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Research Report

Employee Perceptions of South African Office spaces

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EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN OFFICE SPACES

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the type of office spaces in South Africa together with the presence of generational and cultural/ethnic differences in employee's perception in the office environment on particular aspects. The research was carried out as a single case study of an office using private consultancy firm, located in Johannesburg, South Africa. Questionnaires were sent out to employees based in various segments within the firm.

The study showed that the leading office typology is open plan/group office spaces as opposed to all other office configurations within the firm, such as private/cellular offices. The case study highlights the trade-off between collaboration and privacy in the primary office typology, open plan office spaces. The findings demonstrated that no significant differences exist between the different generations' and cultures' ability to conduct activities which are influenced by personal and interpersonal aspects of the office spaces. Furthermore, findings illustrated that no generational and cultural differences exist in the environmental, personal and design aspects of the office space. Lastly, findings showed that generational and cultural differences do exist in group cohesion and intension to stay.

The main limitation of research is the small sample size which may have resulted in an untrue reflection in the generalisation of the population.

The paper's findings add to the cultural and ethnic differences experienced in open plan offices on personal/interpersonal, environmental and design aspects. Further studies need to explore the possible theoretical links between the workspace, group cohesion, intension to stay and productivity for South African office using firms.

Keywords: generational differences, cultural/ethnic difference, employees' experiences, collaboration, privacy, team work