Brand champion behaviour: Its role in corporate branding

ABSTRACT

Brand champions are responsible for encouraging employee commitment to the corporate brand strategy. They strongly believe in and identify with the brand concept - the company's selected brand meaning, which underpins corporate brand strategy implementation. We conducted research to explore why and how brand champion behaviour operates within companies implementing a new corporate brand strategy. Against a backdrop of growing interest in brand champion behaviour in corporate branding research, we grounded our study in social identity theory and rhetorical theory from change management literature. Our findings, show that articulating a compelling brand vision, taking responsibility, and getting the right people involved are the most widely used strategies by brand champions. We uncover how rhetorical strategies within brand champion behaviour generate employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. The dimension of brand champion behaviour that is effective depends on the type of brand evolution, involving shifts in the brand concept. We make suggestions for further studies underpinned by social identity theory and rhetorical theory to investigate brand champion behaviour processes within companies introducing a new corporate brand strategy.

Key words: corporate branding; brand champion behaviour; corporate brand strategy implementation; brand evolution; social identity theory; rhetorical theory

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 25 years, scholars and consultants have become increasingly interested in corporate branding (Balmer, 2010; Cooper *et al*, 2015; Iglesias *et al*, 2013; King, 1991; Rindell *et al*, 2015). Corporate branding is a process that aims to create and maintain differentiation and preference among key stakeholders (Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Veselinova *et al*, 2015). To maintain relevance and fit with the external environment, companies need to evolve the corporate brand (Balmer, 2012; Nedergaard and Gyrd-Jones, 2013). As part of this process, leaders articulate a brand concept that inspires employees and addresses customer needs (Ankler *et al*, 2012; Golant, 2012). The brand concept is the company selected brand meaning, which underpins corporate brand strategy implementation (McEnally and de Chernatony, 1999; Park *et al*, 1986). Effective implementation requires employees' understanding of and commitment to the corporate brand strategy (Brexendorf and Kernstock, 2007; Piehler *et al*, 2016). This understanding and commitment underpins employees' ability and motivation to live the brand (Piehler *et al*, 2016; Stuart, 2012).

As companies have increasingly adopted corporate branding, consultants recognised the role of brand champions in generating employee commitment to a corporate brand strategy (Pringle and Gordon, 2001; Upshaw and Taylor, 2000). According to Ind (2007), brand champions can be thought of as '…committed individuals who are willing to proselytise on behalf of a brand' (p. 124). They necessarily understand the brand and have the respect of fellow employees (Ind, 2007; Thomson *et al*, 1999). Brand champions are often long-standing employees, who have an informal or formal role in stimulating employee commitment to the corporate brand strategy (Ind, 2007; Wallace *et al*, 2013). Informal brand champions adopt voluntary behaviour that demonstrates support for the brand concept, which goes beyond role requirements (Wallace *et al*, 2013). This includes storytelling about the

corporate brand, and behaving as role models of the brand values (Ind, 2007). Informal brand champions are likely to demonstrate a commitment to the corporate brand strategy because they have a strong belief in and identification with the brand concept (Ind, 2007).

Despite increasing interest in brand champion behaviour, previous research provides an inadequate theoretical explanation of why and how brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment with respect to a new corporate brand strategy. Companies introduce new corporate brand strategies to foster brand growth and performance (Merrilees, 2005; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2011). We aim to explore this research issue within companies undergoing shifts in the brand concept.

To underpin this study we borrow from social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Morhart *et al*, 2009), which explains why brand champion behaviour influences employee commitment to an existing corporate brand strategy (Morhart *et al*, 2009). Based on social identity theory, brand champion behaviour stimulates employees to integrate a brand-based role identity into their self-concepts (Morhart *et al*, 2009). Individuals tend to identify with attractive attributes (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), such as the brand values and goals underpinning the corporate brand (Morhart *et al*, 2009). When an employee identifies with brand values and goals, they embody a brand-based role identity in their self-concept. This identification with attributes of the organisation's identity underpins employee motivation to adopt behaviour that supports brand goals (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014). Although social identity theory may explain why brand champions encourage employees to support an existing brand strategy, it does not explain how brand champion behaviour processes generate commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. Companies introducing new corporate brand strategies may require employees to de-identify with attributes of a previous brand strategy that have become less relevant to key stakeholders. Without such de-

identification, employees are likely to continue supporting attributes of the corporate brand that detract from effective implementation of the new corporate brand strategy (Gotsi *et al*, 2008). Rhetorical theory complements social identity theory as it provides an understanding of persuasive strategies that encourage de-identification and identification with attributes of a redefined organisational identity (Fiol, 2002; Sillince *et al*, 2012). This study is the first to employ rhetorical theory in corporate branding research.

The deficiency in theoretical explanation for brand champion behaviour processes within companies implementing a new corporate brand strategy is best addressed with an exploratory research strategy that allows theory to emerge from the data (Tenzer *et al*, 2014). On the basis of in-depth interviews with managers from five companies implementing a new corporate brand strategy, the results of our study provide insights into the brand champion behaviour processes. We develop a theoretical explanation of why and how brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. We uncover certain rhetorical strategies that explain how brand champion behaviour encourages employees to identify with the redefined brand concept. The type of brand champion behaviour processes depend on the nature of changes to the brand concept. We describe brand championing strategies that are useful to managers within companies implementing particular types of corporate brand strategies.

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Although exploratory research emphasises the systematic discovery of theory from data, researchers do not enter a study with an 'empty head', but rather rely on existing theory and concepts as a backdrop for interpreting the data (Richardson and Kramer, 2006; Tenzer *et al*, 2014). Relevant literature is examined in the following section, which will help to develop a

greater understanding of brand champion behaviour processes. This includes literature on corporate branding, champion behaviour, and change management.

Corporate branding and brand champion behaviour

Corporate branding requires that brands evolve to maintain relevance and fit with the external environment that a company faces. Scholars propose various frameworks of branding evolution. First, Park *et al* (1986) present a normative framework of brand concept management, in which a firm develops and maintains a product brand image, based on the initial brand concept. Brand concept management involves making timely adaptations to the marketing program to enhance the value of the brand image. Like brand concept management, corporate brand strategy implementation is underpinned by the brand concept (Ind, 2007; Merrilees, 2005). However, unlike the product brand that has contrived values; a corporate brand concept is based on values held within a company (Balmer, 2001b).

Second, McEnally and de Chernatony (1999) extend Goodyear's (Goodyear, 1996) conceptual model of brand evolution that comprises six stages. According to McEnally and de Chernatony (1999), brands begin at the stage of an unbranded product, and can progress to the increasingly sophisticated stages of brand as reference, brand as personality, brand as icon, brand as company, and brand as policy. For example, in formulating a new brand strategy, the brand concept could shift from brand as reference (brand name is used to identify the producer, to enhance perceptions of product quality) to brand as personality (brand incorporates emotional and symbolic values that resonate with customer identities).

Merrilees (2005) remains one of few studies that demonstrates how brands progress through the stages of brand evolution proposed by McEnally and de Chernatony (1999). The study

suggests that shifts in the brand concept are instances of radical brand evolution. Merrilees (2005) develops a process model of radical brand evolution, based on insight from the Canadian Tire retail case study, which shifted from brand as icon (brand symbolises higher-order values of society and imbues a sense of brand ownership among consumers) to brand as company (brand has multiple stakeholders and represents the company products and services, which embody the corporate brand values). This model includes three phases, which are brand visioning, brand orientation, and brand strategy implementation. During the brand visioning phase, a marketing team develops a corporate brand vision, based on consumer research and manager discussions. The corporate brand vision specifies the brand's purpose, and emphasises (functional, emotional, or symbolic) values that meet stakeholder needs (de Cherantony, 1999; de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo, 1998). The brand orientation phase is a manager-initiated process involving activities that encourage employees to develop commitment to the corporate brand vision. The present study focuses on the brand orientation phase of radical corporate brand evolution, in which brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy.

Conceptual research on global corporate branding suggests that brand champions have a formal role in overseeing corporate brand strategy implementation (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999, 2000). Based on this research, senior manager brand champions make recommendations on strategy implementation (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000). According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (1999), employees give careful consideration to these recommendations, as brand champions have legitimacy. A brand champion has legitimacy partly because of organisational power, and partly because of a depth of experience, knowledge and insight into corporate branding (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999).

Aspects of brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour are likely to overlap with brand champion behaviour. Morhart *et al* (2009) studied leadership behaviour in service-oriented firms and found that transformational leadership behaviour was more likely than transactional leadership behaviour to encourage employee commitment to brand initiatives. Based on Morhart *et al* (2009), brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour includes acting as a role model of the corporate brand values, articulating a compelling brand vision that engages employees, encouraging employees to rethink their jobs from the perspective of a brand community member, and teaching and coaching followers in their roles as brand representatives. Based on social identity theory, research suggests that brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour stimulates employees to integrate a brand-based role identity into their self-concepts (Morhart *et al*, 2009). When this role identity is salient in one's self-concept, individuals are motivated to adopt behaviour that supports corporate brand goals (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014).

Research and consultant work suggests that within some companies brand champions are formally responsible for executing internal marketing programs that encourage employees to develop an understanding of a new corporate brand strategy (Causon, 2004; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2011). For example, within an industrial company manager brand champions from all levels of the company were appointed as brand champions (Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2011). These brand champions promoted the redefined brand vision and contributed to developing training that aligned with a new strategic goal.

Champion behaviour in innovation research

The term 'champion' has been used in the innovation literature dating back to the 1960s (Schon, 1963). Walter *et al* (2011) provide a comprehensive table of previous literature and

note that '…despite increased understanding of champions, few studies define what constitutes "championing behaviors"' (p. 588). Howell *et al* (2005) developed a scale for measuring champion behaviour that contributes to successful innovations. Howell *et al's* (2005) scale of champion behaviour was the result of a process, which involved a review of the literate on champions and a number of surveys of managers and team members who rated champion behaviour within manufacturing firms. This scale has three main dimensions, which are: persisting under adversity, expressing enthusiasm and confidence about the success of an innovation, and getting the right people involved. Building upon earlier work on innovation and change management, Walter *et al* (2011) developed a scale for measuring champion behaviour that is associated with innovation success. Walter *et al's* (2011) scale was developed using interviews with academic entrepreneurs, and questionnaires administered to founders of academic spin-offs. This scale provides four dimensions of champion behaviour, which are: persisting under adversity, pursuing innovative ideas, taking responsibility, and network building. The results of these studies of innovation are relevant to brand champion behaviour in radical corporate brand evolution; however it is not known which dimensions of champion behaviour apply to brand champions.

Scales of champion behaviour are based on the behaviour of champions who often pursue innovation ideas that are not closely related to the corporate strategy (Walter *et al*, 2011). Champions persist under adversity to generate top manager commitment to these innovation ideas. For these champions network building is critical, to establish a support group, which contributes to developing and implementing an innovation (Chakrabarti and Hauschildt, 1989; Walter *et al*, 2011). As brand champions pursue initiatives that align with corporate goals and build on the existing shared brand understanding within the company, the situation is somewhat different from championing innovations. However, it is thought that some

dimensions of champion behaviour from innovation research overlap with brand champion behaviour in corporate branding evolution, as will be explained in the following sections.

'Taking responsibility' involves actions that demonstrate a personal dedication to an innovation idea (Walter *et al*, 2011, p. 590). According to Schon's (1963) conceptual work on radical innovation, this dedication is underpinned by a champion's strong belief in and identification with the innovation idea. Champions take responsibility either informally, or as part of a formal role (Jervis, 1975). Empirical and conceptual research suggests that when champion behaviour is part of a formal role, it is particularly effective in stimulating employee commitment to an innovation idea (Jervis, 1975; Schon, 1963). Within some companies, senior managers give champions responsibility for overseeing the successful development of an innovation, and allocate funding towards this goal (Schon, 1963).

Champion behaviour emphasises 'getting the right people involved' (Howell *et al*, 2005, p. 642). Product champions encourage key decision makers and employees to participate in developing and implementing an innovation idea (Howell *et al*, 2005; Markham *et al*, 1991). Research shows that champions need the support of employees to successfully develop and implement the innovation idea (Soo *et al*, 2009; van Laere and Aggestam, 2016).

Champions engage in 'expressing enthusiasm and confidence about the success of an innovation' (Howell *et al*, 2005, p. 642). Research suggests that such expressions incorporate behavioural and affective components (Markham *et al*, 1991). Based on a survey study involving 28 organisations, Howell and Higgins (1990) suggests that champions of technological innovations exhibit some transformational leadership behaviour, which includes articulating a compelling vision of the innovation's potential for the organisation,

expressions of confidence about the ability of others to contribute to the innovation, and displays of innovative actions to achieve ideological goals.

Rhetorical theory and change management

Rhetorical theory informs an understanding of the rhetorical strategies change agents use to generate support for strategic change. Classical rhetorical theory is concerned with the argumentation and persuasion of an arguer (Aristotle, as cited in Barnes, 1984). This study draws upon the ancient work of Aristotle, and the enthymeme, which partly explains the persuasion process (Aristotle, as cited in Barnes, 1984). The enthymeme is an argument in which the arguer deliberately omits the premise that is essential to its reasoning. It encourages the audience to participate in their own persuasion by filling in that missing premise (Blair, 2012). New rhetorical theorists broaden classical theory to the interplay between speech, text and context that is needed to understand persuasion within organisations (Sillince *et al*, 2012). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), argumentation is effective when an arguer establishes 'communion' with the audience, which can be understood as a sense of solidarity centred around shared values and common knowledge. To develop connections with varied audiences, speakers construct arguments in ways that align with values and sentiments of the audiences (Burke, 1989). For example, speakers achieve communion 'through references to a common culture, tradition or past', and by involving the audience in the active exposition of an idea (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, pp. 177, 178).

Fiol (2002) proposes a model of identity transformation by drawing upon rhetorical theory, research on organisational identification, and observations within a high-technology company. Identity transformation applies to companies that redefine 'who we are' as an

organisation, and implement a new corporate strategy. Such transformation is relevant to companies with an identity that 'no longer works' within the marketplace (Fiol, 2002, p. 659). Fiol's (2002) model consists of three phases, which are de-identification, situated re-identification, and identification with core ideology. Fiol (2002) proposes that change agents use negation to encourage employee de-identification with attributes of the organisation's current identity. This includes defining what an organisation is 'not' and describing why certain attributes lack relevance (Fiol, 2002, p. 659). Within rhetorical theory, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) suggests that negation that makes apparent a deficiency, motivates the audience to look forward to stabilising a group's order (pp. 330-331). Similarly, Fiol (2002) suggests that a rhetorical strategy involving negation stimulates employees to engage in rhetoric to make sense of the deficiency, in preparation for redefining organisational identity. We anticipate that the de-identification phase applies to companies undergoing shifts in the brand concept, to address a decline in corporate brand relevance.

Rhetorical theorists consider that 'the process of identification is conducted primarily with language' (Cheney and Tompkins, 1987, p. 11). In the second phase, re-identification involves change agents rebuilding ties to a new future state (Fiol, 2002). To describe this re-identification process, Fiol (2002) draws upon Rousseau's (1998) conceptualisation of organisational identification. Rousseau (1998) suggests that this involves cognitive processes in which one expands the way they think about themselves to include the organisation's interests or attributes. Within situated re-identification, a person is aware that they have common interests with the organisation (Fiol, 2002). Such identification is created by situational cues signalling shared interests (Rousseau, 1989). According to Fiol (2002), such cues may include active experimentation in projects that are consistent with the

organisation's desired direction. Fiol (2002) suggests that within such experimentation employees explore new ways of seeing their organisational role.

Within the identification with core ideology phase, individuals develop deep structure identification (Fiol, 2002). Deep structure identification refers to the cognitive schema that occurs when an individual is aware of congruence between self-at-work and the broader self-concept (Rousseau, 1998). This cognitive schema can form part of an individual's self-concept. Fiol (2002) proposes that change agents can encourage deep structure identification by using abstract language to describe the core ideology i.e. the organisation's unchanging values and purpose. Such abstract descriptions encourage consensus building about the core ideology, which involves employees modifying the meaning of the message based on personal or organisational preferences (Sillince *et al*, 2012). These individual interpretations of the message are still consistent with the desires of leaders, and foster organisational adaptation (Eisenberg, 1984).

Corporate branding research suggests that social identity theory explains *why* brand champion behaviour encourages employee commitment to an existing corporate brand strategy. Rhetorical theory explains *how* change agent strategies encourage employees to commit to a new corporate strategy. Innovation research informs an understanding of dimensions of champion behaviour that generate employee commitment to new initiatives within an organisation. In this study we specifically explore a subset of champion behaviour by analysing how brand champion behaviour functions to secure employee commitment within five companies implementing a new corporate brand strategy. We describe our research approach in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

To understand effective brand champion behaviour processes, we selected five companies introducing a new corporate brand strategy. These five companies featured in the Interbrand Top Brand lists. The listed companies are of particular interest here, because the corporate brands can be considered successful, suggesting the possibility of sophisticated corporate brand evolution processes. The five companies were from four main industries, including air transport, banking, software, and travel publishing. Table 1 provides background information on each company.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1

As brand champion behaviour processes within corporate brand strategy implementation have not yet been systematically investigated, an inductive, theory-generating approach was considered most suitable (Siggelkow, 2007). This approach is appropriate for investigating complex social processes (Birkinshaw *et al*, 2011; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Inductive studies allow researchers to develop theory of context dependent phenomena (Birkinshaw *et al*, 2011), such as brand champion behaviour processes, which occur within companies implementing a new corporate brand strategy. We grounded our study in social identity theory and rhetorical theory, as suggested by researchers (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007).

We adopted a semi-structured in-depth interview method, which allows researchers to explore poorly understood corporate branding processes (Balmer and Wang, 2016; Rindell *et al*, 2015). This method enables researchers to develop an appreciation of participants' emic views concerning '…the actor's understanding of the situation he/she is in' (Eckhardt, 2004,

p. 403). This study included interviews with middle managers from the five companies that were implementing a new corporate brand strategy, and with managers from media and advertising agencies who assisted implementation. As McEnally and de Chernatony (1999) suggests that the stage of branding development can vary across industries, the selected companies were from a variety of industries, to provide variation in brand evolution processes. We used snowball sampling to identify managers who were most involved in overseeing the implementation of a new corporate brand strategy, and who had first-hand knowledge of branding evolution. Below we describe how we collected data on brand champion behaviour and branding evolution processes.

Data collection

Our data collection spanned a year and a half. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were the main source of data collection. Archival data and follow-up communication with key informants were used to promote converging lines of inquiry.

Face-to-face interviews with key informants

Our principal informants were 25 middle managers from the five companies that were implementing a new corporate brand strategy and 7 managers from media and advertising agencies who assisted implementation. Research suggests that middle managers often engage in brand champion behaviour (Morhart *et al*, 2009; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2011). The participants had first-hand knowledge of brand champion behaviour and branding processes for each company. Informant role titles are shown in Appendix A.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted at the workplace of participants in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. In all, there were 36 face-to-face in-depth interviews, which varied in length from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. The face-to-face interviews were semi-structured, allowing the researchers to probe respondents, to develop data depth (Flick, 2014). For example, probing was used to develop emerging lines of inquiry concerning the process of introducing new corporate branding procedures. Interview questions encouraged informants to describe brand champion behaviour processes, branding responsibilities, and brand evolution. Within 24 hours of each interview, notes were made about the main themes and lines of inquiry to follow up in subsequent data collection. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Archival data

We collected media clippings, website information, journal and professional publication articles, manager presentations, and branding documents. The media clippings and website information was used in pre-interview preparation. Following the interviews, we used the documents to triangulate interview data.

Follow-up communication with 'confirming' informants

We used follow-up interviews and emails to corroborate interview data. The interviews were with four middle managers (Softech, Australair, Trekker), and follow-up email responses were received from most informants and one additional manager. For example, interview data showed that after introducing a new corporate brand strategy, Starbank and Softech managers implemented a reward system that encouraged employee commitment to the redefined brand values. Follow-up communication allowed the researchers to develop a more detailed

understanding of features of the new reward systems that comprised brand champion behaviour processes. The informants gave additional information that provided a triangulation of viewpoints.

Data analysis

Data was analysed in an iterative fashion, systematically comparing the data and emerging themes (King, 2012; Patton, 2002). Data was coded based on common themes found across the data set. The themes were discussed among co-authors and revised until all authors reached a consensus on the final theme set. In accordance with established techniques of interview-based studies, data analysis progressed in three phases (Cody and Lawlor, 2011; Gambetti and Graffigna, 2015), which included developing a code manual (phase one), writing descriptive company summaries (phase two), and systematic combination of theory with themes (phase three).

The manual included the code name and a description of the theme. The codes were informed mainly by champion behaviour and corporate branding literature and marked concepts found in our data. For example, we found evidence of champion behaviour dimensions of 'taking responsibility', and 'getting the right people involved' and the brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour of 'articulating a compelling and differentiating brand vision' (Morhart *et al*, 2009, p. 123). However, we used the code name 'articulating a compelling brand vision', for brevity. As data analysis progressed, the code manual was refined by adding new codes and revising code descriptions based on the views of participants.

After integrating all the interview data in the code manual, in the second phase, we developed descriptive summaries of each company. The summaries provided a narrative of the themes in each company alongside interview and archival data that supported the themes. This allowed the researchers to develop a detailed understanding of brand champion behaviour processes within each company (Patton, 2002), and further refine code descriptions.

We aggregated first-order codes into higher-order codes that represented theoretical categories. These categories are shown in the right-hand column of Table 2. We found evidence of the processes by which brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. We explain key dimensions of these brand champion behaviour processes in the findings.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2

Research reliability is increased when researchers can provide a chain of evidence to show how the findings were developed (Yin, 2014). We offer a chain of evidence by illustrating the data structure progression from the first phase to the third phase in Table 2. The data analysis resulted in a detailed explanation of why and how brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. As shown in Table 2, this explanation included only those higher-order themes corroborated by at least two interviews and one archival source or follow-up communication per company. Examples of quotes for higher-order themes taken from interviews and archival data are shown in Tables 3, 5 and 6.

Findings

We present the findings that emerged from our data. Our presentation links descriptions of corporate branding incidents with our theoretical categories concerning brand champion behaviour. Certain dimensions of brand champion behaviour generated employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. This included articulating a compelling brand vision, taking responsibility, and getting the right people involved.

Articulating a compelling brand vision

In all cases, senior and middle manager brand champions articulated a compelling brand vision that engaged employees (see Table 3). This included communications that described the brand vision by making links to past, present and future brand values. The Softech CEO used storytelling to describe a new microfinance initiative by making links to past and present brand values (Ind, 2007). He described the brand vision in terms of the activities of the past and present that demonstrate the company's 'role to play in nation building' and 'helping strengthen the communities in which we operate' (Head of Brand Strategy). This storytelling linked to the traditional customer focus values, which employees identified with. Based upon research on organisational identification, Fiol (2002) proposes that inclusive referents are one marker of organisational identification. The Head of Brand Strategy used inclusive referents in reflecting upon the CEO's presentation about the new microfinance initiative.

> …the CEO yesterday launched a major corporate social responsibility initiative around microfinance which is providing some financial opportunities to some of the more marginalised people in the community…. our CEO stressed… to the senior leadership team… that we are in an enviable position here. We are one of Australia's two largest companies and we've got a responsibility to the whole community… there is a sense in which we have a role to play in nation building… in actually helping strengthen the communities in which we operate… We think for 150 years, the way this bank has built its franchise is around backing people to achieve what it is they want to achieve and I think some of these things are actually

really very good examples of backing people to achieve what they couldn't achieve without our backing. (Head of Brand Strategy, Starbank)

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3

Brand champions articulated the brand vision using abstract language. For example, Australair and Banksmart managers introduced, or revised brand books that described key brand attributes, and offered guidelines for implementing the visual identity (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999; Urde, 2003). Australair marketing managers led the development of an extensive array of brand books to address the communication needs of specific functions. Although the brand books gave detailed prescriptions regarding the correct use of the brand logo, colours, and typeface, the guidelines for images and designs were more abstract. For example, to articulate each design attribute that represented the brand personality, the Design Vision Guidelines included a few sentences and some images.

Managers found that employees and designers who adopted the new brand books had an improved understanding of the brand and were able to deliver coherent corporate brand communications. The Brand and Design Adviser stated that: 'Our designers [are] understanding our brand better and we're getting better creative execution… [that is] more on brand, we don't have to go through so many iterations of things' (Australair). Our data suggests that, brand books used abstract descriptions for brand attributes (including text and images), which fostered the development of individual interpretations of the brand vision that were consistent with managers' intended definition. This understanding of the brand vision was part of an individual's deep structure identification with the organisation.

Brand champion behaviour and brand concept shifts

Two further dimensions of brand champion behaviour (taking responsibility, getting the right people involved) depended on the type of branding evolution. For each company, the new corporate brand strategy was underpinned by a radical brand evolution. Table 4 describes the shift in brand concept for each company. With the move to a brand as personality concept, Australair and Banksmart brand champion behaviour emphasised taking responsibility for overseeing the implementation of a new visual identity. However, with the move to a brand as company concept, Softech, Starbank, and Trekker brand champions emphasised getting the right people involved.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 4

Taking responsibility

Our data shows that taking responsibility involved brand champions making recommendations on strategy implementation (Australair, Banksmart, see Table 5). Brand champions emphasised such recommendations within companies in which the corporate brand strategy was underpinned by a visual identity that reflected the brand personality. There were three types of recommendations. First, Banksmart marketing manager brand champions had in place an internal marketing program which gave employee brand champions from across the bank responsibility for disseminating recommendations. The recommendations concerned appropriate marketing communications, as the brand strategy focused on developing a new brand positioning, using an integrated marketing communications approach. Marketing manager brand champions organised monthly forums, which gave an opportunity for brand champions to share ideas of appropriate marketing

communications that expressed the brand personality. Employee brand champions then shared these ideas with employees who worked on developing new marketing communications.

> The brand champion forum… has a representative from every area from across the bank that has anything to do with sponsorships, events or marketing communications and we get all of those people together and we share with them brand strategy that they need to know in order to do their work, and integrated advertising ideas like if we've got a new tag line or a new positioning, that they all communicate that in their work. It's sort of [a] presentation but then… we pick topics from amongst them and they'll also present to the… group… if they're doing something in the retail branches, for example, that the rest of the bank needs to know about. (Brand Communications Manager, Banksmart)

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 5

Second, brand champion behaviour involved manager communications that encouraged employees to adopt brand books and adhere to brand policing - the centralised approval of corporate brand communications (Ind, 2007). The Banksmart Retail Division Group Managing Director instituted a 'mandate that every piece of communication comes through our [Brand] Team for sign off so he was instrumental in making that sort of an edict across the group' (Head of Brand). Given this directive, employees adhered to manager recommendations within the approval process, which prevented the implementation of marketing communications that did not support the new brand strategy.

Getting the right people involved

Softech, Starbank, and Trekker introduced a new corporate brand strategy, to improve stakeholder perceptions of the company. Our data shows that, within companies that shifted to a brand as company concept, brand champions executed internal marketing programs that

encouraged employees to adopt active experimentation within new projects that aligned with the corporate brand vision (Table 6). Softech and Starbank managers introduced a brand-aligned reward system. The Softech reward system encouraged employees to question application of the corporate brand values within new projects. This reward system incorporated manager assessments of the degree to which an individual demonstrated behaviour that reflects the redefined brand values. Employee remuneration was tied to this assessment. The Senior Integrated Marketing and Communications Manager explained how the new reward system influenced employees.

> Basically making everyone live and breathe the values… People talk to each other about, that's not on this value, you know that's not open and respectful, that's not you know, accountable, that's not …you know, you really should take on, this is a big challenge and people actually talk like that. They actually use those words that are the values when they actually take on board projects and then question projects, or your own behaviour.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

At Trekker, middle manager brand champions oversaw internal marketing programs that aimed to develop new product concepts reflecting the brand values. This included the 'Differentiation Project', which engaged employees from across guidebook production functions to develop product innovations that would enhance brand differentiation. The program produced new guidebook content, including covers, cartography, and blurbs. Following on from the Differentiation Project, managers distributed a 'Blueprint' book to employees, to celebrate and reflect upon how well the new guidebook content captured the brand values. Some of this guidebook content was used in new products.

> For the whole year, I worked with the managers across different departments so editorial, digital, trade… cartography… and it was like an awareness campaign… so… getting groups of sales, marketing and editorial people together and external copyright experts to come and say 'let's just really have a go. How can we loosen this up? How can we make them more fun? How can we make them more Trekker?'…

it's just make sure we continue to evolve…. what you stand for or how you execute that. (Creative Director, Trekker)

DISCUSSION

Contribution to corporate branding research

An empirical contribution of this research is a theoretical explanation of *why* and *how* brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. This explanation, which is underpinned by social identity theory and rhetorical theory, builds upon research within corporate branding literature. The present research unpacks brand champion behaviour processes that are effective within companies undergoing radical brand evolution. This includes articulating a compelling brand vision, taking responsibility, and getting the right people involved. These brand champion behaviour processes are summarised in Table 7.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

'Articulating a compelling brand vision' involves use of abstract language and imagery to describe the corporate brand vision and encourage employee identification with the redefined brand concept. Ind (2007) suggests that storytelling that makes links to the past, present, and future brand vision, encourages employee identification with the brand concept. According to social identity theory, leaders manipulate symbols, such as traditions, to encourage strong organisational identification, such that an organisation-based role is salient within one's self-concept (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Borrowing from social identity theory, our data suggests that storytelling that makes links to the past, present, and future brand vision enhances employee identification with the brand concept. Such storytelling builds upon brand core values traditionally held among employees.

Within rhetorical theory, Fiol (2002) proposes that change agents use abstract language in expressions of the core ideology, to encourage deep structure identification. Abstract language is an enthymeme that draws the audience in to participate in the persuasion process (Blair, 2012), by allowing people to develop individual interpretations that are consistent with leaders' intended definition of the core ideology (Eisenberg, 1984). Although rhetorical theory emphasises persuasive language (Cheney, 1983; Sillince *et al*, 2012), our data demonstrates that persuasion involving abstract language and visual imagery to describe the corporate brand vision encourages employees to identify with a redefined brand concept. Our data suggests that this identification process involves the enthymeme, as the rhetoric encourages employees to develop individual interpretations of the brand vision. According to social identity theory, when employees embody a brand-based role identity, they adopt behaviour that contributes to brand goals (Löhndorf and Diamantopoulos, 2014). Such identification explains the ability of Australair employees to produce more on-brand communications, after brand champions introduced brand books. These books employed abstract language and visual imagery to define brand attributes, so that employees could develop individual interpretations of the brand vision within processes to develop new communications.

Within companies shifting to a brand as personality concept, brand champions 'taking responsibility' make recommendations on strategy implementation. This overlaps with the taking responsibility dimension of champion behaviour within innovation literature, involving actions that demonstrate a personal dedication to an innovation idea (Walter *et al*, 2011). Conceptual research on global corporate branding suggests that senior manager brand champions with a formal role in overseeing corporate brand strategy implementation take responsibility by making recommendations on strategy implementation (Aaker and

Joachimsthaler, 1999, 2000). Our data demonstrates that within companies shifting to a brand as personality concept, brand champions take responsibility by making recommendations on marketing communications and branding procedures i.e. involving brand policing and books. Within rhetorical theory, Perelman Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) propose that one rhetorical strategy to build communion is to involve the audience in the active exposition of an idea. Based on rhetorical theory, taking responsibility involves engaging employees in discourse that builds communion around appropriate brand communications to implement the new corporate brand strategy. Middle manager brand champions initiate such discourse by overseeing regular brand champion forums, and by making recommendations on brand communications.

Within the innovation literature, 'getting the right people involved' concerns champion behaviour, which encourages employees to participate in developing and implementing an innovation idea (Howell *et al*, 2005; Markham *et al*, 1991). Research and consultant work suggests that within some companies brand champions are responsible for executing internal marketing programs that encourage employees to develop an understanding of a redefined corporate brand vision (Causon, 2004; Vallaster and Lindgreen, 2011). Our data shows that within shifts to a brand as company concept, 'getting the right people involved' incorporates internal marketing programs in which brand champions encourage employees to actively experiment within new projects, which fosters employee questioning of the brand values. Within rhetorical theory Fiol (2002) posits that active experimentation in projects that are consistent with a desired organisational direction may cue situated identification. However, within social identity theory, Dutton *et al* (1994) posits that salience of the organisation-based role identity within one's self-concept depends on the degree of exposure to an attractive organisation. Similar to Dutton *et al* (1994), our data suggests that active experimentation in

projects encourages deep structure identification. Within rhetorical theory, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) propose that a speaker can build communion by involving the audience in the active exposition of an idea. Based on rhetorical theory, active experimentation projects involve employees in discourse that builds communion around the corporate brand values. Building upon social identity theory, internal marketing programs that foster frequent questioning of the brand values develop a salient brand-based role identity within an employee's self-concept.

A tension within the research is the recognised need to maintain control of corporate branding (Gyrd-Jones and Kornum, 2013; Gyrd-Jones *et al*, 2013), while also achieving flexibility to permit employees and customers to construct individual interpretations of the brand (Golant, 2012; Iglesias *et al*, 2013). It is thought that managers attempt to control corporate brand strategy implementation by articulating the brand vision, and using brand books and policing (Balmer, 2001a; Jones, 2012). Flexibility is needed, so that employees may be empowered to make implementation decisions that enhance brand relevance (Iglesias and Bonet, 2012). Our study demonstrates how certain brand championing imparts flexibility and control within branding evolution. Brand champions impart control by articulating the corporate brand vision and by taking responsibility. However, brand champions' use of abstract language and imagery to describe the corporate brand vision encourages consensus building, to develop individual interpretations that are consistent with leaders' desired meaning. These interpretations, which are part of one's identification with the brand concept, motivate and empower employees to contribute to corporate brand strategy implementation. Within companies shifting to a brand as company concept, brand champions encourage employees to engage in active experimentation of new projects, which generates questioning of the brand

values within one's role. This questioning develops a salient brand-based role identity within one's self concept, and an intuitive understanding of on-brand behaviour.

Based on social identity theory, Morhart *et al* (2009) suggests that within companies implementing an existing corporate brand strategy, brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour encourages employees to develop a brand-based role identity within their self-concepts. Building upon Morhart *et al* (2009), our data shows that dimensions of brand-specific transformational leadership behaviour, including 'articulating a compelling and differentiating brand vision,' and 'making followers… rethink their jobs from the perspective of a brand community member'(Morhart *et al*, 2009, p. 123), overlap with brand champion behaviour within companies introducing a new corporate brand strategy. Within companies shifting to brand as personality and brand as company concepts, brand champions use abstract language and visual imagery to describe the brand vision. Within companies shifting to a brand as company concept, brand champions make followers rethink their jobs from the perspective of a brand community member by encouraging employees to actively experiment within new projects.

No single theory fully explains the issues identified in this research. However, borrowing insights from social identity theory provides an explanation of why brand championing influences employee commitment to new corporate brand strategies, while selective aspects of rhetorical theory and change management explain how this may be achieved. As the brand core values are widely held among employees, brand champion behaviour effectively encourages employees to develop a salient brand-based role identity. Brand champions use persuasive speech, text and visual imagery to describe the redefined corporate brand vision and to encourage employees to engage in active experimentation in new projects. Such

rhetorical strategies develop individual constructions of the brand vision that are coherent with leaders' desired meaning.

Managerial implications

Our study has several implications for managers within companies undergoing brand evolution. It addresses the tension in the corporate branding literature concerning the need for control and flexibility within processes to implement a new corporate brand strategy. Our data suggests that certain brand champion behaviour processes foster the right balance between flexibility and control, to effectively implement a new corporate brand strategy within companies shifting to brand as personality and brand as company concepts. Brand champions can encourage employees to identify with attributes of the redefined brand concept by articulating a compelling corporate brand vision. This could include storytelling communications and descriptions of brand attributes in brand books. Communications should employ abstract language and imagery to describe the brand attributes. Such communications encourage employees to develop individual interpretations of the brand vision, which foster creativity. Importantly, descriptions of brand attributes should make links to the brand's core values that are widely held among employees.

Within companies shifting to a brand as personality concept, brand champions should make recommendations on strategy implementation. This includes recommendations concerning appropriate marketing communications, and branding procedures involving brand policing and books. Employees develop an understanding about appropriate brand communications when brand champions involve employees in discourse concerning recommendations on

brand strategy implementation. To achieve such understanding, marketing manager brand champions could oversee brand policing and a regular brand champion form, which foster discourse about appropriate brand communications.

Within companies shifting to a brand as company concept, middle manager brand champions should emphasise internal marketing programs that encourage employees to engage in active experimentation in new projects that align with the corporate brand vision. These programs can incorporate brand vision-aligned reward systems and other projects. The programs foster employee questioning of the brand values, which develops a salient brand-based role identity within the self-concept. Such a role identity means that employees have an intuitive understanding of on-brand behaviour, and can support implementation of the new corporate brand strategy.

Limitations and future research

This study contributes to an understanding of why and how brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. We developed a detailed explanation about effective brand champion behaviour processes within companies shifting to brand as personality and brand as company concepts. Our findings generalise to theory and may apply to companies undergoing similar types of brand evolution. However, Goodyear (1996) proposed two further stages of brand evolution, which are brand as icon, and brand as policy. We anticipate that brand champion behaviour processes will facilitate corporate brand strategy implementation within organisations shifting to brand as icon, and brand as policy concepts. Future studies could explore these brand champion behaviour processes using case studies of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

We anticipated that within companies undergoing brand evolution, employees may need to de-identify with attributes of the brand that are no longer relevant. However, our data did not provide evidence of such a de-identification process. Rather, our findings suggest that employees faced by company crises and brand concept changes adhered to the traditional brand core values with which they strongly identified. Corporate branding research suggests the need to adhere to a brand's core values throughout branding evolution (Urde, 2009). However, change management research suggests that de-identification is needed within companies undergoing identity transformation (Fiol, 2002). An interesting avenue for future research could be to explore whether brand champions can effectively encourage employee de-identification with some corporate brand attributes, within companies undergoing brand evolution. Such brand evolution processes might occur within companies attempting more extreme brand concept shifts from the stages of brand as reference, or brand as personality, to brand as policy.

Our study demonstrates that social identity theory from corporate branding literature and rhetorical theory from change management literature are useful for developing an explanation of why and how brand champion behaviour generates employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy. While social identity theory explains why brand champion behaviour encourages employee commitment to a new corporate brand strategy, specific aspects of rhetorical theory explain the how of effective brand championing processes. Future studies may find it useful to borrow from social identity theory and rhetorical theory to explore brand championing within companies introducing a new corporate brand strategy.

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Table 1: Companies in the sample

Company	Main industries	Markets	Number of full-time staff	Ownership
Australair	Domestic and international air transport	Global	34,832	Public
Banksmart	Retail, commercial, and institutional banking	Global	32,256	Public
Softech	Software for home, corporate, and business use	Global	71,000	Public
Starbank	Business, private, and retail banking	National	38,433	Public
Trekker	Travel publishing	Global	Over 500	Private

Table 2: Data structure[*]

Evidence					First-order themes	First-order coding	Higher-order coding
Australair	Banksmart	Softech	Starbank	Trekker			
A, b	A, a	C, a	A	A, b	Manager actions that 'enlist support' from employees for corporate branding initiatives and procedures.	Brand champion behaviour	Brand champion behaviour processes • Articulating a compelling brand vision • Taking responsibility • Getting the right people involved
		B	A, c		Discussion about remuneration dependent on how supervisors evaluated employee behavioural alignment 'against living the values'.	Reward systems	
A, a	A, b	B	C	C	Describe key brand attributes and offer guidelines for implementing the visual identity.	Brand books	
A, b	A, c				Discussion of a centralised 'final approval' or 'sign off' procedure for corporate brand communications.	Brand policing	
B, a	A, a		A, a	C, a	Discussion of communications that express the corporate brand values.	Coherent corporate brand communications	Corporate brand strategy implementation
C		B		B	'Unique' attributes and the 'vision' and 'values' that guide employee behaviour.	Key brand attributes	

[*] Codes for the evidence are: **A** = evidence from three interviews. **B** = evidence from two interviews, **C** = evidence from one interview, **a** = evidence from three archival sources and follow-up communications, **b** = evidence from two archival sources and follow-up communications, **c** = evidence from one archival source or follow-up communication.

Table 3: Articulating a compelling brand vision

Company	Quote
Australair	It [presentation to Engineering Department]…. talks about the brand is the heart of Australia, which is the soul of the Australair brand, our values and personality. (Brand and Design Adviser)
Banksmart	So he could directly communicate his vision for the brand directly to each marketer in the bank so people aren't hearing it third-hand through other areas… so they're not unclear of what his particular vision is and to encourage collaboration… so they could see his passion and commitment to the direction that we've decided to go but it is up to if the fraternity of marketers don't also passionately embrace that vision, it can't be implemented so he needed to basically enlist the support of everyone in that room to say now, we need to make this happen. (Brand Communications Manager)
Softech	As an industry leader, we have a unique role in the world – unique in the contribution we make and the responsibility that comes with that. Customers expect us to hit a very high bar in terms of product and support quality, delivering on our commitments, and providing excellent customer-focused decision making. Our industry wants us to be more actively engaged and open about who we are, and about our roadmap for the future. (CEO memo)*
Starbank	He [CEO] communicated that [$AUD30 million microfinance initiative investment] yesterday… in the context of both our brand proposition which is 'we're really here to help people… to achieve their dreams, to fulfil their aspirations'… and also… in the context of our… heritage that this is not just a trendy initiative, this is has been our franchise for 150 years. (Head of Brand Strategy)
Trekker	The closest that we've got is "The Essence of Trekker" [one-A4-page document] where we talk about our philosophy, our vision, our travellers, about us and what makes us different. (Global Sales and Promotions Manager)

* Archival data.

Table 4: Shifts in brand concept for each company

Company	Brand concept before introducing a new corporate brand strategy	Brand concept after introducing a new corporate brand strategy
Australair	**Brand as icon:** The brand had a strong Australian heritage and had a 'brand awareness of… 100 percent' among Australians (Team Leader, Media Agency). Media reports suggested that many Australian customers felt that they owned the brand.	**Brand as personality:** To improve customer perceptions of the company, managers and branding consultants developed a revised visual identity emphasising the Australian personality, which distinguished the brand from premium international airline competitors. This personality was described in terms of the 'natural, engaging, spirited, resourceful and contemporary' attributes (Brand Advertising and Design Manager).
Banksmart	**Brand as a reference:** Employees understood the brand mainly in terms of the brand name and logo.	**Brand as personality:** To improve brand differentiation, managers and consultants developed a new brand positioning based upon functional and emotional attributes that would distinguish the brand from retail banking competitors. This included the 'dynamic, progressive, professional, community minded' attributes (archival data).
Softech	**Brand as a reference:** Managers recognised that the brand name provided the main source of differentiation, as a symbol of quality to software consumers (archival data).	**Brand as company:** Following a public crisis that damaged the company reputation, senior and middle managers increasingly recognised that the brand had a responsibility for meeting the expectations of multiple stakeholders including, customers, software partners, and the government. Senior managers formulated corporate brand values that reflected the values of the founders, and would enable employees to address stakeholder expectations.
Starbank	**Brand as a reference:** Employees understood the brand mainly in terms of the brand name and logo that was used in advertising.	**Brand as company:** After a public crisis that damaged the reputation of the company, senior and middle managers increasingly recognised that the brand was responsible for meeting the expectations of a number of key stakeholders including customers, the wider community, employees, and regulators. Middle managers formulated a revised brand vision that reflected the traditional customer focus of employees.
Trekker	**Brand as personality:** Trekker was most recognised for the 'chatty, eccentric and laced with practical advice' character of its guidebooks (archival data). These guidebooks were written by the founders and fellow travellers, who loved travel.	**Brand as company:** Following a profitability crisis, managers recognised the need to improve operational efficiency, and the ability to maintain differentiation and preference among customers. For the first time senior and middle managers articulated a brand positioning that emphasised the attributes of 'attitude' and 'authority,' which reflected the traditional values expressed in Trekker guidebooks. Maintaining differentiation and preference among customers was essential to sustaining the company and its community activities. This included the Trekker foundation, which donated a share of profits to community initiatives in poor travel destinations covered by the guidebooks.

Table 5: Taking responsibility

Company	Quote
Australair	It's [Master Brand Guidelines] presented to our various agencies, presented to internal groups even people like crew just so that they can understand what our brand is all about and what we do and what we're trying to articulate. (Brand Advertising and Design Manager)
Banksmart	It's normally someone who is in the marketing area and producing a lot of their material and Head of Marketing will nominate a person so there will be a person for personal loans and credit cards etc. and so they become say like prime communication, we meet them every month to make sure that they're up to date, so if they're asked any questions by their team, they know what the latest thinking is and can explain the positioning. (Head of Brand).

Table 6: Getting the right people involved

Company	Quote
Softech	I mean we check each other against it all the time. We say is that accountable? On any given campaign we might you know think about what we're doing and we judge the activities against the Softech values all the time. (Senior Integrated Marketing and Communications Manager)
Starbank	You should know how you're tracking all along because you've got a scorecard that sets out what your objective is, how you're getting measured…. So you should be able to look at it and go 'okay, I'm tracking to expectation'. Your people leadership [is] regularly talking about that with you so the objectives you're aiming to achieve. (Performance Management Team Leader)
Trekker	The Cartographic Excellence team takes great pleasure in showcasing our department's contribution to Attitude and Authority. Our brief was simple enough - how do we embody and convey A&A? The challenge was defining what that meant for mapping. We sought help and input from the Traveller Information Centre, authors, the digital publishing team and, of course, cartographers themselves. We concluded that Cartographic Attitude lies in the way we present our maps - they look and feel better than any competitor. (Blueprint)*

*Archival data

Table 7: Brand champion behaviour strategies within companies undergoing brand evolution.

Dimension of brand champion	Key aspects of brand champion behaviour processes	Theoretical underpinning
• Articulating a compelling brand vision	• Storytelling communications that make links to the past, present and future brand vision, encourage employees to identify with the redefined brand concept. • Abstract language and visual imagery are entymemes that draw the audience in to participate in developing individual interpretations of the corporate brand vision that are consistent with leaders' desired meaning.	**Rhetorical theory:** • Change agents use abstract language to describe the core ideology, to encourage deep structure identification with the organisation (Fiol, 2002). • Abstract language is an entymeme that draws the audience in to participate in the persuasion process (Blair, 2012). **Social identity theory:** • Leaders' manipulate symbols, such as traditions, to encourage employees to incorporate an organisation-based role identity in their self-concepts (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).
• Taking responsibility	• Brand champions make recommendations on brand communications and branding procedures (involving brand policing and books). • Brand champions develop communion around appropriate brand communications by involving employees in discourse about this issue.	**Rhetorical theory:** • A speaker builds communion by involving the audience in the active exposition of an idea (Perelman Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969).
• Getting the right people involved	• Brand champions execute internal marketing programs that encourage employees to engage in the active experimentation of new projects. • The programs encourage employees to question the corporate brand values within new projects, which develops a salient brand- based role identity within one's self-concept. • Active experimentation projects involve employees in discourse that builds communion around the corporate brand values.	**Rhetorical theory:** • A speaker builds communion by involving the audience in the active exposition of an idea (Perelman Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). • Engaging people in active experimentation of new projects encourages situated identification (Fiol, 2002). **Social identity theory:** • The greater the level of exposure an individual has with an attractive organisational identity, the more salient is the organisation-based role identity within an employee's self-concept (Dutton *et al*, 1994).

Appendix A: Role title of interviewees and number of interviews

Brand	Role title	Number of interviews
Australair	Brand and Design Adviser	1
	Brand Advertising and Design Manager	1
	Market Research Manager	1
	Recognition Programs Manager	2
	Communication Agency Managing Director (advertising agency 1)	1
	Team Leader (advertising agency 2)	1
	Team Leader (media agency 1)	1
Banksmart	Head of Brand	1
	Brand Communications Manager	1
	Marketing Manager Core Deposits	1
	Retail Division Group Managing Director	1
	Market Research Manager	1
	Head of Breakout and Cultural Transformation	1
	People Capital Consultant for Banking Products and Division Support	1
	Advertising Account Manager (advertising agency 3)	1
	Media Service Director (media agency 2)	1
Softech	Senior Integrated Marketing and Communications Manager	1
	Marketing Manager TGames (games console)	1
	Integrated Marketing Communications Director	1
	Customer Relationship Marketing Manager (advertising agency 4)	1
Starbank	Brand Strategy Consultant	2
	Manager of Engagement and Culture	1
	Performance Management Team Leader	1
	Senior Research Consultant	1
	General Manager for People and Culture	1
	Head of Brand Strategy	1
	Strategic Creative Director (advertising agency 5)	1
Trekker	Global Sales and Promotions Manager	2
	Creative Director	2
	Trade Reference Publisher	1
	Global Product and Marketing Manager	1
	Learning and Development Manager	1