

**The exploration of manager's experiences when leading
millennial's employees, in a South African fashion retail
organisation.**

BY

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the IIE Bachelor of Commerce Honours Degree in Management, to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes. ^[1]_[SEP]

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Abstract

The corporate workforce today occupies a multitude of varied generations, which has created a need for businesses and their managers to fully understand the individualities of their multi-generational teams. Millennial employees are said to bring about significant change to existing business environments, as their characteristics appear notably different to previous generations. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the experiences of managers when overseeing millennial employees, in comparison to older generations. The interpretivist approach used investigated the managerial approach taken with millennial employees and how this may differ when compared with older generational employees.

The conceptual framework references Adair's action-centered leadership model, of three key principles for successful team leadership and management. The case study conducted on South Africa's fashion retail business, *Mode* obtained data through semi-structured interviews, using a purposive sample of two brand managers. The thematic analysis applied allowed the researcher to discover shared phenomena and identify themes based on the participant's perceptions responses. The participants reviewed the findings of the study, affirming its trustworthiness. These findings revealed how managers developed an intrinsic understanding of the differences found in managing millennial and older employees. Thus enhancing their insight to personal integration, facilitating growth and enticing collaboration.

Contextualisation

When exploring the dynamic and volatile business environment today, studies have found that several managers of modern organisations are faced with the task of managing employees from multiple generations. This has highlighted the need for managers to understand the individual make up of their employees and to alter their managerial approaches to ensure sound employee relationships and collaboration is achieved (Sibarani, Tjakraatmadja, Puro and Munir, 2015). Generations such as, Baby boomers, Generation X, and Millennials are said to hold different values, ambitions and working styles (Sujansky et al, 2017). The existence of these generations has been referenced in many ways. For the purpose of this study, Baby boomers will be referred to as individuals born between the years (1946-1964), Generation X between (1965-1980) and the Millennials between (1981-2000) (Sibarani, 2015).

Baby boomers: The name of this generation originated from the dramatic increase in birth rate after World War II. In today's working world, most boomers have begun their retirement. However, a substantial amount of these employees have continued to work beyond their pension years (Codrington, 2008).

Generation X: These individuals would now fall in the age gap of the late thirties to early fifties. Generation X is known to assert their individuality and is self-reliant. These employees are skeptical of long-term commitment to organisations and have a need for a sense of balance in both their personal and work life (Codrington, 2008).

Millennial generation: are the children of the Baby boomers and Generation X. Researchers have found the millennial generation to be the most sheltered cohort amongst older generations. Millennials were born in high-tech and revolutionary times. They live in a time of globalisation and find ease in communicating with people of various backgrounds and cultures both off and online (Codrington, 2008).

Various studies have been devoted to exploring the traits and characteristics of American Millennials (Dimitriou and Blum, 2015). However, a limited amount of research has been conducted on Non-American Millennials. There is a need to explore other millennial's in regions. Researchers have made an impact in exploring millennial employees in both Asian and European countries (Dimitriou and Blum, 2015). This study aims to take this exploration into the region of South Africa, with the fashion retail industry. A growing interest in the millennial generation stems from their common characteristic of bringing about change and challenging the existing organisational culture, in terms of, job flexibility, worth ethic and supervisor-employee relationships (Gursoy, Thomas, and Christina, 2008; Johnson,2015). Lunova and Cirjevskis, (2017) propose millennial's also offer the opportunity for modern businesses to grow and move forward in a highly competitive and volatile market. This exploratory study aims to discover the experiences of managers who supervise millennial employees and older generation employees (Baby boomers and Generation X), Furthermore, the study will also consider the differentiating nature of millennial employees in comparison to older generational cohorts, through exploring: motivational factors, work ethic and relationships with managers. The research of this phenomenon will be conducted within a South African retail organisation.

For the purpose of the study, the pseudonym *Mode* will be used for the retail organisation being researched to ensure the ethical standards and confidentiality of this study is maintained. '*Mode*', will refer to a South African fashion retail organisation, which aims to trade trend-focused clothing and accessories to both young and conservative consumers both locally and internationally. As an employee of this organisation, I understand that it has been communicated through the companies strategies that they aim to recruit some of the most talented young individuals to join their teams. *Mode* feels that by harnessing the strengths and inside knowledge of these young employees, the company will gain more insight into discovering the demands of younger consumer markets. This will allow the organisation to gain greater market share by forecasting trends that are likely to appeal to their target market.

Rationale

The focus of this study revolves around the millennial cohort, as they have grown to become the largest generation of employees in the workplace (Johnson, 2015). Millennials have been described as the 'hottest commodity on the job market' since the cultural icon, Rosie the Riveter (Raines, 2002). A decline has been seen in the number of baby boomer employees within the corporate landscape (ibid). As millennials are now starting to fill these gaps by occupying higher ranked positions previously occupied by boomers. Therefore, it has become significantly important for organisations to harness the skills sets of these younger employees, for the purpose of financial success and to foster forward-thinking (ibid).

It is important for managers of multi-generational teams to understand the need to create an environment where diverse employees are able to work collectively towards reaching the organisation's goals and objectives (Houlihan, 2007). A noted characteristic of the millennial generation is their desire to bring about change in organisations, by moving away from conventional ways of thinking (Johnson, 2015). This study aims to explore the experiences of managers when leading the millennial cohort and explore the aspects this cohort may bring to a multi-generational organisation.

It is possible that the evidence gained from this study could be of use to the retail organisation *Mode*, as the business aims to capture a predominantly young consumer market. Millennial employees are said to have primary experience and understanding of the wants and needs of younger target markets and could possibly form a great asset for modern businesses that are striving to build a presence and gain market share within a younger consumer market (Sujansky, 2017). This presents the opportunity for businesses like *Mode* to recruit and train millennial employees as they could help the organisation to stay relevant in the fast-paced fashion retail industry (Lunova and Cirjevskis, 2017).

Previous studies on the characteristics of millennial employees have mainly stemmed from an American perspective (Dimitrou and Blum, 2015). Studies such, McEwen, Fang, Zhang and Buckholder's (2006) study on Chinese millennials, Downe, Loke, Ho and Taiwo's (2012) study on Malaysian millennials and Corvi, Bigi and Gabrielle's (2007) study comparing American to European millennials, have taken research beyond American boundaries. This study offers a contribution to the limited evidence surrounding millennial employees outside of these previously explored regions, as the study will take place in a South African organisation.

Problem statement

Each generation has its own unique communication styles, principles, and work ethic, which have created a challenge for business leaders and managers in understanding how to relate to these varying traits and build better relationships with their employees (Milligan, 2016). This study aims to explore the various experiences that the managers of *Mode* have faced when overseeing younger general employees being, millennial's. The researcher will also explore the manner in which managers have adapted their managerial approaches to building more collaborative and productive relationships with millennial employees. In addition to how manager's experiences have differed when managing older and younger employees.

Purpose statement: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of managers when supervising millennial employees in comparison to older generations, within a chosen South African retail organisation. The researcher will investigate how managerial approaches may have altered in the process of creating a better understanding of the unique characteristics of the millennial generation and forming successful employee-supervisor relationships with this cohort.

Research questions

- 1) What are the manager's experiences of working with millennial's?
 - What business challenges do managers face when working with the millennial cohort?
 - What potential benefits does the millennial cohort offer to the business?
- 2) What differences are experienced when managing millennial's in comparison to managing older employees within organisation?
 - How have managers dealt with the difference of millennial employees?
 - How have managers changed their managerial styles to adapt to leading multi-generational teams?

Research objectives

- 1) To discover what benefits and challenges managers have experienced when leading millennial employees.
- 2) To learn how managers may have altered their managerial styles when working with millennial's.
- 3) To understand the experience of managers when leading multi-generational teams.

Literature review

This review aims to assess some of the differentiating characteristics that managers are likely to face when overseeing a generationally diverse workforce. The literature will investigate the differences between the generation of Baby boomers, Generation X and millennial's. By exploring the personal traits, characteristics in the workplace and the motivational factors of these generations. Specific focus will be placed on employees of the millennial generation and how their characteristics in the workplace differentiate when compared to older generations. As the millennial generation begins to integrate into the corporate workspace, a need is created for managers to fully understand the core values and characteristics of the millennial generation and how they might differ to existing older employees (Sujamsky, 2017). These elements will be further discussed in the review; in addition to the guidelines, managers could follow when striving to forge stronger employee-supervisor relationships with millennial employees.

1) The multi-generational workforce

When managing a multi-generational workplace managers have become aware that there is no longer a 'one style suits all' approach to leading a dynamic workforce (Johnson, 2015). Extensive research has been conducted on exploring the strengths, challenges, behavior, job motivation and other aspects that distinguish millennial's from previous generations (Karp and Sirias, 2001 as cited by Dimitriou and Blum, 2015). Significant differences have been found between millennial's and older generations (Sujamsky, 2017). These differences have been found to create both challenges and opportunities for managers when overseeing multi-generational teams. As each generation possesses its own strengths and knowledge base that when combined could foster great opportunities and productivity for organisations. (Sujamsky, 2017).

Furthermore, Wagner (2017) proposes that younger generations possess traits that older employees could possibly learn from and vice versa. It is suggested that in order to maintain a competitive advantage organisational leaders must understand the need to adapt to the current needs of the evolving workforce (Schullery, 2013 as cited by Milligan, 2016). Wagner (2017) adds that it is necessary for managers of multi-generational teams to be well informed and educated about how to lead a workforce of varied generational backgrounds.

This will ensure leaders and managers of these employees gain a substantial understanding of employee work ethics and personal traits, in order to form solid employee-supervisor relationships and aid the process of employee collaboration (Milligan, 2016)

2) The individualities of older generations within the workplace

Modern organisations today are known to employ approximately four generations of employees with working ages that range over 60 years of age (Hersatter and Epstein, 2012). This study will be focusing on three generations, namely: The Baby boomers, Generation X, and the Millennial generation.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are generally characterised as workaholics and individuals who are set in their ways (Houlihan, 2007). These employees are known to be company loyal and are of the opinion that there is value in making sacrifices to get ahead (ibid). The journey of gaining superior titles and positions in the workplace is what motivates this generation. Baby Boomer employees have defined their corporate identity by ensuring they are visible in the workplace by climbing the corporate ladder (Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, boomers are known to work beyond their retirement years, mainly due to the access to employee benefits (ibid). When communicating with their peers and managers, boomers prefer to engage in one on one personal dialogue (Houlihan, 2007).

Generation X

Generation X emerged into the workplace in a time where most of the senior positions were occupied by Boomers, therefore making the opportunity for growth highly competitive (Johnson, 2015).

They are known as a highly independent and self-sufficient generation. Generation X favours environments that provide constant challenge and interesting work objectives (Johnson, 2015). However, when compared to the Baby boomer generation before them, Generation X can be seen as the slacker generation in terms of work ethic (Houlihan, 2007). Generation X values productivity over the length of time spent on the job and aim to maintain a balanced professional and personal life (Houlihan, 2007).

Generation X is the first generation before millennial's to grow up with the exposure to technological advancements (Houlihan, 2007;Sibarani et al 2015). They are creative individuals and they require more freedom to perform their job effectively (ibid). Johnson (2015) adds that, when communicating with their managers, these employees are known to ask more questions and expect a good reason when executing a task. A beneficial employee-supervisor relationship is likely to emerge from managers supplying: stimulating works activities, self-governing and flexible working cultures and the opportunity to customise their benefits, these traits are seen to correspond well with the divergent desires of Generation X and millennial's (Johnson, 2015).

3) Millennials in the workplace

Characteristics of millennial's in the workplace

The millennial generation is often accused of being entitled and arrogant in their approach, as they are demanding of their employee needs and confident in their ability to succeed (Wagner, 2017). Millennials are testing assumptions more than the generations before them did. They are not satisfied with the status quo and tend to ask rather probing questions about the reasoning for business operations (ibid).

Managers in the retail industry have previously found it a trying task to supervise the millennial generation, due to their varied skills set, curious work ethic and energetic attitude (Sujansky, 2017). According to Wagner (2017) aspects of miscommunication between managers and millennial employees may be caused by the generation gap, different backgrounds, and an inability to recognise different perspectives. Therefore, managers need to form an adequate understanding of how to effectively manage the differences of their millennial employees and how to successfully integrate these employees into their existing workforce.

Many organisations have failed to keep millennial's engaged in the past, as the characteristics of this generation show that they tend to 'rattle the cage' in wanting to break down the inflexibility of the corporate workspace (Johnson, 2015). Millennial employees within American organisations are known to bring about significant change to corporate culture, including elements such as dress code, the inflexibility working hours, and the relationship between employee's and managers (Gursoy, Maier and Chi , 2008 as cited by Dimitrou and Blum, 2015). Change in corporate culture can be seen as a positive way for modern organisations to keep up with the dynamic pace of the current business environment. According to Johnson (2015), millennial employees offer organisations the opportunity to create a renewed, more energetic and dynamic work environment, which has the potential to foster higher levels of productivity and profitability.

Sujansky (2017) adds that that today's modern businesses that strive to capture a younger target market could gain great knowledge from their millennial employees, as they are known to possess inside knowledge of the needs and wants of the younger consumer market. However, one of the challenges organisations face when trying to retain these individuals is their lack of organisational loyalty (Ibid).

Sibarani et al (2015) found that when millennial's entered the working world their range of job opportunities was not as limited as the generations before them. This flexibility of choice impacted both the loyalty of these individuals and their need for change and flexibility. The millennial generation is also seen as more assertive than previous generations, in communicating what they value in a working role (Kelly, 2014). Millennials are also not hesitant to change their job roles or careers (ibid). Researchers have found that millennial employees will not allow themselves to be limited or tied to their desk jobs as the older generations may have, as they do not foresee the future growth of their careers ending with only one or two organisations (Wagner, 2017; Sujamsky 2017).

Younger employees are also making requests that were not considered by previous generations (Wagner, 2017). An example seen in the medical field was a younger employee applying for a sabbatical after a working period of five years (ibid). When looking at this request from the perspective of an older generation employee, this request would be viewed as a privilege that is reserved for individuals who have worked thirty years or more (ibid).

Millennials in the retail industry have previously portrayed millennial employees as untimely, state that they often request to leave early and repeatedly turn down overtime requests (Sujansky, 2017). Despite these negative traits millennial's still struggled to understand why they have not been promoted after just one year within a role (ibid). These factors can be viewed as some of the challenges managers face when trying to incorporate younger employees into an existing workforce.

Solnet and Hood (2008) as cited by Dimitriou and Blum (2015) points out that a significant variance lies between the work ethics of Millennials and the generations before them. Millennials adequate use and understanding of technology has worked in their favour of being highly effective employees.

When communicating with coworkers millennial's preferred to communicate through various electronic communication tools, unlike the baby boomer generation who would prefer human contact (Johnson, 2015). Their strong knowledge of technology and 'team mentality' has made them natural mentors in older generations (Wagner, 2017). As generations such as the Boomers are known to have begrudgingly taken to the adaption of technology and have not been overly exposed to collaboration as millennials have. Sujansky (2017) explains that millennial's are known to be well accustomed to working collaboratively, more so than previous generations. Aspects of teamwork have been well integrated into the developmental years of the generation, through sporting activities, school projects, group outings and various other collaborative activities. This could work in favour of managers overseeing multi-generations teams, as millennial's are said to naturally forge close relationships with co-workers (ibid).

Through the exploration of millennial characteristics, a clearer view is created of the need for managers to take a renewed approach to supervise employees (Houlihan,2007). As Dimitrou and Blum (2015) have recognised that by managers understanding the unique characteristics of each generation and by earnestly considering the needs of their employees, this could result in the process of building stronger employee-supervisor relationships, enhancing productivity, team collaboration and employee retention could be maintained.

4) Motivation millennial's in the workplace

Millennials like most generations appreciate managerial styles that make an effort to understand their personal and professional needs. Millennial's see great value in managers who mentor them, are positive, motivational, collaborative, achievement-oriented, and provide structure (Kelly, 2014).

Houlihan (2007) adds that if managers want to effectively lead their employees despite any generational differences, they would then need to consider and gain further understanding of what motivates these employees in addition to how they could retain and utilise the strengths of millennial employees. The following factors could be used to assist managers in this process

Make expectations clear

When supervising millennial's managers need to ensure they communicate their expectations of these individuals with the utmost clarity and set concrete goals in place in order for these employees to be fully productive and deliver effective results (Sujansky, 2017;Wagner (2017). Older generation managers, such as baby boomers should not expect their millennial employees to fall in line with the known procedures of a business or to fill in the gaps of existing business concepts without clear explanation (Sujamsky, 2017). Millennials are greatly appreciative of clear communication and are said to deliver effective and efficient results once they fully understand what is required of them.

Provide sufficient feedback.

Regular employee feedback and recognition is ranked as one of the key motivational factors for the millennial employees. Sujansky (2017) proposed that there is no previous generation that has received as much employee feedback and encouragement as millennials. This generation that has been raised with constant exposure to technology, which is said to have enabled their need for instant communication and gratification (ibid). Millennials have become accustomed to fast-paced and energy filled environments, and as a result, tend to seek a faster turn around of results.

Sujansky (2017) believes that it is due to this generation receiving a great deal of positive feedback, support and instant gratification from various mentors throughout their lives, they continue to expect that magnitude of feedback recognition when entering the working world.

Create opportunities to add value

When managing millennial's it is recommended to secure the hearts and minds of these employees to maximize their performance, as millennial's seek positions that will grant them greater purpose over the reward of a higher title or monetary incentive (Johnson, 2015). Although all generations enjoy monetary incentives, millennial's are also enticed by the idea of challenge and change (ibid).

Developing non-traditional career opportunities is of great importance to this new generation of workers (Wagner, 2017). By presenting new challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities, manager's will help millennial's feel valued (Sujansky (2017). These efforts could also build greater loyalty amongst a generation that is not infamous for their organisational loyalty (ibid). Organisations have come to recognise the need to invest in the growth and development of their employees when aiming to recruit and retain well sort after talented employees (Wagner,2017).

Create an environment of engagement

Researchers have come to the understanding that the millennial workforce is searching for a challenging, collaborative, creative, enjoyable, and financially rewarding working environment (Dimitriou and Blum, 2015). A study revealed that European Millennials desire: "a flexible work environment and work schedule, one that allows for work/life balance, teamwork and a collaborative culture, up-to-date technology, a forward-thinking, responsive, and innovative company, and streamlined business processes" (Forrester Consulting, 2006, p.9)

When communicating with managers, millennial's enjoy the ability to suggest solutions and ideas to their superiors, as it provides a sense of belonging, validation and supports their need to be creative (Dimitriou and Blum, 2015). Managers who create these dynamic and collaborative working environments are seen to benefit not only from the collaboration and productivity of millennial's but, all employees (Sujansky, 2017).)

The right organisational structure would need to be established to foster a more dynamic organisational culture, which will assist managers in building employee determination and career development (Wagner, 2017).

Conclusion

The literature discussed has demonstrated that the task of managing and motivating a diverse workforce is a challenging responsibility. The introduction of new generations into the workplace creates the potential for turbulence to be caused within the existing workforce, as there are various characteristics and facets to employees that managers would need to consider when leading different generations. The research has shown that millennials are known to cause some change and unsettlement to an existing working structure, which can be a challenge for their supervisors. However, research has also shown that the millennial employees can offer both the organisation and its managers the opportunity to bring about positive change and coloration to the existing structure. Millennial's are natural team members and will be able to learn from the experience of past generations and vice versa. By creating a fresh, more dynamic workplace culture that promises higher levels of productivity and profitability.

By exploring the various aspects of managing the millennial's, it becomes clear that there are still areas to be explored. Firstly, there is a need to look deeper into the experiences of managers of a multi-generational within an unexplored geographical region. Dimitrou and Blum (2015) have mentioned that there are limited sources of literature that explore the millennial workforce outside of American and European countries. This research of this study aims to explore beyond these geographical barriers, to understand the dynamics of millennial employees within a South African context. Secondly, Sujansky (2017) has mentioned that managers have previously experienced challenges when managing millennial employees in the retail industry. This study intends to look deeper into the dynamics of managers and millennial's employees within this sector. Lastly, modern organisations targeting younger consumer markets have recognised the need to utilise the tacit and primary knowledge of their millennial employees of the youth market Sujansky (2017). This study will explore the extent to which retail organisations like *Mode* have used their employee knowledge to their advantage.

Theoretical framework

John Adair's 1970's, action-centered leadership model, of team leadership and management has been chosen as the theoretical framework for this study. Frank Braun, Avital, and Martz, (2012) state that, Adair's model has created a fully integrated approach to concepts within managerial and leadership roles. Adair (2017) explains that his model relates to demands of modern business management and its flexibility can be used in varied team environments. The model is centered on three core principles of, achieving the task, managing the team and managing individuals.

The relevance of Adair's theory to this study stems from the need for managers to gain an in-depth to understand of the differences amongst the generations they manage and how managing a multi-generational workforce affects their individual role as a manager.

Many modern organisations today are now faced with the task of managing more than one generation. (Hershatter and Epstein,2012). Adair (2017) believes that truly successful managers and leaders can be built, by mastering the three key principles of his model.

Task

According to Adair (2017), the model allows managers to clarify their responsibilities for achieving tasks through:

- . Setting a clear direction and purpose in their activities and tasks.
- . Establishing sound strategies to achieve these tasks.
- . Setting guidelines and parameters in place to guide processes.
- . Reporting and reviewing the actions taken to revise new plans going forward.

Generational diversity in the workforce has brought great attention to the varied individual characteristics, behavioral patterns, and value systems of employees (Milligan, 2016). Millennial's as individuals are known to be task-driven individuals who are known to perform well in a collaborative environment and where personal interaction and feedback with managers is maintained (Sujansky, 2017).

Adair's model will aid the researcher in exploring how managers address employees on an individual level, as many individuals have affiliation needs and tend to seek acceptance and personal interaction from others in order to perform effectively (Hendricks and Cope, 2012).

Individual

When assessing the aspect of managing individuals, Adair (2017) believes that managers make take on their responsibility to:

- Understanding the individual differences in their team members.
- Identifying where their skills and strengths would be best utilised.
- Assessing and supporting individuals with presenting professional and personal growth opportunities.
- Ensuring individuals are given the opportunity for training and development.

Locmele-Lunova and Cirjevskis (2017) add that, successful organisational leaders must be prepared to understand generational differences and capitalise on the unique strengths and characteristics of each generation. Managers are not only responsible for ensuring they understand individual differences but overall team collaboration. Positive and productive teamwork assists intergroup relationships to be formed, thus reducing possible conflict (Milligan, 2016)

Team

When managing a team environment, Adair (2017) explains that managers must ensure:

- They encourage their team towards objectives that provide a collective sense of purpose.
- They allow team collaboration and sharing of knowledge to take place, to better foster the communication and element of team spirit.
- Sufficient feedback is given and teams are regularly consulted with on the overall progression of goals.

Adair's model will aid the researcher in exploring how managers could foster stronger employee-supervisors relationships. The three elements of this model will serve as a framework to for this study and will aid the researcher in understanding how managers would clarify employee tasks, form better understandings of employee traits and characteristics of individual employees, and facilitate better collaboration within the workforce.

Methodology

Research design

Research paradigm

The interpretivist approach will be applied to this research study. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016), the Interpretivist paradigm stems from the notion that human beings cannot be studied in the same manner in which researchers would study objects. The goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behavior rather than to generalise and predict causes and effects in an objective manner (ibid).

The researcher will investigate the experiences of managers within a multi-generational workforce and how the task of managing different generations could influence their managerial style. Moreover, this study aims to understand the differentiating nature of millennial employees in comparison to other generational cohorts, through exploring: motivational factors, work ethic and relationships with co-workers and managers (Locmele-Lunova and Cirjevskis, 2017). Therefore the exploratory approach of the interpretivist paradigm will allow the researcher to investigate the subjective experience of the managers (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012a). When applying the interpretivist approach, it is important for the researcher as a social actor to appreciate the differences between individuals (Saunders et al, 2012a). Human beings are constantly subjected to change as the environment in which they surround themselves is constantly influencing them (ibid). The use of the interpretivist paradigm will help the researcher to explore the journey of the selected managers and the possible changes they may have experienced when leading the millennial generation.

Research approach

This research study will take a qualitative approach. As the aim of the approach is to explore and understand why it is that certain phenomena occur. A qualitative study involves, collecting, interpreting and analysing a significant amount of data, to allow detailed descriptions and research findings, to be established from the research study (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). The significance of this research study taking a qualitative approach is to explore the lived experiences of business managers within South African fashion retail organisation. The study aims to identify and characterise how the manager's experiences of leading the millennial cohort may have altered their managerial approach in comparison to their approach taken with older generations. The researcher will collect, interpret and analyse the textual data gathered, in order to interpret and understand if changes in their managerial approach have occurred.

Case study

This study will serve as an exploratory case study. Case study research will allow the researcher to explore and analyse the study as a real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis and aid the explanation of both the process and outcome of a phenomenon (Yin, 1984 as cited by Zainal, 2007). This approach will require the researcher to select a small geographical area or a limited sample of participants for the study to be conducted (Zainal, 2007). This case study has been set to understand the different experiences of selected managers when managing various generational cohorts within *Mode*.

Cross-sectional design

The time dimension of this study will be captured by the use of a cross-sectional design. This design is used to gain an overall picture or snapshot of phenomena at a particular point in time (Saunders et al, 2012b). The design will gather data from respondents once, therefore indicating that the data collection will not be repeated (ibid). The researcher will conduct interviews with the selected participants within a specified time frame.

Inductive and deductive theorising

Inductive theorising and deductive theorising will be applied to this research study. According to Bezuidenhoud (2014) inductive theorising refers to the process of utilising data gained from the research study, to build up a theory that is adequately grounded the data collected from the study, this could then allow the researcher to contribute to developing broader theoretical constructs. The deductive approach will work in the opposite manner to inductive, by taking general understandings and refining them to a more specific construct (ibid). The researcher will shift from exploring broader aspects of a theory, and utilise them within the study that they are currently investigating (ibid).

Research plan

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis of this study will be brand managers within the planning division of *Mode* retail organisation.

Population

The population of this study: Fashion retail organisations within South Africa.

The sample of the study: Managers within South African organisations, as the study aims to gather the experience of managers when managing multi-generational teams.

Sampling

This study will be using non-probability sampling technique. This method will aid the researcher in selecting the sample from the population they are targeting (Pascoe,2014). When using non-probability sampling, the sample of a study is selected based on the subjective judgment of the researcher, rather than random selection (ibid).

Purposive sampling will be used to select the participants of this study. This non-probability sampling method allows the researcher to utilise their judgment and hand pick the participants based on a set of characteristics that are best suited to the researcher in pursuit of answering the research questions and to meet the objectives of the study (Saunders et al, 2012c). This study will include two brand managers within the planning department of *Mode*, as the participants of the study.

The researcher will ensure that they select individuals who hold a managerial status within the organisation. The researcher has specified that the participants are to be brand managers, as this role has allowed these managers to lead large teams of multi-generational employees.

As an employee of the organisation the researcher is aware that the planning department of *Mode* recruits a large percentage of millennial within the organisation. Therefore, the researcher believes that these individuals will possess sufficient knowledge and experience in interacting with both millennial employees and older generations. This will also help the researcher in their attempts to answer the research questions of the study.

Data collection method

This research study will be conducted using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing is said to be well suited for gathering qualitative data, as provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Longhurst, 2003). Furthermore, this interview method will allow the researcher to engage in a conversational interview with the participants. When conducting the interviews a list of pre-determined questions will serve as the 'interview guide' to address topics that need to be covered during the conversation (ibid). Although the researcher will follow the sequential order of the interview questions, the nature of the interview will allow for topical trajectories to be made during the conversation when the researcher feels it is necessary, these trajectories may stray from the guided questions, but will serve the purpose of exploring the topic further (Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Due to the questions being open-ended an occasional divergence from the interview questions, the interview will be tape-record to ensure all information is gathered and will then later transcribed for the analysis of the data.

The exploratory nature of this data collection tool will aid the process of gathering in-depth data in order to substantially answer the research questions (Longhurst, 2003). The researcher will also be able to probe the participants further to understand their experiences of managing millennial's, the differences that exist amongst cohorts and how the managers themselves may have adapted to overseeing multi-generational teams. See Appendix C for the semi-structured interview question used in this study

Data analysis method

Thematic analysis will be used to examine the data of this study. This approach is used to analyse various categories and present frequent themes or patterns that occur in the data collected (Ibrahim, 2012). Thematic analysis is considered appropriate for qualitative studies, which seek to discover findings through the interpretation of a phenomenon (Ibid). The researcher might find connections in the various concepts and opinions expressed by the managers and to the data that has been analysed in previous literature. This method will also aid the researcher enhancing the overall meaning of the study and in conferring the trustworthiness accuracy and intricacy of the study, (Ibid).

The use of thematic analysis will allow the researcher the flexibility of applying both inductive theorising and deductive theorising (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane,2006). When applying the inductive approach a majority of the data will start with a specific content, evolve into broader generalisations and lastly to develop theories (Ibrahim, 2012). This enables the researcher to gain a general understanding of the differences that managers have detected in each generation's individualities. Along with the change that may occur in managerial approaches when forming relationships with their millennial employees in comparison to their traditional employees. This process will then allow the findings generated, to be applied to more abstract and theoretical constructs surrounding this phenomenon. The deductive approach as a top-down approach will allow this researcher to find themes and similarities in the findings that are collected and coded from the study Bezuidenhoud (2014). The researcher will then be able to make connections in the findings to the objectives of research questions, thus allowing the researcher to test the existing theory through the research study and generate more grounded evidence (ibid).

Findings and interpretations

This research has been conducted at the South African fashion retail organisation *Mode*, which targets a younger to more conservative consumer base. Two participants were used; the names of these participants have been altered to protect their identities. The data of this study has been analysed using Braun and Clark's method of content analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2013). The themes were identified using both deductive and inductive methods. There are five main themes, which emerged from the study, namely: The demand for growth in millennial's, managing expectations, personal development, communication amongst employees and combining new ideas and experience. Each theme will be explained and assisted by quotations from the interview data and will then be connected to the existing literature

Narrative of participants

Participant one

Louise has held the title of a brand manager for the past four years and has been working at *Mode* for the past two years. She is 34 years old, which places her in within the older sector of the millennial generation according to the timeline of this study. Her journey as a brand manager started with another South African fashion retail business. Prior to this, she worked for a large online retailer in London, where she gained great knowledge of the online retail space. Her broad understanding of the online retail industry has had a significant impact on how she views the movement and progression of the fashion industry today. She is thoroughly enjoying her time at *Mode*. She feels that age is quite apparent in the culture of the business; *Mode* has a younger and more energetic feel to business. The team she currently manages comprises of a much younger demographic. She feels that there is a strong influence of the younger millennial generation coming through in the workspace and what is seen in the demand and forecasts of trends that are evolving into the fashion retail space.

When managing her team Louise takes time to understand the individual strengths and skills of her employees throughout their journeys and the unique characteristics each individual brings to and strives for in the team. When dealing with the growth of her employees Louise ensures that there is a good balance of vertical progression and personal development for team members. As they progress in their respective roles Louise feels that the next natural step for employees would be to mentor and coach others and that process she believes will encourage employees and assist them in their growth. This also feeds the sense of autonomy and independence to execute their own tasks. As Louise feels that there is a strong sense of independence and entrepreneurship that exists in the business. Louise motivates her employees to own their respective areas and create opportunities for her team to showcase their work to the relevant executives. When handing over more responsibility she ensures that she supplies them with the reassurance and support they require through their journey.

Louise aims to manage her team with as much humility and openness as possible. Louise strongly believes that all team members need to feel comfortable to communicate openly and honestly with each other, irrespective of their roles and titles. Working with varied individuals has also brought about a learning curve of how people work and think differently. Being in this managerial role Louise learned a great deal of how to manage the communication and understanding amongst employees, in order to build common ground. Louise strongly believes in sharing of ideas and opinions across employees and departments, in order to expand the thinking and strategy building. There is a strong element of collaboration and open communication in her managerial approach.

Participant two

Kingston has worked for *Mode* as a brand manager for the past three years. Within this time he has managed a diverse set of individuals, this is especially seen in the range of ages of his team. Some of his team members are relatively young and have just entered the business world from college, whilst the rest of his employees have been with the business for close to twenty years. The average age of his team currently sits around thirty years old. There is a mix of educational background amongst team members. His younger employees are known to all have various spectrums of tertiary education.

Whereas the older employees had joined *Mode at* a time where tertiary education was not required. Despite the individual differences, Kingston has created great collaboration amongst his team members. The significant differences between employees are seen in how they communicate, their drive for growth within the team and their personal energy.

Kingston strongly believes in investing in his team, through teaching, mentoring and trusting them with the delivery tasks. He acknowledges that there are robust structures and training facilities in place that allow for employees to progression vertically and gain a better understanding of the business. However, he finds great pleasure in the act of personally growing his employees, especially the newer employees, as there are many avenues in which he can grow them in their respective roles. Kingston is also trying to introduce the act of mentoring and coaching to his older and more experienced employees, as he believes that this creates an opportunity to grow newer employees but for the older employees to evolve into greater positions within the organisation. This process can be seen as an act of passing down and sharing of knowledge in order to create more autonomy. Kingston strongly believes in growing his team members and ensuring they develop a well-rounded and in-depth understanding of their roles. This has enabled him to trust his employees with more responsibility and allow them to be more autonomous in the roles and decisions. Kingston believes in leading his team in a fairly unrestricted manner. He finds that it important for his team members to create their own journey, to take risks and try new avenues. As he feels that he learned the most when his managers gave him the opportunity to run his own projects. When motivating his team he focuses on keeping a positive outlook in all circumstances, he focuses on their ability as a team and the end goal, as he strongly believes that their collaboration is what drives their results.

Discussion of themes

Theme 1: The demand for growth in millennial's

Managers have noticed a pronounced demand for progression and growth amongst their younger team members. These employees tend to fall between the ages of early to mid twenties and aim to progress faster and much younger than the generations before them. These millennial's are said to be intensely goal driven and are seen as quite demanding individuals.

Louise: "...below that sort of quarter life crisis um are very demanding in what they want and how they want to progress....I think the only thing I've noticed is the strive for them to want to achieve alot younger. "

Louise:" yeah they come in wanting, they want to get promoted a lot quicker."

Kingston: "Yes I mean there are challenges, like your younger employees are very goal driven and goal orientated. So I want to do A,B,C,D and check the boxes and then on the flip side once the boxes are checked they have this feeling like its done dusted now I've mastered that skill because I've done it ."

Existing research has shown that the millennial generation is often accused of being entitled and arrogant in their approach, as they are demanding of their employee needs and confident in their ability to succeed (Wagner, 2017). Kelly (2014) agrees, explaining that, this generation is typically more assertive than previous generations when communicating what they value in a working role. Researchers have found that millennial employees will not allow themselves to be limited or tied to their desk jobs older generations may have in the past. Millennials also do not foresee the growth of their careers ending with only one or two organisations (Wagner, 2017; Sujamsky 2017).

Theme 2: Managing expectations of millennial's.

The findings have shown that managers find it challenging to manage the expectation for growth in their younger employees. Despite the clear succession plan has been outlined for all employees of the department, managers find the expectations and time in which younger employees expect to achieve their goals can become unrealistic. As younger employees have a need to progress a lot faster.

Louise : "... its really about managing that space really and its managing what the requirements are and if I think they are ready and I think the biggest challenge

Kingston "its kind of 'tick, tick tick, ok I've mastered this now I'm done' and its like yeah but you've done it once, so you have to kind of do it 100 times before you master it. Its not a once off thing and its that kind of management that is kind of difficult and also managing expectations in what they want in their careers..There's a clear path of 'I wanna go, here,here,here' and their expectation is that it's a 2 year plan but if you being really realistic it is like a 5 year plan and its that of trying to reign in their expectation.

Managers in the retail industry have found the task of managing millennials frustrating at times (Sujansky, 2017). Managers have noted that millennial's want to progress faster, receive more recognition and do not put in the extra hours when needed. However, millennial employees still fail to understand why they have not been promoted after just one year within a role (ibid). These factors can be viewed as some of the challenges managers face when trying to incorporate younger employees into an existing workforce. The findings have expressed the impatience of millennial's wanting to move on to the next challenge and their resistance to stay in the same role for extended periods of time.

Theme 3: Personal development

Managers have found the nuances and general approaches to managing multi-generational teams quite standard. However, it is the personal management that tends to be more difficult. Whilst outlining the tasks and succession plan for team members is fairly clear-cut, the softer skill of managing employees tends to be more challenging. Personal management is seen as a journey of relationship building and close teamwork over a period of time. This is the space where managers are able to unpack the strengths, skills, and emotions of their team members. A challenge that managers have faced in the areas of personal development is the ability to develop the more experienced and older employees and explore how they may be able to grow these employees further in their established roles.

Louise: "I've always said technical proficiency is a easy thing to own and to master but its actual people management that people need to realise."

Louise: "... I think its just important to kind of just spend some time with people most of the time, i think after about 3-4 months you kind on how people deal when they're stressed when they are happy when they are relaxed you kind of have to go through those motions with people. "

Kingston "...my struggle is and its not the age thing it's the experience thing , cause im really good with the younger trainee employees cause its kind of teaching them this is 'how we do something' but the hard thing for me is the more softer skills on the experienced side which is hard for me to kind of mentor on it..."

Researchers have found that when managers strive to effectively lead multi-generational or multicultural teams it is essential that they consider and gain further understanding of what motivates these employees in addition to how they could retain and utilise the strengths of employees (Houlihan,2007). By managers understanding these unique characteristics and by sincerely considering the needs of their employees, could enable the process of building stronger employee-supervisor relationships, enhancing productivity, team collaboration and employee retention could be maintained (Dimitrou and Blum ,2015).

As employees appreciate managerial styles that make an effort to understand both personal and professional needs. Millennial's see great value in managers who mentor them, are positive, motivational, collaborative, achievement-oriented, and provide structure (Kelly, 2014).

Theme 4: Communication amongst employees.

The importance of communication has been seen across genders. The manner and frequency in which managers communicate with their employees tends to differ amongst different age employees. The act of communication also relates to the need for managers to recognise the form of communication that will suit all employees, to ensure clear and open communication is maintained.

4.1) Communication with older employees: The older employees who are quite comfortable and experienced in their roles require less one on one time with their managers. They are also portrayed as quite reserved and tend to shy away from confrontation.

Kingston: "...I say the older crowd they kind of know where they are going. Like if I count time lines to it I would probably give once a month feedback to a younger person and an older employee every like 6 months..."

Kingston: "...the older generations are bit more closed up ... today I had a discussion where there was a week boil up and we went outside and had a very private discussion and its more of 'I don't want to put you out but' and I'm like 'no its you that's out, just come to me I'm happy to listen'... the older generation are a lot quieter and would like little one on one chats and prefer to catch up that way and don't speak up as much and are very comfy and fit in the teams nicely"

4.2) Communication with younger employees: The younger employees are in need of constant communication and confirmation of their tasks, they also tend to be more outspoken. Another common trait found in younger employees is their need for feedback. They tend to thrive on constant confirmation of how they are performing and how they can improve. These employees require more feedback than older employees. Managers are said to spend longer and have more frequent catch-ups with younger employees.

Kingston "...on the younger side you have lots of energy, lots of questions and generally the louder bunch.. the one on one interaction is a bit different so with the younger crowd they will happily come sit at my desk and talk personally, privately and everything... "

Kingston: "...they come to you with a lot more simpler questions and needing just more, not guidance but consent on everything they do. They ask 'So like can I do this?' and I'm like 'yes but you know you can', but its just that I need to just double check that they can.... the one thing I found is that feedback is like a buzzword for the younger crowd they kind of want to know all the time how they are doing 'am I performing, am I performing am I progressing?'"

Researchers Sujansky (2017) and Wagner (2017) found that, when supervising millennial's, managers need to ensure they communicate their expectations of these individuals with the utmost clarity and set concrete goals in place in order for these employees to be fully productive deliver effective results. Regular employee feedback and recognition is ranked as one of the key motivational factors for the millennial employees. Sujamsky (2017) proposed that there is no previous generation that has received as much employee feedback and encouragement as Millennials. It is believed that it is due to this generation receiving a great deal of positive feedback, support and instant gratification from various mentors throughout their lives, they continue to expect that magnitude of feedback recognition when entering the working world (ibid).

4.3) The preference for verbal communication

It has been discovered that employees and some managers prefer to communicate through verbal communication as appose to electronic communication. These individuals feel this medium helps maintain good lines of open communication and builds a clear understanding of executing tasks.

Louise: *“...I am very specific about how I like to put my information together, I put them in the email calendar and I slot them into times and assign tasks and I expect people to be prepped to it and people weren’t prepped and I was really unsure of why and it came across that they relate more to work being verbalised I also realised that I cant lead by delegation and expect that people are going to slot in...So they actually took to the more verbal communication and I found that was very fair, them telling me that they did not understand I think it opened my eyes to how people like to relate to each other as well.”*

Kingston: *“...Yeah so for me I don’t like emails, even if it is coming to ask you a simple question I would rather just come over to your desk and ask I hate emails, yeah I’m a very ‘lets talk’ person. “*

Previous literature has found that the millennial age prefers to communicate via technological devices, whereas older employees, such as the Baby boomers preferred personal communication (Houlihan, 2007). However, this study has found that verbal communication is preferred amongst the millennial employees as the most effective form of communication. Researchers have also found that older generation managers, should not expect their millennial employees to fall in line with the known procedures of business activities or expect them to grasp existing business concepts without clear explanation (Sujamsky, 2017). This is a characteristic Louise has learned through a process of working with younger millennial’s.

Theme 5: Combining new ideas and experience

Managers have noticed that good collaboration has been formed between their younger and older employees. Their younger employees have the ability to bring new, fresh ideas to the team and have a closer interaction with the businesses target market. The older employees have the experience and historical knowledge of the business, which helps materialise these ideas into holistic strategies and allows the team to expand their horizons going forward.

Louise: *"I think it really is about the personal engagement you know different people bring different things to the table I think trainees and even our super young employees that are straight out of varsity give a different opinion of how they see the customers take because they are also closer .It is actually quite enlightening to see their opinions. I do have people that work with me that are my age and I think that level of experience is quite important as well and I think it just takes a bunch of people to make this work and there difference experiences or contribute"*

Kingston: *"... Ya, and a lot of learning from each other if that makes sense, in most of the pairings in my area its more experienced with a slightly with a.. Well not necessarily more experienced but a older with a younger and that equates to more experienced with less experience and it kind of lots of historic knowledge lots of new ideas and it kind of comes together quite nicely.."*

Wagner (2017) stated that collaboration is bound to take place across generations, as younger generations possess traits that an older employee could possibly learn from and vice versa. Millennials are also known to be well accustomed to working collaboratively, more so than previous generations. Teamwork was well integrated into childhood and developing years, through sporting activities, school projects, group outings and various other collaborative activities (Sujansky, 2017). This will work in favour of managers overseeing multi-generations teams, as millennials are said to naturally forge close relationships with co-workers. Research has also found that today's modern businesses who strive to capture a younger target market could gain great knowledge from their millennial employees, as they are known to possess inside knowledge of the needs and wants of the younger consumer market (Sujansky,2017).

Discussion of research findings and theoretical framework

John Adair's integrated model for team leadership and management has formed the theoretical framework of this study. Millennial's as individuals are known to be task-driven individuals who are known to perform well in a collaborative environment and where personal interaction and feedback with managers is maintained (Sujansky, 2017). The following headings illustrate these characteristics of millennial's by discussing how the key elements of team, task, and individuals of Adair's model have emerged in the findings of this study.

1) Team

This theme explores how managers are able to motivate their team towards achieving their objectives and allows a sense of purpose to be fostered Adair (2017). Managers will create an environment that allows team collaboration and sharing of knowledge to take place, communication within the team and enhance team spirit (ibid). The manager would also provide regular feedback to teams on the overall progression of goals and objectives (ibid).

The findings show that managers have allowed their team members to find their sense of purpose by allowing the teams to take more ownership of their tasks. Kingston explains that he tends to shy away from being too rigid or rules based and encouraged his team members to try new avenues and take risks, as this is where he learned the most in his journey. Louise mentions that they work in a fairly entrepreneurial space where teams are able to own their work and given the opportunity to present to executives. This is an affirming process for employees as it recognizes all the work that they have put into succeeding in their tasks. These managers are strong believers in encouragement and motivating team members to create and build their own strategies.

Managers also ensure they support and invest in their teams wherever they can; they are strong believers in their success being derived from a collective effort. Kingston ensures he maintains a positive outlook in all circumstances to keep his team focused and motivated. Louise strongly believes in the need to build trust and honesty within her team, as it has largely contributed to the fostering open communication and overall collaboration in her team.

Sharing of knowledge has been seen between older and younger managers have noted the combinations of new ideas that the younger employees bring to the team are coupled with the more historic knowledge of older employees. This is said to have aided the teams in building stronger and more holistic strategies. Managers supply regular feedback on both team and company performance. However, they do find that feedback is frequently demanded with younger employees as want to be constantly informed on how they are performing and progressing.

2) Task

This theme looks into how managers clarify the responsibilities of employees to achieve set tasks. It evaluates whether clear direction and purpose have been set Adair (2017). Sound strategies and guidelines would need to be established by managers to guide the process to achieve these tasks (ibid). Once the tasks have been fulfilled, managers are the responsible for reporting and reviewing the actions taken and to devise new plans going forward (ibid).

The findings have shown that a sense of independence and autonomy has been created in the team dynamic. Team members are given a great sense of responsibility and ownership as they progress. The act mentoring and teaching supplied by both managers and older employees has enabled trusted in employees to deliver results and to be supplied with more tasks and responsibilities. As a result, employees are able to drive their own performance more frequently and are given the opportunity to grow, evolve and fully understand their areas in the process. The regular feedback received from managers has also supplied employees with clear direction on their tasks, where they are heading and how they are progressing. Open and clear communication has been a significant factor in ensuring tasks is executed effectively. Louise has learned managers tend to be specific about how they relay information. However, it is important that they take care not to lead by delegation and expect that employees to fall in line. The medium and manner in which managers communicate must relate be effectively received by all team members.

3) Individual

When assessing the aspect of managing individuals, it is important that managers understanding the individual differences in their team members (Adair,2017). They would need to identify where their employee's skills and strengths would be best utilised and ensure they assess and support individuals with presenting professional and personal growth opportunities (ibid). Lastly, the opportunity for training and development must be presented to team members (ibid).

The findings show that managers find that personal engagement is an important element of managing a diverse team. As each individual brings something new and unique to the team. Findings show that younger employees are able to supply a closer and more insightful outlook on the demands of consumers, as they are closer to the customer base. Whilst the older employees possess more historic knowledge about the business. Managers find that the strength of their team and their ability to deliver positive results stems significantly from the collaboration of these various generations and their sharing of knowledge.

When building employee-supervisor relationships, managers find that over time they are able to unpack the individualities of their employees, as each employee has their own challenges and motivators that they strive for, this characteristic is no different across the genders or ages. Managers find great importance in spending time with employees and over a sufficient period of time managers in order to gauge how employees deal with their emotions in various circumstances as they go through the paces of their respective roles.

Managers have found it particularly difficult to deal with managing the expectations of their younger employees. As these goal-driven and demanding natured employees tend to want to grow faster and to achieve a lot younger than previous employees. Managers feel that creating progression, development, and growth is always going to naturalise into individual positions, however, they need to ensure their employees are fully equipped and well-informed to progress and grow into new roles. By managers incorporating the element of mentorship and coaching into growing both their younger and older employees has aided the process of growth.

Trustworthiness of the study

In order for a study to be deemed trustworthy, it has to be both valid and reliable. These elements add to the credibility of the study. Trustworthiness is a significantly important element in qualitative studies, as it facilitates the understanding of a phenomenon within a specific context (Koonin, 2014). The validity and reliability of this qualitative study cannot be objectively measured; the responses of participants are based on each participant's individual experience (Koonin, 2014). Apart from the elements of validity and reliability, Koonin (2014) states that the trustworthiness of a research study can be determined based on the following four subcategories:

- Credibility: relates to how accurately the researcher has interpreted the data provided by participants. The researcher has ensured that the findings generated from participants were described in a coherent and unbiased manner, which has enable participants to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the research study (Koonin,2014)
- Transferability: relates to the ability of the research study to deliver the similar results, had the study been conducted by another researcher. This will then allow for the study to be generalised. To certify transferability, the researcher has ensured the participant's responses were transcribed in their entirety and in an unbiased manner, allowing the generated results to be as accurate as possible (Koonin,2014).
- Dependability: in order for the research study to be dependable, there would need to be a rigorous process put in place which integrates how data is collected, analysed and results are generated. The researcher has managed the data collection process proficiently, by ensuring all data is gathered and recorded directly from the participant to confirm that the information presented in this study is communicated in a coherent and reliable manner (Koonin,2014).

- Confirmability: expresses whether the findings flow and translate accurately from the data collected. The research process should be described entirely, in order to assist external parties in analysing the research design. Therefore, in order for this research study to be seen as confirmable, the researcher ensured that they collected and interpreted the interview data accurately. This will then allow for external parties examining the data of this research study to reach a similar conclusion as the researcher and confirm the findings generated from collected and analysed data (Koonin,2014).

Overall the researcher has maintained consistency throughout the data collection process. A uniform process was applied to gathering and analysing the data of each participant and used to build themes from both data sets. The research methodology and design have remained constant throughout the study. A constant sample size of two brand managers within *Mode's* planning department was maintained. The research phenomenon was explored through one-on-one, recorded semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were closely aligned with the central research questions and have remained consistent with both participants.

Conclusion

Research Questions

The two key research questions of this study were designed to guide this report in both the literature review and the formulation of the interview questions. Given the interest surrounding the millennial generation in the workplace, these research questions were generated to understand the experiences of managers when managing the millennial cohort in comparison to the older generation employees and to understand how managerial approaches may have shifted in building relationships with employees. The findings below demonstrate the interview data has answered all each research question.

Question one: What are the manager's experiences of working with millennial's?

- What business challenges do managers face when working with the millennial cohort?
- What potential benefits does the millennial cohort offer to the

The first research question aimed to gain an overall sense of manager's involvement of managing the millennial generation. This question explored the challenges and learning curves managers have experienced along the journey of building relationships with younger employees. In addition to understanding the positive attributes managers have come to learn about millennial's generation.

The findings show that one of the challenges managers have faced when leading millennial's is their demand for growth, as millennial's want to progress at younger and a faster rate than previous generations. Although these employees are admired for their tenacious and goal-driven attitudes, the timeline they set for achieving their goals in the business are often unrealistic. Managers have also found that younger employees tend to require more feedback on how they performing and confirmation on executing tasks than older employees. Personal development has been portrayed as quite a challenging journey for managers, especially when leading older employees who have been with the business for several years. Managers have found it difficult to coach and guide older and experienced employees on how to grow.

Older employees have been characterised as more reserved and closed off which has made the communication process with these employees a lot slower when compared to the younger millennial employees. Younger employees tend to be more outspoken and communicate more often. Millennials are said to supply a sense of energy and youthfulness to the culture of the business. They are also said to contribute unique and fresh ideas to their teams, which aid the team in staying relevant and understanding the needs their target market. Managers have noted that there has been great collaboration seen between both older and younger employees, which have been a great benefactor to the teams success.

Questions two: What differences are experienced when managing millennial's in comparison to managing older employees within organisation?

- How have managers dealt with the difference of millennial employees?
- How have managers changed their managerial styles to adapt to leading multi-generational teams?

The second question explores the general differences between the younger and older generations that managers have encountered when working with a multigenerational team. The sub-questions look deeper into this aspect, to understand how managers have learned to manage these differences that exist between employees. In addition to how they as managers may have adapted their managerial approach to deal with these differences more effectively.

Managers have learned to adapt and understand the differences of millennial employees and older employees over time. Managers have had to ensure they manage the expectations of millennial employees and help them develop more realistic goals and timelines to achieve those goals. As a result a significant amount of effort has been put into mentoring, and teaching employees to stimulate growth within respective roles. Managers have also identified the need to encourage older employees to mentor and coach younger and less experienced employees, to create a path for growth for both generations of employees. The findings indicate that the forms of communication and differ between generations and that millennial's tend to communicate best through verbal communication rather than electronic mediums.

Managers needed to recognise that their younger employees are more outspoken and need to communicate more frequently, the older generation tend to be more reserved, prefer to engage in more private discussions and take a longer time to express their feelings or opinions. The need for feedback on growth and performance is prominent amongst the younger generation and so managers have learned to touch base with their millennial's more frequently. Managers have come to understand the dynamics between team members over time and ensure that they create a comfortable space and are approachable in order to foster employee communication and collaboration. In addition to this was the need to analyse how to pair the personalities and strengths of different generational employees, to ensure there is a sound relationship for good collaboration. Through their time in the corporate retail industry, Louise and Kingston have both learned a great deal from being managed and have used this as a guide to how they could foster better trust, honesty and open communication in their teams.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations of this study relate to whether the researcher has conducted the research study with integrity. Thus, the researcher would have had to remain trustworthy, respectful of its participants. This will entail ensuring the promise of confidentiality, anonymity and the information gathered is presented in its entirety (Louw, 2014).

Ethical conduct of the research population has been maintained to ensure the integrity of the research. The researcher informed the organisation of the nature of the study and the intention to conduct the research with the organisation. A gate keeper letter was the issued to the researcher, confirming the organisations understanding of the research study and giving the researcher consent to proceed with the research process, see Annexure C. Once the approval was given through a gatekeeper's letter, from the selected organisation the research process was started. Prior to the interview process, the researcher supplied the selected participants with a verbal explanation of the nature of the study and allowed the participants the opportunity to decide whether they would or would not like to volunteer to be apart of the study.

The participation of the subjects should be voluntary and provided without coercion or deception (Louw, 2014). The researcher must certify that one's position does not misguide the participants in any way and that they are not harmed or made uncomfortable in any way (ibid).

When beginning the interview process, each of the participants received informed consent forms, see Annexure A. informed consent, this document forms one of the key document to ensure the participant has been well informed of the nature of the study and has knowingly consented to partake in the study (Louw, 2014). In order to eliminate any potential ethical problems, the nature of the study was disclosed to all participants (ibid). An explanation was given to the participants as to why they will not be obligated to participate in the study and have the right to withdraw at any time during the process by rendering a verbal notice to the researcher (ibid). The request for the interview process to be recorded was supplied. Participants were also assured that all personal information such as their: names, background information, and responses have been kept anonymous and confidential (ibid). The recordings will be stored in a secure folder on the researcher's computer. The evidence gained from these interviews will then be destroyed after a period of five years.

Final conclusions of the study

Millennials have been portrayed to have a strong presence within the organisation. *Mode* is said to have a younger and more energetic feel to their corporate culture, which is fostered by its employees. This new generation brings a set of new characteristics. This study validated key characteristics of millennial employees. These being their need to be around supportive managers and leaders who will supply them constant feedback and communication, their strong demand for growth and progression and their ability to contribute new and relevant ideas for the business to reach their target audience. Millennials have shown passion and enthusiasm to grow and build successful career paths within this organisation.

The findings of this study show that managers have recognised and acknowledged the characteristics of not only the millennial generation but older generations as well. They have recognised the differences and individualities of all employees and have altered their managerial approaches accordingly to ensure they communicate effectively and create growth for their team as a whole.

The research has shown that both managers take great pride in building success through team collaboration. These actions will aid managers in maintaining a culture of employee engagement, prevent conflict, and enhance retention of employees.

Implications and findings for future research

Implications

The findings include an understanding of the manager's experience of managing both the millennial cohort and older generations. The key differences in these generations have been shown, along with how managers have adapted their approach to fostering successful employee-supervisor relationships with each generation. The findings of this study could possibly add value to *Mode* in addition to other South African retail organisations that would like to gain an understanding of the changes their managers are likely to face when overseeing the millennial generation in comparison to older generational cohorts.

The need to utilise the implicit knowledge of millennial has been highlighted in this study as this could assist modern organisations in capturing their desired target market. Thus probing more reason for organisations to invest more time into training and trying to retain these employees. This researcher study could also further educate corporate managers on how to engage effectively and collaboratively with their younger generation employees. They will also understand the unique differences in all generations how their managerial approach could potentially impact the success of their employee-supervisor relationship. Furthermore, there lies the potential for managers to foster a culture of employee engagement, prevent conflict, and enhance retention of employees.

Recommendations for future research

Further recommendations for this study can include a larger sample. As the participants were limited to two managers in a fairly large department, both of which fall under the millennial generation. This could have possibly impacted the results of the study, as managers with the Generation X or Baby boomer generation may have provided a more objective view. Future researchers would need to consider these aspects when selecting their samples. The objective of this research can also be applied to other retail organisations in South Africa, as the culture and ratio of millennial employees could be different.

This study has also highlighted the need to explore the relationships that millennials have fostered with their managers. By considering the perspective of millennials of how managers have supported their growth and progression in the workplace. The aspects of millennial employees could offer a different view on the key characteristics of the cohort. Millennials could also provide greater insight into the experience being managed by individuals of older generations and how this has impacted their employee-supervisor relationship.

Limitations

The limitations or constraints of a study are known to be beyond the control of the researcher (Eslin, 2014). The key limitations of the study firstly include that the researcher may hinder the transparency of the interview process by being an employee of the organisation. This might lead participants to being less descriptive in their responses due to the shared general knowledge of how the business operates. Secondly, future research of the topic has been limited due to the budget and time restriction of the study. Thirdly, the focus of the study has been placed solely on one specific fashion retail organisation in South Africa and a select number of participants. Therefore, one cannot confirm to what extent one could generalise the study's findings to other fashion retail organisations. Lastly, This study solely focused on the managerial aspect of working with the millennial generation, which creates a need to explore the understanding of millennial's experiences of being managed.

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Annexure A: Consent forms

Appendix A: Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is Ashleigh Henley and I am a student at Varsity College, Durban North. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Amanda Cox about the experiences of brand managers when managing millennial employees. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of whether managers have altered their managerial styles when overseeing younger employees in comparison to older employees.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will you be doing if you participate in my study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit the title of a brand manager. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to conduct one interview with you. The interview will take approximately one hour of your time. It will be scheduled at a time that is most convenient for both of us, and will take place at a venue that is most comfortable for you. I will be asking you questions on your experience of managing both younger and older generation employees, and how this affected your managerial approach.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your managerial approach when leading individuals of various generations. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do you have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is purely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will your identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor and myself will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at the organisation, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my honours degree in strategic management. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Ashleigh Henley
0827808169
ashleighhenley04@gmail.com

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Amanda Cox
0826997972
coxamandajane@gmail.com

Consent form for participants

I, [REDACTED], agree to participate in the research conducted by Ashleigh Henley about the experiences of managing millennials in comparison to older employees.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

[REDACTED]
Signature

24 May 2018
Date

Consent form for audio-recording.

I, Alexandra Clark, agree to allow Ashleigh Henley to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the experiences of managing millennials in comparison to older employees.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.


Signature

24 May 2018
Date

Consent form for participants

I, [REDACTED], agree to participate in the research conducted by Ashleigh Henley about the experiences of managing millennials in comparison to older employees.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. I agree to be interviewed for this research.
2. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
3. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
4. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
5. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

[REDACTED]
Signature

25/05/18
Date

Consent form for audio-recording.

I, [REDACTED], agree to allow Ashleigh Henley to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the experiences of managing millennials in comparison to older employees.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

1. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
2. The recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer.
3. Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

[REDACTED]
Signature

25/05/18
Date

Annexture B: Data collection questions

Interview questions

- 1) What age are you?
- 2) How long have you been in your current role?

Team

- 3) How would you describe the demographics of your team?

Probe

- What age range would they fall under?
- What would be the split of your older and younger employees?

- 4) What is it like to manage a team across a range of generations?

Probe

- What would you say the challenges are?
- What are the positives?
- Are there any differences you have noticed between the generations?

- 5) Can you describe the teamwork dynamics?

Probe

- What is the collaboration like amongst generations?
- What is the communication like, between you and your team members?
- Sharing information, within the team

- 6) How do you facilitate and motivate your team?

Individuals

7) How do you manage different ages of individuals on your team?

- Do you notice the difference?
- Would you use different approaches for different ages?

8) How well would you say you know each team member's strengths and skills?

9) What contribution do you feel you make to the growth of individuals, in terms of their professional development?

Task

10) Describe how you assign tasks to individuals and your team?

Probe:

- Means of communication (verbal or online)
- How clear and direct would this be?
- Guidelines and parameters in place?

11) How do you provide feedback to your team?

Probe

- Individually ?
- As a team ?

Annexure C: Gatekeeper letter

Annexure D: Ethical Clearance letter

Annexture E: Originality report