

Exploring the Role of Metropolitan Open Space Systems in Building Meaningful City Brands: a D'MOSS Case Study

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Creative Brand Leadership

at the

Independent Institute of Education: Vega School

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March 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Dissertation submitted for the Master of Arts Creative Brand Leadership at Vega is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree at another university or higher education institution.

ABSTRACT

With a global movement and a greater focus on the greening of cities, metropolitan open space systems could add significant value and play a role in building meaningful city brands. This study explores city brands in relation to measures for building meaningful brands. Three cities, New York, Sydney and Vancouver, are assessed as best practice case studies to determine the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands. The findings are useful for strategic planners in positioning a city as a meaningful brand in the minds of local, national and international audiences. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore through Visual Narrative Inquiry the opinions, perceptions and lived experiences of Durban residents and the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS). The Durban beachfront, flagship of D'MOSS is a large stretch of paved promenade and landscaping designed to conserve biodiversity and provide amenities to residents and tourists of Durban, South Africa. The themes derived from the Visual Narrative Inquiry are triangulated with the meaningful city brand metrics and the principles of the three best practice city brand case studies. Guided by the findings from the literature review, the Visual Narrative Inquiry focuses on an insider perspective (the residents of Durban) by exploring their emotional connection with the city and the space (the Durban Beachfront as part of D'MOSS). Findings reveal that metropolitan open space systems can help unify communities, build positive city brand associations, and help residents of a city to be happier, healthier and to make their lives more meaningful. For a city brand to be a meaningful brand, strategic planners must first consider the internal stakeholders and residents, suggesting that the design of metropolitan open space systems must be implemented with the residents as a co-designed, community driven project, and second to that considering tourism. Through the development of key projects within metropolitan open space systems that offer shared value to multiple audiences (such as the Durban beachfront) cities can unify an audience and a diverse population in a single space, catering to the residents' needs. In doing so a city brand can help residents to connect, become more tolerant and positive about their future and their emotional connection with, and investment in the city.

Key words

D'MOSS, Metropolitan Open Space Systems, Meaningful City Brand, Urban Open Spaces, City Brand Building, Place Branding, Durban Beachfront, Visual Narrative Inquiry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I began teaching at Vega, I always felt a little disconnected. I had an undergraduate degree and post graduate diploma in architecture, and years of experience working in a design and branding field and here I found myself teaching at a school that specialised in brand. When I first thought about doing my master's at Vega, encouraged by Mary Robinson, Amy Mitchell and Siobhan Gunning, I had no intention of linking architecture to my study – thank you Naretha Pretorius for encouraging me to link the two.

It's been a long journey, and I have been tested thoroughly. I sold my house, have moved twice, fallen in and out of love. Work got more intense. Covid happened. Durban Riots. Through it all my cat Willow sat by my side, or on my lap, and on my notes (and laptop) and gave his stern opinion about what I was doing. I thought about quitting often.

To Mary, Amy and Siobhan, thank you for pushing me into this. To my best friends, Scott and Bennie that have stood by me through all of this – thank you. To my dad for giving me space (and my desk), thank you. Nina de Klerk and Carla Enslin – thank you for your support and assistance during the process, the links, the discussions, the articles were all a great help. Cecilia, Theresa and Thembi – your support from the library was amazing. I owe tremendous gratitude to my participants for the long talks and sharing your stories with me. Connecting with you made this feel more worthwhile.

Naretha – I can't even begin to express my gratitude towards you. You're an eternal optimist. You're amazingly supportive and you encourage and nudge and push the likes of which I've never experienced before. You always seem to know exactly what to say to motivate me. Working with you on this project has been amazing. I'm super grateful that you were my supervisor, and super grateful that I work for you. Thank you.

I have learnt so much from this experience. I am a better teacher for it. I love my city more than ever because of it. I love my job more than ever because of it. I am also so glad that I'm done and proud of myself for doing it. I wish my mom were here to see this. She would have been proud of me.

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VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THIS RESEARCH DOCUMENT

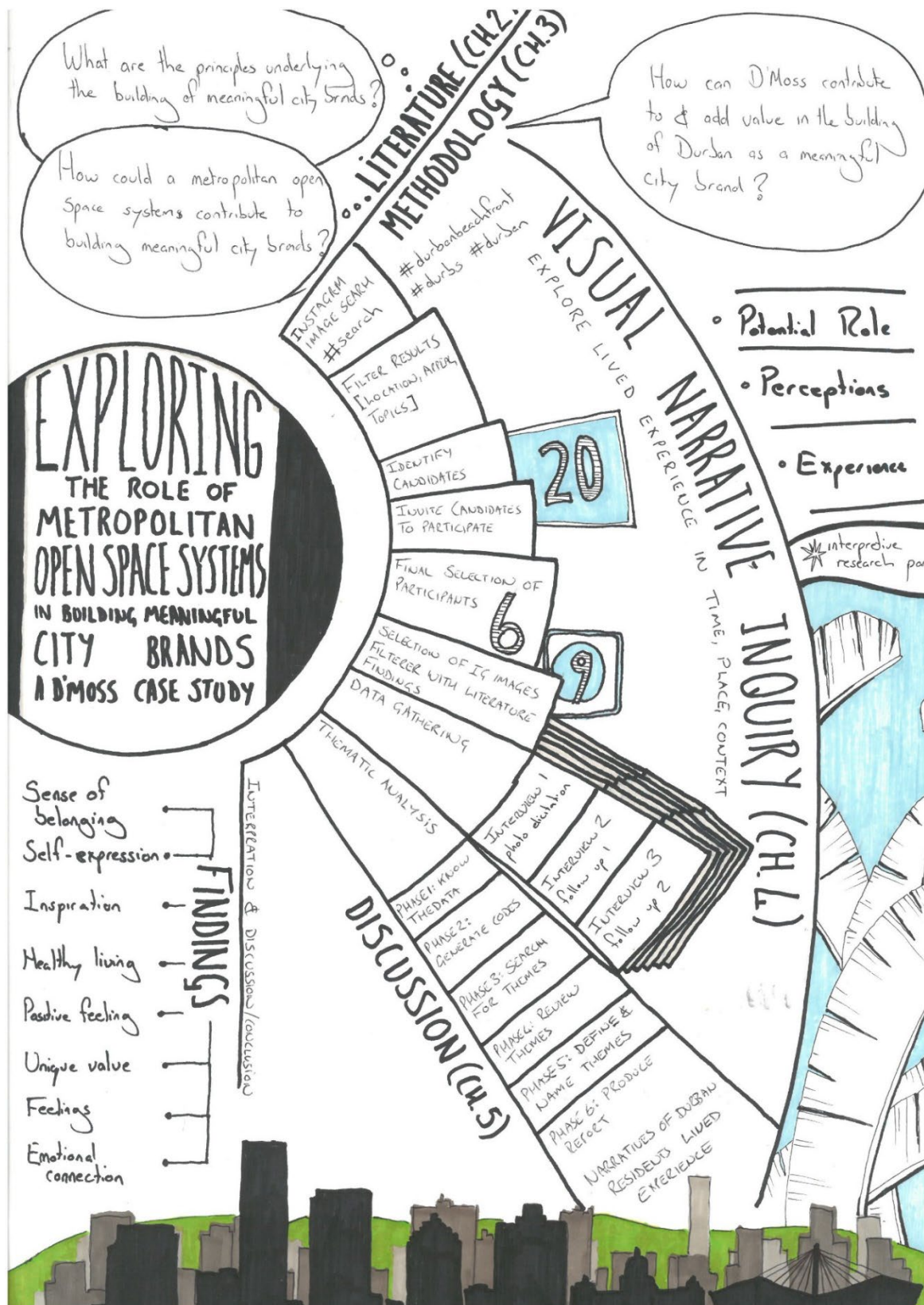


Figure 1 - A visual representation of this research document (Simpson, 2020)

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: A background to the study

1.1 Introduction

Now, more than ever before in history, brands influence the beliefs and behaviours of people across the globe and can unite individuals through ‘shared goals, principles and a desired future’ (Ricca, 2021: 5). When people become emotionally involved with things of independent value, like people and places, they are more likely to attach meaningfulness to those things or places (Yeoman, 2019). By placing human experience at the centre of the brands focus, brands can become ‘the connective tissue between business and society, investors and people, profit and purpose, leaders and constituents, present consumption and future resources’ (Ricca, 2021: 4).

Cities ‘have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word’ argues Anholt (2006: 18), and the narrative of a city has an impact on people’s desire to visit, transact or even relocate to them. Cities brands are not currently labelling themselves as meaningful, argues Yeoman (2019) which does not imply there are no meaningful cities but there is limited research on meaningful city brands. If a city brand is to be considered meaningful, it should be perceived as engaging and experiential and will happen when residents connect actively with ‘something or someone of value’ (Yeoman, 2019: 468), and residents of the city are an embodiment of the culture of the city and are representative of the nature of the brand (Insch, 2011).

‘A healthy city is one that provides physical opportunities for free social engagement, has plenty of green space and fosters co-existence, promoting democratic participation, as well as good public health and well-being’ (UN Habitat, 2020: 5). UN Habitat (2020) argues that strategic planners of cities need to focus on the maintenance of public space as a multi-functional connected urban system given the rapid growth of cities and increased demands on cities due to urbanisation. The Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D’MOSS) is an initiative by the city of Durban to conserve biodiversity in the face of rapid urban growth.

Incorporating over 94 000 hectares of high biodiversity value land and water, the system links the fragmented pockets of land into 'a viable network of open spaces' (eThekweni Municipality, 2018). D'MOSS, like other metropolitan open space systems, could potentially hold value and play a significant role in building a meaningful Durban city brand. The original objective of D'MOSS did not include a deliberate attempt to contribute to the building of the Durban city brand. The eThekweni (Durban Metropolitan) Long Term Development Plan (eThekweni Municipality, 2018: 1) envisions the city as 'the safe, vibrant and accessible; literal and symbolic centre of eThekweni'.

There would appear to be limited research on meaningful city brands and therefore the role open space systems (can) play in building meaningful city brands. This study explores city brand building and meaningful brands and the various metrics available for both, to determine what constitutes a meaningful city brand. The purpose of this study is to explore the **opinions, perceptions** and **lived experience** of Durban residents of a metropolitan open space system – D'MOSS – and to gain an understanding of the unique value that D'MOSS contributes to the Durban city brand and the role metropolitan open space systems can play in the building of a meaningful city brand through a visual narrative inquiry. The study will further explore the potential significance of an open space system, and the role it can play in building a city brand by examining similar best practice examples.

1.2 Contextualisation: D'MOSS

The Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS) is an initiative by the city of Durban to conserve biodiversity in the face of rapid urban growth. Incorporating over 94 000 hectares of high biodiversity value land and water, the system links the fragmented pockets of land into 'a viable network of open spaces' (eThekweni Municipality, 2018).

Wheatley (1996: 19) argues that when initiated in 1996 the concept of D'MOSS incorporated the 'social, political and economic needs' of the Durban Metropolitan area in a holistic approach. Protected areas were labelled as D'MOSS, and visible corridor connections were made to physically connect isolated pockets together. The Durban

Metropolitan area, and consequently D'MOSS, has expanded and residents, tourists, industry and the environment all interact with D'MOSS daily, with residents of the greater Durban Metropolitan area often unaware that places form part of a deliberately designed open space system.

In a larger context, eThekweni (Durban Municipality) 'falls within the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany biodiversity hotspot' which runs along the coastal region from the Eastern Cape to the southern regions of Mozambique (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018:52). Globally there are 34 biodiversity hotspots which are important high biodiversity areas under threat from development (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018: 52).

Durban aspires to be a great city (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018: 12) and has set up a development plan to be Africa's most 'Caring and Liveable City' by 2040. eThekweni LTD Plan (2018: 23) defines a great city as a place 'where the human spirit can thrive socially, economically and culturally', offering a variety of lifestyle and recreation options, and offering a 'balance of the natural and built environment'. By 2040 Durban aims to 'be Africa's leading, most vibrant, liveable, walkable city providing economic, residential, sporting and leisure opportunities for all' (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018: 19).

The intent of this study is to understand the perceived, experiential, and potential value of metropolitan open space systems – like D'MOSS – in relation to the role it can play in building a meaningful city brand and through that, to potentially position the city brand strongly in the minds of a local, national, and international audience.

Open space, as defined by Woolley (2003: 3), is 'land and water in an urban area that is not covered by cars or buildings or as any undeveloped land in an urban area'. Tinkel (as cited in Woolley, 2003: 3) suggests that it also includes the space and light above the land. Open space is the space between buildings. These are the spaces people use to transition from one place to the next. These include gardens (including private ones), city parks, recreational and sports grounds, cultivated land, derelict land, undeveloped land, road and rail verges and beaches. An open space system as defined by Nicolson (1988) – one of the original creators of D'MOSS – is an integrated network of open spaces, which cater for the

needs of the people living within the system by promoting conservation, allowing for recreation, education, health and various amenities. It is the linkages between the isolated pockets of open space, which hold the system together as a continuous, interdependent and interactive network of open space.

The objectives of D'MOSS as set out in 1989 were 'biological conservation, river protection and storm water management, amenity, recreation, trail building, education and community participation' (Wheatley, 1996: 11). Contribution to the building of Durban as a city brand was not an original objective, it can however be argued that with an increased attention on the 'greening of cities' and future planning together with more attention given to city brand building, that initiatives such as D'MOSS can add both perceived and real value to the building of a meaningful city brand, especially for its residents. The extent of D'MOSS within the eThekweni area (Durban) is indicated in Figure 2 - D'MOSS approved areas 2016 (eThekweni Municipality, 2018) below.

Insch (2011: 4) argues that as cities attempt to create a brand of their own – the most significant stakeholders are often overlooked in terms of their 'needs, values and interests'. According to Insch (2011: 4), the residents' feelings about their city 'where they live, work and play', can hold a large influence on 'the perceptions of tourists and visitors through their recommendations and complaints', as well as their skills, talents and entrepreneurial drive contributing to the growth of the city.

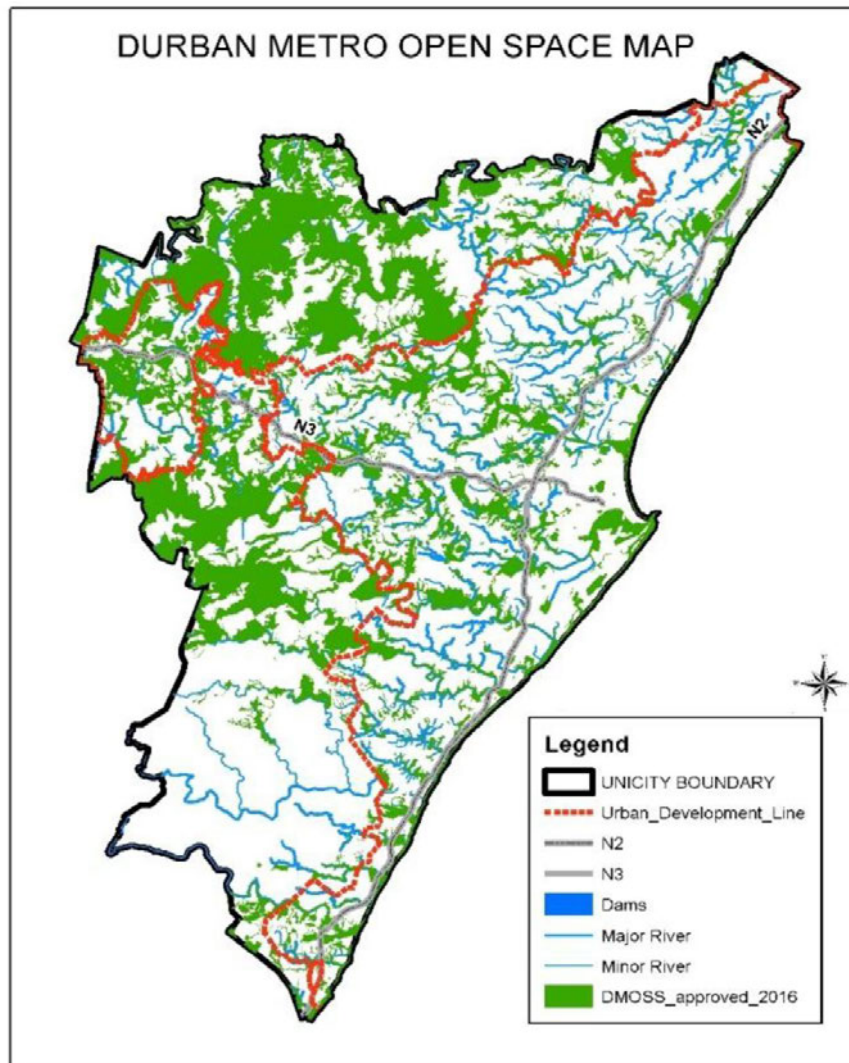


Figure 2 - D'MOSS approved areas 2016 (eThekweni Municipality, 2018)

The eThekweni (Durban Metropolitan) Long Term Development Plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018) outlines the city's vision for 2040 as 'Africa's most Caring and Liveable City' through these key objectives: creating a safe city, promoting an accessible city, creating a prosperous city where all enjoy sustainable livelihoods, celebrating our cultural diversity, arts and heritage, ensuring a more environmentally sustainable city, and fostering a caring and empowering city. To achieve this vision, the municipality has plans to (amongst others): 'develop and sustain the spatial, natural and built environment' and create a quality living environment (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018).

eThekweni LTD Plan (2018) argues that the spatial development plan will be driven by the principles of being connected (physically, socially and economically and through connected

open space), a walkable city (with easy access to transport and opportunities, walkable neighbourhoods), a city of intensive land use, and unleashing potential - Figure 3 - eThekweni Central Spatial Development Plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018). The city hopes that through these principles they will be able to extend and expand the D'MOSS areas through the inner city by increasing the 'number and type of open spaces' (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018).

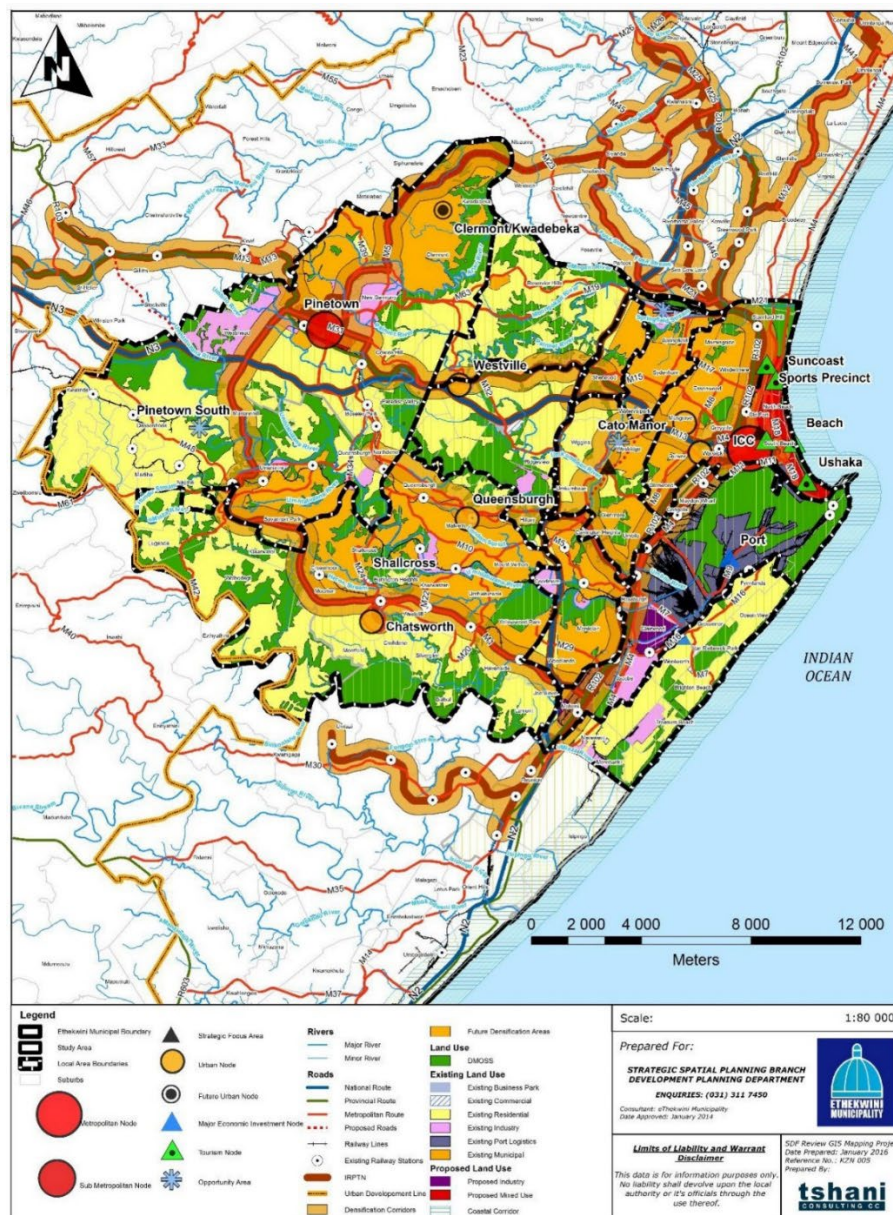


Figure 3 - eThekweni Central Spatial Development Plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018)

1.3 Research Problem

D'MOSS, like other metropolitan open space systems, could potentially hold value and play a significant role in building a meaningful Durban city brand. There are currently no city brands labelling themselves as meaningful, argues Yeoman (2019) which does not imply there are no meaningful cities. This study does not seek to label any city as meaningful, but rather seeks to understand the potential contribution of metropolitan open space systems to meaningful city brand building. There is limited research on meaningful city brands (Yeoman, 2019) and this study seeks to explore city brand building and meaningful brands to determine what constitutes a meaningful city brand.

Although the original objective of D'MOSS did not include a deliberate attempt to contribute to the building of the Durban city brand, and considering the global movement and a greater awareness and focus on the greening of cities, could D'MOSS be utilised in strategic brand building for the city? If residents form the principal stakeholders and hold a significant influence in building a city brand, then how do the residents of the greater Durban area engage with and respond to a uniquely designed open space system, such as D'MOSS, and what does it mean for the city in building a meaningful brand?

The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions, perceptions and experiences of Durban residents of a metropolitan open space system – D'MOSS – and to gain an understanding of the role D'MOSS can play in the building of a meaningful city brand. The study will further explore the potential significance of an open space system, and the role it can play in building a city brand by examining similar best practice examples. This inquiry seeks to understand and interpret meaning from the day-to-day lives of people living within the city as an interpretivist, in order to 'gain a deeper and more empathic understanding of aspects of social life and human behaviour' (Bezuidenhout and Davis, 2014: 65). In order to explore the research problem Bezuidenhout and Davis (2014) recommend narrowing down the research problem into research questions that indicate what data should be collected and interpreted to be able to help address the research problem.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands?
- How could a metropolitan open space system contribute to building meaningful city brands?
- How can D'MOSS contribute to and add unique value in the building of Durban as a meaningful city brand?

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To develop an **understanding of the principles in building meaningful city brands** by reviewing **best practice examples**, such as cities utilising metropolitan open space systems and other relevant examples.
- To explore the **perceived, experiential** and **potential value** of D'MOSS as a metropolitan open space system amongst a purposeful sample of greater Durban residents.
- To explore the role a metropolitan open space system, such as D'MOSS, can play in building a **meaningful city brand** amongst residents and how strategic planners involved in building the city brand, can position the brand strongly in the minds of a local, national and international audience.

1.6 Research Methodology

The research methodology that has been adopted explores the **perceived, experiential** and **potential value** of D'MOSS as a metropolitan open space system amongst a purposeful sample of greater Durban residents by exploring how D'MOSS contributes to and adds unique value in the building of Durban as a meaningful city brand. Vollrath (2019) argues that exploring how people form connections with their city, may help city brands become more meaningful for residents. Narrative inquiry is a 'frame of reference', a method of self-reflection, a methodological approach to research and a means of presenting the research, argues Moen (2006), while Connelly and Clandinin (1990) concur that narrative is simultaneously the phenomenon and method. Narrative helps address the complexity and subtlety of human experience (Mertova and Webster, 2020).

This exploratory research fits within an **interpretive research paradigm** as it explores lived experience and emotion within the social context of living in the city and data interpreted in terms of the meaning making which it brings to the participants and does not seek absolute truth (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). 'Interpretivists merely want to understand human behaviour' (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 28). The perceptions, opinions and lived experience cannot be separated from the individuals but were interpreted when collating the findings into a narrative which respects 'ordinary lived experience' (Clandinin, 2013: 17). Any narrative research revolves around how people experience the world, and this study seeks to collect and write these narratives to inform and develop an understanding of the phenomenon of study.

The research focuses on a purposive sample of Durban residents that make them uniquely suited to this study. Pascoe (2014) argues that in purposive sampling the researcher looks at the research questions and population and decides on the characteristics significant to the outcome of the research and chooses the participants on this basis. Narrative analysis of the data will be both holistic and contextual – focusing on the emotional connection of the participants involved, which requires all processes to be systematic and transparent to explore 'both the individual experiences and social processes that shape these experiences'

(Esin, 2011: 95). The Place Brand Observer (2018) argues that the connection to where people live is significant, but not easy to define, and any attempts to understand these connections need to explore the hidden reasons, which could assist in uncovering further interesting and relevant research studies. With interpretive research it is important to note that the research will be specific to the context within which the study is conducted (Durban) and cannot be generalised or directly applied to other instances or cities without specific research within the context of that city.

‘We do not stand outside the inquiry but are part of the phenomenon under study’ (Clandinin, 2013: 23). This interpretive research relies on the insights, knowledge, and experience of the inquirer within the context of this particular study, while remaining aware of their own personal biases and any possible preconceptions they might have in order to deliver an accurate portrayal of the subject being studied (Moen, 2006; Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Moen (2006) argues that a narrative approach is a means of reflection during the process, a research method, a manner of presenting the research and the unit of analysis itself.

The aim of this research is to make sense of the perceptions, opinions and lived experience of residents over time, rather than searching for specific answers and finding absolute truths and interpret these against the measures of a meaningful (city) brand and in presenting this research will demonstrate what city brands and open spaces mean to residents to make them ‘feel better and more positive about themselves and their city’ (Kageyama, 2019: 3).

1.7 Ethical Considerations

As a research method, narrative inquiry seeks to obtain and reflect on people’s lived experience and is essentially delivered through the relationship the inquirer has with their participants and every aspect of that relationship must be considered ethically, and participants should be assured of free consent to participate, and their confidentiality guaranteed (Josselson, 2007: 537). Ethical clearance was obtained at the Proposal defence and is available in Appendix E. Participants were invited to participate and provided with an informed consent form (Appendix A) which detailed the interview process. The informed

consent form allowed participants to indicate that the inquirer could utilise screenshots of their Instagram accounts in the study, and that their interviews would be recorded and transcribed. Due to the nature of narrative inquiry – intruding on the participants’ real lives - and the engagement and interaction of the inquirer and the participants, an exact ethical approach is difficult to define, but by having an ethical attitude which involves thinking ‘through these matters and deciding best how to honour and protect’ the participant in the study is essential (Josselson, 2007: 538).

1.8 Layout of the Chapters

The content of this dissertation is briefly summarised as follows:

Chapter 2: Building Meaningful City Brands: Best Practice Case Studies

This chapter attempts to address the gap in literature about how people form meaningful connections with city brands to understand the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands and how a metropolitan open space system contributes to building meaningful city brands. The chapter explores the concept of meaningful brands to decipher which principles relate to city brand building and presents best practice case studies of Sydney (Australia), New York (USA) and Vancouver (Canada). The chapter concludes by exploring the role a metropolitan open space system could potentially play in contributing to building a meaningful city brand.

Chapter 3: Research Plan / Research Methodology

To explore the **perceived**, **experiential** and **potential value** of D’MOSS as a metropolitan open space system, and to evaluate the potential role an open space system can play in building a meaningful city brand; the inquirer will explore the **perceptions**, **opinions** and **lived experience** of residents within the greater Durban area, by exploring a particular area of D’MOSS – The Durban beachfront. This chapter outlines the research approach and paradigm in relation to the research objectives of the study, and explores narrative inquiry, and specifically visual narrative inquiry and introduces the research design and analysis

including a deeper look into the inquirer's own narrative, participant selection and narrative inquiry by collecting and analysing visual narratives.

Chapter 4: A D'MOSS Case Study: Visual Narratives from Durban Residents

Through narrative this chapter explores their **perceptions, opinions** and **lived experience** of the Durban beachfront, the flagship of D'MOSS. The narratives of the residents are interwoven with those of the inquirer and the analysis of the field data and literature findings. The study presented in this chapter relies on the insights, knowledge, and experience of the inquirer within the context of this particular study and acknowledges any personal biases and preconceptions they might have in order to deliver an accurate portrayal of the subject being studied.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Interpretation and Conclusion

The discussion presented in this chapter seeks to explore the role a metropolitan open space system, such as D'MOSS, can play in building a meaningful city brand amongst residents and how strategic planners involved in building the city brand, can position the brand strongly in the minds of a local, national and international audience. The chapter reflects on the research questions, research problem and objectives, how they have been approached during the research process, and how the data gathered might be interpreted in order to understand the role a metropolitan open space system might play in building meaningful city brands. The chapter includes a discussion around the study's limitations and potential future studies around the topic.

CHAPTER 2

Building Meaningful City Brands: Best Practice Case Studies

2.1 Introduction

The ultimate purpose of any city is to provide the means to achieve happiness, as happiness, pleads Montgomery (2013), lies at the core of all decisions people take. ‘As Freud said, we strive to become happy and remain so as long as possible’ (Montgomery, 2015: 2). A desire for happiness and for a meaningful life, are two of the most significantly held goals to which people aspire (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker & Garbinsky, 2013). Can our cities indeed help us to achieve happiness and more specifically within a city – is the presence of a metropolitan open space system able to help the city provide the means to achieve happiness and could this contribute to making the city brand a meaningful one?

UN Habitat (2020) describes a healthy city to be one where available green space for social activities are abundant and accessible and that strategic planners need to focus attention on the maintenance of those spaces given the rapid growth of urbanisation. The city of Durban, through its D’MOSS (Durban Metropolitan Open Space System) initiative has attempted to link otherwise fragmented open spaces, parks, and high biodiverse areas into a ‘viable network of open spaces’ (eThekweni Municipality, 2018). D’MOSS, like other metropolitan open space systems, could potentially hold value and play a significant role in building a meaningful Durban city brand.

There would appear to be limited research on meaningful city brands and by extension the role open space systems (can) play in building meaningful city brands. This study explores city brand building and meaningful brands and the various metrics available for both, to determine what constitutes a meaningful city brand. The purpose of this study is to explore the **opinions, perceptions** and **lived experience** of Durban residents of a metropolitan open space system – D’MOSS – and to gain an understanding of the unique value that D’MOSS contributes to the Durban city brand and the role metropolitan open space systems can play in the building of a meaningful city brand through a visual narrative inquiry. The study will

further explore the potential significance of an open space system, and the role it can play in building a city brand by examining similar best practice examples.

‘Cities are layers of experience, interaction, tension, culture, and a social life that manifests itself in what we see from day to day’ (Wolfe, 2021: 1). Cities are where people live, work, socialise and celebrate and the connection to the places they live are significant but not easy to define (The Place Brand Observer, 2018). Vollrath (2019) acknowledged that there is a gap in literature exploring how people form connections with city brands and that addressing this gap could help city brands become more meaningful and impactful for city residents, which is echoed by Insch and Walters (2018) that the complex, nuanced relationship between place and residents requires further study. ‘A healthy city is one that provides physical opportunities for free social engagement, has plenty of green space and fosters co-existence, promoting democratic participation, as well as good public health and well-being’ (UN Habitat, 2020: 5).

The research presented in this chapter attempts to address this gap (emotional connection to city brands) through the exploration of the potential significance of a metropolitan open space system in building a meaningful city brand. In so doing, this chapter seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands?
- How could a metropolitan open space system contribute to building meaningful city brands?

The research begins by looking at the concept of meaningful brands, or brands that demonstrate purpose in all that they do to determine which principles of building meaningful brands might be applicable to city branding; followed by an exploration of city brands as meaningful brands. The contributions of metropolitan open space systems to city brands are explored through three best-practice case studies: Sydney, New York and Vancouver. The chapter concludes by exploring the role a metropolitan open space system could potentially play in building a meaningful city brand.

‘Paris is romance, Milan is style, New York is energy, Washington is power, Tokyo is modernity, Lagos is corruption, Barcelona is culture, Rio is fun’ (Anholt, 2006: 18). When thinking of cities, people associate thoughts, values, ideas and pictures in their heads of what those places are like. Paris is the Eiffel Tower. Milan, cobbled streets and high fashion. New York; the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Central Park. Rio; the beach or the carnival. ‘Close emotional ties exist between people and the places they live, visit and work’ (Baker, 2019: 92). What thoughts, values, ideas and pictures form in when thinking of Durban and to what extent are these influenced by marketing and media exposure? Lichrou, Patterson, O’Malley and O’Leary (2017) suggest that engaging in stories through narrative offers insight into the communities and individuals that both live and work in a place. Through the exploration of residents’ narratives of their lived experience of the city of Durban, this study seeks to explore these thoughts, values, and ideas.

The mental images people have of places are formed from their experience of place, be it from personal experience or via media channels. Movies play out in those places. TV series are grounded in a location, often a city. Opinions are formed around the places seen in pop culture. New York is Sarah Jessica Parker walking down an autumn-coloured street wearing a pink dress in the opening sequence of *Sex and the City*. Paris is the Eiffel Tower with Roger Moore as James Bond in *A View to a Kill*. The mental images of place become integral to a person’s narrative of place (Escalas, 2004). It is through an understanding of the narrative that is created in the minds of residents – to categorise and store emotions and memories – that will be explored to gain an understanding of the potential influence an open space system has on a city brand. This has largely influenced the visual narrative inquiry methodology adopted for this research, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

Many of these places and associations are related to outdoor urban spaces, especially metropolitan open spaces, the likes of, Times Square in New York City, Copacabana in Rio, The Sydney Opera House, The London Eye, Table Mountain in Cape Town, and the Durban beachfront. Metropolitan open space systems are an attempt to link any open spaces together into a viable network of linked spaces. These are parks, nature reserves, waterfronts, sports facilities, pathways, beaches and much more. People move through these spaces daily. From their homes to their place of work, to the beaches and parks

through city streets and shopping centres. As much as people spend time indoors learning, working and entertaining themselves, they also need to move between the buildings. Public spaces improve general health through the provision of stress reduction, physical activity and psychological relief (UN Habitat, 2020).

During the 2020 worldwide pandemic, our relationship and engagement with these open spaces has been affected. 'On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan City, China. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent of what we now know as Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Since then, the virus has spread to more than 100 countries, including South Africa' (COVID-19 News Portal, 2020). Much has changed since the sudden spread of the Covid-19 virus. In a bid to contain the spread of the virus, most of the population has been forced to stay indoors (COVID-19 News Portal, 2020). For several weeks, the people of Durban were not able to use the open spaces they were accustomed to. As lockdown regulations have slowly been eased, certain activities and outdoor spaces have slowly become accessible – albeit in a limited capacity. With the ability to exercise within certain distances from their homes, residents took to the streets to walk, run and just be outdoors.

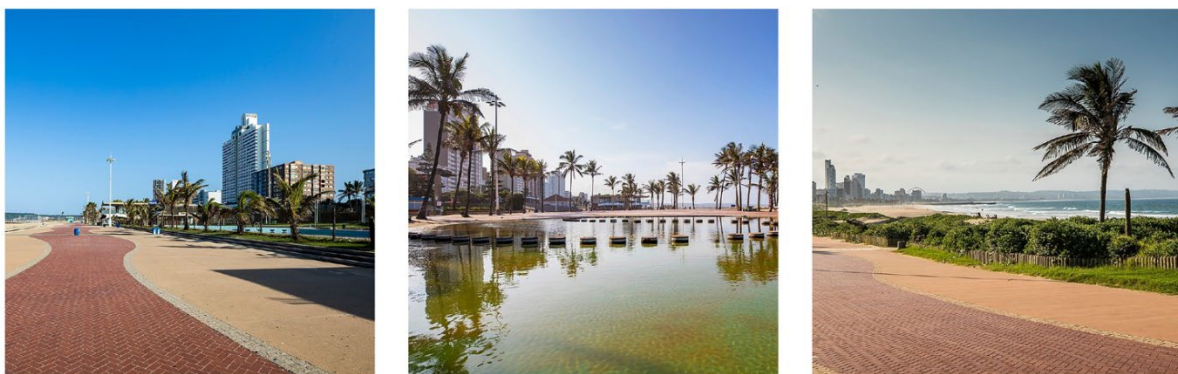


Figure 4 - Durban is a ghost town due to the 2020 lockdown. Photographer Kierran Allen (ECR, 2020)

Throughout the last century the human population has begun to spend more time indoors, in front of computers, televisions and mobile phones, but the Covid-19 pandemic has – even if just in the interim – shifted the appreciation for the outdoors (Smith, 2020). Smith (2020) refers to a University of Michigan study demonstrating an increase in human cognitive

ability after a walk through a city park, and a decrease in human cognitive ability after a walk along a city street. Researchers found that people were more satisfied with their lives when the environment in which they lived provided them with three basic needs; access to explore, ability to make a difference and a desire to feel effective (Smith, 2020).

The lockdown regulations and Covid-19 have, in part, renewed people's appreciation for their access to and potentially their relationship with outdoor spaces. The Durban beachfront area is once again a meeting place. A place to walk. To run. To enjoy the outdoors, the sunshine and the warm winter weather in Durban – albeit in a mask and observing social distancing. Covid-19 has taught people that having easily accessible outdoor spaces adds value to their lives. Although many people do not use the outdoor spaces regularly – not being allowed to access them has made the desire stronger. Medway, Warnaby and Byrom (2021: 7) suggest that considering the impact of Covid-19, and beyond, people will need to learn to 'better appreciate and (re)connect' with where they live. Jackson (2021) argues that 'during lockdown the need to repurpose our urban centres became apparent' as cities try and reintroduce elements of nature back into their urban frameworks.

Life has slowly started normalising again and people are out on the streets, in parks, and on the Durban beachfront and in the spaces between buildings. We have come to appreciate that those spaces outside of our homes – those which we take for granted – are more important to us, our happiness and our lives more than ever before and that we have potentially developed a better appreciation for our cities and the outdoor spaces and opportunities that they provide. Yeoman (2019) argues that the ability able to partake in activities within a city where people can have an emotional compelling experience that is of value to them or of significance can enable them to increase meaningfulness in their lives through that engagement.

*'Just a perfect day
Drink Sangria in the park
And then later
When it gets dark, we go home*

*Just a perfect day
Feed animals in the zoo
Then later
A movie, too, and then home*

*Oh, it's such a perfect day
I'm glad I spent it with you
Oh, such a perfect day
You just keep me hanging on
You just keep me hanging on*

*Just a perfect day
Problems all left alone
Weekenders on our own
It's such fun'
Lou Reed, 1972*

2.2 Meaningful brands

Brands can influence the beliefs and behaviours of people and are able to unite people through 'shared goals, principles and a desired future' (Ricca, 2021: 5). By placing human experience at the centre of the brands focus, brands can become 'the connective tissue between business and society, investors and people, profit and purpose, leaders and constituents, present consumption and future resources' (Ricca, 2021: 4). Neumeier (2005: 2) defines a brand as 'a person's gut feeling about a product, service or organisation'. Every person interprets a brand in their own manner and despite efforts to remain rational; people's interpretations of brands are emotionally charged and Neumeier (2005: 13-14) further argues that a brand is 'not what you say it is', but 'what they say it is' and increasingly it can be seen that brands that form meaningful connections with people prosper, and that 'brands need to know why people care, and what makes their brands meaningful' because 'people wouldn't care if 77% of brands disappeared' (Meaningful Brands, 2019).

In exploring how a metropolitan open space system can contribute to the building of a meaningful city brand, this research study seeks to first understand what makes a brand meaningful and explore which attributes contribute towards a brand being considered meaningful. Neumeier (2005) argues that a successful brand is a purposeful brand that offers unique value and makes a compelling difference, clearly articulating a reason for the existence of the brand and the impact it makes in the world. Purposeful brands inspire consumers to join and follow in their journey and that 'brands without meaning are undesirable' (Neumeier, 2008: 11).

Aaker (2015: 23) notes that when a brand communicates its higher purpose, it 'needs to be, and to feel, genuine and substantial' and be visible. Enslin (2016) argues that strategies for uniqueness create efficient brand building and that the brands motivation should be about their unique value to stakeholders. Rosethorn (2018: 2) concurs that if an organisation defines an authentic and resonant purpose it will have a positive impact on brand perception, but stresses that 'purpose in action is what makes an organisation truly

purposeful'. Brands should have a particular and compelling reason for being, argues Enslin (2019), implemented in everything they do and that the reason for why the brand does what it does should be the driving force behind their efforts.

Certain brands are attempting to redesign themselves to integrate wellbeing into their organisation and shift focus to the creation of healthier relationships both internally and externally (Cook, Erwin, Carmody and Enslin, 2010). More connected consumers are engaging with and supporting brands that 'serve a purpose to better the world' (Hsu, 2016: 373) – brands which demonstrate that they care. 'A brand's purpose explains why the brand exists and the impact it seeks to make in the world' (Hsu, 2016: 374). For a brand to be purposeful, argues Hsu (2016), it should demonstrate ideals behind everything it does to form an emotional connection with like-minded consumers. This behaviour enables purposeful brands to gain competitive advantage. 'The purpose to exist is the driving force of the brand. It is at the heart of the brand's identity and guides all its actions' (Cook et al., 2010: 13). Brands should not just define a purpose, but they must allow that purpose to continually be clear and visible in everything they do (Hsu, 2016).

To be a meaningful brand, you need to make a meaningful impact, argues Standlee (2018), and the most powerful and profitable brands are those that enhance well-being and enrich peoples' lives. Brands need to have a 'positive impact on societal well-being' exuding meaning and eliciting emotion from its core, and a meaningful brand needs to enhance the vibrancy and vitality of what people feel in their day-to-day lives. If a brand can help people and communities become, and feel smarter, healthier, stronger, safer and/or more connected and positive it will be more meaningful (Standlee, 2018).

Thellefsen and Sørensen (2013) suggest that brands only become meaningful when the brand's values become so integrated into their products or community that they can no longer be distinguished from the brand itself, through the creation of a common understanding of meaning. 'Today's greatest brands build coherence in feeling' (Interbrand, 2020: 10). Through the brand, the user needs to experience something unique with which they can form an emotional bond, that in turn, will help develop trust (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013). Emotional bonds formed with a brand are based on past experiences with

the brand and an emotional reaction is never neutral. Brands become more meaningful, the closer their narrative can be intertwined with people's lives (Escalas, 2004).

People build stories as a means of understanding their experiences in the world and Escalas (2004) argues that they do the same for the brands with which they interact. Because their own narratives are built around their aspirations, experiences and memories, these brand narratives are interwoven with their own as they interpret their world and help create meaning for brands. Escalas (2004) demonstrates 'that a brand becomes more meaningful the more closely it is linked to the self'. The meaningfulness of a brand comes from its inclusion in the users own narrative as they make sense of the world around them, argues Escalas (2004), influencing the choice of narrative inquiry adopted for this research, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3.

Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat and Kachersky (2018) suggest that meaningful stories – which demonstrate a sense of purpose – can elicit positive brand attitudes. Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2010: 336) argue that consumers build relationships with brands through storytelling when they share 'meaningful stories based on personal experiences'. If a brand wants to add value in the marketplace, they must consider designing meaningful brand experiences; Norton (2005: 24) explores the power of places in 'story telling' and how having a place-based presence allows brands to tell their own stories, as 'people love to hear stories about places almost as much as they love going to places to be told stories. And when you tell stories, you create cultural capital'. Storytelling can elicit an emotional response that helps a viewer connect with a story and that when people share the same feelings and meanings, they begin to feel a sense of belonging and are more eager to participate (Terttunen and Weitoft, 2017).

Rosethorn (2018) suggests four fundamentals that need to be in place for an organisation to be purposeful; the purpose needs to be truthfully grounded; permeate every level; be visible; and be every day. Smith (2014) provides three significant ways in which a brand can be meaningful to customers; by finding opportunities to delight, by giving people a way to express their individuality to others, and by standing for more than just their products and services.

De Beer and Enslin (2015: 20) argue that when a brand expresses 'why it does what it does and believes what it believes in' its purpose becomes apparent, with reference to Neumeier (2005, cited in de Beer & Enslin, 2015: 20) prompting brands to consider 'who are you, what do you do and why does it matter'. 'Meaningful engagement' with stakeholders happens when brands are acutely 'aware of the changes in wider society' and how those relate to the brands' performance, structure and organisation and the brand uses past and present experience to 'shape future planning and engagement' in order to build trust with their stakeholders (Jeffery, 2009: 8).

Probst (2019) maintains that despite the apparent shortening of attention span of modern consumers, they will give attention to information and brands that are both meaningful and relevant to them and ignore the brands that do not meet their needs. To achieve success, a brand should strive to deliver meaningful messages that educate, that are genuine (through the leveraging or creation of heritage) and, that allow for the creation of consumer communities (giving the consumer something to which they can belong to). Probst (2019) believes that a strong desire to belong forms the basis of what people stand for, and these communities are formed around shared emotion rather than demographics. Groups of people become a community when they feel a sense of belonging or form emotional attachments to other members or their spaces (Mehta, 2014) and a community, argues Montgomery (2013: 158) refers to 'groups of people who use the same media... or like a certain product, regardless of whether its members have actually met'.

The desire to belong, and the communities formed around shared emotion, as suggested by Probst (2019) are echoed in the 'Meaningful Brands' study, where the Havas Group (Meaningful Brands, 2019) define a meaningful brand by looking at the impact a brand has on both personal and collective wellbeing, as well as looking at the functional benefits of the brand. The study defines a meaningful brand as 'a trusted brand that contributes to its industry as well as benefitting people's personal and collective wellbeing' (Meaningful Brands, 2019). The study refers to collective benefits as those that contribute to things such as the economy, employment or helping to improve the environment; and personal benefits as being how brands improve people's lives through encouraging or aiding in such aspects

as healthy lifestyles, connectivity with family and friends as well as making their lives easier (Meaningful Brands, 2019). Only through ongoing engagement in ‘conversation and co-creation’ can effective brand building be achieved (Interbrand, 2020: 17). Functional benefits speak to pricing, quality, safety and responsible products, where personal benefits speak to delivering inventive ideas making the user happier and their lives easier or providing peace of mind, and the collective benefits include helping the local economy and providing a good workplace, where processes are transparent, ethical and encourage diversity (Meaningful Brands, 2019).

When people become emotionally involved with things of independent value, like people and places, they are more likely to attach meaningfulness to those things or places (Yeoman, 2019), and Neumeier (2008) argues that meaningful brands inspire consumers to join and follow the journey. Brands that inspire people to become healthier, stronger, safer, happier (Standlee, 2018), and allows them to form an emotional bond with it (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013) could be considered meaningful. Interweaving the personal narratives and the brand narratives, leads to a more meaningful brand (Escalas, 2004; Yeoman, 2019).

Meaningful brands create a sense of belonging or a community around them allowing users to connect with the brand and each other through their joint experiences. The sense of belonging – echoed by Probst (2019), Meaningful Brands (2019) and Yeoman (2019) – allows users to express their individuality through being part of the community and the brand becomes a meaningful one.

If a brand can demonstrate these three aspects; functional benefit, collective benefit and personal benefit, it can be said to be meaningful to its audience (Meaningful Brands, 2019), and those aspects should permeate every level and be truthfully grounded (Rosethorn, 2018). To be meaningful the brand must make a positive impact on the lives of its users, and it needs to demonstrate that through all they do (Cook et al., 2010; Standlee, 2018). When a user forms an emotional bond with a brand and they can no longer distinguish the brand from its values, then the brand has achieved a meaningful position in their lives (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013).

Can a city brand then be a meaningful brand? Cities can offer users functional benefits – as they are necessities for a city. To be considered meaningful, a city brand would need to go above and beyond in terms of improving the lives of its residents or users. The city would need to offer personal and collective benefits (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and be more than the roads, buildings, schools and facilities, but possess ‘the foundational elements for common and shared purpose’ (Kageyama, 2019: 5). A city brand would need to become intertwined in the user’s narrative to such a level that the users identity becomes linked with aspects of that city (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013). The city could almost become a character in their lives. Barron (2020), quotes *Sex and the City* executive producer Michael Patrick King as saying, people have said it was the fifth character’ referring to New York City and how much the city brand featured in the popular television show.

Place brands are the ‘totality of thoughts, feelings, and expectations’ which people believe about places and its distinctive promise of value and sense of place is represented through the ‘character, reputation and the enduring essence of the place’ and it is important that the valued promise ‘must be grounded in truth and reality’ (Baker, 2019: 9). Lichrou et al. (2017: 173) echo that place brands are social constructs that attempt to reinforce a ‘sense of place’ to residents and offer unique value to investors and tourists.

If a meaningful brand is all of these elements, or a combination of them – higher purpose (Aaker, 2015), belonging (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019), function, community (Probst, 2019), inspiration (Neumeier, 2005), unique value (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016), enrichment, positive feelings, healthy living (Standlee, 2018), emotional connection (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2019), self-expression, intertwined and linked to self (Escalas, 2004), provide opportunity to delight and express individuality (Smith, 2014), grounded (Rosethorn, 2018) and visible (Hsu, 2016; Rosethorn, 2018) – then how could a city brand be defined as meaningful? In the next section, the study explores the concept of the city brand and how it might be perceived as a meaningful brand.

2.3 Exploring City Brands as Meaningful Brands

‘Paris is romance, Milan is style, New York is energy, Washington is power, Tokyo is modernity, Lagos is corruption, Barcelona is culture, Rio is fun. These are the brands of cities, and they are inextricably tied to the histories and destinies of all these places’ (Anholt, 2006: 18).

Now, more than ever before in history, brands influence the beliefs and behaviours of people across the globe and can unite individuals through ‘shared goals, principles and a desired future’ (Ricca, 2021: 5). When people become emotionally involved with things of independent value, like people and places, they are more likely to attach meaningfulness to those things or places (Yeoman, 2019).

Cities ‘have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word’ argues Anholt (2006: 18), and the narrative of a city has an impact on people’s desire to visit, transact or even relocate to them. Cities brands are not currently labelling themselves as meaningful, argues Yeoman (2019) which does not imply there are no meaningful cities but there is limited research on meaningful city brands. If a city brand is to be considered meaningful, it should be perceived as engaging and experiential and will happen when residents connect actively with ‘something or someone of value’ (Yeoman, 2019: 468), and residents of the city are an embodiment of the culture of the city and are representative of the nature of the brand (Insch, 2011).

‘I love New York’, is one of the most well-known slogans around the globe, but it is more than just a brand slogan, argues Bell and de-Shalit (2011) it represents how people feel about the city. Swanson, Medway and Warnaby (2017: 89) found that places, and more specifically, cities, are brands that people claim to love and can form real emotional attachments to.

Keller (2000) notes that people do not buy a product because it is a collection of attributes, they buy into the combination of the attributes, the brand image, service and other tangible

and intangible factors that create an attractive whole. Cities are the same. There is no single attribute or service and it is the combination into an attractive whole that draws residents to the city. Cities are often large, with an extremely diverse populace, but frequently cities can represent different social values, argues Bell and de-Shalit (2011) looking at Beijing and Jerusalem: Both cities were designed using core concentric circles, but these cities could not differ any more from each other. Jerusalem's core expresses spiritual and religious values. Beijing represents political power (Bell & de-Shalit, 2011). Swanson et al. (2017: 104) argue that 'places have a real physical presence, they have meaning to people, and they are consistently being experienced and created'.

Anholt (2006) stresses that given the current connected social nature of the world, places need to compete to gain attention for their share of the marketplace, and cities – as the economic and cultural hubs of nations – need to compete for their share of funds, talent and fame. If a city can develop a focused and clear identity, argue Bell and de-Shalit (2011), then that could help revive a failing economy, as happened in Bilbao, Spain, where the construction of a modern museum transformed the economic focus of the city from a failing industrial centre to a mecca of the art world. Cities (and communities) are increasingly becoming aware of the significance of how they position themselves with strategic intent, but Baker (2019) argues that most cities do not have a strategic brand positioning in place because their positioning has evolved organically.

Increasingly it can be seen that brands that form meaningful connections with people prosper, and that 'brands need to know why people care, and what makes their brands meaningful,' according to Meaningful Brands (2019), as 'people wouldn't care if 77% of brands disappeared'. If a city is to be perceived as meaningful, it would need to be perceived as engaging and experiential, allowing it to be experienced as different, innovative and inspiring (Baker, 2019). Residents love their cities because of qualities like beauty and social openness, as opposed to economic factors and facilities (Goodyear, 2010).

City branding could be viewed as a tool for communicating the competitive advantage of the city, through its historical narrative, current lifestyle, cultural activities and liveability (Oguztimur & Akturan, 2015). Kavaratzis (2004) says that although in existence since the

nineteenth century, city branding, as a conscious application of marketing approaches to city branding is a relatively new concept emerging in the last three decades. There are an increasing number of reasons for cities to brand themselves, note Kerr and Balakrishnan (2012), including new media and social media, accessible transport and improved technology, which assist in making relocation easier. Merrilees, Miller and Herington (2013: 37) define city branding as a field of place branding emphasising the marketing and branding of cities to residents (current and potential) 'as a place to live and to businesses as a place to invest'. Merrilees et al. (2009; 2013) were interested in exploring how the attributes of a city (physical, economic, culture) which people in the city experience and share, would influence the perception of the city brand.

Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) argue that places have always needed to assert their unique qualities and differentiate themselves in terms of 'economic, political or socio-psychological objectives' (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005: 506). Place marketing is essentially 'dependent on the construction, communication and management of the city's image' as in layman terms, 'encounters between cities and their users take place through perceptions and images' (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005: 506). 'The essence of place', is drawn from those features that make it stand out as a brand (Herget, Petrů & Abrahám, 2015: 120).

'A city's brand is increasingly considered an important asset for urban development and an effective tool for cities to distinguish themselves and improve their positioning' (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2009: 520). Real (2019) argues that place branding is the idea of focusing on some unique aspect which can differentiate a place from others to gain some competitive brand value. Places are highly complex products comprised of multiple components (Niininen, Hosany, Ekinici & Airey, 2007), and Real (2019) calls place branding a complex process as places are not (necessarily) owned or controlled by any single party, and complexity arises from organisational control to management of partnerships and measurements of success. This makes 'places distinct products and place branding a distinctive form of product branding' (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005: 513). Dinnie (2011) notes that the complexities in city brands are based on their need to cater to a wide range of target audiences. Swanson et al. (2017) found respondents love different places for various reasons to satisfy their own needs.

Oguztimur and Akturan (2015) found that there are additional complications that arise within city branding as even within a particular city where specific neighbourhoods, locations, attractions and activities find themselves in competition with one another rather than contributing to the branding of the city. In a South African context, urban green spaces are not equally distributed, because cities were racially segregated (Venter, Shackleton, Van Staden, Selomane & Masterson, 2020) and little effort has been made to rectify urban planning divisions of the past.

Place brands mean particular things to their particular target audience argues Vollrath (2019), for instance tourists would only understand a very simple representation of the city, but a resident may have a deeper grasp based on their daily lived experience. To become more authentic (or meaningful) in the way in which it is represented, Vollrath (2019) argues it needs to embrace the complexities of its diverse make up. A place or city brand is a social construct that attempts to reinforce a 'sense of place', argues Lichrou et al. (2017: 173) and must appeal, inspire and connect with residents (internal audience) and offer unique value to investors and tourists (external audience).

Living within cities rewards residents with numerous advantages, notes Insch (2011), from financial through to social interactions and bonds, and the goal of a city brand is to encourage loyalty to the brand amongst a wide target audience. As much as the residents are dependent on the city to provide them with a place to live, the city is as dependent on the residents for 'economic, social, cultural and environmental vibrancy' argues Insch (2011: 9) and it is vital that the city aims to maintain a satisfied residential core. This is echoed by Baker (2019) – if a city is to be considered meaningful, it would need to be perceived as engaging and experiential, allowing it to be different, innovative and inspiring. 'The experience of meaningfulness is more likely to occur when a person becomes actively connected to a worthy object; that is, something or someone of value' Yeoman (2019: 468).

The brand of the city, particularly when viewed from a resident's point of view would be centred around how they (the residents) understand and experience their surroundings and how they make sense of the city utilising physical, symbolic and implied elements according

to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005; 2009). City branding is more than simply selling the city to attract investment, tourism and people, suggests Vanolo (2018), but is aimed at the creation of a strong local identity – which allows people to believe and trust in their city. The city brand influences how people ‘live, experience and talk about the city’ (Vanolo, 2018: 67-69) and people’s daily lives, social interactions and their ‘sensation of being in place or out of place in the city’ are influenced by the city brand. A city brand needs to primarily be based on any pre-existing natural, cultural or economic attributes (Vollrath, 2019).

Making sense of a place happens through three distinct processes: physical spaces or urban design, the use of spaces and the representation of those places through media (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). People then process this information into ‘mental maps’ which allow them to understand their environment. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) believe that place branding then becomes an attempt to leverage those mental maps and influence them favourably. People do not necessarily need to read or understand the particular meanings related to the city brand for them to connect to the brand on a ‘perceptual and affective level’ (Despard, 2015: 8). Swanson et al. (2017: 104) argue that ‘places have a real physical presence, they have meaning to people, and they are consistently being experienced and created’ and that residents often associate one or more sensory experience with places but that they sometimes find it difficult to express those emotions through words and often are more able to express them through pictures and collages as narratives. Narrative inquiry with Durban residents exploring their relationship with D’MOSS and their city, will be utilised further in this study to understand the connections on a perceptual and affective level.

‘A place needs to be differentiated through unique brand identity if it wants to be first, recognised as existing, second, perceived in the minds of place customers as possessing qualities superior to those of competitors, and third, consumed in a manner commensurate with the objectives of the place’ (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005: 510). Focusing on their distinguishing characteristics, places attempt to communicate their distinctive features to a target audience (Sevin, 2014).

To classify a city as a distinctive brand, Winfield-Pfefferkorn (2005) suggests it needs to have easily identifiable, distinct and definitive characteristics that may be both functional and non-functional qualities, including but not limited to, the cities appearance, experiences of people in the city, their belief in the city, the inhabitants of the city and what the city stands for. 'Creating a distinctive brand that captures the spirit of a city must be able to inspire – the travellers, the industry and the general populace itself' (Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005: 13). First and foremost, cities need to be functional; they must have obvious benefits and be a place where one could find employment, housing, transport and recreational facilities (Winfield-Pfefferkorn, 2005). When considering cities, people will think in practical terms, looking at real-life issues like cultural and sporting activities and facilities, cost of living, public and private transport systems, pollution and weather (Anholt, 2006).

The Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) asks five thousand people to rank cities by judging their presence (international status); place (physical appeal); prerequisites (amenities); people (friendliness); pulse (activities) and potential (education and business). The Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index compares metrics of cities without consulting residents. Although a measure of cities used and proudly displayed the world over – it speaks less to the meaningful brand – than it does to the outside perspective of the city. Anholt (2006) notes that stronger performing city brands – as defined in the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index – are credited with greater qualities than actually exist.

The Place Brand Observer (2018) lists several additional city indexes that may provide useful insight into city branding including *City RepTrak* – Reputation Index (levels of trust, esteem, admiration and respect) and the *Sustainable Cities Index* (people, planet and profit) and others which constitute a multitude of indexes with particular focus on specific areas of interest and allow for the comparison of cities. The majority of these are examined only from the outside in and do not reveal city residents' feelings about their cities. Medway et al. (2021: 2) argue that any such metrics are meaningless to the place brand and ignore the multisensory experiences of all users of the place. More than ever, given the context of Covid-19 and beyond, places need to turn their focus inwards and help residents 'nurture their feelings of local embeddedness, place attachment, care and associated safety and security' (Medway et al., 2021: 7). 'The people who live there know best, and they should be

involved in how their immediate world evolves' (Wolfe, 2021: 22). Insch and Walters (2018: 152) argue that residents of cities are amongst the 'most neglected' aspect of place branding theory.

If city marketing is to be successful, it is crucial to focus marketing efforts on both external (for external audiences such as tourists and investors) and internal brand building (residents and local businesses). Place brand building should not only involve green phrases according to Konijnendijk (2010), but should rather involve long-term commitment and strategy, where places have meaning and a clear identity which is shared amongst many stakeholders. Traditional place marketing tends to focus on tourists as the main stakeholders, but it has become increasingly important to see city residents as the main stakeholders. Cities need a strong base of residents to exist as a working city. Konijnendijk (2010: 3) explores how Venice, Italy has had a 'true exodus of native residents', and that there is a risk of only visitors or tourists remaining. An attraction to Venice, according to Konijnendijk (2010: 3), is 'its particular form of culture and daily life'.

In most instances, visitors to cities are unaware that the cities they are visiting are 'consciously branded places' and that slogans such as 'I love New York' are the result of well-executed city branding attempts, according to Järvisalo (2012: 1). For the branding of a place to be successful it needs to draw 'equity from the recognition of known strengths and positive actions' (Järvisalo, 2012: 7). Through the projection of a strong and a relevant image a city can gain some competitive advantage over other cities and if a place (or a city) has been designed to meet the needs of its target market – people, residents and businesses – it will succeed (Järvisalo, 2012).

Often, people may change their opinions of a product through successful advertising or marketing, but this is not necessarily the case for city brands argues Anholt (2006), and changes in the perception of a city brand, are the result of real change that has taken place in the city, whether that be the people, policies, opportunities or current developments. 'What advertising and marketing cannot ever do is to make a bad city look good: that is propaganda, not brand management, and it is as wasteful as it is ineffectual' (Anholt, 2006: 31). Where successful attempts have been made to rebrand cities, it has always been done

through engagement with the community, and through the adoption of an inside out approach (Yeoman, 2019; Lichrou et al., 2017).

People are intrinsically involved in a relationship with their living and surrounding environment using and shaping it to meet their needs (Yangsomran, 2017). Cities and their environment are shaped by people as much as people are inspired by and shape their environments and cities argues Yangsomran (2017). If city branding is to be successful it is important that residents, as stakeholders, are engaged in the process, as it is them who give legitimacy to the branding of the city and who articulate its essence and create its meaning and essentially 'own the brand' (Kavaratzis, 2012: 7-15). Residents are an embodiment of the culture of the city and are representative of the nature of the brand (Insch, 2011). If residents form a foundation of what a city communicates through its brand, it is imperative to have their voices heard and have their say integrated into the branding process. In today's context where online voices and communities are more emphasised and impactful, it is even more important to have residents involved in the co-creation of city brands (Kavaratzis, 2012). Lichrou et al. (2017: 165) share a rebrand of Berlin, conducted through a campaign where residents' narratives were shared and ultimately used to rebrand the city by its residents – who were invited to become storytellers and ambassadors for the brand. For a meaningful city brand to exist, the residents should be given rights and responsibilities by involving them in joint activities and allowing them to immerse themselves in emotionally compelling experiences (Yeoman, 2019).

What then makes a city or a place brand a marketable and consumable entity? According to Skinner (2011) the environment can be moulded to fit a certain image, but the existing environment has a moulding effect on the people using the area. As much as we may try to alter areas to suite our needs, the area is continually shaping who we are. City brands are often aligned to their nation brand, argue Kerr and Balakrishnan (2012: 11) where 'Mercedes Benz for instance, could be argued to be part of the brand portfolio of Germany', but many cities are not aligned. Kerr and Balakrishnan (2012: 12) demonstrate how the national brand of Australia (with a brand promise of 'wilderness', 'wildlife' and 'adventure') is at odds with the positioning of Sydney as exciting and sophisticated. Hicks (2012) quotes Simon Webb (senior VP and director of Ogilvy Illumination Practice) as saying, 'Sydney and

Melbourne show strongly in our city branding rankings – largely we believe off the back of strong and consistent investment over time in Brand Australia’.

For branding of places to be effective and meaningful Hoyne (2016) suggests that long-lasting results and economic benefits need to be meaningful, inspired, protected, encouraged and maintained. Gehl (2011) writes that to make a place meaningful it needs the city space to be inviting and popular. ‘A good city is like a good party – people stay longer than necessary because they are enjoying themselves’ (Gehl, 2011: 146). When residents of a city respond favourably to the city brand, they become loyal to that brand, promote the brand and are more likely to support other brands, which show an investment in that city brand argues Vollrath (2019).

An encounter with a city is often an emotional one that involves a certain level of anticipation or apprehension, and different expectations and Vanolo (2018: 53) describes a plan of approach to visiting a new city as, ‘you are probably crowded with mixed ideas, stereotyped beliefs, plans and dreams about what to do, what to see, what to experience during your stay in the place’. The city branding is responsible for the mental image a person has of a city before they arrive (Vanolo, 2018). There are emotional connections between people and places (Baker, 2019). If a city is to be perceived as meaningful, it would need to be seen as engaging and experiential, allowing it to be experienced as different, innovative and inspiring (Baker, 2019). A city is made up of both the physical – or lived space – and ‘spaces of the imagination and representation’ and Vanolo (2018: 53) argues that cities ignite a variety of ‘feelings, emotions and attitudes’, ranging from alienation to inclusion, solitude, freedom, possibility, anxiety and fear and excitement and even the erotic.

Nogué and Vela (2018) acknowledge that while emotion is fast becoming a significant asset for the development of a place branding strategy, there have been relatively few studies exploring this connection. Fundamentally place branding is about creating a narrative which stirs emotion towards a place and establishing a personal connection between a person and that place (Nogué & Vela, 2018). Place brands are not about the creation of thematic places but are about living and experiencing those places and the emotional experiences involved therein (Nogué & Vela, 2018). Everyday life happens in places, which people experience

both spatially and emotionally and any interactions with space or place arouse emotions from the meanings associated with that living (Nogué & Vela, 2018). People will experience 'specific emotions' in different places, not only because they are living the experience argue Nogué and Vela (2018), but because of the social and cultural ideas people have about those places.

A city brand is diverse in every aspect, and the connections that the brand makes with people will also be diverse, from their experiences to their reasoning behind living in the city, their economic or cultural background will have an influence on which attributes are most meaningful to them in relation to the brand (Vollrath, 2019). When a city brand represents something authentic and unique, and residents of that city feel aligned to that brand because of their belief in that unique quality or authenticity, it results in increased civic consciousness and people begin to share their stories about the brand (Vollrath, 2019). If a city brand personality is in line with an individual's personality, then the residents will be inclined to feel more positive towards the city (Vollrath, 2019). For instance, a surfer in Durban might enjoy the laid-back attitude of the city. When people feel love for their city, they actively set out to defend and promote the city (Kageyama, 2011).

Meaning is not necessarily found in the immediate environment, and can be found thinking of past, present and future possibilities and in different spatial realities argue Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker and Garbinsky (2013: 506) and purpose, which is a core component of defining meaningfulness, 'entails that present events draw meaning from future ones'. Meaning often involves an understanding of life beyond the present by integrating one's future (and past) into an idea of what could be (Baumeister et al., 2013: 506). To be a successful city brand, the brand should be positioned as 'credible (that is, anchored in reality), significant to the target audience, and differentiated from its competitors and allow for growth' (Insch, 2014: 249).

Current research on cities focuses on sustainable smart cities but very little is being done to study the concept of the liveable city and there appears to be a lack of focus on people when studying sustainable smart cities (Yeoman, 2019). By exploring the human connection to the smart sustainable city, Yeoman (2019) examines meaningful lives and work, equality

and inclusion, smart and sustainable practice, participation and voice and governance and leadership metrics as shown in Figure 5 - The Meaningful City (Yeoman, 2019). In order to help people achieve purpose and meaning in their lives, cities should rather focus on implementing changes and innovations with people, rather than to people (Yeoman, 2019). People can achieve meaningfulness when they are actively involved with things of independent value, like people and places, with which they can become emotionally involved (Yeoman, 2019).

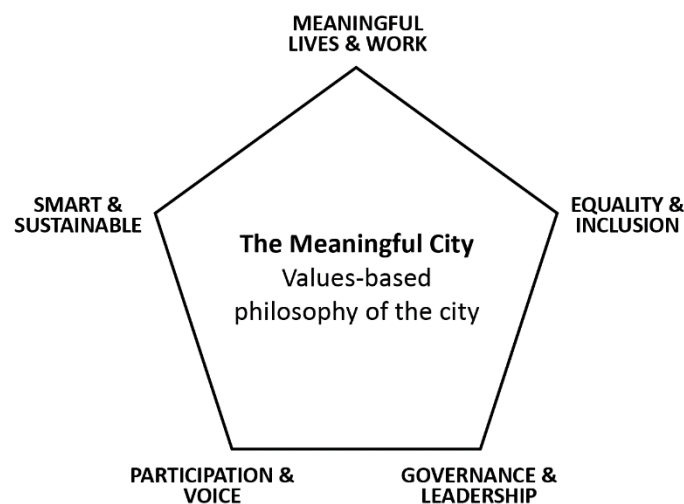


Figure 5 - The Meaningful City (Yeoman, 2019)

A city brand which enhances well-being and enriches peoples' lives and elicits emotion from its core, helping communities and people become and feel smarter, healthier, stronger, safer and/or more connected, can be considered meaningful (Standlee, 2018). Brands need to add value to the lives of people without doing harm to mind, body, society or the environment (Cook et al., 2010). Only when the values of the brand are so integrated into their products or community that they can no longer be distinguished from the brand itself, can the brand be said to be meaningful (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013).

The 2020 Interbrand report acknowledges the significance of brands that listen to their 'customer communities and celebrate them rather than the product' (Interbrand, 2020: 18). For a brand to be considering meaningful, the brand should share similar – if not the same – views of what matters, whether functional, emotional or otherwise (Interbrand, 2020). The

Interbrand report finds that brands that are ‘actively listening to and anticipating their evolving needs, beliefs and desires, and responding effectively and appropriately’ are those achieving success as they see their users or customers as partners in the business and not just consumers (Interbrand, 2020: 27).

Loving is a powerful source of creating meaning in our lives and being able to care for places can help people achieve meaningfulness in their lives. Cities can provide a wealth of sources of diversity and meaning, but structures and processes in cities can often limit access. The meaningful city seeks to give responsibilities to its residents and streamlines structures and processes to make access to sources of meaning more readily available argues Yeoman (2019: 472) and ‘at its best, city living provides a complex exterior richness which matches our need for interior richness, consistent with the conditions needed for experiencing meaningfulness across a whole life’.

Good open spaces allow ‘all people using it to feel welcome, respected, safe and accommodated’ regardless of whether they are residents, tourists, old or young, abled or disabled or how they utilise the space available (Gehl Institute, 2016: 12). Open spaces function better when they are well used and the more widely mixed the possible uses, the more diverse an audience the space will attract (Gehl Institute, 2016) Exposing oneself to different cultures, preferences, races and religions helps users become more tolerant and empathetic towards others argues Gehl Institute, 2016) helping build wider, more inclusive communities.

Residents need to experience something unique with which they can form an emotional bond that allows them to build trust in the brand, and in turn the residents begin to include elements of the city brand into their own narrative (Escalas, 2004). Lichrou et al. (2017: 168) propose that narrative inquiry allows an engagement with stories that might offer insight into the communities and individuals that both live and work in a place or those who have never visited the place and that narratives about a place allow us to ‘get access to a remembered past(s) as well as imagined, desired or feared future(s)’. The emotional bonds and brands inclusion in the residents’ narrative will be the focus of the research as outlined in Chapter 3, utilising visual narrative inquiry.

2.4 Meaningful City Brands – Best Practice Case Studies

Three cities from across the globe have been selected to explore how a metropolitan open space system might contribute to the meaningfulness of a city brand through best-practice case studies; Sydney, New York and Vancouver. Yeoman (2019) argues that there are currently no cities calling themselves meaningful – which does not imply there are no meaningful cities. In *Happy City*, Montgomery (2013) explores cities which are transforming lives through urban design, while Kageyama (2019), looks at the emotional infrastructure of places and how cities can make us healthier and happier and more connected to each other. Both Montgomery (2013) and Kageyama (2019) explore a variety of cities and demonstrate the impact of meaningful, purpose-driven projects on residents, by living alongside them and experiencing their challenges on the city streets through narrative. Narratives reveal the ‘possibilities of meaning’ from everyday lived experience to help understand and explore new knowledge (Leggo, 2008: 5). Narratives are used to arrange experiences into a whole that allows the significance of each experience to be understood in relation to that whole (Elliott, 2005: 3).

Although not a signifier in terms of meaningfulness, the recent Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) released in 2020, ranks the top ten cities as follows; London, Sydney, Paris, New York, Rome, Amsterdam, Vienna, Vancouver, Melbourne and San Francisco. Three of these cities are included in the meaningful city brand case studies below. When they were chosen (in 2019) Vancouver was eleventh and has since improved in its rankings.

The three cities chosen for this study are: Sydney (Australia), New York (United States of America) and Vancouver (Canada). All three cities were built around natural harbours, and all three have extensive waterfront areas – which are particularly sensitive open spaces that require attention. The city of Durban is similarly built around a natural harbour with an extensive waterfront area. Although each of the three cities have their own socio-economic and political histories, they do differ from Durban’s geographic location within South Africa and South Africa’s legacy of Apartheid and socio-economic segregation which has left vast differences in the distribution and accessibility of open spaces (Venter et al., 2020). The

Durban beachfront was originally designed during the Apartheid era, when certain segments of the population were excluded from using any of the facilities, argue Maharaj, Sucheran and Pillay (2006) and the beaches were only opened to all residents in 1989. The transition caused much tension, and the city has had to adopt and shift its focus and development along the beachfront to cater for all members of society (Maharaj et al. 2006).

Vancouver, Sydney and New York are in highly developed parts of the world and do not share many of the problems that potentially face a city in the developing world like Durban due to economic stability (United Nations, 2020). This study aims to explore the role metropolitan open space systems play in building meaningful city brands by using Durban as a case study and drawing from best practice metropolitan open space systems from around the globe.

- Sydney was selected for its commitment to being sustainable and actively involving residents in its ongoing planning. The Australian climate is somewhat like South Africa's and both countries are ex-colonies of Great Britain.
- New York City was selected for its sheer scale. It is not just a city but is a well-loved city. New York City residents are proud to speak of it as their home. It is densely populated and an extremely large city and not a city one would immediately think of when thinking about green cities with well-developed metropolitan open space systems. Central Park in New York, on the other hand, is arguably one of the most well-known urban open spaces in the world. In the last 20 years alone, in Central Park, New York City, two new species (leopard frog and centipede) have been discovered (Beatley, 2016).
- Vancouver was selected for its setting. The natural landscape has heavily influenced urban planning and vertical living was a necessity. Due to forethought and planning the city has managed to maintain its open spaces. Their purpose-driven action plan to be the greenest city in the world by 2020 made the city an obvious choice.

Each of the cities shown demonstrates the desire to capitalise the full potential of their open space systems for the betterment of society, now and in the future. All three, like Durban are trying to maintain progress, industry and growth whilst protecting the natural

environment. Natural harbours are significant junctions in nature and often require delicate attention to detail.

An expansive view of nature, or big city parks, argues Montgomery (2013: 120) deliver benefits to residents, but does not express anything about an individual's 'nature diet'. Central London residents statistically have twenty-seven square metres of green space per person – which measures a third more than residents in Vancouver notes Montgomery (2013). London's expansive green areas are the Royal Parks – originally created as hunting grounds for the Royal family, but Vancouver 'feels' greener and more open because it was designed for the people (Montgomery, 2013).

Large parks, like Central Park in New York are impressive open spaces and form the keystone of the open space system, but in speaking to New York residents, Montgomery (2013) found that the majority interviewed, although pleased with its presence in the city, had not visited it regularly. 'Nature has to be part of your life. It has to be part of your daily habitat and routine' and has to be 'integrated right into the urban fabric' (Montgomery, 2013: 121).

2.4.1 Sydney, Australia

Sydney Harbour is considered one of the most beautiful natural harbours in the world by Wanderlust Travel Magazine (2020) and is the playground for the residents of Sydney (and many a tourist). The harbour consists of over 240 kilometres of shoreline combining pristine beaches, beautiful gardens and natural bushland. It also features the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This area forms part of the extensive open space system of Sydney. 'The harbour is not only a place for recreation and nature, but it is also an integral part of our identity that is free to us all' (City of Sydney, 2018). Residents will feel more positive towards a city when they feel the city personality is in line with their own (Vollrath, 2019).

'Sydney will have fair access to quality parks and public places for leisure, sport and recreation for the local community and visitors. The city will have a range of open spaces that meet the diverse and changing needs of the community. A network of recreation trails will provide walking and cycling opportunities linking centres and parks' (City of Sydney, 2018).

One of the main features of the city of Sydney and its suburbs are the green and open spaces, which are a key feature to people's sense of enjoyment of urban life (City of Sydney, 2018). The open space system of Sydney consists of parks, sporting grounds, trails, the harbour, rivers and beaches and includes streets, squares, waterfronts and more which are believed to play a role in social interaction, community engagement and the provision of a sense of place (City of Sydney, 2018). A city brand that allows for, encourages and provides spaces where people could feel connected to others, could thus be helping its residents to achieve both happiness and meaningfulness (Baumeister et al., 2013).

Sydney incorporates over 630,000 hectares of open space, of which 31,000 hectares are within the Sydney urban greenspace network and the city recognises that the provision of open space, connectivity, quality and amenity will be critical in the coming years to cater for the projected increase in population density through the fostering of community well-being, increased physical activity and social interaction (City of Sydney, 2018).

By 2030, City of Sydney (2018) aims to;

1. Acquire additional open space;
2. Increase the capacity, quality and diversity of parks, sport and recreation facilities;
3. Ensure easy access to their open spaces;
4. Improve the links between open spaces;
5. Facilitate and encourage community participation in development and use of open spaces;
6. Ensure all facilities are environmentally sustainable;
7. Ensure all facilities are adequately managed;
8. Partner with business, councils and relevant parties to expand the network where possible.

The city recognises that they need to create liveable urban environments through quality urban design and the provision of parks, sports and recreation facilities to support a projected increased population density and to encourage health lifestyles and support the local ecology. The City of Sydney (2018) encourages community involvement in their open space projects and future development within the city through the Sydney Your Say website. De Beer and Enslin (2015) argue that meaningful brands engage with stakeholders directly through authentic communication.

Sustainable Sydney 2030 (City of Sydney, 2018) is a set of goals for the city aimed at making the city as green and global as possible by 2030. Residents asked for a city that cared about environmental issues, had a strong economy, that supported the arts and 'connected its people to each other and the rest of the world'. Recently the city website has included a call to residents to let them know what they would like in their 2050 plan.

Some of the targets of the city's vision include that all residents will live within walking distance to most local services (including food, healthcare, schools, leisure and cultural activities). 'Every resident will be within a three-minute walk of continuous green links that

connect the Harbour Foreshore, Harbour Parklands, Moore, Centennial or Sydney Parks' – the major open spaces within the city (City of Sydney, 2018).

In the first stage of the Central Park renewal project, an award-winning mixed-use building was constructed, notes Beard (2016). 'One Central Park includes the tallest vertical gardens in the world; at 150 meters (approximately 500 ft.) tall, the construction includes 21 garden panels with 370 species of Australian flowers and plants that change seasonally' (Beard, 2016: 159). Set in Central Park, the complex is home to residential units, retail outlets and collaborative spaces for artists and architects, with space in the park for music and arts festivals and 'every aspect of the project serves multiple purposes: aesthetic, academic, social, and environmental' (Beard, 2016: 160).

The Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) places Sydney second. The city, probably the most well-known of the Australian cities from an outside perspective, is seen to be modern, efficient, green, friendly and an appealing place to live. The city ranks highly in the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) because of its people (perceived as friendly, helpful and happy) and prerequisites (facilities, rental prices, affordability and public amenities). The mention of Sydney immediately conjures up the Sydney Opera House – one of the world's most famous and unique buildings. The mental image shows the exterior of the building set next to water, possibly the Sydney Harbour Bridge in the background. It is these types of significant structures in public open spaces that draw attention to the city. It is a single building, but it becomes representational of what we think when we hear the city's name.

2.4.2 New York City, USA

Situated on one of the world's largest natural harbours, New York City is one of the most visited places in the world. New York City is home to some of the most iconic landmarks known worldwide and featured in music and pop culture repeatedly. New York City arguably has one of the strongest city brands, which benefitted from a 1970's campaign in which the 'I [heart] NY' slogan was born (Bendel, 2011). Landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty, Times Square and Central Park come to mind when one mentions the city – and they all form part of the New York City open space system.

'Our vision is to create and sustain thriving parks and public spaces for New Yorkers. Our mission is to plan resilient and sustainable parks, public spaces, and recreational amenities, build a park system for present and future generations, and care for parks and public spaces' (NYC Parks, 2019).

New York City Parks takes care of over 12,140 hectares of land in the city (fourteen percent), including Central Park, Coney Island Beach and other iconic places, providing recreational and athletic facilities to residents (NYC Parks, 2019). With over 800 kilometres of waterfront in the city, the open space system must play an active role in looking after the estuarine system in one of the planets most populous cities. The city has committed to helping foster growth of economic opportunities, increase social equity and make liveable neighbourhoods a priority by committing to building affordable housing, providing better access to targeted athletic, cultural and academic programs and creating safer streets within the city. 'NYC Parks commits to ensuring that the benefits of open space reach every community' (NYC Parks, 2019). Montgomery (2015) argues that well connected communities are more content and able to deal with challenges better due to that connection.

The redevelopment and repurposing of New York's High Line railway into a park was a series of political and social compromise, stresses Broder (2012). The High Line Park immediately received iconic status as a city landmark and won the city praise for its bold redevelopment, which has subsequently sparked further developments in the area that have resulted in job creation, housing provision, and art galleries and so forth (Broder, 2012). The High Line Park

has been praised in the media, and it is well used, extremely sociable, and well visited by tourists and locals alike, although Foster (2010) notes, it is not characteristic of New York City's Public space. The park costs more to maintain monthly than several of the other parks in the city and is run as a private-public partnership between NYC Parks and Friends of the High Line (Broder, 2012). Although an isolated and unique project within the city, the complexity involved with the creation of this park and the number of stakeholders involved speaks to a city willing to 'bend the rules' to achieve something extraordinary and Braiterman (2011) argues that a city that utilises open spaces and roofs helps increase functionality and enjoyment of the residents. 'By re-imagining cities as natural habitat, cities can compete in terms of human health, quality of life, job creation, and environmental innovations (Braiterman, 2011: 81).

Foster (2010) questions whether the ecological benefit of the High Line Park development outweighs the social inequality in the area. The High Line Park and the 29 developments around it are targeted at a top-end of the market but it exists in a community area that is distinctly lower-end argue Foster (2010) and Broder (2012). Often developments such as this are only financially viable in lower-end communities where property values are significantly lower, but the economic benefit added to the area could be of great value. The High Line Park is a feature most New York residents will not use regularly but its presence in the city is 'immensely satisfying to the community and clearly a reason to love the city' Kageyama (2011: 24). In South Africa there are clear benefits that would be derived from open spaces – which are 'fundamental for socio-economic development and general human wellbeing', and that focusing on the development of these in previously disadvantaged areas would help 'to dismantle the racial, economic and green Apartheid in South African cities' (Venter et al., 2020: 11).

One of the future goals of New York City, according to NYC Parks (2019), is the establishment of the Community Parks Initiative, which aims to work with leaders, open space groups, and communities to create new dynamic public spaces where people can enjoy being outdoors, where recreation and physical activity is encouraged, and economic development promoted. NYC Parks (2019) sees itself as being able to bring various stakeholders together to envision new and exciting projects that both increase green space

and help promote a sense of place. The city has started a variety of these initiatives including the City Parks Foundation, Central Park Conservancy, Adopt-A-Park and many others to share responsibility for the open spaces and allow for community involvement (NYC Parks, 2019). De Beer and Enslin (2015) argue that meaningful brands engage with stakeholders directly through authentic communication and Baumeister et al. (2013) argue that city brands which encourage and help people connect with others through the provision of space helps residents achieve happiness and meaning.

Paley Park in Midtown, New York City is a much-loved urban space, notes Beatley (2016) and was one of the first pocket parks built, opened in 1967, the park is around 390 square metres in size, and the success of the park lies in its use of water. A six metre 'waterfall' constructed at the rear of the park drowns out the sounds of the city and allows visitors to escape the built environment. Pocket parks have become popular thanks to this New York first (Beatley, 2016).

The Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) places New York City fourth. The city, probably the most well-known of the United States cities from an outside perspective, is seen to be a massive metropolis that is as appealing for its diversity as it is frightening for its magnitude. The city ranks highly in the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) because of its pulse - outsiders believe that New York City offers ample opportunities for entertainment, activities and so on.

The mention of New York City immediately conjures up the Statue of Liberty, or the Twin Towers (now Ground Zero), Central Park – It is a city we recognise in every movie we see. Popular culture has driven home the concept that this is the city where everything happens. 'If I can make it there, I'm gonna make it anywhere, It's up to you, New York, New York' (Kander & Ebb, 1979).

2.4.3 Vancouver, Canada

Well-known for its green credentials, Vancouver is a city that has grown in a compact and vertical manner, set amongst a landscape of steep mountains and the ocean (Beatley, 2016; Montgomery, 2013). As early as the 1970's, the city refused to allocate additional road space for cars, and has been actively reducing road space, turning roads into walkways (Montgomery, 2013). Where other cities in North America have emptied into the suburbs, Vancouver has seen a large influx of residents into the city centre and yet the city remains ranked one of the world's best places to live (Montgomery, 2013). The city has been designed to meet these high density needs with large residential towers, but strictly imposed by-laws to protect views, so that whether a resident is on the street, or in an apartment block, or park, the visual connection to nature is protected. The form of building has become world renowned (and highly profitable) and *Vancouverism* (tall, widely separated, slender towers, public space, small parks, pedestrian friendly) has been copied worldwide (Montgomery, 2013: 118-119).

'Building a Vancouver that's amazing for everyone. Enabling new buildings that are so efficient, you can keep your whole family warm with a hair dryer in winter. Turning waste into a resource, and water into something we manage holistically. Restoring natural spaces. Designing a city that makes it easy to leave the car behind, with neighbourhoods where everything you need is close at hand. When you must drive, making sure electric vehicle charging is available, no matter what type of dwelling you live in. Adapting Vancouver... and making sure no one's left behind. Influencing green practices across the globe, and helping our local green businesses get ready for the world stage' (City of Vancouver, 2018).

Vancouver aspired to be the greenest city by 2020 (City of Vancouver, 2018). They aim to achieve this through the construction of green buildings, implementing green transportation, producing zero waste, increasing the green economy and providing residents access to nature. By giving residents easier access to the city's green spaces, such as parks, gardens and walkways – the city aims to improve the health of the residents and strengthen the community. In their 2019 update the city reported that 53% of trips within

the city utilise walking, cycling or public transport and nine percent of businesses engaged in greening their operations. The city did not necessarily meet its goal of becoming the greenest city – but it has made strides towards a much greener future. Babiak (The Place Brand Observer, 2018) argues that through a well-crafted meaningful narrative about place historically, currently and in the future, a city could attract new investment and interest.

The mission for the City Parks department is ‘provide, preserve and advocate for parks and recreation services to benefit people, communities and the environment’ (City of Vancouver, 2018). Rosethorn (2018) argues that if an organisation defines an authentic and resonant purpose it will have a positive impact but stresses that ‘purpose in action is what makes an organisation truly purposeful’. Open space, parks, greenways and pedestrian amenities account for close to 1600 hectares of land. The city Parks Board in Canada is a separately elected committee and not appointed.

The City of Vancouver (2018) believes in maintaining integration between the city and the environment, ensuring high quality parks that facilitate easy movement between them. Families are encouraged to move into the city centre, which is rich in housing and open spaces connecting schools, community centres and parks. The city aims to combine parks, community centres and schools to maximise the engagement and use of spaces that traditionally are single use. Converting any traditional single-use space into multi-use would be of great benefit to the community. With proper management systems in place, well-designed facilities could cater for multiple audiences in simple spaces.

With densification of the population within the city, more and more residents are living in housing which does not have private open space (gardens) and those residents are much more reliant on being able to access parks and open spaces (Montgomery, 2013). The city has been active in reclaiming land previously used for industry and establishing new parks – specifically along the Vancouver waterfront with new high-density housing developments alongside those parks.

The Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) places Vancouver eighth. The city ranks highly in the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) because it is deemed to have the

best prerequisites, friendly and approachable people and is seen as a city with high potential.

Unlike New York and Sydney, Vancouver has not really featured in any big way in popular culture in terms of songs and memorable movies – in fact the city is a well-used filming location for mimicking cities such as San Francisco and New York in movies (Montgomery, 2013). Although well-known in the architectural world for its style of building, there are no images that really come to mind when the name is mentioned – other than possibly a view of waterways, mountains and large trees.

2.4.4 Case studies in summary

Each of the cities explored in the case studies are ranked highly in terms of the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) but for a combination of different reasons. Sydney, New York and Vancouver demonstrate many of the following meaningful city brand building principles in their use of metropolitan open space systems:

- Development of systems to enable people to walk to most major services in Sydney, New York and Vancouver demonstrate a **higher purpose** (Aaker, 2015);
- Developing and expanding green areas in previously industrial areas helps encourage a **sense of belonging** (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019);
- Encouraging community ownership demonstrates a **functional and community centred approach** (Probst, 2019);
- Demonstrating an **inspired approach** (Neumeier, 2005) e.g., Vancouver's laws to protect visual connection;
- Seeking to ensure that they have a **unique value** (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016) which can be argued is true to each city;
- Allowing **opportunities for enrichment** (Standlee, 2018) e.g., Vancouver City Parks are elected independent of the government;
- Encouraging development which **promotes positive feelings** amongst residents and tourists (Standlee, 2018) e.g., developments along waterfront areas in Sydney, New York and Vancouver;
- **Encouraging healthy living** (Standlee, 2018) as seen in all three cities;
- Allowing opportunities for residents and visitors to create an **emotional connection** (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2019) which all three cities demonstrate through their open space systems of parks and the connections between them;
- Encouraging residents to express their individuality and allowing the cities to become a part of their identities, allowing for **self-expression**, to be **intertwined** and **linked to self** (Escalas, 2004) as seen in Sydney, New York and Vancouver;
- **Provide opportunity to delight and express individuality** (Smith, 2014);
- Demonstrating their **groundedness** (Rosethorn, 2018) by making every effort to have open spaces as accessible and available to as wide an audience as possible.

2.5 Meaningful City Brands and Open Space Systems

Famed urbanist Jane Jacobs once described the purpose of cities simply and succinctly as a means to create wealth. Without doing so, a city cannot sustain or improve the quality of life of its citizens... Increasingly, reputation, identity and the perceived quality of place determine where talent, capital and tourism flow... perception of place is influenced by a wide range of factors; the quality of the natural environment; parks and open spaces; diversity of people; safety; economic prosperity; variety of restaurants and nightlife; and the quality of the arts and culture. These assets and many others shape the perception and identity of place in the minds of people when evaluating places to live, visit or invest (Resonanceco.com, 2017).

Yeoman (2019) argues that although meaningful cities may currently exist, no city is calling themselves one yet, and that although the idea of a meaningful city is new, that labelling a city as meaningful will not remove meaning from another city. The 'Meaningful Brands' study by the Havas Group (Meaningful Brands, 2019) defines a meaningful brand by looking at the impact the brand has on both personal and collective wellbeing, as well as looking at the functional benefits of the brand – but the study does not refer directly to cities as brands. Where do cities and their open space systems fit into this mix? It is clear from the case studies presented previously that metropolitan open space systems offer functional benefits in the form of services and improve general wellbeing on a personal and collective level, but do they extend beyond that?

The Havas report refers to collective benefits as those that contribute to things such as the economy, employment or helping improve the environment; and personal benefits as being how brands improve people's lives through encouraging or aiding in such aspects as healthy lifestyles; connectivity with family and friends as well as making their lives easier; and functional benefits – responding to 'does the product deliver?' (Meaningful Brands 2019).

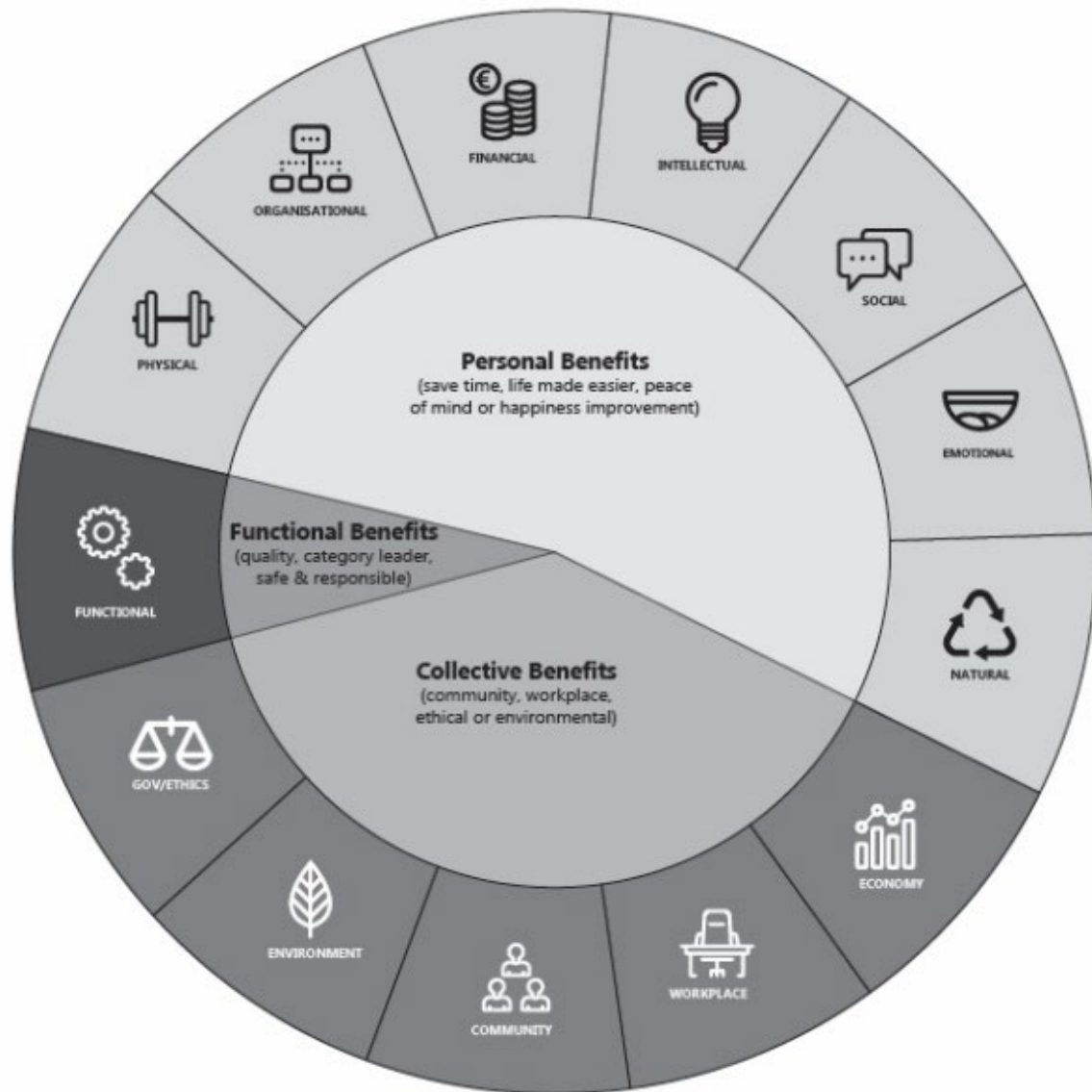


Figure 6 - Meaningful Brands Benefits (Meaningful Brands, 2019)

The Havas Group has reported that 55% of consumers believe that brands are more important than governments in helping create a better future and findings of the study have demonstrated that people support brands that aim to improve the world and reflect their values (Meaningful Brands, 2019). Given the growth of social media and the apparent strength of the consumer voice, the significance of involving residents in the co-creation of city brands has become essential (Kavaratzis, 2012). City branding is complex, notes Kavaratzis (2009) due to the diversity of stakeholders and volume of organisations steering the brand and the limited control each organisation has over their role within the overall brand.

‘Brands that go beyond their product and make a positive, tangible impact on what matters to us, gain a greater share of our lives’ (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and these brands then gain a deeper, more significant connection with people, and results in building trust in the brand. A city brand accentuates the unique qualities of the city and reflects its identity, argues Ooi (2010), but can also change the city and the society within it.

Despard (2015: 1) argues that open spaces, such as parks and gardens, have a function over and above being spaces for recreation and social engagement, ‘they constitute a socially and culturally powerful, if subtle, form of media’. They both alter perception of space, experience and activity, and they function as ‘mediums of social and cultural exchange’, through other mediums such as photographs shared on social media. Inam (2002) proposes a meaningful approach to urban design that is driven by purpose, generates long-term development and is relevant to human values, to improve quality of life. Too many urban design projects focus on the environmental aesthetics argues Inam (2002) rather than how the environment functions in terms of community and the economy, and any meaningful urban development project should develop the community, encourage economic development and foster opportunity.

Anholt (2006) argues that the brand narrative of a city has an impact on people’s desires to visit cities, to transact with them or even relocate to them and Aaker (2015) demonstrates that if brand building is about packaging facts that directly affect people’s lives, into stories, they will be more persuasive. A well-crafted meaningful narrative for a place allows people and those in charge, to collectively celebrate successes of a place historically, currently and in the future notes Babiak (The Place Brand Observer, 2018), which would in turn help to attract new investment and interest to a city. Understanding the Durban residents’ narratives will be the focus of the research as outlined in Chapter 3, utilising visual narrative inquiry.

Vollrath (2019) explores how people form deep connections with brands to help city leaders gain maximum leverage from the city brand without using promotional activities, but rather through physical, economic and cultural conditions and demonstrates that once a place is

perceived as an expression of one's own self, that connection helps establish brand loyalty, brand advocacy and brand engagement – which in turn help boost the city brand.

Montgomery (2015) questions whether wealth, a sense of security, health or job satisfaction can lead to feelings of happiness within a city and finds that, although influenced by all of these, the single biggest contributor to happiness within cities is where residents held the highest levels of trust for their neighbours. 'Connected communities are happier, more resilient in hard times and better equipped to handle economic challenges' (Montgomery, 2015: 2).

Despite strong evidence of the link between open space systems and human well-being, South Africa's legacy of Apartheid and socio-economic segregation has left vast differences in the distribution and accessibility of these spaces (Venter et al., 2020). Venter et al. (2020: 11) found that there are clear benefits that would be derived from open spaces – which are 'fundamental for socio-economic development and general human wellbeing', and that focusing on the development of these in previously disadvantaged areas would help 'to dismantle the racial, economic and green Apartheid in South African cities'.

The creation of connected green space within cities, argues Braiterman (2011), helps benefit both people and the environment by providing numerous functional benefits, including cleaner water and air, improving the quality of life and providing much needed spaces that allow people to interact and socialise with each other and nature. An abundance of urban green space could well give a city the competitive edge over another when competing for the attention of corporations, tourists or new residents (Braiterman, 2011).

Merrilees et al. (2009: 362) note how significantly different the relevance of brand attributes is to different target audiences for the city. Utilising a list of attributes of the city – related to physical, economic and cultural aspects – Merrilees et al. (2009) found that cities with similar issues drew similar attribute responses in their study, suggesting that the success of a city brand might begin by how people connect to specific brand attributes. Keller (2000: 4) notes that people do not buy a product because it is a collection of

attributes, but they buy into the combination of the attributes, the brands image, service and other tangible and intangible factors that create an attractive whole.

The attributes used in the study by Merrilees et al. (2009) are closely aligned with the benefits described in the Meaningful Brands report (Meaningful Brands, 2019), and the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2006) as shown in table 1 below with many of the categories overlap in peculiar ways; the *Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index* judges a city from the outside, the *Meaningful Brand Benefits* looks at products and services while the *City Attributes* feel devoid of emotion. Meaningful connections can only come with an emotional connection, as people's interpretations of brands are emotionally charged (Neumeier, 2005).

'Good public space is responsive, democratic and meaningful' Mehta (2014: 53). Mehta (2014) suggests five key dimensions in evaluating the quality of public space;

- i) Inclusiveness (ability to participate with ease),
- ii) Meaningful activities (useful space that supports activities which are meaningful to users and supports sociability),
- iii) Comfort (familiarity, people, weather, physical conditions, convenience),
- iv) Safety (isolated from traffic, eyes on the street/space, perceptions),
- v) Pleasurability (high levels of spatial quality and sensory complexity).

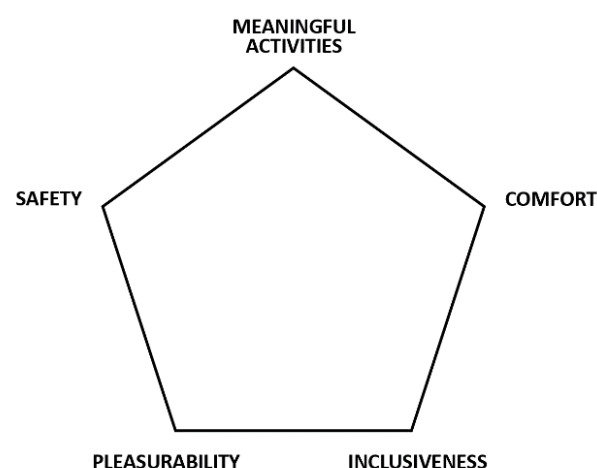


Figure 7 - The five dimensions/aspects of public space (Mehta, 2014: 58)

The metrics from all four of these systems, in addition to others, will be analysed with the emerging themes found in the narrative inquiry (as outlined in Chapter 3) and findings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Comparison of Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index, Merrilees et al. City Attributes, Meaningful Brand Benefits and Public Space Index.			
Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index <i>Ipsos (2006)</i>	City Attributes <i>Merrilees et al. (2009)</i>	Meaningful Brand Benefits <i>Meaningful Brands (2019)</i>	Public Space Index <i>Mehta (2014)</i>
The presence	Nature/Environment	Government/Ethics (collective)	Inclusiveness
The pulse	Business opportunities	Environment (collective)	Meaningful activities
The people	Shopping	Community (collective)	Comfort
The place	Brand	Workplace (collective)	Safety
The potential	Intentions	Economy (collective)	Pleasurability
The prerequisites	Social bonding	Natural (personal)	
	Transport	Emotional (personal)	
	Government services	Social (personal)	
	Cultural activities	Intellectual (personal)	
		Financial (personal)	
		Organisational (personal)	
		Physical (personal)	
		Functional	

Table 1 - Comparison of Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index, Merrilees et al. City Attributes Meaningful Brand Benefits, and Public Space Index

‘People are seeking better lives and expect brands to help them’ (Benady, 2015). Rethinking urban spaces as green initiatives can help make cities more liveable for people, more welcoming for nature, and will have a direct impact on air and water quality; reduce carbon emissions, improve food security and public health, will help establish better communities, reduce crime, increase wildlife habitat, help promote tourism and potentially create jobs argues (Braiterman, 2011) while Constantine and Miller (2017) argue that personal wellbeing is the most significant driver of meaningfulness, followed by collective benefit and that the functional benefits are a necessary factor, but not enough to drive preference with consumers.

Happiness is a natural feeling which arises from one's current situation, where meaningfulness may be culturally dependant and in a personal capacity, meaningfulness often results from being able to make a positive contribution to another person (Baumeister et al., 2013: 506-507) and a city brand that allows for, encourages and provides spaces where people could feel more connected to others, could be helping its residents to achieve both happiness and meaningfulness. Baumeister et al. (2013: 511) report that happiness is associated with 'the benefits one receives from others while meaningfulness is instead associated with the benefits that others receive from self'.

Whereas nature was previously designated for parks or the city outskirts, there is increasingly an interest in how vitality can be breathed into the urban environment by bringing back plant life and new public spaces (Braiterman, 2011). Air pollution in Hong Kong has reached such high levels warns Braiterman (2011), that business leaders are considering relocating from the city. In contrast, a city like Seoul, which has embraced a wide spectrum of green city initiatives has led to an influx of businesses and investment into the area (Braiterman, 2011).

Montgomery (2015) questions why so few commuters walk and cycle in a city, when it has been shown that in general the activity makes people happier and in answering his own question believes that the city designers of the recent era designed walking out of our lives. 'Most people tend to walk farther when streets feel safe and interesting' (Montgomery, 2015: 194). If a city does indeed care about the health and sociability of its residents, argues Montgomery (2015), then the city must do more than just design or implement mixed-use zones, but rather focus on the promotion of activity, creating interesting, permeable street edges and no big, blank walls and notes that cities such as New York, Melbourne and Copenhagen have outlawed blank facades on certain streets within the city. Montgomery (2015) argues that when a place feels comfortable and safe it enables people to develop trust and that designing spaces that encourage this feeling in cities allows us to create altruistic cities. The more trust people have, the better they will behave towards the city and others, and the more empathy residents will feel to their fellows, as cities are shared projects and spaces (Montgomery, 2015).

As cities compete for money, attention, talent, innovation, creativity and tourism it is increasingly imperative that they market their potential strengths and distinct qualities. Konijnendijk (2010: 5) argues that more and more, cities are achieving this through the marketing of their 'greening initiatives', while Resonanceco.com (2017) argue that the reputation of a city or the perceived quality of the space will attract residents, tourism and investment. Green branding tends to focus more on issues such as climate change but can focus on the literal greening of cities including planting trees and the establishment of parks. Green spaces 'often play an important role in city marketing and green branding in particular', where green is used as an opportunity for the creation of city and sense branding rather than to make a meaningful contribution to city branding, stresses Konijnendijk (2010: 5) and it is imperative that they link up to the 'bigger picture' (including offering spaces for social interaction, sport activities, climate control, storm water management and more).

Andersson (2016) suggests the cities are increasingly adopting green-city labels and making use of their urban environmental policies for the purposes of place branding. Green city branding has become a tool for city leaders to promote their cities promising better quality of life and sustainable development according to Gulrud (2014); as seen in cities such as Sydney, Australia with 'Sustainable Sydney 2030', and Vancouver, Canada with their 'Green City 2020' vision. Green city brands are providing a vision of a healthy lifestyle for residents and a positive outlook for the future (Gulrud, 2014). Green place branding is about both environmental policies addressing climate change, sustainable development, reduced carbon emissions and the like, as well as the green spaces created within the city to increase urban vegetation and helping improve the quality of life (Gulrud, 2015). If a green positioning strategy combines functional attributes and emotional benefits there is a positive effect on the attitude towards the place brand (Hartmann, Apaolaza Ibáñez & Forcada Sainz, 2005).

A densely populated city offers the potential for the highest quality of life in a city, due to the ability to share resources like transport and green or recreational spaces and increasing planting within a city (utilising open spaces, roofs and even walls) makes cities more functional and enjoyable for the people living there (Braiterman, 2011). 'By re-imagining

cities as natural habitat, cities can compete in terms of human health, quality of life, job creation, and environmental innovations' (Braiterman, 2011: 81).

A metropolitan open space system, by its very nature is a multifunctional space. This helps foster community; allows for co-ownership of spaces; and could potentially affect the city status; the urban spaces, the basic city qualities, the residents and their behaviours, the pulse and the potential of the city. Pompe (2017) argues that there are three important components of the brand perception of a city; values, perceived attributes and personality, that shape the city's brand positioning in the eyes of stakeholders. A city brand's strength is based on the quality of its internal perception and any study related to city brands should focus on internal stakeholders, residents and city visitors (Pompe, 2017: 5).

A 'city is a kind of a story, a pattern in people interrelations, among production and distribution spaces and physical forms' and a city with a strong brand will have clear and positive values, which have been approved and are lived with by both residents and visitors to the city (Pompe, 2017: 5). Personal values will affect every stakeholder and are instrumental in creating attractions for everyone because feelings about a city are a consequence of certain values (Pompe, 2017: 14).

Although cities offer similar conditions for living and function in similar ways, they differ with their unique features, or peculiarities, how they express themselves with atmosphere, urban and architectural solutions amongst others to utilise potential for 'creating impressions of uniqueness' (Pompe, 2017: 20). 'Diversity and uniqueness are the conditions and possibility for a city to create their own position' in a competitive environment and Pompe (2017: 20) argues that brands which are more focused and more active in their communication of their unique features gain a higher degree of perception from their residents.

Adopting smart city initiatives, argue Yavuz, Cavusoglu and Corbaci (2018), help position a city brand as attractive to its target audience (specifically residents, tourists, new investors and potential tertiary education students), by demonstrating efficient, productive systems that are sustainable, improve security and help improve general tidiness of the city. A smart

city uses innovation in technology, communications, sustainability and ecological design to deliver quick, quality, clean and advanced experiences for residents while being sensitive to the management of natural resources (Yavuz et al., 2018). If a city takes care of the life that happens between buildings, Gehl (2011: 11) argues that it will take care of the needs of the people, while Mohapatra (2016) continues that there is a need for a focus on people and place interactions in multifunctional spaces to maximise opportunities for shared use and activity and Fleming (2010: 63) argues that successful open spaces are accessible through easy-to-use linkages, are walkable, provide a multitude of activities, provide comfort and encourage social interaction.

Activities in public or open spaces can be divided into three categories; necessary (everyday tasks, like walking doing errands, going to school and shopping), optional (highly dependent on outdoor conditions and availability of time) and social (dependent on the presence of others like children at play) (Gehl, 2011: 9). In areas of poor open spaces, only necessary activities take place; people rush through the spaces to get to where they want to be. In areas of better open spaces, more social and optional activities take place (such as lying in the sun, picnics). Mohapatra (2016: xi) argues that 'human beings need to make contact with nature in the course of their daily lives, and no special effort or journey ought to be required for experiencing it'.

There is a link, according to Curtin (2015: 11), between 'ecological and social fragmentation' and surmises that 'it is nearly impossible to sustain human culture and well-being if the ecological fabric on which they exist is damaged'. To solve the complexities of open spaces, people and urban development within shared spaces it is imperative to re-establish connectivity between ecological and social frameworks. D'MOSS recognises the importance of open spaces in respect of biodiversity, protection, quality of life, recreation, education and economy (Wheatley, 1996: 20).

Public open spaces have the opportunity, argues Woolley (2003: 7), of being able to bring back to cities the benefits of nature and to provide each citizen with the opportunity to walk through a natural landscape. The extent to which a city provides these opportunities and the extent to which it develops open spaces to serve the needs of its residents are a way of

measuring the progress of the city. Urban open spaces play a vital role in creating healthier, more sociable communities. 'Nature has to be part of your life. It has to be part of your daily habitat and routine' and has to be 'integrated right into the urban fabric' (Montgomery, 2013: 121).

The benefits to resident's health derived from urban open and green spaces are complex, but they can be largely attributed to the 'various ecological and social functions of green spaces' and these 'contribute to public health through improving air quality, alleviating the urban heat island effect', and helping to lower the level of noise (Huang, Yang, Lu, Huang & Yu, 2017: 1). The proximity to which communities live from green space is another contributing factor, as is the richness or biodiversity of the vegetation composition. In their study, Huang et al. (2017: 2) were able to demonstrate that vegetation composition is associated with human health, mainly mental health and increased psychological benefits. Their study revealed that the higher availability of urban green space in South Africa 'was associated with a lower incidence of depression for middle-income participants'.

Zenker and Beckmann (2013: 11) found vast differences in the perceptions of a city brand for diverse target groups in their study and that those differences have an implication on the management and marketing of the place brands to those diverse audiences. When examining the value of the metropolitan open space system one should examine the interests of both internal and external parties. Perceptions of various open spaces in a South African context would potentially be diverse based on where the open space occurs and who it is designed for due to South Africa's legacy of Apartheid and socio-economic segregation which left vast differences in the distribution and accessibility of these spaces (Venter et al., 2020).

We define ourselves by the city in which we live. We take on characteristics and lifestyles that identify us with our city. Our personalities begin to resonate with the city as it weaves its way into our own narratives. If meaningful brands enhance our well-being and enrich our lives (Standlee, 2018), then a meaningful city brand would do the same. Swanson et al. (2017: 94) found that participants of their study commonly indicated that places had

‘become part of their lives’ which indicated attachments to a place in addition to them expressing love for the place.

People are looking to improve the quality of their lives and expect brands to help them do it, and there is an expectation that brands will help them to make things better (Benady, 2015). A city provides residents an opportunity to find meaning in their lives, argues Yeoman (2019), but the complex structure of cities, with their processes and institutions, can also hinder development. A meaningful city puts human needs first, through inclusive city living and thereby helps its residents find their own purpose and a truly meaningful city sees meaningfulness as an intrinsic human need (Yeoman, 2019).

Open spaces exist in cities, whether they form part of a planned open space system or not. They are spaces between buildings, and those form part of a system. A metropolitan open space system covers these open spaces, parks, natural areas, forgotten areas, previously used areas, and attempts to link them in a system that allows for the flow of people, nature and life and if that metropolitan open space system that is well-designed and integrated into every part of the city and is visibly helping people improve their quality of life (Benady, 2015), it should enrich the resident’s lives (Standlee, 2018) and add meaningfulness. Cities can improve lives through involving residents, respecting the environment, improving access to technology and allowing for interconnectedness (smart cities), but unless people are easily able to contribute their diverse meanings and unique perspective, they will not be able to live a meaningful life (Yeoman, 2019). Cities must enable people to help each other live more meaningful lives, through the creation of design processes that allow for discovery, curation, interpretation, and communication of ideas that affect the city (Yeoman, 2019).

If ‘human beings need to make contact with nature in the course of their daily lives’ and they should not be making any special effort to do so (Mohapatra, 2016: xi), then open space systems are there to meet this need. In the meaningful city, an open system allows you to move from your home to your place of work, from parks to stores, from churches to galleries and anywhere in between. Moving between those places a resident should feel safe, happy and protected.

2.6 Conclusion: A Meaningful City Brand

A meaningful city is one that openly shares its vision and puts the needs and wants of its residents above all else by improving their lives or enabling them to do so themselves (Yeoman, 2019; Benady, 2015; Standlee, 2018; Aaker, 2015; Rosethorn, 2018). Residents of a meaningful city brand feel like they belong there (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019) and that the city and its spaces form a part of their identity as much as they are a part of the city's identity (Yeoman, 2019; Swanson et al., 2017). Residents are inspired (Hoyne, 2016; Neumeier, 2005) by their city and understand the unique values (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016) that the city offers them as residents. Residents have an emotional bond (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Standlee, 2018; Kageyama, 2019) with their city and feel positive about the place and their place within it, believing that their life is better, healthier and happier for being there. Kageyama (2019) argues that cities can build an emotional infrastructure to help a community achieve these goals even if residents are not able to explain their feelings about the place. Swanson et al. (2017: 89) found that places, and more specifically, cities, are brands that people claim to love and can form real attachments to and by being a part of the city, they are part of a community in which they feel they belong, where their needs are met.

A metropolitan open space system connects spaces and places between the buildings. If the spaces between buildings, and the parks and the streets are not taken care of – it can appear that the city does not take care of its people (Gehl, 2011). By focusing attention on these neglected spaces, a city can effectively demonstrate its intentions towards its residents. Beautiful parks, pathways and connections, inspire residents to care, and help nurture feelings of safety within the place (Standlee, 2018). Outdoor areas that encourage physical activity, with interesting stops along the way, help a city demonstrate that it cares for the health and sociability of its residents. Roads that are designed to give pedestrians easy passage through the traffic encourage walking. In cities with well-designed open space systems, residents utilise the outdoor spaces willingly for more than their necessary day-to-day tasks and will actively seek to socialise in those spaces and will want to spend time outside, exploring their community (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019).

The best practice case studies of Sydney, New York and Vancouver explore how these cities are attempting to help communities achieve better lives. Sydney encourages emotional connections through a strong sense of place and has at its core a vision of encouraging residents to enjoy their urban lifestyle through community-driven open space projects. Residents of the city are seen to be friendly, helpful and happy.

As much as New York City appears to be a sprawling metropolis, fourteen percent of land within the city is dedicated green space. Bold new developments are actively seeking to expand green areas within the city in order to encourage residents to feel safer and more welcome on the streets. Initiatives are underway in the city that effectively give ownership of certain outdoor spaces to community initiatives in order to encourage a shared responsibility towards those spaces.

In Vancouver, laws were written protecting the views of the outdoors – effectively guaranteeing that even if you live in a high-rise apartment block – you should have access to see nature and New York and Sydney are actively creating roof and vertical gardens to help achieve the same – Montgomery (2013: 120) argues how important these views are to residents. In addition to this the city is actively promoting walking through the careful design of parks and walkways that make residents feel safer, happier and more cared for.

As has been shown in the literature review, a city is a complex brand, controlled by a multitude of stakeholders with a variety of their own needs. As much as a meaningful brand needs to be meaningful in every aspect of everything it does – it is unlikely that a city could ever meet every need, of every person. To be a meaningful brand, a city would need to demonstrate through action and commitment that it has the best intentions of improving its residents' lives and enabling them to do so through key projects and visible open space initiatives. The residents of the city would need to feel as though they belong to and form an integral part of the city as much as the city forms an integral part of them. The city should inspire the residents – who in turn – should love their city back and want to care for the city as much as the city does for them. As part of a greater city community, and various communities within the city, a resident should ultimately feel happy, feel safe, feel

welcomed and feel at home and they should feel loyal to and love their city (Goodyear, 2010; Kageyama, 2019; Vollrath, 2019; Yangsomran, 2017; Vanolo, 2018; Insch, 2011; Escalas, 2004).

Findings from the literature review concluded that a key component of understanding meaningful city brands is the emotional connection people have with places and those emotional connections are explored through a narrative inquiry with a particular focus on Durban residents' lived experience. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach for this study.

'In the meaningful city we know our neighbours.

We trust them.

We walk with them from our homes to our schools and to our places of work.

In the meaningful city we feel safe walking.

It becomes our everyday – rather than a weekend escape.

We eat lunch in the park across the road from our office.

We hear the ocean as we walk along the beach.

We hear the gulls.

We stop to admire the flowers on the sidewalk.

We stop and enjoy the moment.

We take out our phone, open Instagram and take a photograph of the young lady in a shiny blue cocktail dress, riding her skateboard along the beachfront promenade with the city in the background.

As we tag the post #happiness #lovemycity #bliss we walk back to our office to carry on with our days' work.

Happy for the experience of being a part of this city'

Simpson (2020).

CHAPTER 3

Research Plan and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research was to gain an understanding of the potential role metropolitan open space systems play in building meaningful city brands by exploring the lived experience of Durban residents using the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS). Findings from the literature review concluded that a key component of understanding meaningful city brands is the emotional connection people have with places and that a qualitative approach was most suited to explore these connections and their lived experience through narrative inquiry. Interpretive research studies subjectively and research methods should be 'sensitive to context' in an attempt to gain insights into in-depth understanding and is reliant on qualitative research which 'emphasises word rather than numbers' (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 30). 'Quality of space imparts a unique individual experience; that is, each person will perceive and enjoy it differently' (Gehl Institute, 2016: 31).

While doing the literature research, the Covid-19 pandemic caused open spaces to become inaccessible for a substantial period. As a result, Durban residents' appreciation for, and 'love' of their open spaces appeared to have deepened – and increased the significance of this study in terms of a heightened awareness about being able to access and engage with the outdoors. In May 2020, as lockdown restrictions were eased and residents were allowed to exercise outdoors, they took full advantage of the spaces they were denied for the previous weeks, and ventured onto the Durban beachfront to jog, cycle and walk (Naidoo, 2020). 'Our relationship with the outdoors has changed' (Naomi, 2020: 243), and many people around the globe are (re)connecting with nature, as they tend to feel safer outdoors and are rediscovering an appreciation for what nature offers them. Naomi (2020: 244) argues that if life returns to 'normal' once vaccines and a cure become available that 'the appreciation for and value of nature' will remain. Medway et al. (2021: 7) suggest that considering the impact of Covid-19, and beyond, people will need to learn to 'better appreciate and (re)connect' with where they live.

The research presented in Chapter 2 explored the potential significance of a metropolitan open space system in building a meaningful city brand through answering these questions:

- What are the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands?
- How could a metropolitan open space system contribute to building meaningful city brands?

The research methodology that has been adopted in this chapter (Chapter 3) and the research presented in Chapter 4 explore the **perceived, experiential** and **potential value** of D'MOSS as a metropolitan open space system amongst a purposeful sample of greater Durban residents by answering the question:

- How can D'MOSS contribute to and add unique value in the building of Durban as a meaningful city brand?

Vollrath (2019) argues that exploring how people form connections with their city, may help city brands become more meaningful for residents, while Lichrou et al. (2017: 168) propose that narrative inquiry allows an engagement with stories that might offer insight into the communities and individuals that both live and work in a place. Through residents' narratives this study explored the unfolding stories by engaging with their own photographs taken of, or within, the specific area; the visuals acted as prompts for the participants to share their lived experience, emotional connection and relationship with the area, and through that shared their perceptions and opinions of the potential and unique value of D'MOSS.

Hollingsworth & Dybdahl (2007) explain that narrative inquiries revolve around conversations in semi-structured interviews where learning is demonstrated through the conversation while Elliott (2005: 19) concurs that the conversations from semi-structured interviews in a narrative inquiry are 'the ideal method for discovering more about individuals' lives and intimate experiences' through an exploration of their everyday lives and any meanings they attach to their own lived experience.

To explore D'MOSS as a metropolitan open space system, and to evaluate the potential role an open space system plays in building a meaningful city brand; the inquirer, through narrative inquiry explored the **perceptions, opinions and lived experience** of a particular area of D'MOSS – The Durban beachfront. Widely regarded as one of South Africa's most iconic public open spaces, the Durban beachfront (also known as the Durban Promenade and previously marketed as the Golden Mile) was the focus of this study as D'MOSS areas cover '94 000 hectares' within the city (eThekweni Municipality, 2018). Besides being a significant drawcard for tourists and holidaymakers to the city, the Durban beachfront is used by locals of all races, across all income brackets, for social and recreational purposes. 'The social value of this is invaluable' (Buccus, 2017). The extension to the promenade in November 2019, lengthened the formal promenade along the beach to an eight-kilometre stretch from the Durban Harbour to the Umgeni River mouth – a significant mangrove biosystem – at Blue Lagoon.

Although often used interchangeably the terms opinion and perception differ somewhat in their meaning and interpretation. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010) **opinion** can be defined as 'your feelings or thoughts about somebody/something, rather than a fact' whereas **perception** is defined as 'the way you notice things, especially with the senses'. To gain an understanding of participants' opinions this study explored the participants views, beliefs and judgements about the Durban beachfront, which would have been formed and influenced by their religion, background, education, culture and their perceptions. To understand the participants perceptions, this study explored how the participants look at things and interpret them. 'Experience differs from person to person; each undergoes and acts and reacts differently' and although participants have their own personal experiences, which are 'shaped by the social, cultural, and institutional narratives' they share similar experiences and each perceived the experiences differently because of their differing 'angle of vision' or perception (Bach, 2007: 282).

In order to demonstrate trustworthiness in this study, the inquirer has demonstrated credibility (by testing findings and interpretations in consultation with the participants in follow up interviews), transferability (by providing detailed descriptions to the findings so that others may judge transferability to another study), dependability (by ensuring the

process follows logic, is traceable and documented thoroughly) and confirmability (clearly indicating how interpretations, findings and insights were derived from the data) (Nowell et al., 2017).

The chapter begins with the research approach and paradigm in relation to the research objectives of the study, and then moves into narrative inquiry, elaborating on the specific use of visual narrative inquiry and introduces the idea of using Instagram as the visual platform to gather field texts and data, the chapter then leads into the research design and analysis including a deeper look into the inquirers own narrative, participant selection, ethical practice, conducting the narrative inquiry by collecting and analysing visual narratives and concludes with composing a visual narrative inquiry.

3.2 Research Approach and Paradigm

The objective of this research was to gain an understanding of the potential role metropolitan open space systems play in building meaningful city brands by exploring the perceived, experiential and potential value by gaining insight into the lived experience of residents. The concepts of perception, opinion and lived experience can only be understood from a subjective position – where the inquirer interprets the findings and gathers insights based on data gathered through a narrative approach. Narrative inquiry is a ‘frame of reference’, a method of self-reflection, a methodological approach to research and a means of presenting the research, argues Moen (2006), while Connelly and Clandinin (1990) concur that narrative is simultaneously the phenomenon and method. Meaning can be found when there is an attempt to ‘make sense of our experiences’ (Proulx and Inzlicht, 2012: 317).

This research fits within an interpretive research paradigm as it explored experience and emotion within the social context of living in the city and data was interpreted in terms of the meaning which it brings to the participants and does not seek absolute truth (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). ‘Interpretivists merely want to understand human behaviour’ (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 28). The perceptions, opinions and lived experience cannot be separated from the individuals but was interpreted when collating the findings into a narrative which respects ‘ordinary lived experience’ (Clandinin, 2013: 17). Any narrative research revolves

around how people experience the world, and a narrative inquirer aims to collect and write these narratives to inform and develop their understanding of the phenomenon of study (Moen, 2006). The research presented is subjective and sensitive to the context within which it occurs and is reliant on a qualitative method which allows for the inquirer to make sense from an interpretive position (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Rather than focusing on a wide audience, this research focused on a purposive sample of Durban residents who meet certain criteria (discussed below) that made them uniquely suited to this study. The role of the inquirer and their involvement is clearly expressed during the analysis as their inclusion in the process is subjective, as they are both the researcher and the subject and cannot be separated from one another (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen, 2006). The analysis of the data is both holistic and contextual – focusing on the emotional connection of the participants involved, which required all processes to be systematic and transparent. In conducting research of this nature, the collection of data and analysis happened simultaneously, and required continuous reflection and needed to be adapted based on the results and adjusted to better capture the narratives of the participants. This iterative process was captured in a reflexive journal.

The Place Brand Observer (2018) argues that the connection to where people live is significant, but not easy to define, and any attempts to understand these connections need to explore the hidden reasons, which could assist in uncovering further interesting and relevant research studies. With interpretive research it is important to note that the research will be specific to the context within which the study is conducted (Durban, during Covid-19) and cannot be generalised or directly applied to other instances or cities without specific research within the context of that city. Inquirers acknowledge that they themselves form part of the research taking place, in that the inquirer uses their observational skills and trust in their participants to interpret any gathered data. An interpretive research study relies on the insights, knowledge and experience of the inquirer themselves within the context of the particular study, but they need to always remain aware of their own personal biases and any possible preconceptions they might have in order to deliver an accurate portrayal of the subject being studied (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen,

2006). 'We do not stand outside the inquiry but are part of the phenomenon under study' (Clandinin, 2013: 23). The aim of this research is to make sense of the perceptions, opinions and lived experience of residents over time, rather than searching for specific answers and finding absolute truths. To be considered credible or trustworthy, the inquirer needed to demonstrate adequate data triangulation across the various subjects and data collection methods and must maintain detailed data management and analysis techniques throughout (Lemon & Hayes, 2020: 605).

3.3 Narrative Inquiry

'Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007: 35).

3.3.1 Turning to Narrative

Narrative inquiry is a form of research that places its focus on interpreting and understanding meaning (Clandinin, 2007: 9) and it seeks to gain clarity through the documentation of the lived experience of participants. It is 'a focus on the particular' and an attempt to find an understanding of the 'value of a particular experience, in a particular setting involving particular people' (Clandinin, 2007: 21). Leggo (2008: 5) holds that 'there is significance in the moment, in the particular, in the mundane' which reveals the 'possibilities of meaning' through narrative inquiry to help gain understanding and explore new knowledge. Ketelle (2010: 549) describes narrative inquiry as a qualitative inquiry which focuses on making meaning retrospectively and McMullen and Braithwaite (2013: 93) argue that people can understand, find significance and give meaning to their lives as 'narratives compose and order life experiences', as reflected by the inquirers interests and assumptions. Riessman (2008) argues that narrative is an attempt to create a meaningful interpretation of events, ideas and experiences which might otherwise seem without order and present that interpretation in a manner that helps make sense of the phenomenon

being studied. A narrative can be defined organising events holistically in order to understand the various parts and their relationship with the whole and 'in this way a narrative conveys the meaning of events' (Elliott, 2005: 3).

Engaging in narrative inquiry with communities that utilise a space, can offer insight about the past, present and future of that place by exploring the stories of individuals within those communities (Lichrou et al., 2017), and Escalas (2004) argues that a brands meaningfulness comes from its inclusion in a user's own narrative as they attempt to understand the world around them. 'Meaningful thought allows people to think about past, future' and imagined possibilities and meaning has the ability to link experience across time, and similarly purpose is found when 'present events draw meaning from future ones' (Baumeister et al., 2013: 506). 'Narratives of place can simultaneously incorporate continuity and change, values and identity' (Grenni, Horlings & Soini, 2020: 1360). Community generated narratives could help unify communities which could then be used to steer community projects and 'serve as a catalyst for change' if shared with city planning authorities (Grenni et al., 2020: 1361).

Narrative inquiries revolve around conversations which could take the form of structured interviews, semi-structured interviews or unstructured conversation where learning is demonstrated through the conversation (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007). Elliott (2005: 19) argues that the conversations from structured and semi-structured interviews in a narrative inquiry are 'the ideal method for discovering more about individuals' lives and intimate experiences' through an exploration of their everyday lives and any meanings they attach to their own lived experience. Riessman (2008: 39) notes that narratives 'do not merely describe what someone does in the world but what the world does to that someone'. Although the conversations held during the interview process are a 'medium for learning' (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007: 163), the meaning derived from the narrative can only be found through the analysis of any data collected as the inquirer embarks on a process of listening and retelling the stories.

Clandinin (2007) stresses that in undertaking a narrative inquiry, the inquirer needs to understand that there are different ways of knowing and interpreting human experience. To

engage in a narrative inquiry, it is necessary to think narratively, where the inquirer must reflect on their own experiences and field texts (gathered data) to create a story about an experience or experiences by organising them around their ‘perception, thought, memory, and imagination’ (Kim, 2016: 156). Narrative inquiry is a view of experience (including what one hears, feels, loves, tastes, dislikes, fears and more) as composed and lived over time, as studied and understood as a narrative phenomenon and then represented through narrative forms (Clandinin, 2013: 15). Narrative inquiry should always relate to three specific dimensions, argue Clandinin and Huber (2010), which are temporality (the past, present and future of everything under the study), sociality (the social conditions under which the study takes place) and place (the experiences occur in a specific place) in order to conceptually frame the study and to fully gain meaning from the narratives of lived experience.

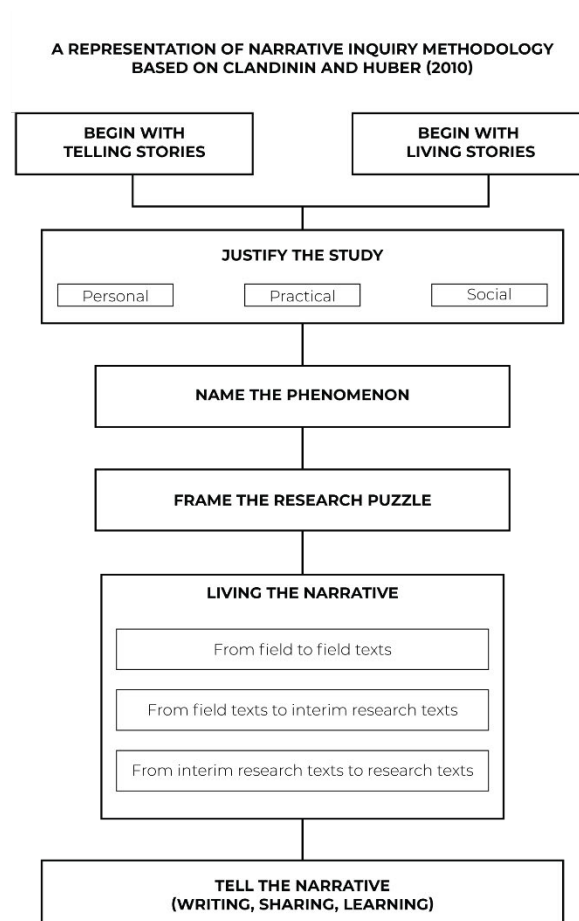


Figure 8 - Visual representation of Narrative Inquiry (based on Clandinin and Huber, 2010)

As seen in Figure 8 - Visual representation of Narrative Inquiry (based on Clandinin and Huber, 2010) a narrative inquiry begins with the telling of stories or the living with stories. In

starting with telling of stories inquirers begin with interviewing participants to gather data about their lived experience, where a dialogue is opened between the participant and inquirer and could use artefacts, photographs or other items as related to the topic at hand as an impetus to conversation. In living with stories, the inquiry starts with the inquirer exploring the artefacts, photographs or stories and then engages with the participants to dig deeper into their truths (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Whether the inquiry begins with telling stories or living with stories it needs to be justified in at least three ways; personally – why does this study matter to the inquirer, practically – what difference might this research make, and socially or theoretically – what difference might this research make to theoretical understanding or the social framework (Clandinin, 2013: 35; Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

From the outset, a narrative inquirer must consider the phenomenon under study narratively in terms of temporality, sociality and place, paying attention to the outcome of the study and what they are looking to achieve. It is that desire to frame and understand a research puzzle that should lead the inquiry, rather than a search for a specific answer to a research question (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Narrative inquiry is then a process of being in the field (gathering data), composing field texts and interim research texts. It generally involves sharing the interim research texts with participants to delve deeper into their stories and then rewriting and sharing until the final research texts are written (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). The term field texts, as described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) include all records from the research including visuals, photos, notes, interviews and writings by both the participants and the inquirer.

Clandinin (2013: 38) describes that in narrative inquiry one needs to look at both personal conditions (feelings, hopes, desires, reactions) and social conditions (conditions under which participants experiences and events are happening) and these, together with place (the ‘specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place’) need to form a part of the narrative – as people, place and stories are inextricably linked. Narrative inquiry does not solely focus on the experience of the individual, but it seeks to explore the ‘social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional’ narratives within which an individual’s narrative takes place (Clandinin, 2013: 17). Narrative inquiries ‘attend to individual’s lives, as they are composed over time’ and they relate to people and their experience of a particular place (or

places) and 'the focus remains on the lives lived and told throughout' (Clandinin, 2013: 39). The knowledge gained from a narrative inquiry is particularly textured and incomplete and will not lead to generalisations of certainty, but more towards wondering about and imagining alternate possibilities; in the case of this study, exploring the potential role a metropolitan open space system can play in building a meaningful city brand.

Clandinin (2007: 25) argues that there are 'multiple ways of knowing and understanding human experience', and through stories about lived experience one can uncover that knowledge. 'We live in a world of stories, and, though we help shape those stories, we are shaped by them' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 318). In the telling of stories, a narrator gives a narrative form to experience. Characters in the story are positioned in time and place and the narrative gives order to their experiences. Narrative is a way of explaining what has happened and why things are the way they are. Moen (2006) argues that a narrative approach is a means of reflection during the process, a research method, a manner of presenting the research and the unit of analysis itself.

Through the process of a narrative inquiry, meaning is derived 'through the individual meaning-making process of interpretation and reflection' where the inquirer, and participants, reflect and make sense of their experiences to discover what is both important and meaningful to them (van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2009: 510). Meaning can be found when we attempt to understand our lived experience and make sense of those experiences (Proulx & Inzlicht, 2012). Using narrative as a 'meaning making activity' involves a 'process of reflection and making sense' of lived experience (Elliott, 2005: 24).

When an inquirer works in narrative, they begin the research 'in the midst of our own lives and in the midst of our participant's lives' (Clandinin & Caine, 2013: 175). Elliott (2005: 152) notes that a narrative study is 'frequently accompanied by a more reflexive methodology' as the inquirer needs to indicate an awareness of their own lives within the context of the study and their role in retelling the narrative of the participants. The inquirer must understand that there is no final answer, and no final story, but that the process is an ongoing one as lives are constantly 'in motion' which allows for the emergence of new

relationships and new unexpected understanding from the process which helps the inquirer to gain insight into the human experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2013: 176).

3.3.2 Visual Narrative Inquiry

‘Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled’ (Berger, 1990).

Narrative inquiry attempts to understand the emotions behind people’s lived experience, but often people are unable to adequately put those emotions into words and often, through images, people can communicate things otherwise difficult to describe, like emotions (Serafinelli, 2017). ‘Visual images are widely recognised as having the potential to evoke empathic understanding of the ways in which other people experience their worlds’ (Mannay, 2016: 45) and increasingly researchers are recognising the significance of visual methodologies to ‘enhance their understanding of the human condition’ (De Lange, Mitchell & Stuart, 2007: 2). Prinsloo (2007: 115) concurs that the omnipresence of visuals in everyday life has heightened its ‘significance for social knowledge and for meaning-making’. ‘Visual narrative inquiry allows another layer of meaning to narrative inquiry’ (Bach, 2007: 282).

The advantage of using visual narrative is that it enables an understanding by allowing the inquirer access to ‘see as a participant sees, and to feel’ argues Riessman (2008: 201). Visual images are an effective medium to elicit meaning-making by the participants as they interpret their images in a narrative interview (Mitchell, 2008: 374). While much meaning can be drawn from an analysis of the image content and quality, it is of less significance in an elicitation interview than the understanding gained about the lived experience of the participants (Mannay, 2016). The purpose of using visuals in the study will determine how photographs will be used and how narratives are told argues Riessman (2008), which in this

study, is about understanding the lived experience of the participants. Through the elicitation process participants embark on a 'meaning-making process of interpretation and reflection' as they attempt to make sense of their own photographs and share their stories about their lived experience (van den Heuvel et al., 2009: 510).

Although written text is still a significant communication medium, it can increasingly be seen that visual media such as images and videos, are the most widespread communication method online (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017). Images, music and colours all communicate without words and to properly understand meaning from an image, a researcher needs to look at the image, how the image was made, where it was shown, the audience viewing the image, as well as the words placed with the image in the form of captions, comments and hashtags and this will enable a researcher to uncover meaning in the images by gaining insight into the participants prior experiences, culture and knowledge (Serafinelli, 2017). Regardless of how clear an image might be, they remain ambiguous and capture narratives of the event photographed, the meaning behind the event, the story of the actual taking of the photograph, and the feelings of the people in the photograph as well as of the photographer (Clandinin, 2007).

When people think of places, thoughts, values, ideas and pictures form in their heads of what those places are like and there are often strong emotional connections involved (Baker, 2019). Narratives about places allow us to 'get access to a remembered past(s) as well as imagined, desired or feared future(s)', such as imagining or exploring the potential role an open space system can play in the building of a meaningful city brand (Lichrou et al., 2017: 168). The images in our heads come from an experience of place, be it personal or via media channels. Opinions develop of the places seen in pop culture and the images in our heads form part of our narratives of places explored, that become part of our stories (Escalas, 2004). Mitchell (2008: 374) argues that photographs help draw a participant into 'the interpretive process' to help share their narrative.

Visual narrative inquiry is a form of narrative inquiry. Narratives, when considered visually are both the data and 'the means of acquiring data' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990: 327). Pole (2004) argues that for most people, life is experienced through their capacity to see and

make sense of what they see and that at its most basic, visual research simply draws on a person's capacity to interpret the world through their sense of sight. When looking at the built environment, visual research depends on the inquirer's capacity to make sense of the interface between people and the image (Pole, 2004). In doing any form of visual research, the inquirer interprets the visual material and does not find truth in the material and any interpretations should be justified through the adoption of an explicit methodology (Rose, 2001). Images convey meaning, and a researcher should attempt to interpret the meaning from those images. All visuals are themselves interpretations of something else and they display them in a particular way, no visual is ever innocent. When interpreting images, a researcher should think about what the image says about the viewer (researcher) in relation to it (Rose, 2001: 6), and images are 'a space for visual representation similar to that of journal entries, field notes and artefacts' which, 'represent aspects of life as it unfolds' (Bach, 2001: 7). Ketelle (2010: 549) argues that 'photographs can be used to understand the world of others' because they not only capture what was in the frame, but also the 'cultural context that underpins' the photo.

Often visual narrative inquiry revolves around building narratives from images taken with supplied cameras where participants are tasked with documenting their experiences for the researchers to gain insight into those experiences and draw meaning from them (Bach, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2013). However due to ever changing technologies, what visual research is carried out, and how, changes continually. As technological equipment has become more advanced, so has the researcher's ability to store, categorise and present research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 797).

3.3.3 Social Media Platforms and Instagram

Research using social media is rapidly increasing as researchers begin to adopt new technologies that showcase and influence the everyday lived experience of people (Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 224). Individuals now have easy access to cameras via smartphones and other mobile devices and can share these images easily through social media platforms (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017). Communication through these networks now exists as part of people's

everyday experience (Iversen & Smith, 2012: 128) allowing ‘for meanings and experiences to be co-created and recreated within and through ongoing dialogue’. The content generated by users of social media helps contribute to the establishment of online communities that share similar values and interests (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017).

Areas within cities are traditionally connected to others based on similar use or appearance, but more often may be connected through online communities such as Facebook groups or similar – increasing the complexity of a city through the addition of ‘multidimensional communities’ (Wolfe, 2021: 20). Online platforms or communities built around narratives of place are becoming commonplace – with websites such as Airbnb, Trip Advisor and Google Maps – where people share their opinions, photographs and stories about places, which in turn helps shape the narratives of those places (Lichrou et al., 2017: 168).

Instagram is a visual social media platform that facilitates storytelling through the sharing of images, along with captions and hashtags (and to a lesser degree comments), which other users can ‘like’, ‘tag’ or ‘comment’ on, which can lead to the emergence of online communities that share similar interests (Serafinelli, 2017; Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017). Instagram posts, as with images in general, represent a view of the world, where certain elements may be included or excluded to tell a specific story (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017). Arias (2018) emphasises that any images shared online carry meaning and Arvanitis (2010) explains that ‘people value and interpret their surroundings in many different ways, which might conflict or contradict the original purpose of the surroundings’, often differing in how others might interpret the same environment.

Photographs published via social media may represent an individual’s experience, which together with other users’ individual experiences form a shared narrative of place which in turn can affect another user’s experience. ‘Socially networked photographs are actively created, they inform and are informed by participatory communities that continuously reflect and sustain their individual and collective identities’ (Arias, 2018). Online photographs of chosen everyday experiences allow the photographer to express their own unique viewpoint, on their chosen topic, and add to the ‘memory communities to which they belong’ (Arias, 2018). Any studies, however, related to online photographs need to

simultaneously consider more than just the visuals, by including captions, hashtags, comments and may be combined with either interviews or focus groups to remove ‘ambiguities of interpretation’ (Arias, 2018). The study of Instagram posts related to a specific topic is ‘a way to understand and reflect on their motivations, experiences and expectations’ (Arias, 2018).

In trying to understand reflexive practice in education, Billen (2015) explores the use of visual narrative reflection through Instagram, where the participants Instagram feed (and captions, hashtags and to a lesser degree comments) reflect an individual’s narrative, which can then be analysed and interpreted for meaning. Once reserved for special occasions, argues Billen (2015), our access to cameras on our mobile phones has forever changed the way we take photos and the subjects we take photographs of. ‘Visual narratives can help... discover identity and understanding’ (Billen, 2015: 38).

Manovich (2017) found that although most pictures posted on Instagram are dominated by the human world, the outside world (outdoor, nature and architecture) was widely featured and extensive research into Instagram posts from various cities revealed that the content of Instagram photos changes significantly based on the specific city. This suggests that research using Instagram images from one city, might visually produce a different set of results, but the meaning drawn from the study may still hold. For instance, a study of the city of London would not have people on the beach necessarily. Seasons, location and the city would all change the styling and subject matter of posts on Instagram.

People’s experience of place is driven by how they communicate – from chats on the corner to watching a news report – and more recently mobile phone users who instantly express their opinions with audiences around the globe. Users of Instagram curate images of the city as they use it as a ‘stage or props in their posts’, and those images can become instrumental in changing (the perception of) the city (Boy & Uitermark, 2017: 613). ‘Instagram users select specific places and moments, choose an angle and a frame, invent witty hashtags and produce an image for circulation’ and in so doing the users convey feelings of ‘what is beautiful, enjoyable, humorous or interesting’ and as a result may affect their viewers perceptions of the city brand (Boy & Uitermark, 2017: 613).

Instagram could function as a tool for the acquisition of data, image, video and opinions for visual research in the field of urbanism to understand the connection between the offline and online world and their influence on each other with regards to public space and interactions within it (Toscano, 2017). Boy and Uitermark (2017) argue that although Instagram feeds may have a variety of colours and varying posts, they 'portray a very certain image of the world', because Instagram users are curating their feeds, curating what they post and what they see but have an acute ability to 'capture an individual's street-level view of daily urban life'. Users tag places not simply because they are there, argue Boy and Uitermark (2017), but because they want to show others that they were there, and a user boosts their own status by posting images of themselves in certain places – but that in turn boosts the status of those places.

Instagram shows an 'image of a city that is sanitised and nearly devoid of negativity' (Boy & Uitermark, 2017) as users curate their feeds and show only the desirable, the attractive, the beautiful, the healthy and the impressive. The reality of the mess and decay of the city are not generally welcomed. A typical Instagram user expects that. They understand that filters are used and that it represents the perfect scenario. In many ways – it represents the idealised version of the city according to Boy and Uitermark (2017). In selecting Instagram as a platform to use for this research, the inquirer is trying to understand the emotional connection with the city and specifically the Durban beachfront and will need to consider the potential curated and idealised view. The inquiry will explore any perceptions that are revealed through comments from the participant or other users and their opinions as revealed during the interview process. While exploring the narrative associated with the visuals, the participants might reveal deeper emotional situations or connections than what is portrayed on the platform (Instagram). Any themes that deviate from the idealised version of the city and therefore the potential role D'MOSS can play in building a meaningful city brand should be categorised accordingly.

3.3.4 Reflexive Practice

Josselson (2007) argues that narrative inquiries need to be designed to be adaptive because understanding emerges from the narrative itself and questions and approaches may well be altered during the analysis process based on the data. Reflexive practice then becomes essential to the narrative to document and rationalise any necessary changes that emerge in the process because 'narrative researchers are engaged in making meaning of the stories told' (Kim, 2016: 248). Including reflexivity in a narrative inquiry helps establish validity of the research by helping achieve objectivity and helps maintain integrity for both the participant and the inquirer (Kim, 2016: 250).

The conversations held during the semi-structured interviews are a 'medium for learning' (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007: 163), but the meaning derived from the narrative can only be found through the analysis of any data collected which involves reflexive practice on the part of the inquirer who embarks on a process of listening and retelling the stories told to make sense of the data, but the process of reflexive practice extends to the participants as they reflect on their own life experiences in the process of telling their story (Elliott, 2005). Participants, when asked to think about their own photographs during the interviews tell stories about their images and attempt to make sense of their lived experience as they 'reflect on and find meaning in everyday events' (van den Heuvel et al., 2009: 522).

Schön (1983: 49) argues that adaptability is important due to increasing complexities, insecurities, inconsistencies and unique situations within any professional practice and 'knowing-in-action' is of utmost importance where 'our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing' must be considered. 'Reflection-in-action' which occurs during the action or 'reflection-on-action' which is considered after the action, in any complex or unusual situation is principal to 'reflect on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action' which needs solving and may lead to alternative actions (Schön, 1983: 49). Reflexive practice is a process of examining the current situation and adapting and contextualising the problem to learn from it and solve the problems being faced (Horwitz, 2009). The inquirer will apply reflexive practice throughout the narrative inquiry by reflecting on the visuals, the lived experience narratives and the various inquiry actions

(such as conducting the interviews) and by reflecting on the emerging themes in relation to the meaningful brand measures. The reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are captured in a reflexive journal for analysis.

3.4 Research Design and Analysis

3.4.1 Introduction

In simple terms, this research involves identifying images of the chosen subject matter (Durban beachfront) from the selected participants (Durban residents) Instagram feeds, the images are then used to explore their personal narratives to better understand their emotional connection to their city and in particular, to explore the potential role D'MOSS can play in building a meaningful city brand. The research draws inspiration from visual narrative inquiries from Bach (2001), Billen (2015), Thelander and Cassinger (2017) and Clandinin (2013). Visual narrative inquiry is often used in the fields of education and nursing (Clandinin, 2007), social change (De Lange et al., 2007) and occasionally feeds into place branding for the tourism market (Lichrou et al., 2017). The process of selecting participants and images, along with all analysis and interviews are recorded by hand in a journal, in addition to capturing images and interviews digitally, as the entire process of the research journey forms part of the narrative study. Participants gave permission for the recording and transcribing of their interviews and allowed for their photos to be used in the study in the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A). Mitchell (2008: 374) argues that, as with many of forms of research, there is no simple way to plan the 'interpretive processes involved in working with visual research', but that using reflexivity throughout the process remains core. The interview guide was tested with the first participant and through a process of reflexive practice after the interview, the guide was adjusted to improve the flow of the remainder of the interviews.

The research methodology adopted seeks to understand the feelings (emotional connection), perceptions, and opinions of city residents against the measures of a meaningful (city) brand. The feelings, perceptions and opinions are built on the individual's lived experience of the beachfront and will be influenced by their social and cultural context

and the narrative study captures both the individual and context. By exploring the personal narratives of city residents, the inquirer is seeking an understanding of participants' emotional connections to the places in which they live in order to understand whether metropolitan open space systems could potentially play a role in adding meaning to the city brand as outlined in Figure 9 - Research design and analysis plan.

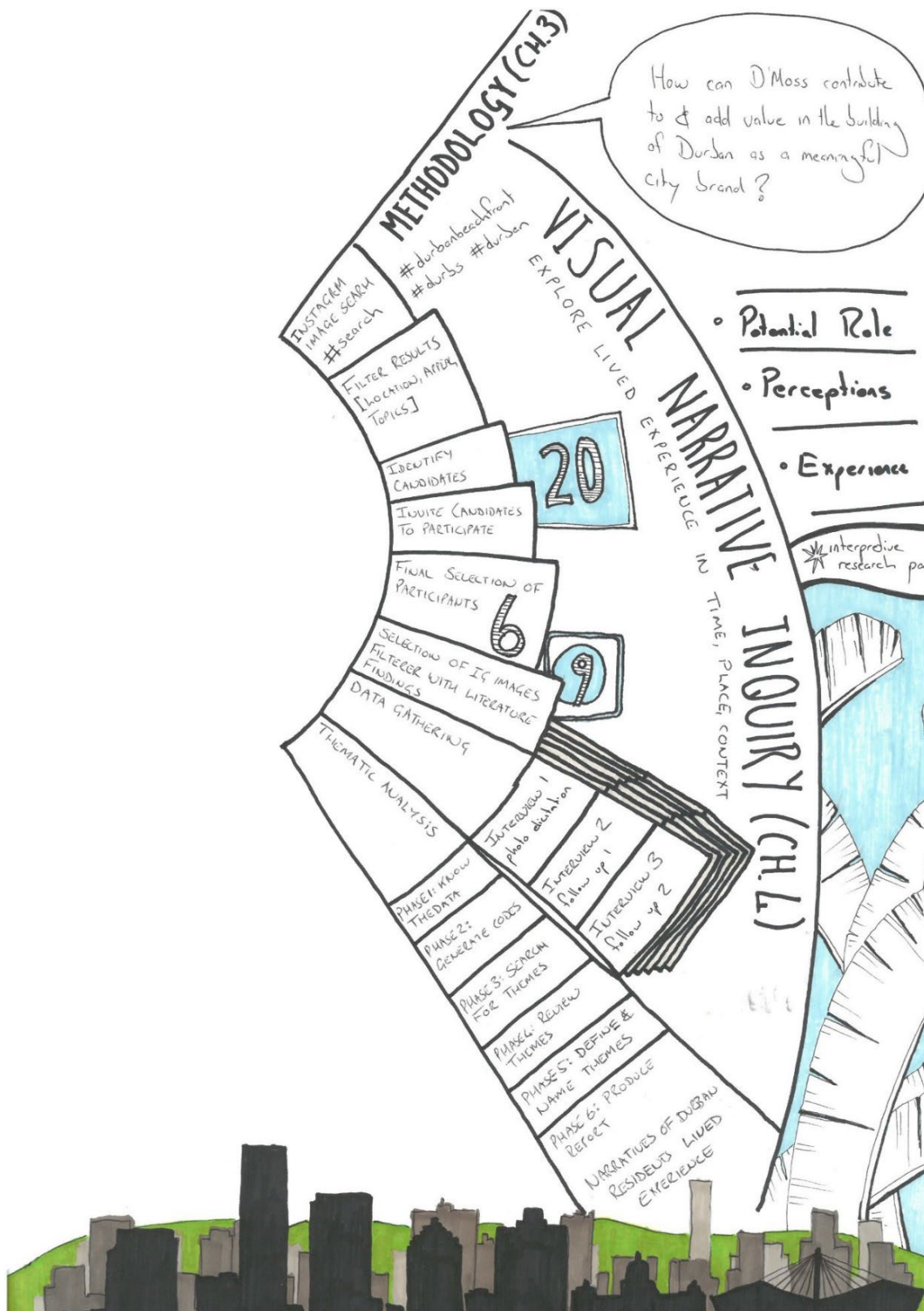


Figure 9 - Research design and analysis plan

Narrative inquiry needs to be justified in at least three ways; **practically** – what difference might this research make, **socially or theoretically** – what difference might this research make to theoretical understanding and **personally** – why does this study matter to the inquirer (Clandinin, 2013: 35).

3.4.1.1 Practically: What difference might this research make?

As city populations increase, there is additional pressure placed on governing bodies to develop more areas for housing, facilities, schools and other functional elements – often at the cost of open space. Durban’s open spaces are protected by D’MOSS, but many of these spaces are currently being overrun with invasive alien plants, litter and several have had squatters settle in them due to their prime locations within the city. Other open spaces are involved in development proposals such as the ‘Natal Command site, which is set to transform the face of the Durban beachfront promenade, will boast high-end venues including hotels, flats, restaurants and a shopping centre’ (Magubane, 2021). This research seeks to demonstrate that open spaces within the metropolitan open space system are valuable not only in terms of functional benefits (parks, beachfront, leisure, environment) but also in terms of the perception and building of the city brand and what this could potentially mean in terms of securing funding and support for the expansion of the D’MOSS areas and additional maintenance where necessary within the strategic planning departments of cities. In recent years, the Durban beachfront has been extended from the Durban Harbour to Blue Lagoon, with walkable paths linking major other areas of interest planned for the near future including the development of a walkable link between the Durban beachfront Promenade and the Umhlanga Promenade to the north of the city. Formalising D’MOSS areas, and making them more visible, could potentially expand awareness and perceptions of the initiative, and improve the lives of residents.

3.4.1.2 Socially: What difference might this research make to theoretical understanding?

This research began with an exploration of D’MOSS and meaningful city branding. D’MOSS studies speak to the functional benefits, while the city website also speaks to functional benefits. But what about the emotional benefits? What about how D’MOSS affects the psyche of the people living and using those areas? What about how it makes people feel,

hear, see, taste and believe about the city? In addition to the social aspects around D'MOSS, while exploring the idea of narrative inquiry (and particularly a visual narrative inquiry), the inquirer has found very little evidence of studies done that use this methodology for brand building (from cities to products), and because brands are often associated with feelings, Neumeier defines a brand as 'a person's gut feeling about a product, service or organisation' (Neumeier, 2005: 2) – it would appear that this would be a logical approach to brand building studies even though it does not deliver absolute truths to specific questions. Kageyama (2019: 3) explores narratives to understand what it is that the people of a city 'need in order to feel better and more positive about themselves and their city'. If this study can further the knowledge on this topic and the contribution a metropolitan open space system could potentially play in building meaningful city brands or help align strategic planning and city brand building, then it will have achieved its purpose.

3.4.1.3 Personally: Why does this study matter to the inquirer?

Clandinin and Huber (2010) argue that to understand 'life as narrative' it is necessary to share stories of our lives – our 'autobiographies', and in so doing the inquirer has written a short narrative describing their lived experience relating to D'MOSS.

3.4.1.4 The story of Jody and D'MOSS

I was born in Durban but spent most of my childhood living in Johannesburg, although holidays were spent in Durban. I remember those long drives vividly. My dad would always drive. My mom would wake occasionally to dish out food. I sat in the back of the car in between my siblings. The drive down to Durban was long and uncomfortable. I sat in the middle seat peering out the window – looking for that first view of the sea - I must admit the middle back seat provided the clearest view out of the windscreen. I loved that feeling of the temperature and humidity rising as we got closer to the coast. My dad would always tell stories about how he used to race down Fields Hill as a teenager on his motorbike.

One thing always struck me as we approached the city - it felt green and alive, with trees growing in the streets, growing on the walls. Everywhere felt fertile and healthy. While my family complained about the heat and the humidity, I felt immediately at home. Durban smelled different. Perhaps it was the ocean. Having left at 3am, my parents always wanted to sleep on that first afternoon. I just wanted to go to the beach. It was where I always felt comfortable. I hated all the 'stuff' that we took along to the beach. Meals, umbrellas, chairs. We would arrive at the beach as a family and then cart everything to our chosen spot. I remembers always carrying way more than I probably should have in order to make the transition from the car the beach as quick as possible. I think it probably has a lot to do with why when I now go to the beach, I take only a towel and sunblock. We always went to North Beach, and then later Vetches' Pier because it was quieter.

In my final year of primary school, I went on a trip with my classmates to Durban. Riding in the bus on the way down to Durban I had a window seat. I kept telling my friends stories along the way. Oh, that's where they pump water from Natal to Transvaal – things have changed so much - one would now say KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng. We arrived in Durban late that night – and ended up in an area I wasn't too familiar with – Umdloti. On the second night of the trip, we went to Durban Funworld – near North Beach. The air was thick and humid. I remember buying candy floss. It was on this day that Paul and I really became good friends as we ran around Christine – and she appeared to enjoy the attention. We rode on the rides together and had a really fun evening. Although now halfway around the world, Paul and I remain friends. The last time we got together we spoke of that trip fondly and wondered what had ever happened to Christine.

The next year we moved to Durban. I was beyond excited. The idea of living near the beach was amazing. Knowing I would be able to go to the beach as often as I wanted. But we moved to Westville. Convincing my family to go to the beach was near impossible. It never happened. I didn't have many friends – and those I did have didn't like the beach. It felt like living in Durban had taken me further

away from the beach. At age 16 I got a motorbike, a beautiful red and white Suzuki. Suddenly I could disappear off to the beach alone at the weekend and I did. At 18 when I got a car, the beach trips became even more frequent. Friends. Paddle skis. Even by that time, as apartheid was beginning to collapse, the Durban beachfront (North Beach and the more popular beaches) had a terrible reputation for crime. Muggings, car theft, petty theft. Vetches' Pier didn't seem to have the same issues. There were no facilities. No toilets or restaurants or anything of the kind. It was a parking lot and a beach and remained that was for a long time (until the recent extension of the Durban beachfront Promenade).

When I first started dating and going out as an adult, the first places I used to go on dates was the Durban beachfront (despite the crime, maybe because of it). The beachfront always felt somewhat comfortable. Somewhat familiar. Like I belonged there. The collection of restaurants around North Beach gave off the oddest smells collectively. Combined with the humid heavy air that hangs around in summer it has an odd smell. The ocean. Doughnuts. Hamburgers. Fries. Ice cream. Weed. As much as I always felt at home on the beachfront – the energy really did shift. While I was studying architecture at the University of Natal (where I was first introduced to the idea of D'MOSS) everyone spoke about how you could not go to the beachfront as it was too dangerous. At the weekend people drove to Umhlanga or Umdloti to go to the beach. No one went to Durban beaches anymore. I guess in truth – the white people stopped going. Other than the occasional stroll down the beach – I stopped frequenting the beachfront.

A varsity degree and post graduate diploma later and a complete shift in career, I moved to Joburg. Skip ahead 20 years and I moved back to Durban. Visiting the beachfront again was completely amazing. It had transformed and become beautiful again. It was so busy and full of people - all the time. From all walks of life. People walking their dogs. Running. Jogging. Families. Just an absolute melting pot of people from all walks of life together in one space enjoying themselves. I began running along the beachfront. Visiting restaurants. Cycling. I

have started swimming there again. It's not all fantastic. I had my car broken into there. People get mugged. There are beggars asking for help. There are friendly people, and not so friendly people. But it is a space for everyone. It feels almost like the glue that is holding the Durban people together in some way.

As I tell you this, the world is caught in the grip of Covid-19. The South African Government has closed off the beaches to help stop the spread of the virus. You can still use the promenade. I still run there. I go for walks with friends and enjoy the space. But we can't step onto the sand.

Why does this matter? Why bother telling my story? Because it is the personal reason behind this master's study. There are other justifications. There are logical explanations about the links between my chosen field of study and career. They make sense. They're true. But so is this. I have always felt a connection to this space. I have always felt like something significant in my life would happen in this place. The first time I took a surfboard into the ocean there I felt it. When I connected with friends. Working on one of my first architectural real-life projects I felt it. On my first date there. When the idea hit to use this place as part of my master's study – it suddenly felt more real. Even more significant.

Durban is my home and I love this city. I get angry about how much development happens up the coast – how companies sell off their city buildings and build new ones up north. I long to see city redevelopment projects. I get excited when I read that Durban plans to transform major city streets into pedestrian parks with limited vehicle access. I love seeing trees growing in the paving. Everywhere you go in Durban you see the green spaces. I think that's what I love about Durban. I see green in between the buildings. Nowhere in the city represents this more clearly for me than the beachfront area.

The narrative of Jody and D'MOSS is included based on the realisation that the inquirer had built a significant and meaningful relationship with the space, and this led to a curiosity of how ones lived experience and relationship with the city spaces might relate to city brand

building and open space systems. In writing the narrative of Jody, the inquirer embarked on a sense-making process of understanding their lived experience and through a 'process of interpretation and reflection' clarified and categorised their experiences in order to find meaning within those experiences (van den Heuvel et al., 2009: 510).

3.4.2 Participant Selection

This narrative inquiry begins with living stories, as it will be exploring photographs that already exist and are part of the participants lived experience, drawing inspiration from Bach (2007) using photographs to explore the lives of participants. Before the inquiry can begin focusing on the participants, it was necessary to identify suitable candidates. The research focused on a purposive sample of Durban residents that make them uniquely suited to this study. Pascoe (2014) argues that in purposive sampling the researcher looks at the research questions and population and decides on the characteristics significant to the outcome of the research and chooses the participants on this basis.

The population of the study is all users of the Durban beachfront. To narrow the search for participants down to those who would be accessible and suited to the study at hand, the population was limited to Instagram users that actively tagged the research area – as they were assumed to be more willing to share the feelings about the topic at hand as the inquirer was specifically looking for people that demonstrated an emotional connection to the area. Participant's race, religion and socio-economic status were not intentionally targeted, as Instagram's audience should incorporate community members from all walks of life. For the inquirer the most significant measure of suitability came down to the likelihood of an emotional connection to the space or city.

The narrative inquiry began by exploring how the focus area (The Durban beachfront) is currently portrayed by doing searches on Instagram using hashtags for phrases such as #durbanbeachfront (13.8k posts) #durbanbeach (10.9k posts) #durbs (32.6k posts) and results were filtered initially using geotagging and location (identifying pictures tagged on the Durban beachfront). The list of hashtags was altered and expanded on reflection and analysis of the returned results. The inquirer sought to identify images from the Durban

beachfront that suggested an emotional connection to the place or that there may be more to the story than was necessarily presented. To demonstrate this, the images returned using the hashtag #durbanbeachfront as seen here (Figure 10 - Screenshots of hashtag searches on Instagram (Instagram.com, 2021)).

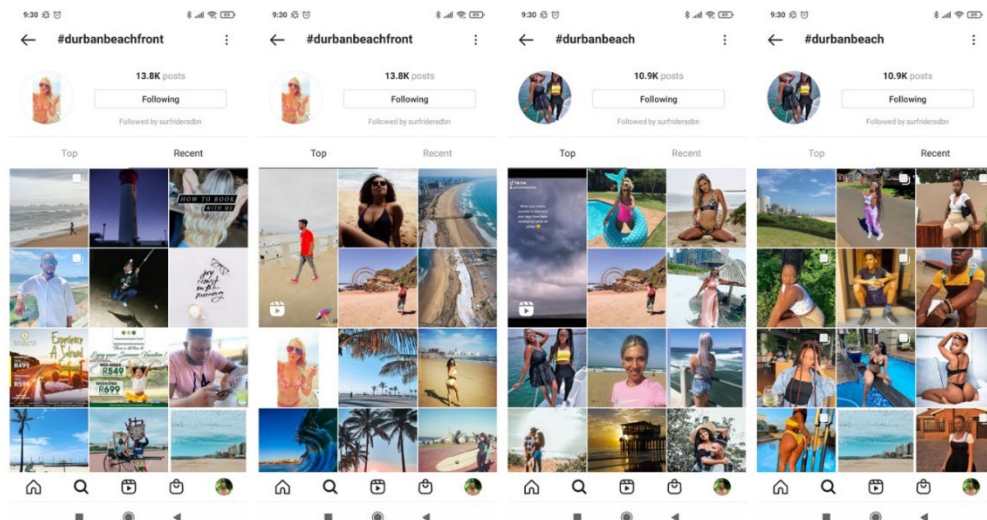


Figure 10 - Screenshots of hashtag searches on Instagram (Instagram.com, 2021)

The criteria for deciding on the suitability of the images was drawn from the findings of the literature review and some other basic requirements, such as location (many images are tagged with the incorrect location, or incorrect understanding of the location – some images posted as #durbanbeachfront are located further north in Umhlanga which falls outside of the area of study). Many of the images contained in the screenshots are ‘selfies’ tagged with specific hashtags drawing attention from popular search terms and proved unsuitable. Suitable images focused more on the Durban beachfront – even if they were ‘selfies’. The images had to reflect aspects of, or potentially suggest concepts including - but not limited to, emotional connections, self-expression, inspiration, a sense of belonging, healthy living, positive feelings and unique value. These concepts helped filter the results with the aim of identifying candidates that were suitable.

The inquirer selected and approached twenty (20) candidates to consider participating in the study with the aim of purposively securing six (6) participants. Narrative methods of inquiry seek to construct rich and detailed narratives and ‘the number of participants is not

a major concern' depending on the research topic (Esin, 2011: 98). Participants were residents of the greater Durban area who used the Durban beachfront area and were active on Instagram. Instagram accounts needed to be personal accounts and not have any commercial activities associated with them. For instance, some users are paid to post images featuring Surf Riders Café – a popular restaurant on the Durban beachfront – this was considered commercial and not suitable for the study. One identified participant can be seen in Figure 11 - Screen captures of a potential (Instagram.com, 2021).

3.4.3 Ethical Practice

As a research method, narrative inquiry seeks to obtain and reflect on people's lived experience and is essentially delivered through the relationship the inquirer has with their participants and every aspect of that relationship must be considered ethically, and participants should be assured of free consent to participate, and their confidentiality guaranteed (Josselson, 2007: 537). Due to the nature of narrative inquiry – intruding on the participants' real lives - and the engagement and interaction of the inquirer and the participants, an exact ethical approach is difficult to define, but by having an ethical attitude which involves thinking 'through these matters and deciding best how to honour and protect' the participant in the study is essential (Josselson, 2007: 538).

In trying to fully understand feelings, emotions, attitudes and opinions derived from the participants lived experience this study required that the inquirer and participants enter into an 'individual, personal, intimate relationship' which cannot simply be covered through an informed consent form (Josselson, 2007: 539). In most qualitative research an ethical approach would involve full disclosure of the nature and purpose of the research but given the nature of narrative inquiry it is acceptable to not fully disclose the phenomenon being studied as to not influence the participants feelings, and as a result the consent form needs to be worded in such a manner that it does not unduly influence their participation (Josselson, 2007: 539).

Ethical clearance was obtained at the Proposal defence and is available in Appendix E. Participants were invited to participate and provided with an informed consent form

(Appendix A) which detailed the interview process. The informed consent form allowed participants to indicate that the inquirer could utilise screenshots of their Instagram accounts in the study, and that their interviews would be recorded and transcribed.

3.4.4 Data Collection: Visual Narratives

Once the research participants had been selected and had agreed to participate, images were selected from their shared Instagram posts. The inquirer selected images based not only on the aspects and mentioned concepts but needed to rely on their own perceptions to interpret the images using their own cultural cues, visible attributes and aesthetic qualities (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017).

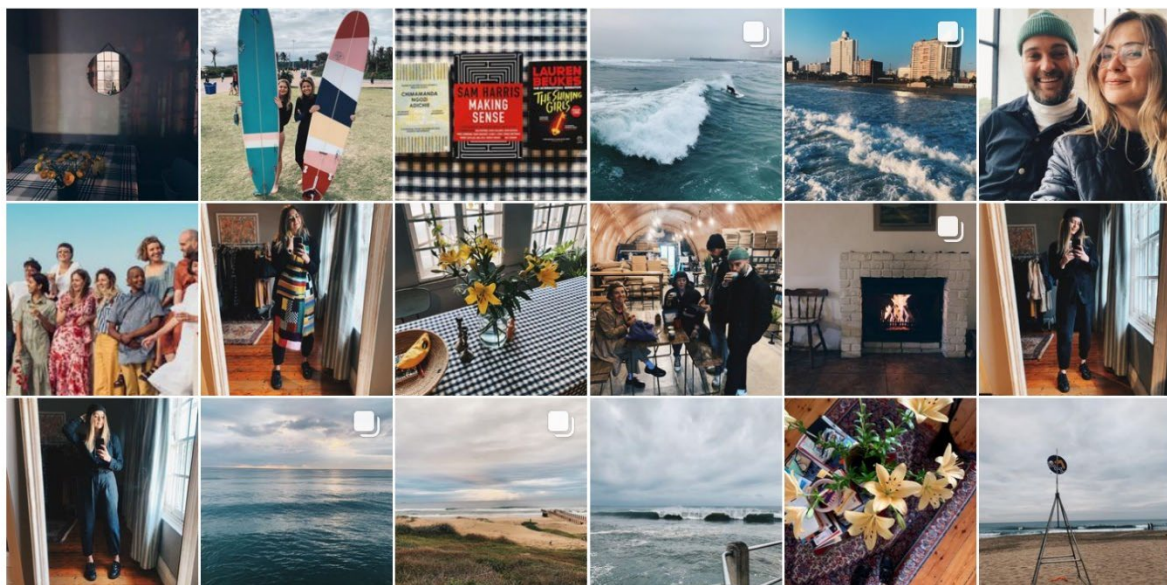


Figure 11 - Screen captures of a potential (Instagram.com, 2021)

Participants have different ways of seeing and interpreting the city through Instagram, argue Thelander and Cassinger (2017), because of their age, familiarity with social media, personal styles, personal narrative, experience and preference. In any narrative inquiry the inquirer is part of the research process and cannot be separated from it and as such the bias is understood and accepted because in narrative inquiry both the inquirer and the researched within the study form a relationship with one another from which both parties will learn and grow (Clandinin, 2007), although Clandinin and Huber (2010) argue that many

narrative inquiries acknowledge that the relationship between researcher and participant can be less important depending on the subject matter and it is possible to conduct a suitable inquiry with distance between the inquirer and participants.

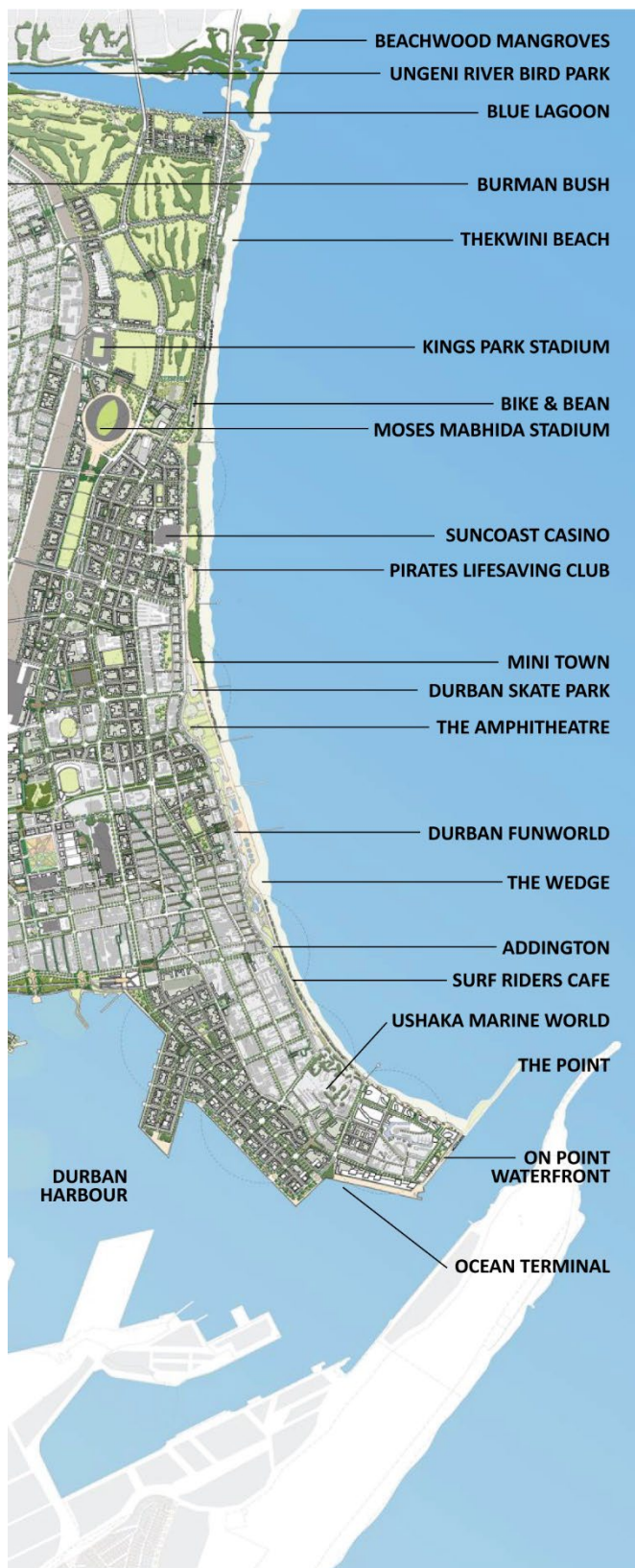


Figure 12 – Adapted Durban Beachfront Map showing features (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018: 93)

Although this research is looking at D'MOSS in relation to Durban, due to the sheer scale of the entire D'MOSS system, the study focused on the Durban beachfront area as the 'flagship' of D'MOSS. The Durban beachfront is an eight kilometre (8km) stretch of paved promenade that runs from the Durban Harbour mouth in the south to Blue Lagoon in the north and the designated area includes a variety of different attractions (Ushaka Marine World, Durban Funworld, Durban Skate Park, Mini Town) and venues (restaurants such as Moyo, Surf Riders, Bike & Bean) catering to both the local and the tourism market and provides walking linkages to city features such as the Moses Mabhida Stadium and Umgeni River Bird Park. The study could have focused on both tourist and residential experiences, perceptions and opinions as the tourist point of view is significant, but the primary aim in understanding meaningful city brand building was to focus on an insider view, a personal view and the lived experience of residents within the designated area as a city brand's strength is based on the quality of its

internal perception from internal stakeholders, residents and city visitors (Pompe, 2017: 5).

Once the users had been selected and agreed in writing to participate in the study, nine (9) posts were selected from their feeds – taken anytime within the last two (2) years – which allowed for some pre-Covid images and some more current ones, taken during the lockdown restrictions, to fully explore their emotional connection and relationship with the space experienced over time. The selected images had to have been taken in the area of study but could be of any subject matter (for instance some related to surfing, skateboarding, running, walking, eating or socialising). The images were saved, along with their captions, hashtags, comments, tags, number of likes and dates. All field texts were captured and saved on the inquirer's desktop computer in Microsoft Excel and uploaded to a secure cloud-based server. In doing any analysis of visual material the inquirer decodes the image into written forms – field texts – but there always remains some element of insight and knowledge that cannot adequately be translated from visual to text (Ketelle, 2010).

To adequately extract meaning from the images, semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) with participants about the images were conducted and added to the field and reflexive texts after transcription. Interim research texts were created for the individuals photographs as well as for the collection of photographs from each participant to explore potential development of stories over time. Although a single photograph can tell a story, when grouped into a collection they are more effective at telling stories which communicate greater meaning (Terttunen & Weitoft, 2017). Thelander and Cassinger (2017) argue that a photo's aesthetics and content can generate different associations and interpretations for different viewers and that one image can communicate several ideas and meanings, but a collection of multiple images can better illustrate the overriding concept. The photographs will not be analysed in terms of their composition, framing, colour and quality, as they are not the subject being researched, they are a means to elicit additional information from the participants about their lived experience of D'MOSS. Photos used in any photo elicitation techniques in interviews are there to act as a catalyst to dialogue about the participants experiences (Torre & Murphy, 2015). Mitchell (2008: 369) argues that using photo images to 'elicit data' allows a researcher 'an entry point to the views, perspectives and experiences of participants' and helps create a better flow of conversation during the interview process.

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant individually, the first of which included photo elicitation techniques to find out more about the selected images, while the follow-up interviews focus was on expanding the potential relationship and to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and emotional connections; expanding the depth of research for inclusion in the narrative. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person (where Covid restrictions allowed) or via an online system where necessary (Blackboard, Microsoft Teams and Zoom). Semi-structured interviews began with initial questions around the participants Instagram posts, which were printed and used to encourage discussion about the participants lived experience, the story behind the image and to elicit meaning while taking notes. This photo elicitation was used to draw additional information about the images that might not be apparent, such as asking, 'tell me the story behind this photograph'. A more detailed interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart (2010: 373) assert that using photo elicitation provides 'stimuli for effectively tapping into informants' tacit, and often unconscious, representations, images and metaphors' and 'produces different and richer information than other techniques'. Torre and Murphy (2015) argue that using open-ended questions in photo elicitation interviews, a researcher can often 'uncover ways of knowing' that are not the same as their own. Images from before the Covid lockdowns arose may differ from those posted during or after the lockdown and the feelings towards the spaces may have been altered because of it and any semi-structured interview should explore these differences. The inquirer explored the field texts gathered and the draft narratives created to elaborate and build deeper meaning in follow-up interviews (each participant had at least three interviews, as some required additional interviews to share deeper information). All interviews were recorded using the inquirers mobile phone recorder or computer (depending on how the interview was conducted) and transcribed verbatim by the inquirer (using Otter to draft initial rough transcripts and then edited by the inquirer) to capture not only what was said, but also emotional indicators, and a few notes recorded in the inquirers reflexive journal. Interim research texts based on the selected images were updated after the interview as to gain a deeper insight into the emotional connection when the photographs were captured. When composing research texts, the inquirer needs to consider

the voice of the participant – not only in the form of their lived experience, but in the manner with which the narrative is written to be true to their lives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). A more detailed interview guide for the follow-up interviews can be found in Appendix C.

Ketelle (2010: 564) suggests that visual researchers should ask themselves about what they see, rather than being overly analytical and that as researchers they must try and understand why the image was taken to understand what they can learn from it. The researcher must analyse both personal conditions (feelings, hopes, desires, reactions) and social conditions (conditions under which participants experiences and events are happening) argues Clandinin (2013: 38), while at the same time drawing on past experiences or events that might have shaped their beliefs or feelings towards the subject matter.

3.4.5 Analysing Visual Narratives

Narrative analysis is used to explore ‘both the individual experiences and social processes that shape these experiences’ (Esin, 2011: 95). ‘Analysis of digital stories is complex’ argues Campbell (2018: 7), as the inquirer must look at both narrative and visual analysis in the search to find meaning, and text must be analysed for contradictions or a ‘play on words’, while visuals should be examined for clues to which meaning could be attributed, by looking at such things as context, colours, cropping, setting and focus. Questions to ask could include, ‘Why this story at this time? Why those images? Does the connection between the words and images seem authentic? Is there a story behind or beneath the story?’ suggests Campbell (2018: 8) and each part of the narrative process involves decision-making to interpret and gain an understanding of meaning. After the semi-structured interviews were completed, the inquirer transcribed the interviews and together with the previous field texts, reflexive notes and interim research texts, analysed and composed the final research texts. Participants were reminded that the study is about the city, open space systems, and D’MOSS and not about them personally – as much as the study relies on their personal lived experiences, perceptions and opinions. The analysis and narratives derived from the study are about the inquirers ‘meaning making’ rather than about the individual – and the inquirer

takes the meanings from the narratives and relates that to the theoretical standpoint in order to gather findings (Josselson, 2007: 559).

Qualitative research and the analysis of any data must be conducted precisely, consistently and exhaustively through a well disclosed method to be considered credible (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Thematic analysis is a method used to analyse, organise, describe and report themes found within the data and through this method a researcher can produce findings that are both insightful and trustworthy if the process is well documented (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In order to demonstrate trustworthiness in a qualitative study, the inquirer needs to demonstrate credibility (by testing findings and interpretations in consultation with the participants in follow up interviews), transferability (by providing detailed descriptions to the findings so that others may judge transferability to another study), dependability (by ensuring the process follows logic, is traceable and documented thoroughly) and confirmability (clearly indicating how interpretations, findings and insights were derived from the data) (Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic narrative analysis focuses more on what is said in the interviews than how it is said (Esin, 2011). Narrative analysis in practice combines 'ideas and themes' gathered from the literature and any themes found in the data while conducting the analysis (Esin, 2011: 108). Once the interviews were transcribed, relevant sections of the transcript were marked for analysis (for instance, all sections related to 'freedom'), and themes identified in the form of words, sentences or groups of the latter (Esin, 2011: 108). Sentences and mentions across the participants narrative texts were then assigned to categories and the content collected in each category was used to demonstrate meaning (Esin, 2011: 108).

Establishing trustworthiness	
Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data	Prolong engagement with data Triangulate different data collection modes Document theoretical and reflective thoughts Document thoughts about potential codes/themes Store raw data in well-organised archives Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	Researcher triangulation Reflexive journaling Use of a coding framework Audit trail of code generation
Phase 3: Searching for themes	Researcher triangulation Diagramming to make sense of theme connections Keep detailed notes about development of hierarchies of concepts and themes
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	Researcher triangulation Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	Researcher triangulation Documentation of theme making
Phase 6: Producing the report	Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient detail Thick descriptions of context Description of audit trail Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Table 2 - Establishing trustworthiness during each phase of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017: 4)

The inquirer then analysed the final research texts in comparison with Figure 5 - The Meaningful City (Yeoman, 2019) and Figure 6 - Meaningful Brands Benefits (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and all of the findings gathered in Chapter 2 (with regards meaningful brands) to explore through triangulation any connections between the composed narratives of the residents of Durban, and their experiences of the Durban beachfront and the meaningful city brand metrics. The research presented is about trying to understand the emotional connection, perceptions and opinions of city residents and interpret these against the measures of a meaningful (city) brand. The emotional connection, perceptions and opinions are built on the individual's lived experience within the city and are influenced by their social and cultural context and the narrative study captures both the individual and context.

3.4.6 The Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis used is the narrative itself. Moen (2006) argues that the unit of analysis should be an integrated whole, made up of a series of various – possibly conflicting – elements and cannot be broken down into smaller pieces and that it should be able to be subject to development and transformation and enable readers to understand the process of development and transformation within any social or cultural context. Esin (2011: 116) defines narrative analysis as an ‘umbrella term’ including multiple analytical approaches that position the ‘story itself as the unit of analysis’.

3.5 Composing a Visual Narrative Inquiry

A narrative inquiry can be described as a ‘fluid inquiry’ and does not have a definite list of procedures and rules to be followed but is a methodology that follows where the stories of the participants take the research (Clandinin, 2013) and Mannay (2016) argues that researchers engaging in visual research need to remain flexible. The aim of this study is to explore the perceived, experiential and potential value of D’MOSS as a metropolitan open space system with a specific focus on the Durban beachfront as the flagship of D’MOSS. The assumption of the inquirer is that few people are aware of D’MOSS as a brand, or that a designed metropolitan open space system exists – but that the residents are aware of several of the more visible facilities; the Durban beachfront, Durban Parks, Botanic Gardens, Kranskloof Nature Reserve, Giba Gorge, Peoples’ Park at Moses Mabhida Stadium and others.

In exploring photographs and developing narratives through analysis and semi-structured interviews the inquirer holds that residents may have an appreciation for the city of Durban as a brand because of their emotional connection for such open spaces and expects that the participants awareness of their relationship with these spaces may well be heightened given the current context within the Covid-19 related lockdowns experienced in recent months in the city. In researching, analysing, writing and comparing the narratives of the residents and exploring the emotions or experiences behind the photographs they share on social media against the measures of meaningful city brands as identified in Chapter 2 – the inquirer

seeks to understand how a metropolitan open space system, such as D'MOSS might play a role in the city brand, both currently and in the future and potentially in the past.

A narrative inquiry accepts and embraces changes that happen during the process, and that change potentially happens in multiple ways, in all three of the justifications set out initially in terms of personal, practical and social dimensions. Through the process of the inquiry and based on engagement and storytelling, participants and the inquirer may alter their perceptions and opinions. The phenomenon studied changes as it will be seen differently and understood differently, and a new theoretical understanding may be revealed which could potentially lead to social changes through the reading of the narratives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Narrative research is an ongoing process of interpretation, argues Moen (2006), which begins as soon as one story, one image, one participant, or even the subject matter is selected and continues throughout the process and sometimes continues well after the research study has completed, due to the interpersonal relationships that can develop between the inquirer and the participants. That relationship that is formed between the inquirer and the participants determines how much personal information the participants are willing to share and in honouring that relationship it is fitting to share the narratives created with the participants. The research utilises their lived experience to study a specific phenomenon – how a metropolitan open space system might play a role in building a city brand – and is not about the individuals themselves – but as with all narrative inquiries the participants and the inquirer gain knowledge and insight from the process, and it would provide a sense of closure to the study.

The methodology adopted in this study in a visual narrative inquiry which is entirely dependent on the specific context within which the study has been conducted (the Durban beachfront area of D'MOSS) and is thus limited in its adaptability to other areas and similar studies would need to be conducted in other cities or areas to extend the reach of the study.

The narratives will aid in gaining an understanding of the participants' emotional connection to the city and through a comparison with the findings in chapter 2 (with regards meaningful brands) the inquirer seeks to make visible any connections between the narratives and the meaningful city brand metrics. To demonstrate what city brands mean to residents to make them 'feel better and more positive about themselves and their city' (Kageyama, 2019: 3), the inquiry explored the emotional connection and lived experience of residents against the measures of a meaningful (city) brand.

'This is the truth that shines over the journey towards the happy city. We do not need to wait for someone else to make it. We build it when we choose how and where to live. We build it when we move a little bit closer. We build it when we choose to move a little slower. We build it by choosing to put aside our fear of the city and other people. We build it by pursuing it in our own lives, and in so doing, pushing the city to change with us. We build the happy city by living it' (Montgomery, 2013: 328).

CHAPTER 4

A D'MOSS Case Study: Visual Narratives from Durban Residents

4.1 Introduction

Findings from the literature review concluded that a key component of understanding meaningful city brands is the emotional connection people have with places, and through the analysis detailed in this chapter the inquirer seeks to explore those connections through residents' lived experience to answer the question:

- How can D'MOSS contribute to and add unique value in the building of Durban as a meaningful city brand?

Through narrative, this chapter explores Durban residents' **perceptions, opinions and lived experience** of the Durban beachfront, the flagship of D'MOSS. The narratives of the residents are interwoven with those of the inquirer and the analysis of the field data and literature findings. 'We do not stand outside the inquiry but are part of the phenomenon under study' (Clandinin, 2013: 23). This study relies on the insights, knowledge, and experience of the inquirer within the context of this study, while remaining aware of their own personal biases and any possible preconceptions they might have in order to deliver an accurate portrayal of the subject being studied (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2013; Moen, 2006). During the semi-structured interviews conversations are a 'medium for learning' (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007: 163), and meaning is revealed from analysis and reflexive practice by the inquirer and participants alike (Elliott, 2005).

Between the initial interviews and the two follow-up interviews, South Africa experienced a shift in lockdown levels, limiting access, due to another wave of Covid-19. Simultaneously in July 2021, Durban became caught up in civil unrest. 'What may have started as a backlash to the incarceration last week of former president Jacob Zuma has evolved into a full-blown, nasty, violent spectre of greed and indifference' (Erasmus, 2021). Some participants that previously met in person chose to rather have online follow-up interviews and the inquirer was adaptable in their approach through reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Although the

unrest, destruction and damage didn't affect the area of study directly, it did affect the participants' emotional state of mind and their frequent visits to the area, albeit briefly. All the participants have visited the Durban beachfront since the incidents of July 2021, but remain emotionally affected by the events, with many, including the inquirer, feeling disheartened by the actions of the greater Durban community.

The process of identifying participants through Instagram as outlined in the methodology section proved challenging in that many of the photos posted and tagged in the desired location were taken outside of the area, for instance, in Umhlanga but tagged as #durbanbeachfront. Images found in the initial searches led to Instagram profiles of people who were either not residents of the city or if they were, had not posted enough pictures of the area to meet the criteria as set out in Chapter 3. This complexity somewhat slowed down the process of identifying the potential participants. Many of those that were

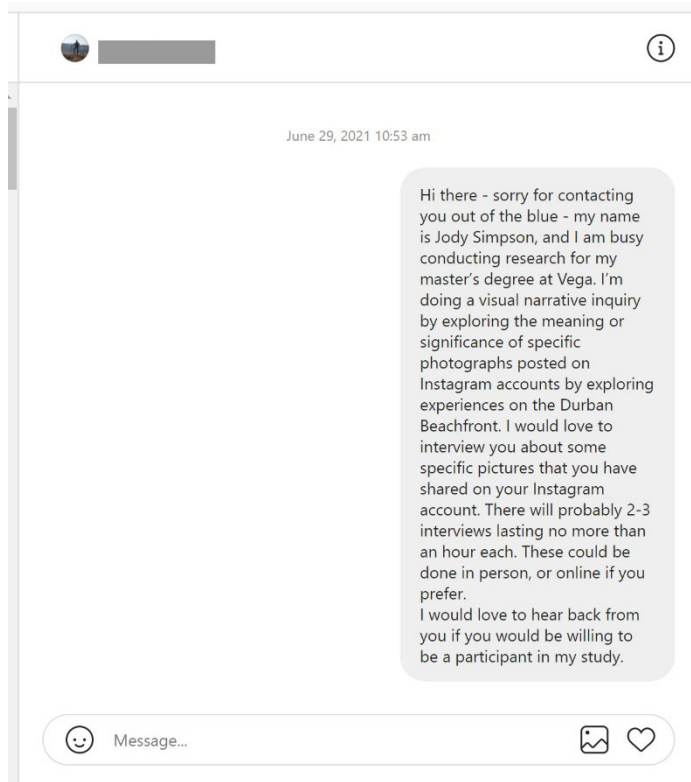


Figure 13 - Unread Direct Messages (Instagram.com, 2021)

identified did not respond to Instagram Direct Messages – it is well known that many Instagram users only allow direct messages from people they know. Of the twenty potential participants initially identified two responses were received. This process was repeated until the final six participants were secured; Horwitz (2009) echoes this by stating that reflexive practice is a process of examining the current situation and adapting and contextualising the problem to learn from it and solve the problems being faced.

Once the participants were selected and agreed to take part in the study, the inquirer analysed their Instagram feed over the last two years and took screen captures of all photos of the study area. The photos and comments were then carefully considered, and images selected based on the potential to add value to the study because of their subject matter. Figure 14 demonstrates the approach, where the photo was initially selected because of the subject matter (Durban surfers in the water and the city in the background) but used as one of nine photos to be discussed

primarily because of the caption, 'Durban you are pure magic'. Comments such as this indicate brand love towards the city and provided the inquirer with suitable material to use in the photo elicitation process during the semi-structured interviews, as Swanson et al. (2017: 89) found that cities are brands that people claim to love and can form real emotional attachments to.



Figure 14 - Selection of images (Simpson, 2021)



Figure 15 - Reflexive journal on the beach (Simpson, 2021)

Initially each participant was invited to a semi-structured interview along the Durban beachfront as being in the location would potentially have assisted in the elicitation of information. In developing a more meaningful view of experience and place, using 'photographs of the everyday', Bendiner-Viani (2016: 1) revisited the location with the participants and their photos to gain a greater 'feel of place' by exploring 'people's emotional connections' and their reactions to photographs in context of the place photographed. Three of the initial interviews were conducted at various locations along the Durban beachfront including the popular morning coffee shop, Bike & Bean

and the Durban Skate Park. The other initial interviews were conducted via MS Teams online. Immediately after each initial interview the inquirer expanded on the notes captured during the interview (reflections-in-action) using a reflexive journal to document their reflections-on-action from the discussion.



Figure 16 - Reflexive journal (Simpson, 2021)

During the initial semi-structured interview, nine pre-selected, printed photos chosen by the inquirer were presented to the participants with the intention of having the participants write or draw on the photo to share more of the story behind it. After the first interview took place on a bench on the Durban beachfront, where drawing or writing on the printed photos was impractical, through

reflection on the action, the idea was abandoned. Instead, the printed photos were used by the inquirer during the reflexive journaling process. Mannay (2016) argues that researchers should always be flexible in their use of methods and must understand that different participants may respond to alternate methods. The inquirer needed to 'reflect on the

feeling' within that situation and adopt a different course of action which was more suitable for both the participants and the inquirer (Schön, 1983: 49).

The inquirer writes...

'I was so nervous to do my first interview. I didn't know whether this would work. I didn't know if I was going to get anything from the participants... But as I was sitting talking to the first participant in an interview on a bench on the Durban beachfront and he began talking about how returning to the beachfront after the lockdown was eased and how that made him, even if just for a moment, feel optimistic about the future, I was moved. I felt a tingle run up my spine and felt genuinely excited about what may come from the interview process. I wrote about the first interview for longer than the interview took to complete...

As each interview began the same feelings of anxiety came over me – what if they were just sharing photos, and each time I was amazed, surprised, and grateful for how open they were about sharing their feelings about the space.

Although selected purposefully as people who would be positive about the city, I suspected that some might have reservations or concerns about the city or the beachfront – even though they were avid users'.

The inquirer wrote notes in their reflexive journal immediately after each interview and during the transcription process, and the analysis was ongoing throughout the process, with each subsequent interview and transcription adding more data. During the reflection process the inquirer needed to examine their own bias and personal beliefs in addition to mentions of concepts that demonstrated signs of happiness, meaningfulness, emotional connections or social engagement from the participants. Initial codes were sought out in the transcripts and captured by hand as a word cloud and as a visual aid in the inquiry - Figure 17 - Codes Word Cloud - by hand (Simpson, 2021).

The analysis presented in this chapter seeks to explore Durban residents' emotional connection with the Durban beachfront by gaining insight into their lived experience of the space. The chapter begins by introducing the participants, defines the elements used for triangulation of the data and analysis before moving onto the emerging themes. Each theme is presented as a combined narrative derived from several of the participants in various combinations before concluding.

4.2 Meet the participants

It's 6:30am on a Wednesday morning in July and the sky is beginning to change colour over the ocean. *The Surfer* is halfway through her daily run and pauses to take in the morning light and catch her breath. As she looks out at the waves, she wishes she had the time to go for a surf this morning. *The Runner* moves past her in the opposite direction as they sort of nod in acknowledgement of a somewhat familiar face. They work for the same clothing company but have never actually met – although they more than likely run by one another on a regular basis.



Figure 18 - Sunrise: The Runner (Instagram.com, 2021)

The Optimist parks his car at Bike & Bean and waits for his friend to arrive before heading onto the promenade just as *The Surfer* heads back down the beach towards Surf Riders. As the sun starts climbing out of the ocean *The Runner* pauses briefly to capture the moment on her iPhone before continuing her run moving past *The Optimist*. As he turns around to run back to Bike & Bean, *The Optimist* almost bumps into two women walking with their coffees onto the beach. *The Doctor* apologises for getting in their way, before she heads onto the beach to sit and enjoy her first cup of coffee for the day.

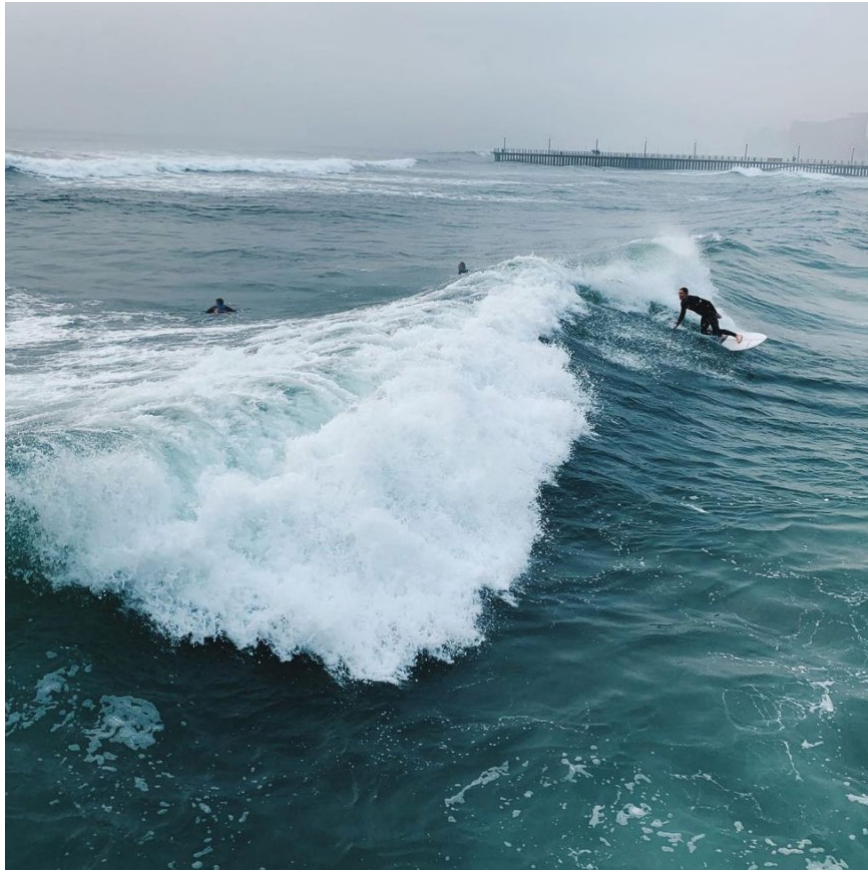


Figure 19 - Summer is here: *The Surfer* (Instagram.com, 2021)

The Surfer stands on the pier looking out at the ocean watching the early surfers and captures a video of the beautiful surf to send to out her morning surf report. As she heads back from the pier, she passes *The Photographer* crouching to get the perfect shot of the morning surfers and fishermen. He is still on the Durban beachfront later that afternoon when *The Roller-skater* arrives. It's not the best weather, but the new swimming costume she ordered arrived that morning and she's keen to take it for its first swim in the ocean.

Later that afternoon *The Inquirer* parks at Moses Mabhida Stadium and begins walking around the stadium and moves through the M4 Underpass to get to the beachfront. He turns around to take a photo of the sun setting behind the stadium and takes the opportunity to stretch before embarking on his bi-weekly run.



Figure 20 - Sunset: *The Inquirer* (Instagram.com, 2021)

Seven people connected only through their use of the Durban beachfront and now each connected through Instagram to *The Inquirer*. As *The Inquirer* walks along the beachfront regularly and sees people taking photos, selfies or videos, he wonders why he was not able to find them on Instagram.

4.3 Refining the triangulation data

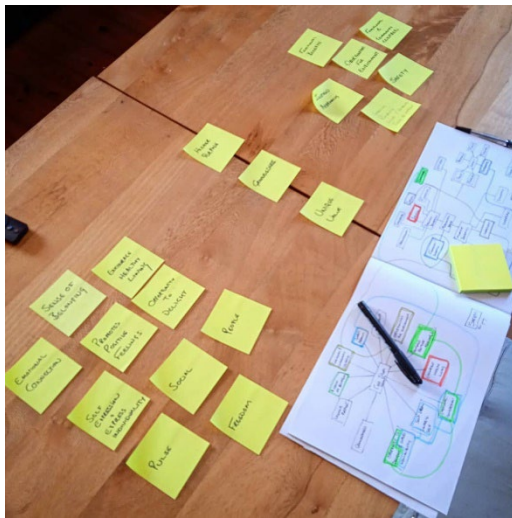


Figure 21 - Understanding the various metrics (Simpson, 2021)

‘At the heart of visual work is its facilitation of reflexivity in the research process’ (Mitchell, 2011: 11). As the interviews progressed and the recordings were transcribed, the inquirer reflected on the various brand metrics and questioned the triangulation process. The inquirer realised that there were too many complex metrics related to measuring cities and brand building to compare and contrast in order to appropriately gather findings. In the literature review several significant metrics (in terms of popularity, familiarity and

relevance) were identified which were to be compared to the findings from the narrative inquiry, including the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020), ‘Meaningful Brands Benefits’ by the Havas Group (Meaningful Brands, 2019), The Meaningful City (Yeoman, 2019), City Attributes (Merrilees et al., 2009), Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014) and the findings from the best practice case studies. To review the variables, all metrics and attributes were written on individual post-it notes and put into categories to look for overlaps and discrepancies. To further compare and contrast these various metrics against each other, they were visually combined into a graphic, to literally see the full picture and the respective metrics’ viewpoint (Figure 23 – Comparison of various city metrics). This was done for the inquirer to understand the relevance of each metric to the study and how each metric related to the others. Although visually the inquirer was able to relate all of them to each other, the inquirer felt uncomfortable with using all of them for the purpose of triangulation as they were measures of different elements of a city from different viewpoints.

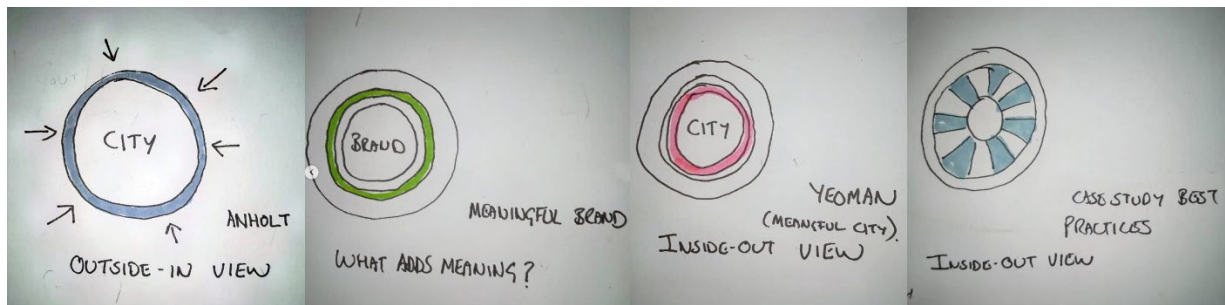


Figure 22 - Points of view of each metric (Simpson, 2021)

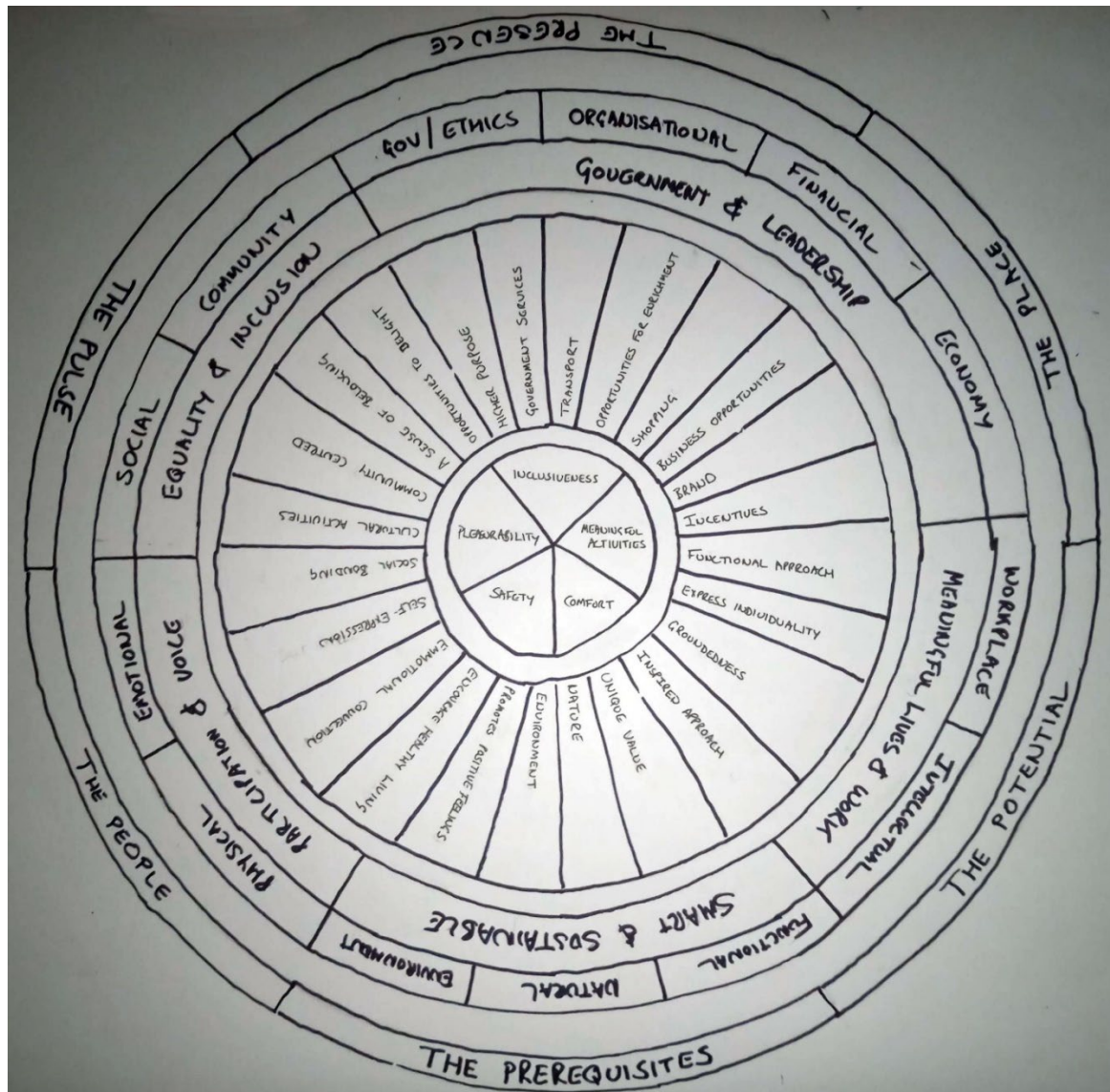


Figure 23 – Comparison of various city metrics (Simpson, 2021)

Through this process of reflection and revisiting the literature related to each metric, it became clear that there were too many variables to compare effectively. Some of the metrics originally identified should be eliminated from the analysis because of their lack of relevance to understanding the perceptions, opinions and lived experience of the residents,

and as a result, that the key viewpoint should be focused on the residents more than the city itself.

Each of the metrics looks at different aspects of the city (or brand) and the purpose of comparing these was to understand their significance to building meaningful city brands. Although the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) is a popular city ranking index, index revolves around an outside-in view of the city, as it is judged by an outsider perspective and not from the lens of the city's residents (insiders). Each of the six categories relate very clearly to the other metrics, but those are viewed from within the city and are more relevant to the study which focuses on the insiders, or residents' point of view.

Medway et al. (2021: 2) argue that any such metrics are meaningless to the place brand and ignore the multisensory experiences of all users of the place. As such the Anholt-Ipsos City Brands Index (Ipsos, 2020) was not considered in the triangulation, although its relevance remains intact for understanding the possible criteria in building city brands. Similarly, the City Attributes (Merrilees et al., 2009) although relevant to building a city brand in terms of what the city offers residents, acts more as a checklist of must-haves, rather than measures of meaningfulness and for that reason was also eliminated from the triangulation process.

Initial codes and emerging themes were captured on post-it notes and highlighted transcripts for each participant and were placed around the comparison metrics to see where they fit. Through this process the narrative themes were correlated with the key principles of the meaningful city brand metrics. See Figure 24 - Codes and metrics (Simpson, 2021).

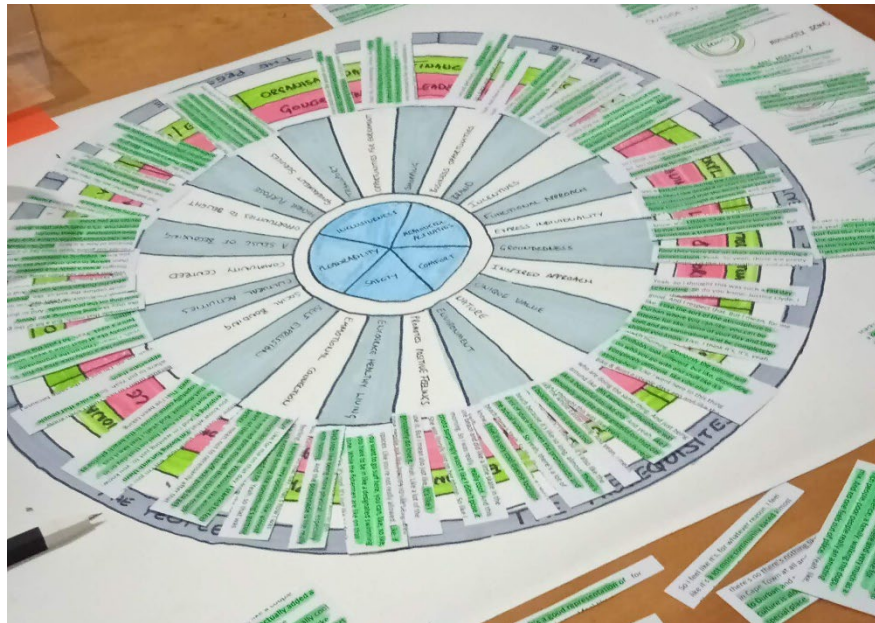


Figure 24 - Codes and metrics (Simpson, 2021)

The analysis revealed that the most significant measures in terms of meaningfulness would be achieved through the triangulation of the 'Meaningful Brands Benefits' by the Havas Group (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and the Meaningful City by Yeoman (2019), along with the findings from the best practice studies against the emergent themes gathered in the narrative inquiry (as illustrated below and demonstrated in the next section). The attributes of the Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014) are discussed along with the themes as they relate directly to open spaces.

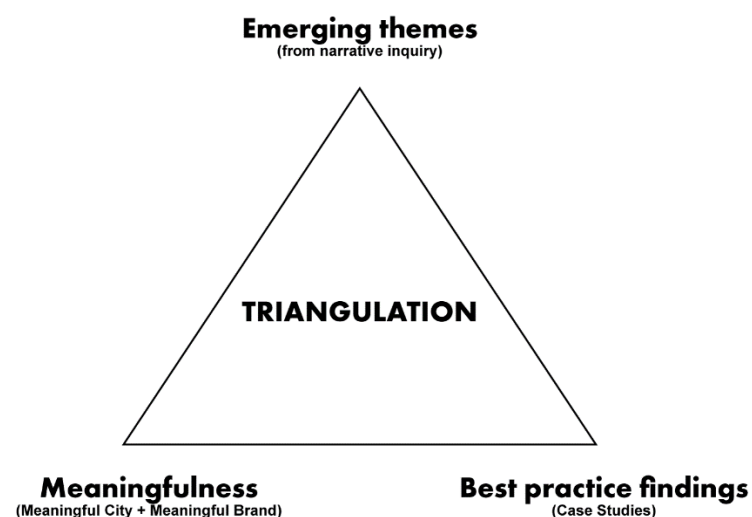


Figure 25 – Triangulation (Simpson, 2021)

4.4 The assumptions of the inquirer

The participants chosen were regular users of the Durban beachfront and the inquirer held the belief that the participants would hold a positive view of the Durban beachfront. That point of view is not something shared by all Durban residents. Casual conversations with many people about the Durban beachfront result in statements such as, 'be careful, it's so dangerous down there' or 'it's too crowded', and 'it's so unsafe'. A Google image search for the term 'Durban beachfront' reveals hints as to why people may feel this way as can be seen in this photograph captured on New Year's Day 2018 on the Durban beachfront by photographer Dawn Rouse (SAPeople, 2018).



Figure 26 - Crowded Durban beachfront (SAPeople, 2018)

Mehta (2014) suggests five key dimensions were necessary for the evaluation of the quality of public space including inclusiveness, meaningful activities, comfort, safety and pleasurability. Being a public space, the Durban beachfront would naturally need to exhibit aspects of the five key dimensions and the inquirer assumed each of these might emerge as themes from the participants' narratives and may be significant in terms of understanding meaningful city brands in the wider context.

In studying the meaningful city, Yeoman explores the human connection to the smart sustainable city by examining meaningful lives and work, equality and inclusion, smart and sustainable aspects, participation, voice, governance and leadership (Yeoman, 2019). It was assumed that to some degree aspects of this may be represented in the study.

Being a long-time resident of the city and a user of the space, the inquirer and their lived experience over time informs their feelings about the space. As indicated in 3.4.1.4 The story of Jody and D'MOSS;

'I believe that Durban is always green, with large open space, D'MOSS adds value to the city and I believe that it is responsible in part for the significance of the city to me personally. I believe or would like to know if the same holds true for others in the city'.

The inquirer reflected and acknowledged that they have a strong emotional connection with Durban and the idea of D'MOSS. Their lived experience of the city is influenced by their habits of walking and exploring the city. Their lived experience includes using the Durban beachfront area regularly. Their experience and architectural degree helped provide insight into the use of space and the significance of designing with users in mind. As Clandinin and Caine (2013: 175) state, to work in narrative, an inquirer begins the research 'in the midst of our own lives and in the midst of our participant's lives' and Elliott (2005) elaborates saying that the inquirer needs to indicate an awareness of their own life within the context of the study and their role in retelling the narrative of the participants through a reflexive methodology.

4.5 Identifying themes from the narrative inquiry

After transcribing the recorded interviews, the inquirer found digital methods of sorting the data and finding codes and emerging themes didn't resonate, upon reflection the inquirer found instead that using a more tactile method of sorting the data on paper worked more effectively as it allowed for a bigger picture (and visual) view of the gathered data. Sorting information in a tactile manner allows for the analysis to happen in a more visual method

which is in keeping with the visual narrative inquiry. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) provide such as example, as they work with printed copies of transcripts and use pens and highlighters to begin coding and then use scissors to cut up the transcripts to sort the initial codes into potential themes.

Narrative analyses in practice combines 'ideas and themes' gathered from the literature and any themes found in the data while conducting the analysis (Esin, 2011: 108). Identifying



Figure 27 - Empathy Mapping (Simpson, 2021)

codes and themes from all of the gathered data can be a challenging process and one practical method in achieving this is to 'visualise the research data' and many methods exist to help achieve this such as 'empathy mapping, mind-mapping, journey maps, and affinity diagrams' (Yayici, 2016: 326).

Empathy mapping involves looking at users' emotional bonds to services and spaces and helps uncover, visualise and better understand the data that might

otherwise not be obvious (Yayici, 2016). The interpretation revolves around seeking patterns in the field texts and research data.

The codes represent the inquirer's interpretation of meaning from the field texts while the thematic analysis is the reflection of the inquirer's interpretive analysis of the data (Byrne, 2021) using the field texts, meaningful metrics and case study findings. Codes or themes emerging are unique to the inquirers reflection and a different inquirer may produce differing results. The development of themes involved analysis and interpretation from the inquirer and the emerging 'themes cannot exist separately from the researcher' as it is only through the combination of their intrinsic values, abilities, and personal experience that those themes exist (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 39). In reflexive thematic analysis the choice of themes emerging from the data rely on the inquirer's discretion and knowledge, and often

the themes are chosen based on their connection to the research questions and their usefulness in answering to the research question. The organic manner in which the coding is performed is subject to the inquirer's familiarity with the data and is 'an inherently subjective process' that relies on reflexive practice for the inquirer to understand and discuss their assumptions throughout the process (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 39).

Analysis of the field texts and raw data was physically done on paper after reading and re-reading the transcripts, and the inquirers handwritten reflexive notes. Transcripts were printed and read again, and each participant's transcripts were highlighted in different colours on paper to identify codes. The printed transcripts were then cut up leaving the most relevant field texts. A single A2 sheet of card was used per participant to analyse their transcripts.



Figure 28 - The inquirer analysing the transcripts (Simpson, 2021)

Cut-up transcripts were sorted into similar concepts or codes (such as safety, and city love). Once the grouping into codes was completed, all were re-read to check whether they may fit better into different codes and as a result some merged. Each code was then cross-checked with the notes from the inquirers reflexive journal and notes made on the A2 sheet per participant. Codes from all the participants were then collected per participant and

compared with the other participants to sort into themes. Emerging themes were then compared to the findings from the literature review and the meaningful metrics; Meaningful Brands (2019) and the Meaningful City by Yeoman (2019).

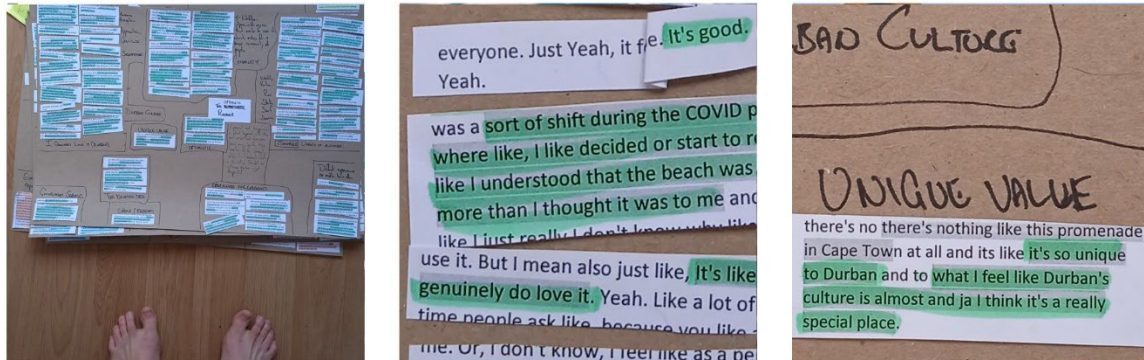


Figure 29 - Sorting of field texts to codes (Simpson, 2021)

Emerging themes are discussed below where they are compared to the meaningfulness metrics and case study findings. The narrative from of the emerging themes are brought together using three specific dimensions; temporality, sociality and place, as suggested by Clandinin and Huber (2010). Temporality speaks to the lived stories from past, present and potential futures of the participants. Sociality speaks to the participants relationships with the world around them, internally (feelings, hopes, fears) and externally (environment, people etc. that form their context). Place refers to the Durban beachfront and their experiences within, and of that space and the greater Durban environment as the beachfront influences their feelings about the city.

4.6 Emerging themes from the narrative inquiry

1. Feelings of safety (perception of safety in the space),
2. A sense of freedom (perception of freedom in the space),
3. The morning light (experiences shared by participants),
4. The unspoken connection (opinions about the community),
5. A different experience (experiences shared by participants),
6. Feelings of gratitude (opinions about the city),
7. I love Durban (opinions about the city) and,
8. Contemplating the future (residents contemplate their future in the city).

Each of the emerging themes were drawn from the field texts and reflexive journal of the inquirer during the initial analysis and were compared and contrasted with the metrics relating to meaningfulness and the best practice case studies from the literature review. 'The interview therefore becomes a site for the production of data and an opportunity to explore the meaning of the research topic for the respondent' (Elliott, 2005: 22). The Durban beachfront is an ideal area to study because it is a mixed-use, multi-functional space, which provides residents with the opportunity to be outdoors. The emerging themes related directly with the Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014), and many of the case study findings as well as some of the meaningfulness attributes. Each of the emergent themes explore different aspects of emotional connections with the Durban beachfront and positive feelings were expressed overall. Place brands mean specific things to a specific audience and as Vollrath (2019) argues, residents have a deeper grasp based on their daily lived experience.

Notably missing from the themes were meaningfulness attributes of environment, although discussions around the litter do relate to this, workplace, economy, intellectual and financial - participants use the space for leisure activities and not for work purposes – except for *The Photographer*. Mention was made of having free access to the space which did relate to the theme of gratitude. The environment (conservation, preservation etc.) a significant meaningful attribute and core component of the best practice case studies was not mentioned by any of the participants during the interviews – except for discussions around litter. D'MOSS areas specifically are there to help maintain the ecological framework and teach residents about the importance of that framework –it is however interesting to note that residents aren't talking about the space in terms of ecological benefit. The Durban beachfront is not giving residents a place to have meaningful work necessarily, but through the emotional connection with the space and their experiences of freedom, escape and happiness it adds unique value to them in terms of a meaningful life which is further discussed in Chapter 5.

The Durban beachfront is a widely used, popular public space and tourist attraction and as such many of the themes that emerged overlap with the five key dimensions (inclusiveness, meaningful activities, comfort, safety and pleasurability) suggested by Mehta (2014). 'Good public space is responsive, democratic and meaningful' (Mehta 2014: 53). 'Brands that go

beyond their product and make a positive, tangible impact on what matters to us, gain a greater share of our lives' (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and these brands then gain a deeper, more significant connection with people and results in building trust in the brand. Functional benefits (does the product or service deliver?) are now less important when compared to collective (what is their role in society?) and personal (how does the brand improve peoples' lives?) benefits. Functional benefits speak to pricing, quality, safety and responsible products, where personal benefits speak to making the user's life easier, delivering inventive ideas, making the user happier and their lives easier or providing peace of mind, while the collective benefits include helping the local economy, providing a good workplace, where processes are transparent, ethical and encourage diversity (Meaningful Brands, 2019).

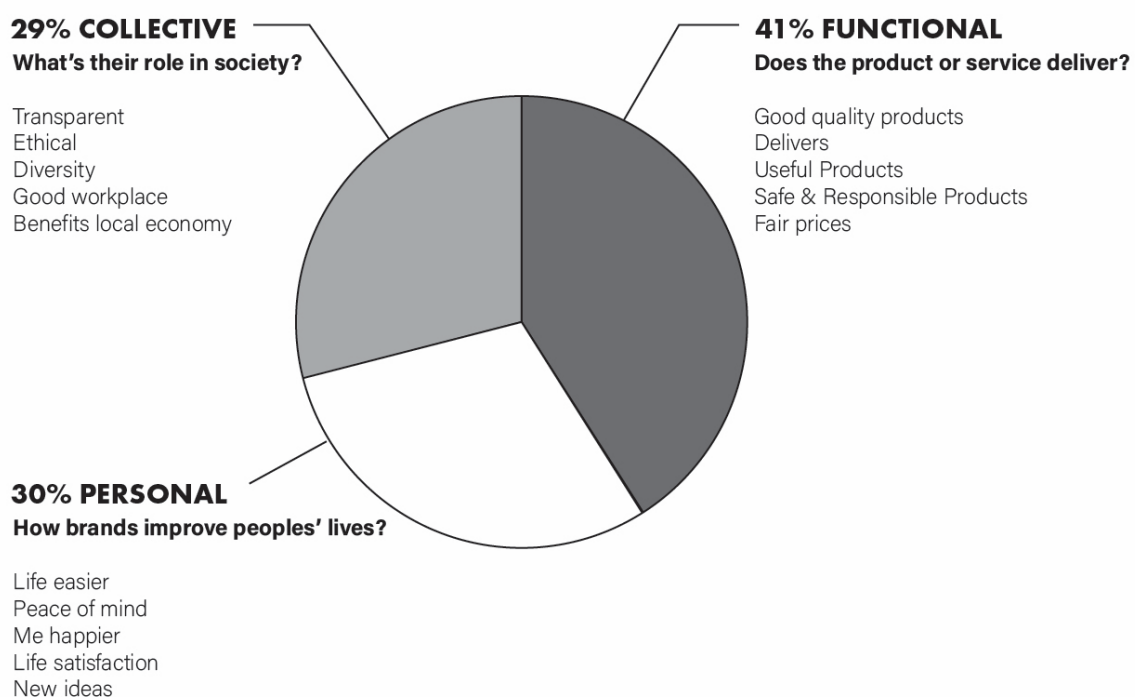


Figure 30 - Understanding meaningful brands (Simpson, 2021)

People can achieve meaningfulness when they become emotionally involved with things of independent value, like people and places (Yeoman, 2019). Yeoman explores the human connection to the smart sustainable city by examining meaningful lives and work, equality and inclusion, whether the city is smart and sustainable, participation and voice, governance and leadership (Yeoman, 2019). Yeoman's metrics speak mostly to the collective benefits

described by Meaningful Brands (2019), with only the smart and sustainable measure potentially being able to be considered as a more functional benefit. To achieve many of Yeoman's measures the city would need to help residents on a personal level to improve their perceptions of collective benefits.

4.6.1 Feelings of Safety



Figure 31 - 'It was like I was the only one out there today' *The Runner* (Instagram.com, 2021)

When *The Inquirer* began exploring the Durban beachfront the assumption was that safety may come up as a topic, based on their own experiences with crime on the beachfront in the recent past and lingering memories of word-of-mouth about the area. Each of the participants spoke about safety – they however perceived the space to be predominantly a safe one. A key objective for long term development of eThekweni (Durban Metropolitan) is creating a safe, accessible city (eThekweni Municipality, 2018).

Safety is an important dimension of the Public Space Index and in the context of open spaces refers to being isolated from traffic, having eyes on the street/space, and Mehta (2014: 60) argues that 'perceptions play a significant role in making places appear safe or unsafe'. Participants spoke of safety more in line with concepts of safety from potential crime which relates more to the South African context. Open spaces often have visual appeal, contain various amenities and green space, but aren't well used 'due to negative perceptions of safety' (Wolfe, 2021: 115). The occurrence of violent crime is shown to be reduced in areas where green spaces and parks are well-maintained, and it can be said that 'a sign of social capital and cohesion might deter criminals' (Spektor, 2016).

Safe and responsible products are a functional benefit of the Meaningful Brand benefits and safety might also be considered relevant to peace of mind from the personal benefits and would speak to the functional approach identified in the best practice case studies although not specifically mentioned. If a brand inspires people to become more positive, or healthier, stronger, safer or happier and more connected (Standlee, 2018), and allows them to form an emotional bond with it (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013) it could be considered a meaningful one.

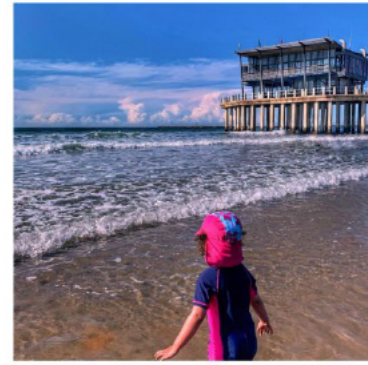


Figure 32 - Emerging theme: Feelings of safety (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - Feelings of safety		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
Perceptions of safety expressed by <i>The Runner</i>, 'You feel really safe to walk by yourself and safe as a female'. <i>The Doctor</i> perceives the space as safe. Considering Covid restrictions and social spacing the space available 'has helped me a little bit to just carry on being in the environment, and not feeling too unsafe'. <i>The Surfer's</i> perception: 'sometimes it can feel a bit unsafe'.	Beautiful parks, pathways and connections, inspire residents to care, and help nurture feelings of safety (Standlee, 2018) which help demonstrate a higher purpose. <i>The Runner</i> believes the Durban beachfront to be the only space where she feels safe – demonstrating a unique value. The safety perceived in the area helps promote positive feelings and allows people to exercise freely which helps to encourage healthy living. Spaces that are accessible and available where they feel safe demonstrates groundedness (Rosethorn, 2018).	The Governance and Leadership has made the Durban beachfront feel safe. Safe and responsible products are integral to meaningful brands. If residents perceive an area to be safe it gives them peace of mind when visiting the area. Residents express feeling better about life after visiting the area which demonstrates life satisfaction.

Table 3 - Triangulation of data: Feelings of safety

Follow up interviews took place the week after the civil unrest in Durban in July 2021, and each of the participants expressed their disappointment in the people and the leadership of South Africa, and their fear of visiting the beachfront again - even though the area was untouched by the rioting - using words such as 'disappointed', 'not proud', and 'disheartened'. *The Runner* describes her lived experience as

'Even the first time I went back to the beachfront, I was quite scared, and once I was there, I felt safe... I had wanted to go to the beachfront that week because I knew the looters wouldn't be there, but the roads to get there weren't safe... I think the beachfront is still intact for me in terms of a place of safety'.

For *The Runner*, the beachfront is her place of safety. Despite South Africa's comprehensive and progressive Bill of Rights, 'South Africans still question the extent of real progress towards a violence-free society, particularly in relation to the gender continuum' and 'gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a social and public health concern' which affects all races, ages and social classes of women in South Africa (Meyiwa et al., 2017: 8614). *The Runner's* perception of the space is that it is one of the only places she can go as a female, alone, and not have to worry about going with another person.

'As a female, whenever I'm going out, it's always like, 'who's going with you?... Is it a safe space?' Almost like, 'are there any guys coming with you?' Or 'are you going in a group?'. I don't have that issue when I'm going to the beach, because there's lots of security, the police are patrolling all the time. Even the beggars don't really harass you. You feel really safe to walk by yourself and safe as a female. So yeah, that's what I love about it. I don't need a chaperone, I don't need a friend to go with, I can walk on my own and enjoy the beachfront, on my terms'.

This echoes a key dimension of the Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014) where being isolated from traffic and having eyes on the street/space help improve perceptions of safety. *The Surfer* runs almost daily and admits that there are occasional mornings where the beachfront is emptier than normal, and she finds herself running a little faster, perceiving it as less safe; expressing that she senses something out of the ordinary. Negative perceptions

of safety often can deter open space users (Wolfe, 2021), but if they are well-maintained and look well-kept this can deter criminals (Spektor, 2016). *The Optimist* – who also runs in the early mornings has the same perception (noticing things with the sense) that occasionally he doesn't feel safe and says a little more security could help. He expresses that he normally feels safe in the area.

The Doctor describes that she feels comfortable on the Durban beachfront because 'you can distance yourself from people' given the Covid-19 situation where social distancing is important for one's health. She says 'in these past two years that has helped me a little bit to just carry on being in the environment, and not feeling too unsafe' even though she's walking amongst people. This sentiment is echoed by *The Runner*.

'I definitely take more opportunities to go out there since lockdown because it's a place where you feel safe from Covid. It's a place where if you're jogging you don't necessarily have to wear your mask the entire time. You can breathe and it's sort of like you can almost forget Covid for a little bit and you can at least pretend the world's normal for a little bit. You do feel a lot more free there'.

'Most people tend to walk farther when streets feel safe and interesting' Montgomery (2015: 194), and beautiful parks, pathways and connections, inspire residents to care, and help nurture feelings of safety within the place (Standlee, 2018). Feelings of safety link strongly to the various other themes, such as a sense of freedom. Spaces that are accessible and available to residents where they feel safe demonstrates groundedness (Rosethorn, 2018). Feeling safe in an area will promote positive feelings (Standlee, 2018) amongst other residents and may encourage them to express themselves freely (Escalas, 2004; Smith 2014). More than ever, given the context of Covid-19 and beyond, places need to turn their focus inwards and help residents 'nurture their feelings of local embeddedness, place attachment, care and associated safety and security' (Medway et al. 2021: 7).

4.6.2 A sense of freedom

Cities are able to ignite a variety of ‘feelings, emotions and attitudes’, including alienation, solitude, freedom, possibility, anxiety and fear (Vanolo, 2018: 53). Montgomery (2013: 41) argues that cities need to improve human well-being and that once the basics (food, shelter, security) are provided a city should ‘offer us real freedom to live, move and build our lives as we wish’. Initially freedom was not a topic which *The Inquirer* thought would be raised by the participants, although on reflection, the inquirer realised that many of their own Instagram posts about going to the beachfront are captioned with phrases such as ‘escaping work’, ‘feeling free’ and ‘happy place’ and that the feeling of being on the beachfront is indeed one that does feel freeing. The best practice case studies revealed how cities such as Vancouver have laws protecting views and Montgomery (2013) argues how important these views are to residents to make them feel safer, happier and more cared for.

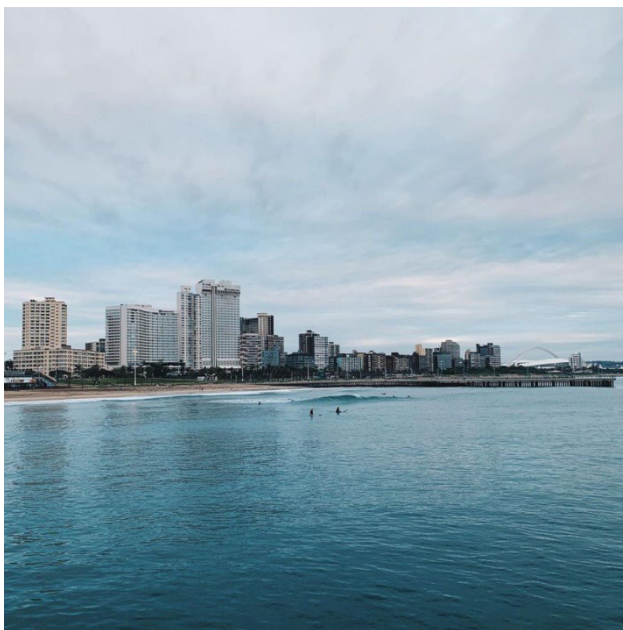


Figure 33 - 'Durban you are pure magic' The Surfer (Instagram.com, 2021)

When asked what he will miss about Durban when he eventually emigrates from South Africa, *The Photographer* mentioned the freedom, but his opinion was twofold; related to the South African experience and the easy access to nature. He visits the Durban beachfront several times a week, generally in the early mornings to catch the early morning light and because he feels there is more freedom to move around with fewer people using the space. *The Doctor* perceived her first experience back on the

beachfront after lockdown as a ‘freeing’ one. She feels free on the Durban beachfront because ‘you can distance yourself from people’ given the need for social distancing and the desire to be outdoors and amongst people.

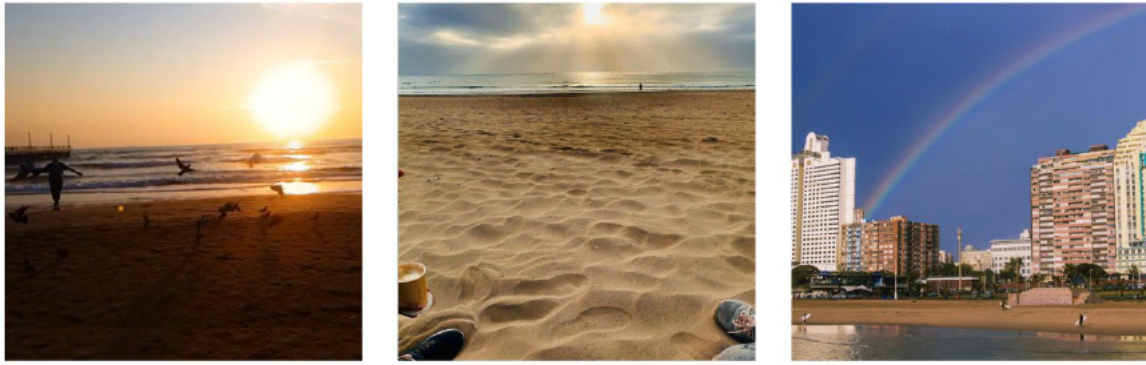


Figure 34 - Emerging theme: A sense of freedom (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - A sense of freedom		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Runner</i> believes that 'at the beachfront you do feel a lot more, free'. <i>The Doctor</i> perceived her first experience back on the beachfront after lockdown as a 'freeing' one.	The spacious mixed use paved promenade encourages running, walking, cycling and helps give users feelings of freedom to do anything which helps demonstrate a higher purpose and encourages residents to feel a sense of belonging. In comparison to other open spaces within D'MOSS, the Durban beachfront offers the most diverse use area with mass appeal giving it a unique value which helps promote positive feelings and through the activities it can encourage healthy living. Public spaces improve health through provision of psychological relief (UN Habitat, 2020).	Meaningful Lives and work – can be achieved by being able to partake in activities within a city where people can have an emotional compelling experience that is of value to them (Yeoman, 2019). Feelings of freedom might be from the engagement with the ocean, the ability to do/move as they please and the wide open space available. It helps to demonstrate a peace of mind leading to a me happier attitude for visitors and encourages residents to experience life satisfaction.

Table 4 - Triangulation of data: A sense of freedom

In cities with well-designed open space systems, residents utilise the outdoors willingly for and seek to socialise in those spaces, exploring and connecting with others (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019). Being able to view open spaces or being in spaces that allow for views, or a sense of openness, help encourage feelings of freedom (Montgomery, 2013). *The Optimist* describes visits to the beachfront as ‘a bit of an escape from everything’.

A city is made up of both the physical – or lived space – and ‘spaces of the imagination and representation’ and Vanolo (2018: 53) argues that cities ignite a variety of ‘feelings, emotions and attitudes’, ranging from alienation to inclusion, solitude, freedom, possibility, anxiety and fear and excitement and even the erotic. Experiencing a sense of freedom within a city could be argued to be an emotionally compelling experience which is of value to residents that might indicate meaningfulness (Yeoman, 2019).

Pleasurability is a key dimension of the Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014) and refers specifically to high levels of spatial quality and sensory complexity and it could be argued that the sense of freedom referred to by the participants relates to pleasurability.

The Runner is of the opinion that all the pictures she posts on Instagram represent freedom. She explains

‘Each one of these is about freedom... For me they’re about freedom because I haven’t had that same opportunity to feel safe in other areas. The beachfront is somewhere I really feel free... I post a lot of photos of birds too and that’s also about freedom. Being there is very therapeutic for me, and at the moment, we’re in this pandemic, and you’re always so stressed. But at the beachfront you do feel a lot more, free’.

Speaking of freedom and the beachfront *The Runner* recalled childhood memories of the area.

‘I just remember going there [Funworld] as a kid as well. Every weekend, enjoying the freedom, the space. I used to go on the cable cars with my

parents. My parents are divorced now. For me it just reminds me of having my whole family, enjoying Durban together'.

A sense of freedom could be attributed to the proximity to the ocean, but also to the ability to walk an eight-kilometre paved promenade stretching the entire Durban beachfront area. The development of this promenade and its recent extension demonstrate a higher brand purpose (Aaker, 2015). The development of the extension to the promenade took previously derelict areas and converted them into more useable, walkable, multi-use spaces which help promote positive feelings (Standlee, 2018). Each of the participants told stories about their mornings on the beach.

4.6.3 The morning light

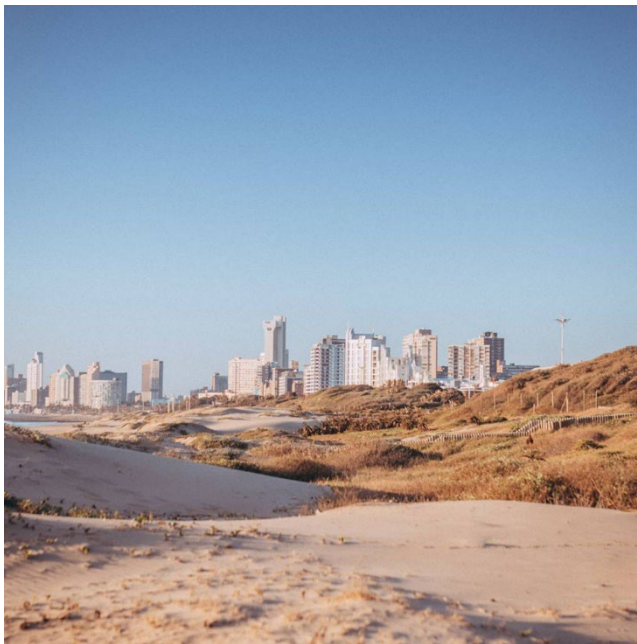


Figure 35 - 'Durbs at dawn' The Optimist (Instagram.com, 2021)

Durban, on South Africa's east coast, enjoys a humid subtropical climate with hot, summers and warm winters (eThekweni Municipality, 2018). With high day time temperatures in summer, many residents prefer to run, swim and exercise in the early hours while the temperatures are lower. Sunrises all over the world could be argued to be unique to their context, but unique features gain a higher degree of perception from residents.

Brands which demonstrate a unique value (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016) and are focused and active in their communication of their unique feature (Pompe, 2017) gain more attention from their audience. The experience of something unique allows the formation of emotional bonds with the city (Escalas, 2004) and different people will share similar experiences but perceive them in a unique and individual way (Gehl, 2016). The unique

features that make a city stand out as a brand are the ‘essence of place’ (Herget et al. 2015: 120), and help the city become a character in their lives. The city environment can mould the people using the area (Skinner, 2011) and for some Durban residents a desire to be on the beachfront in the mornings has altered the way they live their lives.

Within the context of this study, residents spoke of the mornings and all frequent the area during this time and many remarked that it was their favourite time of day to be on the Durban beachfront. The unique morning experience has created an emotional bond for them with the beachfront that they weave into their personal narratives and through their Instagram feeds. Through the integration of that experience of the Durban beachfront into their narrative the city brand becomes more meaningful in their lives (Escalas, 2004).

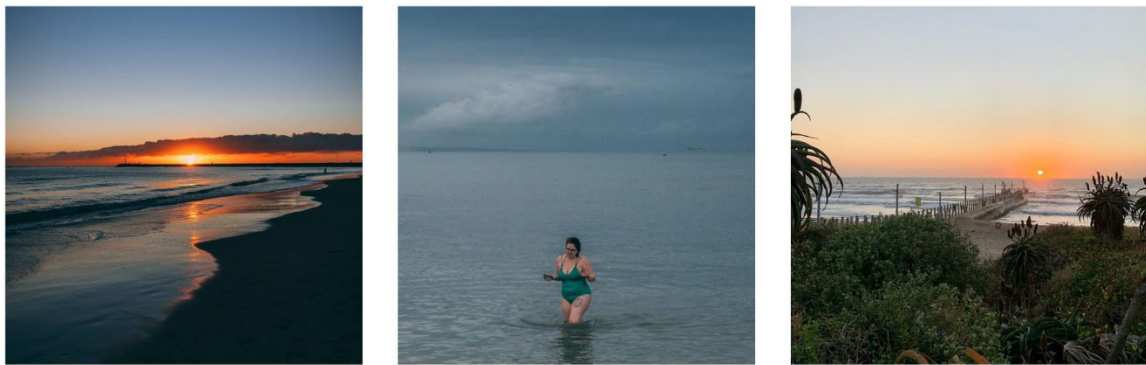


Figure 36 - Emerging theme: The morning light (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - The morning light		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Case Studies (Best practice findings)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
'What's special in Durban is that you get the morning light... that's what Durban has to offer, so take advantage of that' – <i>The Surfer</i>. <i>The Optimist</i> expresses that 'part of me always knows that it's going to be worth it. It always feels different, like it's a sunrise, but every morning it will look different'. <i>The Surfer</i> almost has a spiritual sense of her morning experiences and explains 'I think I'm in this space where, every time I'm at the beachfront and I look at the sunrise I think that's where you express your gratitude'.	Participant narratives show Durban residents to be 'morning people'. The early sunrise during the summer months encourages this and creates some sense of belonging or community for the early risers, giving them a unique value. Celebrating the sunrise promotes positive feelings while it also encourages healthy living. Residents establish an emotional connection to the space, and it continues to provide them opportunities to be delighted.	The beachfront provides a space that supports an early morning lifestyle and it could be argued that the morning light makes life easier. A visit to the beachfront at sunrise is busy, Durban mornings offer cool air, and smooth waves, so residents can run, cycle, swim, surf, do yoga, all helping promote peace of mind, which can lead to a me happier attitude that helps with life satisfaction.

Table 5 - Triangulation of data: The morning light

The Surfer laughs that people make comments about her dedication to being on the beachfront when talking about her Instagram post titled 'The 5am klub'. Her opinion of mornings in Durban are expressed as follows,

'What's special in Durban is that you get the morning light... that's what Durban has to offer, so take advantage of that. Waking up early, going for a run, sitting there. It's a nice way of starting the day'.

With sunrise in Durban at the height of summer before 5am, city residents can get outdoors and enjoy their open spaces before work and before the heat of the summer becomes too

much and they retreat indoors to take advantage of air-conditioners to escape the high humidity and temperatures.

A morning experience is not a topic that directly came up in the meaningful metrics or the best practice case studies, but the experience of it strongly connects to several of the metrics of both, such as the meaningful brands; me happier and life satisfaction; and the case studies promote positive feelings and encourage healthy living (Standlee, 2018), emotional connection (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2019), opportunities to delight (Smith, 2014) and is a particularly unique value (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016) offering in Durban.

The Photographer visits the beachfront several mornings a week as part of his routine and says 'you don't get a better place to come spend your morning' and enjoys taking photos with the 'morning rays coming through'. He has the advantage of living relatively close to the beachfront, unlike *The Runner* who lives about 10km away or *The Optimist*, who visits the beachfront at least twice a week and lives around 20km away. As part of their routines, they take the trouble to travel those distances multiple times a week leaving home before sunrise to enjoy the morning experience. The opinion expressed by *The Optimist* is

'Part of me always knows that it's going to be worth it. It always feels different, like it's a sunrise, but every morning it will look different, depending on who you go with... a different vibe and atmosphere. Like I was at Bike & Bean a couple of days ago and the sun here was completely different to how it feels today'.

The Runner often will take photos for her Instagram while running,

'These little moments, the sunrise in the morning, catching that shot of the birds, seeing that lady on the beachfront dusting her stuff, seeing the surfers. These moments make up your life. I'm hoping to inspire others to appreciate the little things and see the beauty in the stuff around them. Beauty is a matter of perception. Being able to see another sunrise is a blessing'.

The Surfer is known amongst her followers on Instagram as being a dedicated morning person and of late...

'I've started doing morning surf reports, and for some people it makes or breaks their morning, and they'll share it with their friends and not go surfing because of me. But maybe they should go. You have to have that experience for yourself and not base it on watching something I've shared. So, I'm trying to figure out how I feel about that, because as much as it's interesting you really don't want to be responsible for somebody making up their mind. Maybe if they were there they would have jumped into the ocean or gone for a run. Had coffee. So, I don't know'.

New technologies (such as social media) can influence the everyday lived experience of people (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), which together with other users' experiences form a shared narrative of the place (Arias, 2018). *The Surfer* has used the Durban beachfront from before Covid and has noticed the change in the area since the end of the first hard lockdown in South Africa and says...

'It's quite interesting to see how many people have taken advantage of the beachfront after Covid. There is a massive difference between the amount of people that are actually there in the mornings, which is nice to see.

I don't see the sunrise from my apartment, and I'm so used to seeing and appreciating it, that friends that did have views started sending me the sunrise, because we couldn't go out. It was really special. But now that I can see the sunrise, I want to make sure that I don't take it for granted'.

Each of the participants in discussing their photos and the beachfront mentioned enjoying the diversity and sense of community experienced on the beachfront.

4.6.4 The unspoken connection



Figure 37 - 'Dancing into the middle of the week' The Rollerskater (Instagram.com, 2021)

Before the sun rises over the Indian Ocean in the early hours of the morning, people begin to gather at the beachfront. The area attracts runners, cyclists, families, roller-skaters, skateboarders, surfers, hawkers and more – each using the space as their own. A community argues Montgomery (2013: 158) refers to 'groups of people who use the same media... or like a certain product, regardless of whether its members have actually met' and can be formed

when people feel a sense of belonging or form emotional attachments to other members or their spaces (Mehta, 2014) and want to spend time outdoors, exploring and connecting with their community (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019). Through their joint experiences and sense of belonging they connect with the city brand (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019) and can express their individuality. 'We need contact with nature. And most of all, we need not to be excluded. We need to feel some sort of equality' (Montgomery, 2013: 4).

The meaningful metrics include equality and inclusion; participation and voice; and diversity. The best practice case studies found a community centred approach (Probst, 2019), emotional connection (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2019) and a sense of belonging (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019) which all relate to the idea of community. People using the Durban beachfront vary in terms of their race, income, their reasons for being there and many will never engage in conversation – but they do share and use a space in common. When people share the same feelings and meanings, they feel a sense of belonging and are more eager to participate (Terttunen & Weitof, 2017).



Figure 38 - Emerging theme: The unspoken connection (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - The unspoken connection		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Optimist</i> 'Culturally it is a lot more diverse. I can go to different parts of the promenade and see completely different groups of people, which I think is awesome'. <i>The Runner</i> 'What I love about the Durban beachfront is that everyone can go there. Beggars walk there and a CEO could be walking beside him. There's no hierarchy in terms of status, race, religion, or anything. It's open to everyone, the ocean is for everyone. It's a space in Durban where everyone comes together, and it doesn't matter who you are or what you do'. <i>The Surfer</i> 'I think it's a space where there are so many different people and demographics and ages and it's just open there for anybody to use'.	Groups become a community when they feel a sense of belonging or form emotional attachments to other members or their spaces (Mehta, 2014) and by encouraging a community space, leaders could be said to have an inspired approach and demonstrate their higher purpose. Residents want to spend time outdoors, exploring and connecting with their community (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019) which demonstrates how a city can help promote positive feelings and helps to encourage healthy living and establish an emotional connection. A sense of belonging (Probst, 2019) allows users to express their individuality through being part of their community.	The Meaningful City metrics include equality and inclusion, which is demonstrated in the city through a multi-use space that isn't defined for any specific audience and open to all where they are able to participate and use their voice for self-expression, and the meaningful brand benefits include diversity. Access to the Durban beachfront is free (fair price) and is not limited. The space can be used for a multitude of activities. The area is used for running, cycling, skating, walking, swimming, surfing and much more offering a good quality experience, that delivers to everyone's needs and is a useful space where safe and responsible management helps with lifeguards, police, maintenance, and services.

Table 6 - Triangulation of data: The unspoken connection

Communities within a city may exist across different areas based on a variety of reasons, such as functionality, similar trades or uses or even cultural groups. Similarly, communities might exist online as Facebook groups or informal WhatsApp groups founded around similar interests. City-based communities are sometimes difficult to determine and define (Wolfe, 2021). Casual encounters, such as those which happen on the Durban beachfront, 'are just as important to belonging and trust as contact with family and close friends' (Montgomery, 2013: 1380). *The Optimist* says 'just being around people who were doing the same thing and just this awesome atmosphere on a beautiful day'.

Probst (2019) believes that a strong desire to belong forms the basis of what people stand for, and these communities are formed around shared emotion rather than demographics. Groups of people become a community when they feel a sense of belonging or form emotional attachments to other members or their spaces (Mehta, 2014).

The Optimist describes it as follows

'Culturally it is a lot more diverse. I can go to different parts of the promenade and see completely different groups of people, which I think is awesome. I often see people I know on the promenade. I think the promenade is for everyone in Durban. It's not designed to appeal to a certain group. It's for everyone who lives here and is very much a mixed audience; a family, walking the dogs, rich people, poor people. Really an amazing mix, and no one feels out of place.'

I think the nice thing about the Durban promenade is it almost does just feel like it's an open communal area for everyone. There are no designated spaces. If you want to go surf, you can. You don't have to be in a designated swimming area. I feel it's a very cool diverse location. It's a good representation of how I see Durban. A community where I can just feel like I'm part of it'.

The Optimist speaks about the diverse population and mixed community using the space, while *The Runner* enjoys the lack of judgement from people on the beachfront and describes it as follows,

'What I love about the Durban beachfront is that everyone can go there. Beggars walk there and a CEO could be walking beside him. There's no hierarchy in terms of status, race, religion, or anything. It's open to everyone, the ocean is for everyone. It's a space in Durban where everyone comes together, and it doesn't matter who you are or what you do. I don't like seeing people judged based on who they are, who you know, or how much money you make. So, I think it's cool that a beggar could walk along the promenade and feel safe, the CEO also feels safe and they just see each other and acknowledge each other even though they are coming from completely different places but sharing the same space.

There's like a community almost and you start seeing the same people every day and I think that's cool. You see the surfers, the runners, the kids with their parents and the cool Bike & Bean guys. You have to watch the cyclists though – they're always all over the show. There is a real sense of community on the beachfront, you even see the same beggars every day, the same cats, the same monkeys. It's a type of unspoken connection. You recognise them and they recognise you as well and having those same people there make it feel safer'.

Cities that provide spaces where people can feel more connected to others can help residents achieve happiness and meaningfulness (Standlee, 2018). *The Runner* mentions that she possibly is weary of the cyclists because she hasn't learnt to ride a bicycle yet but would love to. She often pauses briefly on her runs to capture moments of beauty that she enjoys sharing on her Instagram account. She recalls a particular morning that explains the idea of the unspoken community.

'We don't talk but we're all looking out for each other. I think we're all happy that we're sharing that same space. This man saw me on a day I was trying to chase the pigeons. I have a lot of photos of birds flying away with the sunrise behind them, and I was trying to get this perfect shot of the sunrise and the pigeons as they flew away. This man on the beach saw what I was trying to do, and he doesn't know me at all, yet he decides to help me – we never even spoke, he just ran through the pigeons seeing what I was trying to achieve,

just to help me, just for my photo, which accidentally ended up being a video and then he was gone. I never saw him again. I think Durban people are really warm and friendly. They would do something random like this just to help a stranger and ask nothing in return. We just have this unspoken connection. I hashtagged the post 'Durbanites' for a reason, because I don't see this happening in other cities'.

In a city that has a well-connected community, residents are generally able to adapt to difficult shifts in economy and tough times and outwardly appear more content (Montgomery, 2015). Well-designed open space systems encourage residents to use their outdoor spaces more willingly and do more than necessary day-to-day tasks and actively seek to socialise in those spaces, wanting to spend time outdoors, exploring and connecting with their community (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019). *The Surfer* met many of her friends on the beachfront for the first time. Casual interactions between people in the water helped bring her together with others. She explains

'You are almost comfortable to interact, especially if there's a mutual sport that you share, like surfing, it makes it easy to start a conversation. It's about connecting with like-minded people that enjoy the beachfront and a surf or a run, in a way, it's like trying to find more people that share the same hobbies or common interests'.

The Surfer enjoys that the Durban beachfront is a space people can enjoy for free...

'I think it's a space where there are so many different people and demographics and ages and it's just open there for anybody to use. You can either be lazy and sit on the beach or you can go surfing, you can go stand-up paddle boarding, or walk the dogs. I mean you can do that all without spending a cent and you leave healthier. You feel good. There's nothing better than actually swimming. That feeling after you've swum in the ocean, maybe it's the salt. You feel fresh or a little bit revived. It's really nice to see that people are actually using the beachfront for what it is there for and not just over the weekends'.

Discussion around the community of Durban was positive for the most part from the participants, but some interesting points around race were raised that are included in a later theme, while contemplating the future. Any space that appeals to a wide community will offer something different to the various people using it and each will visit the place to do something different from the next.

4.6.5 A different experience



Figure 39 - 'We're all just out here looking for sardines' The Doctor (Instagram.com, 2021)

The Public Space Index (Mehta, 2014) lists meaningful activities as one of their criteria for the assessment of the quality of open spaces looking specifically at useful spaces that support activities which are meaningful to users and support sociability. Mehta (2014: 59) argued that places become meaningful when they can offer activities that are 'symbolically and culturally meaningful' to residents and that help with sociability. Activities in the city don't feature in the Meaningful City metrics

but it could be argued that multiple Meaningful Brand benefits would link through; delivers, useful, fair prices, me happier, life satisfaction and diversity (Meaningful Brands, 2019).

If a city is to be considered meaningful, argues Baker (2019) it would need to be perceived as engaging and experiential, thus innovative and inspiring. 'The experience of meaningfulness is more likely to occur when a person becomes actively connected to a worthy object; that is, something or someone of value' (Yeoman, 2019: 468).

The number of public open spaces globally are being reduced as 'more places are privatised, gated or fenced, closed for renovation, and/or redesigned to restrict activities' which is

potentially harmful for places which were previously open and allowed for a variety of activities to suite a diverse audience (Low, Taplin, & Scheld, 2005: 1). Spaces which allow for diverse activities improve the individuals experience as ‘each person will perceive and enjoy it differently’ (Gehl Institute, 2016: 31) and Mehta (2014: 59) argues that ‘space becomes meaningful when it is useful’. Gehl (2007) echoes this by arguing that multi-used spaces are most valuable.

Low, Taplin, and Scheld (2005: 101) argue that beaches in urban areas allow for an intermingling of diverse populations ‘while engaging in a great variety of activities’. ‘Fun is not something most cities plan’ but by providing spaces that allow residents to have fun makes cities more loveable (Kageyama, 2011: 25). The experience of something unique allows residents to build trust in a brand and form an emotional connection and include elements of that brand into their own narrative (Escalas, 2004). ‘Diversity and uniqueness’ allow a city to compete for the attention of users (Pompe, 2017: 20).

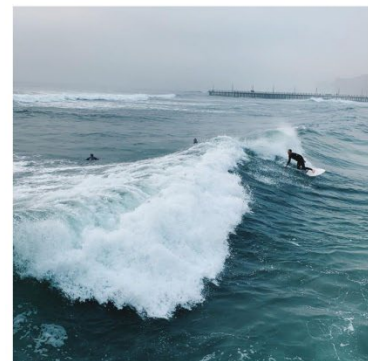


Figure 40 - Emerging theme: A different experience (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - A different experience		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Optimist</i> says 'it always feels different and part of me knows it will always be worth it'. <i>The Roller-skater</i> believes 'I'm definitely in a better space mentally when I've gone [to the beach] at least once a week'. <i>The Photographer</i> expresses that 'it's different every time'.	A unique value of good open spaces is widely mixed the possible uses, according to Gehl Institute (2016) and exposing oneself to different cultures, races and religions helps users become more tolerant and empathetic to others – helping build wider, more inclusive communities. A brand which inspires people to become more positive, or healthier, stronger, safer or happier and more connected (Standlee, 2018), and allows them to form an emotional bond with it (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013) is a meaningful one. Public spaces improve health through provision of physical activity (UN Habitat, 2020).	'The experience of meaningfulness is more likely to occur when a person becomes actively connected to a worthy object; that is, something or someone of value' (Yeoman, 2019: 468). If a city is to be perceived as meaningful, it would need to be perceived as engaging (life satisfaction) and experiential (new ideas), allowing it to be experienced as different, innovative and inspiring (me happier) (Baker, 2019). Brands that offer unique value and make a compelling difference are more purposeful (Neumeier, 2008).

Table 7 - Triangulation of data: A different experience

The Doctor has a job that gives her little time to do much else, but she makes sure that she takes lots of walks on the beach over weekends, if possible, with family or friends. She says 'It's a big part of my weekend because I do it every weekend. Even if it's just an hour or so on the beach, it does help me with my mood'.

If a city's brand personality is in line with an individual's personality, then residents will be inclined to feel more positive towards the city (Vollrath, 2019). The Durban beachfront allows access to the oceans and beaches but provides much more than that. The widely paved promenade allows for a variety of activities to suit a wide range of needs. *The Optimist* remarks

'I like the atmosphere in Durban where you can be intense for some of your day and then go somewhere and be completely chilled. It's a great place that still excites me. I run on the promenade normally once a week, sometimes twice and it's just a part of my weekly schedule. It always feels different and part of me knows it will always be worth it'.

The Surfer explains that she likes to post photos of the beachfront to encourage and show people how accessible the space is.

'I make it seem accessible and show them that it's there to enjoy. I feel like by posting about being at the beachfront, it may make it easier for somebody to go. If I can do it, so can they. Durban is such a nice place to surf, the perfect place to learn how to surf, the waves are nice and small, especially for beginners. Durban has so much to offer'.

The Roller-skater enjoys walks on the beach and she recently started roller-skating too, generally with groups of friends, some on roller-skates, others on penny boards. Her Instagram is filled with images of walking, roller-skating, swimming, deep conversations and dancing while making Tik Tok videos on the beach.

'I'm definitely in a better space mentally when I've gone [to the beach] at least once a week. I can go down to the beach for an hour without my whole day being gone. It's cool how you can be by the sea, but not get full of sand because of the way it's set up. I'm not a fan of sand. The ocean is definitely my happy place'.

The Inquirer uses the beach for swimming, running, connecting with friends, dining and walking and all the participants mentioned doing various combinations of activities on the beachfront, but *The Photographer* spoke of the widest variety of experiences having used the beachfront since childhood. He walks along the beachfront several times a week as part of his 'normal' routine, and always has one of his cameras at the ready to catch the perfect shot.

‘Some of them are just like, right place at the right time. You have so many other elements that change, the different sunrise, different people, different waves. It’s different every time. Constantly morphing, constantly changing’.

The Photographer mentioned cycling, skateboarding, body boarding, surfing, swimming, walking, exploring the canals, being out on a boat capturing record-breaking canoeists, whale watching, avoiding sharks, bird watching, drinking coffee and just generally enjoying being on the beachfront, occasionally with his father. Most of his Instagram posts are accompanied by facts, stories and information about Durban.

‘I love the history of Durban and South African history and I like just spreading that. If one person learns something about Durban, then great. People aren’t observant about their environment. They see the promenade as just the promenade and are just unknowledgeable about Durban’.

Although he describes Durban as his home and loves sharing information on his posts about the city and the places within it, *The Photographer* is in the process of leaving South Africa for Australia soon. The civil unrest in July 2021 is not the reason, but it has potentially sped up the plans for the move...

‘As far as my outlook on this country, as a living perspective and our day-to-day lives you won’t get better than this. Such an easy-going lifestyle. Weather is great, people are great. It’s getting to that point in my life where I need to concentrate a little more on the future. There was a quote by one of the filmmakers that described South Africans as always being resilient. But I don’t want to be described as resilient. I want to be described as happy and I have made the call to try find happiness in Australia. This will always be home. I will come back for holidays. I would never write off South Africa. I’m 100 percent a Durbanite. A South African. This country has got so much to offer. It’s just an unfortunate situation that we seem to be constantly finding ourselves at the bottom of the freaking barrel, and by no fault of the average man’.

The Runner pokes fun at Durbanites...

'I love Durban after the rain. It feels like it's washed away any problems of the previous day. A lot of people in Durban don't tend to want to go out if it's cold at all, well, below 20 degrees. So sometimes you feel like this whole promenade is just for you.

Your mental health is almost better when you come to the beach. Whatever is stressing you out. You can release it'.

If a brand inspires people to become more positive, or healthier, stronger, safer or happier and more connected (Standlee, 2018), and allows them to form an emotional bond with it (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013) it could be considered a meaningful one. *The Inquirer* always delights in describing a moment on the beachfront which he calls beautiful...

'I was riding a bicycle that day. It was a Wednesday around one in the afternoon. I stopped the biked because I could not believe what I was seeing. I so wanted to capture the moment with a photo but I never carried my phone with me back then. A young lady, most likely in her early twenties was in a beautiful, sequinned blue cocktail dress that shimmered in the sun as she moved. She almost looked as though she was dancing as she rode her skateboard along the promenade. I think it was the first time I'd noticed a girl riding a skateboard. The first and only time I've seen a girl in a dress on a skateboard. She looked so confident. So free. So out of place and yet so in place. She looked like she belonged. She looked free. I'm always grateful that I got to see that moment. I wish I had been able to photograph it'.

4.6.6 Feelings of gratitude



Figure 41 - 'A Saturday of waves and rainbows' The Photographer (Instagram.com, 2021)

Feelings of gratitude for access to a space were not expected by *The Inquirer* based on the literature, but during analysis, one can see how a feeling of gratitude could be compared to the personal benefits derived from the meaningful metrics; life easier, peace of mind, me happier and life satisfaction (Meaningful Brands, 2019) and in terms of the best practice case studies; a sense of belonging (Probst, 2019), inspired approach (Neumeier, 2005), promotes positive feelings (Standlee, 2018) and

emotional connection (Kageyama, 2019).

Gratitude can be shown to indicate 'measures of well-being' and demonstrate 'positive effect' and 'life satisfaction' (Cregg and Cheavens, 2020: 414). Kageyama (2011: 47) argues that it is the 'small and seemingly insignificant thing' that we appreciate most about our cities and that those small things we love often can makes the city feel more meaningful to us. When a city brand represents something authentic and unique, and residents of that city feel aligned to that brand because of their belief in that unique quality or authenticity, it results in increased civic consciousness and people begin to share their stories about the brand (Vollrath, 2019).

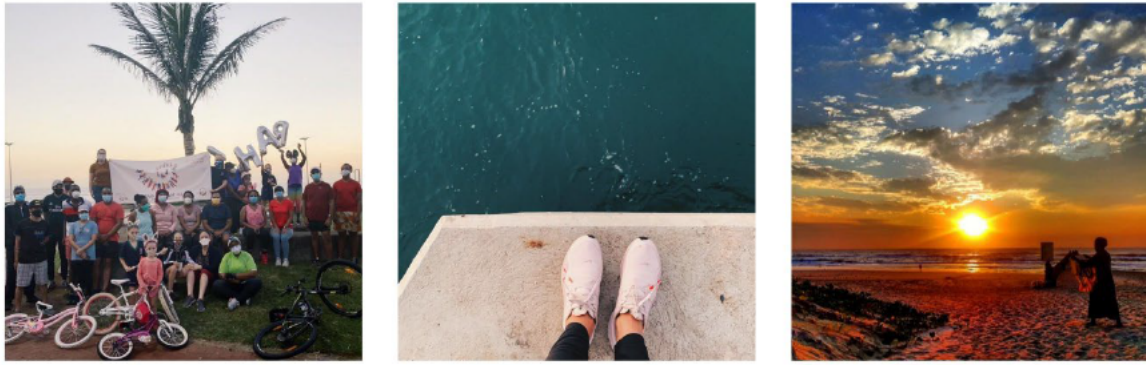


Figure 42 - Emerging theme: Feelings of gratitude (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - Feelings of gratitude		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Runner</i> expresses her gratitude, 'I just felt really lucky to have gone through the lockdown in Durban as opposed to any other city. We really need to be grateful and appreciate life'. <i>The Surfer</i> almost has a spiritual sense of her morning experiences and explains 'I think I'm in this space where, every time I'm at the beachfront and I look at the sunrise I think that's where you express your gratitude'.	Encouraging residents to express their individuality and allowing the cities to become a part of the resident's identities, allowing for self-expression, to be intertwined and linked to self (Escalas, 2004) demonstrates a higher purpose. Demonstrating gratitude towards the city indicates a sense of belonging, shows an emotional connection to the space and might be considered an inspired approach.	A desire for happiness and for a meaningful life, are two of the most significantly held goals to which people aspire (Baumeister et al., 2013). A city brand that allows for, encourages and provides spaces where people could feel connected to others, helps people achieve happiness and meaningfulness (Baumeister et al., 2013).

Table 8 - Triangulation of data: Feelings of gratitude

The beachfront forms an integral part of their lives and they expressed gratitude about living in a city where they had access to spaces such as the beachfront. *The Optimist* said

'I would occasionally come to the beach. There was a shift during the Covid period where I decided or started to realise or understand that the beach was

a lot more than I thought it was to me and now it's just become a normal part of my weekly schedule.

The first time coming back into the city was a weird feeling, I hadn't driven into the city for months. Just being around people who were doing the same thing and just this awesome atmosphere on a beautiful day. I genuinely was really grateful on that day. I started to feel almost optimistic, almost an excited feeling like something's getting back to how it used to be. We walked from here [Bike & Bean] to the new promenade and back – so we spent a long time on the beach'.

The Surfer does not want to take her access to the sunrise from the beachfront for granted after having had it removed during the lockdown period and *The Runner* believes that she found 'a new appreciation for where you lived' once being allowed back onto the beachfront. *The Runner* expressed it as follows,

'Us being allowed to exercise and having the beachfront. For me I just felt really lucky to have gone through the lockdown in Durban as opposed to any other city. We really need to be grateful and appreciate life. Appreciate each moment, appreciate the now. I feel like we, as people are always chasing this unachievable dream. I'm hoping that people will start to appreciate the little things around them and see beauty in everyday moments, the beauty in the mundane'.

During the lockdown *The Roller-skater* found herself posting photos from her times at the beach, her happy place, 'It was just like a reminder of being out in Durban and being together and just enjoying the new spaces that they created. That new boardwalk is so beautiful, and I think I was just longing for that again'.

The Surfer almost has a spiritual sense of her morning experiences and explains 'I think I'm in this space where, every time I'm at the beachfront and I look at the sunrise I think, that's where you express your gratitude. It's where I connect spiritually as well, just being able run, being able to see a sunrise. It's amazing'.

4.6.7 I love Durban



Figure 43 - 'Recent Durban Swell' The Photographer (Instagram.com, 2021)

When people love a brand, they tend to talk about it. They like to share the love. People are not likely to share the love for a brand unless it's meaningful to them. 'When love for a city is produced, that love in turn inspires and creates more love, nurturing a cycle that feeds itself' argues Kageyama (2011: 101), and when people love their city, they are less likely to leave it and become actively involved in defending and promoting their city and tend to recognise the significance of small acts,

like picking up litter because they want to do something for their community. When residents or visitors talk about loving a city, they cannot 'know or appreciate the totality of a city' but will love or hate specific places within the greater city around which they form their opinion (Kageyama, 2019: 6). City authorities talk about cities in a technical sense, but residents and visitors experience the city emotionally (Landry, 2008).

Swanson et al. (2017: 89) found that places, and more specifically, cities, are brands that people claim to love and can form real emotional attachments to. *The Optimist* says of the city 'I really do love Durban and the culture here that's been established'. Meaningful brands create a sense of belonging or a community around them allowing users to connect with the brand and each other through their joint experiences. The sense of belonging – echoed by Probst (2019); Meaningful Brands (2019) and Yeoman (2019) – allows users to express their individuality through being part of the community and the brand becomes a meaningful one. Residents love their cities because of qualities like beauty and social openness, as opposed to economic factors and facilities (Goodyear, 2010). When a resident feels like they belong in a city they 'talk about the city' (Vanolo, 2018: 67), and those connections establish brand loyalty, advocacy and engagement (Vollrath, 2019).

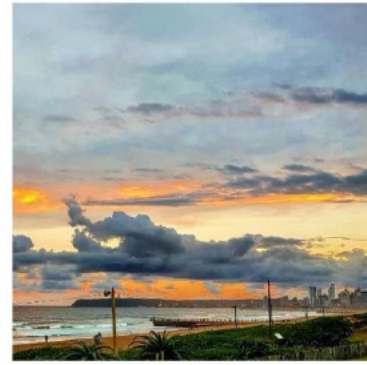


Figure 44 - Emerging theme: I love Durban (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - I love Durban		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Runner</i> perceives the beachfront as home, and 'I title a lot of them 'home' because they feel like home. As much as I don't live on the beachfront, I think Durban just gives me that homey vibe'. <i>The Roller-skater</i> shares 'I really want to be here and really love being here. I couldn't think of moving anywhere'. <i>The Optimist</i> says of the city 'I really do love Durban and the culture here that's been established'.	Emotional connection – Swanson et al. (2017: 89) found that places, and more specifically, cities, are brands that people claim to love and can form real emotional attachments to. Swanson et al. (2017: 94) found that participants of their study commonly indicated that places had 'become part of their lives' which indicated attachments to a place in addition to them expressing love for the place. Consumer communities to which people desire to belong (Probst, 2019) are formed around shared emotion and joint experiences (Mehta, 2014).	Residents love their cities because of qualities like beauty and social openness, as opposed to economic factors and facilities (Goodyear, 2010), indicating relation to all of the personal benefits of meaningful brands; Life easier, Peace of mind, Me happier, Life satisfaction, New ideas. When a user forms an emotional bond with a brand and they can no longer distinguish the brand from its values, then the brand has achieved a meaningful position in their lives (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013).

Table 9 - Triangulation of data: I love Durban

The Runner titles many of her beachfront photos as 'home'.

'I title a lot of them 'home' because they feel like home. As much as I don't live on the beachfront, I think Durban just gives me that homey vibe. I used to travel quite a bit before Covid, and the first thing I would do when I flew back is go to the beach. You just have to... you start to crave it'.

The Roller-skater hasn't always lived in Durban and relocated here a few years prior and now says,

'It took me a good two to three years to settle, but now I really want to be here and really love being here. I couldn't think of moving anywhere. I love posting photos that are true to the moment, a beautiful picture of the sea, or just the city behind me looks so cool, and just a moment of real life. Whenever I've wanted to celebrate something, make a good memory with my friends, I connect it with the sea'.

Swanson et al. (2017: 94) found that participants of their study commonly indicated that places had 'become part of their lives' which indicated attachments to a place in addition to them expressing love for the place. *The Optimist* tags many of his Instagram posts with #ilovedurban and explains his reasoning.

'There's a page called I love Durban. They would often share posts by people sharing their excitement and joy about what they're doing in Durban. But I genuinely do love it. I really do love Durban and the culture here that's been established. From my perspective it's a really great place. It still excites me'.

The Doctor speaks fondly of her connection to the ocean and that plays a big part in why she calls Durban home. She jokes about not having been able to find the sardines despite the media frenzy surrounding the annual arrival of the fish. She says of the city...

'I just thought, it's quite beautiful. This is the city we live in, and it's just quite a beautiful place. It makes me happy to be able to see the beauty in the everyday things'.

The Photographer describes Durban as home even though he plans to emigrate, but says of the beachfront, 'It's stunning down here. It's beautiful. Durban is a special place, weather's good, all the time, people are friendly'.

Words like ‘beautiful’ were used to describe Durban and the views around the beachfront by most of the participants, except for *The Surfer*. She expressed love for the city, because it wasn’t perfect. She enjoyed that aspects of the city are less than ideal.

‘Durban has so much to offer, and I do love it, but I think I like the fact that Durban is a little bit, like, not as pretty as Cape Town. If you look at the beachfront, it’s a little like, dirtier. I like that because life’s not perfect. Cape Town looks like it has a filter on it all of the time, while Durban is just not that perfect, especially when you are in the surf, and you look at the promenade and Addington hospital – all dilapidated – but everything is beautiful in its own way. We do work-life balance really well. We have good weather, especially now in winter. There is a sense of calmness that Durban offers. I think we have a very healthy, balanced lifestyle where you work really hard, but you have the opportunity to just like, chill. It’s affordable. Nothing is out of reach. I really appreciate the imperfection of the Durban beachfront because it’s not like, pretty. We used to call it Durtbin, because it is a little dirty, but the beachfront does look better than it did a few years ago. Cape Town always looks perfect, and Durban is not like that, it’s way more relaxed. It’s not pretentious. I think that’s what I appreciate’.

4.6.8 Contemplating the future



Figure 45 - '5am klub' The Surfer (Instagram.com, 2021)

Meaning often involves an understanding of life beyond the present by integrating one's future (and past) into an idea of what could be (Baumeister et al., 2013: 506). Narrative inquiry allows an engagement with stories about place that allow access to a 'desired or feared future(s)' argue Lichrou et al. (2017: 168) and meaning often involves an understanding of life beyond the present by integrating one's future (and past) into an idea of what could be (Baumeister et al., 2013: 506).

Cities focusing on expansion of green areas or procedures help residents create a positive outlook for the future (Gulsrud, 2014).

Speaking about their futures in the city brought up discussion on litter and the need to solve the ongoing issue. The Gehl Institute (2016) argues that for public places to be successful they need to demonstrate ongoing representation from local politicians and adequate representation of various stakeholders including the community to preserve or expand the versatility of the space and encourage ongoing investment and adequately demonstrate care and maintenance of the local space. Kageyama (2011: 7) argues that it is the residents that make up the city and that through small actions, like throwing a 'cigarette butt onto the street, we diminish our community' or build the community through equally small but positive actions.

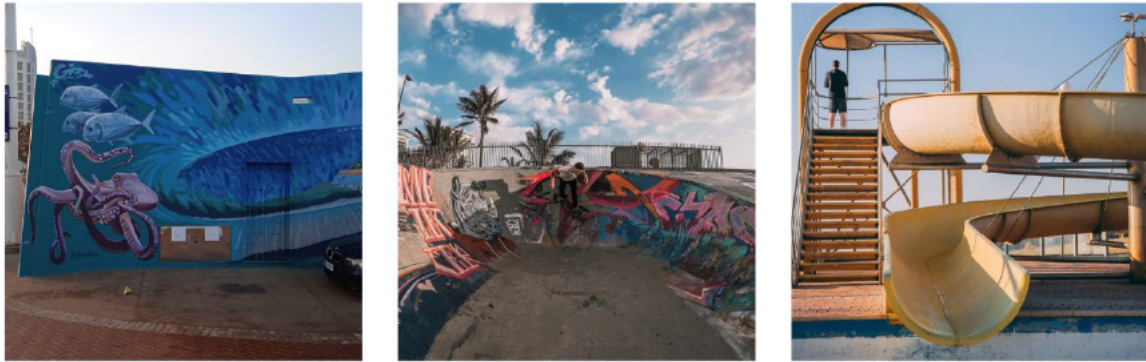


Figure 46 - Emerging theme: Contemplating the future (Instagram.com, 2021)

Triangulation of data: Theme - Contemplating the future		
Emerging theme (From narrative inquiry)	Best practice findings (From case studies)	Meaningfulness (Meaningful City / Brands)
<i>The Runner</i> expressed her opinion about the area ‘I think what is sad about running on that stretch of beach is just seeing the litter’. <i>The Doctor</i> would love to see a ‘government driven initiative to take pride in our beaches and keep them clean’.	Concerns of residents about the future indicate their sense of belonging and the need for a more functional approach to maintain the area which could involve a community approach that would allow opportunities for enrichment which could help promote positive feelings. Through the design of the space which encourages healthy living and self-expression the residents connect to it emotionally.	Meaning can be found thinking of future possibilities argue Baumeister et al. (2013: 506) which represent the personal benefits of the meaningful brands; life easier, peace of mind, me happier and life satisfaction. 55% of consumers believe that brands are more important than governments in helping create a better future.

Table 10 - Triangulation of data: Contemplating the future

Recently the management of the Durban beachfront in terms of maintenance and security has been shifted to a division of Bidvest, according to *The Photographer*. An area such as the Durban beachfront, and any public space for that matter, which has a multitude of people utilising it, is difficult to maintain. With literally thousands of people on the beachfront on any given day, bins need to be constantly emptied and the promenade swept. The area is

also prone to strong winds which often blow over the bins. The homeless move along the beachfront going through what is left behind seeking a meal, someone's leftovers, or anything of value. Monkeys and street cats also often raid the bins. Litter in the area is a concern, especially as much of it ends up in the ocean. *The Runner* expressed much concern about the litter.

'I think what is sad about running on that stretch of beach is just seeing the litter, seeing all the brands that make this litter and knowing that I am also part of the problem. Certain brand names seem to be more apparent on that stretch. On the beaches you are sometimes a bit afraid of what you might step on if you're barefoot because of the litter. It makes you so aware of the pollution in the ocean seeing it on the Durban beachfront all the time. You start panicking a bit, because, I mean, what are we doing? Where does all this go?

I'd love to see more beach clean-ups by Durbanites and the municipality. They have them more Durban North side, but I haven't really seen them happening on the Durban beachfront which is sometimes in a bad condition with all the rubbish there'.

The Optimist described the constantly visible litter on the Durban beachfront as 'heart-breaking' and that 'people are just being selfish and they're not really looking after their place. The Doctor added that she's aware of community initiatives to clean up the beachfront from time to time, but that she would love to see a 'government driven initiative to take pride in our beaches and keep them clean'.

The Runner remarked about the newly painted mural by local artist Giffy on the south facing wall of Pirates Lifesaving Club.

'I really love art, and there is some already, but I'd love to see more art. Local artists. They just recently painted that wall. I think Giffy is the artist. That's a beautiful mural of the ocean. I love that about the beachfront, and that it's a space where local artists can go and express themselves. I'd love to see more of that in the future. Maybe some night markets once it's safe to do so. More

local stuff, food markets showing local designers, local artists from all walks of life’.

Kageyama (2011: 109) notes that cities should encourage ‘positive graffiti’ by offering sanctioned spaces for artists to express themselves as this serves as ‘persistent reminders’ to residents that their ‘city believes in art, creativity and fun’.

In response to *The Runners* mention of art on the beachfront, the conversation shifted to a discussion around Andries Botha’s (a South African artist) elephant sculptures that were near the Warwick Street junction at the entrance to the city have been repeatedly subject to vandalism and will be relocated to the Durban beachfront near to the underpass from Moses Mabhida Stadium (Comins, 2021). The sculptures are a much-valued installation by the city and moving them to the beach will allow for a wider audience to appreciate and engage with them. In Sydney (Australia) an annual outdoor sculpture exhibition on Bondi Beach titled ‘Sculpture by the Sea’ takes place every summer and attracts over half a million visitors who meander through the landscape to enjoy the custom-made, site-specific artworks (Grishin, 2015).



Figure 47 - Vandalised elephant sculptures (Photo: Bhekazi Ernest Ngcobo, 2021)

Although planning on emigrating, *The Photographer* believes some changes to the layout on the beachfront could help solve the current Ushaka Marine World financial crisis. The

aquarium and waterpark facility are currently battling to stay afloat financially and has had to ask the municipality for assistance, citing Covid as the reason for their poor performance. *The Photographer* believes a redesign could help solve the issue.

‘My theory is that Ushaka should be built parallel with the sea especially with so much unused space, can you imagine dining at any of the Ushaka restaurants looking out over the ocean’.

When Suncoast Casino and Entertainment World recently extended their facilities, their new extensions embraced the connection to the beachfront, with many of their restaurants open to the promenade, which was different to the original buildings which had an internal focus.



Figure 48 - Suncoast extension open to promenade (IOL. 2021).

The Doctor feels there are already too many man-made facilities on the beachfront, and although she enjoys that she has access to the ocean because of the beachfront, she would rather future development was limited. *The Surfer*, currently single, talks about future family plans.

‘I’m very conscious of the fact that if I do end up staying in Durban for the rest of my life, it’s important that my future daughter or son will surf, or skateboard or be on the beach and in the water. I definitely would want to raise a family as close to the beach as I could.’

I'm somebody who uses the beachfront often and I think people need to utilise it more, like I do. People need a space to get out. The beachfront is an easy way to do that.

I do wish there was more of a vibe in terms of restaurants. I find it bizarre that there are never good restaurants at the beach. I remember getting the best burgers on the beachfront as a kid. There should be more places like Surfriders.

We need to make sure the rickshaws and the ladies selling pineapples are always there because it wouldn't be the same without them, and wouldn't it be nice if they invested more into supporting this element'.

Beaches from Blue Lagoon to Suncoast Casino were the non-white beaches during the Apartheid government regime. The rest of the beachfront were the white beaches. *The Inquirer* has noticed that since Bike & Bean opened north of Suncoast, there is a more pronounced mixing of the races on that beach. Certain areas seem to still be attracting different races and *The Optimist* is of the opinion that...

'This sort of seclusion is happening on certain beaches. If you go to Ushaka Beach its more of a white community gathering there, and then North and South Beach are more African. I do think people gravitate towards those they are more familiar with, but it would be nice to see more of a mix happening. It's especially on the beaches, not the promenade, that is mixed. I think places like Bike & Bean are great because they attract active people of all races. It's a great gathering space'.

4.7 Conclusion

Cities, argue Kageyama (2011: 112), 'are a shared story' or narrative with which residents can identify and are in turn shaped by that narrative. If a city wants to increase the love shown towards it amongst residents, then the city should begin with the narratives that already exist and build upon those (Kageyama, 2011). Grenni, Horlings and Soini (2020: 1360) argue that place narratives allow for 'continuity and change, values and identity'.

On conducting the interviews and listening to the participants sharing their stories, in order to document their lived experience, the inquirer became increasingly concerned that the selection of the area of study was less than ideal because the participants all spoke about their connection to the ocean more than the open space.

During the reflection and analysis of the transcripts, in order to dig deeper to reveal the hidden reasons behind those connections, the inquirer came to the realisation that the area selected was the ideal area to choose because of the mixed-use, multi-functional nature of the space (a useful space supporting multiple activities is one of the five key dimensions of public space (Mehta, 2014)), which provided residents with the opportunity to establish a connection to the ocean, through the area of the Durban beachfront. Montgomery (2013: 110) argues that ‘touching or viewing nature makes people feel good’. Other beach areas, such as Umhlanga beach to the north have promenades that are paved and offer facilities, but the users of the Durban beachfront prefer this space. It is the reason they are sharing photos of the area and met with the criteria to become participants. Boy and Uitermark (2017) argue that people tag places to show others that they were there.

The ‘Meaningful Brands Global Report 2021’ by the Havas Group (Meaningful Brands, 2021: 40) shows that ‘consumers expect brands to help in decreasing life’s stressors’ by making consumers’ lives easier, giving them peace of mind, helping them feel truly happy and helping them feel content in their daily lives’. The residents clearly indicate happiness and a sense of comfort or wellbeing when talking about the area, calling it their ‘happy place’ or ‘home’. The beachfront helps them destress, relax, and enjoy what the city of Durban has to offer them. People love places because of an emotional connection with it, ‘often a small and seemingly insignificant thing that makes us smile’ (Kageyama, 2011: 47).

While doing research for the literature and methodology sections of this study the inquirer understood the idea that a narrative study would involve looking at a particular phenomenon at a particular time and in a particular place (Clandinin, 2007) – but only once the inquirer began to engage with the narrative inquiry did they fully grasp the extent to which this is true. The findings and themes relate so specifically to the context within which the study occurs, that even expanding the thinking to the wider D’MOSS area – rather than

the beachfront focus – could result in different answers. This in no way diminishes the findings and ideas that are generated from the study.

Yeoman (2019) proposed 5 metrics by which a Meaningful City could be examined, Meaningful Lives and Work, Equality and Inclusion, Governance and Leadership, Participation and Voice and Smart and Sustainable. Although none of the emerging themes directly related to any of these particularly closely in terms of wording, it could be argued that they could be interpreted in different ways. The Durban beachfront is not giving residents a place to have meaningful work necessarily, but through the emotional connection (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2019) with the space and their experiences of freedom, escape, happiness, and as such it adds unique value to them in terms of a meaningful life which is further discussed in Chapter 5.

Ideas around equality and inclusion surfaced in several of the emerging themes and discussions around ‘feelings of safety’, ‘a sense of freedom’, ‘the unspoken connection’, ‘feeling grateful’ and ‘contemplating the future’. For the most part, the residents spoke of inclusive feelings (Gehl Institute, 2016) around community on the beachfront. It was *The Optimist* who raised concerns around seeing apparent racial divides happening on the beach post the civil unrest in Durban in July 2021. But he did note this it was specific to the crowds visible on the beaches and not on the promenade itself. The promenade is a space which allows for easy movement. It leads from the roads to the beaches, from the harbour mouth to Umgeni River mouth. It’s not a place that encourages staying in one place. It’s a transitory space.

The analysis presented in this chapter documents narratives of Durban residents and explores their **perceptions, opinions** and **lived experience** of the Durban beachfront and thereby D’MOSS. Residents have shared their feelings of being safe on the Durban beachfront and how rare that feels for them in a city where crime is almost expected. Residents have delighted in sharing about how freeing it feels to be able to access the ocean and the beaches through the Durban beachfront. The residents proudly share their passion for early mornings on the beaches to see the sunrise. They take comfort in being able to walk alongside a beggar and CEO with no judgement. They delight in partaking in various activities for their health, their mental health, and their general happiness. The residents

expressed their love of their city, their home and shared how grateful they were to live in this city. As each spoke about their futures, all but one believed their futures belonged to the city, and the one that didn't see his future in the city believes strongly in keeping his past grounded here permanently. City assets such as 'natural environment; parks and open spaces; diversity of people; safety; economic prosperity; variety' help shape the opinions and perceptions of people (Resonanceco.com, 2017).

If being a meaningful brand means that the brand helps alleviate stress, helps make lives easier, provides peace of mind and allows users to feel truly happy and content, then a meaningful city surely does the same by making residents 'lives easier, giving them peace of mind, helping them feel truly happy and helping them feel content in their daily lives' (Meaningful Brands, 2021: 40). In Chapter 5 the findings from the narrative inquiry and literature review are used to speak to the research questions, in order to frame and understand the study by exploring the potential role a metropolitan open space system might play in building meaningful city brands and suggests further studies on this topic.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion, Interpretation and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Findings from the literature review concluded that a key component of understanding meaningful city brands is the emotional connection people have with places - as suggested by Hsu (2016); Thellefsen and Sørensen (2013); Kageyama (2011 & 2019); and echoed by Swanson et al. (2017). Through the analysis detailed in the previous chapter the inquirer explored those connections through residents' lived experience, using narrative - a form of research that places its focus on interpreting and understanding meaning (Clandinin, 2007: 9). This final chapter is a discussion of the findings from the literature and the narratives which explored perceptions of safety, a sense of freedom, feelings of gratitude, opinions about mornings in Durban and the different experiences of being part of an unspoken community of Durbanites who love their city.

The discussion presented in this chapter seeks to explore the role of a metropolitan open space system, such as D'MOSS, can play in building a meaningful city brand amongst residents and how strategic planners involved in building the city brand, can position the brand strongly in the minds of a local, national and international audience. The chapter begins by critically reflecting on the research questions and objectives and how they have been explored during the research process, and how the data gathered might be interpreted to better understand the role a metropolitan open space system can play in building meaningful city brands. The chapter then includes a discussion around the study's limitations and potential future studies around the topic before the concluding remarks.

5.2 A critical reflection on the research questions/objectives

5.2.1 What are the principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands?

The research objective of this question was to develop an understanding of the principles in building meaningful city brands by reviewing best practice examples, such as cities utilising

metropolitan open space systems and other relevant examples. In the literature review and through best practice case studies looking at Sydney, New York and Vancouver, several principles underlying the building of meaningful city brands were explored. Findings from the review indicated that meaningful city brands need to demonstrate a **higher purpose** (Aaker, 2015); encourage a **sense of belonging** (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019); demonstrate a **functional and community centred approach** (Probst, 2019); demonstrate an **inspired approach** (Neumeier, 2005); offer a **unique value** (Neumeier, 2005; Enslin, 2016); allow **opportunities for enrichment** (Standlee, 2018); **promote positive feelings** amongst residents and tourists (Standlee, 2018); **encouraging healthy living** (Standlee, 2018); allow opportunities for residents and visitors to create an **emotional connection** (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Kageyama, 2011 & 2019); encourage residents to express their individuality and allow the cities to become a part of the residents identities, allowing for **self-expression**, to be **intertwined** and **linked to self** (Escalas, 2004); **provide opportunities to delight and express individuality** (Smith, 2014); and demonstrate their **groundedness** (Rosethorn, 2018).

The principles were then used to explore how a metropolitan open space system could contribute to building meaningful city brands through the question.

5.2.2 How could a metropolitan open space system contribute to building meaningful city brands?

The objective in answering this question was to explore the role a metropolitan open space system can play in building a meaningful city brand. Through the exploration of the literature and by reviewing best practice case studies looking at Sydney, New York, and Vancouver the connection between metropolitan open space systems and meaningful city brands was explored.

Place branding occurs when the value of a space and its various assets are cohesively presented as a narrative (Grenni et al., 2020). Mehta (2014: 59) argues that ‘space becomes meaningful when it is useful’ and Kageyama (2011) argues that it is often the small details and experiences that lead to emotional connections and become meaningful. Although the

connection between place branding and meaning have been demonstrated in this study, there are noticeable gaps in the link 'between spatial planning and place branding' note Grenni et al. (2020: 1356). Ashworth, Kavaratzis and Warnaby (2015) argue that the various stakeholders involved in a place need to find ways of working together to build meaning for a place brand. By aligning people's expectations of a city brand with lived experience a city brand could 'maximise positive place experience' (Ashworth et al., 2015: 4).

Campelo (2015: 57) argues that the places can achieve meaning when interactions are 'developed between people and the surrounding environment' and it is therefore important that those interactions with their environment are positive ones. Braiterman (2011: 70) asserts that 'interconnected green spaces' help people 'connect with each other and nature'. A metropolitan open space system connects spaces and places between the buildings. If the spaces between buildings, and the parks and the streets are not taken care of – it can appear that the city does not take care of its people (Gehl, 2011), but by focusing attention on these spaces, a city can effectively demonstrate its intentions towards its residents.

Access to open space and the natural environment should be a 'constant experience' argues Braiterman (2011: 78) as beautiful parks, pathways, and connections, inspire residents to care, and help nurture feelings of safety within the place (Standlee, 2018). People can be encouraged to spend time outdoors connecting with their community and exploring where areas are designed to encourage physical activity, with interesting stops along the way (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019).

As much as a meaningful brand needs to be meaningful in every aspect of everything it does – it is unlikely that a city could ever meet every need, of every person. Constantine and Miller (2017) argue that personal wellbeing is the most significant driver of meaningfulness, surpassing the collective wellbeing. The city needs to connect with individuals and improve their levels of happiness. And in order to be considered a meaningful brand, a city would need to demonstrate through action and commitment that it has the best intentions of improving its residents' lives and enabling them to do so through key projects and visible initiatives. One such visible initiative and key project could be a well-designed metropolitan

open space system which would allow the residents of the city to feel as though they belong to and form an integral part of the city as much as the city forms an integral part of them. The open space system should inspire the residents – who in turn – should love those spaces and want to care for them.

5.2.3 How can D'MOSS contribute to and add unique value in the building of Durban as a meaningful city brand?

The objective behind this research question was to gain an understanding of the role a metropolitan open space system could play in building Durban as a meaningful city brand and is discussed further in the next section.

5.3 Interpretation: The potential role a metropolitan open space system can play and the implications for strategic planners

The study set out to explore the principles behind a meaningful city brand by exploring best practice case studies and the narratives of a sample of residents from Durban and its metropolitan open space system with the objective of gaining an understanding of how strategic planners involved in building the city brand, can position the brand strongly in the minds of both a local, national and international audience. Any discussion of cities and the varying communities within them revolve around ideas of ‘authenticity, culture, character and uniqueness’ and are entirely dependent on the context and circumstance of the individual’s experience (Wolfe, 2021: xiii).

UN Habitat (2020) argues that strategic planners of cities need to focus on the maintenance of public space as a multi-functional connected urban system given the rapid growth of cities and increased demands on cities due to urbanisation and that for a city to be considered a healthy one it should be providing physical opportunities for social engagement and green spaces which can be utilised for that engagement. Through D’MOSS, the city of Durban has an ample network of available green space in the form of parks, roadways, verges and areas such as the Durban beachfront. As has been shown in the research presented in the study, the Durban beachfront allows for such engagement in a safe environment that is equally accessible and utilised by the residents of the city, but as mentioned by some of the participants of the study, their feelings of safety are limited to that area alone.

The narratives presented in Chapter 4 explored the way in which Durban residents think (their perceptions), their views and beliefs (opinions), and how their day-to-day lives play out (lived experience). Participants of the study shared their feelings on safety and how rare it is to feel safe in this country, they delighted in sharing their perceptions of freedom awarded them by a visit to the beachfront. They shared their passion for early mornings and the sunrise and expressed joy and hope about the mixed community using the space, feeling happier for being able to access a space that helped them move towards their fitness goals, their mental health, and their general happiness. Participants of the study expressed love of

their city, calling it their home, and spoke of gratitude towards the city. As each spoke about their futures, all but one believed their futures belonged in this city, and the one that didn't see his future in the city believed strongly in keeping his past grounded in Durban.

Between starting this research and finalising it, Durban and the world have experienced major shifts and challenges. Most notably on a global scale the sudden spread and reaction to the Covid-19 virus has forever changed many things. Lockdown restrictions were put in place that limited movement, access and use of many areas – most noticeably within the context of this study open spaces and the Durban beachfront. In addition to this, amidst the roll out of South Africa's vaccination program, in July 2021, Durban became caught up in civil unrest. 'What may have started as a backlash to the incarceration last week of former president Jacob Zuma has evolved into a full-blown, nasty, violent spectre of greed and indifference' (Erasmus, 2021). Besides having obvious effects on participants and the interview process, these events have helped to highlight both positive and negative attributes of the cities and the communities we are part of.

During the civil unrest shops were looted and violence erupted across various areas within the city. Residents were encouraged to stay at home, in some areas of the city residents had to barricade themselves in their homes. Transport, delivery and supply of goods and food was interrupted. In the wake of the unrest after the deployment of the South African National Defence Force, residents were unable to purchase basic food goods, while those with access 'panic' bought everything available, further compounding the problem. Almost immediately community groups – which had been brought together to protect each other during the rioting – began working together to help distribute food and aid with clean-up efforts. *The Runner* describes it as, 'I think what's great about Durbanites is, we bounce back so quickly. We went through this horrible experience, and immediately, we were all about - let's see how we can help. Let's see how we can make it better and complete strangers began helping each other'. As destructive as the unrest was to the South African spirit, it quickly evolved into something else, something better which echoes the arguments of Montgomery (2015: 2) that a community which is well connected is generally more content and 'more resilient in hard times' and is better able to deal with unexpected challenges.

If nothing else the civil unrest did highlight the importance of knowing one's neighbours and having a network of people that one can rely on, and trust, in tough times. *The Optimist* shared his views that he thought 'it was encouraging to see the outcome after that, and just how quickly people actually responded in a positive way'. Residents were able to partake in activities where they could help others, help clean up, distribute food or share what they had and such an emotionally compelling experience within a city helped them feel significant and did enable them to increase meaningfulness in their lives through that engagement (Yeoman, 2019). The civil unrest did highlight once again how across South Africa, spaces, services, education, health services and much more are not yet equally distributed, because cities were racially segregated (Venter et al. 2020).

The original objectives of D'MOSS as set out in 1989 included environmental conservation, biodiversity and 'amenity, recreation, trail building, education and community participation' (Wheatley, 1996: 11). Contribution to the city brand was not an original objective, but urban environments across the globe are improving vitality through the reintroduction of plant life and public open spaces (Braiterman, 2011). 'Nature has to be part of your life. It has to be part of your daily habitat and routine' and has to be 'integrated right into the urban fabric' (Montgomery, 2013: 121) and public open spaces have the opportunity of bringing the benefits of nature back to the residents echoes Woolley (2003). 'Touching or viewing nature makes people feel good' (Montgomery, 2013: 110).

Metropolitan open space systems are created to protect and potentially expand ecologically sensitive areas through corridor connections that physically connected isolated pockets (parks, fields, rivers, gardens, beaches and ecologically sensitive spaces) together. The current eThekwin spatial development plan is driven by the principle of being connected – physically, socially and economically through connected open space (eThekwin Municipality, 2018). The creation of connected green space within cities, argues Braiterman (2011), helps benefit both people and the environment by providing numerous functional benefits, including cleaner water and air, improving the quality of life, and providing much needed spaces that allow people to interact and socialise with each other and nature. When a place feels comfortable and safe it enables people to develop trust and the more trust people have, the better they will behave towards the city and others and the more empathy

residents will feel to their fellow residents, as cities are shared projects and spaces (Montgomery, 2015).

‘Good public space is responsive, democratic and meaningful’ argues Mehta (2014: 53) and suggests five key dimensions in evaluating the quality of public space; inclusiveness (ability to participate with ease), meaningful activities (useful space that supports activities which are meaningful to users and supports sociability), comfort (familiarity, people, weather, physical conditions, convenience), safety (isolated from traffic, eyes on the street/space, perceptions), and pleasurability (high levels of spatial quality and sensory complexity). Using these key dimensions to evaluate a metropolitan open space system such as D’MOSS in its entirety would rank D’MOSS very poorly as many of the areas included are the connections (including roads, rail, pathways etc.) and conservation areas. Only specific locations within the network are traditional public spaces, such as the Durban beachfront, Durban Botanic Gardens, Kranskloof Nature Reserve etc. Green open spaces ‘often play an important role in city marketing and green branding in particular’, where green is used as an opportunity for the creation of city and sense branding but to make a meaningful contribution to city branding it is imperative that they link up to a city-wide system (Konijnendijk, 2010: 5).

Green city branding is a tool for city leaders to promote their cities promising better quality of life and sustainable development argues Gulsrud (2014). Green place branding can involve both environmental policies (climate change, sustainable development, reduced carbon emissions), and green spaces (increasing urban vegetation and helping improve the quality of life) (Gulsrud, 2015). Green positioning strategies combining functional attributes and emotional benefits create a positive effect on the attitude towards the place brand (Hartmann, Apaolaza Ibáñez & Forcada Sainz, 2005).

Metropolitan open space systems are integral to the fabric of a city and represent the connections between spaces and places. Beautiful parks, pathways, and connections inspire residents to care, and help nurture feelings of safety (Standlee, 2018). Outdoor areas that encourage physical activity, with interesting stops along the way, help a city demonstrate that it cares for the health and sociability of its residents. Roads that are designed to give pedestrians easy passage through the traffic encourage walking. In cities with well-designed

open space systems, residents utilise the outdoor spaces willingly for more than their necessary day-to-day tasks but will actively seek to socialise in those spaces. They want to spend time outdoors, exploring and connecting with their community (Smith, 2020; Probst, 2019). *The Photographer* visits the beachfront several mornings a week as part of his routine and says, 'you don't get a better place to come spend your morning' and *The Optimist* says, 'part of me always knows that it's going to be worth it'.

Emerging themes from the narratives of residents revealed feelings of safety (*The Runner* remarked that they felt safer being outdoors and alone), a sense of freedom (*The Doctor* perceived the area as 'freeing'), different experiences (*The Roller-skater* said 'I'm definitely in a better space mentally when I've gone at least once a week'). Enjoying different experiences and the morning light may have more to do with the ocean than the space because 'people who live next to the ocean report being happier than those who don't' (Montgomery, 2013: 33), but it is through the provision of a safe place to access the ocean that the beachfront delivers meaningfulness to the residents. The eThekweni (Durban Metropolitan) Long Term Development Plan (eThekweni Municipality, 2018: 1) envisions the city as 'the safe, vibrant and accessible; literal and symbolic centre of eThekweni'.

Residents of a city should feel like they belong there (Probst, 2019; Meaningful Brands, 2019; Yeoman, 2019) and the city and its spaces should form a part of their identity as much as they are a part of the city's identity (Yeoman, 2019; Swanson et al., 2017) and a metropolitan open space system can help residents feel as though they belong there and are a part of the city's identity. In describing her Instagram photos, *The Runner* says, 'I title a lot of them 'home' because they feel like home. As much as I don't live on the beachfront, I think Durban just gives me that homey vibe'. Residents form an emotional bond (Thellefsen & Sørensen, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Standlee, 2018; Kageyama, 2019) with their city and feel positive about the place and their place within it, believing that their life is better, healthier and happier for being there because of the open spaces within the metropolitan open space system. *The Doctor* talks about Durban 'I just thought, it's quite beautiful. This is the city we live in, and it's just quite a beautiful place'. *The Optimist* says 'I really do love Durban and the culture here that's been established. From my perspective it's a really great place. It still excites me'. The narratives explored the resident's emotional connection with

the beachfront and expressed their love for the city through feelings about the space. The context was in discussion about the beachfront and may not apply to the city. 'We cannot know or appreciate the totality of a city, but we know and love or hate places within that construct' (Kageyama, 2019: 6).

To be considered a meaningful brand, a city would need to demonstrate through action and commitment that it has the best intentions of improving its residents' lives and enabling them to do so through key projects and visible initiatives. The residents of the city would need to feel as though they belong to and form an integral part of the city as much as the city forms an integral part of them. The city should inspire the residents – who in turn – should love their city back and want to care for the city as much as the city does them. Kageyama (2019: 94) argues that when a city provides residents with great open spaces that allow for fun activities and 'beautiful environs... people will feel included and loved by their city'. *The Surfer* expressed 'Durban has so much to offer, and I do love it' and *The Photographer* says of the city, 'It's beautiful. Durban is a special place, weather's good, all the time, people are friendly'. *The Runner* describes it as follows, 'What I love about the Durban beachfront is that everyone can go there. Beggars walk there and a CEO could be walking beside him. There's no hierarchy in terms of status, race, religion, or anything. It's open to everyone, the ocean is for everyone. It's a space in Durban where everyone comes together, and it doesn't matter who you are or what you do'.

If one had to imagine the possibility of an entire metropolitan open space system demonstrating all of the qualities of the beachfront, a space where residents feel safe, comfortable to be themselves, able to partake in activities of their own choosing, able to enjoy unique experiences that give them a sense of freedom and allow them to connect with the greater city community and/or localised communities, where they feel grateful and express that gratitude willingly and openly, the potential role of a metropolitan open space system in building meaningful city brands would be clearly visible. *The Optimist* expressed it best when he mentioned that to him the beachfront is 'a good representation' of how Durban could be. If an area such as the Durban beachfront can act as an area where people feel truly comfortable, are able to be themselves, express themselves, enjoy themselves and not feel intimidated, marginalised, segregated, or separated, where they feel safe and

secure, then imagine that same feeling spread across all open spaces within the city. If we could live in cities where we feel this comfortable in all open spaces, then our homes would feel safer, better and more connected.

Cities need to help residents live healthy lives by offering them 'real freedom to live, move and build our lives as we wish', and should provide services to the entire community equitably (Montgomery, 2013: 42). Spaces within the city, specifically open spaces should allow residents to build relationships and help maintain and grow connections between friends, families and others to help give their lives meaning (Montgomery, 2013). Strategic planners in the city need to be maintaining their network of open spaces (as they do with the Durban beachfront) in order to enable residents to use the spaces.

A sense of pride, or gratitude is most visible in spaces 'where human personality fuses with the cultural or natural environments to create congruity' (Wolfe, 2021: 43). *The Runner* believes the Covid lockdown help her find 'a new appreciation for where you lived', and *The Surfer* describes her morning experiences as 'I think I'm in this space where, every time I'm at the beachfront and I look at the sunrise I think that's where you express your gratitude. It's where I connect spiritually as well, just being able run, being able to see a sunrise. It's amazing'. *The Optimist* expressed that 'my personality fits quite well in Durban... I like the atmosphere in Durban... it's just like community where I can just feel like I'm a part of it... I still feel like Durban is a bit more exciting'. The spaces within a city that we love are those that engage the senses and help create meaningful links on 'physical, emotional, spiritual, social or intellectual' levels and these connect residents to the sense of place (Baker, 2019: 202). In a city where parks are unkept, overgrown and full of litter it becomes difficult for residents to feel pride in their city as it feels ignored by the municipality.

Although the Durban beachfront currently feels like a judgement free, inclusive space where everyone is welcomed, this is not necessarily the case for other areas in D'MOSS, the city, or country. If residents are making an effort to travel to the beachfront because it is the only place where they feel safe and free, then it indicates a problem. Why are other open spaces in the city, the other areas of D'MOSS not perceived in a similar manner to the Durban beachfront? If strategic city planners could apply principles from the beachfront area to

other sections of D'MOSS it would be beneficial for residents. Venter et al. (2020: 11) found that there are clear benefits that would be derived from open spaces – which are 'fundamental for socio-economic development and general human wellbeing', and that focusing on the development of these in previously disadvantaged areas would help 'to dismantle the racial, economic and green Apartheid in South African cities'.

'A healthy city is one that provides physical opportunities for free social engagement, has plenty of green space and fosters co-existence, promoting democratic participation, as well as good public health and well-being' UN Habitat (2020: 5). Open spaces and a metropolitan open space system should be providing that equally to all residents. The legacy of Apartheid and the socio-economic segregation still lingers in the cities and open spaces in certain areas are far less accessible than the Durban beachfront. Venter et al. (2020: 11) demonstrate that 'there is sufficient evidence, alluded to in the Sustainable Development Goals, to show that the ecosystem services derived from green infrastructure are fundamental for socio-economic development and general human wellbeing. Therefore, any instruments of economic development as well as redistributive justice would do well to include urban greening agendas to dismantle the racial, economic and green Apartheid in South African cities'. Strategic planners of the city need to really address the inequalities of green infrastructure and maintain and develop green areas where they are currently not maintained or not provided.

The Inquirer sits writing this final chapter looking out the window at the Durban beachfront less than two kilometres away,

'The walk from my apartment to the beachfront doesn't take long, but I have to admit I'm constantly looking over my shoulder. In order to get to the beachfront, I cross Umgeni Road – which is busy all the time – and you have to be super careful – cars, buses and taxis do not always stop when the traffic lights turn red. Once across Umgeni Road I walk across the bridge over the railway tracks heading into town. There are weeds everywhere, and litter and homeless people, broken paving, and water leaks are visible where some of the manhole covers are missing.'

The walk down to Blue Lagoon takes me between two golf courses, The Durban Country Club and Windsor Park Golf Course. I always walk a little quicker along this section. It is a busy road, and the traffic makes me nervous. There are tall fences along the edges of both sides of the road. I take a right turn along Athlone Road that leads down to the beachfront. I can immediately feel a little more relaxed – which I think has to do with there being no fence on the one side of the road and the street is open to the Blue Lagoon area along the Umgeni River, but still a little uncomfortable walking passed the Golf Course on my right-hand side, and the derelict undersea club building where a few homeless guys always seem to be.

And then there it is. I'm at the beach. Not my favourite part of the beach, but I'm back on the familiar beachfront paving. The ocean is in front of me, and I feel so comfortable. I walk from there along the promenade down to Moses Mabhida Stadium. I love being on the beachfront. Walking along the sand. Seeing the aloes in flower in the dunes. Today there was a guy walking his cat! There is a man there every weekend walking with a parrot on his shoulder (sometimes he is on a bicycle and the parrot sits on the handlebars). The entire walk along the beachfront makes me happy. Really happy. As I turn away from the beach and head towards the stadium beneath the freeway underpass, I love seeing the sun setting behind the stadium. The closer I get to it – the more I am aware that I will soon be closer to Umgeni Road and must walk along a section of roads and pavements that are less than ideal. So many of the pavements and sidewalks in this city and poorly maintained. As much as the Durban beachfront is so perfect, so many of the other open spaces really aren't. I feel suddenly unsafe. I feel somewhat nervous, but at the same time I feel really pleased that I'm there and I'm walking in this city.'

Montgomery (2013) echoes this sentiment and argues that cities are wealthier than ever before and are using and demanding more resources, energy and land but despite this, residents live unhealthier lifestyles. At the same time residents can make changes themselves, argues Montgomery (2013: 328) 'we do not need to wait for someone else to

make it. We build it when we choose how and where to live. We build it when we move a little bit closer. We build it when we choose to move a little slower. We build it by choosing to put aside our fear of the city and other people. We build it by pursuing it in our own lives, and in so doing, pushing the city to change with us. We build the happy city by living it’.

5.3.1 For the strategic planners

This study set out to explore the role a metropolitan open space system, such as D’MOSS, can play in building a **meaningful city brand** amongst residents and how strategic planners involved in building the city brand, can position the brand strongly in the minds of a local, national and international audience. The narratives presented in Chapter 4 explored the way in which Durban residents think (their perceptions), their views and beliefs (opinions), and how their day-to-day lives play out (lived experience). Participants of the study shared their feelings on safety and how rare it is to feel safe in this country, they delighted in sharing their perceptions of freedom awarded them by a visit to the beachfront. They shared their passion for early mornings and the sunrise and expressed joy and hope about the mixed community using the space, feeling happier for being able to access a space that helped them move towards their fitness goals, their mental health, and their general happiness. Participants of the study expressed love of their city, calling it their home, and spoke of gratitude towards the city. **Residents love their city, and the beachfront helps them connect to the city.**

The eThekweni (Durban Metropolitan) Long Term Development Plan (eThekweni Municipality, 2018: 1) envisions the city as ‘the safe, vibrant and accessible; literal and symbolic centre of eThekweni’ and outlines the city’s vision for 2040 as ‘Africa’s most Caring and Liveable City’ through these key objectives: creating a safe city, promoting an accessible city, creating a prosperous city where all enjoy sustainable livelihoods, celebrating our cultural diversity, arts and heritage, ensuring a more environmentally sustainable city, and fostering a caring and empowering city. The objectives and aspirations of the city echo the sentiment of Landry (2008), authorities talk about cities in a technical sense, but residents and visitors experience the city emotionally. Kageyama (2011: 47) argues that it is the ‘small and seemingly insignificant things’ that we appreciate most about our cities and that those

things we love, often can make the city feel more meaningful to us. **The city needs to communicate, interact and share on an emotional level to connect with residents.**

The eThekweni spatial development plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018) for the beachfront area lists as its strategy, 'The strategic role of the beachfront is clearly tourism. The beach and associated promenade are Durban's playground' and describes the beachfront as 'Durban's largest and most inclusive public open space' and repeatedly refers to the significance of the space to the tourism sector. The key ideas for the beachfront space include protecting and enhancing the space for tourism, increasing the green open spaces, protecting biodiversity, and encouraging a mixture of activities that are available both day and night. As valuable as the tourist market is for the Durban beachfront and the city, the residents' feelings about their city 'where they live, work and play', can hold a large influence on 'the perceptions of tourists and visitors through their recommendations and complaints', as well as their skills, talents and entrepreneurial drive contributing to the city's growth (Insch, 2011: 4). 'The people who live there know best, and they should be involved in how their immediate world evolves' (Wolfe, 2021: 22). **Turn the focus inward and develop the city and its open spaces, green spaces and public spaces for the residents as priority.**

Cities need to help residents live healthy lives by offering them 'real freedom to live, move and build our lives as we wish', and should provide services to the entire community equitably (Montgomery, 2013: 42). Spaces within the city, specifically open spaces should allow residents to build relationships and help maintain and grow connections between friends, families and others to help give their lives meaning (Montgomery, 2013). **Make every effort to maintain the network of open spaces in order to enable all residents to use them.**

If a city brand is to be considered meaningful, it should be perceived as engaging and experiential and will happen when residents connect actively with 'something or someone of value' (Yeoman, 2019: 468), and residents of the city are an embodiment of the culture of the city and are representative of the nature of the brand (Insch, 2011). Residents form a foundation of what a city communicates through its brand, and they should be involved in the co-creation of city brands (Kavaratzis, 2012) and any development plans should place

the residents of the city as the primary beneficiary of the development. Brands achieving success listen to their customers and their evolving needs and see the customer as a partner in the business and not just a consumer (Interbrand, 2020). **Engage with the residents of the city and allow for co-creation in the design of new spaces, maintenance of spaces and city initiatives.**

To reach their goals of being 'Africa's most Caring and Liveable City' by 2040, the city needs to focus more on looking inward (the residents' perspective and experience) and through community engagement expand and develop their open spaces responsibly, driven by the principles of being connected and walkable. But in order to do this, those responsible need to understand what it means to walk through the city. They need to understand why it feels safe to walk along the Durban beachfront but potentially uncomfortable to walk beyond it. They need to experience how freeing it feels to be on the beachfront, but how intimidating it is to walk from that area to another. They need to understand why communities are comfortable to express themselves and be themselves on the Durban beachfront but possibly afraid to do so elsewhere within the city. Residents of a city can often not articulate their feelings about a place but seeking out the emotional story behind their daily realities is necessary to address city related issues (Kageyama, 2019: 4).

5.4 Limitations

This study set out to explore the opinions, perceptions and experiences of Durban residents of a metropolitan open space system – specifically D'MOSS – to gain an understand of the role it could play in the building of a meaningful city brand. Lichrou et al. (2017: 168) propose that narratives about a place allow us to 'get access to a remembered past(s) as well as imagined, desired or feared future(s)'. Through the exploration of residents' narratives of their experiences of the city of Durban, this study explored these thoughts, values, and ideas.

Narrative inquiry is a form of research that places its focus on interpreting and understanding meaning (Clandinin, 2007: 9) and it seeks to gain clarity through the

documentation of the lived experience of participants. It is ‘a focus on the particular’ and an attempt to find an understanding of the ‘value of a particular experience, in a particular setting involving particular people’ (Clandinin, 2007: 21). Narrative inquiries ‘attend to individual’s lives, as they are composed over time’ and they relate to people and their experience of a particular place (or places) and ‘the focus remains on the lives lived and told throughout’ (Clandinin, 2013: 39).

The limitations of this study are that it is specific to the Durban beachfront area of D’MOSS and not the entire metropolitan open space system of Durban. The study is limited to the opinions of the participants and is related to their specific experiences of the area and any interpretations of the data collected ‘cannot exist separately from the researcher’ as the inquirers’ intrinsic values, abilities and personal experience exist within the emergent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021: 39). The knowledge gained from a narrative inquiry is particularly textured and incomplete and will not lead to generalisations of certainty, but more towards wondering about and imagining alternate possibilities; in the case of this study, exploring the potential role a metropolitan open space system can play in building a meaningful city brand.

5.5 Recommendations for future studies

Although various studies have looked at the unequal distribution of green space in South African cities, further explorations into open spaces and their distribution amongst the population of South Africa are necessary. Open spaces can change perceptions and help achieve happiness and improve the health and lives of people. The strategic development of open spaces for the specific purposes of rectifying the legacy of Apartheid would prove an interesting and worthy study.

Further studies about open space systems within African cities may well reveal different findings to this study. This study did find correlation between D’MOSS and the meaningful city brand measures as well as the best practice case studies and contributed to an

understanding of the role a metropolitan open space system can play, like D'MOSS, but findings cannot be generalised to all open space systems in building meaningful city brands.

There remain noticeable gaps in the link 'between spatial planning and place branding' as noted by Grenni et al. (2020: 1356). Nogué and Vela (2018) acknowledge that while emotion is fast becoming a significant asset for the development of a place branding strategy, there have been relatively few studies exploring this connection and Ashworth et al. (2015) argue that the various stakeholders involved in a place need to find ways of working together to build meaning for a place brand. Research into how spatial planning and place branding can work together could help extend the research presented in this narrative inquiry.

This study set out to explore the perceptions, opinions and lived experience of a metropolitan open system and demonstrate the value of such spaces within cities to help develop meaningful city brands. The success of the Durban beachfront area could be replicated in other areas throughout the city and further studies on suitable spaces to connect and repurpose could help the city achieve its future goals of being 'Africa's most Caring and Liveable City' by 2040 by designing solutions with the people who use the spaces and not designing for the people who use the spaces.

5.6 Conclusion

'Cities are layers of experience, interaction, tension, culture, and a social life that manifests itself in what we see from day to day' (Wolfe, 2021: 1). Exploring the perceptions, opinions, and lived experiences of Durban residents, their day-to-day use of the Durban beachfront revealed their love of the space and 'beloved places engage our senses, and create meaningful connections on a physical, emotional, spiritual, social or intellectual basis. They go a long way toward connecting us to the soul of the city - and its brand' (Baker, 2019: 202). Fundamentally place branding is about creating a narrative which stirs emotion towards a place and establishing a personal connection between a person and that place where everyday life happens, which people experience both spatially and emotionally and any interactions with space or place arouse emotions from the meanings associated with

that living because of the social and cultural ideas people have about those places (Nogué & Vela, 2018).



Figure 49 - Celebrations, connections and friends on the beachfront: The Inquirer (Instagram.com, 2021)

Durban aspires to be a great city (eThekweni Municipality, 2018). eThekweni LTD Plan (2018: 23) defines a great city as a place 'where the human spirit can thrive socially, economically and culturally', offering a 'balance of the natural and built environment'. The eThekweni Long Term Development Plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018) outlines the city's vision for 2040 as 'Africa's most Caring and Liveable City' through these key objectives: creating a safe city, promoting an accessible city, creating a prosperous city where all enjoy sustainable livelihoods, celebrating our cultural diversity, arts and heritage, ensuring a more environmentally sustainable city, and fostering a caring and empowering city. The objectives and aspirations of the city echo the sentiment of Landry (2008), authorities talk about cities in a technical sense, but residents and visitors experience the city emotionally. Kageyama (2011: 47) argues that it is the 'small and seemingly insignificant things' that we appreciate most about our cities and that those things we love, often can make the city feel more meaningful to us. There are noticeable gaps in the link 'between spatial planning and place branding' note Grenni et al. (2020: 1356). Ashworth et al. (2015) argue that the various stakeholders involved in a place need to find ways of working together to build meaning for a place brand. By aligning people's expectations of a city brand with lived experience a city brand could 'maximise positive place experience' (Ashworth et al., 2015: 4).

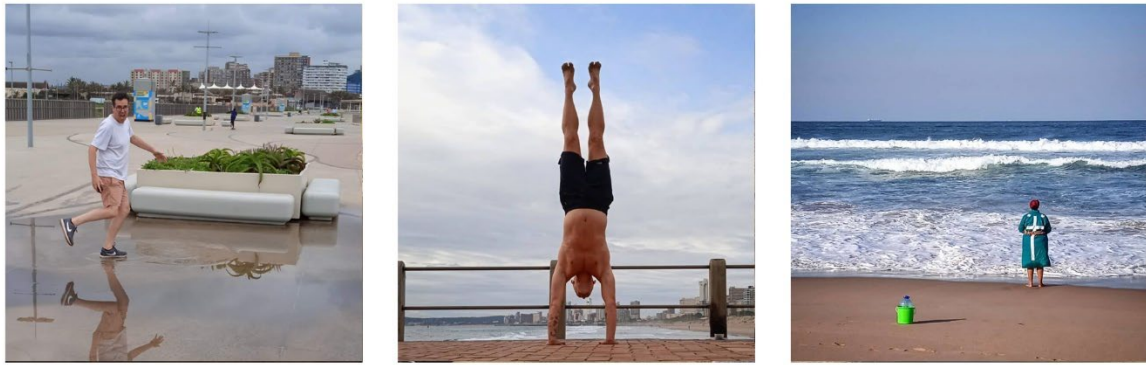


Figure 50 - Small moments, big emotions, positive place experience: *The Inquirer* (Instagram.com, 2021)



Figure 51 - Signage promoting ecological benefit to educate audiences: *The Inquirer* (Instagram.com, 2021)

The eThekweni spatial development plan (eThekweni LTD Plan, 2018) for the beachfront area lists as its strategy, ‘The strategic role of the beachfront is clearly tourism. The beach and associated promenade are Durban’s playground’ and describes the beachfront as ‘Durban’s largest and most inclusive public open space’ and repeatedly refers to the significance of the space to the tourism sector.

The key ideas for the beachfront space include protecting and enhancing the space for tourism, increasing the green open spaces,

protecting biodiversity, and encouraging a mixture of activities that are available both day and night. Built on these principles of being connected and walkable demonstrate a higher purpose (Aaker, 2015) but the focus of the strategic planners on the tourism sector should be questioned. As valuable as the tourist market is for the Durban beachfront and the city, the residents’ feelings about their city ‘where they live, work and play’, can hold a large influence on ‘the perceptions of tourists and visitors through their recommendations and complaints’, as well as their skills, talents and entrepreneurial drive contributing to the city’s growth (Insch, 2011: 4). Focus on development and planning should happen from the inside out. ‘The people who live there know best, and they should be involved in how their immediate world evolves’ (Wolfe, 2021: 22).

If a city brand is to be considered meaningful, it should be perceived as engaging and experiential and will happen when residents connect actively with ‘something or someone of value’ (Yeoman, 2019: 468), and residents of the city are an embodiment of the culture of the city and are representative of the nature of the brand (Insch, 2011). Residents form a foundation of what a city communicates through its brand, and they should be involved in the co-creation of city brands (Kavaratzis, 2012) and any development plans should place the residents of the city as the primary beneficiary of the development. Brands achieving success listen to their customers and their evolving needs and see the customer as a partner in the business and not just a consumer (Interbrand, 2020).

Distribution of wealth and an equal society is still a challenge in South Africa amongst the population, but within certain areas, such as the Durban beachfront feelings of race, judgement and prejudice seem to disappear. *The Runner* enjoys the lack of judgement from people on the beachfront, ‘What I love about the Durban beachfront is that everyone can go there. Beggars walk there and a CEO could be walking beside him. There’s no hierarchy in terms of status, race, religion, or anything. It’s open to everyone, the ocean is for everyone’. ‘A healthy city is one that provides physical opportunities for free social engagement, has plenty of green space and fosters co-existence, promoting democratic participation, as well as good public health and well-being’ UN Habitat (2020: 5). Venter et al. (2020: 11) found that there are clear benefits that would be derived from open spaces and that focusing on the development of these in previously disadvantaged areas would help ‘to dismantle the racial, economic and green Apartheid in South African cities’.

Open spaces, and areas like the Durban beachfront help residents feel healthier, happier and allow for a more connected society. These spaces help to increase economic value, reduce crime and help people feel part of a place by providing the ‘foundational emotional infrastructure’ and Kageyama (2019: 98) believes open spaces are ‘the closest thing to a magic bullet in a city’s arsenal. There are few things more universally loved in a city than its parks, and I believe we are vastly under-utilising them in our strategies and tactics for making better places. We need to break down the historic and institutional barriers and unleash the green goodness of our parks upon our cities’. The more diverse the possible activities of a space are, the more diverse an audience the space will attract and exposing

oneself to different cultures, preferences, races and religions helps users become more tolerant and empathetic to others – helping build wider, more inclusive communities (Gehl Institute, 2016). Ensuring that as many open spaces within the system meet the key dimensions set out by Mehta (2014) including inclusiveness, meaningful activities, comfort, safety and pleasurability will maximise the potential for residents to connect with the spaces on an emotional level and help build the emotional infrastructure of the city in order to help residents become happier and more connected to each other – which is in line with the strategic intent of Durban (a connected city).

‘We need to walk, just as birds need to fly. We need to be around other people. We need beauty. We need contact with nature. And most of all, we need not to be excluded. We need to feel some sort of equality’ (Montgomery, 2013: 4).

To reach their goals of being ‘Africa’s most Caring and Liveable City’ by 2040, the city needs to focus more on looking inward (the residents’ perspective and experience) and through community engagement expand and develop their open spaces responsibly, driven by the principles of being connected and walkable. But in order to do this, those responsible need to understand what it means to walk through the city. They need to understand why it feels safe to walk along the Durban beachfront but potentially uncomfortable to walk beyond it. They need to experience how freeing it feels to be on the beachfront, but how intimidating it is to walk from that area to another. They need to understand why communities are comfortable to express themselves and be themselves on the Durban beachfront but possibly afraid to do so elsewhere within the city. Residents of a city can often not articulate their feelings about a place but seeking out the emotional story behind their daily realities is necessary to address city related issues (Kageyama, 2019: 4).



Figure 52 - Walking Durban: The Inquirer (Instagram.com, 2021)

It is only when you start walking around the city yourself that you realise that it is more comfortable to walk on the road surface than the pavement, because the pavement is uncomfortable to walk on. An exploration into the narrative of residents allows a researcher the opportunity to gain an understanding of what city residents really 'need in order to feel better and more positive about themselves and their city' (Kageyama, 2019: 3).

This study set out to explore the lived experience of the people of Durban and thereby show how a system such as D'MOSS might add value to the city brand as a meaningful one. The narratives shared and stories told are specific to the beachfront, the participants, and the inquirers interpretation, but they

demonstrate the possibilities of what could be. They demonstrate that spaces like the Durban beachfront can, and do bring people together, and allow for self-expression, happiness, well-being and encourage healthy living. City brands that allow for, encourage and provide spaces where people can feel connected to others, can help residents achieve both happiness and meaningfulness (Baumeister et al., 2013).

Montgomery (2013: 328) writes that 'we build the happy city by living it'. Go and walk in the city. Leave your car behind and try it. Feel those connections and that perceived sense of freedom.

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APPENDIX A – Informed Consent Form

Exploring the Role of Metropolitan Open Space Systems in Building Meaningful City

Brands: a D'MOSS Case Study

The researcher is doing a visual narrative inquiry by exploring the meaning or significance of specific photographs posted on the selected participant's Instagram accounts, exploring their experiences on the Durban beachfront.

Consent to take part in research

I _____ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study and I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that participation involves 2-3 interviews with the researcher to discuss the selected posts from my Instagram account and my experiences on the Durban beachfront, in relation to the research topic.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded and understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially and that in any report on the research results that my identity will remain anonymous, if chosen to remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and by not disclosing any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about. I understand that extracts relevant to the research from my interview may be quoted in the master's study which will be published on the IIE Online Library and may be included in academic journals for further publishing. Quotations will be treated with anonymity where the participant elects to remain anonymous.

I agree/do not agree (please delete which is not relevant) that the researcher may use copies of my Instagram pictures in their final report and any articles that may be published about the research.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they have the right to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researchers One Drive account (to which only they have access) until April 2022 and I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from May 2022.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

I will inform the researcher by no later than the final interview whether I opt to remain anonymous or whether I am comfortable for my identity to be made know in the research report. The researcher will make the research report available for the participants to view.

Participant name: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Researcher acknowledges receipt:

Signature of researcher

Date received:

APPENDIX B – Interview Guide (Photo elicitation)

In the initial interview, participants will have the nine (9) images the inquirer has selected from the participant's Instagram feed printed in colour, laid out in front of them. The participant will be provided with writing instruments and encouraged to expand on their stories, engage with the images, elaborate on the experience, assisting the inquirer to expand on their knowledge, associations or perceptions of the image.

The participants will be encouraged to speak to the pictures, to tell the enquirer about the experience without driving or leading them to speak about emotion and connection, but to rather build on and add to questions as the interview progresses; utilising the question laddering technique. For example: 'This photograph was because the day reminded me of my childhood'. Laddering follow up question: 'You mentioned childhood, do you want to tell me a bit more about why it reminded you of your childhood?'.

The proposed interview script and proposed 'opening' questions are as follows:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research. I've selected 9 photographs from your Instagram account that I would like to discuss with you. Is there a particular picture from the nine that stands out for you as particularly memorable or significant? We can start with that one.

Can you tell me more about the story, significance or meaning of this photograph?

What do you see in this photo?

What else is happening here?

Can you elaborate on the experience?

This will be repeated for several of the pictures.

Looking at the selection of images in front of you – what story do you think they tell?

Are there other images you can think of that you've posted that might fit this story any better?

APPENDIX C – Interview Guide (Follow-up)

After the first interviews were completed and initial thematic analysis conducted, participants were asked to participate in a follow up interview where the inquirer delved deeper into some of the key themes revealed. The inquirer asked questions to allow participant to reflect on the initial interview, while connecting the discussion with the potential role D'MOSS may play in building a meaningful city brand. At the time of planning the follow-up interviews, civil unrest broke out in KwaZulu-Natal, with the Durban area directly impacted. Considering this the participants were given the option of doing the follow-up interviews virtually, or at locations on the Durban beachfront.

The proposed interview script and proposed 'opening' questions are as follows:

Thank you for discussing some of your photos from your Instagram feed the other day and thank you for agreeing to meet with me again. If what is currently happening in Durban affects your answers – there is no problem with that. I just have a few follow up questions that I would like to ask:

Since our previous discussion about the Durban beachfront and your posted images, did you find that anything shifted in your thinking, or how are you feeling about the area? Or Durban? Or your Instagram feed?

Based on their response questions are then laddered to elicit deeper meaning – such as: what makes you say that? Could you tell me a little bit more about that? Is there anything else you reflected on? This will be repeated for each question.

In our initial interview a topic that came up quite a bit was about [freedom/community/home]. What about the Durban beachfront makes you associate this concept with that?

What is the unique value that the Durban beachfront offers you?

What do you think would improve the beachfront area for you? What do you imagine the city could do to make it more significant in your life?

APPENDIX D – Instagram introduction to participate

Hi **Name**

My name is Jody Simpson, and I am busy conducting research for my master's degree. I am doing a visual narrative inquiry by exploring the meaning or significance of specific photographs posted on certain Instagram accounts by exploring experiences on the Durban beachfront. I would love to include your pictures in my research and interview you about some specific pictures. There will probably 2-3 interviews lasting no more than an hour each. These could be done in person, or online if you prefer.

I would love to hear back from you.

APPENDIX E – Ethical Clearance



Enquiries: registrar@iie.ac.za

Date: 10 December 2018



Student name: Jody Simpson

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Cape Town



Re: Approval of Master of Arts in Creative Brand Leadership [MACB511] Proposal

Thank you for the resubmission of your proposal under the guidance of your supervisor entitled:



“Exploring metropolitan open space systems in building meaningful city brands: a D’MOSS case study.”

We are pleased to inform you that the Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee considered and has **approved** your research proposal. Ethics clearance has also been granted. You are therefore now eligible to enroll for the Master of Arts in Creative Brand Leadership.

The Committee confirms that **Prof N de Klerk** has been appointed as your supervisor and **Ms N Pretorius** as your co-supervisor.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the campus staff or your supervisor directly.

All the best with your study.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Dr Franzél du Plooy-Cilliers

Dean: Postgraduate Studies

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