Trust the process : Role of trust in creative problem solving

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Trust the process : Role of trust in creative problem solving

A guidebook to empower individuals to build trustful relationships by establishing the role of trust in creative problem solving used in design consultancy - client projects.

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Preface

Design as a field has been an abstract term to define, making it exceedingly difficult to derive a meaning for myself. This posed a lot of doubts and challenges in terms of what value I can bring to the world. Finally after seven years of being in the field, I was able to draw up a meaning that that I am proud of.

Design is an integrator.

It brings together seemingly unrelated things in to something beautiful with the use of processes, methods and tools. It brings together company's goals with people's emotions. It brings together the academic world and the professional world. It brings together materials and forms to make an amazing product. It brings together the market trends and the competitors' innovation to create a new proposition. Building awareness towards design has been a major obstacle to cross and I believed that there is one step before that needs to be addressed.

People around us should trust in what design can offer.

We want to make an impact; we want to add value for users and the society. We use a lot of interventions ranging from technology to products to strategies. But to make someone else see the value of us, it is important for them to trust us. Trust us in our way of working, trust our approaches and methods, trust us, and take a chance with us and believe in what we do. Together, we can make the biggest impacts.

Trust resolves crises, why not let it resolve perceptions.

The journey to the completion of my thesis would not have been possible without all the support I received from the people involved in my project and around me.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my chair Dr. Eui Young Kim and my mentor Ir. Katrina Heijne for embarking on this journey with me. Your unwavering support and patience to my chaos has kept me stable and grounded throughout this project. To have discussions with the both of you and come out of meetings calm and collected, with a concrete direction set through the help of your creative and analytical feedback made it possible for me to derive an outcome that I feel proud of. Your trust in my abilities have pushed my boundaries and made me conquer a field that is not only academically heavy but professionally neglected. And lastly, thank you for giving me the freedom to explore my interests.

My family, dad, mom and sister, your unconditional love, and being the pillar of support in all aspects of my life gave me the confidence to excel personally and professionally. The constant dose of health routines to follow, gossiping about family and friends have shortened the distance between us, making anywhere I go feel like home.

I would like to thank my amazing friends, close and far, who got me through these stressful times by creating joyful memories and providing consistent support. With sparring conversations and good food, the past two years went by in a blink. I would like to thank toad, for being the biggest emotional support in my life. I cannot imagine a life without you.

I extend my gratitude to everyone else who helped me with my project. Lastly, one round of cheers to TU Delft, for fulfilling my dreams and giving me wings to fly.

Summary

Traditionally, conventional consultancies provide operational guidance to customers. However, market demands have shifted towards a human-centred approach, leading to an increase in design consultancies. Design consultancies deliver not only great results but also introduce innovative ways of thinking through a process-driven approach differing from the result-driven process that clients were used to. The new ways of working poses a new challenge of rising uncertainty. Building trust with client organization reduces the inherent risk of working together, thereby building a stronger relationship. This helps consultancies gain credibility and create mutual reliability, improving brand loyalty and customer retention.

Similarities with the creative problem solving process and trust building process were drawn to form a template. Further the research was scoped to see trust building from an individual standpoint, i.e. design consultant being the facilitator in enabling clients build trust towards them. The project was set with the research question of "How do individuals in design consultancies help build trustful relationships with clients amid the constant shift in design perceptions? "

From empirical and theoretical analysis, eight driving factors and many trust building actions were identified. Apart from this, the research identified a lack of trust building awareness, how it is important to build trust around your context and with yourself. Further a trust building journey was developed that establishes how trust is built in a step wise approach and how it can be empowered for skill development for individuals seeking to work in a consultancy environment.

The design solution is a guidebook developed to raise awareness and help surface the factors necessitated towards trust building through narrative-based learning. Narratives of working professionals experiences highlighting suitable actions taken for trust development helps individuals reflect on their ways of working and embed new actions that improves trust building.
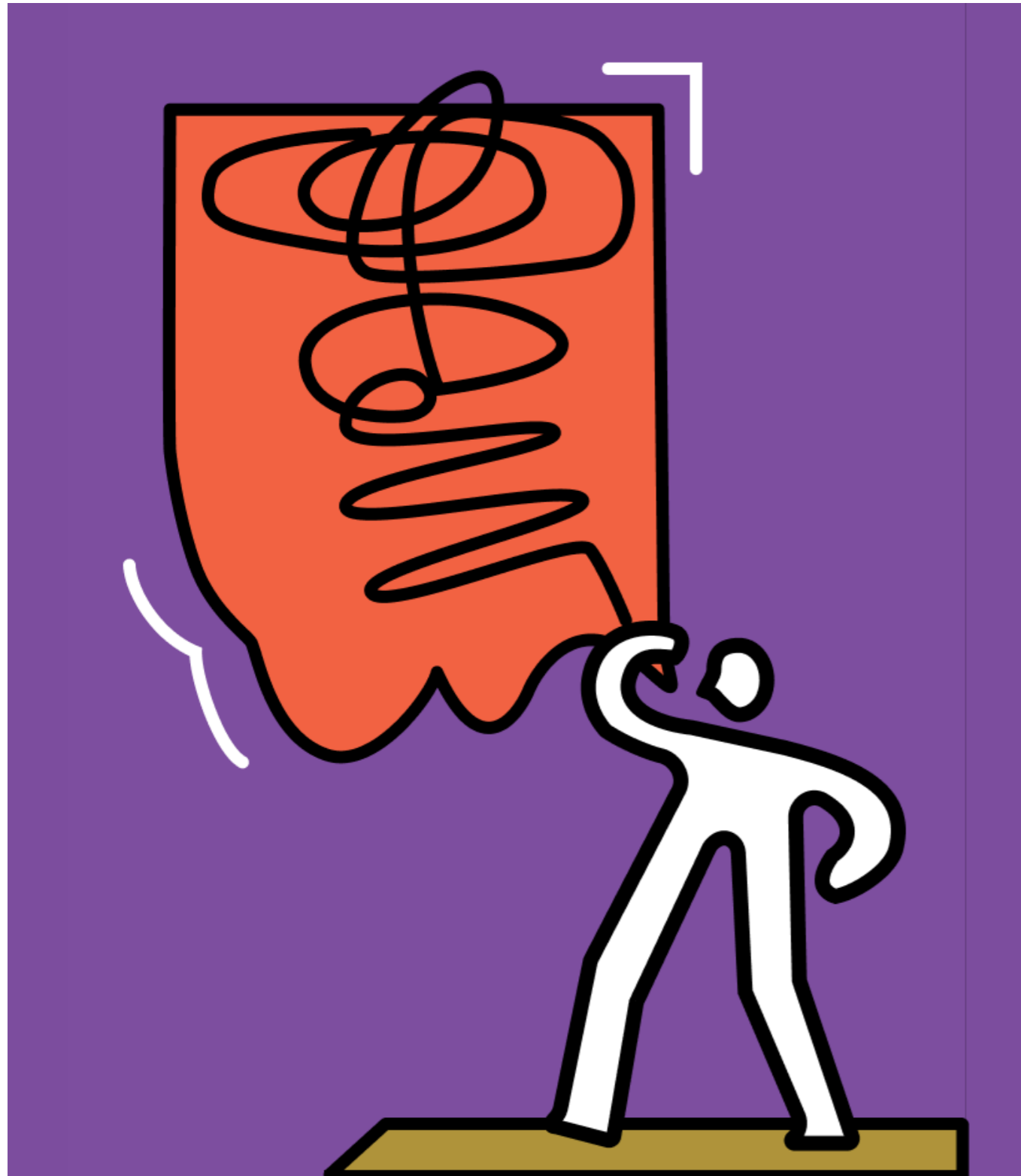
Keywords

Design consultancy-client relationship, Trust building process, Creative-problem solving process, Driving factors, Trust building actions
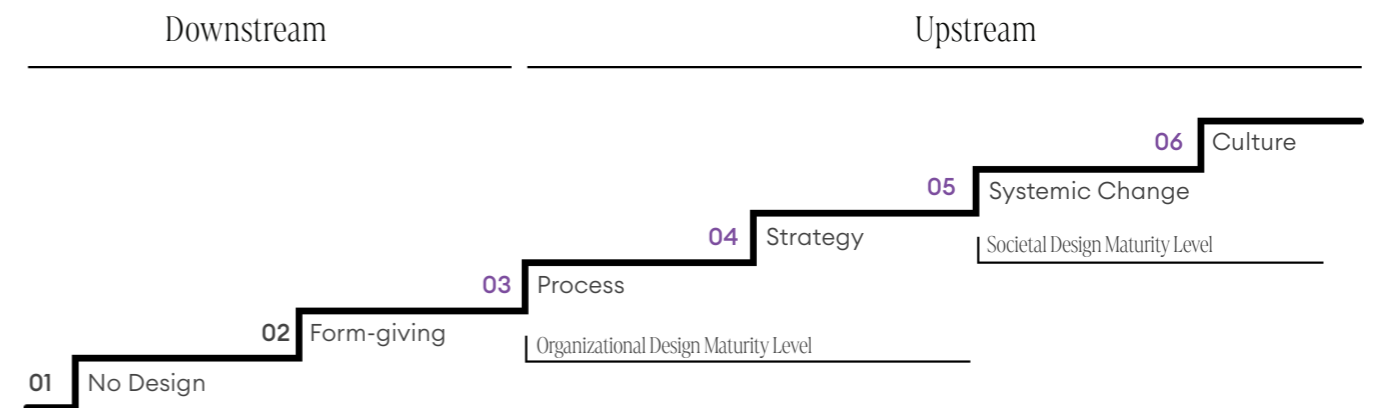
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Chapter 1 : Relevance

The relevance phase offers a comprehensive understanding of the background by highlighting the evolution of the design field, emphasizing its increasing importance and acknowledgment in today's society. Three key challenges are identified that underscore the significance of the topic of building trust. The challenges are framed with the aid of literature and preliminary interviews with design consultancy practioners. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the project's objective, which acts as the foundation for both the thesis and the project approach.

The separation of design as a field of expertise in the form of consultancy dates back to the 1920s (Sparke, 1983). Design consultancy as a domain developed significantly when American designers stimulated the need for industrial design for mass-manufactured products (Er, 1997). Although from the late 1920s to the 1930s the American manufacturers faced fierce competitive pressures due to declining sales, therefore bringing out the need for differentiating products to win market share and gain a competitive advantage (Er, 1997). To meet demands, the design field broadened its capabilities to create products and services that necessitate an appeal to customers and promote long-term growth and differentiation (Olsson & Holm, 2009).

Thus, design started to be viewed from a broader perspective, expanding from industrial design to strategic and systemic integration (Boztepe, 2016), (Buchanan, 1999)(Figure 1). Consequently, the design consultancies' roles changed from a product development-oriented practice to strategy work, aspiring to make impact beyond an operational role (Valtonen, 2007). The implementation of strategic design can result in sustained innovation, rather than a one-time delivery of creative outputs (Boztepe, 2016). The shift has been mirrored in the world of design consultancies. Their purpose had transitioned from outcomes of tangible products to digital services, to now strategy and roadmaps to complex challenges is a much more complex and challenging. However, incorporating design as a part of strategy, culture, and management has not been a seamless process. Traditional consultancies, as commonly viewed management and technology consultancies have adopted different ways of working, uncommon to the practices design consultancies use. As a result, this transition has given rise to three distinct challenges for design consultancies and client engagement.

↙ Figure 1: Design Maturity Scale (Roberto, 2022)

Downstream   Upstream

06 Culture
05 Systemic Change
Societal Design Maturity Level
04 Strategy
03 Process
02 Form-giving
Organizational Design Maturity Level
01 No Design

Challenge of design with a new way of thinking.

Design is an abstract construct of working with the adoption of a new way of thinking, but unable for non-designer entities to integrate with ease.

Design is helpful as a thought action for solving problems and imagining new futures. Investigated in the book Frame Innovation by Kees Dorst (2015), the four reasoning patterns shows how design utilizes a new way of thinking (Figure 2). Deductive and inductive reasoning are models that analyse available information to explain the status quo. Abductive reasoning, identifies elements for achieving outcomes through pattern, an approach typically used for problem solving, especially with close-ended problems (Dorst, 2011). Although, for innovation to happen, the pattern of reasoning needs to move away from these reasonings and adopt design abduction, co-evolving between two unknowns to achieve a desired value. By adeptly thriving in ambiguity new perspectives and unique processes to problem solving can be achieved.

Although dealing with the same level of ambiguity cannot be done by non-designers. Transitioning from conventional thinking to a more open-ended and complex way of thinking can evoke feelings of uncertainty and confusion (Dorst, 2011). This shift in perspective makes it challenging for non-designers to assimilate and understand the thinking of designers (Brown, 2009).
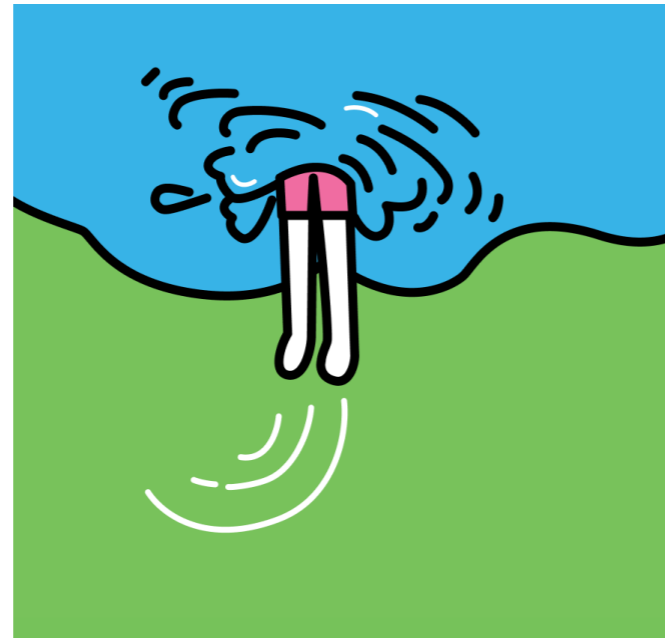

↙ Figure 2: Four reasoning patterns (Dorst, Frame innovation: create new thinking by design, 2015)

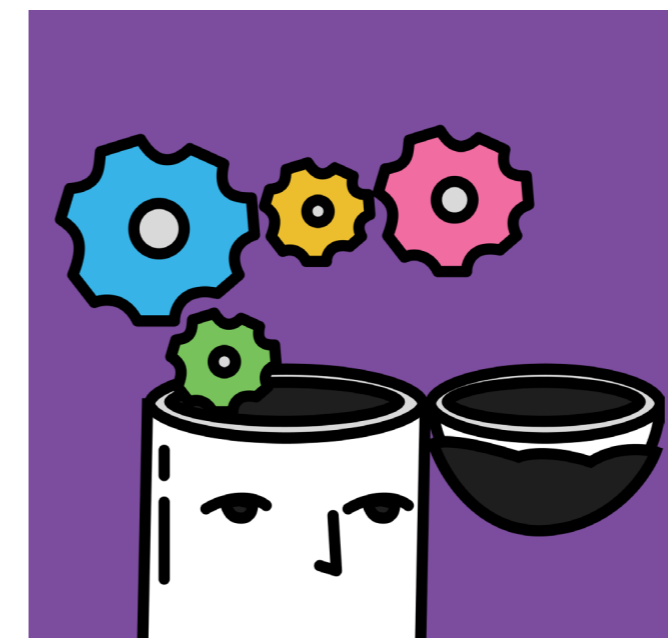## Challenge of design as a new way of working.

The use of design process helps bring rigor, but a process-driven approach gets complex for clients.

Design has an abstract method of working because the field adopts a distinct way of thinking. A field that was once attributed to a product/result-driven approach has now taken on a process-driven approach, now commonly referred to as creative problem solving processes. Companies give significant importance to the goal of the design approach, whereas the importance should be diverted to the process (Tjendra, 2014).

(Kolko, 2013)
"For designers, the process is the language of rigor, and a particular desired outcome."

The need for considering a process-driven approach helps individuals to move away from the norm, explore broadly, and shift perspectives to new directions. However, the creative process can cause confusions to many clients, which potentially creates fear and resistance to the process, thus increasing levels of uncertainty (Clendenon, 2022). This fear can default to people going back to what they know, their safe space, conforming people to old ways of thinking and thus cutting the wings of creativity exploration. Therefore, a process driven approach needs to adopted in a constructive and confident manner that helps clients to have an open-mind and faith in this new way of working. Designers play a crucial role in shifting clients' perspectives towards a comprehensive and flexible problem-solving mindset by alleviating uncertainties.

Challenge of design and its ability to communicate.

Design with a heightened sense of working towards systemic and societal changes, but lacking the material to substantiate and communicate the impact of design impact for clients

Designers are hesitant to quantify impacts due to its ambiguous and complex nature (McKinsey and Company, 2018). This makes it challenging for designers to communicate to non-designers in a language solely design oriented. Unfortunately, design tends to be communicated in business savvy terminologies that aligns with the perceptions of non-designers.

Many firms and design departments dutifully articulate the rigorous process that consists of the systemic actions and thoughtful predictability with proper achievable outcomes, ensuring to say it is not risky. This keeps 'non-designers' calm and confident and willing to pay the amount (Gajendar, 2017). However, this doesn't solve the issue of aiding non-designers who struggle to grasp design concepts, leaving them confused and unclear.

Traditional Reasoning

WHAT   +   HOW   =   OUTCOME

Deduction: Understanding Effects

WHAT   +   HOW   =   ???

Normal Abduction: Solving Problems

???   +   HOW   =   OUTCOME

Induction: Constructing Concepts

WHAT   +   ???   =   OUTCOME

Design Abduction: Exploring Possibilities

???   +   ???   =   **OUTCOME**
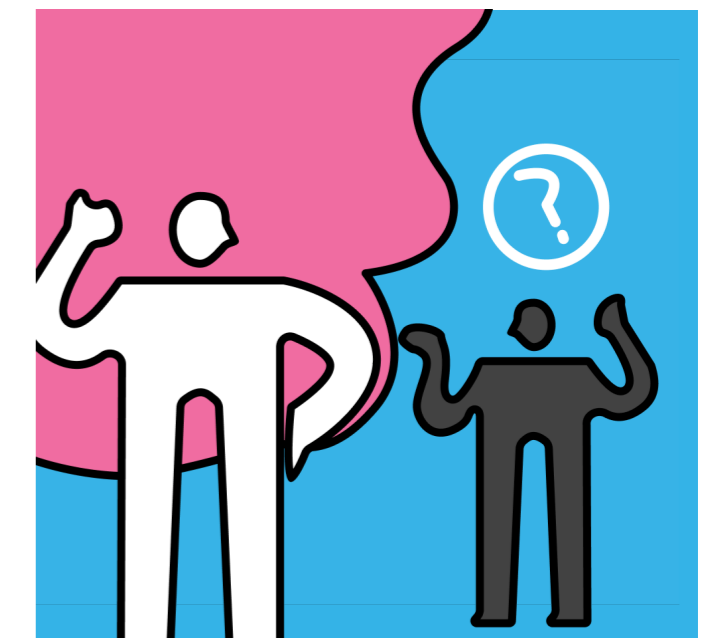
All the three challenges highlighted revolve around one aspect, uncertainty. With new ways of working, thinking and communicating, external parties such as clients or non-designers face difficulties with adopting a new approach or mindset related to design. In an increasingly complex world, with new service propositions, new ways of working and high expectations, trust provides a way of minimizing people's experience of feeling uncertain (Candlin & Crichton, 2019) (Ping Li, 2012).

Design consultancies often state "Trust the design process" to alleviate anxiety and uncertainty for non-designer stakeholders during project engagement (Gajendar, 2017). The phrase has been toyed around for far too long, unfortunately with absolutely no measure to actually help clients trust the process (Gajendar, 2017). Designers possess the capability to alleviate this situation in various ways, rather than solely relying on clients to be open-minded. Trust becomes essential for managing uncertainty, requiring collaboration between the consultancy and client to navigate and overcome challenges, building mutual trust in the process.

In the consultancy field, building trust with clients is crucial for allowing creative freedom and exploring solutions that exceed expectations. However, it is equally important to ensure that clients are not left feeling anxious, confused, or uncertain about the process. As designers, innovators, and product managers in this field, it is essential to engage in practices that cultivate trust and foster a collaborative relationship with clients.

(Lyman W. Porter, 1975)

"Trust... tends to be somewhat like a combination of the weather and motherhood; it is widely talked about, and it is widely assumed to be good for organizations. When it comes to specifying just what it means in an organizational context, however, vagueness creeps in."

(Roy Lewicki, 1995)

"Trust is a core issue at the beginning of a business relationship."
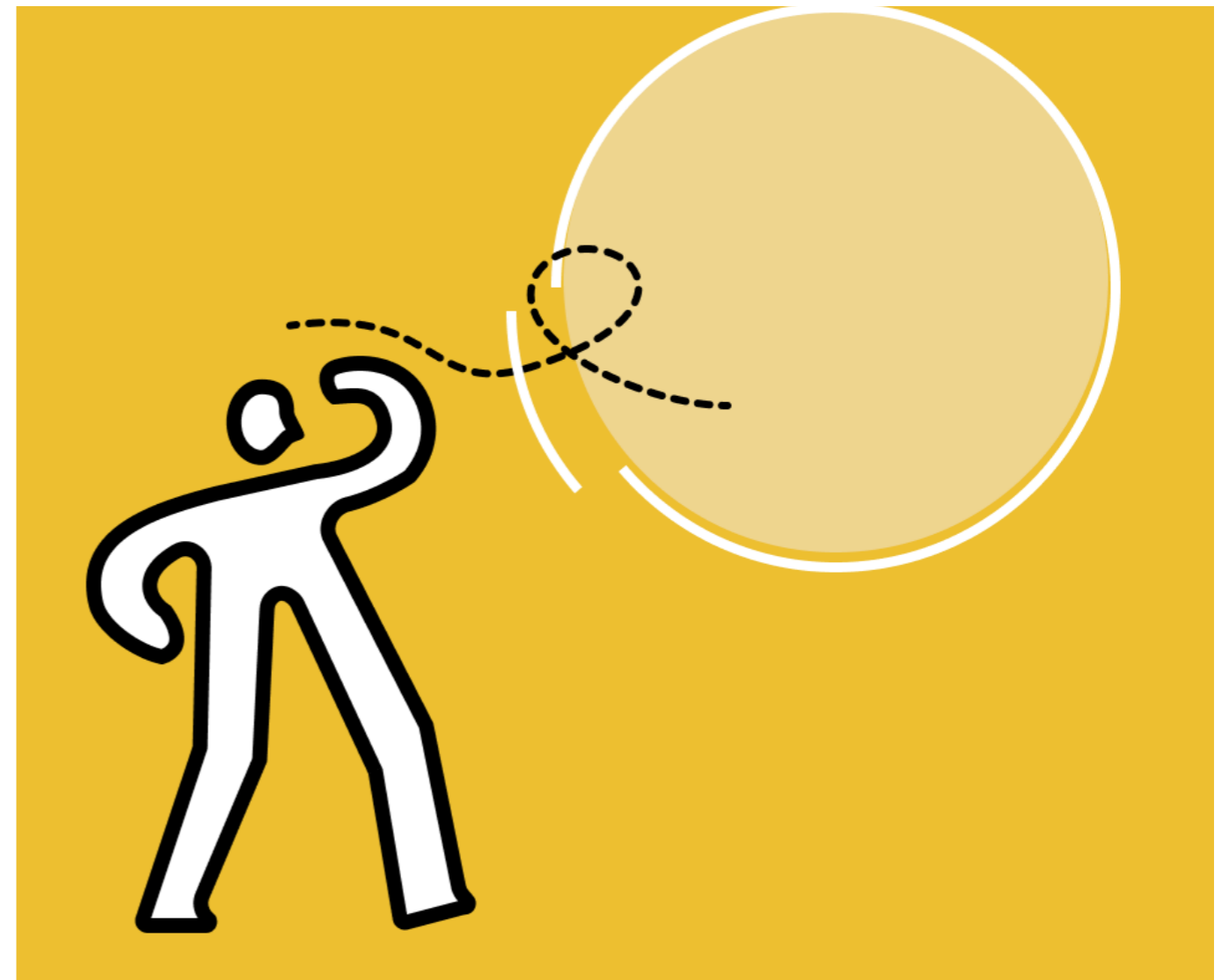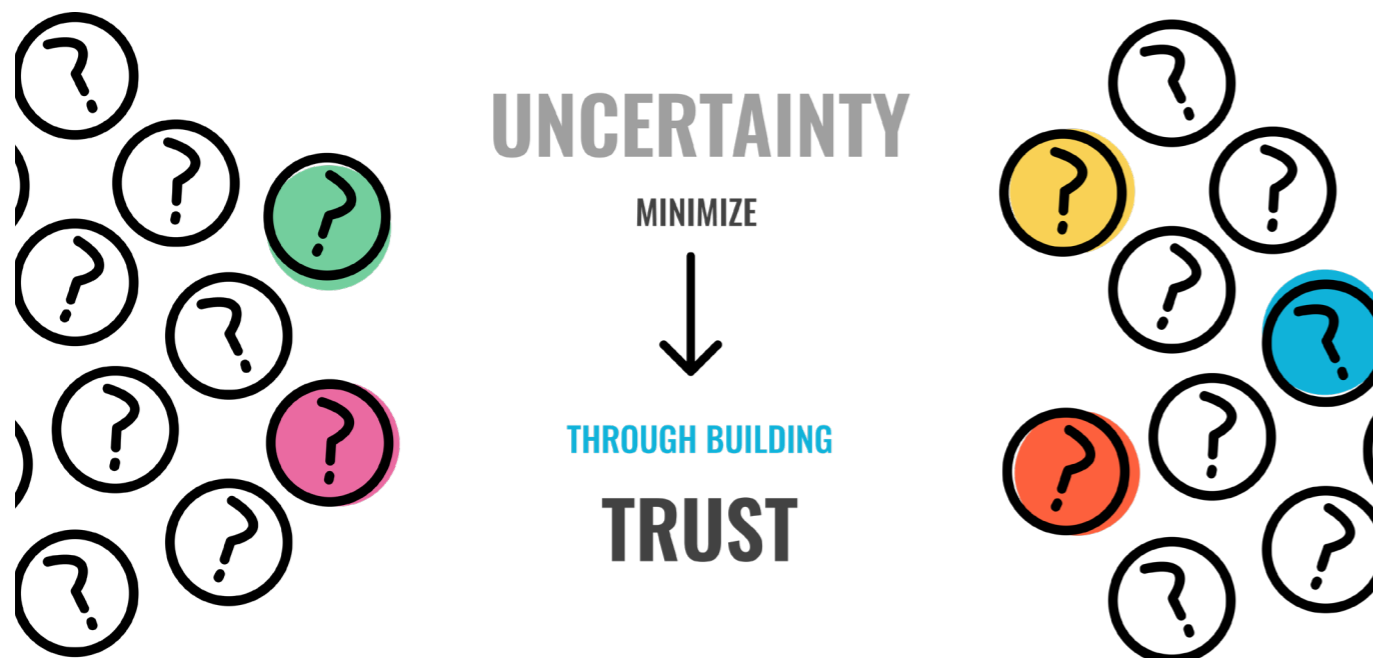
1.1 Knowledge gap and space for opportunity

Design consultancies are expanding their expertise and portfolio of clients rapidly over the last few decades, expanding to solve wicked problems and innovating successfully in digital markets, sustainability and societal domains. Literature has not tapped into this rapidly growing field of consulting for design expertise and the need for trust with client engagement. Since the domain of trust building is quite vast, the project definition will be scoped further after establishing the context of Chapter 2.

Building trust is a key factor in establishing a solid relationship between consultancies and clients, which can lead to improved brand loyalty (Lau & Lee, 1999), customer retention (Mahmoud, Hinson, & Adika, 2018), and credibility. This project aims to assess how is trust being built currently in the consulting firms of design expertise.

"How are design consultancies coping with building trust with clients amid the constant shift in design perceptions? "

With this new focus in mind, there are some subsequent associated questions.

RQ1: What does trust mean? What aspects about trust should be considered for the project?

RQ2: What are the design consultancies ways of working?

RQ3: What does building trust entail in the design consulting context?

UNCERTAINTY

MINIMIZE

THROUGH BUILDING

TRUST

1.2 Project Approach

A double diamond approach consisting of discovery, defining, developing, and delivering is defined for this project. Each section is described below highlighting the methods used.

Establishing the context leverages on the theory published in three aspects, trust, design consultancy and creative problem solving literature. By drawing insights from each section, the research question is scoped down for the purpose of gathering data, the chapter 3.

2. Establishing the Context

The reframed question attempts to answer how is trust built in the context established. Data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with design consultants from different organizations and theory to find driving factors and trust building actions.

3. Gathering Data

In this section, interviews and theory are reviewed to gather insights. By clustering based on similarities, driving factors and trust building actions are defined. These are further translated into a trust building journey, that abstractly show how is trust built with clients.

4. Making Sense

The trust building journey defined will be the foundation for idea generation, to see different applications of the model developed. The chosen direction is "How can individual looking to work with clients learn to build trust?"

5. Design Direction

This chapter defines the approach taken to generate ideas and how a plausible concept is chosen for further development.

6. Possibilities

The concept chosen touches upon the lack of awareness towards trust building and the need for bringing such a topic to surface. The intervention was designed in the form of a guidebook that embodies the whole trust building journey and engages the user with narratives of practioners. The concept helps users reflect on their working style and improve on it with actions for trust building.

7. Intervention
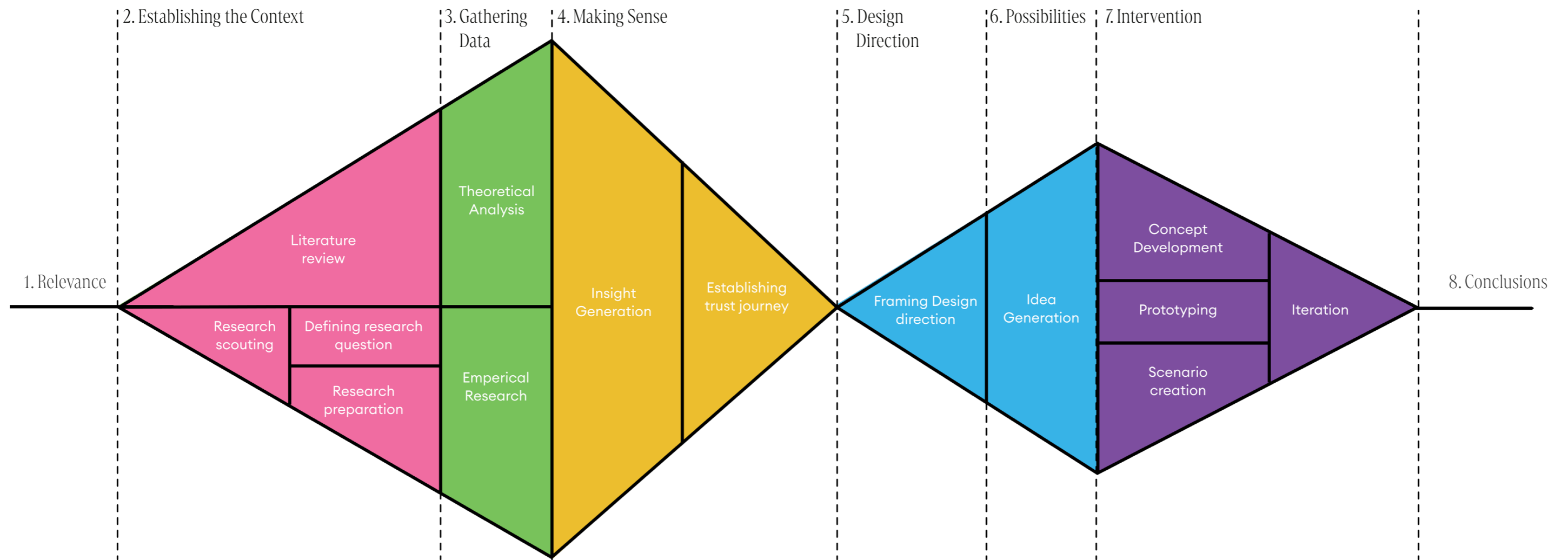
Chapter 2 : Establishing the Context

This chapter includes theoretical background of trust, design consultancies, their ways of working, and the intersection of all the topics. The intersection is developed with the support of theory and personal analysis. This is used to scope down the research question for data gathering.

2.1 Trust and everything about it.

In this section, the context of trust is defined with the supporting aspects needed to establish the project. It seeks to understand that trust is a process and it works on different levels with various factors affecting it. Literature is selected from trust theory most of which are in line with the consulting field and few otherwise (See Appendix for Research Agenda).

2.1.1 Defining trust

Trust is an abstract term leniently used without grasping its true meaning (Sucher & Gupta, 2021). The term 'trust' is subjective, open to one's own interpretations and one's own way of behaving around it. Literature defines trust to be a special form of dependence that revolves around two major characteristics, vulnerability and positive expectations. In an overarching sense, trust is confidence that partners will not exploit each other's vulnerability (Misztal, 2011).

The most widely used definition of trust is proposed by Mayer et al. (1995) as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party". You trust someone when you believe they will do something good for you, even if it means putting yourself at risk. This dependability allows for knowledge sharing and reduces uncertainty thereby minimizing the risk inherent in working relationships.
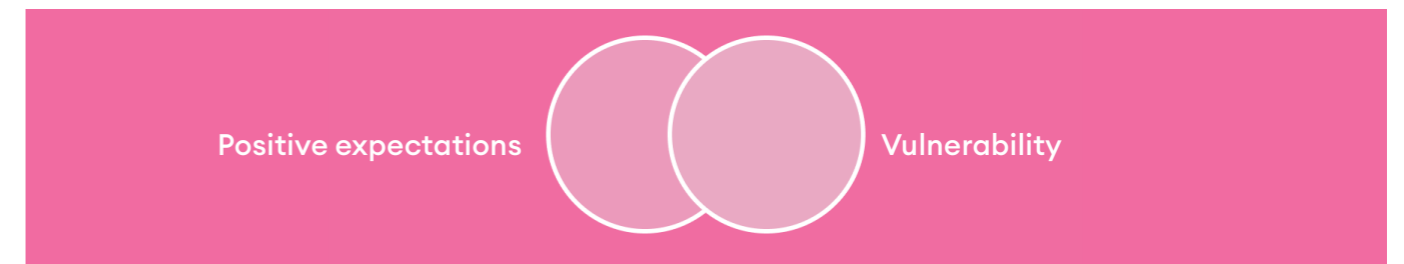
2.1.2 Concepts around trust

Trustworthy, Trustful relationship

Trustworthiness entails possessing a disposition to fulfil one's commitments and responsibilities (Kelp & Simion, 2022). Whereas, trustful relationship is when two individuals come together, with one party assuming the risk of placing trust in the other, while the other bears the significant responsibility of upholding trustworthiness.

Trustor and Trustee

Trust is a dynamic concept that involves both the trustee and the trustor (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). The trustee is responsible for performing actions that meet the expectations of the trustor, while the trustor must be willing to be vulnerable to rely on the said performing actions. Being vulnerable to risk is an essential aspect of building trust, as it creates opportunities for growth and learning.

Regaining Trust

When trust is compromised, it gives rise to a rift between the parties engaged. At its core, it emerges when the trustor's vulnerability is exploited or dismissed. This can lead to feelings of scepticism, uncertainty, and diminished faith in the party being entrusted (Schniter, Sheremeta, & Sznycer, 2013). The repercussions of this compromised trust extend to subsequent interactions and relationships, influencing the way one perceives and engages with each other. Numerous studies delve into this facet of trust, exploring avenues for its restoration. Given the extensive nature of this topic, it won't be covered within the scope of this thesis.

Distrust and Mistrust

Mistrust can be defined as a cautious attitude toward others, where a person approaches interactions with careful scrutiny and a questioning mindset (Bunting, 2021). It reflects doubt or scepticism about the trustworthiness of the other party and may involve a level of wariness in their actions and decisions (Bunting, 2021). On the other hand, distrust is characterized by a suspicious or cynical attitude toward others, where an individual holds a settled belief that the other party is untrustworthy (Bunting, 2021). These aspects of trust will also not be covered in this thesis project due to the timeframe.

2.1.3 Elements of trust formation

Factors of trust

In the context of building trust, factors are elements that have the potential to influence an individual's level of trust to another person. It helps a person assess how trustworthy someone might be. Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman(1995) defines three factors that influence trust formation, namely ability, benevolence, integrity. These three characteristics of the trustee contributes towards a unique perceptual perspective. Like these, many other factors are defined in literature which will be explored further in this Chapter 4.

Relational Signals (Six et al., 2010)

Relational signalling is a framework for understanding how people use cues and behaviors, called «relational signals» to convey intentions and build trust in relationships. These signals help individuals evaluate trustworthiness and guide their actions.

Trust building actions (Six et al., 2010)

Trust building actions are specific behaviors or actions that individuals engage in to foster trust within a relationship. These actions play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of trustworthiness and maintaining positive interactions.

Factors   Actions   Factors
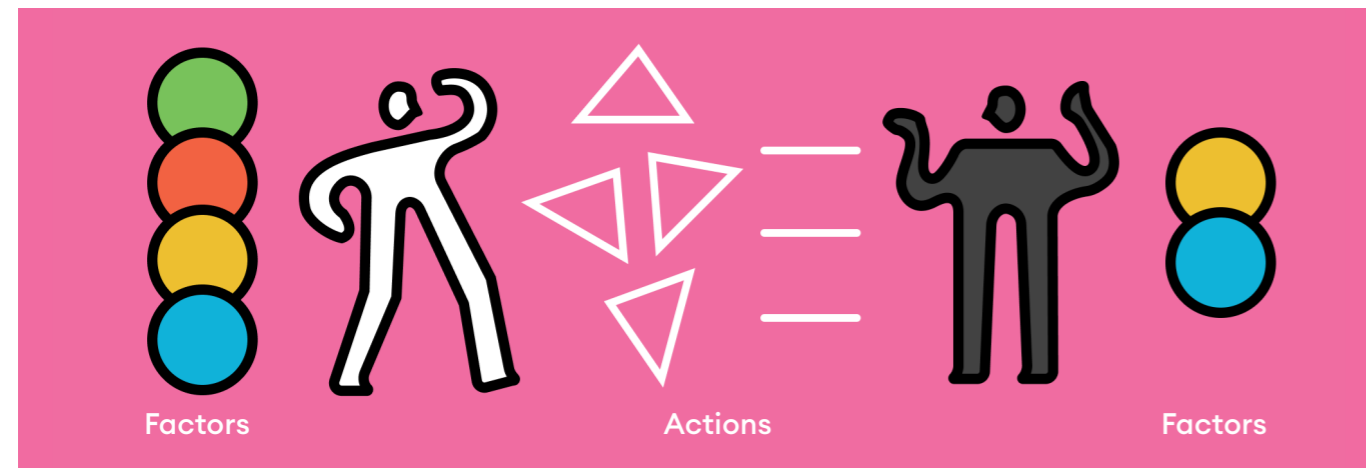
2.1.4 The process dynamicity of trust

Trust is an ongoing process (Nikolova, Möllering, & Reihlen, 2015) (Flores, 1998). It is a dynamic phenomenon, that takes on a different shape in the early as compared to the developing or more mature stages of the relationship (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). This is explored further by explaining three models of trust development. These three models will later be used when intersecting design consultancies way of working and the role of trust (see section 2.3)

↓ Showing the process aspect of trust and how it is a gradual evolution.

Low level of trust ⟶ High level of trust

Four stages of building trust in the client-consultancy relationship

Maister, Green, & Galford (2001) have defined building trust along four phases of the client-consultancy relationship, namely 'getting hired', 'building trust on current assignment', 'building trust away from the current assignment' and 'cross selling'.

1. Role of trust in getting hiring

The getting hired stage of the relationship is the first part of any project initiation, i.e. to actually get a project. At this stage trust is initiated, primarily when interacting with a new client for the first time (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). But trust can also be rekindled when re-engaging with a previous client (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). Literature has defined this beginning stage as the most critical moment to build trust as it holds the power to create first impressions.

At this stage, consultancies are demonstrating that they have something of value to offer, and that they as an organization are suitable to manage and come with an outcome that fits clients' needs (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001) (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Initiating trust is not only seen when starting the project or selling to the client, but it can also be the transfer of a member during the ongoing of the project, interaction with other stakeholders of the client organization (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).

2. Building trust on current assignment

Once trust is initiated, the actual work to do for the project involves building trust. Working for the project with clients does not mean going away and then coming back with a well-made proposition and expecting appreciation from clients (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). Being unknown about the project proceedings especially when client has not only put trust in you, but also their money and their work in consultancies hands, can cause doubt and push-back. At this stage, consultancies are majorly acting on the promises kept and progressively delivering updates of the project to keep clients up to date. Since building trust can be considered something broader as the whole process of building trust, this phase will be here onwards be referred to as developing trust, as cited by Lewicki & Bunker (1996).

3. Building trust away from the project

There are many opportunities of building trust outside the scope of the project (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). One such aspect is maintaining trust after the project by staying in touch with clients. This stage of building trust is done to keep a positive light on the consultancies after the project is completed. Many a times, clients can tend to become institutional partner, that is a long term client for the consultancy (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). Since building trust

can be considered something broader as the whole process of building trust, this phase will be here onwards be referred to as maintain trust, as cited by Lewicki & Bunker (1996).

4. Cross selling

Cross-selling refers to selling within an organization that is already a client (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). By proposing new ways to serve the existing clients, consultancies can build long lasting relationships and gain more businesses. Although, this section will not be focussed upon due to the limited time availability for the project.

↓ Four stages of building trust in the client-consultancy relationship

Getting Hired

Building trust on current assignment

Building trust away from the project

Cross selling
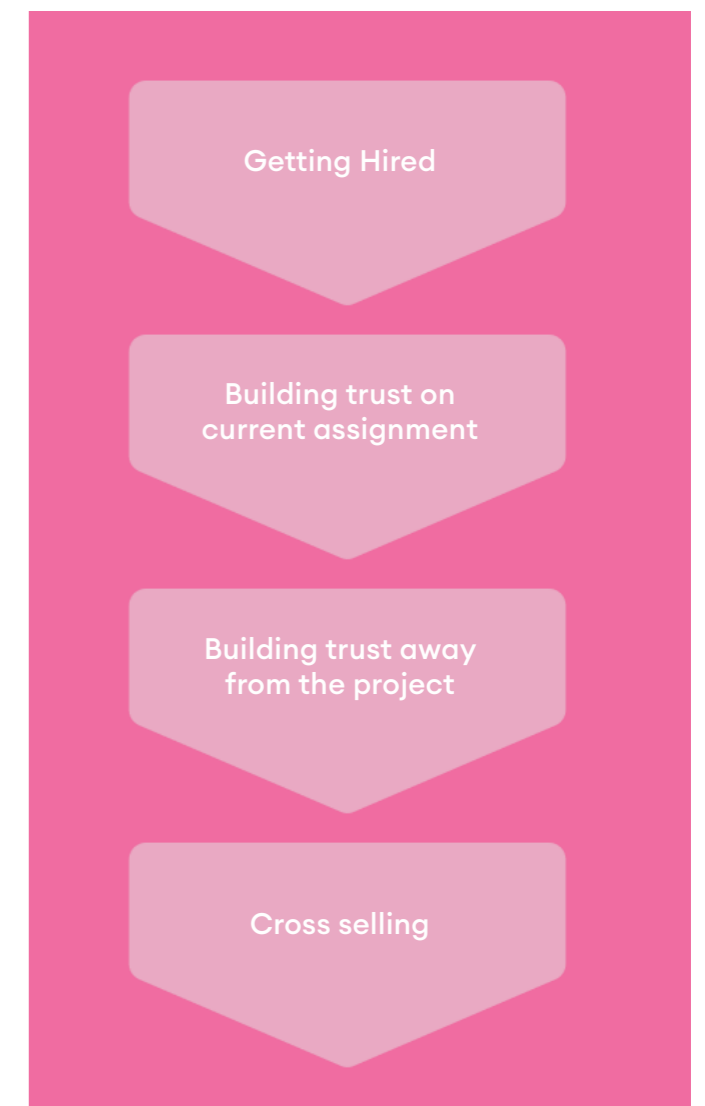
Characterized stages of trust development

Lewicki & Bunker (1996) established three types of trust expanding on the framework of trust development established by Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin (1992). The types of trust are calculus-based, knowledge-based and identification-based trust. The paper suggests the sequential linking between the three types demonstrating, how achievement of one level enables the development of the next level.

1. Calculus-based trust

The calculus-based trust characterizes this type of trust to be at the beginning of the relationship. It is grounded when knowing there will be rewards when trust is preserved or having a fear of punishment when trust is violated (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992). In a working relationship, a brand's 'reputation' can be hurt if the consultancy violates the trust by delivering low quality work. Whereas, if they deliver good quality of work, it is rewarded and trust is enhanced.

2. Knowledge-based trust

Knowledge-based trust is characterized as knowing the other sufficiently that their behavior is anticipatable (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992). This trust generally develops over time through frequent interactions. In working relaionships, the parties gather more knowledge about each other, and observe behaviours in varying situations.

3. Identification-based trust

Lastly, identification-based trust, the third level exists as the parties can effectively understand and appreciate the other's wants (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992). It means to illustrate how the consultancy can 'think like the other' or 'feel like the other'. People can empathize strongly with the other and incorporate aspects of their identity in themselves, leading to a collective identity creation (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992). In a working relationship, this can mean the client has full trust over the consultancy, thereby letting the consultancy conduct the project work for the client with very minimal interventions.

↓ The stages of trust development
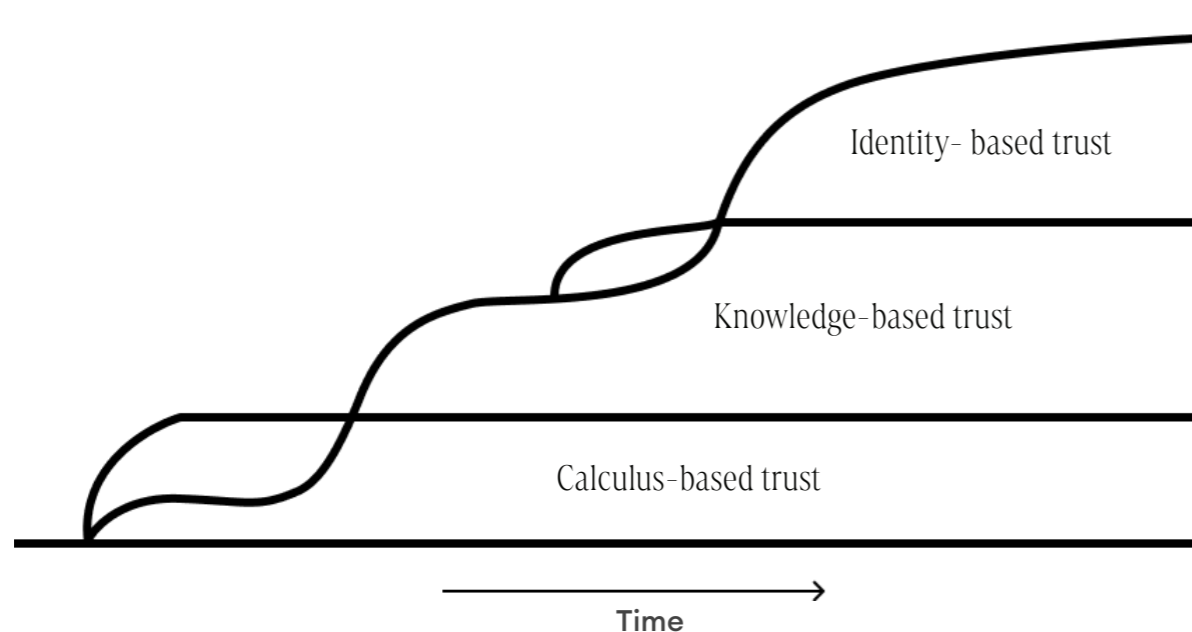
Five step trust process

Maister, Green, & Galford (2001) have established another trust development process namely, engage, listen, frame, envision and commit.

1. Engagement

Engagement is the first step in the process by creating the first connection with the trustor (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). It is a significant step for the trustor as it establishes if they are likely to invest in the consultancy. This stage helps clients assess if the consultancy is worth talking to by taking their time to assess the firm's capabilities and the value they can bring for the client. Engagement with clients can be with new ones or existing ones, but in this project's focus, it will be with new ones.

2. Listening

The next step of the process is the art of listening, crucial to "earn the right". A non-scientific experiment conducted by Maister, Green, & Galford (2001) saw how business people have the span of thirty to sixty seconds for listening without being distracted by other unrelated thoughts. By not listening and enforcing one's ideas and structure onto trustor, one loses the opportunity to hear the their side of the story. To actively listen, it is also important to ask questions that allows for more answers.

2. Framing

The consequent step defined is framing the issue. It involves crystallizing and bringing the client's issues together into a framed problem definition in an objective manner (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). This challenging and rewarding phase consists of two aspects, rational framing, identifying the essence of the issue which is tacit and critical and emotional framing, identifying the core 'gut' issue or the emotional aspects. The rational framing usually follows some formal model that helps distill complex issues to few critical variables. Whereas emotional framing is about surfacing hidden emotions of the client that can hinder progress of the project.

3. Envisioning

The fourth step of the process is to envision an alternate reality, by concretizing a specific vision and choice among the many future states the clients is interested towards. A good envisioning process would take the clients out of their technical approach for problem solving to seeing new perspectives (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). This gives way to building confidence for the clients. Although envisioning is a difficult step to do, and

the frequency of ommiting this step is high in many consultancies.

4. Commitment

The last step of this process is commitment, the final stage of trust building. This step is when the consultant ensures the client understands what is necessary to solve the problem and is willing to do what is takes to achieve the goals (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). By managing expectations and clarifying the roles of the client and the consultant, it makes committing to the project easier.

↓ Five step trust process
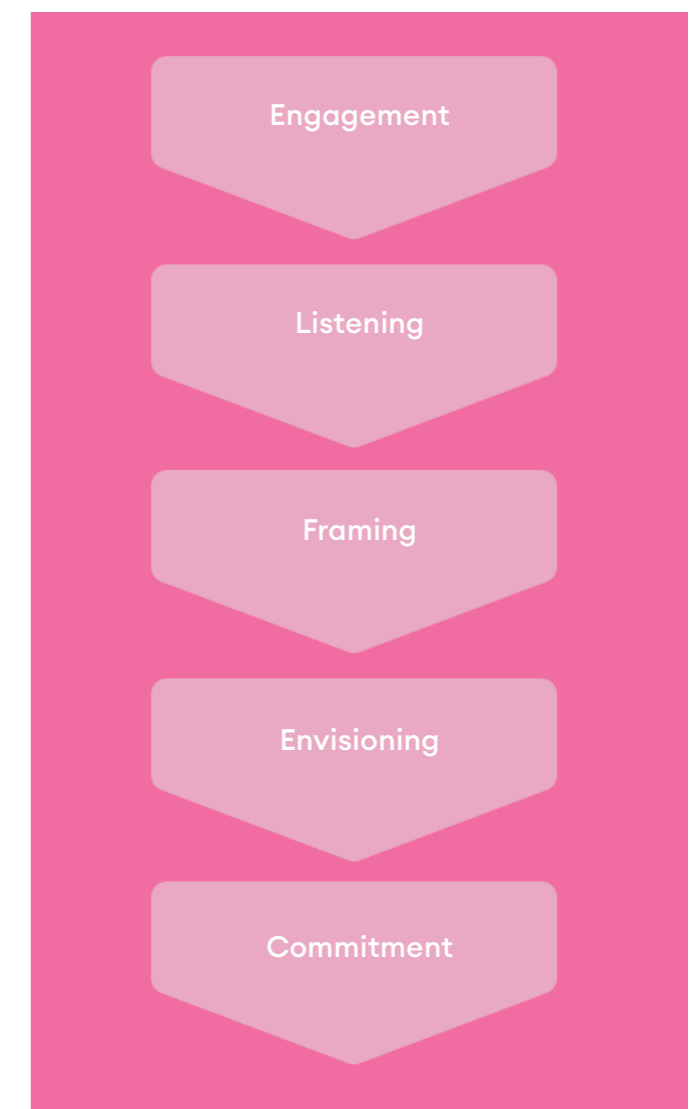
2.1.5 Levels of trust

In the context of organization trust of a consulting environment, one can identify interdependence of client and the consulting organization (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) (Sucher & Gupta, 2021) The client is dependent on the consulting organization with the expectation of an outcome or an expertise whereas the consulting organization is dependent on the client for information sharing and resource allocation (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001).

Organizations are inherently multi-level systems (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). There are three distinct levels of any organization, the individual level, the team level, and the whole organization level.

Trust plays a role between two entities as elaborated above: the trustee and the trustor. However, the level of the system can vary between the two dimensions: a level and a referent, thus creating a matrix of trust relationships. Trust at a level is the level of analysis of a study (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). This could be trust at an organization level, at a team level or an individual level. Whereas trust on a referent is the target of the trust, i.e. the trustee. This could be interpersonal, team and organization trust referents (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Identifying which level and

referent will be tackled is crucial as it scoped the project and formalizes the relationship structure that is researched, therefore, it will be further discussed in section 2.3.

↓ Figure 1 : Matrix of trust relationships
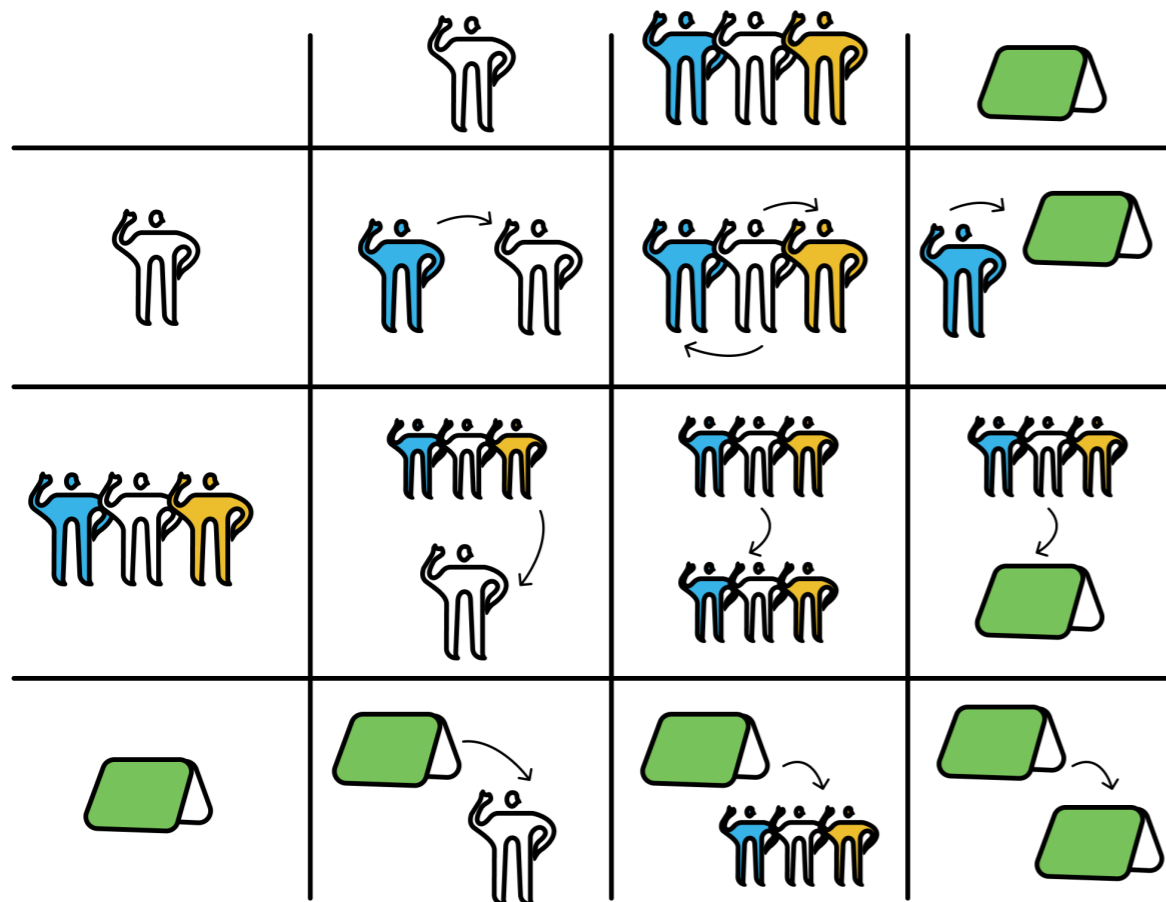
2.1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this section delves deep into the multifaceted realm of trust and its various dimensions. Trust, a complex and abstract concept, is explored through the lenses of vulnerability, positive expectations, and the willingness to depend on two parties; the trustor and the trustee.

Further, the section navigates through the elements of trust formation, elucidating the factors and actions that contribute to its development.

It sheds light on the process dynamicity of trust, underlining its evolution over time and the distinctive stages through which it matures. Three renowned trust development processes are elaborated that signify the dynamicity of trust. These three models will provide as the base on which a new template of trust development in the specific context of design consultancy will be constructed.

In contemplating trust within organizational contexts, the discussion navigates through the interdependence of client and consulting organizations. The three levels of an organization– the individual, team, and whole organization–are explored, highlighting the matrix of trust relationships that can emerge at different levels and between different referents.

This section paves the way for a comprehensive exploration of trust's role in the design consulting domain. By defining and dissecting the dimensions of trust, it lays the foundation for subsequent investigations into the intricate interactions and processes that govern trust within client-consultancy relationships.

2.2 Design Consultancies and their ways of working

The first part of context exploration elaborates on the design consultancy domain. It sets to define design consultancy, what are their processes and ways of working that is unique from management consultancies.

2.2.1 The design consulting space

The ultimate form of separation of design as a specialized area of expertise is consulting (Er, 1997). They bring a unique, outside perspective because they do not work for the organization, which allows them to offer innovative insights (Kuhfus, 2021). Design experts are consulted by companies for various reasons ranging from solving a short-term problem, accessing fresh, new ideas or filling in for a lack of in-house expertise (Er, 1997). As briefly discussed in the introduction, design consultancy has expanded from just improving the efficiency and aesthetics of tangible products to now solving for systemic change. Modern design consultancies have the knowledge to establish strategic roadmaps, come up with innovative business models, and develop valuable proposals for new value propositions (Olsson & Holm, 2009). These areas of specialization include a broad spectrum of abilities and expertise, enabling design consultancies to offer thorough and efficient solutions to their clients.

2.2.2 Distinguishing between agency and consultancy

There is a common misconception about an agency and a consultancy. The distinction between agencies and consultancies lies in their focus and role (Fuchs, 2015).

Agencies, often small and specialized, focus on delivering specific services in fields like digital products, advertising, or communications (Correu, 2017) for example implementing particular projects like campaign building or website creation. On the other hand, consultancies offer cross-disciplinary guidance and strategic insights to address high-level challenges faced by companies (Fuchs, 2015) (Cole, 2021). They engage with senior leadership and help build overarching strategies. However, the line between agencies and consultancies has become blurred due to factors such as the growing demand from clients for full-service solutions. Consultancies have started acquiring agencies to handle creative and project-related work, while agencies are establishing consultancy roles to offer high-level strategic services (Cole, 2021).

For the purpose of the thesis and the empirical research, my focus will rely on the design consultancy space and agencies tapping into the consultancy space, where outcomes are unknown and the process of the project is given equal significance with the outcome of the project. The process driven approach involves higher levels of ambiguity and uncertainty for which building trust is much more highly regarded.

↙ Consultancy vs Agency difference

Consultancy   Agency

2.2.3 Hierarchy, role and responsibility of individuals in design consultancy

In design consultancies, projects are worked in teams, with a manager leading the project. In larger consultancies, many times managers are represented from the design team and the project management side. Consultancies can be viewed as a multi-level structure consisting of three levels, the individual level (the consultant or the designer), the team level and the whole organization level. This structure of the organization will be taken forth to draw conclusions for establishing the context.

↙ Consultancies with a multi-level structure

Individual   Team   Organization
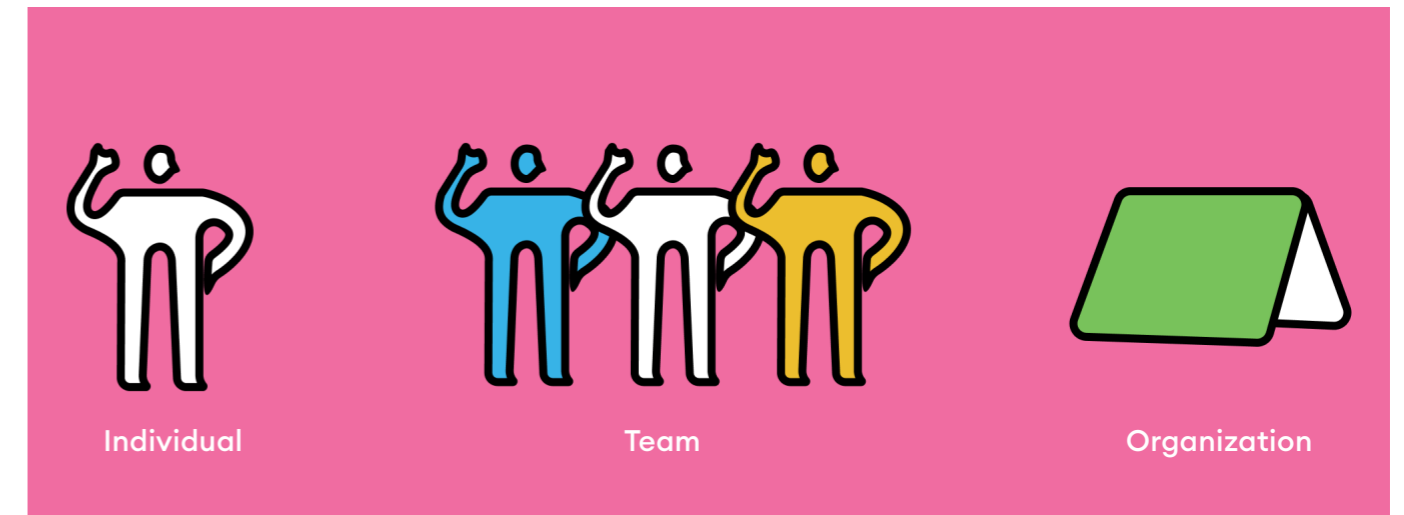
2.2.4 Establishing the process-driven approach

Design consultancies acquire projects with a sales process, likely used when consultancies are looking for new projects. Large design consultancies, typically have a separate team who conduct the sales process and manage client accounts. Whereas, medium and small design consultancies, have senior employees prospecting for suitable client leads. For the scope of this project, the sales process consists of initiating contact, establishing a proposal and signing a contract before conducting pre-kick off and kick-off session.

↙ The sales process

Initiating contact   Project proposal   Pre-kick off   Kick-off
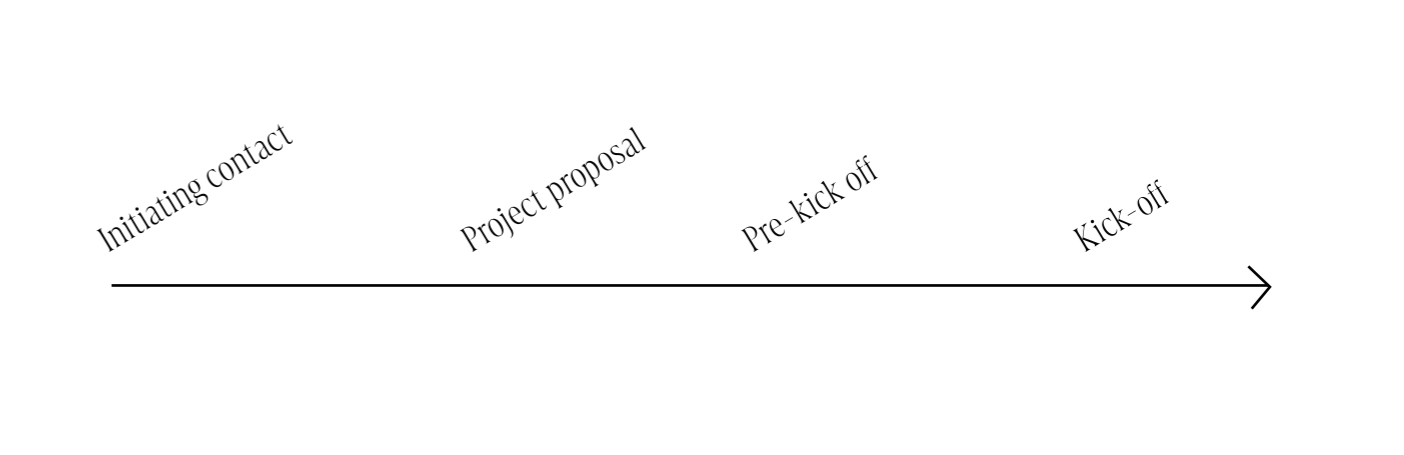
Design consultancies often have their own organization level design process, which is curated for every client project they work on. This is essentially their main selling point as design is a decision making process for generating new ideas and solutions to solve complex and specific problems (Verganti, Vendraminelli, & Iansiti, 2020). To consider all the possible design process used by organizations would be stupendous, although due to time bracket a generalized one is drawn up and used for the project.

To solve a problem, one can use a lot of approaches. Two commonly used creative approaches are creative-problem solving and design thinking process. The concept of design thinking aligns seamlessly with the principles of creative-problem solving. While creative-problem solving serves as a guiding ideology focused on deconstructing challenges and reconstructing them holistically to yield more robust solutions, design thinking presents a structured approach that brings creative-problem solving to life (KnowledgeCity, 2022). Both approaches take use of methods, tools and techniques along the process to solve for problems creatively (Trocin, Stige, & Mikalef, 2023) and with a human-centred perspective .

Since creative problem solving supersedes design thinking (Boyles, 2022), from henceforth, the principles and process of creative problem solving will be taken into consideration. This approach involves a divergent and convergent thinking (Boyles, 2022) or a diamond structure (Buijs & van, 2013). Typically, Europeans often adopt a more streamlined CPS process model consisting of just three steps; Problem definition, Idea Generation and selection and Idea improvement (Buijs & van, 2013). These three steps can be succinctly outlined: delve into the issue and reframe it in the initial diamond, followed by idea generation and selection in the second diamond, and ultimately, the transformation of a promising idea into real-world implementation in the third diamond (Buijs & van, 2013).

(Brown, 2009)

"In contrast to our academic colleagues, we are not trying to generate new knowledge, test a theory, or validate a scientific hypothesis. The mission of design thinking is to translate observations into insights, and insights into the products and services that will improve lives."

↙ Creative Problem Solving Process

Problem definition — Idea generation and selection — Idea improvement
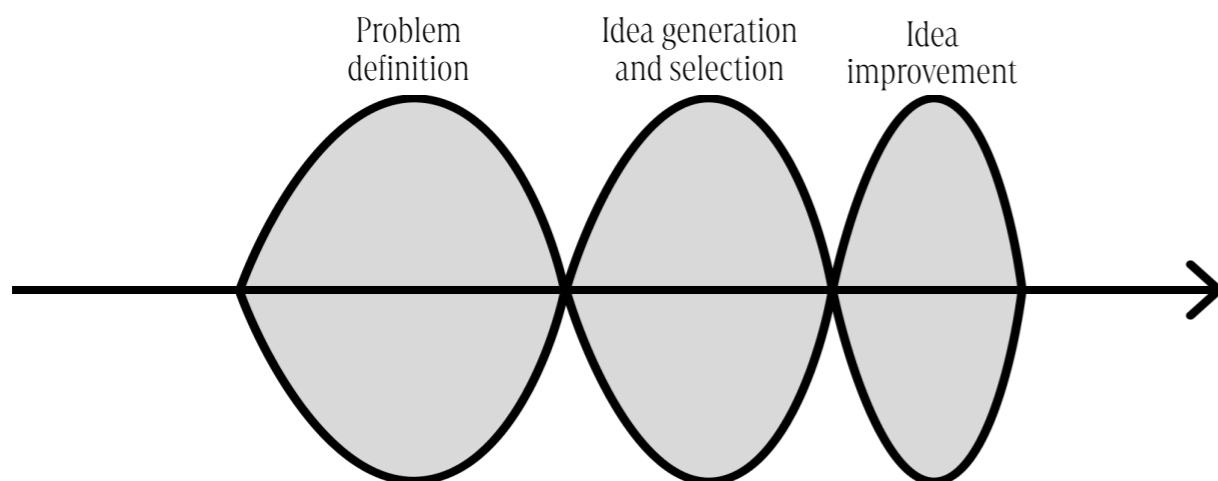
2.2.5 Differences in design way of working and management ways of working.

Traditional strategy firms rely on analytical approaches, grounded in data and analysis. They begin by thoroughly understanding the current state of the market, industry dynamics, and competitive landscape through extensive research and data analysis. With this knowledge, they identify opportunities for their clients to compete and create value. Their recommendations are data-driven and aim to transition from the current state («as-is») to the desired state («to-be») (Morey, n.d.).

In contrast, design consultancies approach strategy with a more optimistic and creative mindset. They see the world as a realm of possibilities that can be shaped and transformed. Designers seek inspiration from various sources, both within and outside the industry, and engage in generative thinking to imagine the ideal future state («should-be»). Only after this creative phase do they apply analytical tools to evaluate and refine their ideas. They consider market viability, the client's capabilities, technological feasibility, and the potential impact on industry dynamics using traditional strategy tools (Morey, n.d.).

While both types of firms address strategic questions, their contrasting perspectives and methodologies yield different outcomes. Management consulting firms focus on analysis and data-driven decision-making, while design consultancies prioritize creative ideation and crafting future possibilities (Morey, n.d.).

2.2.6 Collaboration styles

The relationship between a consultancy and a client can differ based on several factors such as the phase of the process, the client's level of interest etc. But important to grasp the client environment as it is about relationship building with the consultancy

The different collaboration styles with clients are defined into four different types. The distinction is based on their knowledge level and their collaborative attitude (Díaz-Méndez & Saren, 2019). The knowledge axis refers to their understanding of the organization and the collaborative attitude axis is about their willingness to work with the organisation (Kuhfus, 2021). The four types are briefly describes below.

1. Novice clients: If they are not taught, they make counterproductive decisions and cannot assess a good quality work.
2. Control concerned clients: They have a high degree of implicit expectation and do not wish to lose control. They are inflexible towards advice and seem to blame the organization for failure. They are farthest in the graph for collaboration
3. Integration concerned clients: Considered as the ideal type of client, they see the organization as a partner and work collaboratively towards achieving a positive outcome.

Understanding the type of clients helps with assessing how much priority should be given to them. It also helps in assessing their trust levels and how the engagement is to be conducted.
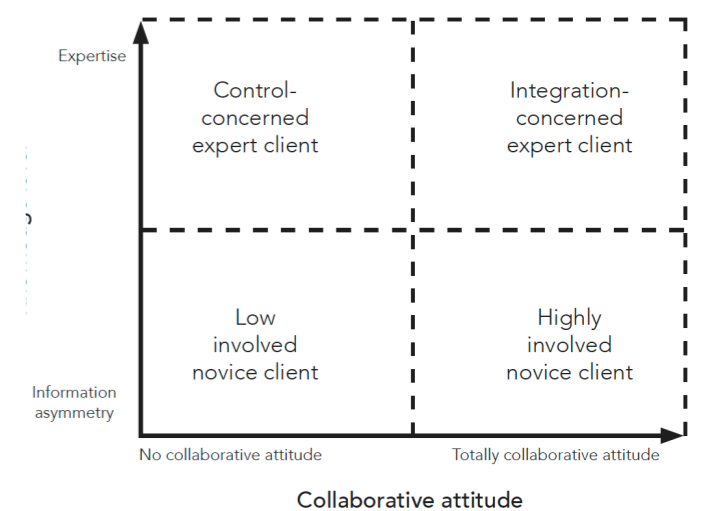
2.2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the foundation of design consultancies are elaborated by highlighting unique characteristics, processes, and ways of working that set them apart from traditional management consultancies.

The organizational structure within design consultancies is demostrated, outlining the multi-level nature of the organization. The review further delves into the process-driven approach adopted by design consultancies, with a focus on creative problem-solving. This approach, rooted in divergent and convergent thinking, emphasizes reframing challenges, generating innovative ideas, and transforming those ideas into actionable solutions. This approach is contrasted with the analytical methodologies often employed by traditional management consultancies, underlining the unique perspective design consultancies bring to strategic problem-solving.

Collaboration styles between design consultancies and clients are also categorized, based on clients' knowledge levels and collaborative attitudes. This categorization aids in understanding the dynamics of engagement, trust levels, and the approach required to effectively work with different types of clients.

It lays the groundwork for understanding the nuances and complexities of building and maintaining trust within this dynamic and creative domain.

2.3 The role of trust in Design Consultancy space

This section brings together the key takeaways from the trust literature and the design consultancies and ways of working literature to establish a context by merging elements and scoping the project. Key decisions on similarities of design process with trust building process, the level of trust in design consultancy helps to reframe the research question for the following phases.

2.3.1 Need for trust in design process

Design processes aims to solve for open and complex problems, typically weighted with massive amounts of data. This makes many phases of the process, ambiguous, therefore colloquially calling it the "fuzzy front end". Creative problem solving heavily leverage on intuition apart from using other methods and techniques to find data. Using intuition for projects is not a technical approach and not considered logic, making clients feel more uncertain towards the project process.

2.3.2 A relation between trust development and creative problem solving process

The three trust development models discussed in section 2.1.3 shed light on how trust is to be built. All the models have similar aspects which are illustrated in the table below.

Trust development 1 (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001)	Trust building process 2 (Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992)	Trust building process 3 (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001)	Creative Problem Solving Process (Buijs & van, 2013)
Initiate Trust: Getting Hired	Calculus-based trust	Engage, listen	Project initiation
Develop Trust : During current project	Calculus-based trust, Knowledge-based trust, identification-based trust	Listen, Frame, Envision	Problem definition
Develop Trust : During current project	Calculus-based trust, Knowledge-based trust, identification-based trust	Envision	Idea generation and selection
Develop Trust : During current project	Knowledge-based trust, Identification-based trust	Envision, Commit	Idea improvement
Maintain Trust: Beyond project	Identification-based trust	Commit	Beyond the project

Project initiation (acquisition > kick-off)

In this phase, the steps include, project acquisition, a proposal creation before the project pre-kick off and kick-off. Depending on the type of consultancy, the people involved in each of the step can be different. In this phase, trust needs to be moulded well, as it creates the first impression. By engaging and actively listening to clients, trust can be initiated.

Problem Definition

In this phase of the project process, the problem given is questioned, and reframed after researching the problem scope through different methods. By actively listening to users, and client organization's perspectives, information is integrated to reframe the problem solving objective. Since this phase questions the problem, the outcome and the direction to solve for is unclear, creating an anxious mindset for clients. Therefore, to develop trust towards the process is crucial at this stage. Further at the end of the problem defining phase, the new reframed problem should be presented to the client that helps them envision how the project will take shape.

Idea generation and selection

Once the problem is defined, the process proceeds to generate ideas that solve the problem. By engaging in methods like brainstorming and clustering, ideas are generated and selected based on viability and feasibility or other metrics. By envisioning new directions, it takes clients out of their technical mindset and see new perspectives, thereby building confidence.

Idea improvement

By transforming the new promising idea for implementation, an alternate reality comes to existence, making clients feel confident and assured. As a consultant, one must ensure that the client understands the concept and knows what to do after during implementation.

Beyond the project

At the end of the project, as a consultant, one still needs to ensure the project completion is gone well. After the project is completed, being in the radar of the client is important to maintain trust.

Through this integration of the design process and the trust development process, there are many similarity merged to form a new template that will be used to find out how trust can be created in each of the phases.
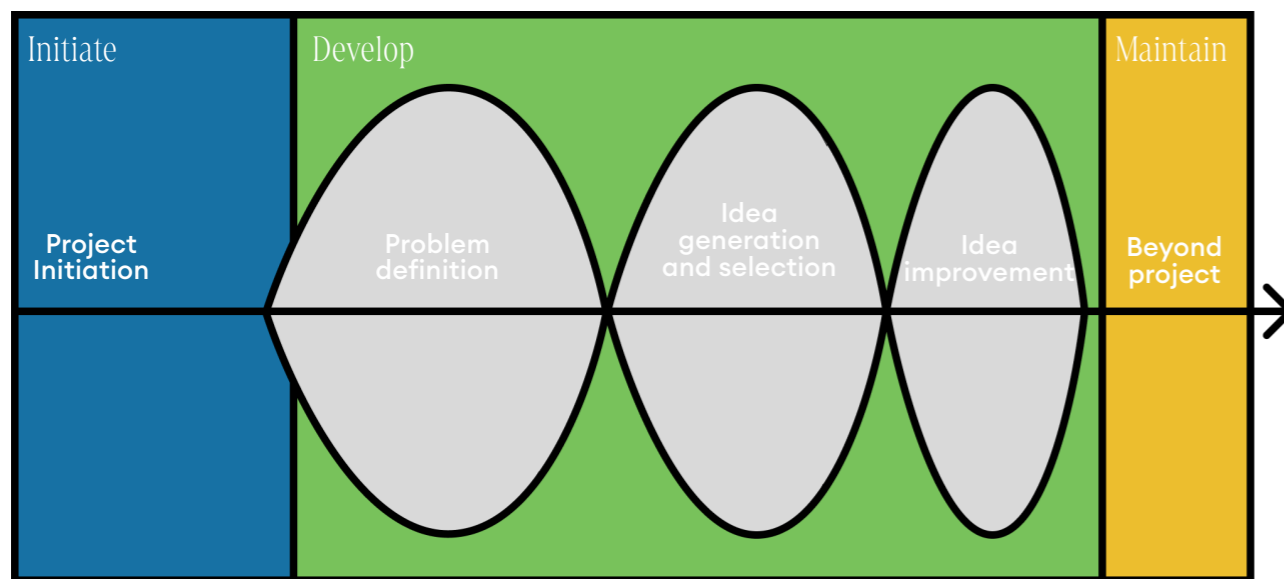
2.3.3 Level and referent of trust selection

As discusses earlier in the structure of design consultancies, there are three levels in the organization, individual, team and organization. Similarly, trust is also seem from a multi-level perspective as interpersonal, team level and organization level. By drawing on the similarities of this multi-level structure the project is scoped to a point that is achievable in the time frame.

Organizations are trusted because of three antecedents; the organization antecedent, individual antecedent and the cultural antecedent [see figure]. To establish trust within an organization, employees need to possess a comprehensive understanding of the organization, exhibit confidence in its leaders, perceive reliability in processes due to transparent information sharing, and experience a natural sense of confidence with specific individuals who share important characteristics (Khouya & Benabdelhadi, 2021). In the context of the project, the trust building is assessed between the individual of the consultancy and the individual and team of the client, thereby making it an interpersonal level of trust. Additionally, given the project's feasibility and time constraints, this leads us to the reframed research question.

To demonstrate this further, the design consultant acts as the facilitator to help clients build trust towards the consultant, thereby making the design consultant a trusted consultant. This is reflected onto the research question below.

In this study, the project takes the view of an interpersonal referent, i.e. from the trustee's view of how they can enable trustful behaviors and actions to build trust from the trustor.
The data points to be gathered will be at the individual level, individual trust in interpersonal referent, team level, team trust in individual referent and organization level, organization trust in individual referent.

Consultancy   Client
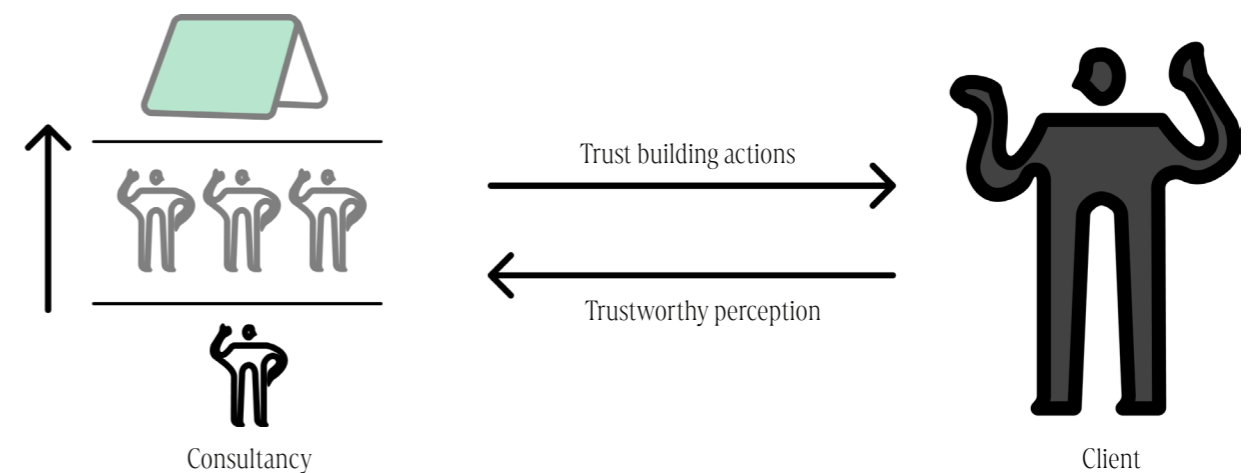
2.3.4 Reframed research question

"How do individuals in design consultancies build trustful relationships with clients amid the constant shift in design perceptions? "

Why is it important to answer this question?

By being a trusted design consultant, clients would tend to micromanage the project lesser, giving more confidence to the consultant to carry out the work on the project with more freedom. It allows the design consultant to leverage on their skills they are hired for with more creative freedom. Overtime, it can lead to more repeat businesses more the design consultancy, by delivering quality work trust by the client (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001). It opens up opportunities to help the client organization integrate more design centric ways of working.
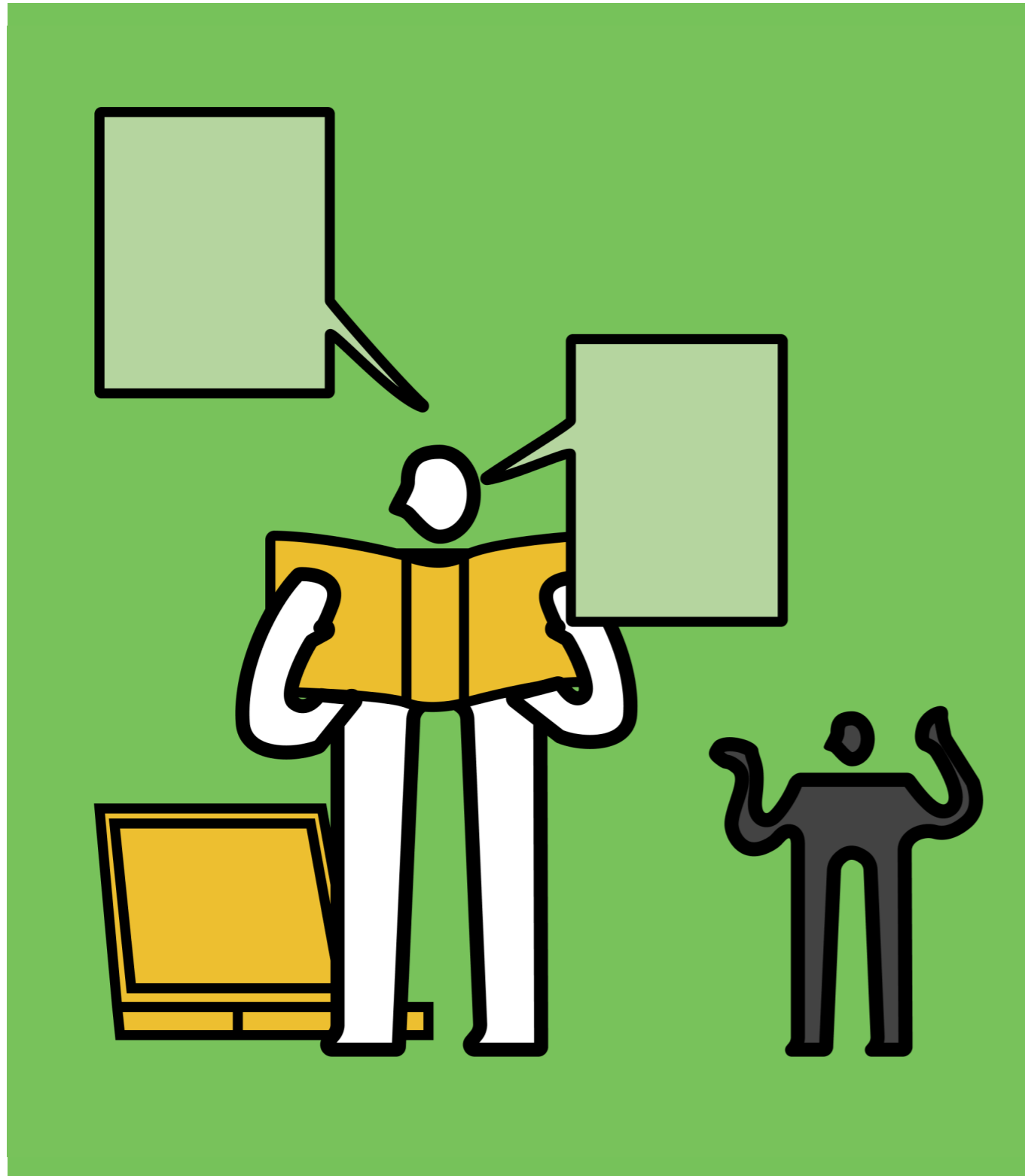
Driving factors and trust building actions constitute key data categories for establishing trust. For a design consultancy, driving factors encompass overarching themes to cultivate trust with clients. This approach identifies trustee's actions that enhance trust, through observable behaviours recognized by the trustor. By understanding the role of the driving factors, necessary actions can be taken to improve the trustful relationship.

The driving factors and the signs and signals that aid in building the trustful perception is gathered through two approaches: empirically and theoretically. Interviews are conducted with consulting practitioners, and the theoretical knowledge gathering is conducted by analyzing through literature that contributes to relational signaling theory.

3.1 Data Gathering Methods

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews with practioners from design consultancies

Consultants were interviewed to gather a breadth of information, through interviews with people of different seniority and different roles held in the organization. Open ended-question were asked about their experiences that follows the process flow of trust building (Chapter 2). These experiences shed light on what actions were conducted that were positively perceived by the clients.

Participants were recruited through personal connections made on LinkedIn and referrals. Few interviews were also scheduled through networking at IO Business Fair. The brochure invitation to participate is attached in the appendix. In the span of three weeks, 10 interviews were conducted with design consultants, product managers from different design organizations who have regular and consistent interactions with clients. The interview lasted approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The table of participants and the interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

The interview was semi-structured to gather insights about different signs and signals that contribute towards a driving factors that establish trust with clients. The interview took place with five phases exploring different aspects.
- The first part of the interview was to gather more information about the individual's backgrounds, their role and responsibilities.
- The second part constituted questions regarding the organization practices
- The third part was to understand the definition of trust an what it meant for each person.
- The fourth part went in-depth into the questions about trust initiation, development and maintenance.
- The fifth and final part was about the importance of trust, other aspects of trust (regaining trust, cultural differences and physical vs virtual) and envisioning trust building as a skill.

3.1.2 Theoretical Analysis

In addition to the interviews, a wide source of literature was used to gather further information on the driving factors and the trust building actions. The literature was mostly across interpersonal trust building and interorganizational trust building. Based on the consultancy and client context, the selected factors and signals were picked and translated to insights. However, the signs and signals gathered in the interviews that dictated the data gathered from the literature. The literature merely substantiates the actions defined.

3.1.3 Data Analysis Methods

To gather the data points of driving factors and trust building actions, a themeatic analysis is used on the interviews and the theoretical findings. This is explained further in the Appendix

Chapter 3 : Gathering Data

This section highlights the approach taken to gather more knowledge of this subject through interviews and specific literature studies. It begins with defining what specifically is going to be gathered empirically and theoretically.
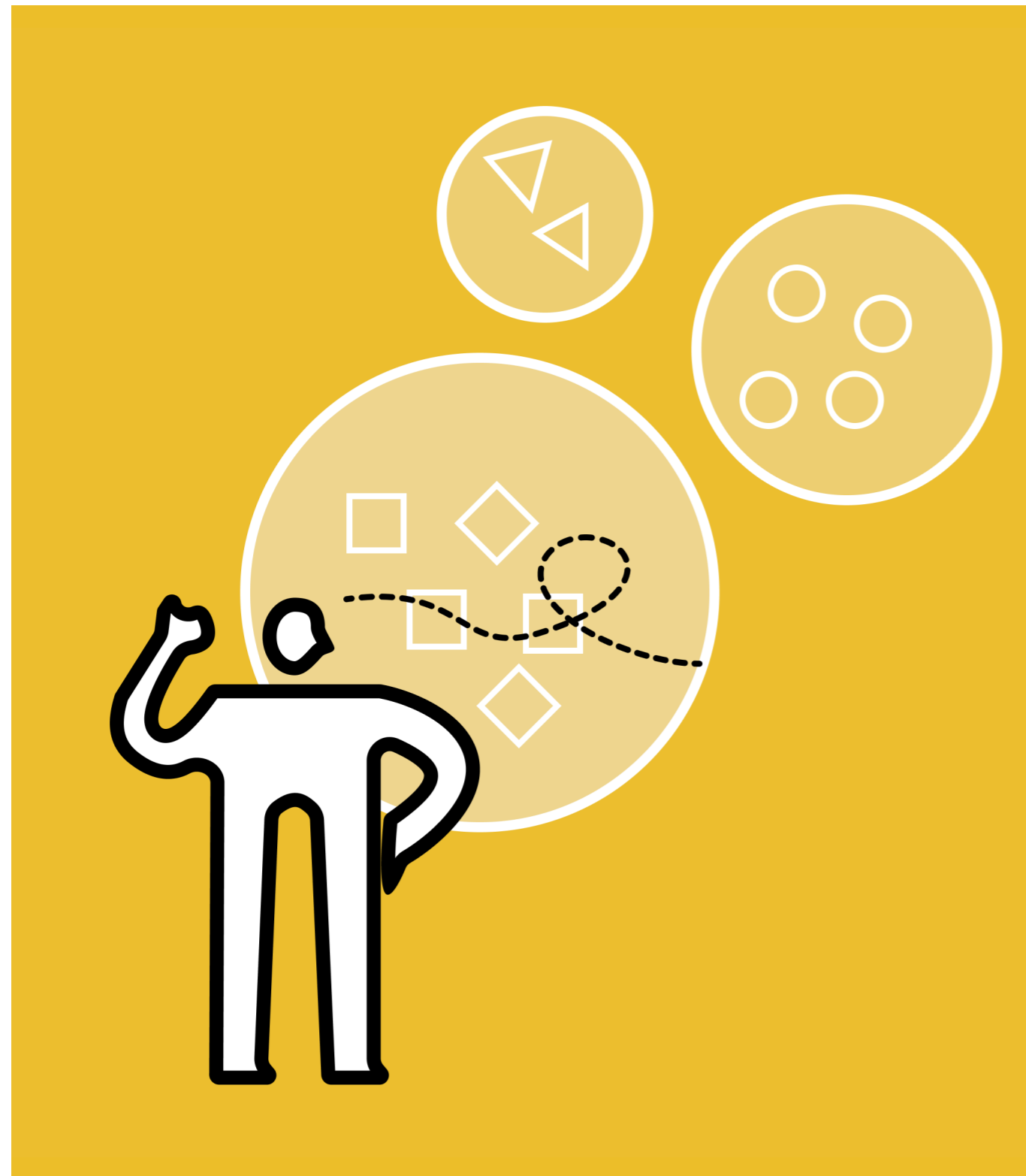
Chapter 4 : Making Sense

This section showcases the key insights derived using thematic analysis that answers the question 'how trust is built'. The section is divided into general findings and two forms of analysis, one to identify driving factors the other to define trust building actions. The method of analysis can be read in the Appendix.

4.1 General Findings

Personal trust is important

Building a personal connection with the client is important, it allows for informal engagement that is much likely to be stronger than only adhering to formal approaches. This does not go to the extent of becoming friends with the client but more that the consultant takes it upon themselves to engage with the client in something beyond work-related conversations. Socializing is not necessary but being sociable is. Simple questions like, how are you, how is your family, how was your weekend, can invoke a feeling of care and concern and thus increasing the momentum for trust formation. Establishing personal trust is not an aspect limited to design consultancies, but rather adopted towards other work relationships.

Quote from Participant 8
« Don't building a relationship with your client is something that I find very important and that is doing a little bit of extra, showing some interest, asking about their life, anything like that, just to sort of really try to connect with them. «

Trusting yourself

Before interacting with clients, interviewees stressed the importance of having confidence in oneself and one's judgment. Being confident in your abilities and appearances qualifies for this category. Apart from being able to rely on your coworkers, it's critical in the design consultant industry to use your own intuition, expertise, and life experiences because they can provide a fresh viewpoint while developing innovative concepts. Because the creative industry is so subjective, there are several examples of how designers experience impostor syndrome; feel like frauds (Cousins, 2020). This not only makes clients more uncertain and raises their level of doubt, but it also has a negative impact on the consultant or individual.

Quote from Participant 5
« If you don't trust your intentions it becomes very hard to navigate unless you have something concrete. «

Lack of formal trust awareness

During the interviews, it was fascinating to observe that many participants expressed surprise when they realized their own trust-building strategies. The thought-provoking questions posed during the interviews prompted them to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of the concept of trust. This revelation led to the realization that individuals possess inherent knowledge of how to build trust, but what they lack is the awareness of whether their actions truly contribute to trust-building or not. Currently, they rely on trial and error, experimenting with different approaches to gauge their effectiveness. However, by fostering awareness about trust and its underlying drivers, individuals can enhance their abilities in working with clients and become more adept at building trust-based relationships.

Quote from Participant 5
« I want to read what you produce in the end because I want to reflect on it. Like when you ask the question, I was formulating a bunch of stuff that I never formulated before. I mean, some of it was formulated, but it will be interesting to see it written down your insights then as well. Because for me, it's been a personal process as well of kind of learning.»

Build trust around your context

The consultant has to feel at ease in their surroundings in order to develop positive relationships with clients. The environment a consultant is in has an impact on how they think and feel because most projects are completed in teams that are represented by an organization. To produce a high-quality result, it is important for all team members' opinions to be taken into account, for communication to be active, and for creativity to be cultivated among co-workers. A trustworthy environment enables design consultants to function with self-assurance and resilience. It influences interactions and makes it possible for more helpful collaboration.

Quote from Participant 6
« If that can be done because it starts with you trusting yourself and you trusting the environment and trusting maybe something beyond environment. «

4.2 Driving Factors

Core Identity based

Identity are attributes that distinguish an individual from the others. Alternatively termed, characteristics-based trust touches upon aspects of sex and race which can contribute as a factor towards perceives trustworthiness (Zucker, 1986). Although it seems to include aspects of personality, there needs to be a distinction between aspects such as race, gender, age, sexuality, and cultural background as these cannot be moderated or modified.

Many of the trust influencing aspects of the core-identity have stemmed from stereotypes, for example men are much more trusted in the workplace contexts than women and there is more trust between women than men. Acknowledging these perceptions helps tackle cultural differences when working on projects around the world, primarily when working in projects for systemic and social design. Apart from that, it creates accepting environment towards diversity and inclusion.

Quote from Participant 7

We're both women of colour and women of colour in the workplace or just generally kind of non-straight white male identities in the workplace and I think I think there is an element of trust that that also you know is different when you feel like people might be perceiving you slightly differently, based on appearance or other characteristics.

Personality and Attitude based

In order to establish trust with the client, the consultant's perceived personality and attitude are crucial factors in the process of trust building. Personality traits are termed as descriptions of people in terms of stable patterns of behaviour, thoughts and emotions (Laura Parks-Leduc, 2015). The Five-Factor model is the most widely used taxonomy that defines personality traits into five broad trait dimensions; Openness to experience, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability (Goldberg, 1993) (O'Connor, 2002) .
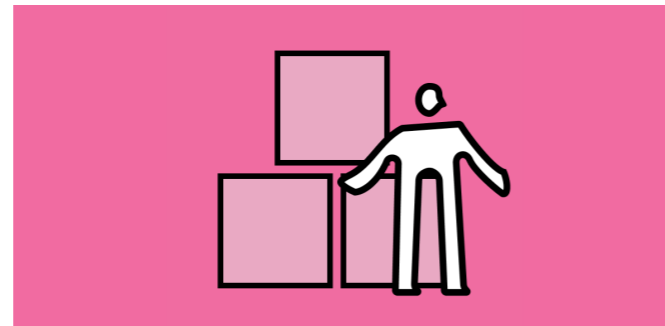
Each individual cannot be distinctly defined by one factor, they are usually weighted across different factors. Although in many cases, they have a higher strength in one than the other. Design consultants frequently exhibit a curious mentality by limiting judgments and being open to new ideas, knowledge, and experiences. Design experts are already fairly regarded as trustworthy due to this inherent characteristic. Any type of personality, being analytical or sociable helps in trust building. Personality that you show helps the trustor perceive who you are and likely allow them to assess if they trust you or not.

Quote from Participant 5

And if you have something that is very analytical and very stern. I have something very Germanic culture like you go into a meeting with. Everything is laid out. Just very clear, very stern. Everything is executed and, but you can have different combinations. And I think I'm sort of like in this weird combination of both informality and analytical.

Quote from Participant 3

I worked very closely together with a client. I talked to them a lot. I would really know them quite well and I think that's also my style to get, like pretty, friendly, and personal. I think I really made a connection with them.

Quote from Participant 5

That's something that I personally struggle with. I'm not cold. I tend to be very informal. But I think it's different from like one thing is to be informal and the other things like talking about family and like what you're doing like what you did on your weekend and like and say like, "oh, I see that you have the plant to be behind you, like maybe like plants." Like, that's the kind of thing that I really don't do. And I have a very hard time. And you can really view trust on that. So, it's different styles. And I think this one is also very valid. You trust on this other side when it's a more personal style of building trust.

Competence-based

Competence refers to group of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitude and behaviour (Arifin, 2021). It is elaborated with sub factors such as communication

skills, role/position, expertise, adaptability, competence and professionalism.

Communication skills

The communication skills of a consultant plays a huge role in all aspects, including communication of intention and one's integrity. Although in the aspect of competence, it is evaluated through articulation, depth and transparency of communication and consistency of communication. Due to the messy nature of the creative problem-solving process, it is the obligation of the design consultant to communicate thoughtfully, effectively, and consistently. Since design is a new area and communication in it may be difficult, design consulting requires an abundance of communication skills. If clients have a limited comprehension of design, design consultants must devote an increasingly bigger part of their time to communication.

Role/position

Your position inside the company affects how trustworthy you are. When compared to a senior employee, junior employees are perceived differently. Clients appears more at ease while interacting with a more experienced individual. This is applicable in all situations beyond design consulting.

Expertise

People are trusted based on their individual skills, thus it's important to establish your credentials by working in a variety of fields. The degree of confidence is increased by the consultant's prior expertise and familiarity working in a related area to the client's domain. Clients also anticipate radical and creative results that are in line with the newest industry trends. Keeping up with the ongoing changes in the world helps consultants develop knowledge that is ideal for serving customers (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993).

Adaptability (Maister, Green, & Galford, 2001)

The way one organizes their workflow is improved by realizing that everyone is unique. The perception of being less different is created through adjusting to the client's working style, role expectations, and language used (Nikolova, Möllering, & Reihlen, 2015). Given that design consultancies use a human-centric perspective when working, consultants are well-equipped to adapt to new developments and methods of working. An everlasting open-mindset helps design consultants adapt to situations quicker.

Ability

Although they have very similar meanings with competence for this subfactor, ability is considered as attributes one may have or may not (Business Process Incubator, 2016). Speaking a language, having realistic judgements, providing quality work,

Quote from Participant 8

So, it's not about only about sort of laying the groundwork, but also really explaining why you did something.

Quote from Participant 2

But then asking some questions and then maybe also paraphrasing what they said to you to show that you've understood that or to check that you understood it would make them feel safer.

Quote from Participant 4

Put ugly, good, bad, ugly. As a consultant, you must give the right picture to your client every week. If things are going down South, call it out, because if you if you keep shielding the information from them then it will hit you hard.

Quote from Participant 4

You start working with a team and you create certain ways of working and then you suddenly must pull back few people. When the client is not very much happy you bring in somebody who is more capable and more senior. You support them with putting extra hours.

Quote from Participant 4

There's also a lot of credentials which we show them that this is the work which we have done for clients in similar space, and we try to put up all the case studies from relevant. I know. For relevant clients and similar work to build that confidence in the client.

Quote from Participant 2

Being able to learn let's say the company's terminology and the things quickly is also a way of showing that you are now one of them. Let's imagine that you're making a research report and that you call that an insight report, but the company calls it findings report.

having a personal interest, tactfulness (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993) and timeliness (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993) constitutes within ability. In design consultancy space, the consultants are assessed by their ability to understand others perspectives and driving values. With methods like stakeholder management, design consultants consider everyone's vision and opinions towards the project brief.

Professionalism (Blomqvist & Ståhle, 2000)
Workplace professionalism encompasses an employee's demeanour, attitude, and interpersonal interactions with colleagues and clients. In essence, it encapsulates an individual's behaviour, attitude, and overall approach to their work responsibilities. Aspect like being punctual, productive working, resilience to name a few (Virginia Tech, n.d.).

Intention -based
A positive intention reflects on the actions one initiates to take. Therefore, it is crucial for consultant to have positive intended mindset and do the best for all the people and groups one interacts with (Sucher & Gupta, 2021). This can be further categorized into three sub factors namely; Benevolence, Dedication and Norm Acceptability.

Benevolence
Benevolence (Söllner & Leimeister, 2013) indicates the perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). It signifies the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor. Benevolence in the context of client-consultancy relationship can be portrayed in the form of trustee doing what's best for them, creating a positive perception for the reporting client and making them happy.

Dedication
The second aspect of intention, dedication (Six F. E., 2007) can be interchangeably used with commitment. This is indicated when trustees make an effort, dedicates sufficient time, visibly show their involvement, stay sincere (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993).

Norm Acceptability
The third attribute of intention, norm acceptability (Six F. E., 2007) falls between the driving factors, intention and integrity. It is defined as the state of acceptability of one's own principles or so referred to as moral integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In a lot of mainstream literature of relational signalling approach, it is defined by the goal "to act appropriately", which is highly culture-dependent. But it is important to note that, norm acceptability

Quote from Participant 5
It's like I trust that you're going to take the best decisions for this. I trust that you know more about this than I do. I trust that you have the best intentions in mind as well, which is kind of important as well.

Quote from Participant 9
She had full trust in me not to saying something or not showing something that might have been put her in a bad light, for instance.

Quote from Participant 7
I thought was actually very powerful was that we on our side were fully dedicated, so I think it was a six-eight-week project, something like that. It was full time from our side, but we also had a pretty much full-time team from their side. So, every day we had working sessions.

can be defined with the actions of showing good intentions through personality or behaviours, one of which is not making clients over-reliant on the consultant.

Integrity-based
Integrity is defined as the adherence to moral and ethical principles (Simons, 1999). In the context of trust building, it is defined as the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). It is divided into behavioural and professional or work integrity.

Behavioural integrity (Simons, 2002)
Behavioural integrity is defined as the perceived degree of congruence between the values expressed by words and those done by the action (Simons, 1999). It considers whether the actor is seen as keeping promises and enacting the same values they espouse (Simons, Leroy, & Nishii, 2022) .The phrase "walks her talk" (Six F. E., 2007) is often stated when someone acts towards the words they have said. In the context of the consulting field, the match between the words said and the actions done by the consultant are assessed by the clients.

Professional and work integrity
Consistency, ethical justness and fairness are attributed to professional and work integrity. Fairness of another is viewed as a key indicator of trustworthiness (Lind, 2001) and the experience of justice also promotes interpersonal trust (Johnson & Lord, 2010). Through interview analysis, open and honest communication further promotes trustworthiness. It can be assessed when the consultant admits mistakes honestly. Consistent performance is also an indicator of professional and work integrity. It keeps track of following through with kept promises by assessing work progressively.

Institution based
Institution based trust depends on the formal organization practices of the institution (Zucker, 1986). Institution-based trust encompasses the presence of impersonal structures that enable individuals to take actions with the expectation of positive outcomes in future endeavours (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).

To define the meaning of institutions more clearly, Giddens (1984) states that institutions are structural organization represented by principles of behaviours to which individual and collective actions are directed. They appear as formal organizations but they can also include context-specific informal rules like routines or practices. Institutions create

Quote from Participant 2
In the 'how' it can be, it can be something like, if you say you will do something then you should do it in time, and as you promised.

Quote from Participant 7
Another aspect of that like trust undermining is not meeting your commitments. So, if you've said you're going to do something, if you said you're going to send us something, if you said you're going to have a conversation or whatever.

Quote from Participant 2
So don't be too sure that what you think is right is right, you know. Being prepared to admit that we're wrong and preferably to admit that we were on the wrong path before, we must admit that we were wrong, but just to adapt to new information. Because the further you get trapped in your assumptions and certainties.
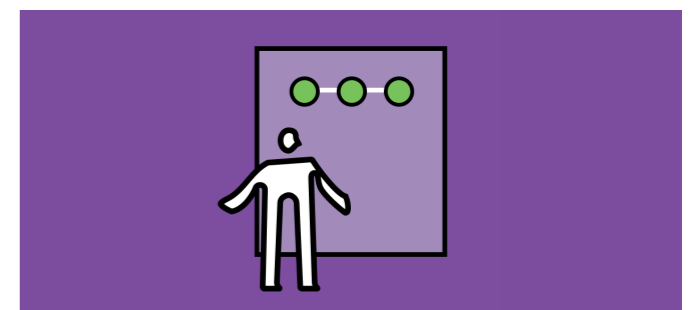
Quote from Participant 5
Like consistency is something that we will trust because it's always about this play of expectation and delivery and being consistent on this. Best case scenario, you have set the expectation high, and it deliver high

the guidelines of behaviour but as such they are not mandated (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011).

Within this driving factor, there are six sub-factors that holistically play a role in promoting trustworthiness. Although formal certification will not be considered in the context of design consultancies, evaluated from the interviews, the other five sub-factors are explained briefly.

Legal Provision

The existence of a reliable contract can be conducive to developing trust in business relationships. These relationships that are based on legal rules can significantly lower the inherent risk of trust (Arrighetti, Bachmann, & & Deakin, 1997). Legal contracts can help maintain confidentiality and align expectations of the actors (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011). Although legal contracts are very detailed, design organizations tend to keep a flexible agreement for project details and further collaboration.

Quote from Participant 9

And I would say all of this breaks down when the contract, the consulting contract, the SLW. To do a project you start a project to have an understanding and especially legal understanding.

Perceived accreditation

Accreditation alternatively referred to as reputation, is defined as the scope of efforts undertaken to verify the ability of an organization to perform (Pavlou, 2002). Although reputation does not hold too much of a value towards interpersonal trust, it does hold a value to the client and consultancy relationship. In many a times, a third party's opinions on a consultant can affect the perception of trustworthiness.

Perceived cooperative norms.

Cooperative norms are stated as values, standards, and principles for which a population of the organization adheres (Pavlou, 2002). These values and norms, discourage opportunism facilitate cooperation and joint problem solving.

Bringing Clarity

Creating alignment, bringing a shared understanding, and clarifying expectations help in bringing clarity for both parties, trustor, and trustee. Done through alignment sessions or progress meetings with clients.

Quote from Participant 6

So, you almost work in a way that those problems don't occur. So that's why when I mentioned like alignment and all of that, you spend more time on aligning rather than doing earlier.

Flexibility

Flexibility refers to the willingness to make changes and good-faith modifications if required (Pavlou, 2002). Everything cannot be defined as the outcome of the process is unpredictable, so ensuring to have a flexible work approach is crucial. This helps the trustee to not be constrained to the defined direction and gives the trustor the leeway to give feedback and be involved.

Solidarity

Solidarity is the expectation of maintaining a successful relationship (Pavlou, 2002). The trustor and the trustee should have the feeling of belonginess

Quote from Participant 6

Internally, I feel like you should internally feel that you sort of like belong to them. And you it's that sort of a belongingness from your side makes them feel like they also belong to you.

with each other.

Information sharing

It refers to the mutual exchange of pertinent information (Pavlou, 2002). Information sharing works both ways, it is relevant for the trustor to share information to the trustee for the expectation of quality work. Simultaneously, it is crucial for the trustee to share the progress of the project to the trustor.

Perceived monitoring

Monitoring refers to a range of activities carried out to ensure that transactions adhere to predetermined agreements and widely accepted rules. Its purpose is to verify that all transactions meet the established standards for quality, delivery, and performance (Pavlou, 2002). Standardizing processes, approaches and keeping someone responsible ensures a quality performance.

Perceived feedback

Feedback mechanisms collect and share information about past trading actions of organizations, allowing quick responses to signals. They deter opportunistic behaviour and establish trust in relationships. Feedback's effectiveness relies on its credibility and the perception that it provides reliable information. Effective feedback replicates word-of-mouth communication, fostering trust-building and goodwill (Pavlou, 2002).

History based

Trust is also driven by past relationships for example previously worked together projects or interactions from an informal setting. Although, it is a situational factor, it is crucial to be considered for defining a trustful relationship.

Quote from Participant 4

It is the result of the continuous relationship in the past which has transpired for them, like, just worked out very well with them, so they are they having this confidence to give you this work.

Quote from Participant 4

These account managers have built a reputation with these clients over the period. And the reputation I think this relationship directly translates into trust. Let's say after four or five programs in years they start trusting me.

Propensity to trust

The factors that define the trustee alone does not contribute towards trust building. In a relationship between the trustor and the trustee, it is important to acknowledge the trustor's willingness to trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995); propensity to trust.

A trustor who has low propensity to trust is likely to not trust someone easily, the difficulty to gain the trust is high and the efforts for it is also equally high. The same goes vice versa, if the trustor has high propensity to trust, they easily trust someone.

4.3 Trust Building Actions

4.3.1 Initiate Trust

The trust building actions listed below are mapped across the trust building process and the first step of the project process, i.e the project initiation process. These actions are specific to the first part of trust formation, the trust initiation.

Initiate Trust	Making contact and building rapport	# Show previous work and experiences
		# Be more responsive to client's needs
		# Communicate your intentions regarding the project openly and honestly
		# Setting strong but healthy boundaries on projects
		# Maintaining a consistent communication language
	Proposal stage	# Clarify expectations through transparent and flexible communication.
		# Ensure a legal binding to hold accountability for trustee and reduce fear for trustor
		# Plan with room for change and be open to change in your decisions
	Pre-kick off	# Gain advantage through experience and/or personal interest in the client's project domain
		# Additional efforts spent for client is appreciated
		# Create a dialogue through asking questions and listening actively
		# Acknowledge client's expertise in the field
		# Identify client's pain points and show care and concern for them and the project
		# Consider expectations of all the stakeholders of the project
		# Aim to build a personal relationship with the client
	Kick-off	# Build a safe space that allows people to be open and direct with their opinions
		# Communicate your intentions regarding the project openly and honestly
		# Prioritize establishing a mutual and precise understanding for yourself and the client
		# Creating trust by adopting client's language to align meanings
		# Share your interpretations back to the client
		# Maintaining a consistent communication language
		# Plan with room for change and accept changes to your decisions
		# Take ownership of the project
		# Set boundaries and demarcate responsibilities with the client
		# Give the client a structure of the project process

4.3.2 Develop Trust

The develop phase was mapped across the creative problem solving process, problem definition, idea generation and selection and idea improvement. Trust building actions were identified for each of these phases, contributing in trust development through the design project. The trust building actions take shape based on the characteristics of the project phase.

Develop Trust		#Following through with kept promises and fulfilling expectations
		# Admit mistakes truthfully and create an action plan to rectify it
	Problem Definition	# Grab opportunities for frequent meaningful and collaborative engagements with the client
		# Have regular check-in moments
		# Maintain a consistent and standardized workflow for achieving project expectations
		# Argument decisions properly
		# Using methods and tools to create a shared mental model
		# Be transparent in communication and disclose information in an effective format
		# Articulate negative decisions in a constructive manner and deliver assertively
		# Be the guiding partner who regularly assures the end goal for the client
		# Be open to feedback through constructive dialogue to create change
		# Take the client's perspectives to consideration and empathize with their problems
		# Explore specific expectations in detail as the relationship develops
		# Keep a flexible work approach to accommodate for new change
		# Keep other stakeholders of the client's organization informed in a timely fashion
	Idea generation and selection	# Grab opportunities for frequent meaningful and collaborative engagements with the client
		# Using methods and tools to create a shared mental model
		# Be open to feedback through constructive dialogue to create change
		# Boost client's confidence on the consultancy through positive enforcements
		# Regularly review past successes to reassure the trustor and reaffirm that the project is progressing smoothly
		# Making an idea or concept tangible for the client
	Idea improvement	# Argument decisions properly
		# Adapt yourself and the work to fit to the client's vocabulary
		# Be transparent in communication and disclose information in an effective format
		# Keep concrete standards of delivery to achieve quality results

4.3.3 Maintain Trust

The maintain trust phase has been divided into maintaining trust at the ned of the project and after the project. The trust building actions defined for the end of the project helps consultants maintain the relationships longer if those actions are done. The actions for building trust after the project helps to maintain contact with the client long after project completion.

Maintain Trust	End of the project	# End the project on a positive note through informal engagement
		# Create a positive perception of the reporting client
		# Involve and update other stakeholders in an effective manner
	v	# Sharing information that would interest them post project completion
		# Be open to assisting them for future endeavours
		# Keep in touch by following up with implementation updates

4.3.4 Highlighting the aspects of trust in Design

The research findings offer insights that have potential applications beyond their immediate context. However, specific findings that underscore the role of design consultancies and the strengths inherent in design processes are outlined below:

Structured Project Approach
Designers often rely on intuitive processes, which may lack formal structures or processes. This is much likely with experienced designers, while possessing a wealth of intuition, might overlook structured methodologies. Adopting a process-oriented approach, even if designers don't strictly adhere to it in their work, imparts clarity and direction to clients. Embedding this approach makes the project's trajectory more tangible and understandable for clients.

Collaborative Frameworks:
Numerous design methodologies emphasize collaboration with clients. Approaches such as generative sessions and co-creation promote collaborative workstyles, enhancing dialogue frequency and creating informal trust-building opportunities.

Visual Communication as Persuasion:
Design consultants and designers leverage visual communication, facilitating swift comprehension for clients. This approach visually illustrates concepts before asserting them, streamlining understanding and facilitating buy-in from client.

Empathy and Client Relations:
Designers are adept at cultivating empathy with customers, a skill that can extends to responsiveness, care, and concern towards clients. This empathetic stance nurtures positive client relationships, fostering a trusting environment.

Effective Methodology Utilization:
Design methods inherently contribute to trust-building. These methods provide implicit structures that guide progress. Design's plethora of methods and tools bolsters its resourcefulness and enhances its applicability to diverse projects.Using such methods allows for designers and clients to explore creatively while simultaneously constraining with client metrics and method guidelines.

4.4 Establishing a trust building journey

From the insights of the three analysis sections, general insights, driving factors and trust building actions, a trust building journey is generated. This section elaborates each part of the journey more broadly.

4.4.1 Trust Internalization

The three steps of trust internalization is derived from the general findings of the research. When done, they hold a strong foundation in trust building with clients for any external parties

Identifying your personality/
working relationship strength

Trust in your
organization and peers

Trust in yourself

Trust yourself
Trusting yourself involves having confidence in your abilities, judgments, and characteristics. It means believing in your capabilities and having faith in your own competence. Trusting yourself is essential for personal growth and success as it allows you to take risks, make important choices, and navigate challenges with self-assurance.
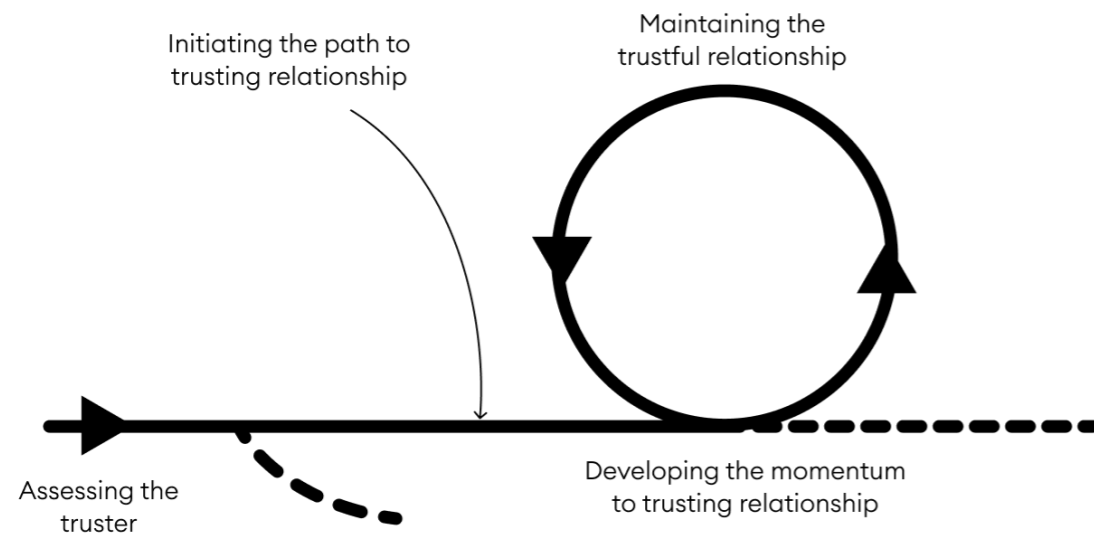
Trust your context
Trusting your context refers to having confidence in the environment, situation, or circumstances in which you find yourself. It involves recognizing the reliability and predictability of the context and believing that it will support your endeavours. Trusting your context allows you to feel secure and comfortable, enabling you to focus on your goals and tasks without unnecessary doubts or distractions. It involves understanding the dynamics and resources available within your context and leveraging them to your advantage.

Identifying your personality/ working strength
Identifying your potential involves recognizing your unique strengths, talents, and capabilities. It requires self-reflection and self-awareness to understand your areas of expertise and areas where you have the potential for growth. Once you have identified your potential, the next step is to actively work on strengthening and developing those aspects. This can involve seeking opportunities for learning, honing your skills, and acquiring new knowledge. By investing in your potential and continuously improving yourself, you can maximize your abilities and unlock new opportunities for personal and professional success.

Quote from Participant 7
I had a conversation with our head of people a couple of days ago talking about kind of having confidence for us, you know, as consultants going out in the world and really kind of portraying confidence and she's she asked me do you think it's like an age and experience thing? And I said I really don't think that that's the case per se. I think it's about modelling.

4.4.2 Trust Externalization

This step wise approach is developed from the trust building template that combines the literature of the three trust building models in Chapter 2.

Maintaining the
trustful relationship

Initiating the path to
trusting relationship

Assessing the
truster

Developing the momentum
to trusting relationship

Assessing the trustor

Assessing the trustor involves evaluating their level of trustworthiness and credibility of the individual or entity. It requires examining their intentions, reliability, competence, and consistency in fulfilling commitments. Understanding the trustor's past behaviours, track record, and reputation can provide insights into their trustworthiness. By assessing the trustor, one can make informed decisions about the level of trust to place in them and the nature of the relationship to establish.

Developing a trusting relationship

Developing a trusting relationship is an ongoing process that involves strengthening and deepening the level of trust between individuals or entities over time. It requires consistent positive interactions, shared experiences, and mutual understanding. This phase involves nurturing trust through open and honest communication, demonstrating integrity, and delivering on commitments. Developing a trusting relationship involves building a sense of reliability, dependability, and shared values, which enhances the level of trust between the parties involved.

Initiating a trusting relationship

Initiating a trusting relationship involves the initial steps taken to establish trust between two parties. This phase often includes building rapport, open communication, and demonstrating credibility and reliability. It requires setting clear expectations, showing transparency, and engaging in trustworthy actions. Initiating a trusting relationship is crucial as it sets the foundation for further trust development and lays the groundwork for effective collaboration and cooperation.

Maintaining a trusting relationship

Retaining a trusting relationship focuses on maintaining and preserving the established trust between individuals or entities. It requires ongoing efforts to sustain trust through consistent behaviour, effective communication, and addressing any issues or concerns that may arise. Trust can be maintained by being responsive, demonstrating empathy, and continually reinforcing the trust established in the relationship. Retaining a trusting relationship involves being proactive in maintaining trust and addressing any potential threats or challenges that may jeopardize the trust developed over time.

4.5 Discussion

The rich insights derived from the analysis encompass trust-building across three levels: the driving factors, the actions for building trust, and the trust building journey. These three elements converge to address the question, «How do individuals from design consultancies build trust with their clients?»

Revisiting the challenges underscored in the Relevance chapter (Chapter 1), namely the novel approach of design in thinking, working, and communicating, the ensuing sections strive to establish a connection between the identified problem and the research outcomes. While the research insights do not entirely resolve the challenges faced by the design industry, they do offer a starting point for mitigating uncertainty for clients.

Design, as a fresh cognitive perspective, elucidates how designers' distinct thought processes can prove elusive for clients to grasp. Employing trust-building actions such as project structuring, effective communication methods, and comprehensive sharing of pertinent information–ranging from negative decisions to positive ones–can aid designers in conveying their thought patterns to clients. This approach empowers clients to comprehend the rationale behind pivotal choices, gain insight into the design process, and opt for heightened involvement in projects, thereby providing a glimpse into designers' cognitive landscape.

Furthermore, in terms of design as an innovative operational methodology characterized by a process-driven ethos, the insights are applied to a template that amalgamates the trust-building process with creative problem-solving. This furnishes designers with a structured modus operandi, not only for project advancement but also for cultivating relationships, consequently nurturing trust. Through the employment of these actions and the step-by-step trajectory outlined in the trust building journey, the dimension of trust is consciously illuminated and actively pursued.

Additionally, in the context of design as a novel mode of communication, grappling with the transmission of intuitive ideas, subjective nuances, and abstract concepts to clients becomes apparent. By proactively nurturing trust with clients, communication between the two parties can be fostered in a manner that adapts to the client's language and the designer's specialized terminology.

In the context of design consultancies, the project endeavors to explore how design consultants foster trust in their specialized domains. The research findings not only shed light on trust-building within the consultancy realm but also extend to the establishment of trust with any external entity.

By categorizing the diverse aspects that influence the formation of trust, a clearer understanding of the measures present or lacking in the realm of relationship building emerges.
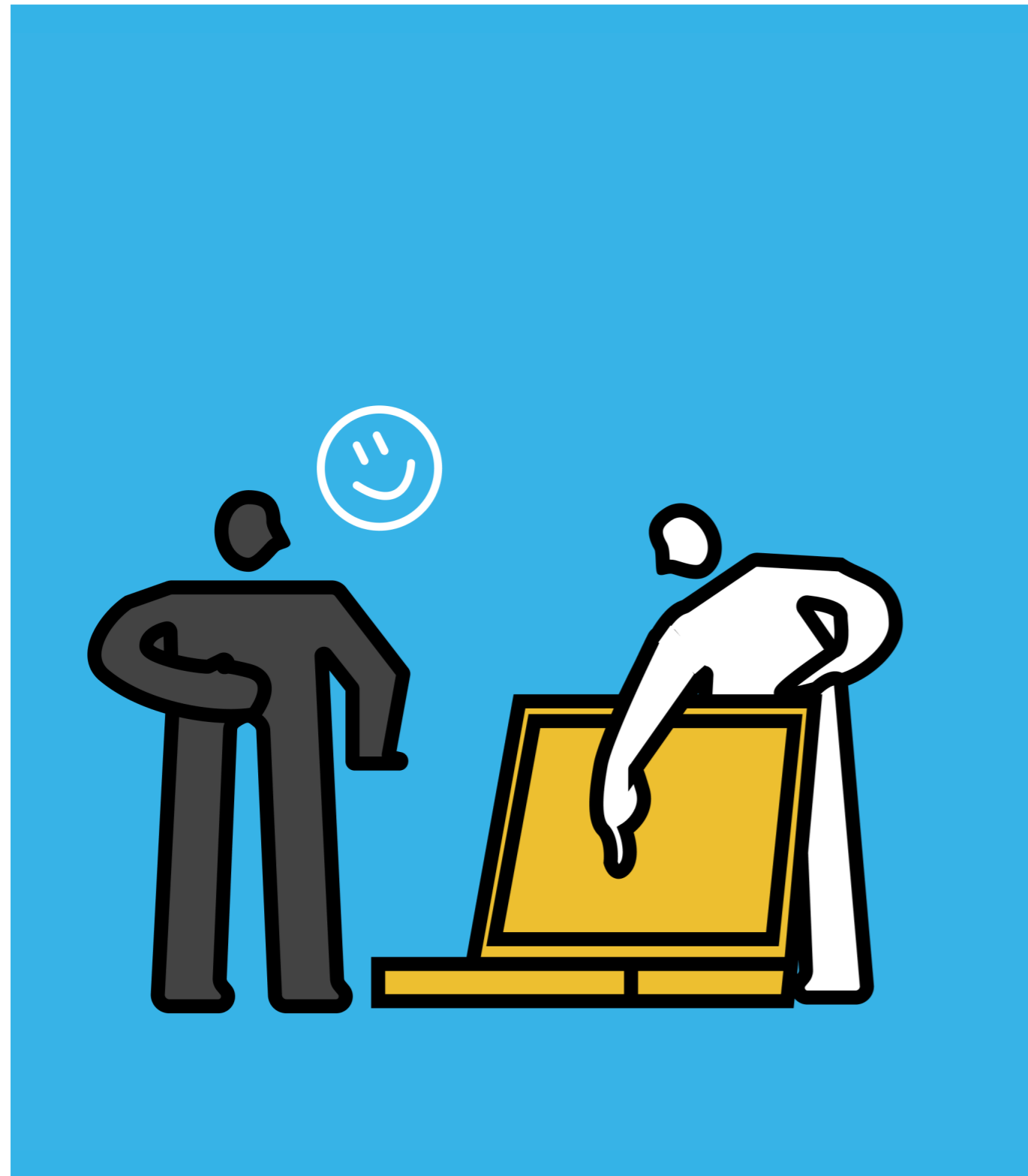
5.1 Research Applications

The findings from research; the driving factors, the trust-building actions, and the trust-building journey, combined and individually have the potential for different applications. Driving factors function on a superficial level, whereas trust-building actions in a more descriptive manner can define the relationship. Based on this reasoning, using the trust-building actions with the trust-building journey will be used for idea generation henceforth.

After brainstorming ideas on how the research can be translated to a design concept, one direction was picked. Considering the time for testing and the remainder time for the project, the research will be used for creating an intervention for learning.

Learning approaches can be constructed in a multitude of possibilties which will be covered in Chapter 6. Additionally, working towards building a learning approach will assess if trust-building can be classified as a skill one can acquire. Through this direction, other findings such as «superficial trust awareness» can be incorporated to test and for the individuals to learn to improve. This gives rise to the design direction, discussed in the next section 5.2.
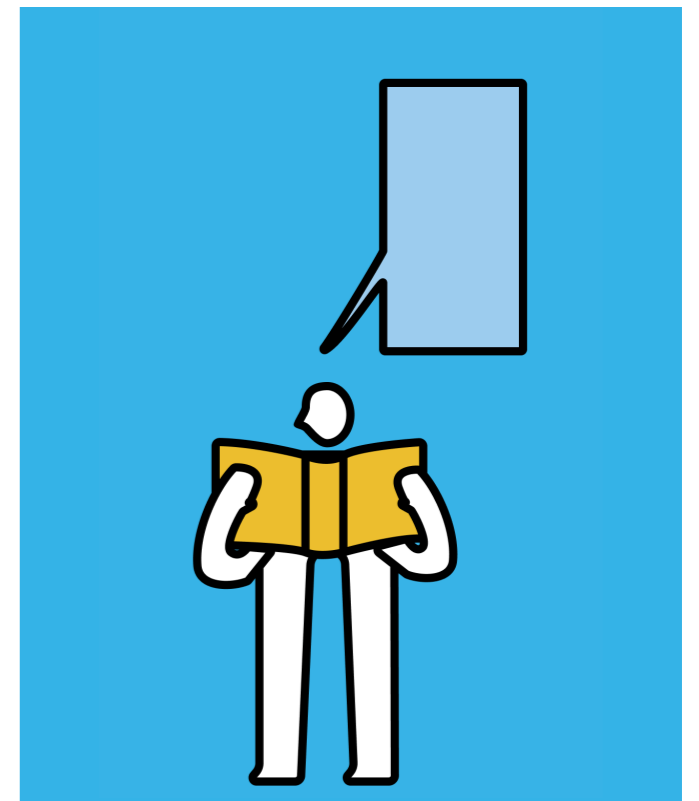
5.2 Design Direction

"How can individuals who want to work in this field empower themselves with the skill to build trust?"

Vision for the design direction

Trust building is a gradual process that requires years of experience, learning from trial and error, and adapting to various scenarios. Design consultants, as experienced practitioners, have acquired valuable insights through practical encounters and knowledge passed down from their seniors. While individuals who lack first-hand experience in the field may have some understanding of trust building, it is important to acknowledge that our knowledge is not definitive and can be subject to refinement.

Therefore, the objective of this design direction is to explore ways to enhance the skill of trust building. It involves investigating how individuals can learn effective trust-building strategies, discerning what approaches yield positive outcomes, and recognizing those that are less effective. By delving into these aspects, we aim to deepen our understanding of trust building and refine our abilities in cultivating trust with others.

Chapter 5 : Design Direction

This chapter seeks to establish a direction towards idea generation using the research gathered from interviews and theory. It establishes the potential applications and the selection of one of them

6.1 Learning Discourses

Since it involves a large portion of learning, it is necessary to identify learning andragogy as this helps establish the ideas from a broader sense. There are several learning discourses that are explored to define the solution artefacts.

Reflective Practice (Davis, 2023)

Reflective practice is the process of evaluating one's reactions, behaviours, interpretations, and motivations in order to improve effectiveness and learning. The metaphors of illumination and seeing can be used to describe it, which entails self-reflection. It can be thought of as a philosophy of self-teaching, and research has shown that it is beneficial in fostering greater understanding and better behaviour.

Directive Pedagogies (Davis, 2022)

The term «directive pedagogies» describes instructional strategies that involve delegating responsibility and authority from the teacher to the pupil. It is distinguished by a concentration on explicit knowledge, in which teaching is viewed as directing, and students are viewed as either recipients of that direction or direction-takers. The Directive Pedagogies, which emphasize issuing instructions and keeping order in the learning process, are strongly related to the concept of instruction. These associations are strengthened by the language itself, which frequently connects words like «straight» and «right angle» to positive meanings while giving words like «deviation» or «non-linearity» negative connotations.

Case-Based Learning (Davis, 2023)

The Case Method, sometimes referred to as the Case Study Method or Case-Based Learning, is a learner-centered methodology that is based on actual instances or scenarios. It entails presenting learners with factually accurate narratives or circumstances that encourage debate and inquiry. The objective is to encourage learners to think independently and to work together. Instead of beginning from scratch, the strategy places an emphasis on applying disciplinary knowledge to situational contexts. Before engaging with the cases, learners are introduced to important concepts, allowing them to investigate social and practical challenges.

Community of Practice (Davis, 2021)

A community of practice (CoP) is a gathering of people who work in a certain profession and join together to share information, skills, and experiences. It places a strong emphasis on the social co-participation necessary to maintain collective competence. CoP includes people who are collective apprentices and take part in a process of learning through apprenticeship. Within a CoP, mentoring is viewed as a type of instruction. It provides insights into social dynamics, formal and informal interactions, and induction tactics like apprenticeships.

Narrative-based approach: (Glaser, Garsoffky, & Schwan, 2009)

Narratives structure events: They make things plausible and connect them, and they also serve as parables and examples to make a point. Therefore, a person's sense of personal and cultural identity, as well as the production and building of memories, entail a personal narrative process. Additionally, using narratives can spread information, spark innovation, and effect change.

Choosing a learning discourse for development

Considering the extensive data collection and time constraints of the project, the narrative-based learning discourse was chosen as the most suitable approach. While other options may require additional processes and approaches, they remain viable alternatives that can be further explored within the given context. With the use of narratives in the structure of STAR (situation, task, action and reflection) the reader is able to get a sense of structure and objective to outcome. Narratives can also show the positives and negatives, cases that worked and did not work to enhance the learning breadth. The narratives were also easily accessible. Through this learning approach, the aim is to help people reflect on their own actions, and possibly be more mindful towards actions that can help build trust.

Choosing guidebook as artifact

Narratives can be represented in many ways, website, app, booklet, brochure to name a few. Since the trust dynamicity plays a huge role in trust awareness, the concept of representing in a guidebook was chosen.`

With the use of a guidebook, this vision can come to realization. The guidebook will be able to incorporate the nuances of trust, in terms of the process building, the driving factors and the trust building actions. This concept it further developed in the next section.

Chapter 6 : Possibilities

This section goes through the idea generation process for the trust building journey. The trust building journey can be used in multiple ways which are illustrated below. Further, the section will cover how the chosen direction can be represented

Chapter 7 : Intervention

This section demonstrates the concept and how it aligns with the theoretical and empirical findings. It explains the details of the concept and how an individual would use it. Further, this section will elaborate on the testing session and the iterations for the concept.

7.1 Vision for the guidebook

The vision for the guidebook is to cultivate awareness regarding trust, its underlying drivers, and effective strategies for building trust. It seeks to address the superficial nature of trust and establish a deeper understanding grounded in research findings. Furthermore, it aims to emphasize that trust should not be underestimated or treated casually, but rather approached as a deliberate and intentional process. The guidebook aims to empower individuals with knowledge and insights to foster meaningful and genuine trust in various contexts.

7.2 Guidebook concept

Taking the narrative-based learning approach, this guidebook was developed encapsulating different aspects about trust.

How it works?

The core of this concept revolves around a guidebook dedicated to cultivating trust-building. This guidebook systematically unfolds the trust building journey, offering a structured step-by-step process. Drawing inspiration from narrative-based learning, the guidebook embraces a storytelling approach. Each stage of the trust building journey is illuminated through real-life narratives, spotlighting the actions taken by diverse individuals. Organized into four distinct sections–trust awareness, trust within design consultancy, internalizing trust, and externalizing trust–the guidebook's initial three sections provide foundational insights essential for comprehending trust externalization. The final section seamlessly aligns the trust development process with the design process, exemplifying experienced professionals' narratives.

Ease of navigation characterizes the guidebook, as trust-building actions are prominently featured at the bottom of every page. This intuitive design empowers readers to swiftly grasp the narrative's essence, offering a rapid preview into the content's focal point.

7.3 Testing

The testing was conducted with six participants. All students with minimal experience in working with clients in a professional setting. They are looking to work in a consulting environment, where interactions with clients is pertinent and projects are conducted for them.

The evaluation was conducted as three parts. First evaluation was done to assess the participant's trust awareness before diving into the book. The evaluation form is attached in the Appendix. In the second phase, the participant was told to explore the guidebook. They were given the freedom to read narratives which they find interesting. After reading the guidebook, the participant filled out the evaluation form to assess the changes in understanding. The booklet was tested on two metrics, the effectiveness and the impact.

Effectiveness is measured to see if the intervention is able to achieve the objectives. The objectives set for testing effectives are listed below.
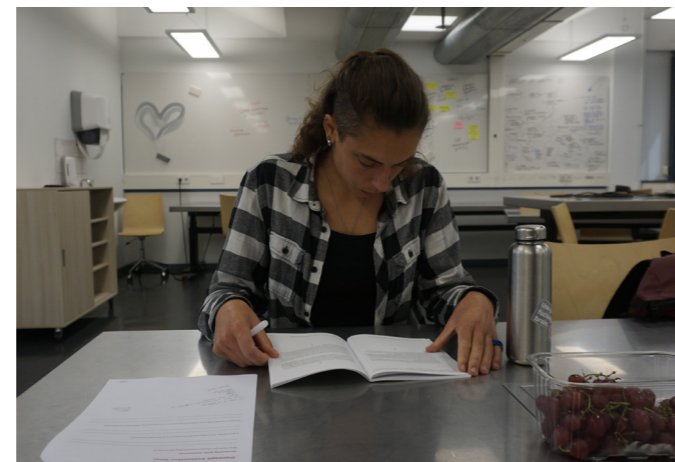1. Coherence of the content

2. Narrative based approach- The goal for narrative based approach is to help the reader reflect on their actions and be more mindful about it.
3. Flow of the guidebook- The narratives of the guidebook follows the flow that is interlinked between the design process and the trust building process.

Impact is measured to see what difference does the overall intervention make. These are assessed against the objectives listed below.
1. Better articulation of the topic: Through this guidebook intervention, the reader is able to articulate the topic better.
2. Trust awareness: Through this guidebook, the narratives and content should tap into the reader's inhibited ways of knowing how to build trust
3. Reflection towards personal challenges: The guidebook should help the reader reflect on their personal ways of working and some challenges they have seen.
4. Ability to change current practices

7.4 Findings and Iteration

The findings are presented below in relation to the objectives set for testing.

Effectiveness
1. Coherence of content: Simple stories and paragraphs written in conversational language helped the participants understand the content better. They were engaged with the content. Which really helped because the feedback given was also needed for identifying gaps in the flow of the booklet. All the participants were able to understand the content well, therefore this was not changed to great extent in the booklet.
2. Narrative based approach: The participants felt much more connected to the story because of its depth and richness. They were able to understand the trust building actions taken better when knowing the situation. It gave them a chance to relate to it.
3. Flow of the guidebook: The overall perception of the flow was positive, in terms of the narratives and how it follows the trust and design process. There was feedback given on having better sectioning or a table or content at the beginning that would help the person know what to expect. This has been incorporated into the final concept.

Impact
1. Better articulation of the topic: Participants felt the content helped them better articulate the topic. The participants felt the content and the topic was structured. Although it did not radically change their meaning and understanding towards the topic, they were able to pinpoint aspects better, thereby improving their articulation towards the topic. It brought out things they know to surface.
2. Trust awareness: All the participants were finding it difficult to articulate the meaning of trust. There was use of metaphors, analogies and even the use of the word 'trust' to describe the concept. All the meanings were subjective and unique to the person's experiences and relation to the concept. This shows how dynamic the nature of trust is and how important it is to address that there is no right or wrong in the definition. There was also a suggestion of showing fake trustworthiness and how honest should someone be.
3. Reflection towards personal challenges: Participants narrated a lot of their personal experiences when working in different settings. Although they were not from the consultancy-client setting, some of them told experiences that happened within their organization. It shows how the content of the book can be helpful in

many other contexts. In other cases, the trust building actions mentioned in the book helped the participant feel reassured. "When reading the book, I felt assured in many things I already know and do."
4. Ability to change current practices: The book was designed knowing that the participant would not be able to actively change their current ways of working and this is true from the findings. The biggest suggestion asked was to make actionable items in the guidebook. "How can they use the content now?" "What should they do about it?"

This was helpful to know as participants wanted to do something actionable about building trust with clients. Although this insight is super helpful, it should be done in another booklet or representation. This can be further looked into as it requires much more research which unfortunately does not fit into my project timeframe.

Changes to be implemented

Structural changes were incorporated into the booklet, for example, table of content, a better way to find what you are looking, better context at the beginning on what the book is about. Apart from these, the text that is in relation to the trust building actions are higlighted in the narrative to help the reader get a quick glance. For many participants, the section of trust internalization seemed preachy and did not feel rich enough to get something out of. This change will be incorporated into the final concept.

7.5 Final concept

This section focuses on establishing the details of the concept. It dives deep into the sections of the guidebook and shows elements of the guidebook.

The guidebook is designed for individuals looking to work in a consulting environment. This can include people as freelancers, consultants, entrepreneur etc. The guidebook is developed to be used for people primarily prior entering the field. But since the narratives extend from junior role experiences to senior role experiences, it can be used by people who are already working in the field. It holds nuances about relationship which is not limited to only one set of audience. The book is meant to be read for inspiration and just surface back the aspect of trust building and how it is important.

The guidebook is designed with experiences framed as narratives that follow the trust building process. It dictates experiences from many design consultants currently working in the field. Although they are not put into the guidebook verbatim.

The book aims to spread the meaning of trust with minimal amount of content. It shares stories that is easy to read and reflect with. The narrative tries to follow the STAR structure, situation, task, action, and result. It dives deep into the experiences not only from a positive situation but also negative ones.

The book takes the flow of the trust building journey created. It starts with trust awareness, then diving deeper into trust internalization and externalization. The externalization trust building follows the trust building process, initiate, develop, and maintain, that is closely interlinked with the design process.

Each section of the book will be elaborated in the following sections.


Trust awareness

The book commences by delving into the concept of trust awareness and its implications for individuals. It guides the reader through a comprehensive exploration of the essence of trust, elucidating its significance in various contexts. The section culminates by underscoring the notion that trust is not a singular achievement but an ongoing journey of development and maintenance.

Oftentimes, the significance of trust is relegated to the background of people's minds. This segment is strategically positioned to evoke contemplation on the subject within the reader. By prompting readers to contemplate their personal interpretations of trust, it encourages them to engage with the book while maintaining a keen focus on this pivotal theme.

Within the initial pages, the book addresses the pervasive issue of «lack of trust awareness» from a universal standpoint. It establishes a foundational understanding of trust, paving the way for a deeper exploration of its intricacies. Furthermore, the text expounds upon the dynamic nature of trust, shedding light on the gradual and evolving process of trust establishment.
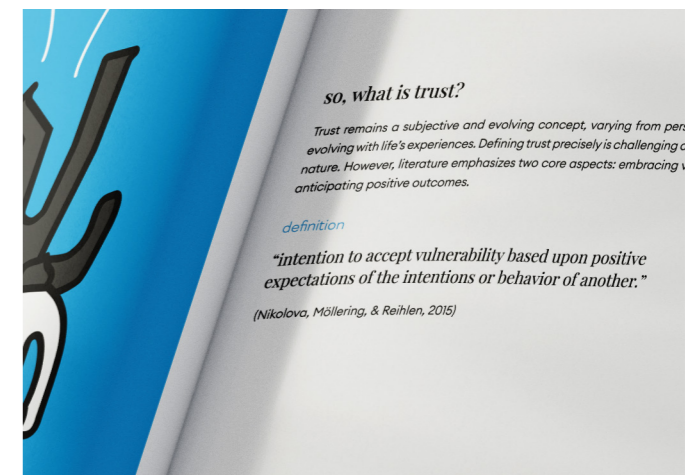
Trust in the context of building a relationship with clients.

Within this segment of the guidebook, it initiates a discussion about the context of design consultancy and its relationship with the client. It succinctly convey the trust-building journey and the key determinants derived from our research analysis by employing visual aids that illuminate the various dimensions of trust establishment. Concluding this section, it outlines the scope of the book, detailing its structure and providing a glimpse of what readers can anticipate from its contents.

Internalization of trust building

The concept of internalizing trust building underscores the notion that fostering robust external trust hinges upon a foundation of sturdy internal trust. Since trust internalization would been additional amounts of research, the topic is highlighted in a general sense.

Externalization of trust building

The process of externalizing trust building guides the user in approaching the establishment of trust with external entities, particularly in the context of engaging with clients. This process is broken down into four distinct steps: assessing the trustor, initiating the relationship, nurturing its development, and ultimately maintaining a trustworthy connection. Each section of this guide draws upon real-life scenarios, offering insights into various situations where individuals have navigated trust-building dynamics by taking specific actions. These actions are illuminated through engaging narratives, providing users with tangible examples of how trust was cultivated in practice.

The primary objective of this section is to provide a platform for users to learn through narratives, observe concrete actions undertaken, contemplate their own approaches, and make informed decisions about refining their client interactions. It's important to note that this section is not intended as a strict directive; rather, it acknowledges the flexibility inherent in addressing each unique situation. It encourages users to recognize the variability in their approach while considering what might be beneficial or suitable for their clients. This approach empowers users to engage in a trial-and-error process, discovering what strategies resonate most effectively within their own contexts.

7.6 Conclusion of the design

The guidebook's intervention aims to address the question, «How can aspiring individuals equip themselves with the skills to foster trust within this domain?» By formulating a trust building journey that immerses guidebook readers in the experiences of seasoned professionals within the design consulting sphere, the trust building journey effectively facilitates the discovery of inherent trust-building abilities.

The trust building journey is structured into four distinct sections, with each segment playing a pivotal role in honing an individual's aptitude for cultivating trustworthy relationships.

Through the implementation of this trust building journey, the significance of trust, a cornerstone in relationship development, is underscored during project undertakings. By seamlessly integrating the research findings into this trust building journey, a bridge is established between the academic and practical realms. This synergy aids individuals in their endeavors to actively nurture relationships founded on trust.

7.6.1 Placement of guidebook

The guidebook can hold a lot of importance when designed as a set of books. Starting from gaining an in-depth understanding about trust internalization to books that show actionable ways to build trust. These stages are defined from the findings gathered from testing.

Book 1: Trust internalization
The book can be collaborated with other authors to derive actionable ways to help people build trust with their own capabilities and intentions. There is much existing literature on this topic.
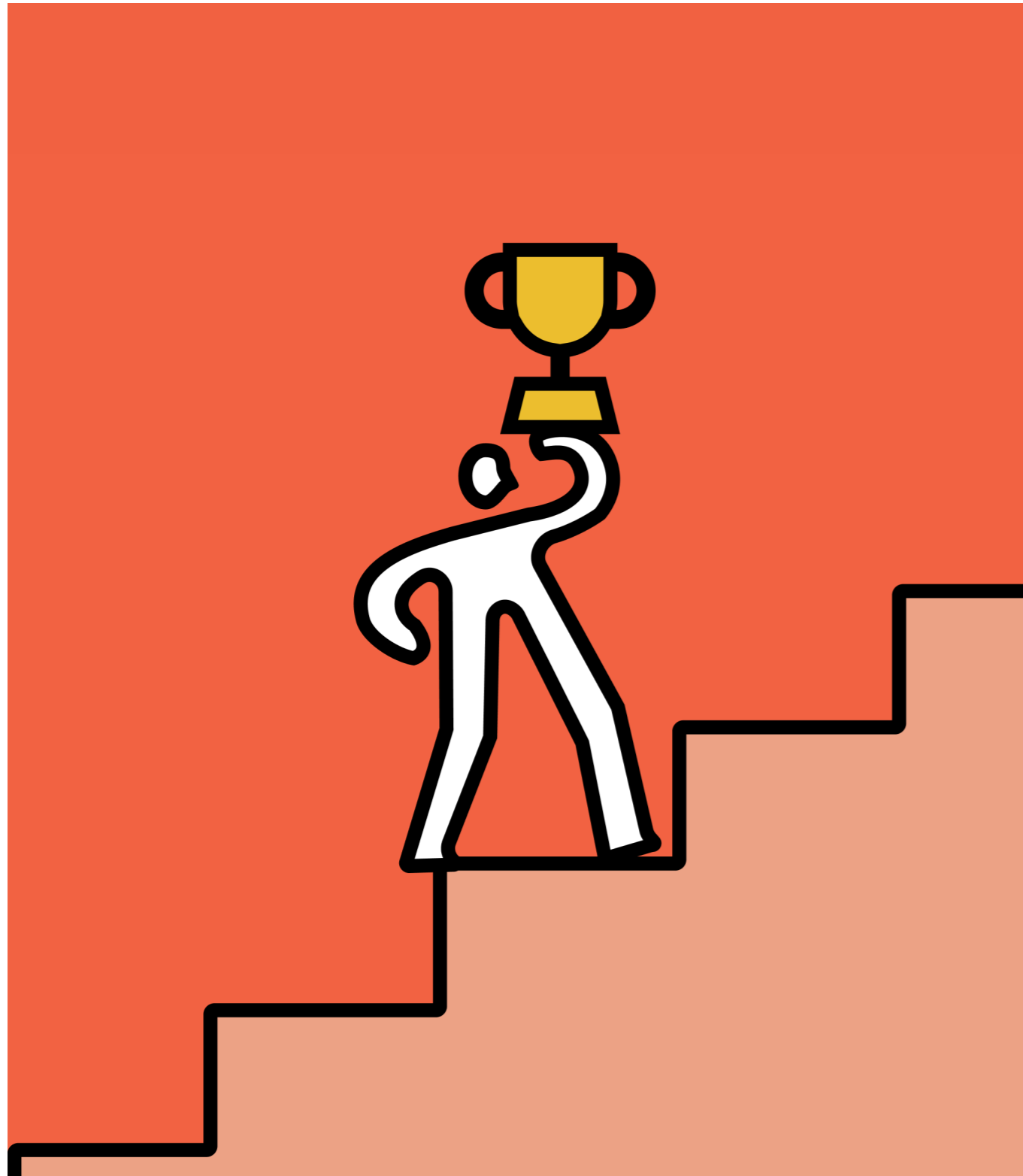
Book 2: Inspiration booklet for trust building with clients
The existing book designed as the concept for this project is this book

Book 3: Guidebook with actionable ways to build trust with clients.
It is a workbook that has ways someone can learn to build trust. The booklet will have approaches that helps someone initiate the trust building relationship with context they the reader is situated in. Starting from building trust with client from course project. The book will also have questions that help the reader ask themselves and be more introspective. The book can consist of worksheets that can be used by the trustor and trustee to assess the relationship and how using some actions it can be improved. It can show gaps and help the parties work together in resolving them.

The books can be made more gender-neutral and inclusive. It can cover aspects about cultural differences.

8.1 Conclusion

The project sought out to answer the question "How are design consultancies coping with building trust with clients amid the constant shift in design perceptions? " and scoping it further by seeing from the perspective from an individual level, that is the design consultant's level. The research question was answered by defining eight driving factors and many trust building actions identified from theory and empirical study.

Academic Relevance

The research conducted in this project contributes to the existing literature by introducing four aspects, general findings, driving factors, trust building actions and the trust formation journey. All these aspects are built upon theoretical findings and empirical research. The division of driving factors brings a holistic and a detailed way of looking into trust formation. The driving factors brings together different influencing aspects that plays a role in trust formation whereas, the trust building actions show the specific actions taken that are perceived for trust formation. All these findings are specific to the engagement between design consultancy and clients.

Management literature has not touched upon the trust formation between design consultancy and clients. Therefore, the findings from this project contributes to the academics of management consultancy related to the space of design. As mentioned earlier, the insights give a holistic and a detailed lens into trust formation in this space between both the parties. Although there are many similarities between the trust formation literature in management consultancy and design consultancy, this projects brings a new lens into trust formation towards the design process.

The design process is a complex process that is new in the form of working, thinking and communication. By drawing up the trust formation practices towards the design process, it contributes towards the academic relevance for design research. The design literature does not touch upon these aspects , as it only covers trust formation between users, technology and awareness towards design process.

Further, the research is scoped down to understanding this trust formation from an individual level but covering aspects from a team level and organization level. It addresses the multi-faceted complexity of trust formation by solving towards one level.

Practical Relevance

The research findings and the concept have provide for practical relevance to multiple stakeholders, the design consultancies, the individuals working in the organizations and the people who wish to work in such a setting.

Design consultancies for a long time now have been using the design process to develop propositions and guide clients. Although each organization follows a project approach that is unique to a client's project and a design process that is unique to the organization, the findings of this research up to an extent succeeds to investigate it. The research has incorporated how the general design process works, that is having a divergent and convergent approach to solving problems. Consequently, this research can be adapted to the more customized processes of the organizations. But for now, the research aims to give an overall picture of how trust building works for practice. It has aimed to formalize the trust building process, by making it structured, and articulated by defining them as driving factors and trust building actions.

For individuals working in this context of working with clients, the research gives a good baseline for individuals to assess their relationship with their clients. By having the aspect of trust, articulated and structured, identifying gaps in the relationship makes it easier. Further, the trust building actions offers a sort of action on how to resolve certain problems and gives insights into a best practice.

The concept designed as a learning approach for individuals wanting to work in this setting also shows the practical relevance of the subject. The guidebook being one of the applications of the research signifies the possibilities that can be developed. The guidebook offers the reader a view into the practices of experts in this domain. The research insight of how every individual knows how to build trust plays a significant role in the learning approach. The book aims to give the reader an insight into what works and what doesn't, thereby helping them reflect on their practice.

Finally, the research holds a value in solving for the larger issue, design ways of working and the increase in uncertainty for non-designers. The research findings shows ways in which a trustful relationship can be built. By taking a step back from just building awareness, which can be one-sided, building trust has a more collaborative understanding and belief in what is being done. It makes the relationship more strong and the ease to build awareness is increased. Through this research driven process, it not only provides value for building trust with clients but with anyone who needs to trust the design process, thereby fostering a space for more creativity and satisfaction towards work.

Chapter 8 : Conclusion

This section elaborates on conclusion with academic and practical relevance, and moves on to showcase the limitations and further research of this project. It ends with a personal reflection highlights my learnings and future ambitions.

8.2 Limitations and Further Research

Limitation of the empirical research

The empirical research conducted has not been able to incorporate the perspectives of clients as design consultancies have contracts or agreements for non-disclosure with clients.

Limitation of the trust building journey

The trust building journey was built based on the theoretical and empirical research, but it has not been validated by the design practioners in consultancy and with clients. Further the aspect of assessing the trustor, should be researched further to see how it can be done.

Further aspects of trust

The project currently touches upon the aspects of building trust, that is initiating, developing and maintaining. Although there are more aspects like mistrust, distrust, regaining trust when trust is broken that have not been covered. These aspects are not covered in the research for this project. Regaining trust once lost is also a major aspect that is not covered in the project. Certain circumstances can lead to losing trust and then having to regain it, which is can be an arduous process requiring more research.

Trust Internalization

Aspects like trusting yourself and trusting your context are important antecedents for building trust with someone else. These characteristics of trust were not researched in-depth as they remained out of project scope. Although the addressed parts in the trust building journey section and the concept guidebook, took a superficial level of information from the research. They can be addressed further by identifying relational signals, that is actions that can dictate this trust characterization.

Applications of research findings

The research findings can be used in multiple ways, as illustrated in the section of concept development. One of the applications was the guidebook concept as a learning approach to trust building. These findings can be used for other applications like assessing existing relationships to identify the gaps using the driving factors or having an action-based training model to help people build better relationship.

Other possibilities of the design concept

The concept only takes form in one aspect that is the narrative based book for reflective learning. But it can take a more prescriptive approach where the outcome can be directive or action based learning. Other possible ways in designing the learning approach were discussed in the Possibilities chapter of the book.

Trust from a deeper context level

The research for the project is conducted with participants working in companies or with clients based in the Netherlands. Therefore, the need to address cultural differences in defining the trust building actions has not been essential. Further research can take this subject deeper into a specific context such as a geographical location that identifies cultural differences in the design consultancies' ways of working. Many of the driving factors and the trust building actions can be extrapolated to some degree. This should be further researched and modified based on the context related findings. This research also does not address trust formation based on core-identity based factors in detail. Perception of gender, neuro-divergent groups and other abled groups of people can affect trust formation. To build a trustful relationship, one needs to address the power dynamics of a relationship. Although briefly mentioned in the project about establishing boundaries, acknowledging expertise and demarcating responsibilities seem to build upon literature from trust and power. Understanding how the power an status between the client team and the consultancy team, from a team and an individual level should be researched further.

Trust in other settings

Trust can be seen in the field of design as trust with customers, trust with technology. Other interactions pertaining to the design field can be researched, designer as a manager and building trust within organization, designer as a facilitator building trust with participants, designer working with users, in several domains like human-computer research, qualitative research etc. Moreover, emergence of new fields of design, and ways of working; how building trust towards design in one area can influence for the other fields of design.

Recommendation to design education

Trust as a subject has been taken with little regard in design education. The acknowledgement of the challenges design possesses is not evidently considered. This lack of acknowledgement can be seen when designers move from academia to practice, where there is a steep learning curve on not just what is possible but also how interactions with clients are. Design concepts as the outcome from academia are rarely implemented leading to wider gap in the level of understanding. Designers learning to build trust plays a crucial role in communicating ourselves, showing our impact and reducing the gap between academia and practice.

8.3 Personal Reflection

Before initiating my graduation project, I set some expectations for myself personally and for the project. In retrospect, I can now appreciate the significant growth I underwent and realizing my path to success.

Project Reflection

I aim to bring in a holistic view of how a project can be tackled. From acquiring customer by building trust to improving brand credibility and retaining clients for long term relationships. I believed in seeing design from large aspects. A crucial aspect I have seen is how Strategic Product Design is a broad field with many abstract aspects, like research, the data gathering etc. It can cause uncertainty not just for others but for designers, and above all, myself. I grabbed this topic as it gives me a chance to see design from a new lens, where it can provide impact and how it can be trusted. Coupled with that, design gives less importance of how to work with clients as a stakeholder, how to communicate project and its impact. Moreover, design also fails to be involved in the implementation phase, in many cases, solving problems and not seeing how it evolved. To solve all these problems, I chose a topic that I felt could resolve these issues.

I took a research heavy topic as I love to dig deep into data and find the crux of information. This helped in improving my analysis and insights finding skills. The journey taught me not only to help others build trust, but also to trust myself. I was able to trust my process, my intuition, and my interests. All this trusting led me to interesting paths that I could not have imagined. Conflicting ideas and visions helped me judge nuances better and arrive to more informed decisions. I aimed to build an outcome that is academically produced, but it can be used in the professional settings. Although I failed to do so to a greater extent, it has a broader potential now on how it can be applied in different settings.

Overall, I am glad I took this topic up. It was super challenging and a tough journey to make sense of things. But I believed in my hard work and constant improvement to achieve the best.

Personal Reflection

Towards the last few months, I took more time to reflect and see what design meant to me. And I am proud to say that I have been able to combine what I believe into what I can showcase as my strength. After talking to many people, I was able to set a definition for myself. I covered this in my acknowledgement. Design is an integrator.

I took it upon myself to analyze how I function individually. Although I love working in areas that have constraints. I wanted to see how I can do this for myself. I improved myself in setting accountability for myself, time management and decision-making skills. I was able to improve my way of working independently. Further, I wanted to improve myself on more technical skills like graphic design, storytelling, and software skills.

Future Ambitions

The last two years shaped what I want to do in future. I want to be the integrator in the domains involving finance, like fintech, insurance, investments, mainly focusing on the psychology and behavioral aspects of money. I want to be the voice of change towards people to achieve financial independence and financial literacy in the third world countries like India. I want to see how to empower women to be more literate in financial management at homes, how to improve retirement plans or how to help people save better. I want to help corporations to focus on ESG investments, how to build propositions that are user centric and transparent. By owning my own design consultancy, I hope to make this dream comes true.
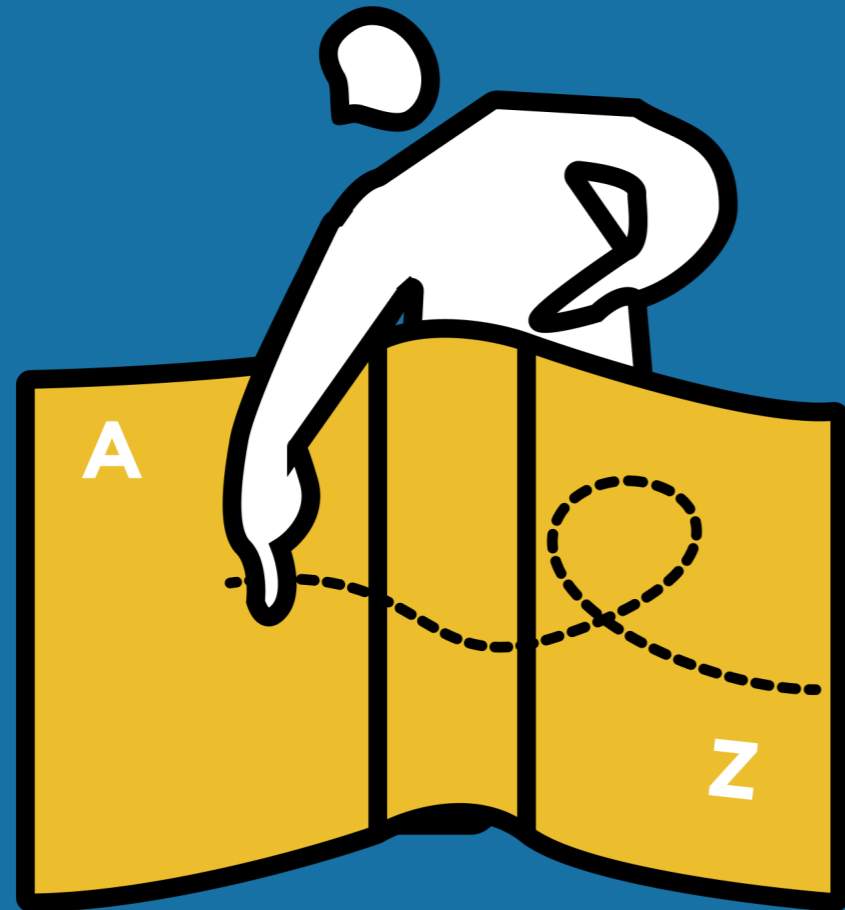
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Chapter 10 : Appendix