

Deo Leadership: How Design Executive Officers Lead Creative Organisations in Korea

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Design Executive Officers (DEOs) manage creative employees. It differs from prior leadership research in creative industries in three ways; it focused on DEOs, specified their influences on an organisational level, and discovered Korea-specific insights. We conducted in-depth interviews with the seven DEOs who have run their own design agencies for over ten years and hired more than 50 employees in Korea. Our thematic analysis of the 287 quotations collected revealed that 75% of the quotations fit the existing leadership framework and the remaining 25% are two unique attributes of DEO leadership: attitudes toward deeds and business growth. We further verified our thematic analysis by recruiting DEOs and conducting an online survey. Our findings contribute to the academic discussion on design-driven entrepreneurship by shedding light on the changing role of designers in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Keywords: design driven entrepreneurship, Design Executive Officers, leadership, creative industry, thematic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Creative industries are defined as “industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (DCMS, 2001). They include, for instance, advertising, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, research, and development (architecture, graphic design, fashion), and telecommunications. Note that “all these activities directly or indirectly produce cultural products and include commercial and artistic enterprises as well as public and non-profit organisations ... In any case, the underlying theme is creativity, even if it is not an element that identifies just one sector” (Lazzeretti et al., 2008). Since the products produced and services offered by creative industries involve substantial artistic or creative work, the “superstar effect” is often observed whereby a few highly performing people tend to dictate to their markets (Caves, 2000). Indeed, such people often play critical roles in the fates of organisations as leaders. Research has shown that their emotional intelligence stimulates team creativity (Rego et al., 2007), their tendency for exploration determines firm-level innovation performance (de Visser & Faems, 2015), and their ideational skills dictate entrepreneurial success (Ames & Runco, 2005).

Although we recognize the importance of leaders in creative industries, our understanding of their leadership remains plagued by ambiguity. As Rickards and Moger (Rickards & Moger,

2006) noted in their review of papers published between 1991 and 2000, “for many authors, leadership remains an implicit factor”. As its definition is ambiguous, leadership is difficult to teach and nurture. In a survey of 1,337 creativity management trainers from 19 countries, most respondents “lacked trainable skills that are essential for encouraging workplace creativity” (Epstein et al., 2013). There is “emerging acknowledgement in higher education that a significant training gap exists in the teaching of ... leadership skill sets for ‘creatives”” (Thomas et al., 2014, p. 425).

We contend that the definition of leadership lacks clarity because researchers’ views of leadership are relatively constrained by activities (Burns, 1978; Hemphill & Coons, 1957). While more recent work has framed leadership as a process (G. A. Yukl, 2013), researchers have rarely adopted this perspective (James & Lahti, 2011; Moultrie & Young, 2009; Sternberg et al., 2004). In the present research, we aimed to revitalize research on the topic of leadership in the creative industries by applying a process-based approach which encompasses the characteristics of leaders, the behaviours that they engage in to have an impact on environmental contexts, and the outcomes of their behaviours. In particular, we applied this approach to our in-depth interview data collected from design CEOs or so-called Design Executive Officers (DEOs).

Our research will contribute to the academic discussion on design driven entrepreneurship by emphasizing the changing role of designers in the entrepreneurial landscape. Although the role of designers shifts from being creatives and service providers to becoming founders, prior studies on design leadership primarily focused on how non-design leaders apply design tasks for their projects (Lima & Sangiorgi, 2018; Maciver, 2016; Nam & Jung, 2008) or initiate design activities for their organizations (Giudice & Ireland, 2013; Gloppen, 2009; Jevnaker, 2000). We shed light on how DEOs go beyond design by mapping the interview data on the process-based leadership model. It elaborates why and when some designers started their own businesses in the past, how they are managing creative employees in the present, and what will be the expected outcomes of their management in the future. Our careful attempt to understand DEOs will benefit the academic discussion on entrepreneurship as well because designers have a lot in common with entrepreneurs since they both are requested to address complex problems creatively (O’Grady, 2012).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Process-Based Leadership Model

Traditionally, leadership has been viewed as a set of activities individuals need to engage in to direct followers’ activities towards shared goals (Burns, 1978; Hemphill & Coons, 1957). In contrast, nowadays, leadership is often viewed as a process. For example, studies have defined leadership as “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement” (Rauch & Behling, 1984), “a process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose” (Jacobs & Jaques, 1990), and “the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and be committed” (Drath & Palus, 1994), p. 4). Among the most recent and comprehensive definitions, leadership is described as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted over other people to guide, structure and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organisation” (G. A. Yukl, 2013).

Prior studies of leadership in the creative industries, however, have rarely utilized process-based approach. Instead, researchers have tended to focus on one of many aspects of leadership or develop their own leadership models. Therefore, some researchers have investigated the impacts of different levels of leaders on organisational performance (James & Lahti, 2011) and applied a creativity model (Moultrie & Young, 2009). Others have developed new models by asking leaders about the degree to which they accept existing ways of doing things, challenge existing ways of doing things, and synthesize different, existing ways of doing things (Sternberg et al., 2004).

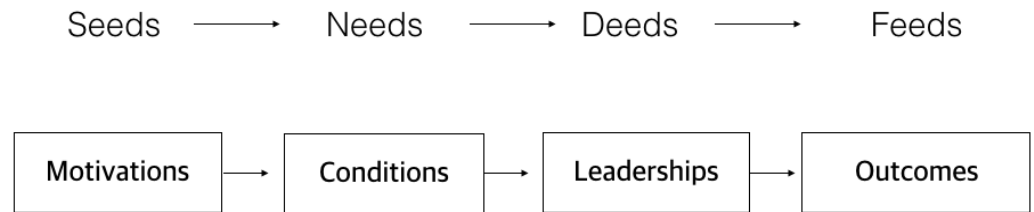


Figure 1. SNDF model (Adapted from Baek, 2005)

In order to adopt a process-based approach, we borrowed a comprehensive leadership model which consists of seeds, needs, deeds, and feeds (henceforth the SNDF model) (Baek, 2005). This model is based on the grounded theory method, a method of constructing a theory inductively by following a certain procedure based on specific data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). According to grounded theory, reality is defined as a process that changes in the constant interaction between people and environments. Therefore, researchers who use the grounded theory method first extract processes, phases, and decisive moments of various events developed around a person and then understand how relationships between key components are formed and transformed (Morse, Stern, Corbin, & Bowers, 2009).

When researchers relied on the grounded theory method to develop a novel leadership theory, they often converted its six key components (cause, context, condition, action, consequence, and covariance) to four components of the SNDF model (seeds, needs, deeds, and feeds) (Kan and Parry 2004). To elaborate, seeds are the motivations of individual leaders, needs are the environmental conditions which influence leaders, deeds are the behaviours that leaders demonstrate, and feeds are the outcomes of leaders' behaviours. The SNDF model is a process-based leadership model because it accounts for the antecedents and consequences of a leader's behaviour. That is, when there is a cause that stimulates a specific behaviour of a leader, it induces a specific leadership behaviour to respond to it, which produces direct or indirect outcomes.

Several researchers have applied the SNDF model to provide fresh perspectives with leadership researchers. Mumford & Van Doorn (2001) introduced pragmatic leadership by extracting motivations, conditions, and outcomes of ten leadership cases centred on Benjamin Franklin in the United States. Wittington et al. (2005) developed legendary leadership by studying how Paul's spiritual actions spread to early Christian followers and how the followers turned to legendary leaders. The authors examined the contents of "1 Thessalonians" and summarized seeds such as innocent motivation, needs such as boldness in opposition, deeds such as influencing others, and feeds such as changing one's life. Bligh and Hess (2007) proposed delicate leadership by studying the relationship between economic situation and the corresponding communication behaviours of Alan Greenspan.

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1.2. Three Limitations of Prior Leadership Research in Creative Industries

Although leaders in the creative industries have been discussed extensively, prior research has three critical limitations. First, prior studies have little studied CEOs but focused on project leaders. For example, researchers interviewed 50 project leaders in German institutions shortlisted for awards for their innovative products to understand R&D leadership (Grosse, 2007). Another R&D leadership study was also based on the 84 interviews with group leaders and group members at universities and biotechnical companies (Hemlin, 2009). This is not different in design research. Researchers interviewed team leaders or collected data from project leaders in design industries (Arnott, 2006; Gloppen, 2012; Lee & Cassidy, 2007). However, attention needs to be paid to CEOs as they play critical roles in creative industries.

Second, prior studies have paid attention to design tasks or design activities and ignored the impact of designers on the overall organisation. Design leadership has been discussed in terms of the design tasks which contribute to a specific business project (Lima & Sangiorgi, 2018; Maciver, 2016; Nam & Jung, 2008) or the design activities which benefit organisations at a strategic level (Giudice & Ireland, 2013; Gloppen, 2009; Jevnaker, 2000). However, DEOs will influence their organisations as a whole as CEOs are known to have a “substantial impact on the climate for creativity” (Byrne et al., 2009, p. 264).

Third, prior studies have focused on various countries, including Sweden, Germany, the UK, the UAE, China, and Taiwan; however, they have ignored Korea. Researchers conducted 84 semi-structured, oral interviews in Sweden to explore R&D leadership in bio-technology (Hemlin, 2009). Other researchers examined R&D project leadership by conducting interviews with 50 R&D project leaders working at German institutions (Grosse, 2007). Another study based in the UK administered surveys to ten firms and then conducted interviews with five firms to examine organisational creativity in firms within the creative industries (Moultrie & Young, 2009). Similarly, researchers conducted a large-scale survey of firms in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to study the role of entrepreneurial creativity (Dayan et al., 2013). In Asia, meanwhile, one study examined entrepreneur leadership by collecting data from 168 ventures in China (Huang et al., 2014). According to a study by House and Aditya (1997), about 90% of the leadership publications are published in the US and other English-speaking countries. Also, most leadership theories published by Western scholars have been used as a backbone of research. Although this is not a problem from a universal cultural perspective (epic), it is a problem from a cultural specialist perspective (emic) (McCall, Jr., 2001). In other words, the introduction and application of theories of different cultures as they can cause the problem of under-representation by not considering the cultural specificity of one country. For example, in the case of transformative leadership theory (Bass, 1987), the role of passionate leadership behavior (Paik et al., 2010) is not important in the West but highly important in Korea. In recent years, leadership research based on such cultural specificity has attracted the attention of scholars from various countries (Shin, 1997; Pittinsky & Zhou, 2005; Baek et al., 2010).

In sum, prior studies have focused on project leaders, design activities and tasks, and western countries. In order to advance the academic discussion of leadership in creative industries, we aim to fill these gaps by (1) conducting interviews with DEOs, (2) specifying their influences on organisational level, and (3) discovering Korea-specific insights. In addition, With the rise of digital technology, designers have emerged as strategic leaders in shaping organisational

policies and driving business success (Muratovski, 2015). Companies like IBM, Coca-Cola etc. have sought to establish an in-house design team at a strategic level to bring innovation spirit, and they need to understand how designers will be managed to make them generate innovation and infuse cultural dynamic (Michlewski, 2015). Thus, our research results help those companies manage their design teams and designers to change the organisational culture for innovation.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted mixed methods to validate interview findings through an online survey.

2.1. Interview Participant Recruitment

To study leadership for medium-sized design companies is rare because design companies are skewed towards micro-firms (Vaccaro et al., 2012). In total, 99% of design consulting agencies in the UK employ fewer than 50 people, failing to meet the requirement for the Small-Medium Enterprise (SME) category (Krake, 2005). Indeed, majority of the design companies in the UK employ fewer than nine people (Design Council, 2022). A similar pattern is observed in Korea. The average number of total employees of a design company is 4.97 and the average number of designers working at a design company is 3.15. Note that 4.5% of the Korean design companies employ more than 15 people and only 1.7% employ more than 15 designers (KIDP, 2019). According to the 2022 Korea Institute of Design Promotion report on design industry statistics in Korea, out of 19,456 businesses specializing in design, as recorded in the 2020 Economic Census, only 26 companies employing over 50 individuals were identified (KIDP, 2022). Further, the survival rate of Korean start-ups in their fifth year is 29.2%, which is far below the average survival rate of the start-ups in major OECD countries, 58.3% (Korea SMEs and Start-ups Institute, 2021). These numbers suggest that there are only few entrepreneurs and designers who survive in the market.

We contacted the designers who founded their own design consulting companies, survived over ten years, and hired more than 50 employees at the moment, suggesting that they run medium-sized companies (Krake, 2005). Since there are only few candidates who met our research criteria, we used a purposive sampling method to recruit participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We contacted candidates by email and informed them about the purpose of interviews. In total, seven DEOs accepted our interview requests for academic research (see Table 1).

Table 1: Founding Years and Number of Employees for the seven Companies

Company	Founding years	Numbers of employees	Final education background	Degree	Birth year
A	2008	60	Industrial design	Bachelor	1975
B	2001	150	Graphic design	Master	1972
C	2002	55	Graphic design	Master	1969
D	2000	80	Graphic design	Bachelor	1977
E	2003	60	Graphic design	Bachelor	1973
F	2000	70	Design management	Master	1970

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Company	Founding years	Numbers of employees	Final education background	Degree	Birth year
G	2000	60	Communication Planning & design	Master	1968

We carried out multiple interviews with the seven DEOs from January to December in 2015. Each interview was held at each one's office, lasted between 70 and 107 minutes, and was fully recorded. We conducted semi-structured interviews using a standard list of questions following the SNDF leadership model. We sometimes asked additional open-ended questions to learn their experiences deeply and empathize their feelings.

2.2. Interview Data Analysis

When we analysed our recorded interviews, we applied the following six phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

1. We transcribed the interviews and read and re-read them to become familiar with the content.
2. We coded the content following the inductive and deductive ways. We firstly open-coded each content to derive themes by applying an inductive approach and then categorized coded content following our proposed motivations-conditions-leaderships-outcomes (MCLO) model, which is a clearer version of the SNDF model.
3. We clustered coded quotations into themes.
4. We reviewed every single coded quotation in each theme and applied axial coding to merge or split any given coded quotation to develop convincing themes.
5. We refined core ideas and specified stories for each theme and unified multiple themes into one.
6. We reported the findings in Tables 2 and 3.

2.3. Online Survey Process

To verify the themes by survey, the first-order themes were changed into questions (See Table 4 and 5), and 7-point Likert scale was used. Regarding participant recruitment, we contacted CEOs with design backgrounds who either ran their own companies more than 10 years or hired more than 50 employees. Note that there are very few CEOs who satisfied both criteria (running business over 10 years and hiring more than 50 employees), as indicated in 3.1. Since it is hard to have a list of companies which meet the criteria, we used snowball sampling: we directly contacted and asked the CEOs who meet the criteria whether they were willing to participate in the survey and they would love to refer to the other CEOs for the survey. As a result, 24 CEOs participated in the survey. Among the whole twenty-four participants, two participants were excluded because they failed to meet any of the two conditions.

Table 2: 214 quotations belonging to the existing SNDF leadership model

Thematic area	Second-order theme	First-order theme	Further categorization	Number of CEOs who give quotations	Number of quotations
Motivations (MO)	1. Internal motivations	A. Negative experience of a previous workplace	- as an employee - as a team leader	4	5
		B. Aspiration to run one's own business		4	6
	2. External motivations	A. Sudden closure of a previous workplace	- close down - down-size	2	3
		B. Continuous demands from previous work		1	1
Conditions (CO)	1. Macro conditions (global)	A. Technology	- design outcome - design process	5	9
		B. Market	- Domestic market shrinks while Chinese market expands - changing IT industry	4	9
	2. Micro conditions (Korea)	A. Lack of autonomy	-	3	5
		B. Demanding requests	-	3	4
Leaderships (LE)	1. Transformational leadership	A. Necessity of a vision	- agree - disagree	6	10
		B. Ways to communicate a vision	- direct - indirect	7	22
	2. Transactional leadership	A. Necessity of evaluation	- agree - disagree	7	13
		B. Ways to reward or punish	- monetary - non-monetary	7	31
	3. Empowering leadership	A. Project empowerment	-	6	20
	4. Directive leadership	B. Project direction	-	2	9
Outcomes (OU)	1. Organizational outcomes	A. Organizational structure	- internal flexibility - external collaboration	4	10
		B. Organizational constitution	- short-term, small - long-term, big	6	13
	2. Cultural outcomes	A. Bottom-up culture	-	6	35
		B. Top-down culture	-	3	9

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Table 3: 73 quotations which do not belong to the existing SNDF leadership model

Thematic area	Second-order theme	First-order theme	Further categorization	Number of CEOs who give quotations	Number of quotations
Attitudes towards leaderships (AT)	1. Employee-centred operations	A. Employee-friendly spatial arrangement	-	3	5
		B. Employee's capability building	- positive - negative	4	9
		C. Responsive actions based on understanding of employees	-	5	13
	2. Self-role definition	A. Underrepresented roles	- Servant - Role model	4	7
		B. Proactive roles	- Enabler - Integrator	5	6
Business growth (BG)	1. Success factors	A. Intuitive-oriented approach: Gut feeling	-	6	14
		B. High quality control	-	3	4
	2. Ways of business expansion	A. Business for production	-	2	4
		B. Business for own brands	-	5	6
		C. Continued growth of the original company	-	2	4

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

We obtained 287 quotations in total. Among them, 214 quotations (75%) fit the MCLO model, encompassing four thematic areas, nine first-order themes, and 18 second-order themes. The remaining 73 quotations (25%) did not fit the MCLO model. They represented two thematic areas, four first-order themes, and ten second-order themes.

3.1. Themes Fitting the Existing MCLO Model

DEOs highlighted two motivations, which led them to found their own design companies (MO). Along with their motivations, they described two conditions surrounding their businesses (CO). They also mentioned diverse activities which can be categorized into three leadership styles (LE). Finally, their activities produced two outcomes (OU). Each component is elaborated in the following.

3.2. Motivations (MO: 15 Quotations)

A wide range of leadership studies have discussed motivation as a key factor of leadership behaviour (Barbutto, 2005). Internal motivations including episodic memory often end up transformational behaviour change and external motivations frequently function as the tipping points for CEOs trajectories towards founding their own companies (Burns, 1978; (Bass, 1999). We found that internal motivations were more frequently mentioned than external ones (11 vs 4). Some DEOs found their own companies following internal motivations such as pursuing their own designs or defying the organisational customs which were taken for granted. Others did so following external motivations such as taking care of the team members when previous companies closed businesses or answering the requests from new clients.

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3.3. Conditions (CO: 27 Quotations)

Conditions not only dictate leadership behaviours but also serve as mediating variables that influence leaders' performance (Hunt 1999; (G. Yukl, 1999). We found that conditions can be broken down into macro and micro ones, and the former were more frequently mentioned than the latter (18 vs 9). Macro conditions account for technology and global markets. Micro conditions elucidate Korea-specific client-agency relationships including a lack of autonomy or demanding requests.

3.4. Leadership Types (LE: 105 quotations)

Pearce and Sims (2002) classified leadership into four types. They are transformational, transactional, and empowering and directive leadership. We found transactional leadership (44) was the most frequently mentioned following transformational (32), empowering (20), and directive one (9).

Transformational Leadership - Transformational leadership results in growth, independence, and empowerment of followers ((Bass, 1985); (Dvir et al., 2002)). We found that DEOs preferred indirect to direct approaches when practising transformational leadership. Some DEOs legitimated their visions and tried to share the visions with, at least, a few employees. Other DEOs opposed to establish visions explicitly and instead dispersed them informally because, they believed, when visions were forced to be infused into organisations, their intended culture did not produce.

Transactional Leadership - The leaders who use transactional leadership often set up reward and penalty system in advance for highly performing and poorly performing employees (Barbuto, 2005). We found that DEOs preferred non-monetary reward to monetary one when employees performed highly. However, when employees performed poorly, DEOs rarely used any previously developed penalty system. Instead, DEOs had a private conversation with or warned them verbally to encourage them work harder.

Empowering Leadership & Directive Leadership - Empowering leadership is not laissez-faire leadership whereby leaders disregard supervisory duties and fail to guide subordinates (Bradford & Lippitt, 1945). Instead, an empowered employee "is self-motivated and believes in his or her ability to cope and perform successfully" (Kark & Chen, 2003), p. 246). In contrast, directive leadership involves "issuing instruction and commands and assigning goals" (Pearce & Sims, 2002, p. 174). It emphasizes task-oriented behaviours necessary to complete and deliver projects effectively (Bass, 1967). We found that except the two DEOs who practised directive leadership, the others believed that their employees are empowered and complete their tasks creatively.

3.5. Outcomes (OU: 67 quotations)

Research suggests that leaders seek to enhance innovation by "engaging employees' personal value systems" and "encouraging employees to think creatively" (Jung et al., 2003), p. 147). We found that DEOs preferred the culture developed by their employees (bottom-up) over the one enforced by organisational constitutions or structure (44 vs 23). They attempted to foster a bottom-up culture for organisational flexibility.

3.6. Themes That Do Not Fit the Existing MCLO Model

The quotations that did not fit the existing MCLC leadership model represent the unique attributes of DEO leadership. We divided them into two groups: attitudes towards leadership and business growth.

3.7. Attitudes Towards Leadership (AT: 40 quotations)

Designers tend to understand users deeply and they aim to interpret users' needs to produce tangible outcomes (Fraser, 2009). We found that DEOs considered their employees as users and deployed the organisational management strategies following this perspective. Employee-centred operations were mentioned more frequently than self-roles (27 vs 13), implying that DEOs paid attention to employees more than themselves. They responded to employees' needs with empathy; they not only applied employee-friendly spatial arrangements and responsive actions but also devised ways to grow employees' capabilities. They conducted these activities either passively or actively depending on their previous experience.

3.8. Business Growth (BG: 33 quotations)

We discovered that DEOs struggled with either how to survive or how to expand their businesses. Intuitive and gut-feeling-based survival were more frequently mentioned than analytic approach for expanding business (18 vs 15). Five DEOs either developed their own brands or manufactured new products to commercialize their own design ideas whereas two DEOs wanted to continue working in the same industries without having any interest in developing their own brands or new products.

4. VERIFICATION OF THEMES

In the descriptive analysis, the employees' mean in 22 cases is 65.32, and the company's operation period is 20 years. Among them, 12 companies deal with digital/multimedia and service/experience design, 7 companies cover spaces or product design with digital/multimedia and service/experience design, 2 companies focus only on visual design, and 1 company focuses only on product design.

Regarding themes under the existing SNDF leadership model (see Table 4), 3 themes in Motivations (MO) – 'negative experience of a previous workplace (MO-1-A)', 'sudden closure of a previous workplace (MO-2-A)' and 'continuous demands from previous work (MO-2-A)' – were less than 3.5 on average. On the other hand, regarding themes which do not belong to the existing SNDF leadership model (see Table 5), only one theme in Business growth (BG) – 'business for production (BG-2-A)' – was less than 3.5 on average. The other themes have been confirmed as generally relevant to DEOs.

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Table 4: Themes verification belonging to the existing SNDF leadership model

Thematic area	Second-order theme	Questions for first-order theme	Mean	SD	
Motivations (MO)	1. Internal motivations	A. I was motivated by the negative experience of my previous job to start a company.	3.23	2.31	
		B. My desire to run my own business motivated me to start a company.	5.59	2.09	
	2. External motivations	A. I was motivated by the sudden closure of my previous job.	1.77	1.90	
		B. I was motivated to start a company by ongoing projects or business requests from my previous job	2.09	1.77	
Conditions (CO)	1. Macro conditions (global)	A. Design outputs or processes that change with technological development affect the company's operations.	6.05	1.36	
		B. Growth in the size of the Chinese market or external changes in the IT industry are affecting the company's operations.	5.18	1.59	
	2. Micro conditions (Korea)	A. Lack of autonomy for projects commissioned in Korea affects the company's operation.	5.23	1.23	
		B. The tight schedule and excessive demands of projects commissioned in Korea are affecting the company's operation.	5.86	1.64	
Leaderships (LE)	1. Transformational leadership	A. As a leader, it is necessary to set up and share a vision to run a company.	6.05	1.53	
		B. As a leader, I directly communicate the company's vision rather than indirectly.	5.23	1.95	
	2. Transactional leadership	A. As a leader, I conduct employee evaluations to run the company.	5.59	1.53	
		B. As a leader, compensation or punishment for employee evaluation uses a monetary method, not indirectly.	5.32	1.46	
	3. Empowering leadership	A. As a leader, I empower staff to manage the project.	6.00	1.15	
	4. Directive leadership	B. As a leader, I give directions directly to the project.	4.50	1.90	
	Outcomes (OU)	1. Organizational outcomes	A. The company organization is well-organized for internal flexibility and collaboration.	5.91	1.38
			B. The company organization consists of a short-term/microscopic perspective.	3.63	1.62
2. Cultural outcomes		A. The company organization has a bottom-up culture.	4.05	1.13	
		B. The company organization has a top-down culture.	4.55	1.30	

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Table 5: Themes verification which do not belong to the existing SNDF leadership model

Thematic area	Second-order theme	Questions for first-order theme	Mean	SD
Attitudes towards leaderships (AT)	1. Employee-centred operations	A. Our company has an employee-friendly space configuration.	5.64	1.47
		B. Our company supports activities for the growth of employees' capabilities.	5.09	1.38
		C. Our company responds to the employee's understanding (willingness).	4.86	1.13
	2. Self-role definition	A. My role in the company is defined as an undisclosed role (e.g., a role model for volunteers or employees).	3.50	1.47
		B. My role in the company is defined as a revealed role (e.g., performer or active integrator).	4.86	1.67
Business growth (BG)	1. Success factors	A. My intuitive way was the root of our company's success.	5.32	1.29
		B. Maintaining a high level of work quality was the foundation of our company's success.	5.95	1.33
	2. Ways of business expansion	A. In the future, we will expand our business to manufacturing.	3.09	1.97
		B. In the future, our company will expand its business area with its brand.	5.09	2.04
		C. In the future, we will focus on the continuous growth of our current business rather than expanding our business sector.	4.73	1.75

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Although leaders play crucial roles in creative industries, their leadership has been rather vaguely understood because researchers considered leadership as activities in the past. In the present research, we viewed leadership as a process, borrowed the SNDF leadership model, and developed our own MCLLO model to understand leadership clearly and comprehensively. We also aimed to expand the academic discussion on design leadership. To achieve this goal, we (1) conducted interviews with DEOs, (2) specified their influences on an organisational level, and (3) discovered Korea-specific insights. Our analysis of the in-depth interviews with seven DEOs reveal that 75% of the quotations belonged to the MCLLO model and 25% did not. This suggests that although the existing leadership model accounts for DEO leadership, the uniqueness of design leaders should be carefully considered.

While conducting a survey using a set of questionnaires, we invested significant effort to recruit the participants who are similar with the interviewees. This is because the objective of the survey was to verify themes obtained from interviews. We additionally found from the survey that some themes collected from interviews scored low and need further explanation. First, three themes under Motivations (MO) scored lower than 3.5 on average. We suspect that this was because they were the factors which were influenced by others. Indeed, interview comments under external motivation were mentioned by relatively few people in the interviews. Also, the theme of 'negative experience of a previous workplace' can be interpreted as a motivation that influenced the company's operation while starting a company. Second, one theme under Business growth (BG) scored lower than 3.5 on average. This is because only eight survey participants run their businesses in the physical context and therefore, they pay more interest in brick-and-mortar manufacturing than digital technology.

More specifically, we found that DEOs differ from CEOs in two aspects: attitudes towards leadership and business growth (see Figure 2). These two unique attributes led DEOs to manage their organisations at a strategic level. While we aimed to understand the two unique attributes, we found several interesting behaviours of the DEOs who run their own Small-Medium Enterprises in Korea. For instance, they often emphasized a collective culture to overcome a lack of autonomy in their projects, answer demanding requests from clients, and

deliver more than what clients requested, all of which was mainly driven by a hierarchical relationship between clients and agencies.

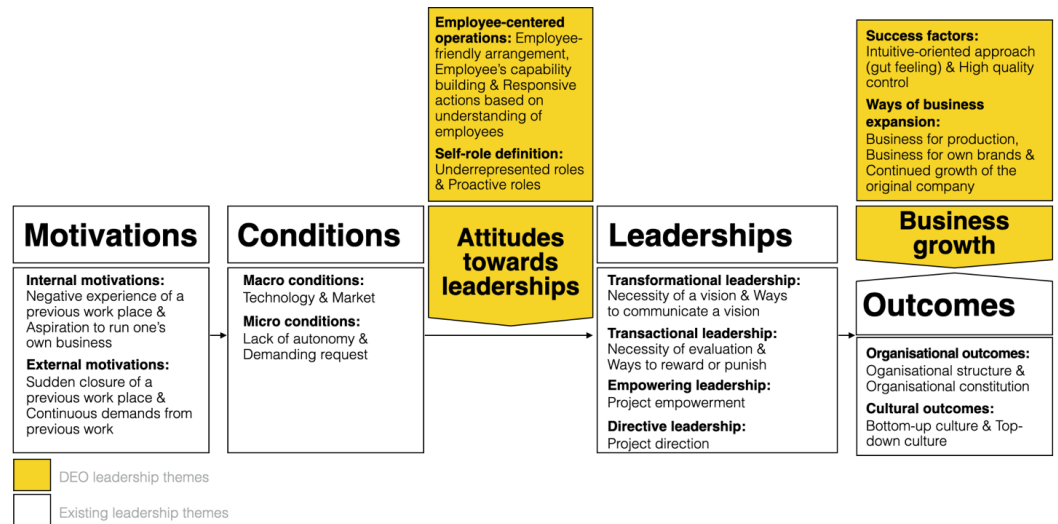


Figure 2. A proposed model of DEO leadership

Note that these two unique attributes enrich the MCLC leadership model since attitudes towards leadership link between conditions and leaderships and business growth as another outcome of leaderships. Although multiple prior research suggests that designers' way of thinking determines the implementation of changes, development processes, and organizational culture (Junginger, 2015; Porcini, 2009; Sato et al., 2010), its impact was limited to design approaches. Our findings go beyond this limitation to demonstrate that DEOs follow an employee-centred approach and manage their organisations smartly.

We want to highlight that our findings clearly demonstrate that designers shift their roles in the entrepreneurial landscape. Differently from prior work focusing exclusively on design tasks (Lima & Sangiorgi, 2018; Maciver, 2016; Nam & Jung, 2008) or design activities (Giudice & Ireland, 2013; Gloppen, 2009; Jevnaker, 2000), our findings shed light on how DEOs go beyond design to manage employees and address complex problems creatively. Indeed, the roles of CEOs in design companies described in the prior research are limited to supporters. They encouraged designers to concentrate on design tasks, made decisions beyond styling on behalf of designers, or shared the value of design with other employees or customers (Song & Chung, 2008). However, we found that DEOs played active roles in their organisations.

The two unique attributes of the DEO leadership we obtained in our study are the results for design leaders to consider their employees and organisational culture seriously. In this aspect, we believe, the two attributes can be applied to entrepreneurs who wish to nurture their employees and organisational culture, or they even drive DEOs to become entrepreneurs.

6. FURTHER STUDY

This study contributes to understanding of the organisational management which makes creative proposals through identifying underlying context, strategy, culture, and leadership characteristics. However, in-depth interviews were limited to DEOs. Therefore, we adjusted conclusions and clarified the limitations of our methodology. Future researchers should conduct in-depth interviews with their employees for triangulation. In addition, there is a need for future research on specific applications of design competence to exert leadership, as there is a need for communication through visuals to share vision in transformational leadership.

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