An Exploratory Study Into The Role Of The Leadership Position In Establishing Innovation Within The Retail Environment

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Mayor Square

Dublin 1

Student Name: Brian Congdon

Supervisor: Rachel Doherty

Student Number: 18160336

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to explore the role leadership has in establishing innovation within the retail environment. The use of relevant academic literature was used to identify areas for exploration. The relationship between the innovation process and the strategic objectives of the organisation provided an opportunity for a narrative to be explored. The study aims to use the subjective experiences of retail sector employees to understand their interpretations of the leadership role and innovation.

The researcher developed a framework using key elements of the Componential Model of Creativity by Amabile (1988) which provided a consistent structure throughout the study. A qualitative research approach was undertaken and the rationale for this method is presented. The research philosophy was interpretive in nature consisting of semi-structured interviews with five participants with varying roles in retail. Using thematic analysis, four themes emerged from the interviews which are outlined below:

- Leadership Style
- Motivation
- Organisational Culture
- Creativity

Several sub-themes emerged through the main themes. The researcher found the themes were significant due to their role in the innovation process within the participants respective organisations. The findings are discussed in conjunction with relevant literature with practical recommendations for retail organisations to establish innovative behaviours included in the study. The limitations of a small-scale study are also presented.

Research Students Declaration Form

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research focuses on the leadership position and its role in developing innovation within the retail sector. It will explore relevant research to provide the researcher with material that can be used in his primary research. This research will increase the understanding of the leadership role and innovation within retail, by focusing on evident gaps in the relevant academic literature. Hristov and Reynolds (2015) identify that innovation is under researched within retail while Pantano and Laria (2012) highlight that innovation is critical to retail organisations if they want to create a competitive advantage. This is supported by Taha, Sirkova and Ferencova (2016) who state that organisations are required to innovate to remain relevant within their sector through rapid change and adaptability to emerging market trends.

Taalbi (2017), identifies the role organisational culture has in providing a platform for innovation to flourish. The retail sector has faced challenging times over recent years which has required leadership strength and resilience to manage the continuous change within the industry. Mendonca (2017) supports this, highlighting that organisational culture is one of the most important elements for leaders to focus on in a change society. This research will aim to identify the role leadership has in creating a culture of innovation within the retail environment.

Tidd and Bessant (2014) classify innovation as something new or a different method of doing something. The organisations that typically come to mind when innovation is discussed are technological in nature, such as Microsoft or Google. However, innovation can be part of any company with the researcher aiming to identify contributing factors to the implementation of innovative practices within the retail sector through leadership, motivation, organisational culture and creativity. Business management has studied the relationship between leadership, organisational culture and innovation with international scholars and business leaders recognising that these factors have played a critical role in organisational and economic development (Tian, Deng, Zhang & Salmador, 2018). The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper knowledge of the leadership role and the contributing factors that lead to idea generation and innovation within the retail sector.

Previous academic literature on this topic focused on barriers to innovation within the retail environment. This research will aim to identify opportunities for retailers to innovate while acknowledging the barriers to innovation.

The use of a framework underpinned by the Componential Model of Creativity by Amabile (1988) will assist the author with the exploration of factors that generate innovation within the retail sector. Exploration and analysis of the components took place through semi-structured interviews which were conducted with five participants who work in various retail organisations. The use of a thematic analysis as used by Braun and Clarke (2006) was identified as the appropriate form of analysis. This method explored the participant's subjective views and the development of themes to create a deeper understanding of the research subject. The findings are presented in the context of the literature reviewed with recommendations suggested for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research aims to explore the leadership role and the impact it has on establishing innovation within retail organisations. The research will look at several key attributes of a leader in both a general and a retail environment, identifying the key drivers that improve employees performance whilst exploring the main characteristics of innovation, identifying if they are present within retail, and if so, how a framework can be utilised to enable leaders of retail organisations to link innovation with their strategic goals.

Services vs Manufacturing Innovation – is there a difference?

Retailers are required to adapt to change quickly to capitalise on market opportunities, react to consumer behaviours and to create a sustainable business model (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). The ability for retail organisations to adapt to an environment of change is crucial to the viability and ultimately the survival of their business (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996) . The various meanings of innovation have long been debated dating back to Schumpeter (1912), with innovation being classified as a set of new outcomes that are contingent upon the behaviour of the entrepreneur, such as new methods of producing, introduction of new products and the entry into new markets (McCraw, 2010). Grossman and Helpman (1994) suggest that innovation can also be achieved through investing resources into new opportunities which improves productivity and effectiveness of the workforce.

This has changed over recent times with the introduction of technology into retail which links research and development with consumer behaviour to enable retail organisations create a competitive advantage through identifying needs and wants of customers (Pantano & Laria, 2012). Rogers (1995) argues that innovation is not solely related to technology and it is the management of incremental improvements that creates a better outcome for the organisation. Rather than using the term innovation loosely alongside terms such as “invention” or “creation”, Rogers (1995) classifies innovation as commercialising novel concepts.

In more recent times, innovation is classified as a change, related to technological advancements but in service industries such as retail, it is less tangible and can therefore be more difficult to measure and define (Tether, 2005).

Whilst there is a growing volume of research conducted surrounding the services industry, academics generally agree that the subject of innovation is under-researched and poorly understood when discussed in the context of the services sector (Djellal, Gallouj & Miles, 2013).

Tether (2005) investigated the difference between innovation in the services and the manufacturing industry. His research found that there are varied approaches to innovation between both industries, highlighting that the "soft capability skills" of the services workforce deviate away from the staircase of innovation which looks at innovation as a phased process through research and development (Loewe, Williamson & Wood, 2001).

Tether (2005) found that leaders are required to create agility within retail organisations due to the constant requirement for change in the services and retail sector, while internal innovation does not get the same level of recognition as technological innovation. The research into innovation explores various factors which indicate that innovation is either a process or an outcome (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). When classifying innovation as a process, Rogers (1983) indicates that questions posed include "how", such as how does innovation happen? However, when innovation is viewed as an outcome, questions pertaining to "what" are posed, such as, what are innovations (Rogers, 1983)? These debates involved classifying innovation according to type (e.g. technical) or form (goods or services) (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010).

Gallouj (2008), highlights that a combination of services in retail is classified as innovation where many services are packaged together by organisations to improve their customer offering such as banking and insurance services. Reynolds, Howard, Cuthbertson and Hristov (2007) argue that retail can be separated into operational and strategic with advancements in retail services classified as strategic while the operational dimension is innovation that takes place but it is not recorded by retail organisations. Hristov and Reynolds (2007) consider that innovation occurs at various points within retail, from supplier to the retailer and from the retailer to the consumer, where products are created by suppliers and delivered by retailers through evolving channels including technological.

Pantano and Laria (2012) argue that innovation within retail is created through technology which influences the perceptions of consumers and their acceptance of change. The various opinions and arguments relating to the concept and practice of innovation answer the "what" but not the "how" innovation is controlled within the organisation.

Barriers to innovation within the retail sector

Hristov and Reynolds (2015) have identified positive innovative practices and barriers to innovation in the sector within their research. Leaders must move through barriers to innovation within retail. Hristov and Reynolds (2009) found that barriers to innovation within retail were not inherently different from other industries. Studies investigating barriers to innovation within retail identified that costs and risks of failure attached to innovation contributed to why retailers have not prioritised innovation in their strategic plans (Hristov & Reynolds, 2015). Tether (2005) found that the risk attached to investing in innovation from a resource perspective reduced the opportunity of innovative practices within retail as retailers find a stronger return on investment in remaining with the status quo.

Tether (2005) determined that innovation within services should focus on developing novel ideas and creative behaviours within organisations, through training and brainstorming to improve the performance of employees whilst reducing the financial burden of investing in innovation. This enabled employees to identify with innovation by recording the improvements that the organisation has created and incorporating these enhancements into new procedures and improved practices (Tether, 2005).

Bennett and Savini (2011) researched the impact of new technologies within retail such as tools for measuring consumer behaviours, operational processes, and employee productivity. The research identified that retailers are passive adopters to innovation that may improve their organisations. Pantano (2014) found that leaders did not build technological advancements into their strategic vision.

The role of Leadership within Innovation

Innovation requires idea generation and creativity, both of which require stimulation from organisational leaders, which can be encouraged through motivation and rewards (Hansen & Birkinshaw, 2007). Leaders are influential characters within the organisation and employees will use the leader's behaviour to guide actions (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003). Leaders who take risks send the message to employees that this behaviour is acceptable, increasing the likelihood that subordinates will participate in unconventional behaviour, driving creativity (Amabile & Mueller, 2008).

The concepts of idea generation, creativity and motivation are used interchangeably, therefore it is important to analyse each concept from the perspective of this research.

Amabile (1996) states that an idea can be copied from another source or it can be a unique thought whilst creativity refers to useful and relevant ideas only. Mumford (2012) classifies creativity as the production of high quality, unique and sophisticated solutions to problems.

The successful application of creativity is innovation, where ideas are created and the best of these are cultivated to establish new products, processes or services (Amabile, 1996). The research that has been undertaken to investigate innovation within the workplace has identified that a supportive working environment is critical (Amabile, 1996). It is important that leaders within the retail sector create a positive environment that empowers employees to discuss their ideas openly to ensure their organisation continues to perform well in today's competitive economy (Mendonca, 2017).

The next section outlines the leader's explicit instruction to employees to guide them in the innovation process. The literature highlights areas that shape the innovative process and it will assist the researcher in formulating the interview questions.

Direct Impacts of Leadership on Innovation

Creative input and idea suggestion: Mumford (2012) identifies the importance of the leaders position in providing input but also highlights that the environment to create innovation requires employee empowerment, therefore facilitating employee's comfort in discussing the leaders ideas whilst providing an opportunity to debate with them. Leaders typically possess an intrinsic motivation to succeed and it is key this trait is used to guide creativity in employees (Hunter, Bedell & Mumford, 2007). Amabile (2013) identified that a positive work environment should be created by leaders for employees to brainstorm and share ideas to facilitate innovation. This will be discussed further using the Componential Model of Organisational Creativity framework.

Vision and Strategy: Research has identified that leaders who use goal-setting in the innovation process, are more likely to produce a culture of innovation within their workforce (Rodan, 2002). This enables employees to engage with a logical strategy set out by the leader directed by their strategy and vision.

Further exploration will be required to establish if the goal-setting initiated by the leader facilitates employees to think freely in achieving the goal in the retail environment and how relevant the employee feels their input is in attaining the organisational goal (Mumford & Hunter, 2005).

Allocation of Resources: This is a critical role of the leader as organisations aim to make profits, whilst innovation is required to enable the growth of the company. It is the leader's decision to select projects that receive resources and critically projects that do not (Hunter, et al., 2011). The research will investigate if leaders allocate adequate resources to innovative practices in the hope of a high consumer pay-off.

Decision-Making: This is closely linked to resource allocation but the leaders expertise in the field can enable them to make an educated decision based on their technical, creative and conceptual skills (Cummings & O'Connell, 1978). Research identified that subordinates confidence in leaders decision-making is required to increase creative engagement (Hunter, et al., 2007).

Peter Drucker discussed innovation and entrepreneurship in his formative work (1985). He proposed that organisations required innovative practices to remain competitive in their industry, highlighting the rapid change that takes place in retail requires the implementation of systematic innovation by the leadership team to ensure survival. As there is more disruption than ever in retail due to the introduction of technological tools and the use of social media to communicate with the target audience of retailers, Drucker's seminal work (1985), remains relevant as retail firms need to ensure creative ideas and practices are delivered through a systematic approach to innovation.

Tidd and Bessant (2014) argue that innovation requires a clear strategy and is not created by chance. The leadership role is required to create an environment for innovation to prosper through aligning strategic goals with innovative practices. Tipping and Zeffren (1995) discuss that creative ideas and innovative practices should be used to assist the organisation in creating a competitive advantage and achieving strategic goals. These organisational goals are often categorised as revenue, profit targets and market share, however a culture that prioritises innovation gives the organisation the opportunity to achieve their strategic goals suggesting a framework is required to align both strategic goals and innovation (Tipping & Zeffren, 1995).

The leadership role must facilitate a structure that enables a positive approach to innovation within the organisation, removing potential blockers that may hinder the creative potential of its employees (Tidd & Bessant, 2014). The structure may include organisational culture (Amabile, 1996), and the right allocation of resources to enable innovation to prosper through a learning environment.

Educating employees improves the knowledge required to complete their role which enables them to provide innovative and creative ideas that will benefit the organisation (Crossan & Hulland, 2002).

The process of innovation and the benefits it brings to the competitiveness of retail organisations requires regular review. An environment that focuses excessively on innovation through a flatter management structure may lose sight of broader organisational goals and this can be as detrimental as a structure that inhibits innovation (Tidd & Bessant, 2014). The presence of innovation within an organisation provides the opportunity to create a sustainable competitive advantage through a change culture. Leaders are required to manage innovation utilising a framework to ensure innovative practices and ideas are linked with the strategy and vision of the organisation with the objective of creating value for the customer (Tidd & Bessant, 2014).

The implementation of innovation into an organisation's strategy is critical to maintaining competitiveness. This should include an attitude and culture of change which requires regular review and opportunities to change the status quo (Hunter, et al., 2007). Retail managers and leaders need to use their role to encourage and stimulate idea generation and creativity within their teams to ensure innovation is achieved (Hansen & Birkinshaw, 2007).

Hristov and Reynolds (2007) explored the idea that management should incorporate innovative characteristics into the organisations culture to remain competitive whilst Medina and Rufin (2009) argue that innovation must be embedded in the strategy of leadership teams for it to funnel down to all employees within the organisation. The incorporation of innovative practices into the strategy and objectives of retailers should integrate with their supply chain to participate in co-creation of innovation to optimise their opportunity of success (Medina & Rufin, 2009).

Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) found that an employee's willingness to change or resist change will hinder the opportunity to innovate, especially if the current method of performing their duties is enabling the achievement of organisational goals. Innovation will rarely take place spontaneously with Hristov and Reynolds (2007) stating that it is imperative that the leader identifies the correct environment for all employees to generate innovation. They also identified motivation as a key element of innovation which will be explored further in the Componential Model of Creativity framework.

The innovation of processes and the differentiation of products and services afford retailers the opportunity to outperform their competitors (Tidd, 2001). The creation of innovative ideas are seen to be found in organisations where there is open communication between employees, where ideas are generated, discussed and modified to facilitate innovation (Cirella & Shani, 2012). The leadership role should stimulate creativity through innovative engagement with employees to find ways to create a competitive advantage.

There are several aspects to a retailer's success that can be categorised into the introduction of new processes, the creation of new goods or services, organisational transformation, and improved marketing techniques. Each of the improvements require innovation and leaders are encouraged to stimulate idea generation and creativity through inspiration and rewards (Hansen & Birkinshaw, 2007). Beheshtifar & Kamani-Fard (2013) argue that an employees creative input is driven by factors such as their expertise, motivation to contribute and their ability to think creativitely. Amabile (2013) found that managers can facilitate creativity within an organisation with Cirella and Shani (2012) arguing that the collaboration of employees trigger ideas enabling creativity through debate and discussion. The composition of teams by leaders enables competitiveness between the teams which increases the likelihood of creativity (Baer, et al., 2010). There is a distinct difference between creativity and innovation as Amabile (2013) argues that creative ideas need development and crafting to deliver innovative products or services.

Componential Model of Organisational Creativity

The researcher used the Componential Model of Organisational Creativity created by Amabile in 1988 to illustrate the stimulation of creativity within the retail environment. This was then updated by Amabile (1996) and Amabile and Mueller (2008). The researcher found that the creation of ideas required knowledge, motivation, creative thinking and an innovative working environment (Amabile, 2013). This framework of creativity requires a leader to prioritise innovation as part of their organisational goal to ensure that employees at all levels are encouraged to participate in the innovation process. Innovation rarely takes place spontaneously and it is imperative that the leader identifies the correct environment for all employees to participate in innovation. Leaders should provide the opportunity for employees to prosper through using these creative requirements.

Knowledge

There are two fundamental aspects to the formulation of knowledge. Gardner (1993) found that employees need technical expertise to understand creative opportunities that may be present in their organisation while they also need the ability to recognise the requirements of the organisation to utilise their creative thoughts effectively.

Simonton (1980), argues that individuals working independently are not capable of creative ideas but team formation is a more effective solution to providing creativity whilst Johansson (2004) found that a balance of independent ideas and a collaborative approach of multi-functional teams is the best method.

The literature on innovation largely agrees with Johansson (2004) highlighting that knowledge sharing between employees provides the best platform for creativity (DeDreu, 2002). Retail requires idea generators but also individuals to create products and processes to incorporate innovation. This suggests that team size and composition with varied skill sets drives creativity and innovation (Taggar, 2001).

The retention of industry specific knowledge is a competitive advantage to a retail organisation. Sharing this knowledge is a critical aspect to achieving innovation within an organisation through diverse views on subjects which creates unique thoughts (McCraw, 2010). The leadership role is required to enable employees to share information through collaboration for knowledge to be effective for the organisation (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996).

The formation of teams and groups by management should include employees from different departments with varying skills and levels of expertise to generate differing views leading to innovative actions (Paulus, 2000). Retail organisations that facilitate employee autonomy while also advocating a flatter management structure, incorporate work teams effectively into their strategy to promote innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003). The opportunity for employees to increase their skillset by acquiring experience in different areas of the organisation elevates the performance of the organisation as employees become more agile which promotes creativity and innovation (Martins & Terblanche, 2003).

Creative Thinking

The identification of an issue or problem is the opening stage of creative thinking where elements of knowledge that pre-exist are combined to identify opportunities to innovate (Mumford, et al., 2012). There are several stages that are undertaken in the creative-thinking process such as gathering and organising information, idea generation, evaluation and implementation of ideas followed by monitoring.

Adams (2006) argues that certain events and environments encourage employees to generate new ideas. The use of brainstorming sessions is encouraged by Adams (2006) to collate, discuss and develop ideas for implementation.

Leaders are encouraged to facilitate brainstorming sessions, enabling employees to pursue their own thoughts for the initial part of the session, then anonymously present ideas to the group, thus stimulating engagement and an opportunity to create improvements on the best individual ideas (Johansson, 2004).

Using brainstorming sessions in the context of the retail environment, different perspectives of the business given by employees from varying roles can be used to stimulate improvements across departments. West (2002) suggests that these sessions are more valuable and likely to create innovation than independent ideas that may lack peer support.

Amabile (1996) and Gardner (1993) found an employee's ability to think creatively requires education, knowledge, and ongoing training. The role of the leader should offer employees the opportunity to broaden their skillset and improve their capacity to perform their role.

The use of workplace training and mentoring is found to boost knowledge acquisition which leads to idea generation (Weisberg, 1999), therefore it can be said that job-specific training positively impacts innovation.

Motivation

Hunter, Cushenbery and Freidrich (2011), describe motivation as the psychological process that creates a persistent behaviour for an individual to achieve their goals. Motivation is the third component of the Componential Theory of Creativity. An employee's beliefs and values provide the motivation to achieve their goals while also highlighting why they behave in a specific manner (Ames, 1992).

Meunier and Bradley (2019) found that managers need to identify what motivates their employees as individuals' motivations are relevant to their personality.

Leaders must establish a culture for employees to succeed (CIPD, 2020). Meunier and Bradley (2019) identified that employee's motivations will alter over their career which emphasises the value of open communication between leaders and employees.

As employees may be intrinsically (e.g. the work is interesting or personally satisfying) or extrinsically (e.g. financial rewards) motivated, leaders must establish how to encourage employees to optimise their performance. Amabile (1996) argues that employees that are intrinsically motivated will test several routes before they find the best possible pathway to achieve their goals.

The use of incentives that financially reward employees to participate in creativity and innovation contradicts the idea generation phase in innovation as the objective is based on an outcome rather than a series of outcomes that can deliver innovation over time (Laffont & Martimort, 2002). The literature researched on compensation packages including incentives highlighted that leaders can create unintended negative consequences through these schemes as employees focus is on the result and not the process, often creating errors through bad judgement along the way in pursuit of the financial incentive (Wash & MacKie-Mason, 2006).

Amabile (1996) argues that extrinsically and intrinsically motivated employees need to be motivated differently. Extrinsic rewards can be divided into non-synergistic motivators and synergistic motivators.

The clear difference between both motivators is that the former focuses on the specific requirements to achieve a target while the later supports creative ideas.

Employees are found to prefer leaders that are synergistic motivators as they give consistent feedback throughout tasks providing recognition for achievements along the way (Amabile & Mueller, 2008). This highlights that employees favour leaders that issue praise, portraying their appreciation through recognition (Dewhurst, et al., 2009).

The Work Environment

Mumford (2000) identified that the stimulation of ideas, creativity and innovation is improved when employees are in a suitable work environment. Amabile and Mueller (2008) propose that creativity is found through the generation of knowledge, motivation and creative thoughts. This is supported by the Componential Model of Creativity (Amabile & Mueller, 2008).

The communication of relevant information through each channel of the retail organisation is critical to the development of ideas and creative thoughts (Mauzy, et al., 2003) and the development of successful creativity is most likely when different ideas are merged (Johansson, 2004).

A positive work environment that encourages innovation tends to benefit from creative ideas through motivated employees who want to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation (Cummings & Oldham, 1997), with management and the leadership role playing a pivotal part in providing this (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Managers are encouraged to empower employees to take risks through a supportive behaviour that removes the fear of failure. The shoe retailer Zappos, encourages employees under CEO Tony Hseih, to decorate their office space with design ideas that allow the employees to express their creativity (Thornton, 2010). This produces a creative culture that is guided by employees and overseen by management where successful results are desired by each team member (Madjar & Ortiz-Walters, 2008).

It has also been found that employees occupying varied roles on a rotational basis will increase their knowledge of the business (Mauzy, et al., 2003). In smaller retailer organisations there are fewer layers of management which increases the opportunity for employees to discuss their roles, share knowledge and create ideas with the view to implement the best ideas to improve the organisation (Adams, 2006). The work environment established by the management team can increase the motivation, knowledge and idea generation of the employees, by encouraging collaboration and reducing the fear of criticism (Amabile, 2013).

A review of the literature identified the factors which facilitate and hinder the development of innovation within retail organisations. It is acknowledged that some industries prioritise innovation more than others. The retail industry requires further investigation as to how the sector can develop and promote innovation. The leadership role has been identified as a significant factor in supporting staff in demonstrating innovation and creativity.

Chapter 3: Research Aims and Objectives

The research question is formulated around the leadership position and its role in innovation within the retail environment. The title of the dissertation is as follows:

An exploratory study into the role of the leadership position in establishing innovation within the retail environment.

The question poses two elements of business performance: leadership and innovation. The topic was identified as a key area to study due to the limited research undertaken on innovation within the retail industry. Hristov and Reynolds (2007) identified that further research was needed to explore innovation within retail, suggesting there should be elements of innovation included in the strategy of organisations to facilitate the development of current practices. Tether (2005) suggested that the lack of innovation within retail was due to the risk of financial investment being unsuccessful, this requires further exploration.

The study aims to understand the subjective experiences of participants employed in the retail industry. The researcher aims to identify learnings that would add knowledge to the retail industry, through the exploration of the leadership role and innovation.

The sub-objectives below were expanded to enable the exploration of the topic:

- How does the work environment affect innovation within retail?
- What motivates employees within retail to innovate and progress within their organisation?
- How do leaders establish creativity within their work teams?
- How do leaders create a culture of innovation within their organisation?

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Introduction

Methodology describes how research should be undertaken and includes the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that the research is based upon, whilst also including the implications of these on the research method adopted (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) argue that a systematic approach is required to ensure that the data is collected and analysed effectively. The systematic approach taken by the researcher was supported by the "research onion" established by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009). The research onion method has been used by the researcher to apply the research methodology effectively ensuring that each layer is analysed. The research onion ensures a consistent approach is taken to the methodology where there is a direct correlation with the research objectives (Saunders, et al., 2016). The inner layers of the research onion aim to collect data to explore the research question such as the methodological choice for the research study, the data collection methods, the time horizon and the methods that are used to develop and investigate the results of the study. The outer layers of the research onion explore the research philosophy and the approaches taken to define the initial motivation for research (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

The research was undertaken to identify similarities and gaps between the data collected from the interviewees and the supporting literature. The method of research will also be outlined in this chapter which will include both the strategy and design for the data collection and data management to result in a fair and ethical analysis. This chapter will also discuss the limitations that are found to include reliability, sample population and ethics, associated with conducting the semi-structured interviews.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the formation of beliefs and assumptions whilst developing knowledge with Saunders et al (2016) highlighting that it is important to determine the underlying research philosophy prior to completing a study. The undertaking of a new study will produce new knowledge therefore it is critical that there is an awareness of the assumptions underpinning the development of this knowledge.

Crotty (1998) states that a research study should not be carried out until assumptions of human knowledge are understood. This assisted the researcher in shaping the research question, establish suitable research methods to use and influence how the results and findings are interpreted. The underlying research philosophy enabled the researcher to find the best way of answering the research question as there were many directions that could have been taken. Quinlan (2011) argues that research should be shaped using a philosophical framework, insisting that each of the steps in the research process is linked to the purpose of the research study. Saunders et al. (2016) adds that there are many ways to answer a research question, including several research philosophies which may be suitable, highlighting that there is no "best" research philosophy when attempting to answer a research question.

While consciously made or not, there are assumptions made in research which include but are not limited to, realities confronted when completing the research (ontological assumptions), about human knowledge (epistemological assumptions) and how personal values influence the research process (axiological assumptions) (Burrell & Morgan, 2017).

Saunders et al (2016), state that axiology defines the role of ethics and values within research studies. The subject chosen for this dissertation was shaped by the researcher's interest on the topics of leadership and innovation and the experience the researcher had in this field. This indicates that the researcher found value in pursuing this topic for further research while also highlighting that the interpretive approach signifies the values of the researcher (Nordqvist, Hall & Melin,2009).

Collis and Hussey (2009), state that epistemology relates to knowledge, including how it is formed, assumptions generating knowledge and what is recognised as legitimate knowledge.

Similarly, to axiology, there is a relationship formed between the researcher and the topic chosen for the dissertation which has been influenced by ontological and axiological assumptions.

The ontological viewpoint enables the researcher to shape the research based on their ideas and beliefs about it. This research aims to explore the perspective of the employees' views and opinions of the leadership role in the innovation process; therefore, an ontological concept was used. Scotland (2012), supports this point, highlighting that each research method relates back to a distinct ontological position. Saunders et al. (2016) describe ontology as, what really exists and the different entities within reality while epistemology can be described as the assumptions about knowledge, what determines valid knowledge and how this is communicated to others.

Ontology is split into objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism can be described as the position in which social entities can exist in a reality external to social factors (Saunders, et al., 2016). Goodwin (2010) highlights that this illustrates there is just one objective and that theory relating to human behaviour should be verified based on observations that are certain. Quinlan (2011) found that objectivism is often linked with quantitative research using numbers and statistics to explore the connections between variables.

In opposition to objectivism, subjectivism (which includes interpretivism) identifies that social phenomena are established through perceptions and subsequent actions of social factors (Saunders, et al., 2016). Consequently, subjectivism identifies that each social factor has independent meanings and values which form certain types of behaviour. Thus, indicating that there is no definite view of reality across individuals which are incapable of being framed by rules and specific relationships. This demonstrates the subjective nature of reality and can only be determined by the participants that are being investigated (Saunders, et al., 2016). Quinlan (2011) and Saunders et al. (2009), highlight that subjectivism is linked to a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to gather data, which lends to the exploratory nature of this dissertation. This reality is constructed socially, which is subject to interpretations by individuals rather than using an absolutist approach (Saunders, et al., 2016). Quinlan (2011) argues that subjectivists will perceive that reality is across all individuals and stakeholders.

The interpretivism philosophy was used to gain the perspectives of different groups of employees within retail organisations with the aim of collecting meaningful data through the participants of the research (Crotty, 1998). Saunders et al. (2016) suggest that the interpretivist perspective is suitable for research conducted on business and the management of people.

The philosophy of ontology using an interpretivist approach was selected to enable the researcher to objectively explore the relationship that exists between leadership and innovation within the retail environment. This approach was taken to fully explore the attitudes and perceptions of individuals working in the retail environment on the role of the leadership position within innovation. King and Horrocks (2010) argue that there is a significant link between ontology, axiology and epistemology and their importance during the research process, providing the researcher with a greater awareness of their own philosophical stance when they are interlinked.

Research Design

Qualitative Approach

The researcher chose a qualitative method as the primary methodology for this research using semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. Given that the retail industry is under-researched in academia, qualitative research was selected to gain insights through the experience of the participants. The use of qualitative research was found to be best suited by the researcher as the process was of more concern than the outcome derived by gathering data from the experience of participants (Atieno, 2009). Qualitative research provides greater flexibility to the researcher as the nature of the study is exploratory. In contrast to this, quantitative research is rigid due to the nature of the data collection. The scientific methods of analysing data through a quantitative approach can be seen as a simpler option when reporting on the data due to the structure that is provided whilst qualitative research can be difficult to analyse due to the volume of data available from the interview stage (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

Qualitative research is an inductive approach enabling the researcher to build concepts and theories from the data provided by participants (Quinlan, 2011). An inductive analysis can be associated to the goal-free evaluation of Scriven's (1991), which requires the researcher to remain unbiased with no focus on a given result.

The collaboration of goal-free evaluation and flexibility offered the researcher the opportunity to identify hidden information within the findings by keeping an open mind. Inductive differs from deductive reasoning as deductive refers to a method whereby a set of assumptions being true can imply that a definite conclusion will be achieved (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). The use of deductive proof gives rise to the implication that results in the future can be projected once a specific range of premises are fulfilled.

The use of induction is based on a judgement of what can happen created by several assertions where the conclusion is supported and derived by established observations. Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) found that induction is a more common approach to qualitative research where the researcher uses a subjective form of analysis.

Sampling and Interview Design

Prior to undertaking a research study, the relevant population must be defined, with the target population formed by identifying a subset of the population. Quinlan (2011) highlights that the selection of an appropriate sample from the population determined can illustrate insights that are characteristic of the whole population. Saunders et al. (2009) highlight that the population within a study is all items, objects, and individuals relevant to the research. Emerson (2015) states that sampling is an act or a process that selects part of the population with the aim of identifying characteristics representative of the whole population. Therefore sampling is used as a representation of the population as limitations such as cost and practicality restrict the researcher from studying the entire population (Saunders, et al., 2016). Probability and non-probability sampling (or purposive) are the two central sampling methods.

This qualitative research is using nonprobability sampling as each member of the population selected in the sample is known and there is no random selection of participants (Quinlan, 2011). The use of homogenous sampling has been used by the researcher with co-workers and peers from within the industry selected to participate within the study due to similar profiles that are relevant to the research (Saunders, et al., 2016). The advantage of homogenous sampling is it increases the opportunity of collecting appropriate data due to the profile of the sample. There were eight participants initially identified to participate in this research with two unavailable and one declined. The homogeneous population of five still met the recommended criteria of between four and twelve recommended by Saunders et al. (2009).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) highlight the importance of matching the samples chosen with the research objectives to ensure pertinent data is obtained. The sample size in qualitative research tends to be smaller in size in order to facilitate an in-depth analysis that is critical to the mode of inquiry (Sandelowski, 1996).

Sandelowski (1996) recommends that the sample size selected for qualitative research is large enough to enable 'new and richly textured understanding' to be identified. Morse (2000) argues that fewer participants can be used if the data collected from the sample is useable and relevant data.

The quality of the research questions are found to influence the depth of the data generated with open questions found to be the best source of achieving richer data (Ogden & Cornwell, 2010). If the researcher had unlimited time to complete the research, informational redundancy could be used, where the sample size could be determined by the number of participants required to ensure new information was available. However, with time being a primary constraint, theoretical saturation is used to determine the sample size which indicates that sufficient data has been gathered for a comprehensive analysis (Morse, 2000).

The participants for the research were purposively selected based on the criteria below:

- Working in the retail industry
- Full-time employees
- The organisations were varied as the researcher aimed to identify common themes across different organisations within the retail sector
- Role was relevant as the researcher aimed to get the opinions of varied levels of seniority

The interviewer was required to prepare the questions in advance of the interviews to ensure the opportunity to gather information from the sample was maximised. The researcher also prepared the sequence of the questions for the interview to provide a conversational flow (Crotty, 1998).

Reliability, Validity and Bias

The reliability of the data presented by the participant is paramount to the success of the research study and it requires a thorough, careful and honest approach by the researcher (Robson, 2002) Reliability has two elements, internal and external reliability. The internal reliability relates to the interview process and the consistency of the process. The process should consider such things as a standardised structure which does not deviate over the course of the interview leading to greater reliability.

When a standardised process is not implemented, the interviewer or interviewee can let bias interfere with the questions being asked and the responses issued, this will negatively influence the data collection and analysis stage. To reduce the opportunity for bias within the process, the researcher designed the interview questions to match the research objectives and then issued the questions to the interviewee in advance of the interview so there was no misunderstanding of the question being asked during the interview. The interviewer was aware of the importance of the interviewee's replies to each question and on occasions where questions were not answered clearly, the interviewer asked for clarification so there was no misinterpretation of the data. This provided clarification of the reply for the interviewer.

External reliability is more relevant to quantitative research as the nature of the study leads to results that are less likely to change if the research was repeated (Quinlan, 2011). This does not alter the data collection and analysis process, where thorough consideration was given to ensure that the information provided was reliable. As qualitative research is exploratory in nature, Saunders et al. (2009), suggested that this research may provide differing results if it was to be repeated as the topic is continuously evolving. Any difference in results found are symptomatic of the subjective and unpredictable nature of qualitative research

The validity of a research study requires the researcher to identify findings that are relevant to the chosen subject (Saunders, et al., 2016). Validity is an important aspect of any research study and it is more relevant to qualitative studies than quantitative due to researcher or interviewee bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researcher bias can be created by factors that influence the researchers assumptions or knowledge negatively while respondent bias refers to dishonest responses that are presented to the researcher by the interviewee (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

As discussed previously, bias can have a negative effect on the data collection, therefore the interviewer must acknowledge their own viewpoints but dismiss their predetermined ideas when conducting the interview whilst ensuring answers aren't sought to justify their beliefs (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher chose to complete semi-structured interviews as this provided an opportunity for information to flow freely between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The flexibility provided by the semi-structured interviews allowed for themes both expected and unexpected to be formed. The themes that emerged will be analysed and discussed in the data analysis and findings chapter. Nygaard (2017) states that the use of semi-structured interviews enables the researcher to gain valuable insights through the exploration of the perceptions of employee's views of the leadership role within the retail industry. The semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity to follow topical aspects of the conversation when the researcher feels that it is beneficial and appropriate to do so, allowing for free-flowing information (Saunders, et al., 2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015), argue that semi-structured interviews are best used when there is only one opportunity to interview participants. The researcher found that this is the most appropriate form of inquiry to gain a deeper understanding from the participants of their views and beliefs of innovation within their retail organisations.

This enabled the researcher to compare the views from the sample population, providing the opportunity to develop and investigate common themes. The twenty open-ended questions were formulated using the research explored in the literature review.

Each of the questions were formed using themes identified in the literature which the researcher has outlined below:

- Barriers to innovation
- Leadership role within innovation
- Working environment
- Employee motivation and leadership influence

The themes identified were used to explore views of the participants and to investigate if there are other factors that drive innovative behaviours within retail which have yet to be found.

Time Horizon

A cross-sectional design was used to conduct this research. This design captures phenomenon or phenomena at a certain point in time as opposed to a longitudinal study which uses various time stamps and undertakes analysis of changes that may arise between stages (Saunders, et al., 2009). The time constraints of the study indicated that the cross-sectional design was the most appropriate.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Saunders et al. (2016) describes ethics as the behaviour standards that guide an individual's conduct in relation to the rights of participants who could be affected by the research. This highlights that due consideration must be given to each participant who engages with the research and participates in the interview process. The researcher must keep participants fully informed of all aspects of the research that may directly or indirectly affect them underpinned by transparency throughout the process.

Consent

To keep participants fully informed about the purpose of the research and their role within the study, a consent form (appendix 1) was issued to each participant prior to the interviews to gain informed consent. Informed consent empowers participants with all the required information to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the study (Quinlan, 2011). Saunders et al. (2009) recommend that participants are given all information that relates to the research and how the data will be interpreted. The consent form also included details regarding confidentiality and anonymity as some of the information discussed could be sensitive in nature. The consent form was emailed to each participant as the documents could not be presented in person due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. Each participant was given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any stage. The consent form stated that the researcher would record the interview once permission was granted and on each occasion it was.

The interviewer highlighted that the recording would be stored in a secure location and that all information contained in the interview would remain confidential. Since the implementation of GDPR in May 2018, the researcher must ensure that all information collected, is stored in a lawfully compliant manner.

Confidentiality

As some participants shared sensitive information relating to their employer and their line managers, anonymity is critical to the study. Saunders et al. (2016) recommend that information provided by participants should only be shared with bodies that have been previously disclosed to them. The data collected should only be available to the researcher, supervisor and the examiner. The researcher removed all identifying details about the participants from both the transcriptions and the data analysis. The anonymity provided the interviewee flexibility and an open environment when discussing certain topics in the interview. This provided an opportunity to create a strong rapport between the participant and the interviewer leading to richer information which increased validity and minimised bias.

Data Collection

Data was collected from primary and secondary sources for this research study. The methods used were deemed the most appropriate as the secondary data provided supporting material with gaps identified in previous academic literature that was relevant to the chosen subject. The secondary data used by the researcher has been collected from various sources of relevant literature such as peer-reviewed articles, journals, and books. Each of the sources used in the literature review are referenced in the references section. The literature provided the researcher with the opportunity to identify areas for further exploration through semi-structured interviews. As discussed in the previous section, ethical considerations were given to each participant during and after the data collection and analysis stage of the research process.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was of importance to the study as it enabled the researcher to identify any gaps that were present in the interview questions which could have negatively affected the formation of the themes whilst also providing the interviewer the opportunity to receive feedback from the interviewee. Creswell (2007) supports this, suggesting that a pilot study is critical to the research and should be undertaken prior to the interviews commencing.

The pilot study provided clarification to the researcher on weaknesses that were present in the interview process and these were then modified before the participants were interviewed. Once the pilot study was completed the interviews took place.

Interview Process

The interview process did not pose risks to participants. Participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any time during the process. Prior to undertaking the interviews with the researcher, each participant was given a clear overview of the purpose of the study, which included the research questions, the reasons why the research was conducted and the length of time to complete the research. This information alongside the requirements of qualification for the research were also issued.

The five interviews took place in June 2020 using Zoom meetings due to Covid-19 restrictions, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. They were all recorded as consent had been granted by the participants. The 20 open-ended questions that were asked relating to the leadership position and its role within innovation ensured the researcher received relevant and detailed information from the participants. The questions offered participants the opportunity to discuss their viewpoints on leadership and innovation in both a general context and within the retail environment, their motivation to innovate, their organisational culture and work environment, amongst other topics.

The interviews were concluded when the interviewer was satisfied with the data collected. The interviewee was thanked again for their participation in the research.

Data Storage

Data collated from the interviews was saved onto a PC that was password protected. The data was backed up onto a Google Drive folder. Each participant in the study was anonymised and any information that was identifiable with the participant was stored in a file that was password protected. All recordings and hard copies of interview questions that contained notes from the interview will be deleted and destroyed when the dissertation is graded.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data provided. This is one of many analytic approaches that could have been used to pinpoint patterns across the findings. Thematic analysis was selected as it provided the researcher flexibility as it is not linked to a specific theoretical framework, using previous academic studies by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a guide. Grounded theory was an alternative method of data analysis considered by the researcher, but it is a more rigid approach which requires the researcher to refer to the relevant literature during the data collection and analysis stage.

Thematic analysis was found to be an effective method of data analysis as it provided the researcher clear and concise steps to analyse the data. The six steps presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) are used in this research are briefly discussed below:

1. The researcher became familiar with the data during the transcription phase and by taking additional notes during the interview stage. The quick turnaround of the transcriptions after the interview stage (within 48 hours) ensured a high level of accuracy.
2. Coding was used to highlight salient points that were found in each transcript. This is an advantage of thematic analysis as responses that were expected or unexpected formed themes that could be often linked by similarities to the literature that was researched. The interpretive philosophy is intricately linked to thematic analysis due to its exploratory nature.
3. At this stage, the themes that were identifiable through the review of each transcript were formed. Sub-themes also emerged at this stage.
4. The flexibility that is provided by thematic analysis is underpinned by the lack of definition that is available as to what constitutes a theme, supported by Braun and Clarke (2006), who argue that there are no rules when identifying a theme. The researcher reviewed each transcript to ensure the themes identified could be supported by the literature researched.
5. The themes and sub-themes were refined at this stage ensuring that a suitable structure was in place to analyse the findings. The researcher ensured that themes were relevant to the dissertation topic and the framework that was used to form the questions. The researcher also reviewed the data to ensure the material was relevant to the research objectives.
6. The final stage of the guide is the inclusion of the themes into this dissertation. An inductive approach was used, ensuring relevant and compelling extracts from the transcripts relating to the research question and literature were included.
   There were also latent themes identified through the interviews linking what the interviewees said (semantic content) to the ideas behind what they said.

Thematic analysis does have limitations, such as the flexibility that it provides the researcher. This can lead to vast amounts of data being analysed by the researcher with time being spent on areas that are not critical to the research topic.

It was also found that the data can be descriptive in nature, but Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) suggest that this can be rectified by improving the quality of the research questions and the analysis of the data.

Limitations

There were limitations of the study which included the sample size and the nature of a qualitative study. There were five participants interviewed for this research and the answers given by the participants were based on their own opinions and beliefs. This is known as a self-report study and a criticism of this type of study relates to the bias an individual may have on the subject (Saunders, et al., 2009). This can lead to exaggerated answers, responses that are under-reported or incorrect answers if the participant has mis-understood the question asked.

A quantitative study indicates a clear answer through survey responses while the qualitative research conducted by the researcher requires conclusions to be created by the researcher which are subjective and dependant on how the answers are perceived, highlighting the issue surrounding external reliability (Quinlan, 2011). Although the answers provided by the participants do not permit for definitive answers, they do offer the opportunity for future research. The final limitation of the research study was the time available to complete the research on schedule and the circumstances that were presented to the researcher due to Covid-19. The participants within the study were available to meet only at scheduled times through Zoom as face to face meetings were not permitted due to government restrictions.

If there was more time to conduct further research, a greater sample size would have been selected to participate in interviews. The participants were not selected at random as the researcher required a mix of participants from varying roles within retail. This does not undermine the information that has been collected nor underestimate the findings through qualitative research (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

The next chapter will analyse the interviews and the responses received, using supporting material from previous research and literature.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which was undertaken to explore the role of leadership in driving innovation within the retail environment. In order to protect the participants anonymity and to comply with Data Protection regulations, each of the participants are referred to as participant 1,2,3,4 and 5. A brief description of the size of the organisation and the role of each participant has been included in the Appendices (appendix 3).

The data has been analysed using thematic analysis as described in the methodology chapter. Four themes were identified comprising of several sub-themes. The themes represent the viewpoints and experiences of the participants. The themes identified are as follows:

- ***Leadership Style***
- ***Motivation***
- ***Organisational Culture***
- ***Creativity***

Leadership Style

The theme leadership style was comprised of four sub-themes: collaboration, autonomy/lack of autonomy, work environment and strategic thinking. The theme emerged as each participant identified that leadership played a role in innovation.

Participant 1 identified that a leader plays a role in highlighting opportunities for the organisation:

"I suppose my understanding of a good leader would be somebody who has a particularly good and real understanding of what is going on and what is required to grow the business".

Participant 3 supported this while also including that their views on a leader include a desire to receive feedback which links with the first sub-theme collaboration:

"An excellent leader would be very inclusive and would be very much open to having conversations and hearing your feedback".

Participant 4 felt that a leader shows initiative in their role and communicates business plans to their subordinates:

"A leader shows initiative in their work, who takes charge and delegates roles to the employees while communicating well with their team".

While the differing views of each participant highlights the subjective nature of the topic it also identifies that participants recognise the need for strong leadership within innovation.

Collaboration

All participants identified that a level of collaboration was required to drive innovation within the retail environment. There were differing viewpoints to the extent collaboration was required to drive innovation based on the size of the organisation and the roles of participants. Participant 1 identified collaboration within their workplace, but due to the large size of the organisation ideas were not always possible to implement:

"Opportunities have been identified to better the service that has been offered to customers through team discussions……. I suppose one store amongst 150 stores isn't going to implement a huge change. So, it's looking at the vastness of the organisation and the number of layers …. people are more inclined to come forward with ideas in my experience when they work full time because they actually have a vested interest in the store doing well".

Participant 2 recognised that the small size of their organisation facilitated free-flowing information which provided a better opportunity to communicate innovative ideas and opportunities to senior management:

"Yes, I think information is free flowing because of the size of the business. The way that we communicate hasn't actually changed in my seven years there…. There's opportunity to discuss these ideas with the senior managers within"

Participant 4 found the small size of their organisation and access to senior management on a regular basis created frustrations as collaborative ideas and suggestions are discussed frequently but actions and results do not always emerge from them:

"It definitely can be frustrating because you're thinking to yourself, you're working for them, you're trying to get the best for them … And then nothing happens with ideas and suggestions aren't really recognised…... What's the point?"

Discussion and Analysis on Collaboration

This sub-theme emerged as participants considered collaboration as an important element in driving innovative ideas within the workplace. Participant 1,2 and 4 recognised that the opportunities to discuss and generate ideas were provided by senior management but due to either the size of the organisation or poor communication, the ideas were not regularly given the opportunity to be implemented. Cirella and Shani (2012) argue that collaboration triggers ideas between employees which drives creativity through open discussion and debate.

Baer, Leenders, Oldham and Vadera (2010) suggest that the composition of work teams supports competitiveness between the teams which increases the likelihood and opportunity of creativity within the organisation. Johansson (2004) found that a mix of collaboration and independent ideas is the most effective approach for innovation.

Autonomy/ Lack of Autonomy

Participants recognised that autonomy was required to implement ideas. It was identified that autonomy was more evident in smaller organisations than larger ones. Participants indicated that this was due to the lack of a framework in place in smaller organisations but also resources were limited in smaller organisations to implement ideas.

Participant 3 highlighted that their organisation had a system in place and while ideas were welcomed by senior management, the organisational ethos was not to disrupt the system:

"There is obviously a way of doing things in our business and it probably has a different way of trading than the conventional retailer…So, one of our big kind of factors will be don't mess with the model".

Participant 5, described an open door policy in their organisation, which provided employees the opportunity to approach senior management with innovative ideas whilst also highlighting that the idea had a better chance of being pursued if a detailed proposal was documented for senior management to review:

"Yes, I think ideas can be communicated to senior managers. That door is always open for employees…. I want to give you a great idea and outline how I believe it's going to affect the organisation"

Participant 4, suggested innovative ideas are discussed and employees are given the autonomy to implement ideas but too frequently there is a delay in implementation through lengthy discussions which can lead to a loss of appeal or a competitor having developed the idea in the meantime:

"It's something that was maybe put on the long finger maybe due to the risk of the investment…..a lot of people had suggested it and it just seemed like it was never going to happen and it was losing its appeal…. but it eventually did happen and was beneficial…. Unfortunately, our competitors had already began implementing a similar idea"

Discussion and Analysis on Autonomy

This sub-theme identified that innovative opportunities were given greater prospects of implementation in smaller organisations due to the agile model that was in place in comparison to larger organisations which operate using consistent frameworks.

The autonomy that is evident in the smaller organisations relies on the investment of senior management to implement ideas where financial resources are required. Martins and Terblanche (2003) suggest the development of teams within the retail environemnt composed of employees with varying skills and levels of expertise enable innovation to prosper as this creates a flatter management structure. Mumford (2012) identifies that leaders should aim to provide autonomy to their employees to create innovation as this empowerment removes barriers to upward communcation between the employee and the leader. This enables the employee to discuss and debate ideas openly with the leaders within their organisation. Free-flowing communication is a critical aspect of creativity where knowledge sharing leads to improvements and opportunities when the correct environment is present. This was identified through the Componential Model of Organisational Creativity framework used by the researcher.

Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that leaders should encourage failure through a supportive manner where employees feel empowered to take risks which is a key factor in idea generation and innovation. This lends to a fail forward culture inspiring employees to be creative with all failures seen as a success.

Desire or lack of desire to Innovate

The participants recognised that the working conditions created through their leader's strategic objectives was critical to the production of innovation within their workplace. There were differences evident between small and large organisations.

Participant 3 identified that the knowledge sharing systems that were in place enabled idea generation and communication of these ideas to senior management:

"So, we have our own app where processes and procedures are on the app. So, from home, you can do your training, read organisational updates, share thoughts and ideas with colleagues……managers have their own app too where we communicate with each other"

Participant 4 and 5 highlighted that their respective roles did not prioritise innovation as their leaders viewed their positions as task orientated over creative.

Participant 4 discussed that:

"It would hinder innovation because you're trying to be innovative, discussing ideas with colleagues but there is little spare time available …you're not even going to have too many opportunities to think about improvements that could be made"

Participant 5 supported this argument by highlighting that resources are limited and therefore the focus is on completing tasks throughout the day rather than identifying ways that current processes or procedures could be improved:

"I think the focus is on maintenance and tasks rather than improvements…….it can relate to people not having enough time to possibly look at how to do something better"

Discussion and Analysis on the Desire or Lack of Desire to Innovate

The viewpoints of the participants highlighted that resources are required to improve the opportunities to innovate. It was identified that improved resources would benefit the smaller organisations through the development of knowledge sharing tools as discussed by participant 3 whilst also providing additional support to the current work teams in the smaller organisations as highlighted by participant 4 and 5.

The prioritisation of task completion in their day to day roles was identified as an inhibitor to idea generation. Mumford (2000) suggests that the stimulation of ideas and creativity are greatly improved when suitable conditions are present.

The leadership role is required to create an atmosphere within their organisation that empowers employees to take reflective time with the aim to identify opportunities to improve current processes while potentially creating new ideas to benefit the organisation (Cummings & Oldham, 1997). Mauzy et al. (2003) argues that leaders should create an open communication channel within the organisation to ensure information is free flowing generating the opportunity to develop innovation through the collaboration of different ideas. Cummings and Oldham (1997) highlight that a positive attitude of leaders towards innovation, including physical and financial support to employees establishes motivation to achieve the strategic objectives of the organisation.

Strategic Thinking

The participants identified that strategic thinking was required to develop innovation within the organisation. Participants recognised that the strategy outlined by the leaders provided the platform for innovation whilst the lack of strategic thinking prohibited innovative ideas.

Participant 2 discussed the leaders lack of strategic thinking within their organisation diminished the opportunity of employees pursuing a lengthy career there:

"So, I think roles that lack development or lack innovation aren't going to attract employees…. I suppose the role can be just seen as a steppingstone and it's hard to build a long-term strategy with employees who don't see themselves being with that organisation"

Participant 3 identified that strategic thinking in their organisation included forward planning which involved training employees to ensure they were prepared for roles as and when they became available:

"The regular in-store training that is given is where it is evident that there is a strong structure where they continuously train to get you where they need and want you to be, keeping employees engaged…it means you're not losing people, like a lot of people are there a long time because there is opportunity to kind of work your way up through promotions"

Participant 5 identified that a lack of strategic thinking could affect organisational goals highlighting that if there is no clear vision for the employees to follow, the organisation can become followers of competitors which could reduce growth opportunities:

"Along with maybe a lack of a strategic plan that maybe managers know of, it just creates a void…. Well, what's all this about? What do we want to achieve? I think it is key to have those goals regarding do we want to be the best at doing one thing, or do we want to copy a competitor doing this"

Discussion and Analysis on Strategic Thinking

This sub-theme identified that a clear strategic plan benefitted the organisation. The organisation benefitted through positive engagement of employees, an increased opportunity of innovation and a robust structure that presents promotional prospects for suitable candidates, whilst the organisation can actively plan knowing that staff turnover will be reduced.

Reynolds et al. (2007) argue that there needs to be clear strategic objectives communicated by the leaders within an organisation to ensure operational functions are optimised and resources are allocated to innovation. This ensures practices are reviewed and employees are given the opportunity to improve them. This would increase "buy-in" of employees into organisational objectives as their input will enable operational improvements. Hristov and Reynolds (2007) highlight that there are many instances where innovative practices occur within the retail environment, however as leaders do not highlight these objectives in their strategic plan, the ideas are often not recorded and the opportunity to implement is lost.

Strategic thinking is linked to the desire/lack of desire to innovate and autonomy sub-themes. The researcher identified that employees will not continue to pursue opportunities to improve the organisation if they feel that their ideas will be disregarded by senior management. The connection between themes will be discussed further under 'motivation' below. Participant 3 discussed the use of technology for idea generation and knowledge sharing within their work environment which aligns with the views of Pantano and Laria (2012) who suggest that technology is required to improve the consumer experience and alter the consumers perceptions of the organisation. This provides an opportunity for retailers to co-create innovative ideas with their supply chain as they can partner with suppliers to enhance the customer experience through instore and online technology.

The synergy between organisations and their suppliers would need to form part of the leader's organisational strategy to ensure the marketing of new products and services are aligned with the current objectives of the organisation.

Discussion and Analysis of the Leadership Style

Participants acknowledged the benefits of having a leader who encouraged employees to collaborate through the sub-themes identified. Amabile and Mueller (2008) argue that the behaviour adopted by the leader can instil innovation within retail organisations. They found that leaders who are willing to take risks created a culture where subordinates were willing to participate in unconventional behaviour which led to idea generation and innovation.

It was also found that participants had differing opinions on autonomy based on the size of their organisation as participants from smaller organisations had perceived autonomy to implement creative ideas, but they lacked the resources to do so. In contrast, participants from larger organisations had difficulty achieving management "buy-in" as local innovative ideas were found to be difficult to implement across the organisation.

Amabile (1996) identified that a supportive attitude towards innovation directed and developed by the leader is critical to innovation as employees are more willing to share ideas freely with colleagues which offers work teams the opportunity to collaborate. There was a common belief between participants that leaders required strategic-thinking and planning within their organisations to improve employee engagement. Tidd and Bessant (2014) argue that innovation will not occur by chance and it should be embedded in the organisational strategy if it is to be achieved.

Mendonca (2017) identifies that leaders who empower employees to discuss their opinions on current organisational strategy and enable them to give honest feedback increase the performance of the organisation as the buy-in from employees is improved due to their involvement in the process. Mumford (2012) agrees with Mendonca (2017), highlighting that organisational performance can be increased by providing the employees the opportunity to debate strategies with leaders as this provides creative input leading to improved idea generation. Hunter et al. (2007) argue that creative engagement is increased between subordinates and leaders if there is confidence in the leaders decision-making skills.

Motivation

Motivation is comprised of two sub-themes: incentives and career path/intrinsic motivation. This theme was an important element in the findings as it indicated how the participants perceived they were valued within their organisations.

Incentives

Participant 1 identified that incentives can play a part in the creation of ideas, but they did suggest that the utilisation of incentives to drive innovative practices and creative ideas could only be measured if the ideas were implemented:

"I think if there were financial incentives in place, I think, yes, people would push ideas forward. But equally, I think that would be contingent on whether the idea had been utilized or not"

Participant 1 also highlighted that there is also a connection between incentives and intrinsic motivation as employees could feel demotivated by not receiving any financial incentives for creating new ideas while also becoming demoralised if their ideas are disregarded:

"It kind of goes back to well, if ideas are slipping through the cracks, not only are you not getting the financial incentive, your idea also has fallen to the wayside and you haven't got a response as to why its implementation is not possible"

Participant 3 identified financial incentives as the primary motivator within their organisation highlighting that individual incentives and team incentives were available:

"From an incentive point of view, every store has a fund. That is money that the store can raise themselves for team activities……. but again, the incentives really are what motivates the team whether it could be a gift voucher or a bonus in their pay".

Participant 5 recognised incentives as being a perk for employees, identifying that incentives could have a negative impact as employees become too focused on achieving the incentive and not on opportunities to improve the current processes or procedures within the business:

"….incentives could be used where you want to drive motivation but you've got to work as a collective, and you have to be selfless in what you do, where you're doing the job to benefit everybody, not just to earn more money….. So, like I said, if you want to create an innovative environment, there needs to be a common goal there within the team"

Discussion and Analysis of Incentives

This sub-theme identified a common belief between participants that incentives can be used effectively to drive innovation within the organisation but they are better utilised in a collaborative manner where the incentive is aligned with the innovation strategy of the organisation. Laffont and Martimort (2002) argue this is not the case, stating that rewarding employees for idea generation through the use of financial incentives contradicts the innovation process as it places too much emphasis on an outcome rather than the process. The research identifies that innovation is created through knowledge sharing and the co-creation of ideas, where concepts are developed through iterations. Where a financial incentive is in place, the objective can be clouded by the reward. Wash and MacKie-Mason (2006) concur, expressing that employees often create errors in pursuit of the financial reward where the result is their focus and not the method of achieving it. Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007) argue that employees can create ideas and innovate when financial rewards are available, highlighting that the leaders behaviour and the emphasis that is placed on the financial rewards embeds this attitude in the organisational culture.

Amabile and Mueller (2008) identify that the availability of time for employees to spend thinking about process improvements and creative thoughts is more beneficial to the organisation and the employee as it enhances the opportunity for knowledge sharing which improves employee's prospects of career progression, often leading to longer term financial rewards.

Career Path and Intrinsic Motivation

Participants identified career path and their intrinsic motivation as important to their desire to create and share ideas within the organisation. Some participants highlighted that a lack of career opportunities within the organisation reduced their desire to improve current organisational practices:

Participant 2 identified a lack of long-term goals for employees and the organisation as a demotivating factor which hindered their desire to be innovative:

"So, I think it's difficult to attract somebody when you can't promise them a career. It is difficult to attract motivated people and just offer them short term goals. I think somebody who is highly motivated needs a long-term vision or needs a path"

Participant 3 explained the positive results that a career path has for the employee and the organisation:

"*When you start with the business, there is up to three months training…. I think the biggest thing is that it keeps people engaged and it means you're not losing people".*

Participant 4 described the opportunities that can be provided when employees join the business at the beginning of their career:

"For example, the manager that's in my store at the moment, he started work at 17 and so he kind of worked his way up through the ranks…I know a couple of people that are in the business and they've worked their way up to management roles, which is a nice kind of incentive to have"

This contradicts the point participant 2 raised. Participant 2 joined their organisation at a young age and after a short period of time they had no opportunity of progression.

Discussion and Analysis of Career Path and Intrinsic Motivation

This sub-theme identified both similarities and contradictions between the participants. Participant 2 identified that a short-term vision by leaders of their organisation hindered the opportunity to improve the organisation while participant 3 and participant 4 identified that longer-term vision enabled employees to see a career path through promotional opportunities. The longer-term vision led to a desire to provide improvements to the organisation. Amabile (1996) argues that a supportive working environment which provides a career path for employees is critical to facilitating innovation and the sustainability of the organisation.

Hunter et al. (2007) identify that leaders often possess an intrinsic motivation to succeed which is a key trait that can inspire confidence in employees as the leader is open to ideas that could improve the organisation creating further opportunities for employees. The research recognises that the career objectives of the leader within the organisation is a factor in employees' motivation to prosper. A strategic plan that includes growth opportunities for employees through an expansion of the organisation provides career prospects and this makes the organisation more appealing for career driven employees.

Beheshtifar and Kamani-Fard (2013) suggest that the creative input of an employee is often led by their intrinsic motivation which establishes the opportunity to succeed within the organisation.

The researcher recognises that such employees are more likely to be beneficial to the organisation in the longer term. These employees have the desire to evolve in their role with ambitions to progress through commitment to their development which positions them to grasp promotional opportunities when they become available. Hunter et al. (2011) indicate that the motivation for an employee to generate ideas and innovate within their work environment is driven by a relentless behaviour towards achieving their goals.

Ames (1992) discusses that employees behave in a certain manner based on their values and beliefs. This aligns with the viewpoint of participant 2 who has become demotivated within their organisation as they cannot see a future promotion available to them. This needs to be recognised by the leaders within the organisation as the employee may decide to leave when they feel that there are no prospects for them. These actions negatively affect the strategic objectives of the leader through an inability to plan successfully for the future.

Meunier and Bradley (2019) argue that leaders must establish what motivates their employees to ensure that they are satisfied in their role, highlighting that an employee's motivations will change over time. This requires clear and open communication between leaders and employees.

Discussion and Analysis of Motivation

The participants recognised that incentives and a career path played a pivotal role in motivating them to improve their organisations while also increasing their desire to work with their respective employers. Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007) found that employees seek stimulation from their leader through financial rewards.

The use of financial incentives was found to increase motivation levels but participant 5 did indicate that financial incentives can contribute to the wrong type of behaviour where employees become selfish and focus on their own gains rather than the value that they are adding to their organisation. The viewpoint of participant 5 is supported by Laffont and Martimont (2002) as they suggest rewarding employees for idea generation and creativity with financial incentives hinders innovation as the incentive focuses on a result rather than the process.

The creative process includes iterations of ideas that leads to innovative practices while the result can be rushed with a lack of focus on the strategic objectives of the organisation if an employee is aiming to receive a financial reward (Wash & MacKie-Mason, 2006).

This indicates that incentives would be better used in a collaborative manner where employees are incentivised to work together towards an organisational goal, therefore the team and the organisation collectively benefit from innovative ideas.

Dewhurst et al. (2009) suggest that employees are found to be motivated by leaders that offer regular feedback and recognition for creative input in the organisation. Amabile and Mueller (2008) concur with this as they argue leaders' feedback during the creative process creates buy-in by employees due to the collaborative approach taken by the leader. Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) found that there needs to be a desire to change current methods by leaders for innovation to take place. Participant 4, reported that their motivation levels were affected by the lack of implementation of ideas that were discussed with leaders in the organisation, highlighting that creative suggestions have reduced in their store as there was no vision to include these in the strategic plan of the organisation.

Organisational Culture

Participants were invited to share their experience of organisational culture and the role it plays in innovation. The participants were asked if they felt their work environment influenced creative thinking and innovation. Two sub-themes emerged in exploring organisational culture: work environment, training and succession planning.

Work Environment

The work environment in the context of organisational culture was discussed in detail by each participant in relation to idea generation.

Differences were identified based on the size of the organisation, but a common argument developed around a fear of change which inhibited the development of ideas into new practices.

Participant 1 recognised that the work environment provided by the leaders in their organisation stifled innovation due to the size of the brand:

"A factor that needs to be taken into consideration is flexibility within the environment. Depending on how big the brand is, creativity is exceedingly difficult unless you are in a certain role within the organisation…… I think in the event everybody was let loose with their creativity; it could be dangerous; you could lose the brand message all together"

Participant 2 identified that their work environment enabled idea generation but there was a lack of follow-up by managers with senior management when ideas were discussed. It was also identified that a log of innovative ideas would simplify the process of communicating the ideas with senior management as they could all be stored in one location and re-visited at scheduled meetings:

"*And maybe if there was somewhere for creative ideas to be reviewed, there'd be more emphasis on a regular follow-up by managers. Maybe there'd be more pressure for senior management to listen and middle managers could change the culture of top-level management by documenting good ideas and following up on a regular basis"*

Participant 5 highlighted how the work environment could contribute to innovative behaviours if there was a common goal between the employees and senior management. This point was further developed when participant 5 identified that the lack of innovative ideas implemented by the organisation effected the future creation of ideas, as employees felt undermined when their views were not listened to:

"*If you want to create an innovative environment, there needs to be a common goal there…… the lack of implementation can actually diminish the creativity from others because they realize I'm actually kind of being undermined here when none of my suggestions are listened to"*

Discussion and Analysis of the Work Environment

In this sub-theme participants identified that the work environment enabled the creation of ideas for their organisations but there was a resistance identified which stemmed from the size of the organisation and the leaders lack of desire to change.

This was also seen to influence the future development of ideas for the organisation as participants felt that it was less likely that ideas would be implemented which reduced the probability of employees making senior management aware of new ideas. Rodan (2002) suggests that leaders need to set goals that factor idea generation into their strategic objectives to develop a culture of innovation within the organisation. The researcher identifies that retailers can improve their product and services by regularly implementing ideas. Though some ideas will fail, others can be developed into successful concepts through iterations and further knowledge sharing by key stakeholders.

Mumford and Hunter (2005) suggest further research be undertaken to identify how relevant the input of employees is in achieving organisational goals, highlighting that some leaders do not manage their organisation in this manner.

This can be seen to reduce employee "buy-in" and increase the rate of attrition where employees do not pursue a career within the organisation as their ideas and input are not valued. This was discussed by participant 5. Amabile and Mueller (2008) argue that an organisation is unable to create a sustainable model without collaboration, as all segments of the business need to be regularly reviewed to identify gaps in service or product offering. Mumford (2012) identifies open dialogue between leaders and employees as a key element of the review process.

Employee Training and Succession Planning

This sub-theme identified larger organisations had both the strategy and resources to implement successful training plans for employees. Senior management identified where opportunities were within the organisation and where they felt future opportunities would arise. This contrasted with the viewpoints of the participants from smaller organisations who highlighted that smaller organisations did not implement a strategy that factored in the future role of employees and skills required to bring the organisation forward.

Participant 1 highlighted the in-house and external training provided by their organisation increased the skillsets of employees empowering them to complete their job to the best of their ability:

"…in house training that is provided like on the job training for merchandise, and employees also get sent on external courses to build-up their skillsets…. I suppose you identify key talent, then prime them formally and informally for current and prospective roles in the organisation"

Participant 3 recognised that the high level of quality training given to employees within their organisation enabled employees to gain an understanding of their role and the role of others, while also giving the organisation an understanding of areas where employees need continuous training to ensure they are prepared for future roles:

"*I had three months training before I started my management role and I was trained in all areas of the store… we have people that are coaches and they go out into the stores and actually spend one on one time with employees, identifying if they need to upskill while also monitoring who has the potential to be promoted"*

Participant 5 identified a flaw in the training provided within their organisation, due to a lack of time and commitment given to the needs of the employee and the future needs of the organisation. This highlights that diluting the time dedicated to training can cause further process and procedural issues for the organisation:

"…It's probably down to a case of time, bad practices and possibly not enough training…..So if it is on the job, like I said, it can be hit and miss regarding the training, so some people could be shown the wrong way or processes can get watered down…Eventually the core of what should be done can get lost through bad habits being taught"

Discussion and Analysis of Employee Training and Succession Planning

This sub-theme identified that the different approaches taken by leaders in larger organisations to training and succession planning in comparison to the on the job approach to training that was apparent in smaller organisations impacted succession planning and innovation.

It was evident that the structured approach taken by the larger organisations enabled the business to plan while also providing the opportunity to maximise employee's productivity on a day to day basis. The lack of formal training provided in the smaller organisations created a lack of consistency in the training provided to employees which hindered succession planning. Tidd and Bessant (2014) argue that a learning environment is critical to innovation and leaders should allocate sufficient resources to enable employees to improve their skills within the workplace which can improve the opportunity of identifying creative ideas to benefit the organisation. An investment in training may not bring an immediate financial return.

Hunter et al. (2007) suggest that the change culture that can be created due to idea creation and the implementation of innovative practices can position retail organisations strongly against competitors, recognising that innovation should be part of each organisation's strategic objectives.

Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007) found that a competitive advantage can be gained by organisations who use innovation as a process that enables colleagues to collaborate on projects that stimulate ideas through an environment that seeks to identify opportunities to disrupt the status quo. This provides growth opportunities for retail organisations which can subsequently facilitate promotional opportunities for employees through succession planning (Gallouj, 2008).

Discussion and Analysis of Organisational Culture

The sub-themes found that a framework was required to provide consistency in the training provided to each employee within their respective organisations. Participants highlighted that succession planning required ongoing training and the use of both in-house and external training was effective in achieving this. Zhou and George (2001) suggest that leaders can develop a learning culture by integrating employees into different business departments to increase knowledge sharing whilst also providing the opportunity for employees to increase their skillset within the organisation. Mauzy et al. (2013) found that this strategy increased the longevity of an employee's career within the organisation as the opportunity to experience varied roles on a rotational basis increased their skillset and the knowledge within the business. Adams (2006) found that this was more likely in smaller organisations as employees naturally participate in varied roles. This can be related to the feedback of participant 4, while participant 2 identified the lack of structure within their organisation "diminished the likelihood of a prolonged career" as there was no clear career path. It was evident through the participants viewpoints that the opportunity to add-value to their organisations is greatly increased when their knowledge of the organisational objectives is present and the opportunity to provide feedback to senior management is available.

Participants identified that clear communication was required to outline why innovative ideas were not implemented by senior management as employees became disillusioned when suggestions or recommendations were not listened to. It was reported by participant 2, 4 and 5 that a lack of justification when ideas were not implemented after discussions had taken place, negatively impacted the culture within the organisation as the participants did not feel "valued".

Creativity

The final theme that emerged was creativity composed of two sub-themes: idea generation and resources both financial and time.

Idea Generation

The participants held similar views on idea generation, however it was evident that ideas generated in smaller organisations had the opportunity to improve processes and procedures. Participants from larger organisations confirmed that management were happy to hear ideas, but ideas were more difficult to implement due to layers of management and the size of the organisation.

Participant 2 highlighted that small improvements made to processes and procedures were beneficial to the organisation through the development of ideas that had been generated within the team:

"…exploring some new ideas and some processes, translating those ideas into something that's of value to either the organisation or the customer….It does not have to be something new either, it can be a change to an existing practice"

Participant 3 discussed how their organisation aimed to achieve rich, new ideas, aiming to implement great ideas across the business while also highlighting the difficulties executing ideas across each store as there are different customer markets based on store locations. Participant 3 highlighted that their organisation gathered ideas that employees generated through an online forum:

"And it can be down to anything, down to any type of improvement that will benefit the business, employees send them through to management via the online forum and they give out prizes every year for ideas that they decide to implement to the whole business…..While ideas are shared freely between managers, some may work at a local level but not across the whole business as there are different customer demands across our stores"

Participant 4 acknowledged many ideas are discussed and implemented at store level but when communicated to senior management rarely get the attention the idea deserves which leads to a lack of development of the idea across the organisation:

"*Like I said, if you're going to suggest an idea and it is working well in our store, it's either put on the long finger or it's just gone overhead…..It's not kind of looked at or implemented for the business which can be quite frustrating"*

Discussion and Analysis of Idea Generation

The participants acknowledged that the ideas generated were of benefit to their respective organisations while highlighting that the ideas were difficult to implement across the business due to consumer demands. It was also identified by one participant that knowledge sharing using their online forum ensured information was communicated to management. A lack of desire to implement local ideas across the organisation was also discussed. Hristov and Reynolds (2007) argue that idea generation should be incorporated into the culture of the organisation to enable the organisation to develop innovative practices that will increase their competitiveness. Medina and Rufin (2009) highlight that leaders of organisations should prioritise innovation within the strategic objectives of the organisation for it to be communicated to all employees. They also argue that idea generation should be co-created by retailers and their supply chain to optimise their opportunity of success.

Resources: Time and Financial

This sub-theme was a salient element over the course of the interviews. Participants highlighted that time was not adequately allocated to the formation of ideas while also acknowledging that financial resources were not available in smaller organisations to pursue innovative projects.

Participant 2 recognised that a lack of financial resources is a barrier to innovation within their organisation, while also identifying that short-term vision from senior management can hinder innovation:

"…a lack of resources or budget is also another barrier… a lack of shared vision or just a lack of time or appetite from senior management to commit to a long-term vision"

Participant 3 discussed how their organisation put resources into innovation, but they are contingent on idea generation rather than direct implementation of ideas as the brand must be kept consistent for customers:

"*They actually have put in great resources for change and innovation, but you're just not going to get the immediate go ahead with ideas…. if everyone was innovating and doing their own things there would be no consistency between the stores and how the business is perceived by customers"*

Participant 5 identified a lack of time and investment within their organisation as a barrier to the creation and implementation of ideas, highlighting that employees will be less willing to contribute more to the business if they are under-resourced:

"I think the barriers tend to come with time, resources, a little bit of investment…. I think resources are key and employees not having time to do their job can tend to make them feel fatigued and not want to take more on board. That's certainly one issue"

Discussion and Analysis of Resources: Time and Financial

The participants held differing viewpoints on the impact time and resources had on creativity within their organisation. The participants in larger organisations confirmed there was a budget (both financial and time) available for creativity and idea generation. They highlighted this was more beneficial to local stores as ideas were not easily implemented across the wider organisation. Participants from smaller organisations felt they were under-resourced to complete their day to day functions and their ability to expand creative ideas was significantly diminished due to the level of tasks that required completion daily. Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) argue that a smaller business can be beneficial as it can adapt to change quickly which is a key requirement in retail. The financial concern discussed by the participants from smaller organisations was considered by Tether (2005) who found that organisations stayed with the status quo as they did not want the risk attached to investing resources into innovation. It was found that time was a more beneficial resource to invest in innovation within services as this increased the opportunity for employees to share knowledge (Tether, 2005). Cummings and O'Connell (1978) found that the experience and expertise of a leader enables them to efficiently and effectively allocate resources based on their strategic objectives. Crossan and Holland (2010) argue that resources should be allocated to innovation as this establishes a learning environment which benefits the employee and the organisation.

Discussion and Analysis of Creativity

Participants shared similar views on creativity, identifying that idea generation is required in businesses to ensure improvements are made and innovative opportunities are grasped. It was found that participants employed by larger organisations identified a risk adverse approach to the implementation of ideas due to the layers of management and the varied consumer demands that occur across many store locations. The lack of resources and an absent strategic vision in smaller organisations was identified as a barrier to idea implementation. Tipping and Zeffren (1995) suggest that resources should be allocated to idea generation and creative ideas to generate a competitive advantage for the organisation. Tidd and Bessant (2014) highlight that organisations should remove blockers to innovation, identifying that a work environment which inspires creativity will increase knowledge sharing between employees. They found that this should be reviewed regularly to identify changes that can be made to the environment to align innovation and the strategic goals of the organisation. Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007) identified that retail managers who encouraged idea generation within their organisation, improved the organisational culture which positively impacted the performance of the retail organisation. Cirella and Shani (2012) found that open communication between employees increased the prospect of innovating through debate and discussion. Although participants from smaller organisations reported that resources were not invested in innovation, Baer et al. (2010) identified that minimal resources were required to establish creativity within the work environment as the composition of teams established creative behaviour amongst peers.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the study which set out to investigate the leadership role and its impact on innovation within the retail environment. The themes of leadership style, motivation, organisational culture and creativity emerged from the data analysis. Participants identified that the work environment created by leaders within their organisations had positive and negative effects on innovation. It was recognised that a collaborative environment increased the opportunity to generate ideas while innovation was diminished when leaders did not provide resources to generate innovation. Employees also felt undermined and disillusioned when senior managers did not communicate why their ideas were not executed or included in a strategic plan.

The research also identified that participants from smaller organisations had more autonomy to implement ideas due to a lack of framework in place, but they often did not have the financial resources or the time to implement ideas successfully. Participants from larger organisations highlighted that resources were provided for change and innovation, but the implementation of ideas was often delayed due to layers of management or the size of the organisation. The use of incentives was recognised as a useful tool for generating ideas from employees, but some participants believed that incentives could create a selfish culture therefore, using incentives that were aimed at collaborative work could be more beneficial to the organisation. Participants acknowledged that leaders who provided employees with a career path had a better opportunity to inspire innovative behaviours within their teams as employees would become invested in the organisation and its goals. The data received from participants introduced some original and enlightening perspectives, however they also confirmed some findings that were present in the literature review.

The nature of the qualitative study provided limitations due to the subjectivity of the data collected. The exploratory element to the research eliminated the opportunity to view the findings objectively, however this was the researcher's intention so as to gain a deeper understanding of both the leadership role and the innovation process within retail organisations. The use of a wider population including employees from a variety of retail outlets in different locations with contrasting roles, could provide the opportunity for further research. This could be then added to the limited research that has been conducted to date on leaderships role within innovation in the retail sector.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This dissertation explored the role of leadership in innovation within the retail environment. The exploration was qualitative, interpretive and inductive in nature. The aim of the research was to gain an understanding of the participants viewpoints through their subjective experiences. The classification of innovation within the various work environments and the role of the leaders in prioritising this within their strategic objectives was subjective with each participant sharing their interpretations of both.

The literature identified academic studies that were relevant to this topic, highlighting there was opportunity for further research on innovation within retail. There is a volume of research available on innovation, but it is lacking when it is linked to the retail industry. The Componential Model of Organisational Theory created by Amabile in 1988 was used as a framework to assist the researcher in maintaining a consistent approach throughout the study. The framework was used as a pillar to support the formulation of the questions asked at the interview stage with the researcher focusing on the four main components: knowledge, creative thinking, motivation, and the working environment. These four elements were found to be linked to innovative practices within the retail environment and the researcher demonstrated opportunities for retailers to improve their current approach to innovation. The semi-structured interviews were completed using Zoom meetings due to the Covid-19 restrictions which made the process more challenging than a face to face approach.

As outlined by the researcher there were four sub-objectives of the research, which will now be summarised.

The research explored how the work environment contributed to innovation. The findings identified that leaders who established innovation as a strategic objective created a work environment where employees were encouraged to share knowledge and generate ideas, with a fail forward mindset by management. This highlighted that innovation required ideas of all nature where even the unsuccessful ones provided opportunity for organisational improvements through iteration.

The researcher explored the motivations of employees as a sub-objective. Intrinsic motivation and incentives were identified as contributing factors to innovation. Participants felt that incentives were required to motivate employees, while others identified that financial rewards hindered innovation as the reward became the primary focus of employees. Research conducted by Laffont and Martimort (2002) supported this finding.

The third sub-objective explored creativity within the organisation. A collaborative approach where knowledge was shared between various business departments increased the opportunity of creativity and innovation as opinions from specialist areas merged to create the best ideas. Taggar (2001) supported this, identifying that teams with varying skill sets facilitated innovation. It was found that resources were needed for this with participants identifying financial resources as a requirement while each participant acknowledged that the allocation of time was critical to creativity.

The final sub-objective explored the importance of the organisational culture created by the leader. Participants identified that leaders should develop empowerment within their organisation to enable employees to make decisions whilst also providing a platform for employees to discuss their ideas freely with senior management. The removal of a perceived barrier between management and employees enabled ideas to be developed through debate and discussion between both parties. It was also identified that an agile structure enabled organisations to react promptly to the fast pace of retail. Whilst participants from smaller organisations found they were able to respond quickly due to the size of their organisation, larger organisations can establish the same agility through improving employee's skillset creating a more cross functional workforce.

The implication of these findings follows previous research on leadership and innovation within retail, such as studies undertaken by Amabile (1996) and Hristov and Reynolds (2015). Further research is necessary on leaderships role in innovation within retail to expand the learning on this topic. The limitations of a small-scale study such as time constraints, sample size and the difficult circumstances presented by Covid-19, restricted the opportunity to expand the research further.

Recommendations

Work Environment

The work environment was discussed throughout the interview stage with four of the five participants highlighting that their organisations were focused on task completion rather than opportunities to improve current practices. Therefore, a work environment that provides employees with the opportunity to collaborate and discuss innovative thoughts is recommended with brainstorming sessions identified as a platform for this. This requires employers to allocate resources through investment in time to provide the platform to increase the opportunity of innovation.

Career Path

It was found that each of the participants were in pursuit of a clear career path. The researcher identified that the resource restrictions present in the smaller organisations increased the likelihood of staff turnover which impacted the employee's willingness or desire to add value to the organisation through innovation or knowledge sharing.

Therefore, regular projects should be created to align with the strategic objectives of the organisations that will keep employees focused. If implemented effectively, the projects could lead to greater success for the organisation providing scope for employees to develop in their role. The participants from larger organisations were attracted to their respective companies due to the opportunity to progress.

Leadership Style

The importance of an open-door style of leadership was identified in this dissertation. The participants each discussed that a culture providing autonomy and empowerment was required to drive innovation. There was only one participant who felt this was present in their organisation. The researcher recommends that leaders within the respective organisations should develop a culture where employees share ideas and thoughts with them ensuring that a follow-up will take place to progress the idea or justify why it will not be implemented or further developed at this stage.

Motivation

The researcher noted through the primary and secondary research that there was a lack of understanding of employee motivation by leaders. Identifying intrinsic or extrinsic motivations are critical to the development of employees and their desire to perform within their organisation, with a general approach to motivation in the form of incentives being a failure of leaders. The researcher recommends that recognition should be communicated regularly to employees through feedback with motivating factors identified on an individual basis to improve the employees buy-in and desire to add value to the organisation.

The findings and recommendations highlight that retail organisations increase the likelihood of innovative behaviours through a collaborative environment, open communication between leaders and employees, with a clear emphasis on employee recognition and motivation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Consent Form

An Exploratory Study Into The Role Of The Leadership Position In Establishing Innovation Within The Retail Environment

Consent to Participate in Research

Dear Participant,

I would firstly like to thank you for participating in my research.

Study Description

The purpose of this research study is to:

- Gain an understanding of the leadership position and its role in driving innovation within the retail environment
- Gain a deeper understanding of the optimum work environment for knowledge sharing, creative thinking and innovation within retail
- Identify whether there is a link between the leadership role and innovation within retail organisation's

This research study is being conducted by the researcher as part of a Masters in Business Administration through the National College of Ireland.

Please take your time to read the below information and to consider whether you wish to participate in this research study. Participation in the study is voluntary, you have the right not to participate or to leave the study.

- I …….. am participating in this study voluntarily
- I understand the purpose of the study and the nature of the interview questions
- As above, I can voluntarily withdraw from the study at any point
- I understand that the interview will be recorded using video and audio
- I understand that all identifiable information will be removed from the interview transcript
- I understand that I can access information presented in this study

- The information received including transcripts, audio and video recordings will be stored in a password protected folder until the researcher receives the result of this research study. After this time, the information will be destroyed.

Consent of Subject

Upon agreeing to participate in the interview stage of the research the researcher understands that consent has been received to use the information provided anonymously in the research published.

Signature of Participant: ***Date:***

Signature of Participant: ***Date:***

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. What is your role within the organisation and what skills are required to do your job?
2. What is your understanding of innovation?
3. What forms of innovation take place within your work environment?
4. Are there barriers to innovation in the organisation?
    a. If so, what are they and have you any suggestions on how to overcome them?
5. What are the common frustrations that arise within the organisation?
    a. How do they negatively impact the productivity and motivation levels of both yourself and peers?
6. How frequently are there team meetings and is there a standard approach to the meetings i.e. frequency, agenda, management oversight?
7. What teamwork contributes to knowledge sharing and does this lead to innovation within the workplace?
    a. If there are no formal work teams in place, what are the creative ideas and discussions that take place but are not implemented?
    b. Can these ideas be communicated to senior management? If so, how are they communicated?
    c. Is there a system to log ideas and creative suggestions?
8. What job-specific training is provided to increase creative thinking and what impact does this have on innovation?
9. What are the key motivations of employees to bring improvements to their role and the organisation?
    a. Is it all about financial incentives?
10. What do you think is the optimum working environment and how does this impact creative thinking and innovation?
    a. Is this present in the organisation?
11. What is your understanding of the role of the leadership position within an organisation?
    a. Is this reality in your organisation?
    b. If not, what changes would you recommend that would improve innovation and the effectiveness of the employees within the organisation?

Appendix 3: Demographics of Participants

- Participant 1 is a manager of a retail firm that specialises in ladies' apparel and has over 150 stores.
- Participant 2 is a manager of a sports retail firm that has 6 stores.
- Participant 3 is a general manager of a clothing and homeware retail firm that has over 100 stores.
- Participant 4 is a sales executive of a sports retail firm that has 9 stores.
- Participant 5 is a sales manager of a retail firm that has 6 stores.