

RESEARCH REPORT

**WHOLESALE & RETAIL SETA
LEADERSHIP CHAIR: GAUTENG**



Project 2024/2

FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE INSPIRATION IN DIY RETAIL

March 2024

PROJECT 2024/3:

FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE INSPIRATION IN DIY RETAIL

Prepared by:

Dr Beate Stiehler-Mulder

Prof Ilse Struweg

Mr Norman Mafuratidze

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL LEADERSHIP CHAIR: GAUTENG

University of Johannesburg



Copyright, University of Johannesburg 2024

Copyright for this report is held by the University of Johannesburg.

ISBN: 978-0-86970-834-7

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Areas of exploration of the study	2
Figure 2: The tripartite model of inspiration	6
Figure 3: Thematic analysis of AoE 1	12
Figure 4: Exerpts from customers' experiences	12
Figure 5: Thematic visualisation of what inspires DIY retail FLEs in an emerging market	14
Figure 6: Participants' quotes according to themes	15
Figure 7: Drivers of DIY frontline employee inspiration	17

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Overview of the methodological considerations	9
--	---

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Africa's home improvement retail sector is diverse. The sector is made up of large retail chains such as Buildit, Chamberlains, Builders Warehouse, Cashbuild, and Mica. Since the COVID-19 pandemic the country's DIY retail sector has witnessed surging activity, showing a need for exceptional customer service to maintain loyalty. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through focusing on inspiring frontline employees (FLEs) because inspired employees lie at the heart of services marketing. This study examined how FLE inspiration in South African DIY retail influences customer experiences and retailer performance. To achieve this aim, several areas of exploration were developed. These were: to explore situations in which frontline employees experienced inspiration in their DIY retail work contexts in an emerging market; to explore what inspires frontline employees in DIY retail in an emerging market; to describe frontline employees' ideas about how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to make them more inspiring; and to describe the prevalence of frontline employee inspiration for DIY retailing in an emerging market. The study also sought to explore the drivers of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market, and to describe the risks of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging marketing. However, research on employee inspiration in the context of the DIY market in South Africa – particularly its impact on customer experience and retailer performance – is still in its infancy. Although employee inspiration is well-established in the literature, studies have tended to focus on non-retail settings, overlooking the inimitable context and operational dynamics of South Africa's DIY sector. This study fills this gap by offering a service-dominant logic perspective on retail employee inspiration. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees and customers of major DIY retailers to explore their experiences with inspiration, its sources, and its effects. The study found that FLE inspiration significantly impacts customer experience. Specifically, it was established that inspired FLEs positively influence customer impulse purchases and improve customer overall experience, education, and product knowledge. The study also established that inspiration emanates from the work environment – specifically, from inspiring workplace elements, colleagues, and promotions. On ideas about how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to make them more inspiring, participants' suggested better salaries, an improved working environment, training, fair treatment, incentives, and friendlier customers. Furthermore, the study found that challenges to maintaining inspiration included a lack of recognition, inadequate training, and unsupportive work environments. The study has several implications in the realm of service marketing and retail. First, inspired employees contribute to better customer experiences and potentially to improved retailer performance. Second, implementing targeted training, fostering supportive work environments, and acknowledging inspired performance could enhance employee motivation. This study contributes to the service marketing literature by providing a better understanding of FLE inspiration in DIY retail, emphasising its role in customer experience and service quality. The study also offers practical insights for retail managers to assist them in optimising workforce potential and improving performance through inspired service delivery.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	v
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	2
2.1 The home improvement market in South Africa.....	2
2.2 What exactly is DIY?	3
2.3 DIY employee service delivery	3
2.4 The service-dominant logic and FLE inspiration	4
2.4.1 Service-dominant logic as a theoretical lens to understand FLE inspiration.....	4
2.4.2 Unravelling the essence of FLE inspiration: A deeper exploration	5
2.4.3 The tripartite framework of inspiration.....	6
2.4.4 Inspired DIY employees	8
3 METHODOLOGY	9
3.1 Description of the study's methodology	9
3.2 Data collection	10
3.3 Data analysis	11
4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS	11
4.1 AoE1: Customer experiences of inspired FLEs	11
4.2 AoE2: What inspires FLEs in DIY retail in an emerging market?	13
4.3 AoE3: To describe frontline employees' ideas on how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to make them more inspiring.	15
4.4 AoE4: To describe the prevalence of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.16	

4.5	AoE5: To explore the drivers of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.	17
4.6	AoE6: To describe the risks of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.	17
5	RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	26
5.1	Recommendations about AoE1	26
5.2	Recommendations about AoE2	26
5.3	Recommendations about AoE3	26
5.4	Recommendations about AoE4	27
5.5	Recommendations about AoE5	27
5.6	Recommendations about AoE6	28
6	CONCLUSION	28
7	REFERENCES	31

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Inspiration is a motivational concept that is known to be of interest to various areas of scholarship, and is that used to explain how humans move beyond the routine towards the extraordinary. Although marketing and retail research focuses on aspects shared with inspiration (Fortini-Campbell, 1992; Arnold & Reynolds, 2003; Doyle & Wong, 1998), only recently has inspiration been explicitly investigated in marketing and retail (Böttger, Rudolph, Evanschitzky, & Pfrang, 2017; Rauschnabel, Felix, & Hinsch, 2019; Izogo & Mpinganjira, 2020). However, most recent studies focus on inspiration from a customer perspective, with very few studies exploring inspiration from an employee perspective in retail services marketing (Rudolph, Neumüller, & Kleinlercher, 2021).

Evidence exists that retailers realise the significance of having an inspired workforce (Jackson, 2012; Wiid, 2020); but it still appears that employee inspiration is conceptualised rather narrowly, mainly in respect of inspirational leadership (Gautam & Enslin, 2019.) Against this background, this study aims to explore and describe the concept of frontline employee inspiration (FLE) in DIY retail in South Africa.

As inspired employees lie at the heart of services marketing, studying the inspiration of frontline employees offers the potential to enhance the services marketing literature. A deeper understanding of frontline employee inspiration is required for retailers to influence customer responses to their retail offerings more efficiently and effectively (Wiid, 2020). Also, as frontline employee inspiration in retail involves different objectives, recipients, and information sources, the retail domain necessarily appears, from a frontline employee perspective, to be different from prior inspiration research areas, such as psychology (Chadborn & Reysen, 2018), education, and creativity (Cui, Thrash, Shkeyrov, & Varga, 2020; Oleynick, Thrash, LeFew, Moldovan, & Kieffaber, 2014), warranting a domain-specific understanding and empirical investigation.

This study argues that frontline employee inspiration in service marketing can apply Böttger *et al.*'s (2017) conceptualisation of customer inspiration in a retail context, in that a) an inspiration state can be obtained by external stimuli when employees are willing to consider new ideas, and b) inspiration includes motivation as a catalyst for changes in routine service practice. The study focuses on the tripartite conceptualisation of Thrash and Elliot (2003) to specify the core characteristics of inspiration as *transcendence*, *evocation*, and *approach motivation*. According to Thrash and Elliot (2004), inspiration consists of two processes, which also ground this study. First, the epistemic process 'inspired by' relates to the process in which individuals (frontline employees) realise a stimulus object's inherent value when a fresh idea enters their awareness. The second process of inspiration, 'being inspired by', describes a motivational process of being compelled to actualise that new idea. This study further investigates inspiration as a personal experience (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), as perceived by the individual frontline employees in DIY retail.

The overall aim of this study is:

To explore and describe the concept of frontline employee (FLE) inspiration in DIY retail

To address the overall aim, the following areas of exploration (AoE) are proposed:

Figure 1: Areas of exploration of the study



Source: Author's own

Given this background, the next section delves into the literature review that underpins the study's objectives and areas of investigation. It begins with a review of the South African home improvement market, followed by an examination of the service-dominant logic and the tripartite conceptualisation of inspiration, which serves as the study's theoretical foundation. The exploration of the concept of inspiration is then conducted in greater depth.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The home improvement market in South Africa

South Africa has a diverse home improvement retail industry, with many large retail chains such as Builders Warehouse, Buildit, Cashbuild, Chamberlains, Mica, and – one of the newest entrants in the market – Leroy Merlin (ZoomInfo, 2023). During 2020, South African stores specialising in do-it-yourself (DIY) products (home improvement retail) sold more products than in the pre-COVID-19 era (DYI International, 2020; Smit, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic arguably led to housebound consumers becoming more aware of areas in their homes needing improvement and/or transforming their homes for fitness, entertainment and leisure purposes (Euromonitor International, 2022).

Consequently, home improvement retail's value in sales in South Africa rose by 7% to R14 billion in 2020 (Euromonitor International, 2021), and continued to show a positive current value growth in 2021 (Euromonitor International, 2022). Statista (2022) predicted that the value of home improvement retail would return to pre - COVID levels as restrictions were lifted. However, steady growth was expected to continue between 2023 and 2027 as demand for housing and the desire to engage in home renovations increased (Statista, 2022). A difficult economic environment during and after COVID-19 also led more consumers to opt for DIY rather than do-it-for-me (DIFM); and the DIY product category most in demand has been paint (Euromonitor International, 2021). Online purchases of DIY products have also been increasing, with companies such as Cashbuild reportedly quadrupling their e-commerce turnover (DIY International, 2022).

2.2 What exactly is DIY?

Do-it-yourself (DIY) occurs when homeowners personally undertake tasks such as decorating, modifying, constructing, maintaining, or repairing various aspects of their homes rather than enlisting the services of professional tradespeople for these tasks (Mackay & Perkins, 2019). It refers to the widespread culture of people taking on home-improvement activities and hobbies such as building boats and sheds (Jackson, 2006). The term originated in the United States of America during the 1950s and 1960s. DIY activities can range from home improvement projects, such as painting a room or building furniture, to crafting, such as knitting or making jewellery. DIY gained popularity as a practice in which homeowners conceptualise, plan, and carry out various projects related to their properties and personal development (Mackay, Perkins, & Gidlow, 2013). In contemporary times, co-creation has emerged as another significant user-involved phenomenon, encompassing many characteristics inherited from the DIY age. Co-creation involves the active participation of users in the development of a product. Platforms such as NikeiD.com and Freitag.ch exemplify this trend by allowing individuals to influence the outcome of traditional design and production processes (Nike.com, 2023; Freitag, 2024).

Owing to the need for competence (skill, knowledge, and judgement) in executing DIY projects (Watson & Shove, 2005) and the typical engagement of non-expert consumers (Qiu, Bouncken, Arndt, & Ng, 2023) in such projects, homeowners often rely on the input and advice of DIY store employees. Consequently, in-store employees play a crucial role in executing DIY projects through guidance and advice to customers.

2.3 DIY employee service delivery

In the modern highly competitive and saturated DIY market, consumers can choose from a wide range of products and services (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2019). However, the product or service itself is not enough for the contemporary consumer. Good customer service experiences are also important. Consequently, DIY retailers must increase customer experience interest to create a unique value. Good customer service is also linked to a good working environment for employees. Son, Kim and Kim (2021) found that a good work environment and service-related training can create a positive employee service climate, thus improving customer satisfaction.

Because DIY encompasses a range of creative activities in which consumers develop products, processes, or other applications in their discretionary time (Mulhuijzen & De Jong, 2023), the success of DIY requires a high-level and proactive involvement from consumers (Wolf & McQuitty, 2011). Consistent with the service-dominant (S-D) logic framework, DIYers apply their skills, knowledge, and judgement to produce goods that they design and build themselves (Campbell, 2005; Watson & Shove, 2008). This makes the connection between DIY and the S-D logic more visible.

2.4 The service-dominant logic and FLE inspiration

2.4.1 Service-dominant logic as a theoretical lens to understand FLE inspiration

Vargo and Lusch (2004) described service-dominant logic (S-D logic) as an alternative theoretical framework that offers a paradigmatic lens for rethinking the concept of value in exchanges (Wilden, Akaka, Karpen, & Hohberger, 2017). Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008) reasoned that marketing thought was not so much fragmented but evolving towards a new dominant logic that integrates goods with service(s), arguing that 'service', not services, is the fundamental basis of exchange. The underlying idea of S-D logic is that actors apply their competencies to benefit others and reciprocally benefit from others' applied competencies through the service-for-service exchange (Vargo, Koskela-Huotari, & Vink, 2020). This means that for, value to be exchanged, resources (operand and operant) need to be integrated (Karpen, 2008).

Since Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008) introduced the S-D logic, it has been the subject of great conceptual debate. It arose from the services marketing scholarship that grew out of the pioneering works of Shostak, Lovelock, Langeard, Eiglier and Bitner. From the start, the S-D logic was more about the identification, synthesis, and extension of an apparent coalescence in the ongoing development of marketing thought reflected in the seminal work of Vargo and Lusch (2004) than a radically new idea. In addition to the work of Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008; 2011; 2016; 2018), a growing community of scholars around the world has contributed to this 'open source' body of work (Lusch & Vargo, 2011).

The S-D logic can be applied to DIY in retail because it transforms and redefines the way in which value is perceived and exchanged in this industry. Traditionally, DIY retail has focused on selling goods, such as tools, materials, and home improvement products. However, with the S-D logic, retailers can reframe their approach and recognise the fundamental role of customers in creating value. In this way, retailers understand that customers are not just purchasing products, but are seeking solutions and experiences that they co-create to fulfil their needs and desires. This shifts retailers' perspectives from simply selling goods to becoming providers of valuable services that assist customers throughout their DIY projects. This also implies that the marketing efforts of DIY retailers could focus on building strong relationships with customers by offering expert advice, guidance, and assistance in using their products. This could be achieved through knowledgeable and trained staff with the necessary competencies to support customers in their DIY endeavours. By leveraging their expertise, retailers could be partners in the customers' DIY journeys, providing personalised recommendations and problem-solving assistance, and even offering workshops or

educational resources to enhance customers' skills and knowledge. Marketing efforts could even go to the extent of preparing educational material to smooth the customer-value co-creation processes. This is how DIY retailers become facilitators of value creation, actively engaging with customers to co-create value. Through dialogue and collaboration, DIY retailers could understand customers' needs, preferences, and constraints, and tailor their services accordingly. This might involve helping customers to select the right products for their projects, offering design consultations, or providing installation or repair services.

This profound shift in DIY retail affirms the need to investigate 'inspiration' among retail staff in order to provide significant insights into the levels of service that clients are likely to receive. Understanding how to inspire, and so having inspired employees, benefits customers, DIY retailers, and employees. This contributes immensely in that it represents a fundamental shift in how value is co-created in the retail industry, highlighting the critical role of consumers and the opportunities for deeper, more meaningful interactions. As DIY retailers actively embrace the ideas of the S-D logic, they embark on a journey to become actual value creators, improving the total customer experience and solidifying their position in a dynamic and competitive market.

2.4.2 Unravelling the essence of FLE inspiration: A deeper exploration

Avramenko (2014) argues that 'inspiration' is often used without a precise definition, assuming a universal understanding. However, the term carries multiple interpretations and nuances. For instance, employee inspiration is often narrowly viewed as inspirational leadership techniques (Neumueller, Kleinlercher, Evanschitzky, & Rudolph, 2022); but it encompasses more than that. Feeling inspired has been found to enhance individual efficiency and creativity and create a positive mindset, all of which are vital for frontline employees (FLE) in engaging effectively with customers (Neumueller *et al.*, 2022).

Building on this, the inspiration concept has evolved, moving towards a vision-related kind of employee vision inspiration. This evolution underscores the need for more clarity and further exploration in understanding the conception of inspiration in leadership studies. Inspiration is a crucial aspect of organisational leadership (Avramenko, 2014; Talat & Chang, 2017): leaders are expected to inspire and motivate their followers. Various scholars and theories underscore the importance of inspiration in leadership, viewing it as a means to energise and satisfy basic human needs rather than simply to push people in the right direction (Mulli & Kiiru, 2020; Oleynick *et al.*, 2014; Sahibzada, Kakakhel, & Khan, 2016).

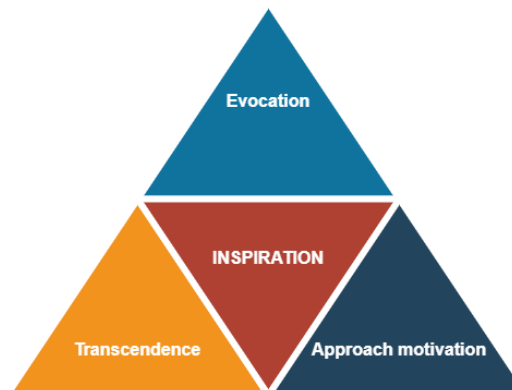
In the organisational context, sources of inspiration can be diverse, encompassing internal and external factors. External sources include colleagues, the workplace environment, events, processes, and work-related challenges; while internal sources of inspiration stem from stimulating ideas and facing personal challenges. Ideas, whether generated internally or through communication with others, can act as triggers for inspiration. Therefore, organisations should create conditions that are conducive to inspiration by cultivating a workplace environment that fosters positive attitudes among colleagues and management.

Experiencing inspiration in the workplace is complex, and extends beyond the influence of leadership. While moments of inspiration may be fleeting, the state of inspiration itself can endure for days or even weeks, indicating its relative stability. This process can be broken down into three phases: initiation, persistence, and reminiscence. The initiation stage involves a triggering event, such as a captivating idea or statement, that sparks an inspirational moment. The persistence stage pertains to the duration of the inspired state, which can vary, based on personal preferences and expressive capacity. Last, the reminiscence stage involves recollecting past episodes of inspiration, which may trigger similar experiences in the future.

2.4.3 The tripartite framework of inspiration

Thrash and Elliot (2003) argued that tripartite conceptualisation outlines three core characteristics of inspiration: evocation, transcendence, and approach motivation (refer to Figure 2). These three characteristics are the minimal criteria to distinguish the state of inspiration from other states (Cui et al., 2020).

Figure 2: The tripartite model of inspiration



Source: Authors' conceptualisation

First, evocation refers to the idea that inspiration is not initiated voluntarily by the individual, but instead is evoked by external stimuli such as a person, idea, or work of art. It refers to the passive nature of being inspired, as it responds to a stimulating influence rather than a volitional act. During an episode of inspiration, the individual becomes aware of new possibilities that surpass ordinary concerns, and this awareness is vivid and concrete. Once inspired, the individual experiences a compelling motivation to transmit, actualise, or express the new-found vision. In the context of DIY retail, the concept of evocation suggests that inspiration is frequently triggered by external factors in the workplace. These external factors can take various forms, including positive customer interactions, exposure to innovative ideas or products, or observing the creative problem-solving skills of colleagues. As employees actively engage with these stimuli, they have the potential to experience a profound sense of inspiration that ignites their passion and fuels their motivation to excel in their work. Consequently, this highlights how important it is for DIY retailers to cultivate an environment that advances the creation of these external stimuli, enabling employees continually to draw inspiration from their surroundings. By deliberately creating such an environment, DIY retailers could encourage and nurture the

inspiration of their employees, leading to enhanced performance, innovative thinking, and, ultimately, a more prosperous and thriving organisation.

Transcendence, the second characteristic, involves a shift in awareness towards new and improved possibilities, often occurring during moments of insight or illumination. Transcendence relates to the shift in awareness employees may experience when inspired. In DIY retail, this can manifest as employees gaining new insights into customer needs, innovative solutions for home improvement projects, or fresh approaches to merchandising and product displays. The efforts of such DIY offerings are consistent with the S-D logic, which shifts the focus towards value in use. These moments of transcendence can stimulate employees' creativity and enable them to think beyond conventional boundaries, leading to improved customer experiences and business outcomes, which, again, are at the centre of the S-D logic.

Third, approach motivation is the drive to realise one's new-found vision. These three core characteristics differentiate inspiration from other constructs (Thrash, Moldovan, Fuller, & Dombrowski, 2014). Approach motivation is essential for employee inspiration in DIY retail. When inspired, employees feel a strong drive to realise their ideas and visions. This may involve actively seeking opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction, contributing innovative suggestions for improved processes, or developing new solutions that meet customers' demands. Thus the approach motivation of inspired employees propels them to take action and to have a positive impact on the organisation.

2.1.5 Understanding inspiration: Characteristics and processes in a tripartite framework

The concept of inspiration can be understood in terms of its characteristics and as a series of distinct processes that make up an occurrence of inspiration (Oleynick et al., 2014). Thrash and Elliot (2004) proposed that two separate processes were involved in inspiration: 'being inspired by' and 'being inspired to'. 'Being inspired by' is a relatively passive process that entails appreciating the intrinsic value of a stimulus object, while 'being inspired to' is a relatively active process that involves the motivation to actualise or extend the valued qualities to a new object. The evoking stimulus can be a source of motivational sustenance at any time. Thrash and Elliot (2004) further suggested that 'being inspired by' gives rise to the core characteristics of evocation and transcendence, while 'being inspired to' gives rise to the core characteristic of approach motivation. Despite the superficial differences in narrative content, the inspiration narratives shared common themes of having one's eyes opened during an encounter with a person, object, event, or idea (being inspired *by*) and desiring to express or actualise one's new-found vision (being inspired *to*) (Cui et al., 2020). 'Being inspired by' occurs when one is moved by the intrinsic value perceived in an evocative object, such as art, role models, or creative ideas. On the other hand, 'being inspired to' refers to the motivation to extend, transmit, or actualise the perceived intrinsic value found in the evocative object. This conceptualisation of the component process aligns with and complements the tripartite conceptualisation. 'Being inspired by' gives rise to evocation and transcendence, while 'being inspired to' corresponds to approach motivation.

This tripartite component process is believed to be present across various manifestations of inspiration. In their study, Thrash and Elliot (2004) asked participants to recall a time when they were inspired or a baseline

experience as a control condition. The narratives of inspiration covered a wide range of topics, including being animated by a scientific or artistic insight, discovering one's calling, being influenced by a role model for success or virtuous living, and realising the potential for greatness in response to unexpected success.

Cui et al. (2020) added that it is essential to consider the implications of the conceptualisation of the component process. Evocation and transcendence are interconnected processes, with transcendence requiring evocation. One cannot transcend their epistemic limits solely through willpower; an external influence must awaken them. In addition, gaining awareness of better possibilities and experiencing motivation are distinct processes that do not always co-occur. For example, a painter captivated by the beauty of nature ('inspired by') may or may not feel compelled to capture the scene on canvas ('inspired to'). Similarly, a sudden insight may or may not lead to inspired action. By definition, inspiration is considered present when both the 'being inspired by' and 'being inspired to component processes are activated.

2.4.4 Inspired DIY employees

The S-D logic applies to DIY in retail because it transforms and redefines how value is perceived and exchanged. With an S-D mindset, DIY retailers get to understand that customers are not just purchasing products that have value bundled with them, but are seeking solutions and experiences that they co-create to fulfil their needs and desires. This shift in perspectives requires inspiration on the part of employees.

Inspiration can be understood through a tripartite conceptualisation that involves evocation, transcendence, and approach motivation. In the DIY retail environment, employees may experience inspiration that is triggered by external stimuli in the workplace, such as positive customer interactions, innovative ideas, or creative colleagues. This inspiration fuels employees' creativity, problem-solving abilities, and motivation to provide exceptional customer experiences. Understanding the component process of inspiration, which involves both 'being inspired by' and 'being inspired to', contributes to a thriving and competitive DIY retail business.

In bridging the transition from the literature review to the methodological aspects of this research report, it is essential to underscore the critical role that the existing body of knowledge plays in shaping the methodological framework. The insights gained from the literature review have informed the research aim and areas of exploration and guided the selection of research methods, data collection techniques, and analytical approaches. Transitioning from the theoretical foundations established in the literature to their practical application in the methodology section, the study's foundation in existing scholarship remains evident. This synergy between theory and methodology is instrumental in ensuring that the research is academically rigorous and practically applicable. In the sections that follow, these methodological choices and the reasons for their selection are linked to the theoretical foundations in the literature review, ultimately facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the overall aim and areas of exploration identified earlier.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology section serves as the operational blueprint for this research endeavour, outlining the systematic approach used. This section delineates the research design, data collection methods, and analysis procedures selected to gather and interpret the data. It clarifies the rationale behind these choices, ensuring transparency to improve the trustworthiness of the research process. Table 2 provides an overview of the methodological choices of the study, while the rest of the section expands on its meaning, relevance, and application.

Table 1: Overview of the methodological considerations

Methodological consideration	The methodological choice for the study
Research philosophy	Pragmatic philosophy
Methodological approach	Qualitative research paradigm
Research paradigm	Constructivist-interpretivism
Research design	Exploratory and descriptive design
Research methodology	Abduction
Context	South African DIY retail industry
Sampling of cases	Purposive and convenience sampling
Cases	Builders Warehouse Chamberlains LeRoy Merlin
Population	Frontline employees working in DIY retail in South Africa at the selected store cases Customers buying at the selected DIY store cases in South Africa
Sample	15 Frontline employees working in DIY retail in South Africa at the selected store cases 15 customers buying at the selected DIY store cases in South Africa
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews
Data analysis	In vivo coding Abductive thematic analysis

Source: Authors' conceptualisation

3.1 Description of the study's methodology

This study is firmly rooted in the pragmatic research philosophy, which emphasises practicality and problem-solving as core principles guiding the research approach (Morgan, 2014). The study adopts a qualitative approach to enquiry, based on the following qualities (Tracy, 2019):

- The approach's richness and holistic orientation.
- It offers more than a snapshot, but provides an understanding of a sustained process (i.e., frontline employees' sustained experiences).
- It focuses on lived experiences in the context of DIY retail; and
- It illustrates how a multitude of interpretations are possible, but how some are more theoretically compelling, morally significant, or practically important than others.

This qualitative study employs abductive reasoning, and adopts an exploratory, descriptive research design. In this design, the exploration is centred on a deep investigation of frontline employee inspiration in the context of DIY retail, aiming to go beyond mere observation and the documentation of incidents. Meanwhile, the descriptive component contributes valuable insights into understanding and enhancing the inspiration of frontline employees, which, in turn, could enrich the services marketing literature. A more comprehensive understanding of frontline employee motivation is essential for retailers who seek to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their customers' responses to retail offerings.

Furthermore, the study is grounded in the constructivist-interpretive research paradigm, in that it uses interactive conversations with participants (DIY frontline employees and DIY customers) to unveil the shared meanings of these individuals while also highlighting their processes of analysis in order to clarify and elucidate their interpretive procedures (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017). Rich, in-depth, comprehensive data was gathered in line with the social constructivist-interpretive paradigm (Carstens, 2018). This data gathering aimed to delve into the DIY frontline employees' inspiration from a dual perspective (DIY frontline employees and DIY customers), shedding light on the intricate nature of the topic under investigation.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection was outsourced to The Culture Foundry, an external research company. The researchers provided a comprehensive briefing to ensure that all of the involved parties were well-prepared and that they fully understood the study's aims, the areas of exploration, and the interview schedules to be used in the semi-structured interviews. Ongoing monitoring of the data collection process was maintained through email and telephone communication and through regular meetings to ensure that data was collected in a manner consistent with ethical standards. Informed consent was received from all of the participants. All of the information gathered during the interviews remained confidential, with a confidentiality agreement between the researchers and The Culture Foundry to safeguard data integrity.

Overall, semi-structured interviews are a versatile method for gathering qualitative data, and are well-suited for research that aims to explore and describe complex, multifaceted issues from the participants' perspective (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Moreover, these interviews facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, experiences, and emotions, providing rich qualitative data that offered a comprehensive understanding of customer-centricity in DIY retail in South Africa. Also, by allowing the

participants to discuss their views in their own words, this type of interview offered a more holistic understanding of the research topic.

As indicated in Table 1, the study involved interviews with two distinct groups of participants. The first group consisted of frontline employees employed in the selected DIY retail stores in South Africa, while the second group comprised customers shopping at these same DIY stores. Regarding inclusion criteria, the first group of participants had to meet the requirement of being actively employed as frontline employees in the South African DIY retail sector, with their ages falling within the range of 18 to 65 years. Likewise, the inclusion criteria specified that the second group of participants should be customers of DIY retail stores in South Africa, also within the age range of 18 to 65 years.

As previously detailed, 15 semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants in each of the two groups. These participants were selected from Durban, Cape Town, and Johannesburg. In the case of group 1, which comprised DIY frontline employees, their interviews were guided by a schedule consisting of 19 discussion points. The participants in group 2, consisting of DIY customers, followed an interview schedule featuring 17 discussion points. Each of the interviews lasted between 40 and 50 minutes; they were audio-recorded and then meticulously transcribed, contributing to the trustworthiness of the study by ensuring the accurate preservation of participants' responses through member-checking and comprehensive analysis.

3.3 Data analysis

As noted above, the qualitative research presented in this report is grounded in a pragmatic constructivist-interpretivist philosophy and paradigm, and it proposes using the abductive approach as its research methodology (See Table 2). According to Żelechowska, Żyluk and Urbański (2020), abductive reasoning is used to make sense of unexpected, unclear, or otherwise perplexing phenomena, to bridge the gaps in our beliefs, and to preserve or re-establishing their consistency. Thus this report's data analysis is based on abductive thematic analysis.

Tavory and Timmermans (2014) specifically support this approach, as each abductive analysis focuses on the examination of themes. The distinctive aspect of the analysis proposed in this research report involves a fusion of the conventional stages of thematic analysis with elements from qualitative content analysis. Denzin (2016) and Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest this bricolage approach for delivering the most accurate interpretation of the specific qualitative data.

4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

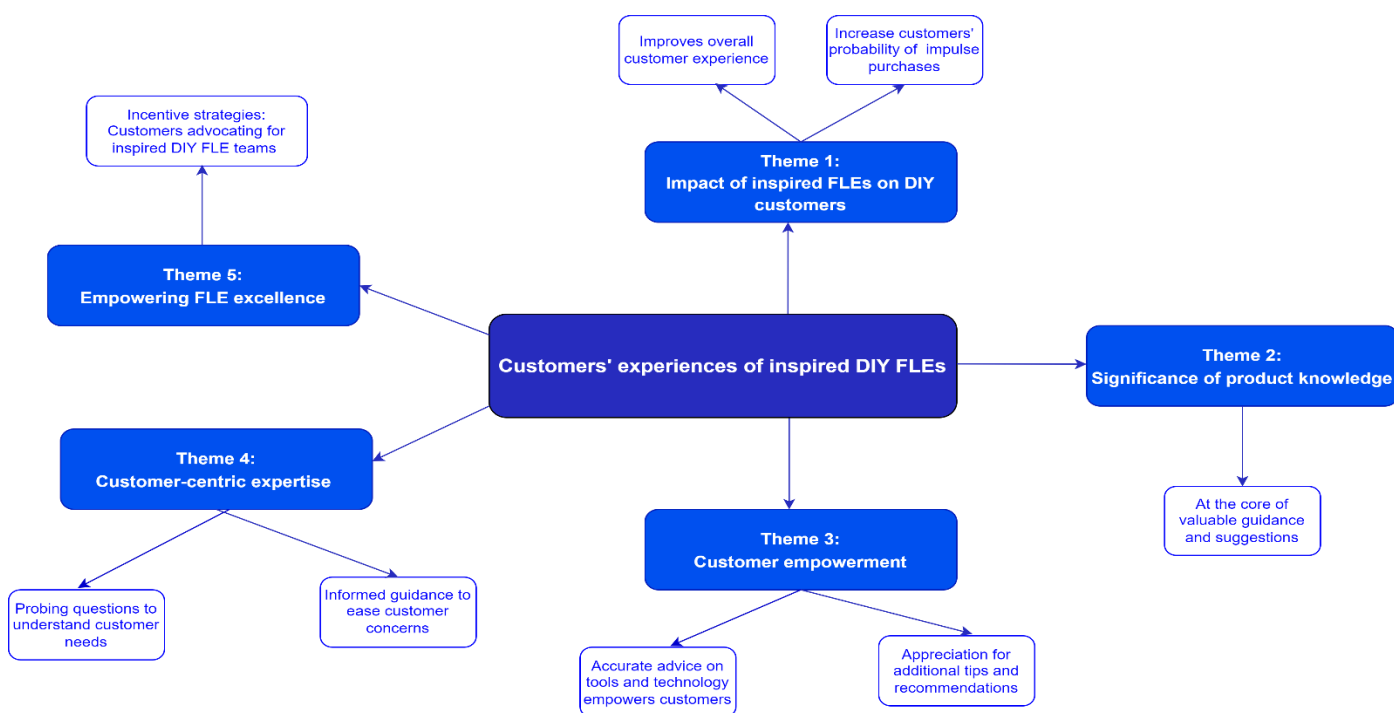
This section presents the findings of the study according to the AoEs.

4.1 AoE1: Customer experiences of inspired FLEs

The first AoE explored situations in which frontline employees experienced inspiration in their DIY retail work contexts in an emerging market. The aim here was to obtain a nuanced understanding of the factors that

drive inspiration among FLEs in the dynamic and evolving emergency market DIY retail landscape. Emerging markets often present unique challenges and opportunities, and understanding how inspiration manifests among FLEs in this context can offer valuable insights for further academic research along with practical implications for industry stakeholders. Uncovering these experiences sheds light on the inspiration dynamics that contribute to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and success in the DIY retail sector in emerging markets. First, a diagrammatic presentation is provided with the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data about how inspired FLEs are experienced by customers (see Figure 3). Some pertinent excerpts from the customer interviews in this regard follow it. The section concludes with an interpretation of the results derived from the themes and quotes from the data.

Figure 3: Thematic analysis of AoE 1



Source: Authors' conceptualisation

The following excerpts contextualise the findings in the DIY customers' experiences related to AoE1 that contributed to the emerging themes, as illustrated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Exerpts from customers' experiences

"...when the employee stopped what he was doing when I asked for help and went out of his way to help me find the resources I needed to complete my project. He had empowered me with the correct tools and technology and showed me where everything was while advising me on which resources to use and why." – DIY Customer 2

"I have met an employee on one occasion who was also doing an organic garden and gave me so many tips that I didn't know about and some guidance. It was a very pleasurable experience." – DIY Customer 6

Source: Authors' conceptualisation

It is clear from the participants' quotes above that inspired FLEs positively influence customer impulse purchases and improve their overall experience, education, and product knowledge. This is consistent with Neumueller et al. (2022), who found that inspiring employees enhance individual efficiency, creativity, and a positive mindset, which are vital qualities for frontline employees (FLE) in effectively engaging with customers. Owing to the competence (skill, knowledge, and judgement) needed by typically non-expert consumers in-store when executing DIY projects, FLEs play a crucial role through their guidance and advice to customers (Qiu et al., 2023; Watson & Shove, 2005). With inspiration, the FLEs play a vital role in providing valuable assistance and recommendations. In addition, the study found that FLEs empower customers by providing them with the correct tools, technology, and guidance, which helps customers with their projects and enhances their overall satisfaction. This AoE also found that customers appreciate receiving tips, advice, and suggestions from FLEs. Competent FLEs are described as inquisitive, asking detailed questions to understand the customer's needs and preferences. This approach leads to better recommendations and solutions. The study also found that FLEs who explain variations in products and provide information about their advantages and disadvantages reassure customers, helping them to feel more confident in their choices.

Overall, this study found that employee inspiration and motivation play a significant role in creating a positive customer experience, and that inspired and knowledgeable FLEs who take the initiative to empower and educate customers lead to a more positive customer experience, often resulting in impulse purchases. This, in turn, underscores the significance of employee motivation and product knowledge in the retail setting.

4.2 AoE2: What inspires FLEs in DIY retail in an emerging market?

The themes that emerged about FLEs' views of what inspires them in DIY retail in an emerging market had a strong focus on the emotional and tangible outcomes of the FLEs' work, such as the satisfaction of seeing a project come to life, building positive client relationships, expressing creativity, and contributing to their personal and professional growth. The responses also highlighted a sense of purpose in helping others and positively impacting their lives, in respect of both immediate needs and broader living spaces.

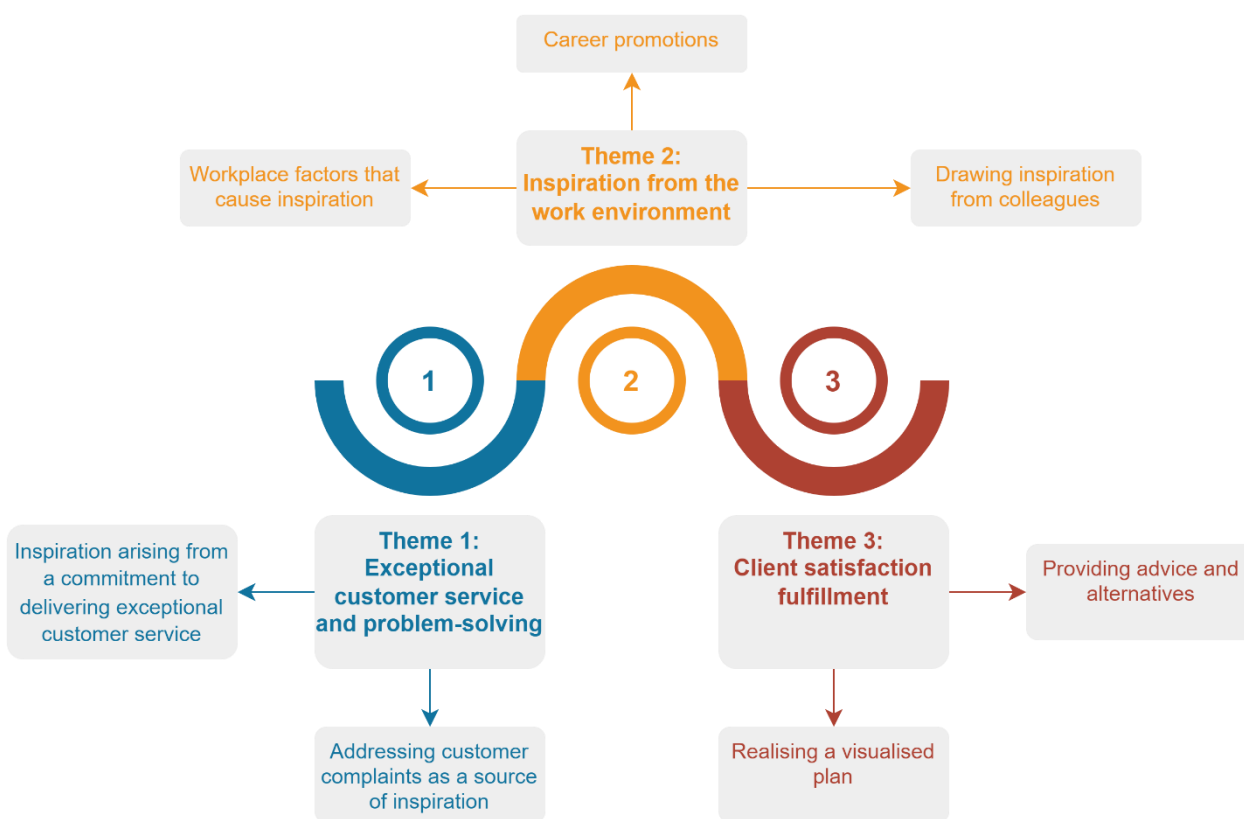
Under this AoE, the study found that inspiration emanates from the work environment, and specifically from inspiring workplace elements, colleagues, and promotions. On inspiring workplace elements, participants reported being inspired by the physical aspects of their work environment, such as tiles and furniture. They expressed a desire to save up and acquire these items, which serve as sources of motivation. On inspiration from colleagues and promotions, participants mentioned that they drew inspiration from witnessing their colleagues' promotions and career growth, which motivated them to work harder, as indicated by DIY FLE 5 below.

“employees are improving themselves academically and getting promotions” - DIY FLE 5

Another theme under this AoE pertained to finding satisfaction from fulfilling clients' needs and expectations. Participants highlighted that they found inspiration in bringing their visualised plans to life, mainly when clients initially expressed scepticism but ultimately understood and appreciated the result. Related to this was being motivated by providing delivery services and ensuring customer satisfaction. Happy clients were a vital source of inspiration for them.

The above findings are also consistent with the tripartite conceptualisation of inspiration. For example, exceptional customer service and problem-solving, motivation from the work environment, and satisfaction from fulfilling clients' needs and expectations all drive frontline employees' new-found vision into reality (approach motivation). Approach motivation is essential for employee inspiration in DIY retail. When inspired, employees feel a strong drive to turn their ideas and visions into reality. This may involve actively seeking out opportunities to enhance customer satisfaction, contributing innovative suggestions for process improvement, or developing new solutions that meet customers' demands. Thus the approach motivation of inspired employees propels them to take action and to have a positive impact on the organisation.

Figure 5: Thematic visualisation of what inspires DIY retail FLEs in an emerging market

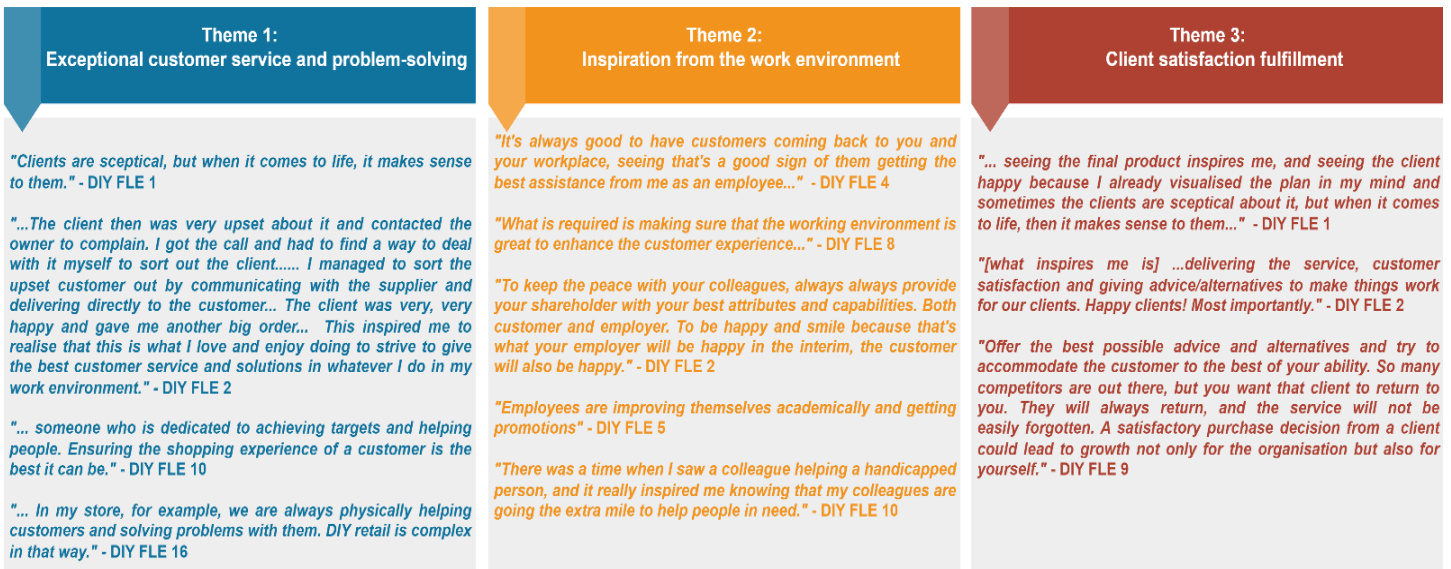


Source: Authors' conceptualisation

Below are quotes from FLEs to support the themes in **Figure 5** above.

To support the visualised themes mentioned above, **Figure 6** has been designed to capture the voices and quotes of the participants, organised under each theme.

Figure 6: Participants' quotes according to themes



Source: Author's conceptualisation

4.3 AoE3: To describe frontline employees' ideas on how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to make them more inspiring.

The fourth AoE sought to describe frontline employees' ideas about how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to make them more inspiring. Under this AoE, participants' suggestions reflected three overarching themes: employee appreciation and recognition, training, and working conditions:

"To continue 'pushing' us to never give up" – DIY FLE 3

"Good leadership skills always show inspiration to others on how to get it done, so being actively around to help in various situations shows experience and guide or curves the correct path or attitude toward growth. Incentives help as well." – DIY FLE 16

AoE3: Frontline employees' ideas about how their DIY retailers could design their workplaces to	Theme 1: Employee appreciation and recognition	Theme 2: Training	Theme 3: Working conditions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge/ appreciate staff • Treat all staff members with respect and dignity • Provide incentive structures • Provide new opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to staff to improve product knowledge • Provide more advanced training courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate tools to staff to do their work. • Keep FLEs in the same department • Not overwork some people • Increase salaries

make them more
inspiring

- Allow FLEs to learn different positions
- Have a broader range of stock – for example, overseas products

The above findings are consistent with those of Nor, Mohamed, Mohamed and Hassan (2020), whose study established a positive association between human resources management (HRM) practices and employee commitment. In their study, the authors demonstrated that, in the four dimensions of HRM practices that were explored (remuneration, recognition, working environment, and training and development), only the working environment and training and development showed statistically significant relationships with employee commitment.

4.4 AoE4: To describe the prevalence of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.

The fourth AoE described the prevalence of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.

"Looking at the demographic of frontline employees, their income isn't always sufficient, even more so now with inflation and rising costs of basic living necessities. This makes it less prevalent for a frontline employee to be inspired, so they go through the motions of doing exactly what they are hired and paid to do, nothing more." – DIY Customer 8

Under this AoE, the respondents focused on reasons for the lack of inspiration. Very few respondents expressly referred to 'prevalence'. But with all the explanations that were provided, it could be deduced that inspired FLEs are few and far between. Based on the study participants' reactions, the presence of FLEs in an emerging economy such as South Africa is relatively low. Very few respondents expressly referred to high prevalence, with the data suggesting that inspired work depends greatly on staff seniority and role. For example, low-ranking staff such as packers tended to be less inspired than people in higher-ranking roles such as retail managers. Most FLEs reported merely working to get paid, with little additional motivation. Pay levels were cited as insufficient, and working hours were felt to need adjustment. There was also a general lack of inspiration because of monotonous work, without any excitement or passion for the industry. Respondents indicated that this could stem from incorrect training, insufficient compensation, a lack of motivation, or the absence of passion for their sector. While explanations varied, the overall feedback implied that inspired FLEs are scarce, given factors such as seniority, compensation, workload management, training quality, and passion for the work.

4.5 AoE5: To explore the drivers of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.

This AoE focuses on exploring the factors that drive frontline employees in DIY retailing in an emerging market to be more inspired. In the dynamic landscape of DIY retailing in an emerging market, the vitality of frontline employees is paramount to retailers' success. As these markets continue to evolve, understanding the factors that drive and inspire employees on the frontline becomes central to retailers' sustainable growth and operational excellence. Figure 6 below illustrates what the DIY frontline employees indicated to be the most prevalent drivers that could lead to improved inspiration in their roles as frontline employees in DIY retailing in an emerging market.

Figure 7: Drivers of DIY frontline employee inspiration



Source: Authors' conceptualisation

4.6 AoE6: To describe the risks of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.

The sixth AoE described the risks of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging marketing. Under this AoE, most respondents did not foresee significant risks arising from having more inspired FLEs.

Participants' quotes

"... as an emerging market, it means there are a few characteristics of a developed market but just do not fully meet the standards, which do not mean that it is impossible, there is still place for improvement and change and with the DIY employees feeling inspired things can change for the better." – DIY Customer 5

"I think it will benefit South Africa to have more knowledgeable employees in their calibre of work." – DIY Customer 10

"... not all employees are knowledgeable and handle customers with care, which may lead to misunderstanding with their co-workers and other staff members as in whose the top achiever." – DIY Customer 12

One positive that were noted was potential improvements to sales and customer service levels. The one risk that was raised was that not all employees might have sufficient expertise or care for customers, which could lead to misunderstandings among co-workers or staff, especially about performance benchmarks. However, others saw no risks, and instead argued that FLEs could become store or brand ambassadors or even be inspired to start their own businesses, thereby helping to reduce youth unemployment and mental health issues. Overall, the feedback did not indicate clear risks, with many perceiving that more inspired frontline talent pools would benefit businesses and the economy.

The above findings are consistent with the literature, in which inspiration is considered a crucial aspect of organisational leadership (Avramenko, 2014; Talat & Chang, 2017): leaders are expected to inspire and motivate their followers.

	Positive impact on sales	Potential for improvement	Benefit to the industry and country	Risk of knowledge disparities	Opportunities beyond the store
AoE6: To describe the risks and benefits of frontline employee inspiration in DIY retailing in an emerging market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspired FLEs will lead to improved sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room for improvement and change, even in emerging markets such as South Africa. Inspired FLEs can contribute to positive transformation in the retail sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The presence of more knowledgeable employees in the workforce is seen as beneficial for the industry and the entire country. Knowledgeable employees enhance the quality of work and contribute to overall growth and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all employees have the same knowledge and customer care skills. This can lead to misunderstandings among co-workers and issues about recognising top achievers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having inspired FLEs can lead to their becoming store and brand ambassadors. Inspired FLEs might be motivated to start their own businesses, thus addressing issues such as youth unemployment and mental health.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Recommendations about AoE1

Considering the findings from AoE1 (situations experiencing inspired FLEs), the study recommends that DIY organisations prioritise comprehensive product knowledge training for FLEs and initiate motivational programmes that nurture a culture of inspiration. Such programmes could include incentive-based remuneration structures that align organisational goals with individual employees' motivation. DIY organisations should also consider recognising the vital role that FLEs play in empowering customers by giving them the necessary tools, technologies, and training. This would ensure that FLEs remain conversant with evolving product landscapes. The study further underlines the significance of inquisitive FLEs in meeting customers' needs and wants. In this regard, DIY retailers are encouraged to incorporate this inquisitiveness into performance evaluation. This quantifies and aligns employee assessments with customer engagement metrics.

5.2 Recommendations about AoE2

AoE2 sought to uncover what inspires frontline employees in DIY retail situations. The study underlines the pivotal role of exceptional customer service and problem-solving as primary motivators for FLEs. Thus DIY retailers are encouraged to instil a culture of dedication to provide the best customer service, coupled with problem-solving skills at work. In addition, the study recommends training programmes and managerial support that emphasise these qualities to fortify employee motivation. The study also identifies the workplace environment as a potent source of inspiration for FLEs. Thus DIY retailers should consider investing in aesthetically pleasing and conducive work environments. Visual elements such as aesthetically pleasing tiles and furniture could act as motivators that drive FLEs to work towards acquiring these items. Last, the study emphasises the intrinsic satisfaction derived by employees from fulfilling customers' needs and expectations. In view of these findings, DIY retailers are encouraged to foster an environment that encourages and rewards employees for realising their creative vision and delivering exceptional service. This enhances overall employee inspiration and motivates FLEs to perform better.

5.3 Recommendations about AoE3

AoE3 sought to describe FLEs' inspiration for DIY retailing. In this regard, DIY retailers are encouraged to cultivate a culture of employee appreciation and recognition. To achieve this, DIY retailers should institute regular acknowledgement programmes that celebrate individual and team achievements. This would foster a workplace ethos that treats every staff member with respect and dignity. Furthermore, retailers are encouraged to explore avenues for professional growth and career development, providing employees with opportunities for advancement and mentorship. In addition, training and skills development are essential parts of crafting an inspiring workplace. It is recommended that DIY retailers invest in comprehensive training initiatives that enhance both product knowledge and technical proficiency among frontline employees. By introducing advanced training courses and creating a flexible learning environment that allows FLEs to

diversify their skills across different roles in their organisations, DIY retailers could empower their employees to deepen their expertise and to contribute meaningfully to their success. Last, the study recommends that DIY retailers optimise working conditions by providing FLEs with the necessary tools and resources to execute their tasks efficiently. It is also recommended that DIY retailers implement strategies that prevent employee burnout, such as equitable workload distribution and fair scheduling practices.

5.4 Recommendations about AoE4

In addressing the low prevalence of FLE inspiration in DIY retailing, the study recognised that inspiration varies, based on staff seniority and role. This necessitates segmented motivational strategies. For example, while retail managers may draw inspiration from their roles, lower-ranking staff such as packers may require different incentives and support structures. Second, it is recommended that DIY retailers address insufficient pay levels by conducting a thorough analysis of their compensation structures to align them with industry standards. It is also recommended that DIY retailers reassess working hours to strike a balance that prevents overworking while delivering the best performance from FLEs. This mitigates burnout and improves overall job satisfaction.

5.5 Recommendations about AoE5

The findings of this study about AoE5 underscore valuable insights for DIY retailers to prioritise employee satisfaction – but, more importantly, to prioritise frontline employee inspiration, which would ultimately contribute to DIY retailers' service enhancement. First, it is recommended that DIY retailers focus on customer satisfaction and recognition, acknowledging the central role that FLEs play in achieving positive customer experiences. Recognition programmes should be implemented to reward and celebrate FLEs' contributions to customer satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, fostering a positive attitude in the workplace would be essential. The management of DIY retailers should lead by example by cultivating a culture of resilience and positivity, even in difficult situations.

Fair compensation emerges as apparently the most important factor influencing FLE inspiration. To address concerns about remuneration, DIY retailers should adopt competitive compensation structures, especially in the light of the extended trading hours inherent in the industry. DIY retailers should periodically review their remuneration packages to align them with industry standards and, as far as possible, with FLEs' expectations. Creating an improved work environment would be equally essential, re-emphasising the need for a supportive culture that considers factors such as the work–life balance, flexibility, and open communication.

Furthermore, DIY retailers are encouraged to invest in industry growth initiatives, aligning their retailing goals with FLEs' aspirations for long-term career prospects. Addressing training needs would be vital, focusing on continuous learning and development to keep employees engaged and motivated.

Strengthening leadership development programmes is recommended to cultivate influential and inspiring leaders, recognising their critical role in motivating employees and shaping DIY retailers' culture. A holistic approach to encouraging determination and motivation involves considering multiple factors, such as

recognition, compensation, and a positive work environment. Moreover, promoting involvement in some decision-making processes could empower FLEs and contribute to their sense of value to the DIY retailer. By adopting these recommendations, DIY retailers could create a workplace that met FLEs' needs and enhanced their overall satisfaction, effectiveness, and inspiration.

5.6 Recommendations about AoE6

To combat effectively the risks associated with FLEs' inspiration in the context of DIY retailing in emerging markets, a multifaceted set of recommendations is proposed. First, DIY retailers should establish a comprehensive risk assessment framework to evaluate and manage potential risks. This framework should also consider knowledge gaps, customer interactions, and inter-employee conflict. By identifying and mitigating these issues, DIY retailers could proactively address the challenges associated with employee inspiration. Second, implementing regular competency evaluations would ensure that inspired frontline employees have the knowledge and skills to handle customer interactions, and so minimise misunderstandings among employees. The study further recommends that DIY retailers introduce mentoring and support programmes to guide FLEs, especially those intending to start their own businesses. This would channel their inspiration into productive ventures and contribute to creating employment. DIY retailers should also foster open communication and feedback between FLEs and management. This collaborative and supportive work environment would make it easier to identify and resolve emerging risks/challenges related to employee inspiration.

6 CONCLUSION

This final section of the report delves into the realm of contemplation, presenting a synthesis of the research findings and suggesting avenues for reflection and strategic action. As DIY retailers navigate the landscape of FLE inspiration in an emerging market, this section serves as a compass for potential pathways, offering insights beyond this study's immediate focus, engaging with these considerations, and embracing the concluding thoughts that pave the way for future research endeavours and innovations in the dynamic retail sector.

- Retailers should explore why some FLEs are highly engaged while others are not; how the relationship-based approach affects customer assistance; and the impact of language barriers on customers' experiences.
- The presence of inspired and knowledgeable FLEs who take the initiative to empower and educate customers leads to a more positive customer experience, often resulting in impulse purchases. This, in turn, underscores the significance of employee inspiration and product knowledge in the retail setting.
- The importance of inspired FLEs should not be underestimated in building customer loyalty, creating a positive shopping experience, and fostering deeper relationships. However, there is also a need for balance, as excessive enthusiasm can have unintended negative consequences. The findings of this

study suggest that inspired FLEs could significantly contribute to a DIY retailer's success by increasing sales and building a community of loyal and engaged customers.

- Successful and inspired FLEs are not only knowledgeable about their products but also skilled communicators who inspire confidence, actively engage with customers, and go above and beyond to provide a satisfying shopping experience. This all-rounder profile is essential for creating a positive and productive customer–retailer relationship.
- A multifaceted approach is necessary to motivate and empower FLEs effectively to be inspired. It combines financial incentives, skills development opportunities, a motivating work environment, and involvement in practical projects. In addition, fostering a sense of purpose through clear goals and vision and building strong interpersonal relationships through team-building activities could enhance FLE inspiration and empowerment. It is about creating a holistic strategy that considers tangible and intangible employee satisfaction and engagement.
- Improving FLE motivation and professionalism would have a multidimensional impact on the retailer. It would start with enhancing customer experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty, leading to increased sales and a competitive advantage in the market. Empowering and inspiring FLEs could create a ripple effect, improving employee motivation and teamwork and enhancing customer experiences. This, in turn, could establish the retailer as a preferred brand in the DIY retailing sector. This study's findings suggest that the benefits of such improvements would extend far beyond just the FLEs, and could profoundly influence the entire DIY retail ecosystem.
- Evidently, inspiration among DIY FLEs is not uniform and is influenced by job role, financial compensation, working conditions, the nature of the job, and personal motivation and passion. A lack of inspiration may be rooted in economic concerns, such as insufficient income, exacerbated by rising living costs. To inspire FLEs, it may be necessary to address these profound issues, including financial well-being and an improved work environment. This highlights the complex interplay of the factors that influence employee motivation and inspiration, especially in an emerging economy.
- Inspiring FLEs carries numerous benefits, such as improved sales, personal and industry growth, and contributions to broader societal challenges. While potential knowledge disparities and interpersonal issues are recognised as risks, the overall consensus suggests that the benefits of having inspired FLEs outweigh these potential challenges. This highlights the positive impact and transformative potential that inspired and knowledgeable FLEs could have, even in emerging markets.
- Various factors, including job security, salary, empathy, and organisational commitment, influence FLEs' inspiration and commitment. The level of product knowledge, role clarity, and the influence of customer satisfaction can further shape employee inspiration. The findings of this study underscore the diverse nature of FLE inspiration, with some employees being highly committed while others may view their jobs as merely transactional. Understanding and addressing the factors that impact inspiration and engagement would be central to enhancing the overall customer experience.
- While some FLEs demonstrate strong customer-centricity and excellent service, others may require further guidance and training to align with the store's customer-centric goals.

- Inspired FLEs undoubtedly contribute to creating a more customer-centric retail experience, which involves a combination of positive attributes and behaviours from FLEs. This includes a welcoming demeanour, knowledge, enthusiasm, empathy, practical product knowledge, a customer-oriented approach, and proactivity. The findings of this study highlight the importance of human interactions and a genuine passion for selling products to enhance the overall customer experience. They also emphasise the need for training and a changed management approach in order to foster FLE inspiration, ultimately leading to a customer-centric environment.

7 REFERENCES

- Adeoye-Olatunde, O.A. & Olenik, N.L. 2021. Research and scholarly methods: Semi-structured interviews. *Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy*, 4(10), pp.1358-1367.
- Arnold, M.J. & Reynolds, K.E. 2003. Hedonic shopping motivations. *Journal of Retailing*, 79(2), pp.77-95.
- Avramenko, A. 2014. Inspiration at work: Is it an oxymoron? *Baltic Journal of Management*, 9(1), pp.113–130. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BJM-07-2013-0110>
- Böttger, T., Rudolph, T., Evanschitzky, H. & Pfrang, T. 2017. Customer inspiration: Conceptualisation, scale development, and validation. *Journal of Marketing*, 81(6), pp.116-131.
- Campbell, C. 2005. The craft consumer: Culture, craft and consumption in a postmodern society. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), pp.23-42.
- Carstens, R.T. 2018. Investigating the role of coordinators in the development of an integrated process to facilitate holistic well-being in six South African school communities. Doctoral dissertation, North-West University.
- Chadborn, D. & Reysen, S. 2018. Moved by the masses: A social identity perspective on inspiration. *Current Psychology*, 37(3), pp.625-631. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-016-9545-9>
- Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C.N. 2017. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.
- Cui, Y., Thrash, T.M., Shkeyrov, R. & Varga, P.J. 2020. Inspiration in the creative process. *Encyclopedia of Creativity*, April, pp.660-666.
- Dąbrowska, A. & Janoś-Kresło, M. 2019. The importance of customer experience for service enterprises. *Marketing i Rynek*, 2019(9), pp.15-25. <https://doi.org/10.33226/1231-7853.2019.9.2>
- Denzin, N. K. 2016. *The qualitative manifesto: A call to arms*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- DIY International 2020. *Retail diversity in the South*. Available online from: <https://www.diyinternational.com/content/diyplus/2020/06/09/retail-diversity-in-the-south.html> [Accessed 3 November 2022].
- DIY International 2022. *Cashbuild quadruples e-commerce turnover*. Available online from: <https://www.diyinternational.com/content/news/2022/11/03/cashbuild-quadruples-e-commerce-turnover.html> [Accessed 9 November 2022].
- Doyle, P. & Wong, V. 1998. Marketing and competitive performance: An empirical study. *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(5/6), pp.514-535.

Euromonitor. (2023). Home Improvement in South Africa. [online] Available at: <https://www.euromonitor.com/home-improvement-in-south-africa/report> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2023].

Fortini-Campbell, L. 1992. The consumer insight workbook: How consumer insights can inspire better marketing and advertising. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 9(4), pp.73-74.

Freitag 2024. *FREITAG F-Cut*. [online] Available at: https://f-cut.ch/?_gl=1*ga6ces*_gcl_au*MTkyODg4NTA5Ni4xNzA3OTk2NzI3 [Accessed 25 Feb. 2024].

Gautam, A. & Enslin, E. 2019. Transformational leadership and work engagement in the automotive retail industry: A study of South Africa. *International Business Research*, 12(5), pp.133-141.

DIY International - The online magazine for the home improvement industry. (2020). Coronavirus effect in South Africa too. [online] Available at: <https://www.diyinternational.com/content/news/2020/11/05/coronavirus-effect-in-south-africa-too.html> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2023].

Izogo, E.E. & Mpinganjira, M. 2020. Behavioral consequences of customer inspiration: The role of social media inspirational content and cultural orientation. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(4), pp.431-459.

Jackson, A. 2006. Labour as leisure—The mirror dinghy and DIY sailors. *Journal of Design History*, 19(1), pp.57-67.

Jackson, B. 2012. Give your people a cause and inspiration will follow: The secrets of successful team-building. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 20(2), pp.32-34.

Karpen, I.O. 2008. Linking S-D logic and marketing practice: Toward a strategic service orientation. *Forum American Bar Association*, 2.

Levitt, H.M., Motulsky, S.L., Wertz, F.J., Morrow, S.L. & Ponterotto, J.G. 2017. Recommendations for designing and reviewing qualitative research in psychology: Promoting methodological integrity. *Qualitative Psychology*, 4(1), pp.2-22. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000082>

Lusch, R.F. & Vargo, S.L. 2011. Service-dominant logic: A necessary step. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45(7), pp.1298-1309. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561111137723>

Mackay, M. & Perkins, H.C. 2019. DIY dreams and the potential of home. *Housing, Theory and Society*, 36(1), pp.112-128. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2017.1408679>

Mackay, M., Perkins, H.C. & Gidlow, B. 2013. DIY “worlds” and the co-construction of home and self. *Asia Pacific Network for Housing Research*, August, pp.20-22.

Morgan, D.L. 2014. Pragmatism as a paradigm for social research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(8), pp.1045-1053.

- Mulhuijzen, M. & De Jong, J.P. 2023. The rich or the poor? Personal resources, do-it-yourself, and innovation in the household sector. *Research Policy*, 52(3), 104712.
- Mulli, D.K. & Kiiru, D. 2020. Influence of intellectual inspiration and performance of the National Police Service. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 5 (3) 165 – 173.
- Neumüller, K., 2022. FRONTLINE EMPLOYEE INSPIRATION IN RETAILING – (Doctoral dissertation, University of St. Gallen).
- Nike.com. 2023. *Nike by you*. Available online from: <https://www.nike.com/za/nike-by-you> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2024].
- Nor, C.S.M., Mohamed, R.K.H., Mohamed, B. & Hassan, N.A.C. 2020. Human resources management practices and its impact on employee commitment among staffs of road transport department, Perak, Malaysia. *Journal of Environmental Treatment Techniques*, 8(1), pp.28-34.
- Oleynick, V.C., Thrash, T.M., LeFev, M.C., Moldovan, E.G. & Kieffaber, P.D. 2014. The scientific study of inspiration in the creative process: Challenges and opportunities. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8(June), pp.1-8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00436>
- Qiu, Y., Bouncken, R.B., Arndt, F. & Ng, W. 2023. Microfoundations and dynamics of do-it-yourself ecosystems. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 193, 122611. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122611>
- Rauschnabel, P.A., Felix, R. & Hinsch, C. 2019. Augmented reality marketing: How mobile AR-apps can improve brands through inspiration. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 49, pp.43-53.
- Rudolph, T., Neumüller, K. & Kleinlercher, K. 2021. Employee inspiration in retailing: Opportunities and risks. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*, 38(1), pp.34-41.
- Sahibzada, S., Kakakhel, S.J. & Khan, A. 2016. Role of leaders' idealized influence and inspirational motivation on employees' job satisfaction. *University of Haripur Journal of Management (UOHJM)*, 1(2), pp.86-92.
- Smit, S. 2021. *Covid will decide if home refurb boom continues*. Available online from: <https://mq.co.za/business/2021-01-18-covid-will-decide-if-home-refurb-boom-continues/> [Accessed February 2022].
- Son, J.H., Kim, J.H., & Kim, G.-J. 2021. Does employee satisfaction influence customer satisfaction? Assessing coffee shops through the service profit chain model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102866.

Statista 2022. *DIY and Hardware Store – South Africa*. Available online from: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/diy-hardware-store/south-africa#revenue> [Accessed 19 November 2022].

Talat, U. & Chang, K. 2017. Employee imagination and implications for entrepreneurs: Inspiration from Chinese business enterprises. *Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management*, 8(2), pp.129-152. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHRM-06-2017-0012>

Tavory, I. & Timmermans, S. 2014. *Abductive analysis: Theorising qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Thrash, T.M. & Elliot, A.J. 2003. Inspiration as a psychological construct. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), pp.871-889.

Thrash, T.M. & Elliot, A.J. 2004. Inspiration: Core characteristics, component processes, antecedents, and function. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(6), pp.957-973.

Tracy, S.J. 2019. *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons. West Sussex, United Kingdom.

Vargo, Stephen & Lusch, Robert. (2004). *Evolving to a New Dominant Logic. The service-dominant logic of marketing. Dialog, debate, and directions*. 68. 1-17.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). *Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution*. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36(1), 1-10.

Vargo, S.L., Koskela-Huotari, K. and Vink, J., 2020. Service-dominant logic: foundations and applications. In *The Routledge handbook of service research insights and ideas* (pp. 3-23). Routledge.

Watson, M. & Shove, E. 2008. Product, competence, project and practice: DIY and the dynamics of craft consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(1), pp.69-89.

Watson, M. and Shove, E., 2005, September. Doing it yourself? Products, competence and meaning in the practices of DIY. In *European Sociological Association Conference, Torun, Poland*.

Wiid, J.A. 2020. Employee engagement in retail organisations: The new normal post Covid-19? *The Retail and Marketing Review*, 16(2), pp.135-144.

Wilden, R., Akaka, M.A., Karpen, I.O. & Hohberger, J. 2017. The evolution and prospects of service-dominant logic: An investigation of past, present, and future research. *Journal of Service Research*, 20(4), pp.345-361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670517715121>

Wolf, M. & McQuitty, S. 2011. Understanding the do-it-yourself consumer: DIY motivations and outcomes. *AMS Review*, 1, pp.154-170.

Wolf, M., Ritz, W. & McQuitty, S. 2020. Prosumers who home brew: A study of motivations and outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 28(4), pp.541-552.

Żelechowska, D., Żyluk, N. & Urbański, M. 2020. Find out a new method to study abductive reasoning in empirical research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, p.1-11.

ZoomInfo 2023. *Top 10 home improvement & hardware retail manufacturing companies in South Africa by revenue for June 2023*. Available online from: <https://www.zoominfo.com/top-lists/top-10-companies-from-retail-hardware-industry-in-ZA-by-revenue> [Accessed 19 January 2024].