a brand as the sum of all their experiences with the brand. The brand is constructed through these interactions with the user (Kapferer, 2012).	<i>Sets the tone or the vibe</i>	<i>Consumers are loyal to the brand because of the experience, not always because of the product</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>Employees need to buy into this brand experience</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>A central theme, that does not deviate helps keep people connected and aligned and this helps create a consistent brand experience</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>Brand experience is linked to the brand promise and this is central to business strategy</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>The brand experience refers to our leading innovations. It refers to our platforms, and the seamless experience on the app</i> (Employee 4, 2020)
4.	A corporate brand and its personality align with the self-image of employees	Brand identity is made up of several attributes forming this concept, known as the prism of brand identity; one of these attributes is consumer self-image (Kapferer, 2012). Research further indicates that end-users have a personal association for brands which they perceive to possess a personality that mirrors their self-identity. This preference is based on the idea that the personality traits associated with a brand, facilitate the end-user's interpretation of their perception of themselves (Belk, 1988)	<i>A brand must identify with you...</i> <i>You must relate to it</i>	<i>The environment should make employees feel inspired and aligned to purpose and personal goals. If an employee feels like they 'belong' in a space, they will enjoy working in this space</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>People want to associate with a place as much as a position</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>Brand aligns with my feelings. This is my place</i> (Employee 3, 2020)

	Theme	Key insights in the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
		...Additional value is obtained if the item or service provides the benefit of self-expression which reflects the image of the consumer (Aaker, 1996).		
5.	Brand personality is the communication mechanism	The brand persona guides cohesion of the overall brand message and offers a reference point for audiences to relate to the brand's values and behaviours (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010).	<i>The communication part of the brand</i> <i>The tone of the relationship between customer and brand</i>	<i>It is the catalyst for creativity</i> (Employee 3, 2020) <i>...It's all the executions and the consistency of the tone</i> (Employee 4, 2020)
6.	Brand personality is the brand's positioning, demonstrating its purpose	A brand's identity needs to demonstrate its business strategy to its stakeholders (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).	<i>How a brand wants to be portrayed in the marketplace, e.g. innovative player in the market</i> <i>Explains what the brand is about</i>	<i>The brand promise is the desired outcome we want to achieve, and in turn influences the customer experience</i> (Employee 1, 2020)
7.	Brand personality is the display of its human traits	These brand personalities will demonstrate recognisable human characteristics such as ingenuity, endurance, or tenacity, which are linked to a motive, action or aspiration (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010). For a brand to resonate with its employees, three basic dimensions of corporate brand personality traits should be considered for successful blueprint creation. These traits are to be passionate and compassionate; creative and disciplined, and agile and collaborative.	<i>Human attributes are displayed e.g.: helpfulness</i> <i>A space becomes 'alive' to match its identity</i>	<i>For this organisation, the brand personality links to 'helpfulness' as a human trait</i> (Employee 1, 2020)
8.	Brand personality can create trust and customer importance. It carries meaning .	De Chernatony (2001), Choi, Ok and Hyun (2017) argues that personality features and brand experiences translated through appealing brand imagery are the most impactful attributes in designing an appealing brand positioning. These attributes hold direct effect on brand popularity,	<i>Brand personality creates a feeling</i> <i>It creates meaning</i> <i>It can define hierarchy or subliminal ranking in the workspace</i>	<i>Brand personality and space create a sense of transparency</i> (Employee 3, 2020)

	Theme	Key insights in the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
		influenced by brand quality and loyalty.	<i>It can communicate a sense of trust in the workspace</i>	
9.	Brand personality can incite or influence behaviour	Aaker states that the personality of a brand encourages consumers to align with attributes they aspire to in the brand, and thus a desire to associate with that brand is formed (1996) ...brand personality has positive effects. It influences consumer preference and use (Sirgy, 1982), boosts levels of trust and loyalty (Fournier, 1998), evokes consumer emotions (Biel, 1993), stimulates active information recall (Biel, 1992), aids expression of self and personal association (Belk, 1988), and influences brand sentiment and mindful associations (Freling and Forbes, 2005).	Participants commented on how the new workspace allowed them a sense of freedom, even though no work policies had changed. Participants felt that the new space encouraged work-life balance, and everyone felt empowered to do their work.	<i>Visuals, symbols, colours all create a feeling or association. When these resonate with you, you will have a positive reaction. Brand personality can influence mood and encourage action. This personality can consolidate, or group people (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>The new office space is a lot more relaxed; it has a relaxed atmosphere (Employee 2, 2020)</i> <i>Allows for the flow of discussions, you feel comfortable to add to someone else's discussion (Employee 3, 2020)</i>

Several distinctive themes emerged around the definition of brand identity and its formation in order to position brand personality. These themes were identified through the analysis of the data extracted from all four methods of data collection.

4.2.1.1 Brand identity forms uniqueness

Through the development of brand identity, brand uniqueness is born through all the elements that make it meaningful (Janonis, Doraliene and Virvilaite, 2007). This uniqueness was referred to by the focus group participants as the signature, or the biometric of the brand. This brand identity is further formed by the culmination of several attributes and visual cues such as shapes, colours and design aesthetics, which create the brand's appearance and could also symbolise the brand.

4.2.1.2 Brand identity is formed by a visual element that symbolises the brand

Participants alluded to the fact that visuals, symbols, and colours create a certain feeling or association, and that identity is enforced through the consistency of this visual representation. Distinct visual brand attributes create a brand image in the user's mind.

Participants further stated that the brand identity represents the mission of the company and sets the tone of the brand, positioning the brand within society.

Previous studies by the researchers, Aaker (1991), Kotler and Armstrong (2010) further define a brand its characteristic representations, which could be its logo, trademark, or package design that associate its goods or services with the organisation and differentiate its offerings from challengers in the market.

4.2.1.3 Brand identity refers to the brand experience

Further to this, brand experience might also define brand identity. Participants in the focus group referred to the 'tone' of the organisation. Kapferer (2012) states that a brand experience is the sum of of experiences at different points of interaction with its stakeholders. Interviewees referred to the brand experience as always being tied back to the brand promise and linked to its brand personality traits. Out of this study, participants discussed that employees instinctively create an experience for their customers and that this experience brings a sense of empowerment or satisfaction, for which the customers return.

4.2.1.4 Corporate brand identity and personality align with the self-image of employees

Research conducted by Belk in 1988 concluded that symbolic qualities are often key reasons for attraction, and that end-users have a personal association with brands which they perceive to possess a personality that mirrors their own self-identity. This became apparent in the focus group when participants referred to the organisation as being 'progressive, innovative and helpful' and that they themselves as employees wanted to be the same. Participants further commented that a brand should identify with oneself and be relatable. The focus group agreed that certain brand personalities would attract certain

human personalities. This came through strongly in the interviews where interviewees stated that if they could visualise themselves in a space associated to an organisation, there would be a higher likeliness for culture fit and result delivery. Commentary around the theme of human capital and organisational alignment included statements such as ‘like attracts like’ and ‘I can identify with this place and feel at home here’.

4.2.1.5 Brand personality is a communication mechanism of the brand’s identity

Brand personality was defined by the focus groups as the *communicator* that showed up as the tone of the relationship between the customer and the brand. The definitive human attribute of helpfulness was referenced repeatedly in the case study (section 3.4.4.1), which tied back to the brand’s promise. Participants discussed the workspace transformation, and how the space came ‘alive’ to match its identity. These comments confirmed De Chernatony’s argument that brand image is a powerful determinant of brand equity (2001). Brand equity in the workspace can be converted to a currency of trust between the organisation and the employee. To this aspect, participants commented on how the new workspace allows them a sense of freedom and empowerment, which in turn, create a positive work-life balance.

4.2.1.6 Brand personality is the brand positioning, demonstrating its purpose

Previous research by Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) refers to the brand personality as a reference point for audiences to relate to and offer the end user a good idea of what it represents.

Focus group participants also spoke to brand identity being the representation of the brand ethos and company mission, where the brand positions itself in the marketplace and entrenches its values within society.

The employees confirmed in the focus groups and interviews that the organisation wanted to signal its progressive, innovative positioning in the marketplace through the new corporate

workplace design. In this case, it is clear that brand personality is a consolidated form of the overall brand message delivery to market.

Within the case study, participants confirmed that the brand personality mirrors its values and culture, with a display of dynamism and transparency. Employees are feeling constantly 'connected' to each other.

4.2.1.7 Brand personality is the display of a brand's human traits

A brand's persona holds recognisable human characteristics, linked back to its intention and purpose (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010). Keller and Richey's (2017) corporate personality trait model defines the dimensions of corporate brand traits which can be used in the development of relatable brand personalities. Participants of the focus group discussed the fact that brand personalities brands are more relatable to the market, creating a sense of being alive, if they display human attributes.

Information from this study suggests that a brand persona can be reflected through the functionality and expressiveness of the design of a corporate workspace. In the case study, this persona is demonstrated through the functionality of the design with designs performing dual purposes, fulfilling aesthetic requirements as well as acoustic- or other functional needs. Here, the design intention is displayed as being helpful, innovative and progressive.

4.2.1.8 Brand personality can create trust and customer importance, and carries meaning

The participants continuously referred to the new workspace design as that it allows them more freedom. They felt that because they can sit anywhere, anytime, creates a sense of trust. This in turn, seems to create a sense of employee accountability; to get work done and to remain productive.

The delivery of the brand personality can also be described as the reflection of the culture built within an organisation. This was particularly evident in the case study, where the employees stated that the brand's personality could be considered as the aura of the people who work in the space.

4.2.1.9 Brand personality can incite or influence behaviour

During the case study's post-analysis of the workspace transformation, participants agreed that because the workspaces were designed in a progressive manner and were aesthetically appealing, that they felt compelled to dress and behave in a similar manner.

Data emanating from the interviews showed that certain design environments create specific atmospheres, which may dictate the experience and behaviour of these spaces. Participants referred to the likes of Google as a good example, where the office design reflects the brand personality of being accessible, curious, and fun, and encourages play and innovation.

4.2.2 Findings on why design matters in the corporate workspace

The table below provides a summary of the key themes extracted on the topic of why design matters in the workspace.

Table 2 : Key themes extracted on the topic of why design matters in the workspace

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation) 'What the participants said'	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
1.	Design reinforces and drives corporate culture	An organisation's space allocation and configuration either asserts or erodes its declared philosophy, culture and strategy (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007). Several studies by Kallio, T, Kallio, K and Bloomberg in 2015 confirm the view that spatial planning and aesthetic detailing within the physical workspace enhance organisational culture and fosters creativity.	<i>The design deconstructs the hierarchy and removes fear</i> <i>Employees are more accessible to each other</i>	<i>The layout (formal or informal) speaks to a company's culture and by default the behaviour it expects. You can tell hierarchy through design, think exclusive executive office space or casual dining spaces that encourage socialising (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>The space has changed our culture (Employee 2, 2020)</i> <i>We have an owner manager culture, but we are very connected. The space is dynamic and there is a feeling of brainstorming, listening and learning. There is a transparency in allowing others to hear conversations and contribute (Employee 3, 2020)</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation) 'What the participants said'	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
2.	The design of workspaces can create enabling spaces .	Spaces should provide enabling structures that allow knowledge processes to develop dynamically. Multi-dimensionally designed spaces that consider architecture, social values, organisational cultures, and technology enablers, all curated in a holistic manner, to support innovation, focus and teamwork (Peschl and Funneider, 2012).	<i>The space has unleashed new energy</i> <i>Space is a platform for a new generation of forward-thinking</i> <i>This space is rejuvenating me</i>	<i>The space provides a basis for quick innovation (Employee 2, 2020)</i> <i>The space is dynamic; it makes for being more innovative and creates excitement about work (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>Space has a positive influence on how we conceptualise as a creative discipline and as creative resources (Employee 4, 2020)</i>
3.	Environmental design can create atmosphere and influence social behaviour, productivity, performance, and stimulate creativity	ABWM has the potential to favourably influence behavioural, and production output (Arundell et al., 2018). The design and space planning of a workspace affects how the occupants feel, and influences their work performance, engagement, and ability to generate new knowledge and create innovative concepts (Visher, 2008). Research links to the fact that satisfaction of the built working environment arguably correlates directly to contentment at work and levels of achievement (Carlopio, 1996; Veitch, Charles, Newsham, Marquardt and Geerts, 2003) A workplace rich in visual stimulus may stimulate creativity (Sternberg and Lubart, 1995)	<i>Previously people were quiet and reserved in the old space, people are more social in the new space, chatty, meet and greet.</i> <i>Participants believed that because the space felt cool that they did too, and that they were more willing to try new things when working in this space.</i> <i>The new design has broken the territorial behaviour displayed by people and business units in the past</i> <i>Participants noted that the space is inspiring and created a sense of productivity.</i> <i>The new design offers me the flexibility to be the best version of myself</i> <i>The space allows me to perform at my best</i> <i>Participants felt motivated to work beyond the traditional working hours and felt that they had a new drive to perform.</i> <i>The space is inspiring</i> <i>This team is young and cool and likes to try new things...I've even found myself trying to</i>	<i>By walking into a space, you instinctively adjust your behaviour to the space (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Physical workspaces need to be integrated, technology should work, access should be seamless, and everything needs to be more efficient (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>The space gives me more creativity (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>I am inspired by spaces. I draw inspiration from the environment around me and the fact that it gives me flexibility to move from one desk to any other functional area is really great</i> <i>...you need to walk to the bin, you start walking around to socialise better, and the communal space encourages socialisation. Design has a really big impact on behaviour. I agree with this statement (Employee 4, 2020)</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation) 'What the participants said'	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
			<i>wear different things (participant referring to her mindset change whilst working in the revitalised space)</i>	
4.	The design model can affect personal mindsets and <i>promote well-being</i>	According to a study conducted by Lin and Chang (2020), it was found that the perception of spatial planning had a positive relationship with the user's self-assessed creativity, activated by the positive mood of being in the space. The Activity Based Working Model (ABWM) has been regarded highly due to its potential to influence health and productivity outcomes and workplace satisfaction (Arundell, Sudholz, Teychenne, Salmon, Hayward, Healy and Timperio, 2018).	<i>Participants mentioned that people are happier in the new space.</i> <i>I feel like I need a new wardrobe when I am working in this space</i> <i>Participants said that the space encourages wellness and mental wellbeing.</i> <i>You are encouraged to move to a space that helps you deal with your psychological state</i> <i>The space allows for quality of time to not only work but develop personal relations with others. The space promotes a lifestyle, not just work</i> <i>Participants said that the space and transformation programme psychologically prepared them to work remotely more often.</i>	<i>Workspace design should allow for more flexibility and individuality; it can create a sense of trust (my company trusts me to deliver results irrespective of where I sit and work) (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Employees are in need of laughter and the feel-good connection, and that's why team get-togethers at the office are important</i> <i>A team get-together is like chocolate, you eat chocolate, and you have a feel-good feeling, it's the same connecting with my team in the office space (Employee 3, 2020)</i>
5.	<i>Aesthetically pleasing design increases the employee value proposition</i> , attracting talent and developing employee pride	In research conducted around workspace quality and employee sentiment, workspace design was considered a key perk, differentiating companies from one another. Participants said that the modernisation of their workspaces improved the organisation's ability to compete in the talent market, and that workspace design was an important factor in their decision to accept a position (Earle, 2003). The aesthetic dimensions of workspaces are found to be related to the occupants' sensory experience (Elsbach and Pratt, 2007).	<i>The space makes the employee feel appreciated.</i> <i>In the focus group one of the participants thought that the new space attracted talented employees.</i> <i>Participants noted that after the redesign that they preferred coming to work as the space was nice to be in and they were proud to exist in it and post pictures of it on social media.</i>	<i>Well-designed workspaces create a sense of reward and empowerment supporting the employee value proposition (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>An employee noted that she would not consider moving to another organisation where activity-based working was not implemented as this had set the standard for her in terms of a future workspace selection (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>Corporate workspace design would be a deciding factor when selecting a new place to work. I wouldn't want to be working in an archaic environment</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation) 'What the participants said'	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
6.	Enabling design may build a sense of trust and freedom	Spaces should provide enabling structures that allow knowledge processes to develop dynamically, in such a way that radically new ideas may be born. The interior design of this space must reflect one of protection, where the unknown can be explored in a space where there are minimal boundaries, a relaxed atmosphere and no sense of hierarchy, enabling the free flow of knowledge.	<i>Employees felt empowered to be able to work anywhere without being monitored, they felt the new design-built trust</i>	<i>Employees want choice. They want the ability to customise the way they work and how the office supports this (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>If I use the case as an example, the office is a lot more relaxed. It does not feel like the formal sector. It's nice sitting at those breakaway areas these days just brainstorming quickly and then moving on. It's a lot, I think it's a more relaxed atmosphere for me (Employee 2, 2020)</i>
7.	Design can be a benefit model to business	Designs act as a way for organisations to set themselves apart, share their sense of purpose, and transform business efficiencies (Borja de Mozato, 2006).	<i>Employees feel like they're more appreciated</i> <i>Everyone seems much more sociable and happier</i> <i>The design is a platform for new generation thinking and endless possibilities</i>	<i>Design distinguishes us from the competition, it creates an environment that inspires and supports our brand promise. The designs influences expectations of what needs to happen in the workspaces, allowing more choice and flexibility, supporting the new way of work, integrating all aspects of life (work, social, engagement, personal work from home) (Employee 1, 2020)</i>
8.	Design of workspaces as the narrative to a brand story	Workspaces should act as the narrative of the company and offer an experience through its interior space. 'Narrative' office projects are committed toward using the workspace as a tool of brand differentiation by linking workspace to a fictional story of the brand (Myerson and Ross, 2003). For many organisations, when 'branding' their corporate identity, their workspaces are considered to be one of the most influential elements (Earle, 2003).	<i>In our new space staff have been able to live the brand values</i> <i>Before the redesign, the element of being an innovative bank was not reflected in our workspace</i> <i>Previously the furniture did not reflect anything, and I did not feel any different working in these spaces</i> <i>The previous space did not carry any meaning; it was just a corporate space. It did not explain what we are all about</i>	<i>In general, interviewees felt that the design helped position the company as a frontrunner in financial services innovation, and that the workspaces supported this</i> <i>We are not afraid to do things differently here, and the office space encourages the same behaviour (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Company X's space is young, funky and technical, it creates feelings of a go-getter attitude and a sense of vibrancy (Employee 3, 2020)</i>

4.2.2.1 Design reinforces and drives corporate culture

Design as a driver of corporate culture emerged as one of the first themes under this topic. The focus group discussions referred to how the design deconstructs perceptions of hierarchy, which in turn removes fear and creates a culture of approachability. Employees became more accessible to each other in the new spatial layout of the transformed workspace. Employees also noted that the design model reinforces the high-performance culture with an expectation for constant innovation. The partially open plan environment with no formal offices allows for intergenerational mentoring and a culture of equality.

The theme of employer-employee trust relationships developed as the workspace design seems to affect the way in which employees perceive this relationship, based on the way they can work in the office and regarding the organisation of the workspaces. Employees noted that the flexibility and variation of the spaces allowed them to show the best versions of themselves, adding that the spaces allow them to perform better as it gives them freedom to be authentic in their styles of work. They also noted that the space creates something more than just a workspace; it also offers spaces to accommodate their lifestyles, as the lines between personal time and work time blur; the importance of socialising and doing other things at work reinforces a culture of diversity; more agility, and a better output performance measurement rather than hours spent at one's desk.

4.2.2.2 The design of workspaces can create enabling spaces

Literature shows that spaces should supply enabling structures which allow for the creation of knowledge to develop in a dynamic fashion (Peschl and Funneider, 2012). Focus group discussions alluded to the workspace providing a sense of energy and productivity through its design, and some staff felt rejuvenated by it.

Participants also commented that employees were behaving differently in the new workspace. There seemed to be an elevated sense of sociality, community, and a spirit of

innovation that had developed. Employees feel as if they were more open to trying new things whilst working in the space.

4.2.2.3 Environmental design can create atmosphere and thereby influence social behaviour, productivity, performance, and stimulate creativity

Prior research shows that the Activity Based Working Model may motivate employees through the ability to better engage with one another throughout these workspaces (Arundell, Sudholz, Teychenne, Salmon, Hayword, Healy and Timperio, 2018).

From the focus group it was noticed that people were more talkative and engaging when working in the newly designed workspace. Further discussions highlighted that design of the spaces encouraged space equity and access to senior management. The employees also noted that the new spaces gestured a new way of working, which required a certain set of behaviours. Interestingly, individuals added that they found themselves willing to try new things when working in these spaces. They said they felt inspired by the space, which in turn, increases creativity and a sense of efficiency, and a consciousness of time or efficiency.

Employees also noted that the ability to work from any desk or environment allowed them to feel free to be themselves, which in turn, built employer-employee trust relationships. Such an atmosphere reinforces the owner-manager culture, which is also one of the organisational values.

4.2.2.4 The design model can affect personal mindsets and promote well-being

As part of the change management process, a pre- and post-assessment was conducted in the case study on the employees who were affected by the workspace transformation. The results of the assessment showed an increase in the overall employee experience, happiness at work, and general value alignment. Results show that the implementation of a design model such as the Activity Based Working Model and the alignment of brand personality traits by way of environmental design may also create atmosphere and influence social behaviour which results in improvements of personal well-being. This aligns with

environmental workspace research conducted by Visher (2008) which says that the design and space planning of a workspace affects how the occupants feel, influences their performance, productivity, engagement and ability to generate new knowledge and create innovative concepts.

4.2.2.5 Aesthetically pleasing design increases the employee value proposition, attracts talent and develops employee pride

Through the focus group, the case study illuminated the fact that employees felt a sense of appreciation and pride since the workspace redesign and noted that they felt that the new design enhanced the employee value proposition and attracted talent.

Previous research completed by Earle (2003) and Alaithan (2019) found that workspace design is considered a key perk, inclusive of several attributes that allow workers to select how and when they would to work; spaces which promote activity, spaces that assist with well-being, reducing stress and depression, spaces allowing for focus time or facilities that energise workers are factors and as such, design is a differentiating factor between organisations. The modernisation of workspaces is an important deciding factor in where to work, as employees feel that these spaces promote their creativity and happiness. Elsbach and Pratt (2007) further confirmed that the design aesthetic of workspaces was found to be related to the occupant's sensory experiences. This theme was confirmed in the current case study research. Participants commented positively and asserted their affirmation for the brand because of the new workspace.

Employees from the case study said that the new design made them want to go to work. Because of the space aesthetics, they felt that it was nice to be 'part' of it. There seems to be a sense of status and pride that has developed along with the workspace transformation. Some employees even noted that they wanted to post pictures of themselves in the space on social media as they were proud to be associated with it; once again, they are mirroring their own self-image against a part of their organisation's brand identity.

Employees further said that these experiences in the new workspace reflect the culture that defines the brand and holds the different personalities together. Employees said that the design of the workspace spoke to the brand offering and highlighted what the organisation is doing differently to other brands.

4.2.2.6. Enabling design may build a sense of trust

Previous authors Peschl and Funneider (2012) have concluded that space should provide the enabling frame for the development of knowledge and the birthing of new ideas. The interiors of these spaces should reflect the feelings generated by them. These include spaces of protection where the unknown can be explored with minimal boundaries; a relaxed atmosphere and no sense of hierarchy, enabling the free flow of knowledge.

Emanating from the case study focus group and interviews, the research data analysis showed that employees felt empowered to be able to work anywhere and without being monitored. They felt that the new design builds trust; they wanted the option to work and sit where they choose. Furthermore, employees would like the ability to customise the way they work. Their expectation is that the workspace accommodates this. The research results further indicate that the variation of spaces and the deployment of the Activity Based Working Model created a relaxed atmosphere. The autonomy to select a workspace at a given time seems to create a level of trust.

4.2.2.7 Design can be a benefit model to business

A further observation of the research shows that employees found that the design acted as a catalyst for change in preparations for further remote work, and the agility of work.

Design may also set the tone around an organisation's priorities. In this case study the theme of innovation and technology is topical. The brand positions itself as a highly innovative and technology first company and therefore, the design of the spaces reinforced these priorities; gesturing employees to be innovative in their approaches around problem solving. This is also true when considering the technology used to allow for agile reservation of workspace

in the case study. One of the company's strategic priorities is that 'everything [should be] on platform'. The reservation app also supports this priority.

Based on Schein's 1990 research, there is a continuous process of mutual influence of the intent of management and the interpretations of the workspace of design. These intentions influence organisational culture, values, and the physical workspace (1990).

The current study's interviewees felt that the design helped to position the company as a frontrunner in financial services innovation, and that the workspaces supported this.

4.2.2.8 Design of workspaces as the narrative to a brand story

Prior research by Meyerson and Ross (2003) indicates that workspaces should tell the story of the company and offer users an experience through its interior spaces. Narration of space becomes a tool of brand differentiation through the linkage of the workspace to the brand story, culture, and its values. This story is often made real by the way in which the employees live out the brand in their everyday work.

From the collection of data in the case study, focus groups and in-depth interviews, there is a demonstration of brand narration created through the workspace design. This allows employees to relate to- and live the brand values. The type of furniture and the spatial placement reflect the way of doing things; an expression of organisational culture that holds meaning to its inhabitants.

Occupants noted that the new workspaces explained what their company was about, citing that the design promoted curiosity and diversity of approach. Employees also felt that the space design was modern, fresh, funky and technologically advanced and that these attributes supported positive staff attitudes and generated a sense of energy.

4.2.3 Finding on the matters of brand differentiation

The below table provides extracts on the key themes surrounding the matters of brand differentiation.

Table 3 : Key themes surrounding the matters of brand differentiation

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
1.	Brand distinctiveness as brand differentiation	Distinctiveness is at the epicentre of brand strategy, where a brand builds novel associations that make it easily recognisable amongst other brands (Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg, 2007).	<i>Brand differentiation is what separates a brand from its competitors. It could be a target market, or campaign imagery</i>	<i>In an instant society, your brand needs to stand out from all the others, and you have a few seconds to achieve that. If done well, a single brand element can make it recognisable (Employee 1, 2020)</i>
2.	Brand differentiation can be classified by a brand's offers, values, people or culture	Marketing literature emphasises that the differentiation should be perceived by customers as different, and these differences must be valued (Ries and Trout, 1986). This valued uniqueness does not have to be a physical product feature. It may be a symbol, an emotional connection, or something seemingly insignificant (Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003).	<i>I feel different and there is a sense of pride to go work</i> <i>The design has encouraged us to be at the forefront of the latest telecommunication</i> <i>It has allowed staff to adopt new mentalities</i> <i>Apart from our brand being our products or offerings, the employees have moved with it, and are just as progressive</i>	<i>It is important that brand experience is not only external, employees need to buy into this promise if they are to deliver on it (Employee 1, 2020)</i>
3.	Brand differentiation is constructed through experience	A brand should be viewed as an ecosystem of interactions, where it is defined by experiential parameters (Salmeron, 2013). Employees of today seek to consume new experiences daily, and the consumption of these experiences has been affected by the high touch-needs for novelty, imagery,	<i>Participants gave examples of brands that attracted customers through special experiences where their products were the same as other competitors, but the experience was the differentiator</i>	<i>Consumers buy things – there are many products on the market that do the same thing, but what makes them loyal to the brand, is the experience. The feeling, the empowerment, a sense of satisfaction – the entire experience is what they come back for (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Beyond the look and the feel of the space, it's the</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study organisation)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study organisation)
		emotion and fun experiences (Schmitt, 1999). Organisations can differentiate themselves and test personal thinking in an individualistic way, thus affecting behaviour in order to create distinct brand experiences that are multi-sensory (Rodrigues and Brito, 2011). These experiences can be translated into physical spaces that activate emotion, which in turn, assists, in expressing brand personality.		<i>ability to book a desk on the app, it's the flexibility that came with the space that creates a point of differentiation for the company</i> (Employee 4, 2020)
4.	Visual stimuli reinforce differentiation	Hulten (2017) notes that vision is the strongest human sense and that colour, art, graphics, lighting and interior design are all visual stimuli, impacting on a brand's differentiation. Enhanced points of stimulus generate corporate brand experience (Onem and Hasirici, 2020)	<i>Because the space is aesthetically pleasing, it is nice to be a part of it. You want to come to work and show it off in your social media. I am proud to say I exist in this space</i>	<i>In a country with several languages, a visual is more universal than text. It allows a brand identity to transcend borders, making it relevant to global society</i> (Employee 1, 2020)

4.2.3.1 Brand distinctiveness as brand differentiation

Authors such as Bao & Sweeney, (2009) as well as Wheeler (2018) define distinctiveness as an element within the epicentre of brand strategy, where a brand builds a unique set of associations that make it recognisable against a landscape of brands.

Participants in the focus group spoke of brand differentiation being the element of separation between a brand and its competitors. Distinctive brand traits may be classified by any valued and noticeable differences. These differences do not only need to be material, but might also be symbolic in nature, or may strike an emotional reaction (Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003) that makes it present differently from its competitors. The in-depth interviews revealed that a single differentiating element could often define a brand. Participants commented that

a brand needs to stand out from all the others in today's instant society, and that organisations have only a few seconds to achieve this recognition.

4.2.3.2 Brand differentiation can be classified by a brand's offers, values, people or culture

Emphasis is placed on differentiation to be perceived by customers as elements of uniqueness and that these unique traits must be valued (Ries and Trout, 1986; Broniarczyk and Gershoff, 2003). Differentiation can also be formed through a brand's personality, humanisation, transparency, and purpose.

Furthermore, the literature review (Gupta, Galleary, Rudd and Foroudi, Mancada, 2020) also reveals that one of a brand's strongest differentiators is its employees, especially considering their approach to customers and the consistency of the experience they deliver. These experiences are often valued through experience authenticity, driven by the underlying culture of the brand.

The case study highlights that brand differentiation may include employee mindset, sentiment and support to innovate or create. This statement was proven through the employee sentiments of pride to go to work; the sense of progression and purpose.

Extracts from the focus group and interviews to support this point are cited below:

- 'I feel different and there is a sense of pride to go work'
- 'The design has encouraged us to be at the forefront of the latest technology'
- 'It has allowed staff to adopt new mentalities'
- '... apart from our brand being our products or offerings the employees have moved with it, and are just as progressive'
- 'It is important that brand experience is not only external, but employees also need to buy into this promise, if they are to deliver on it'

4.2.3.3 Brand differentiation is constructed through experience

Prior research completed by Salmeron (2013), shows that a brand is an eco–system of interactions that create a unique experience for the user. Schmitt (2011) argues that consumers are touched by new experiences daily, and that the consumption of these high touch and high-tech experiences has created an always-on culture driven by novelty, imagery and emotion. Cova (1999) add that multi-sensory brand experiences that highlight the brand personality traits are the basis of realising the cognitive and emotional needs of consumers. This was also explained in the focus groups where participants gave examples of brands that attracted customers through special experiences where their products were of a similar nature to other competitors but where the experience of consumption was the differentiator.

‘Consumers buy things – there are many products on the market that do the same thing, but what makes them loyal to the brand, is the experience. The feeling, the empowerment, a sense of satisfaction – the entire experience is what they come back for’ (Employee 1, 2020).

4.2.3.4 Visual Stimuli reinforce differentiation

Academics such as Hulten (2017) have stated that vision is the strongest human sense and that colour, art, graphics, lighting and interior design are all visual stimuli, impacting on a brands differentiation. Enhanced points of stimulus generate corporate brand experience (Onem and Hasirci, 2020). This research further confirms that for a brand to significantly enhance firm performance, its image should be well executed and well differentiated. The literature also confirms that strongly differentiated visual recognition triggers successfully stimulate brand recall and association (Aaker,1996; Keller, 2003 and Hulten, 2017).

Research participants confirmed that they agreed with the literature position of visual stimulus reinforcing differentiation. This was further discussed as they felt that all elements of brand identity (the colours, logo, imagery, and the font) form a distinct visual language. Some key examples were sighted, such as the Nike swoosh and certain brand-related colour associations. Tertiary research further explored the fact that users respond quicker to

images than a company name, that these visuals were often more emotive and created feelings or experiences through recognition. It was also important to note contextual importance. In a country with various languages, a visual becomes a powerful universal tool that has the ability to transcend language- and cultural borders, making it relevant across global society. A picture also can portray several messages within a single image and is therefore considered a highly effective recognition tool.

4.2.4 Findings on whether brand personality can be portrayed in the workspace design to affect brand differentiation

The table below provides insights into key themes on whether brand personality can be portrayed in the workspace design to affect brand differentiation:

Table 4 : Key themes on whether brand personality can be portrayed in the workspace design to affect brand differentiation

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study population)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study population)
1.	Brand differentiation can be formed through an employee's <i>happiness at work and the satisfaction of the workspace experience</i> determined by the <i>quality and structure of the workspace</i>	The success or failure of any office space is assessed by how well it responds to the expectations and needs of the people who use it, with research showing strong relationships between occupant wellbeing, increased staff engagement, productivity, and enhanced brand perception (Gillen, 2019).	<i>I feel different and there is a sense of pride at work</i> <i>We, the employees, are glowing!</i> <i>The space is inspiring and encouraging, and there is a sense of being productive from the first moment you walk into the office</i>	<i>Employees also want choice. They want the ability to customise the way they work and how the office supports this. Employees are looking for flexibility and a company that supports this through the structure of the workspace (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Office environments need to cater for future generations who have grown up with technology, multi-tasking, with the ability to blend work-life and hold various roles. The space needs to be reflective of this, as this will be the majority of the workforce demographic soon (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Employee expectations of the workspace have risen. People</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study population)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study population)
				expect more and put in more (Employee 3, 2020)
2.	Through the portrayal of brand personality in workspace design, employees feel like they are 'living the brand' .	'Narrative' office projects are committed toward using the workspace as a tool of brand differentiation by linking workspace to a fictional story of the brand. The brand is lived and breathed within these spaces. Examples of this include a skatepark in Quicksilver's headquarters, a running track in Reebok's office, and new model cars parked down a model street in Toyota's workplace or walking through Amazon's forest. (Myerson and Ross, 2003) Individuals tend to associate employer workplace branding on an emotional level, as the attributes expressed are often those that the individual currently holds or wishes to possess in the future. The more complementary the personal and brand attributes are, the more attracted an individual is to the organisation (Love and Singh, 2011).	<i>Participants stated that apart from the company's products being progressive, that the new workspace helped the employees act and feel this way as well</i> <i>In the new space, it feels like staff are able to live the brand values, so essentially, we are the brand</i> <i>There is a lot more movement in the space and I feel the hustle and bustle of the brand; and it's come alive to match the brand identity</i> <i>The design has increased the trust element with employees</i>	<i>The new design integrates all aspects of our lives (work, social, engagement, personal work from home (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Brand aligns with the feeling of this is my place, I feel like this is my family, this is where I belong, it is in my DNA (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>Through the portrayal of the brand persona in the space, it allows for a more personal, individualised experience. Allowing for integration of office and home, more productivity and greater mobility, creating a sense of trust (my company trusts me to deliver results, regardless of structure, hours, place), more rewarding, more empowering, more room to move (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>The brand aligns with the feeling that this is my place, this is my family, where I belong, this is part of my DNA (Employee 3, 2020)</i>
3.	Workspace as a visual brand statement for differentiation	The physical manifestation of a company's brand can be considered in its workspace. Several top companies are creating vibrant, creative and agile work environments to convey the image that their offerings are fresh and innovative, and that the organisation is positioned as an appealing and impressive place to work (Earle, 2003).	<i>Workspace can reflect culture and the personalities of the people that work in it. This makes it an inspiration space; more than just an application of corporate colours</i> <i>I like the flexibility of the space and the ability to work at my own pace allows me to give the best version of myself</i> <i>The space allows you to perform</i>	<i>The layout, formal/informal can say a lot about a company's culture and by default the behaviour it expects (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Companies compete in office space as well – people want to work at certain companies because the environment is attractive (Employee 1, 2020)</i> <i>Space can be a catalyst for creativity, important human connections and engagements (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>The space creates a dynamic feeling of brainstorming,</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study population)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study population)
				<i>listening and learning</i> (Employee 3, 2020) <i>Space does influence a person's perception of a brand</i> (Employee 4, 2020)
4.	When a suitable design model such as the ABWM aligns with the brand personality model it can create differentiation	Although originally designed to enhance collaborative working while reducing office space requirements and operating costs, the ABWM has the potential to favourably influence behavioural, and production output (Arundell et al., 2018). Not only does brand differentiation unequivocally influence brand competitiveness, but it also builds brand value (Gupta, Galleary, Rudd and Foroudi, 2020).	<i>Participants discussed the space after the redesign</i> <i>The new space deconstructs hierarchy and removes fear</i> <i>The space is rejuvenating me</i>	<i>Brand personality within design can distinguish us from competition, create an environment that inspires and supports our brand promise, set and influences the expectation of what needs to happen in our spaces, allowing for more choice and flexibility, supporting the new way of work</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>I think we are ahead in terms of our entire space strategy</i> (Employee 2, 2020) <i>A well-designed space, is likely to keep employees longer engaged and productive, which impacts the bottom line</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>If I think of the collaboration spaces that we've created and a small meeting rooms and focus rooms it's made a huge difference in the way we do stuff in the office</i> (Employee 2, 2020) <i>It has changed our culture. It makes you feel that you want to keep up with the program all the time, but that you can still express yourself</i> (Employee 2, 2020) <i>A bank used to be a bank and you had to wear a suit, so I think it has even affected the dress code. It encourages authentic staff behaviour</i> (Employee 1, 2020) <i>If you walk into company X's space it is young, funky and high tech, in comparison to our</i>

	Theme	Key insights from the literature review	Findings on focus groups (regarding the case study population)	Findings on interviews (regarding the case study population)
				<i>competitor that is very cold and corporate (Employee 3, 2020)</i> <i>This space is one of our bragging points (Employee 4, 2020)</i>

4.2.4.1 Brand differentiation can be formed through an employee's happiness at work and the satisfaction of the workspace experience

In one of Gillen's latest books, *the 21st century office* (2019) she says that the success of a corporate workspace is assessed through its responsiveness to the needs and expectations of the employees utilising it, with existing research showing confirmed relationships between occupant wellbeing, increased staff engagement, productivity, satisfaction and enhanced brand perception.

Employees in the case study said that they felt different when working in the new workspace and that they felt proud of where they worked. They also said that their expectations of the workspace had risen. They wanted the ability to customise the way they work, and that the office supported the level of flexibility they needed. In their minds, workspaces should deliver agility through the structure of the workspace. Participants also alluded to the fact that corporate workspaces should cater for future generations who have grown up with technology, who are multi-tasking, and have the ability to blend work with life and hold various roles. Participants noted that spaces should be reflective of this to hold longevity, as this is the demographic of the incoming workforce.

4.2.4.2 Through the portrayal of brand personality in workspace design, employees feel like they are living the brand and ensures the alignment of personal purpose to organisational purpose

Previous academic work (Aaker, 2000, Rajagopal, 2006, Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010, Sundar and Noseworthy, 2016) confirms that a distinctive brand personality can help create a set of positive connections in a consumer's mind that may elevate brand equity. Focus group participants defined brand personality as the level of human relatedness, with certain brand personalities attracting a certain set of human personalities.

Prior research (Myerson and Ross, 2003, Escales, 2004, 2007, Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010, Werning, 2019) shows that the reflection of brand personality in workspaces is the narrative to the brand story, where employees feel that they are living the brand. Where narration is used, the workspace becomes a tool of differentiation through linking of the physical space to a fictional story of the brand. The focus group participants stated that apart from the company's products being progressive in the marketplace, they personally felt so as well. Commentary from the focus group suggested that employees felt different working in the newly designed workspace and that they reflected a sense of pride and happiness.

Through the delivery of brand personality in corporate workspaces, the design guides alignment of personal purpose to organisational purpose. Researchers state that the better matched personal and brand attributes are, the better attracted an individual is to an organisation.

The employees believe that when workspace design is executed correctly, it could be a differentiator for talent (above salary, number of leave days or other benefits), but in terms of customisable spaces that are adequate to their needs, based on the context and nature of their work. It is interesting to note that in the interviews, the younger generation participants felt strongly about this, while the older generation of baby boomers considered salary and space to be an important factor in position selection.

4.2.4.3 Workspace as a visual brand statement for differentiation

Prior research by Earle (2003) indicates that a company's brand traits manifest in its workspace, and this alone may offer a point of differentiation through the implementation of visual stimuli and the creation of vibrant, creative and agile environments that position the organisation, and an appealing and impressive place to work.

The case study supports the idea that a brand position is delivered through its people, culture and workspace design. As the brand positions itself as a frontrunner in innovative lifestyle solutions, the organisation is quite deliberate that the workspace should support innovation and curiosity, and that employees who share these goals and values will be attracted to these workspaces.

The case study also highlighted that if spaces are designed in line with the organisational purpose, they may become the differentiator for talent through spaces that are customisable to employees' individuality and needs. Data collected from the interviews elaborates on this finding and indicates that brand differentiation may also be created through inspirational spaces that support a brand's promise, spaces that set the tone for the type of work that will happen in these environments, and spaces that integrate all aspects of life. Such spaces allow for more flexibility while supporting the new way of work and the expectations that come with it.

4.2.4.4 The ABWM (design model) aligned with the brand personality model can create differentiation

Prior research conducted by several authors (Arundell et al, 2018) confirms that a design model such as ABWM aligned to an organisation's brand personality can create differentiation through the change in behaviours and productivity outputs. This sentiment was echoed through the focus group, as participants felt that the redesigned space had encouraged new positive behaviours which rejuvenate them and generate a greater sense of productivity when working in the space. They also felt that the deployed workspace design model created a sense of equity in the workspace where business units could no longer

practise territoriality of space, and that this factor contributes to an improved workspace culture. The interviewees commented that the change of space and integration of the brand personality had changed their working culture to a more relaxed one, but that it also supported their need for connection, transparency and engagement, as these spaces allowed for the flow of conversation. This flow stimulates innovative thought and creates excitement.

Interviewees further believed that the new design model distinguished them from the competition, creating an environment that inspired employees and supported the brand promise, commenting that the spaces allow for more choice and support a new way of work. From an employee perspective, the case study allows for more employee flexibility, and individuality, accommodating spaces for all employee needs. They also felt that the design allowed them room to move, that created empowering, trusted experiences.

The literature highlights that design may be an element of competitive advantage in the market through the creation of brand equity and customer trust. Organisations presenting a well-established, distinctive brand identity may create preference in the marketplace and enhance the value of their products or services (Borja de Mozato, 2006).

The case study reveals that employees believed that well-designed space is likely to keep employees engaged for longer and offered productivity; both elements directly impact the bottom line in considering the cost of recruitment and training. Interview participants further commented around the design and the market perception, noting that the new workspace reflects a dynamic, funky and high-tech environment in comparison to their competitor, whose offices are very cold and corporate.

As part of the case study findings, the researcher compiled a table including design and branding attributes that are present within Company X's workplace transformation in order to demonstrate the alignment of the design and branding models for differentiation. This table is shown below:

Case study workspace attributes for differentiation

Design Model (Activity based working model)	Branding Model (Brand personality trait model)	Design Attribute	Brand Attribute
Choice and control	Mind (creative and disciplined)	- Variable spaces, hot desking - Autonomy of seat selection based on task - Reservation of space on platform	- Be free to innovate and co-create - You decide / owner-manager culture - Ease of process / innovativeness / high use of technology
Inspirational spaces	Heart (passionate and compassionate)	- Functional art - Brightly coloured spaces stimulating creativity - Natural lighting	- Curious (brand value) - Helpfulness (brand promise) - Innovation (brand DNA) - Future forward (aura of the people, space and offering) - Narration of brand story
Agility and flexibility of space	Body (agility and collaborative nature)	- Mirage of workspace settings - Furniture on wheels	- Shared purpose through depiction of brand values - Shared ambition: successful words and motivations - Consistency of deployment indicating industrial strength - Creates trust (brand objective)

Figure 20: Case study workspace attributes for differentiation

Source: Researcher's own. Developed by the researcher as part of the analysis and findings

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data that was collected, recorded and analysed, and viewed the key findings from the alignment of literature, case study findings through focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

The first set of findings relates to the first research question by delving into brand personality in the context of brand identity.

Nine key themes crystallised around the concepts of brand identity and brand personality.

The first theme refers to the concept that *brand identity forms uniqueness*. This uniqueness makes it meaningful to the end user. A unique identity is like the signature of the brand and assists the brand to stand out from its competitors. Often, *brand identity is formed by something visual that allows for brand symbolism*. This could be in the form of colour and shapes. These elements become brand identifiers which often set the tone of the brand and represent the mission of the company.

It became clear in the case study and through the literature that the brand identity was formed by the brand experience. This experience is often delivered in a consistent manner to develop a consistent and strong brand identity. Employees and their behaviours are key to forming this experience, and thus it is important that the self-image of employees aligns with the brand identity to ensure that employees are living the brand values.

Brand personality develops as the brand communication mechanism and sets the tone of the relationship between the brand and its users. Brand personality that is the display of its humanistic traits, may be used to demonstrate a business' strategy and brand positioning to its stakeholders and to communicate its brand promise. Through the delivery of a brand's personality, it creates trust and emotional relationships with its stakeholders. This personality can influence stakeholder behaviour as they try to align to the aspirational attributes of the brand and so, a desire to associate with the brand is created.

On the second research theme concerning why design matters in the workspace, several key findings emerged. In summary, these findings confirm that *design reinforces and drives corporate culture*. It became clear through the focus groups that the design alone had the ability to deconstruct fear and create a sense of equity within the workspace. This further highlighted that the *design of workspaces can create enabling spaces*, which allow for the creation of new knowledge, and energises the habitants. Participants confirmed that the *environmental design created an atmosphere of space, which subsequently set the tone of behaviour and stimulated employee creativity*. *Design not only stimulated work productivity and performance, but also promoted employee well-being and affected personal mindsets*.

Data emerging from the focus groups and interviews shows that the ability to make human connection and allow for employee individuality, promotes employee happiness.

Previous research, and qualitative feedback from the employees in the case study organisation *indicate that design may enhance the employee value proposition*, making an employee feel appreciated and supported. *The design of a workspace also created a sense of trust* through the autonomy of workspace selection.

Participants confirmed that aesthetic design creates employee pride and is considered a workspace perk. In summary, *design is found to be a benefit model to business, as it may act as the narration of the brand story*, allowing for distinctive traits to be highlighted against its competitors.

Findings on the theme of brand differentiation allude to the fact that brand differentiation is the way in which it stands out from other brands; it is *a brand's distinctiveness*. This is *defined by a brand's services, people and culture*. This finding was confirmed through the participants in the focus group, where they felt that not only was the brand identity seen as progressive, but the people in the organisation were too. They felt that *differentiation was also constructed through the brand experiences* created and commented that the emotional satisfaction of a positive brand experience developed loyalty.

The questions on how can brand personality may play a role in workplace design to increase brand differentiation concluded to the following:

Brand differentiation can be formed through an employee's happiness at work and the satisfaction of the workspace experience which is determined by the quality and structure of the space.

The notion of brand personality being portrayed within workspace design allows employees to feel like they are living the brand, which in turn creates brand ambassadorship.

A workspace developed as a visual statement and a differentiator of the brand, as participants of the study alluded to it highlighting the aura of the people working in it,

reflecting the culture of the people working within the organisation. Participants further concluded that space is the catalyst for creativity and innovation, and for these spaces to deliver these outcomes, they need to hold a high level of visual stimulus that mirrors the brand's personality and thereby, reinforces the level of brand differentiation.

When a suitable design model such as the *Activity Based Working Model* is effectively paired with a brand personality model, it may create differentiation through its potential to influence behaviour and staff production. These spaces create differentiation between competitors, enhance organisational culture, employee engagement and allow for the flexibility that the new way of working brings.

In summary, the analysis of the findings concludes that brand personality delivered through workspace design encourages workplace transformation and suggests an elevation of market perception. Researchers confirm that competitive advantage in the market may be created through design, which generates brand equity and trust.

The focus group discussion supported the notion of design workspaces assisting employees in aligning their personal purpose to the organisational purpose. This helped them feel as if they were living the brand values. The interviews further found that design could be a differentiator in a competitive market through the support it offered to employees based on the comfort and enjoyability of spaces driving value and productivity.

The below model is representation of these inter-relationships:

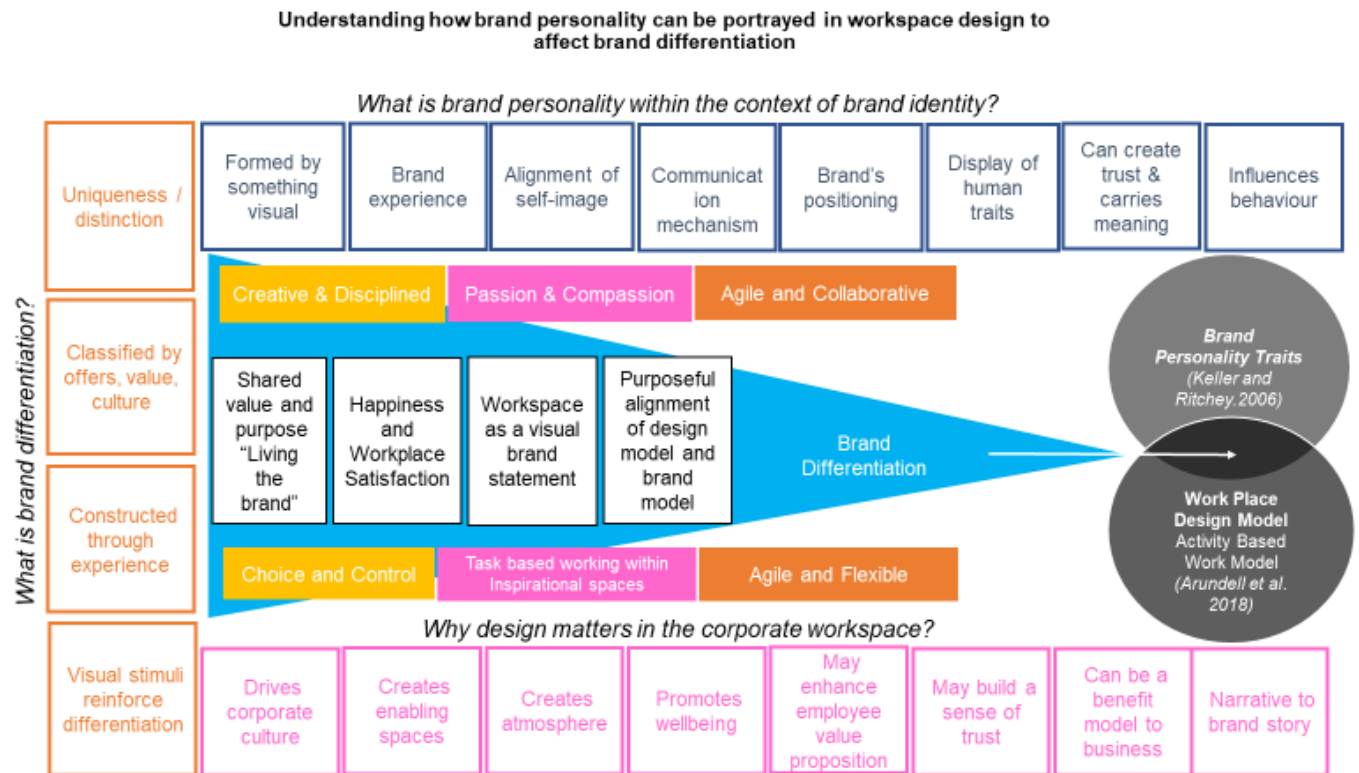


Figure 21: An expanded representation of the key research themes formed around brand personality and workplace design, demonstrating concept inter-relationships, creating brand differentiation when delivered collectively

Source: Researcher's own representation

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The concluding results of the study are presented in this final chapter. This is the overlay of the key themes from the literature analysis, case study insights and participant feedback, all aiming to answer the research questions set out at the beginning of the study. This section provides an in-depth interpretation and synthesis of the findings.

This research explores the themes of brand personality in the context of the brand identity system, and why this is important. The researcher investigated the constituents of brand differentiation and how it develops. The conclusions clarified the importance of workspace design in the landscape of the changing world of work and offers insight into how the delivery of brand personality through workspace design elevates brand differentiation for an organisation.

Analysis was a multi-layered approach. The review of literature informed baseline themes for the primary research mechanism. Seeking emergent patterns from findings emanating from the data generated by the focus group formed the second round of analysis. The tertiary analysis commenced through the review of the data from the semi-structured interviews. These interview discussions were guided by key themes which emerged from the secondary phase.

Finally, the data was holistically examined to understand whether the literature corresponded with, contradicted, or increased the depth of the interpretations. The results validated the final key themes in order to answer the research question: How can brand personality play a role in workplace design to increase brand differentiation?

5.2 Interpretation of results

This research was commenced to determine how brand personality plays a role in workspace design to increase brand differentiation.

Through the research conducted and the relevant research reviewed, the research questions have been answered and the objectives of the study were met.

The first research question was: What is brand identity and what is its relationship to brand personality?

It has become evident from the findings that organisations that present a well-considered, definitive, and relevant brand identity can create a preference in the marketplace and enhance the value of their offerings.

The research confirms that identity is formed by several attributes. Kapferer's model, the brand identity prism, guides these attributes (2003).

The findings indicate that a brand's identity is formed through the culmination of the following:

- a brand's physical appearance;
- its relationships;
- a consumer's reflection of the brand, and meaning to self;
- its human characteristics (brand personality);
- the lived culture; and
- a consumer's self-image.

These attributes develop a uniqueness that sets each brand apart. Often a specific brand identity is recalled by something visual that symbolises the brand. It is further confirmed by the data that this could be a distinct form, shape or set of colours to create a specific design aesthetic.

Identity could also be formed by a unique experience, known as a brand's signature or unique way of doing things. These stand out as the unique part of the brand in a consumer's memory recollection. The data presented concludes that employees and consumers are often retained by the bigger brand experience rather than just a single product. These experiences or identifiers are often aligned with the self-image of its stakeholders and their need to relate. The brand experience is often linked to a brand's promise or motto that supports the business strategy and ensures alignment throughout the organisation.

As the study focuses on brand personality within the internal attributes of brand identity, it is understood that this personality can be delivered into the business through the depiction and delivery of its human-like traits. These personality traits are perceived to further align with the personalities of target market consumers. The delivery of these traits acts as the communication mechanism of the brand. A brand's personality often demonstrates its market positioning and purpose, suggesting the way in which it would like to be portrayed, and offers insight into the internal workings of the brand.

The theme of brand personality acting as a communication mechanism emerged from the literature review and was clearly supported through the secondary and tertiary parts of the research process through the commentary by participants in the focus group and interview process.

Brands are made relatable to its users by persona using recognisable human traits. These traits are human in nature and are often linked to a brand purpose such as courage or happiness. Through the literature and other data, it seems that personality features are found to be one of the most impactful attributes when designing an appealing brand. These attributes directly translate into appealing imagery. It is also clear from the multi-layered research that brand personality holds the spirit of the brand, generates emotions and may incite users to act, based on personal associations. The brand persona offers a reference point for stakeholders to relate to a brand's values, aligning not only with its functional benefits but by the brand's symbolism. The way in which a brand story is told through person-centred narration, articulates its compelling features. Corporate brands identify with

the characteristics of their employees that may project the values, promises and actions of its people.

It was noted in the case study that the brand traits mirror the brand's promise, and that this consideration may be carried through the aesthetic as well as functional design to enhance relatability. The basic dimensions of corporate brand personality traits should be considered to ensure resonance with employees. Characteristics to be considered include passion, compassion, creativity, discipline and agility. Relatable traits are therefore found to be important to employees as they feel as if they are living the brand. The employees commented in the interviews that they feel comfortable in their place of work and that it feels like 'family', proving that brand personality can make a brand identity relatable with employees' self-image and purpose.

The case study and focus group have confirmed that the notion of brand personality generating trust and customer importance through the generation of positive associations and emotions with the brand, is valid. From the findings, the researcher can conclude that personality influences behaviour and creates atmosphere. Participants in the case study confirmed that the personality of the workspaces gave them a sense of freedom, even though no work policies had changed. Data from the case study also concluded that brand personality incites action and creates atmosphere when used in the workspace, which in turn supports a specific type of work culture.

In summary, the concept of brand identity includes the differentness, significance, purpose, intent, and the personality of a brand. In leveraging the concept of brand personality, organisations are provided with an opportunity to reposition the brand in the market and thereby making it more relatable to its users, enhancing brand equity and thus resulting in competitiveness. Prior research has highlighted that personality features are the most impactful attributes in brand positioning and therefore concluding that the perceived brand image dynamically influences a brand's equity.

The second research question was: Why design matters in the workspace?

As the lines between work and home life blur, design seems to matter more in terms of offering employee's choice and flexibility to accommodate their individualised needs through variation and agility of workspaces. If considerations to the design of a workspace are well thought out, and allow for the accommodation of the people that work in them, the design will add value to the organisation through the way in which it can transform business efficiencies and build brand equity through its own employees as ambassadors.

It is concluded that workspace space planning can convey subliminal messages around the brand values and culture through the allocation of floor space, offices and the inclusion or absence of privacy in the layouts. Intimacy or transparency may be created through the design. This research data combined with prior data sets indicate that the design of spaces may stifle or enable innovation, and drive performance and creativity. Further to that, a theme which arose clearly from the case study was that design also has the potential to deconstruct hierarchy and remove fear, allowing for intergenerational mentoring and ease of collaboration. Spaces could, therefore, also guide expectations around employee behaviours expected in line with work strategy. Space is seen as a catalyst of positive behaviour. Employees commented that they felt rejuvenated in the new office design and that the space offered a platform for a new type of thinking. These spaces would be considered to be enabling spaces that reinforce and drive corporate culture in a corporate organisation.

Unlike previous open plan settings, the Activity Based Work design model deployed in the case study allowed for community type working environments with elements of privacy . This model encourages a diversity and authenticity of work styles, allowing for a culture of self-driven performance and creativity to develop. This model further seems to favourably influence behaviour, employee wellness and affects sentiment regarding the employer, stemming from a trust relationship created on the measurement concept of output-based work rather than time at desk. Since the design model promotes employee connections, allowing for both personal and work interactions between people, it allows for the

development of a lifestyle rather than just a place of work. In summary, all the findings indicate that environmental design can create atmosphere, influence social behaviour, productivity, performance and stimulate creativity.

This research proved that employee expectations had risen around workspace design and that this was a key deciding factor when changing to a new professional position. Results from the case study and literature showed that if employees could see themselves working in a physical space which is deemed to promote happiness, balance and creativity that the employer would win their talent. Based on confirmation from the interviews and focus groups, design aesthetic and autonomy to choose where to work in the workplace, are the top workspace satisfaction indicators.

Aesthetically pleasing design creates a sense of employee pride, which in turn makes employees feel more appreciated in their workspaces. These new workspaces gain uniqueness and strength of brand equity through the storytelling of the brand and reinforce the brand values and personality through its interior design. The research clearly indicated that meaning can be attached to the design of workspaces and when executed well, employees will feel like they are living the brand because the design of the workspace becomes the narrative to the brand story.

Design is therefore confirmed to be a benefit model to business through the findings of the case study and the overlay of the literature. Design, therefore, allows organisations to set themselves apart, sharing their sense of purpose, and transforming business (Borja de Moscato, 2006) through employee and customer satisfaction.

The third research question was: What is brand differentiation?

Brand differentiation is defined as the way a brand distinctively stands out from its competitors, and that this distinctiveness should be the centre of its brand strategy. These distinctions make a brand easily recognisable (Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg, 2007). Employees also confirmed that a single powerful, recognisable visual element could define a brand. Differentiation could also be defined as valued differences, which rang true for

employees who felt that differentiation was created through a company's value proposition and its offerings such as the type and format of its workspaces, its values, people, and culture. These points of differentiation made employees feel a sense of pride and created a sense of differentiation within themselves to do more or offer more through the development of progressive, innovative thoughts.

Brand differentiation may also be constructed through experiences. The participant data overlaid with the literature review conclude that differentiation results from an eco-system of interactions defined by experiential parameters (Salmeron, 2013). Positive experiences create a sense of empowerment and satisfaction that drives brand loyalty.

Organisations are deliberately creating vibrant and agile work environments to assist them in conveying the perception that they are innovative in the marketplace with an impressive place of work (Earle, 2003). The allure of the space is often created by defined visual stimuli creating high impact perceptions of the brand through design, graphics, lighting and colours.

Brand differentiation, therefore, matures into brand uniqueness defined by key visual elements, experiences and spaces.

The final research question: How can brand personality play a role in workspace design for differentiation?

It became clear through the several stages of the research that employees felt that they were 'living the brand' via the portrayal of brand personality in workspace design. They offered commentary such as that 'the new design integrates all aspects of our lives; work, social, engagement, and work from home' (Employee 1, 2020), and that the workspace design made them feel that they were aligned with the brand's purpose.

Brand differentiation is therefore formed through an employee's happiness at work, defined by the quality and structure of the workspace. This is supported by previous authors stating that the physical working environment is directly related to job satisfaction and productivity.

Previous research has confirmed that when a brand faces competition in the marketplace, its personality and reputation enable differentiation. Brand personality is executed through narrative office designs, which use the personality as a differentiating tool and link the brand identity to the brand story. Brand personality creates atmosphere in these spaces. This point was further confirmed through the case study with employees stating that the revamped spaces came alive with the new design, allowing the spaces to match the vibrancy of its brand's identity.

Space can therefore feature as a key differentiator in corporate workplaces, as these spaces are draw cards for talent attraction and retention. The research results confirm that space may be a catalyst for creativity, allowing for the enablement of human connection and engagement, required for the ongoing maintenance and growth of corporate culture.

Through the alignment of brand personality models to workspace design models, shared value and purpose may be derived from the design through the enablement of task-based working in inspirational spaces. This allows employees choice and control and supports agility and flexibility of where- and when to work. Employees also concluded that brand personality delivered within design objectives support the new ways of work, organisational culture, individuality and authenticity, which allow for differentiation between competitors.

5.3 Practical implications and recommendations

Based on these research findings, it would be beneficial for any corporate workspace designer or strategist to consider the implementation of brand personality throughout the workspace design to enhance brand differentiation.

When considering how brand personality should be portrayed in corporate workspaces, it is important for the practitioner to be mindful of the following findings of this study.

Firstly, the concept of organisational culture and employee self-identity should align with the organisation's purpose in order to support the overall brand identity because these elements form the soul of the brand.

Secondly, brand personality is developed in a corporate workspace through the physical representation of the brand narrative by way of the integration of spatial planning, interior design, and branding of the spaces. This includes easily recognisable stimuli in the form of shape, colour and materiality.

In the third instance, the users of corporate workspaces have high touch needs for novelty and imagery in order to generate positive emotions around the design of these spaces. This is important for most workers, particularly because the world of work evolves from daily commutes to purposeful visits, driven by specific needs to go into the corporate workspace.

Lastly, these workspaces should inspire thought, or allow for focus and collaboration. A design model such as the Activity Based Working Model considers variable settings, allowing for different types of task work. This model aligns with brand personality models in the sense that both concepts allow the physical environment to take on human characteristics through the portrayal of human traits such as agility, state of mind, and state of receptiveness, and thereby allowing a space to depict brand personality.

Practitioners are therefore encouraged to consider brand personality traits and align them with an appropriate design model. Through the application of these linkages, brand differentiation is formed by creating a tangible brand personality which tells the story of the brand. This portrayal of brand personality creates distinctive, symbolic points of recognition which generate triggers of emotion with the users of the space and in general, offers a better workplace experience with a sense of happiness at work.

5.4 Future research

Given the focused nature of this study, the following future research options have been identified:

- Future research within other corporate entities within the same sector or across different industries. Such research will clarify the generalisation of the key findings and themes,

not only in the corporate workplace but possibly across smaller workplace environments and community co-working spaces;

- Extended research on the same topic, which may include the comparison of different design models against brand identity models to create brand differentiation;
- Future research may include the effects of remote work on the physical workspace. This topic may be explored in scenarios where organisations choose not to invest in physical space and design, but rather choose to define their presence in the virtual world through virtual workspaces and events, aiming to understand how brand personality can be used in virtual workspace design to create brand differentiation and yet still appeal to an employee's self-purpose;
- The value of design in the workspace through the measurement of triple-bottom line valuation, before- and after the implementation of linked design and branding models;
- Future research focusing on specific employee groupings such as multi-generations, their expectations and experiences, and how these could be understood to increase brand differentiation through design; and
- Future research regarding the branding and design objectives of corporate workspaces in post pandemic times, beyond the year 2020.

5.5. Conclusion

As brand identity forms uniqueness, it is important that the brand identity of an organisation stands out from its competition. This identity is often referred to as the brand's biometric, associating its visual symbols and experiences with the meaning and positioning of the brand. In considering the internal attributes of brand identity, brand personality is the conceptualisation of a brand's human-like traits, often communicating the tone of the brand and its positioning in the marketplace. The brand personality may even mirror consumer aspirations. Crafting organisational brand personality can form effective relationships between the consumer and the organisation through the way in which a consumer may relate to the brand and its way of doing things.

Brand personality can create trust and meaning. In the context of space, it creates transparency and defines hierarchy and thereby, influences user behaviour. Environmental design applied with an organisation's brand personality can therefore create atmosphere, influence social behaviour and stimulate creativity. The design of these types of workspaces create enabling spaces and supports innovation through social connection and serendipitous experiences. Design can therefore be considered a support of organisational culture and a benefit model to business through its ability to not only drive performance but affect personal mindsets and promote employee well-being at a time when this is critical in a high-performance culture and high technology world in order to mitigate burn-out, and attract talent. Enabling design may therefore build trust relationships with employees and other stakeholders.

The delivery of brand personality through the design of these workspaces assists the brand to narrate its story, allowing users the opportunity to relate and personally connect to what it represents.

Brand differentiation is constructed by a brand's experiences, its offers and its people.

These elements all create a level of distinctiveness. In the context of corporate workspace, space and visual stimulus create elements of differentiation because the physical manifestation of a brand can be seen in the space planning and design of these environments.

The study concludes that when brand personality is incorporated into workspace design, it can create brand differentiation through the alignment of suitable design and branding models, ensuring employee workplace satisfaction. This sense of satisfaction is created through the alignment of personal self-image and purpose to organisational purpose, which ensures that employees become brand ambassadors, living the brand and acting out its brand purpose in meaningful ways. This, in turn, creates memorable experiences which add value to both employees and other stakeholders. The satisfaction gained from these experiences drives brand loyalty and differentiation. It is therefore confirmed through this

study and others, that brand differentiation generates brand value and positively influences brand competitiveness.

In the new world of work, employees face a tsunami of digital communication combined with the social and physical isolation that remote working has brought, they do however, have the human need to connect and socialise (human to human) in workspaces that align their personal purpose to the greater organisational purpose. If these spaces create experiences and emotional states of employee pride and happiness, and support new levels of work agility, it will ensure that top talent is attracted and retained, further allowing for the execution of strategic projects in progressive ways.

This research confirms that with the application of brand personality in workspace design, a brand can present its compelling differences to the market and its internal stakeholders. These design and branding solutions impact the aesthetic of workspaces and the employee value proposition, supporting new ways of working.

Finally, when a brand's essence is identified through its personality and executes it through experiences created by workspace design, these workspaces become tactics of differentiation. Design matters!

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STUDENT SIGNATURE:	DATE
	03.01.2021

SUPERVISOR(S) & NPPC DECLARATION

The proposed supervisor(s) and National Postgraduate Programme Coordinator declare:

- That the candidate is competent to undertake the proposed study
- That the proposed title suits the particular institution (brand) and supervisor(s)' expertise.
- That the proposed research makes a meaningful contribution to the latest research on the subject and is substantiated by reference to the relevant literature.
- That the proposed research can be undertaken with available resources.
- That the proposal has been screened for and is free of plagiarism.

SUPERVISOR(S) SIGNATURE:	DATE
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME COORDINATOR SIGNATURE:	DATE

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus Group Guide

Research commenced for the Master's in Creative Brand Leadership

Institution: Vega, South Africa

Field work commenced: April 2020

Design matters:

A brand, its personality, and the workspace

Focus group discussion guide

- Welcome participants and introduction of the facilitator.
- Information share on the research they will be part of;
 - The nature of this research is to understand how brand personality portrays itself through workspace design to increase brand differentiation
 - The purpose to obtain employee sentiments and perceptions on the topic
 - The results of this study will be used for academic research purposes only
 - You have been asked to participate in this study as you have formed part of a larger organisational case study, where a workspace redesign was underway.
 - You have furthermore been selected and grouped based on your type of work-mode. Agile workers, Semi – Agile workers and Residential workers will be grouped together to discuss their experiences.
- Confidentiality;

- All discussions will be kept confidential and used for academic research purposes only, no names will be recorded or placed on transcript. Your views will be kept anonymous.
 - Should the participants feel uncomfortable, they have the option to withdraw from participation at any time.
 - This discussion will be recorded
- Ground rules
 - You are encouraged to give your view
 - Please do not condone any views, this is an open discussion where all are entitled to their own opinion and diversity of experience is encouraged.
 - My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion

Discussion Guide

1. Can you explain what the concept of brand identity means to you?
2. Discuss the concept of brand personality (A brands personality is the set of human characteristics it portrays)
 2. 1. What is company X's brand personality?
3. What was the brand personality the company portrayed before the redesign?
4. Which personality does the company currently portray, now after the redesign?
5. What is corporate brand differentiation in your mind?
 - 5.1 And how would you explain it?
6. Is the design of your corporate workspace important to you?
 - 6.1 Why is it important to you?

7. Do you believe that a workspace can create atmosphere and support a specific corporate culture?

7.1 If yes, what atmosphere do you believe has been created based on the new design?

8. How do you think company X brand personality is incorporated in workplace design to create brand differentiation?

9. Concluding question: Is there anything you would like to add around the topic?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Research commenced for the Master's in Creative Brand Leadership

Institution: Vega, South Africa

Field work commenced: April 2020

Design matters:

A brand, its personality, and the workspace

In-depth interview guide

- The nature of this research is to understand how brand personality portrays itself through workspace design to increase brand differentiation
- The purpose to obtain in-depth employee sentiments and perceptions on the topic
- The purpose of the interview is to hold a deeper understanding of the themes and concepts discussed in the focus group
- Please answer the questions with your personal experiences and view in mind, answer as honestly and authentically as possible

Regarding Confidentiality;

- All discussions will be kept confidential and used for academic research purposes only, no names will be recorded or placed on transcript. Your views will be kept anonymous.
- The insight derived from this interview will be used for academic research purposes only
- Should you feel uncomfortable in answering the questions, you have the option not to respond or withdraw from participation at any time.
- This interview discussion will be recorded

Interview Guide

1. Is Brand identity something visual in your opinion?
2. In the focus groups we discussed elements that construct brand identity and the participants shared that the brand experience was one of these elements. How would you describe the brand experience at organisation X?
3. In which way do you believe design may create atmosphere, or influence social behaviour?
4. Do you believe that spatial planning and office layout can contribute to the portrayal of brand personality? Please elaborate.
5. Do you think that employee expectations have risen around the design of the corporate workspace? Please elaborate
6. Would you consider corporate workspace design as a decision-making element when considering a new position
7. With the upsurge of remote work, what role does the physical workspace play in the future in relation to the brand? If any?
7. Based on the workspace transformation you have been through; would you say that this creates a point of differentiation for company X in the financial services sector?
8. In which way do you believe that the new design model implemented affects the
 - 8.1 organisation
 - 8.2 the employee

Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

Appendix C: Focus Group Invitation

Dear (Participant)

Re: Invite to participate in a focus group

I would like to invite you to take part in a virtual focus group (small online discussion group) on (date, time and location) about how brand personality is portrayed in workspace design for differentiation. The focus group should last no longer than one hour.

Your views will be used to help me complete my master's thesis in Creative Brand Leadership. This work will contribute to the academic body of knowledge as well as offer practical views on implementation for brand identity teams, workplace design specialists and strategists.

You have been selected as a possible candidate for the study, as you have recently experienced workspace transformation.

Your expressed views will be held completely confidential and your identity will be anonymous. Your personal details will not be published as part of the study.

If you would like to take part in the focus group on (insert date) please let me know by sending a return acceptance e-mail, using the YES button at the top of this email. Once your attendance is confirmed you will be sent a Microsoft Teams invitation to join the session.

Please note that I will be recording and transcribing the conversation to ensure the integrity of the sessions. In accepting this invitation, please note that you offer consent to the recording.

Regards

Kim Gibson – van der Walt

Appendix D: Interview Invitation

Dear (Participant)

Re: Invite to participate in an interview

I would like to invite you to take part in a personal virtual interview on XXX about how brand personality is portrayed in workspace design for differentiation. The interview should last no longer than one hour, and I have obtained leadership approval to commence this research.

Your views will be used in two ways, to assist us further develop the Productive Me design concept and to help me complete my master's thesis in Creative Brand Leadership on this topic. This work will contribute to the academic body of knowledge as well as offer practical views on implementation for brand identity teams, workplace design specialists and strategists.

You have been selected as a possible candidate for the study, as you have recently experienced workspace transformation or have been a key stakeholder in the workplace transformation process.

Your expressed views will be held completely confidential and your identity will be anonymous. Your personal details will not be published as part of the study.

If you kindly agree to taking part in this interview, please let me know by sending a return acceptance email, using the YES button at the top of this email. Once your attendance is confirmed you will be sent a Microsoft Teams invitation for an interview at a time most suitable to you.

Please note that I will be recording and transcribing the conversation to ensure the integrity of the sessions. In accepting this invitation, please note that you offer consent to the recording.

Best Regards

Kim Gibson-van der Walt

SUPPLEMENTS

- Focus group transcription
- Transcriptions of all interviews

(Available on request)