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National College of Ireland

Thesis

Millennial Graduates: An insight into the job expectations of Millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the retail sector in Ireland.

Masters in Human Resource Management

Paula Ryan

(Student Number 14128152)

Abstract

Millennials are fast becoming the driving force in the workplace and bring with them a change to the traditional ways of working within business organisations. Millennials are considered to be ambitious, have unrealistic job expectations, and prone to job hopping. By truly understanding the job expectations of millennials who have completed a graduate programme within Ireland, it should enhance a business's ability to retain these talented employees.

Stemming from the information discovered in the literature review, the researcher focused their research question on: "Millennial Graduates: An insight into job expectations of Millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the retail sector in Ireland." The researcher chose to use a qualitative research method and applied a phenomenological approach to the study. Purposeful sampling was applied as six interviews were conducted with participants who were born between 1981 and 2000 and had completed a two year graduate programme within the retail sector in Ireland. All participants had completed third level education and had a minimum bachelor's degree. Moustaka's seven steps of data analysis were used to guide logical identification of job expectation themes.

The researcher discovered through the findings that millennials who have completed a graduate programme expressed that they are driven by career progression. Upon completing the graduate programme, they want a clear career path set out for them with short-term milestones and regular feedback from their manager. Participants sought mentors who were on the senior management team and who displayed a genuine interest in 'their professional development and career path. These millennial graduates expressed their need for responsibility combined with support from their managers. They want to take risks and make decisions, relying on their manager's support when required.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Millennials are steadfast becoming the largest share of the global labour force as they join the pre-existing workforce of Baby Boomers born 1946 – 1964; Generation X born 1965 – 1980. Demographers have never fully agreed on the cut off dates of the millennial generation, however for the purpose of this study Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are the general cohort of those born between 1981 and 2000 (Campione, 2014; Cheeseman & Downey, 2012; Johnson & Lopez, 2008).

The growth of millennials has an effect on the global workforce. Information published by Deloitte University Press (2015) depicts a greater presence of millennials in the workplace with 66 million recorded in the United States alone. This number is set to increase and by 2020 the US will have a workforce population made up of 50% of Generation Y (Ferri-Reed, 2015). In Ireland over 95,000 enrolled in full-time education in Irish universities in 2014/2015, with millennials considered to be the most highly educated generation to date (Irish Universities Association, 2017). In 2017 the 'war for talent' continues and companies are increasingly competitive in the methods for attracting the best talent into their organisation, especially among the millennial cohort (Michaels, Handfield – Jones & Axelrod, 2001). College graduates can choose to apply for an existing functional role within an organisation, or embark on a graduate development programme.

As the economy continued to stabilise in 2015, graduate training programmes in private sector organisations rose by fourteen per cent. With forty one per cent of private sector companies offering graduate training, evidence indicates that larger organisations are more likely to offer such programmes rather than SME's (CIPD, 2015). These figures are projected to rise again in 2017 with top UK employers estimating a four point three per cent increase in graduate recruitment (High Flyers Research, 2017). Graduate development programmes in the retail sector are designed to attract ambitious, commercially aware, analytical and talented

graduates who have obtained a minimum bachelor's degree at 2:1 level or higher. Businesses entice graduates by offering training, project work and networking opportunities. They offer a blend of formal and experiential development, affording the business the ability to nurture and foster graduates as future talent within the organisation over a specific time frame usually between two and three years. Customarily, graduates are employed on a fixed-term contract for the duration of the programme. Employers are thus enabled to offer permanent contracts to their top talent and release the remainder on completion of the programme.

The retail sector in Ireland is extremely competitive. It is the country's largest industry and is the biggest employer in the private sector. With over 285,000 people employed within the sector the 'war for talent' is well and truly alive with half of retail enterprises hiring over 250 staff (Retail Ireland, 2017). Pfizer, Musgrave, Penneys, Dunnes Stores and Grafton compile the top five retail companies with varying employee levels ranging from 3,300 to 35,000 (Top 1000, 2017). Employment opportunities within this sector vary and include retail operations, finance, human resources, marketing and trading. The retail industry appeals to many millennial graduates as it offers an extensive range of careers, offering millennials the opportunity to gain experience throughout different divisions of the business.

Organisations, such as the one used in this study, have invested heavily in their graduate programmes since their launch, with the belief that this investment will return talented leaders for the business. Graduates are hired with the intention of forming part of the talent management strategy; this investment is lost when a graduate decides to leave the company once their training is complete. Organisations are battling with an increasing struggle to retain their graduates for longer than a few years (Struges & Guest, 2001). Unlike the preceding generations of Generation X and Baby boomers; Millennials are often accused of being 'disloyal' to their employers (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Branded as 'job

hoppers'; a 2012 study carried out by the Marker Forum identified that graduates only stay in their initial role for eighteen months (cited in Scott, 2014).

This research will seek to ascertain the job expectations of Millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the retail sector in Ireland. The paper will further assess millennials perceptions of this programme, providing synthesis between the factors that affect retaining top talent within this cohort.

1.2 STRUCTURE

Chapter two is the foundation of the study. The purpose of this qualitative study explores the fundamental research question: "An insight into the job expectations of millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the Retail Sector". Generational Theory and the characteristics of millennials and the success factors of Graduate Programmes were the primary conceptual frameworks for this study. In the evaluation of the literature, the researcher will summarise previous research on these theories and the characteristics of millennials, focusing on the contributing factors of their retention within a business.

In chapter three, the researcher provides detailed information on the project, including the role of the researcher and the ethical precautions related to the study. The discussion includes the population and the participants of the study, identifying and justifying the research method and design. The conclusion of the section describes the data instruments, including how the researcher collected, organised and analysed the data.

Chapter four details the findings and the application of the findings to professional practice in the business field. This section concludes with a review of the areas of the study that may need further examination, followed by final reflections on the research process.

Chapter five will discuss the themes which emerged through the analysis of the findings. The findings will be arranged in a phenomenological context. The researcher will offer recommendations for potential actions to be taken. The limitations are also outlined in this chapter.

Finally, chapter six provides a summary of the research findings and offers recommendations for additional research in the area

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to identify the profile of the graduate participating in a graduate programme within the retail sector, more specifically to gain an insight into the job expectations of millennials focusing on those who have completed the programme and identify the reasons for which they decide to remain in the organisation or leave once the programme is completed. For the purpose of this study, the graduate population will be considered as the cohort age group which currently makes up the millennial population.

2.2 MILLENNIALS – WHO ARE THEY?

To understand the impact Millennials have had on the workforce, we first need to understand who they truly are. Representing a new workforce in the global market, Millennials are surpassing Baby Boomers and Generation X and are fast becoming the dominant generation in the workforce.

Born in a digital era close to the turn of the new millennium, Millennials, are commonly referred to as Generation Y, Generation Why, Generation Next, and Echo Boomers (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar and Kaifi, 2012; Bencsik, Horvath-Csikos, and Juhasz, 2016; Campione, 2014; Cheeseman et al, 2012; Doyle, 2017). Millennials are less conservative than their preceding generations. They are less likely to be devout to religion, serve in the military and focus more on their third level and continuous education than older adults (Pew Research Centre, 2010). Coined as the 'me, me, me generation' Stein, (2013) characterises the millennial generation as one which suffers from a sense of entitlement. This entitled belief is based on an upbringing focused on reward, admiration and praise for the slightest effort made by the influential adults in their lives: doting parents, teachers, trainers and instructors (Tulgan, 2009; Twenge and Campbell, 2009). Rather than fear authority, Millennials experience a close relationship with their parents and those in authoritarian positions and even go so far as forming friendships and bonds with

them (Ferri-Reed, 2014). A culture of 'everyone gets a medal for effort' and 'there is no such thing as winners or losers' has empowered Millennials to feel indestructible.

Sinek (2016) argues that Millennials are a generation who have been failed by modern parenting methods. He believes that parents who have forced teachers to give their children better academic results, conditioned their children into believing that they can have anything they desire, have in retrospect, paid their children a disservice. Millennials have grown up in an era where throughout their formative years they were able to have anything they wanted for little effort and face a huge transition when they enter the workplace. In some cases, parents have gone so far as accompanying their young adult children to job interviews, involved themselves in the process of wage negotiation and even requested feedback when their child was not successful for a role (Ellin, 2014; Lantz, 2013; Shellenbarger, 2006). This encourages millennials sense of indestructibility, entitlement and lack of respect for authority as they are reassured they will receive boundless support and encouragement from their parental figures.

As this cohort continues to grow within the workforce, managers are incessantly challenged to reach the high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of this youthful generation (Landcaster and Stillman, 2010). While common thought may lean towards the belief that such parental involvement is inappropriate (Ellin, 2014; Stahl, 2015); some companies are embracing the approach and are enabling opportunities for parents to be involved in the recruitment process. These companies have recognised that millennials respect their parent's opinion and such opinions hold weight when making choices about their career thus increasing the recruitment and retention of these young employees (Berman, 2013; Lantz, 2013; Russell, 2014; Ludden 2012).

Millennials are tech savvy

They are a generation who have grown up as liberals which can be attributed to their acceptance of non- traditional families and heavy influence from technology

(Andert, 2011; Gallicano, Curtin and Matthews, 2012). Having grown up in a technically advanced era, Millennials embrace new changes and trends and have a high acumen for technology (Bencsik et al, 2016). Twenty four per cent of Millennials believe technology is the defining characteristic that sets them apart from other generations (PEW Research, 2010). Immediate access to the internet as they are tethered to their smart phones has enabled this generational cohort to live an 'instant life' (Colòn, 2013). Eighty per cent of Millennials claim to have their mobile phone within arm's reach when they go to sleep, coining them as the 'always – connected' generation (PEW Research, 2010b).

Researchers believe that there are a host of benefits from having access to instant connection as Millennials will become dexterous, quick acting multitaskers who seamlessly thread through work related and personal responsibilities. Millennials don't invest in long term planning, making them comfortable with uncertainty and last minute changes and they are often more comfortable forming virtual relationships and friendships than they are face to face (Karl, Allen, White, Pelchutte and Allen 2017; Trees, 2015; Krishnan et al, 2012). As data is more readily available, Millennials have a lesser requirement to retain cognitive information and in turn has become highly efficient in accessing data (PEW Research, 2012).

Millennials are also not afraid of technology taking over from humanity; rather they embrace technological developments and adapt to these advancements thus utilising modern technology to allow them to become more creative, to live and work more efficiently and identify greater opportunities for collaboration (Colvin, 2015). Technology has revolutionised work disciplines to replace projects which may have been undertaken to 'fill the gap' between certain tasks, to working on something that is actually worth-while (Ghamrawi, 2015).

The ease of access to technology is not without its menaces. Research from the PEW study deliberates the lack of focus, social skills and an unhealthy dependence on the internet and social connection (PEW, 2012). The risk to such exposure to

social platforms as scrutinised by Sinek (2016) is the risk of social media addiction. Sinek believes the necessity to be digitally connected has led to a rise in superficial relationships among Millennials; a lack of presence in meetings as more and more colleagues will place their smart phones on the table sending out a signal to those in attendance that they do not have their full attention. Hartman and Cambridge (2011) also highlight the risks of diminished active listening, team building opportunities and a rise in conflict management as we move away from traditional forms of communication and focus more on virtual methods.

Millennials are Collaborators

The ability to always be connected has radically affected our need for and approach towards communication and collaboration. Throughout their education, Millennials were encouraged to play team sports, join societies and work together on educational projects (Dilullo, McGee and Kriebel, 2011; Decarie, 2010). As Millennials have matured, so too has technology. These technological advances have led to a changed approach towards communication in the modern workplace. Social media, instant messaging, video calls and virtual conferencing have transformed the way we engage within the workplace. Collaboration in the workplace can take place anywhere in the world, among a diverse group of workers as long as there is an internet connection and a phone (Ferri-Reed, 2014b).

Shurman (2015) classifies Millennials as masters of collaboration due to their effective cooperative abilities. Millennials like working in groups, there is very little prejudices among the millennial community so they are generally happy to work with anyone within their organisation; their comfort with technology eases their access to one another making communication much easier; they crave feedback from one another and are open to one another's constructive criticism. Research carried out by Asghar (2014) landscapes eighty four per cent of Millennials prefer working in a culture that cultivates effective collaboration among peers rather than a competitive one. Collaboration gives businesses the opportunity to cultivate innovation, progression, and is critical for growth especially when

successfully integrated amongst inter-generations in the workplace (Srinivasan, 2012).

To enhance the culture of sharing in the workplace, companies have transitioned from building cubical style office space to embracing an open planned office space, encouraging employees to engage in impulse conversation with one another as they are in plain sight (Cutler, 2014). Communication tools such as Skype, Yammer, virtual discussion rooms, cloud computing and emails afford employees the opportunity to work outside of the office, creating more opportunities for work life balance (Trees, 2015; Hampton, 2012).

The tech savvy millennial thrives in this type of environment as colleagues can communicate anywhere in an instant.

Millennials cite their frustrations with not having access to modern technologies within their organisation, limiting their ability to communicate and collaborate with key stakeholders (CIPD, 2015). Although thirty three per cent of workers say face to face meetings are the most effective method of communication, Millennials do not see any merit in attending meetings where they do not add any value to the proceedings. Fifty per cent also believe there are too many emails in circulation as they are often included on email treads that do not relate to their role. Therefore collaboration within the workplace must be effectively managed, as Buist (2016) illustrates a strategic approach should be taken when trying to foster a collaborative setting. Confidence and trust must be instilled in the team to ensure a solution focused and innovative environment is harboured. Buist (2016) elaborates that consideration must be given during the recruitment process to ensure the right mix of people are working together to strengthen the success of the business.

Millennials want a work life blend / work life balance

Thompson and Gregory (2012) term work as *a thing you do* as opposed to the traditional sense of *a place you go*. Technology has unlocked the office doors for the knowledge workers and has created a work environment as anywhere you can connect with your colleagues, enabling consistent relationships.

The concept of work life balance was born of the generation X era and was augmented by millennials (PEW, 2010). Millennials consider it irrelevant what they wear, or where they carry out their work, provided it is done to a performing standard. They not only believe that it doesn't matter, they believe that no one should care about such immaterial issues (Thompson et al, 2012). A recent survey carried out by Ernest and Young (2015) on 10,000 workers in eight countries details one third of all generations surveyed express difficulties juggling their personal life and work life demands. Of those surveyed, millennials were the most disgruntled. They articulate delaying marriage, children and furthering their education as a consequence of their inability to find the equilibrium between their work and personal life.

Research carried out by PEW (2010) considers millennials hold the work ethic of their preceding generation in very high regard and strongly consider decisions made by authority figures are always in the best interest of the company (Gursoy, Chi and Karadag, 2013). Other generations may not be of the same opinion that millennials are hard working or have a positive work ethic (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010).

Millennials believe there is an empathy gap between themselves and Baby Boomers – who currently hold the majority senior management positions. Of those surveyed, fifty three per cent of Baby Boomers have a spouse who does not work full time, affording them more opportunity to grow their career while their partner is able to manage the family environment (Ernest and Young, 2015) There is also an increase in the number of single parent families, with a baby boomer acting as the sole income provider and care giver (Buist, 2016). Eighty per cent of

the cohorts that make up the generation X and the millennial population are part of a dual income couple who work full time. The global recession and rise in the cost of living has influenced couples ability to have a homemaker at home full or part time, which makes it progressively more difficult to manage both careers and the home front with eighty per cent experiencing a rise in the cost of living in Ireland in recent years (Earnest and Young, 2015). Younger Millennials (aged between 18-24) identify flexitime as their preferential benefit from their employer (Matrix Recruitment, 2017).

Millennials visualise a solution to the imbalance of managing a heavy workload and sharing the home and family responsibilities as increased opportunities to work from outside the office. Baby Boomers have a different perception of the workplace and struggle to trust that work will be completed to a high standard if a worker is not in the workplace.

Millennials love the flexibility and authority of dictating where, when and how they complete their work. While millennials share their frustrations with other generations, they are more disposed to leave their employer if they feel there is an unreasonable attitude towards flexibility. This highly educated, and tech savvy generation are passionate about having time for their personal life as well as their career, and consider anything else as non-negotiable (Buist, 2016; Schulte, 2015). Employees, who believe they have obtained optimum balance, will typically be more content in their home and work lives (Demerouti, Peeters and Van Der Heijden, 2012).

The line between home life and work has also become blurred. The communication dynamic has altered as millennials are comfortable talking about their personal lives in work (Gamb, 2013). Work and personal life are no longer perceived as two separate silos and millennials are more focused on getting the seamless blend of getting to live and work their passions.

Millennials are achievement orientated

Reared and indulged by parents who wanted their offspring to have all the possessions and opportunities they did not have as children; millennials are confident, ambitious and have no inhibitions about making a mistake. They focus on results and their high levels of self-esteem empower them to believe there is nothing they cannot achieve (Kaifi et al, 2012; Myers et al, 2010; Twenge et al, 2012). A generation, who some consider to be lazy (Sinek, 2016), are actually achievement orientated (PEW Research, 2007; Howe and Strauss, 2003).

In order to attain more skilled and specialised roles, millennials have invested more into their education than any other generation (PEW Research, 2015; Paul, 2001). Demanding clearly defined course goals and high levels of feedback from their educators (Borges, 2010) millennials have capitalized on technology to aid their development (Crews and Wilkinson, 2010). Strauss and Howe (2000) argue that Millennials further their education, make strategic career choices, and capitalise on employment trends in order to realise their long term goals.

Millennials display drive and hunger to achieve when they are passionate about something, and are willing to sacrifice their own personal time in order to achieve a goal. It would not be uncommon for a member of the millennial cohort to willingly forego their lunch break or work extra hours to achieve a goal that will benefit the business. Millennials are prone to undertake additional responsibilities in order to create excitement and versatility in their lives which Zhu and Graf-Lambsdorff (2017) attributes to millennials multitasking nature (Bajer, 2014). Charmichael (2016) labels millennials as '*workaholics*' based on research carried out Project:Time Off and Gfk. Happy with the perception that they are '*work martyrs*', forty eight per cent of Millennials want their managers to view them in this light, with thirty five per cent of millennials happy for this perception to extend to their colleagues.

Millennials associate their career progression with achievement; they are prioritising their careers and see a direct link between career success and

progression (McDonald and Hite, 2008). When compared to generation X and baby boomers, millennials place a greater prominence on opportunities to develop and career progression (Rigoni et al, 2016; Eddy, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). As the volume of millennials in the workplace increases, so too does the pressure placed on their managers as they seek opportunities for development and progression (Lancaster et al, 2010). McDonald et al (2008) outline the necessity for advancement in career development evaluations to meet the needs of the millennials in the workplace.

No other generation has entered the workforce with the same level of confidence as millennials. They have a different viewpoint of hierarchy, and are more comfortable in a flat organisational structure, with access to senior leadership (Hershatler and Epstein, 2010). Millennials drive for achievement can sometimes cause them to be considered impatient; eager to make an impact on the business from the early stages of their career and unwilling to wait any period of time before they are taken seriously (Myers et al, 2010).

Such is their confidence; millennials do not see anything wrong with offering their opinions or placing demands on their more matured colleagues (Levenson, 2010; Downing, 2006). Familiar with an upbringing where their parents valued their opinions (Ferri – Reed, 2013; Cahill and Sedrak, 2012), this generation are not shy to express their opinion in order to achieve their goals. Colleagues of millennials may be of a different opinion, and misinterpret this attitude as arrogance rather than a need to accomplish their goals (Myers et al, 2010).

This sense of achievement extends to what millennials can give rather than what they can get from an organisation. Adding value to the business and the knowledge that they are confident their work serves a genuine purpose to them (Bajer, 2014). Millennials are concerned about their impact on society and want to be part of an organisation who gives back to the local community and beyond (Ferri – Reed, 2013; Hewlett et al, 2000).

The 2017 Deloitte Millennial Survey unveiled seventy six per cent of millennials believe that a business should have a positive social impact. Employees who are involved in initiatives that create a positive ripple effect among society feel a sense of empowerment (Deloitte, 2017). Researchers believe this has manifested throughout their formative years as millennials have been taught to have a sense of accountability (Kowske, Rasch and Wiley, 2010; Downing, 2006). Businesses who contribute, have a positive impact on society and create a sense of meaning among their workforce, experience better employment retention than those businesses that don't (Deloitte, 2017).

Millennials crave structure, clarity and feedback

Millennials desire a work environment that is structured and offers expansive support (Ondeck, 2002). They also crave clarity and transparency with clearly defined and aligned goals. Millennials are more engaged at work when they have prioritised responsibilities and accountability (Gallup, 2016). Revealing that only twenty nine per cent of the millennial population is actually engaged at work, the report reveals that fifty per cent of Millennials in the US are considering changing jobs within the next twelve months. Millennials believe setting performance goals and the prioritisation of tasks are of equal importance. Understanding what is expected of them and in what order their goals should be accomplished is a must if this cohort is to be kept engaged (Gallup, 2016).

Millennials are hungry for feedback. They have grown up in an instant-access feedback cycle from the internet and social media and this has expanded into their work environment. This cohort has an innate desire to know how they are performing; they want to be kept informed frequently and in abundance, as they have been accustomed to such practices throughout their childhood (Ferri-Reed, 2013). Consistent and honest feedback will build rapport amid managers and their younger direct reports and researchers believe that routine feedback is much more constructive for millennials than a yearly appraisal (Cennamo and Gardiner, 2008; Gibson et al, 2009).

Ferri- Reed (2013) suggests that employers should exploit insight building assessment tools to plot the career development of this young generation, encapsulating their desire for feedback and performance enhancement consistently. Millennials are accustomed to feedback which is focused on praise and guidance (Hershatter et al, 2010) with key emphasis on the end goal and less weight on the method. With a childhood chalked full of successes (Tulgan, 2009; Twenge and Campbell, 2009); often the first failure millennials will encounter is in the workplace placing the responsibility on managers to provide constructive feedback to them (Hershatter et al, 2010; Ng et al, 2010).

Millennials are prone to job hopping

When an employee decides to leave a company of their own accord within a period of two years, it is considered 'job hopping'. The culture of 'job hopping' is problematic as millennials are steadfast becoming the largest cohort within the modern day workforce and high turnover volumes have a significant impact on employers. It remains a constant problem for employers as they struggle to retain talented employees despite continuous improvements to policies and efforts to increase engagement among the highly demanding generation.

The current workforce comprises of three core generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X and millennials. Millennials share a number of characteristics with their generational colleagues. Baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are renowned for their robust work ethic, with high regard for loyalty and prosperity. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980 are stereotypically rebellious and independent. However, there is a more notable rise in the occurrence of employment change by millennials than by Baby Boomers or Generation X (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016).

According to Gallup (2016b) only fifty per cent of millennial employees plan to stay with their current employer throughout 2017. Millennials are considered to be the most disengaged generation in the work place and the report cites engagement as the heart of the issue. Millennials feel compelled to look for opportunities outside

of the business as they feel their employer is not creating a culture of communication or opportunity for regular feedback in which they can connect emotionally and psychologically to the company. Employee engagement is vital to the business as those considered to be engaged at work are twenty six per cent less likely to leave their current employer for a raise in salary for twenty per cent or less. Other researchers contribute unrealistic expectations at work as the cause of discontent among Millennials attributing to their repeated job hopping (Twenge et al, 2008).

A recent report by CNBC (2017) challenges the analysis gathered by Gallup as they found that thirty nine per cent of millennial employees plan to remain with their current employer provided they see a rise in their salary and career progression. There are several reports which echo the sentiment that engagement, pay scale and career progression are contributing factors to the retention of employees, however it is difficult to pin point the time frame in which a millennial employee will remain within a company. Meister (2012) averages 4.4 years as a typical lifespan for today's millennial employee, while Zimmerman (2016) notes 2 years is the average time millennials will stay in one role.

Other researchers also challenge the job hopping stigma associated with millennials as they believe the cohort is as loyal as preceding generations. Kowske et al (2010) argue that job hopping is specific to an individual's circumstances rather than a generational trait. Twenge (2010) argues that Millennials will stay in long term employment unless discontented, and only then will seek other opportunities. Deloitte (2016) believes that job hopping is contextual among generations. The report outlines that as millennials mature, their frequency for job hopping decelerates. Research carried out by PEW (2017) echo's this theory as they outline those who have completed third level education as having longer tenure with their employers than Generation X workers did at the same point in their career in 2000 when they were of similar age to today's millennial.

2.3 MILLENNIALS – WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Millennials value a '*work life balance*'. Defined by Smith (2010) 'work life balance' is the optimum time employees spent at work versus their desired time on outside interests and responsibilities. Driven by both generation X and millennials, companies have received pressure to construct more flexible and transformative options to allow talented employees more choice and autonomy when juggling the demands of their work and personal lives (Klun, 2008). The Deloitte Millennial Survey (2016) paints a nuanced picture of the factors considered by millennials when evaluating job opportunities. Once salary and other monetary rewards were taken off the table, work life balance ranked highest on their criteria at sixteen point eight per cent. A good work life blend illustrates that they want to ensure that their time spent at work is productive, adds value and contributes to their organisations success. Flexibility contributes highly to work-life balance and is hugely important to this generation.

Technology has mobilized the office and employees can now work remotely, and have *flexible* start and finish times (Özçelik, 2015). An environment has been created that offers several avenues for employees to get their work done autonomously. It is widely documented that work-life balance is a top priority of the modern generation, but the reality is somewhat more complex (Project: Time Off, 2016). Millennials are more likely to want to illustrate themselves as work martyrs when compared with older generations with thirty five per cent of them believing it is good for their colleagues to see them in this light. Millennials are also more likely to forfeit their unused holidays (twenty four per cent) than Generation X or Baby –boomers citing "No one else can do my role while I'm away" and "I feel guilty for using all of my annual leave". The report also details that the 'technological – flexibility' that millennials demanded, has created a generation who is always connected to work, by means of mobile phone, internet connections, mobile laptops.

Educated in a time where *feedback* is increasingly used as a tool for learning and development, teaching methods are aimed at outcomes over process. Instant

feedback has become their ethos and millennials believe there should be little reason why this should change when they enter the workplace (Hershatter et al, 2010;). Often portrayed as needy, millennials requisite for hyper-feedback enables them to pursue their quest for professional development and enhance their skills, enabling them to be valued as assets to the business (Thompson and Gregory, 2012). One of the key drivers of disengagement in the workplace among millennials is a manager not giving them the feedback they need. The flow of communication is not frequent enough with a mere nineteen per cent of millennials stating that they receive regular or worthwhile feedback. For managers, they have become accustomed to generations who shun constant feedback and empowered their employees with less direction. This shift in management technique may prove difficult for them to change (Rigoni and Adkins, 2016).

Millennials welcome the security of having someone to turn to for advice. Reluctant to take initiative unless they fully comprehend their role, sixty one per cent of Millennials largely benefit from *mentoring partnerships* within their organisation with ninety four per cent of those with a mentor stating that they receive sound advice from them (Deloitte, 2016). Mentoring can take many forms. Traditional mentoring takes the shape of a senior employee taking a junior colleague 'under their wing' and provides them with advice and council throughout the developmental stages of their career. Research carried out by Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000) demonstrates the importance of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee, noting that if there is no rapport between the two, the exercise is of no value to the mentee. Peer to peer mentoring enables millennials to learn and develop from one another (Meister and Willyeard, 2010) Advanced technology has enhanced the platforms millennials can use when mentoring their peers through community forums, document sharing spaces, conference calls and webcasts. While millennials may be known for their ability to be 'sponges of information', it cannot go undocumented that they have a vast array of knowledge that they can share with other generational cohorts, such as technology and social media. Reverse mentoring shifts the sole onus for sharing

knowledge from senior generations to the younger generation (Meister and Willyerd, 2010; Marcinkus - Murphy, 2012). Mentoring is a powerful tool, not only because of the knowledge and skills millennials can learn from mentors but also because mentoring offers professional socialisation and personal support to facilitate success in their careers.

2.4 MILLENNIALS – A DIFFERENT GENERATION

Millennials are the latest definitive generation to emerge. Preceding generations include Generation X who are smaller in population size and are known to be more conservative. The generation named as the baby-boomers, after the population spike of World War II are known for their rejection of authority as youths, yet their views turn increasingly more conservative as they age (Ng et al, 2016). The defining characteristics of millennials are exposure to the internet during their developmental years, more education and racial diversity than ever before. This generational cohort also came of age during the global recession. Before Millennials became embedded in their careers, they witnessed the global financial crisis, suffering the highest unemployment rates of any modern generation (Smith and Clarke, 2010).

Labels used to describe millennials are lazy, egotistical, and impatient with unrealistic expectations (Sinek, 2017). This is further compounded by research that suggests that Millennials have very liberal views (Ross and Rouse, 2015). It is evident that there are clear differences between these generations. Employers need to manage these relationships in order to cultivate a collaborative culture with the generations currently found within the workplace. Millennials have been very transparent regarding 'what they want' from their employer and are not afraid to differentiate their mentality to those of other generations.

The Psychological Contract

The psychological contract between an employee and an employer is unlike the employment contract which is a legally binding document which explicitly details mutual responsibilities in a generalised form, such as hours of work, salary, annual leave, work policies and terms and conditions of employment. The psychological contract in contrast is implied, it is not documented, not legally binding and is extensive (Conway and Briner; 2002). The psychological contract represents the mutual perceptions and informal obligations between the employer and the employee. The content of the psychological contract encapsulates anything an employee feels they deserve from their employer in return for the hard work, loyalty, extra effort, willingness to go the extra mile and flexibility. It builds the foundation for the relationship and sets out a framework for how work will be completed. Zagneczyk, Gibney, Few and Scott (2011) discuss two measurements in which employees enter into a psychological contract: transactional and relational. The transactional dimension includes an expectation of getting paid at the going rate or above and reasonable working conditions. The relational dimension includes facets of training and development, objectivity, trust, career growth, job security and fair treatment. Employees believe in the conditional promise of reward with rapid career development and pay rises in exchange for hard work, minimal grievances, helping their colleagues and going above and beyond what is expected of them. The relational dimensions drive employee behaviour and while these expectations are only implied, employees believe that this exchange is fair. (Zagneczyk et al, 2011; Guillermo and Rousseau, 2004)

2.5 GRADUATES PROGRAMMES

It is widely documented that graduate programmes are increasingly popular among larger scale companies across Europe and are set to continue to gain momentum (Milkround, 2017; AHECS, 2013; CIPD, 2012). Once commonly found only in the financial sector, graduate programmes have widened across a broad range of sectors including pharmaceutical, retail, logistics, I.T., law and other professional services (gradireland, 2017). Graduate Programmes allow companies

to develop a pipeline of talent within the business and foster future managers and leaders within the organisation.

Having completed their third level education, graduates are posed with options on how they can enter employment. There are two routes most frequently taken by graduates upon entering the workforce. Graduates can choose to apply for a role directly within a company or they can apply for a graduate programme which has been designed to offer support and development for former students with the intention of developing long term leaders within the business.

Companies throughout Ireland such as PWC, Aldi, Jameson, Aerlingus, Bank of Ireland, Deloitte and several more, begin their search for future graduate talent during the final year the undergraduate or masters degree programmes (gradireland, 2017b) Companies use online platforms such as gradireland.com while also hosting presentations, open days and attending career fairs to attract potential candidates. Graduate Programmes are designed to recruit graduates who display high levels of academic achievement, most commonly honours degree or higher. Gault, Redington and Schlager (2000) illustrate that although graduates have obtained a vast array of knowledge while in education, they worry about their transition from third level to work.

Albeit these graduates have not obtained the necessary work experience to put their academia into practice, graduate programmes offer a bridge from the theoretical world into the working world through a blend of experiential and formal development. The graduate receives 'on the job' experience by taking on a formal role within a department. They will report to a line manager and have similar targets to achieve as those who are in a functional role. This is often incorporated with a graduate project where they will collaborate with other graduates from different sectors of the organisation to execute team projects which are strategically aligned with business goals. The projects are then presented to senior management (Kerry Foods, 2017; Musgrave, 2017; Lidl, 2017).

Additionally, graduates are afforded the opportunity to rotate throughout different sectors of the organisation for a specific time frame thus broadening their view and understanding of the organisation. Ferri-Reed (2014) affirms this exposure as a successful practice for graduates as they can gain a comprehensive understanding of the different functions of the organisation and will enable graduates to broaden their career paths. Furthermore, a successful graduate programme can build the reputation of the business as an excellent employer and expands the employer branding, which can augment the attraction and retention levels of the wider employee population.

2.6 GRADUATES IN THE WORKPLACE

Graduates making their debut into the workforce form the Millennial cohort and were born between 1981 and 2000 (Campione, 2014). It comes as no surprise that since entering the workforce the generational cohort of Millennials has impacted the way organisations manage their employees. Coined as the ‘technically savvy’ generation, Millennials are also considered to be the most highly educated and ethnically diverse age group of all time (Eisner, 2005). Millennials have earned the reputation for having poor work ethics, incompetent at using their own initiative, unrealistic expectations combined with impatience, and their over familiarity with authority figures is seen as disrespectful by older generations (Ferri-Reed, 2014; Pew Research Centre 2007). However, generational differences in the workplace is not a novel concept, research has long been documented predating Millennials’ existence (Altimus and Tersine, 1973; Taylor and Thompson 1976).

2.7 THE MODERN WORKFORCE

The modern workplace is evolving. Advanced technologies have changed the definition of the physical workplace. The importance of the physical building itself has lessened as the modern workplace has become more mobile. Employees are now able to log in remotely to access company documents, systems and online applications (Bloom, Liang, Roberts and Ying, 2014). The modern workforce can

exploit the freedom from the office afforded to them by technology and mobile devices, thus allowing them to work from almost any location.

Today's workplace has become a melting pot for a demographically diverse workforce. Managers are faced with several leadership challenges with a multitude of nationalities working together, fast moving technologies, and a changing generational demographic (Gaskell, 2016). Millennials (1981-2000) make up 25 per cent of the workforce, making them the most prevalent generation in the workplace; surpassing the number of Baby Boomers (1946-1964) in 2014 and Generation X (1965-1980) in 2015 and by 2020 Millennials are expected to make up 50 per cent of the world's workforce (Campione, 2014; Cheeseman et al, 2012; Johnson et al, 2008).

In order to build a successful work environment these generational cohorts need to work together and have a mutual understanding of each other thus building a multi-generational workforce. Though the workforce may have a broad range of ages working together who display many varying viewpoints, there is also an opportunity to blend and mix these generational beliefs and attitudes together. It is important to recognise where there is alignment and positive relationships among generations and how the chemistry between the generations can create a dynamic thriving culture. Concurrently it is wise for managers and leaders to keep a watchful eye on pressure points and tensions which may arise between these cohorts.

Generational theory

Research conducted by Strauss and Howe (1991) identifies since the year 1620 there has been four generational cycles which have reiterated themselves approximately every eighty years throughout the western world leading with a 'pinnacle of innovation' to a 'pinnacle of crisis'. Transitioning through the same sequence, generational characteristics are moulded by significant events observed by the generation. Four turning periods occur every twenty years each dominated

by a universal pattern. These archetypes are defined as the Artist, the Prophet, the Nomad and the Hero. Each bring with them major social change, as those of the same age tend to be impacted by the same global events and share similar experience. Mannheim (1953) believes that each generational cohort shares similar core ideals and holds these values throughout their lifetime. As each generation experiences the world, they come to view society with a different vantage point as their predecessors labelling these personal interpretations as 'fresh contact'. The impact of such events during the formative years (0-20 years) can be used to predict the attitudes and behaviours of a generation (D'Amato and Herzfeldt, 2008; Joshi, Dencker and Franz, 2011).

Researchers trust that generational theory can predict the job expectations of Millennials throughout the development of their careers (Fenich, Scott – Halsell and Hashimoto, 2012; Balda and Mora, 2011; Strauss et al, 1991). Millennials witnessed their Generation X parents, defined as the Nomads – rebel against the complaints of the preceding generation of the Prophets. The new ideologies from the Nomads never flourished until the Hero generation came of age (Millennials).

Heroes are considered the revolutionaries of archetypes. Millennials demonstrates all the signs of a Hero's generation. This technical savvy generation has been raised on iPods, Reality T.V., instant communication and are unfamiliar with a world without social media. World events such as the global financial crisis and the spread of terrorism, political and celebrity scandals have brought Millennials together as a community and social channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram enabled them to connect with one another and offer support in times of crisis (Gibson, Greenwood and Murphy 2009).

Over-protective and helicopter parenting practices have laid solid foundations for Millennials to foster the demanding characteristics of the Hero generation. Developments in technology and the explosion of Social Media have empowered the Hero Generation to redefine what a young adult looks like. McNamara (2005)

analysed the optimism of Millennials and believed it contributed to their openness to diversity, accepting of others viewpoints and their inclusive nature.

2.8 EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

As this cohort leaves formal education and enters employment, a survey completed by AHECS (2013) documents that employers hold employability skills in equal if not higher regard to academic skills. Skills desired by employers include: positive employees, as they out-produce workers who think negatively; collaborators and team players; and those who have the ability to self-manage and displays a formal authority on how they manage their own work and decide how their work will be executed. A survey completed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers lists the 'ability to work in a team structure'; followed by decision making, problem solving and communication skills as the top skill employers want in graduates (cited in Adams, 2014). Granted, there is a collective trend among employers of the common skills that graduates should possess, Sundberg et al (2011) contends that there is not always agreement between the expectation of employers and those of graduates entering the workplace. Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) argue that employers should step away from the traditional recruitment and retention methods of analysing skills and focus more on the value congruence between millennial employees and the organisation.

2.9 RETAINING TALENT

Previous research indicates there are multiple reasons why graduates leave their employers. The researcher has previously outlined *work-life balance* (Klun, 2008) and *flexibility* (Özçelik, 2015; Ferri-Reed, 2015); valuable *feedback* (Thompson and Gregory, 2012) and *mentoring* (Meister and Willyerd, 2010) combined with *personal development* (Jennings 2011) can all attribute to the retention levels of today's millennial graduates.

However, there is compounding evidence that indicates the salient reason millennial employees leave an organisation is based on their relationship with

their manager. The relationship between millennials and their immediate manager is the nucleus to their motivation, development and retention (Hershatler et al, 2010 and Ng et al, 2010). The relationship can often become strained by pressures place on managers from millennials to facilitate their need to be challenged. Millennials associate the responsibility and challenging work they receive from their managers with personal growth (Fromm, 2015). When managers charge millennials with responsibility, millennials feel connected to the businesses goals. This feeds into their confidence and instils a sense of trust from their manager. Wotapka (2017) documented the opinion of Jason Dorsey that millennials need to know what challenges they will face in their first twelve months. As millennials are not considered to be long term planners, he outlines the importance of only planning for the challenges they will encounter in the shorter term.

Known as a generation of 'job hoppers' (Rigoni et al, 2016), it is critical that managers ensure that millennials have open channels of communication to guarantee this cohort truly feel 'engaged' with their work. A true sense of feeling part of meaningful initiatives affords millennials a stronger sense of purpose and connection to the greater good (Benson, 2016). In order to retain talented millennial graduates; it is imperative that managers first understand what motivates this modern generation. As documented, this generation have distinctly different values to the generational groups pre-existing in the workforce. To enable managers to create a collaborative environment, they must first get to know them and adapt their managerial styles to accommodate their liberal views (Ferri – Reed, 2015)

2.10 CONCLUSION

The millennial population entering the workforce continues to grow, impacting the way employers manage their workforce and increase the need for graduate development programmes. Employers are increasingly utilising graduate development programmes to foster talent and fast track talented graduates to

leadership roles within their organisations. Huge investment is made by organisations who often see a loss on investment when graduates decide to leave the company once their training is complete.

There is conclusive evidence that millennials hold different values when evaluating their loyalty to an organisation and if something is not working in their favour, they are happy to sever their ties and seek satisfaction elsewhere. When initially entering the workforce, high levels of unemployment and competition for roles, changed the opinion of what was once considered a 'job for life' with millennials typically remaining in their first role for eighteen months.

It is imperative that direct managers take the time to get to know their employees, and adapt their style of management to one that meets the demands of the millennial populous. They need to feel engaged with their managers and have a true sense of purpose. If these foundations are not set, the theory in which 'employees don't leave their jobs, they leave their managers' is reinforced (Thompson and Gregory, 2012).

Research problem and aims of research

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Throughout the literature review the researcher will discover that there is a significant link to the characteristics of millennials and the factors affecting their retention rates upon completion of graduate development programmes.

The fundamental aims and objectives of this research is to identify the profile of graduates who have completed a two year graduate development programme in the retail sector and to identify the key areas of the business they have moved to once completing the programme. It will identify the factors that affected those graduates decision to remain or leave the company once they completed their graduate programme. The graduates involved in this study fit the generational cohort known as millennials.

As noted in the introduction to this study, the principle research question:

An insight into the job expectations of Millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the retail sector in Ireland.

The objective and aim of this study is to envisage as follows:

- To identify the profile of the millennial graduate – age/ gender / education background?
- To gain an understanding of the characteristics of Millennials.
- To look in depth into what graduates / millennials want from their employers?
- To investigate the factors that entice millennial graduates remaining in the company once they have completed their two year graduate programme.
- To examine the effect mentoring has on the overall millennial graduate experience?

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the main research design and methodology used to conduct the study is outlined. A rationale is given for the research approach chosen and the principle data collection techniques are identified and justified. In addition the researcher will explain the sampling approach used and how the collected data was analysed. The chapter concludes with an overview of the ethical issues addressed and an explanation of the limitations of the research.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Quinlan (2011) paints a clear and concise picture to the reader as to how the research is executed and illustrates the philosophical assumptions that form the foundations of the research. Saunders et al (2016) explain that research philosophy refines and specifies the research methods implemented by the researcher throughout the study, providing the framework for the researcher to appraise different methodologies and approaches. It also aids the researcher to implement creative and improved methods that would not have been familiar with.

The study further unveils the assumptions made by researchers that they often include to support their chosen strategy and method (Saunders et al, 2016; Martelli et al, 2015; Saunders et al 2012). Epistemology, Ontology and Axiology form the channels of research philosophy cataloguing three segments: positivism, Interpretivism and realism (Saunders et al, 2016; Dul and Hak, 2008).

The research question and research objectives formulate reasons for choosing the appropriate method of research. Saunders et al (2016) propose that the research question should dictate the most pragmatic approach when deciding which adaptation of epistemology or ontology to use. Guba and Lincone (1994) trust that the question of paradigm (epistemology and ontology) is of greater significance to a research project than the question of the method. Quinlan (2011)

expounds that ontology is considered with what is true and epistemology looks at the means of unearthing these truths. Saunders et al (2016) reflect on axiology as choosing the topic for the research question, the researcher implies that this topic is more important than others.

3.2.1 POSITIVISM

August Comte, Francis Bacon and the collection of philosophers and scientists known as the Vienna Circle contributed to the formulation of positivism (Saunders et al, 2016). Positivism is a philosophy of science based on the view that when studying social phenomena in a social as well as natural sciences, data is derived from the five senses and emphasises empirical observation. Mathematical treatments of such data are together the exclusive source of all authoritative knowledge (Greener et al, 2015). Throughout the positivist process the researcher takes the role of an objective analyst. The researcher is tasked to analyse data collected in an unbiased and impartial manner which requires a well-thought-out methodology and quantifiable observations.

3.2.2 INTERPRETIVISM

Interpretivism is a school of thought which is common in the social sciences recognising the self-reflective nature of qualitative research and the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data (Creswell, 2007). Interpretivist's view society as a social construction of meaning that has no objective reality or existence, independent of the meanings or interpretations people hold. The aim of the researcher is to see the world from the vantage point of those being studied, thus permitting several perceptions of what is true, in contrast to the single truth of positivism (Greener et al, 2015). Saunders et al (2016) clarify that interpretivism is often chosen by those who view their research as too complex for the confines of physical science.

3.2.3 REALISM

Realism uses experiments to find the truth and facts about reality. It is the certainty that reality exists and motivated by natural laws. Realism is the ontological perspective that is impartial, independent of any theories or beliefs or

human behaviour and exists even if it has not yet been discovered (Saunders et al, 2016; Bryman, 2012).

3.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM OF RESEARCH

Throughout the literature pertaining to the job expectations of Millennials who have completed a graduate programme within the retail sector such as Tulgan (2009) Ferri-Reed (2014), Sinek (2016) Myers and Sadaghiani (2010); the author has discovered that millennials have a number of characteristics differentiating them from preceding generations within the workplace. The framework of Suleman (2011) outlines the average working life span of a millennial employee as 1.5 years and only until millennials are fully understood within the workforce, will this job hopping culture be tackled.

The view points and values of millennial graduates can have an effect on their retention levels and their decision whether to build a long term career within a company; or can cause them to look towards other companies who will be able to meet their expectations. The research looks specifically on millennial employees who have completed a Graduate Programmes within the retail sector after they have concluded their third level education.

The study will provide key insights into what are the contributing factors affecting millennial employee's decision to stay within a company or to look for opportunities elsewhere. From a millennial employee's perspective, there are key indicators which can trigger their decision to leave their current employer. By getting a detailed understanding of these indicators, employers will be better able to understand this youthful cohort and implement a strategy which caters for their needs thus facilitating longer working relationships.

The participants of this study were chosen from one of Ireland's leading retailers who has a long standing Graduate Programme. All participants were born between 1981 and 2000, identifying them as millennials (Campione, 2014; Cheeseman et al, 2012; Johnson et al, 2008).

The participants of the study all completed the company's two year Graduate Programme and work / worked full time in various divisions across the business including Operations, Trading, and Marketing. Participants had varying lengths of service within the business; some of the participants are current employees and some former employees. Both male and female participants were chosen.

As noted in the introduction to this study, the overall research question of this study is as follows:

To carry out an investigation into the insights into job expectations of millennials, focusing on those who have completed a graduate programme within the retail sector in Ireland.

This research question will be addressed by undertaking the following research objectives:

- The objective and aim of this study is to envisage as follows:
- To identify the profile of the graduate – age/ gender / education background?
- To gain an understanding of the characteristics of Millennials.
- To look in depth into what graduates / millennials want from their employers?
- To investigate the factors that entice graduates remaining in the company once they have completed their two year graduate programme.
- To examine the effect mentoring has on the overall graduate experience?

The researcher adapted research questions used in a doctorate study in the US which studied “Job expectations of employees in the millennial generation” (Linden, 2015). The study of millennials is emerging and therefore the researcher found it difficult to find an established study on which to base their research questions on. The researcher adapted the questions used by Linden to take an in-depth look at the expectations millennials have and incorporated this with

questions the researcher developed from research discovered throughout the literature review.

The questions were divided into four separate themes:

Profile of the graduate; Graduate Programme Experience; Understanding Millennials and Job Retention.

3.4 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The researcher was responsible for identifying the most appropriate research methodology design for the study. This design needed to be appropriate and implementable to the specific research topic. Suitable participants were then carefully chosen & recruited with thought given to the confidentiality and permissions of both the participants and the business. Interviews were then scheduled and carried out with data collected on a recording device and later transcribed. Consideration was given on how to approach any ethical issues that may arise, however none arose. As the researcher identified with the millennial cohort; it was important for the researcher to be acutely aware that she was responsible for ensuring any biases were avoided.

3.5 PILOT TESTING

Prior to the interviews taking place the interviewer the interviewer conducted a pilot study with one participant. This interview was not recorded but did contribute to the overall formation of the research instrument. During this test the interviewer was able to assess the understanding of the questions and to estimate the time it would take to collect the data (Creswell, 2007). During this process, the researcher discovered that one of the questions was difficult to understand for the participant and the interviewer was subsequently able to restructure the question to ensure better clarity.

3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The Graduate Programme takes place in one of Ireland's leading fast moving consumer goods organisations with opportunities in the buying/trading, finance, retail operations, marketing, and supply chain divisions of the business. In order to be eligible for the programme, participants of the Graduate Programme must have a minimum 2:1 Honours Degree (level 8 on National Framework of Qualifications). The Graduate Programme is tailored to those seeking their first or second role since completing their third level degree. Graduates are placed on a rotation, with some Graduates relocating to other divisions of the business throughout the programme. These locations include Cork, Dublin, Belfast or Spain. The programme aims to shape future leaders of the business by providing graduates with a blend of formal and experiential development. Graduates are inducted into the business and are assigned a buddy who has either recently completed the programme or is a current member of the programme.

Graduates receive on the job development by being placed in a functioning role within the business. They attend the Irish Management Institute (IMI) where they participate in a Graduate Development Programme. During their final year of the programme, Graduates are required to participate in a group project where they are required to work together as a team and present their findings back to the company directors.

Upon completion of the programme, graduates will continue to work within the business with some moving into other roles within their division, while others may relocate to a different location.

Professional networking and collaboration with the company's Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator was the primary means taken towards identifying possible participants. All participants had successfully completed the company's two year Graduate Programme, four of whom were currently still working for the organisation in which they had completed their Graduate Programme and two of whom left the business having successfully completed the programme and were working for another company.

Those who contributed to the study were both male and female and all were born between 1981 and 1996. Millennials are classified as those born between 1981 and 2000. All participants had a minimum bachelor's degree and at least two years of employment within the business.

Participants received an initial email from the Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator who they had an established professional working relationship with outlining the purpose of the study and how their input would benefit the research. The use of Snowball Sampling (Suri, 2011) allowed the researcher to utilise the knowledge and insights of the Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator to identify former graduates who were relevant to the study (i.e. millennials who have successfully completed the Graduate Programme) and who may have been interested in participating in the study. This initial contact was then followed up by an email from the researcher giving further insight into the study and an invitation to schedule an interview.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify suitable participants who, based on their life, education and work experiences would be able to answer the research question (Suri, 2011). With the assistance of the Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator in one of Ireland's larger retailer's, thirty potential participants were identified for the study. The requirements for inclusion in the study were as follows:

- Participants had completed the company two year graduate programme
- Participants identified as Millennials (born between 1981 and 2000).

The cohort comprised of a mixture of current and former employees at the time of the study. Participants who identified as current employees received an introduction email via the Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator outlining the purpose of the study. This was followed by an email from the researcher confirming the reasoning behind the study and seeking their assistance in participating in one to one interviews. Those who had subsequently left the company received an email by the researcher through LinkedIn. Those interested in participating in the study replied to the email and a time and location was then

scheduled which suited the participant. Participants were advised that the interviews would be recorded over the phone or face to face and would take approximately 30-45mins. All information provided would be strictly confidential. They were advised that the Company Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator and the Company Group HR Director may read the overall research results, however all information would be anonymised to ensure their identity was not revealed.

Initially eight participants agreed to participate in the study, however due to work load demands and time restraints, two participants withdrew from the study.

Table 1: Graduate Profile

Participant	Gender	Year Completed Graduate Programme	Age	Current /Former Employee	Educational Achievement
A	Male	2014	33	Current Employee	Masters Degree
B	Male	2013	29	Current Employee	Bachelor Degree
C	<i>Male</i>	2016	26	Former Employee	Masters Degree
D	Male	2016	30	Current Employee	Bachelors Degree
E	Female	2015	26	Current Employee	Bachelors Degree
F	Male	2016	25	Former Employee	Masters Degree

Three interviews took place face to face, while three took place over the phone. Six individuals participated in total to identify themes on the factors which affect the employment expectations among millennial employees who have completed a graduate programme within the retail sector in Ireland. While Suri (2011) suggests that between fifteen to twenty interviewees is a suitable sample size, other researchers suggest smaller sample sizes such as five or six as appropriate

(Pistrang and Barker, 2012). With qualitative research the goal is to develop extensive information from a few people, therefore the quality of the data is seen as more important than the number of interviewees used.

3.8 RESEARCH METHODS

The overall aim of this research study is to investigate the employment expectations of millennials, focusing on those who they have completed a Graduate Programme in the retail industry.

There were a number of options available to the researcher in relation to the type of research approach to take.

Qualitative methods, which are aligned to the Interpretivist's paradigm above, allows the researcher to discover the meaning of the participant's experiences, cultures, views and beliefs (Greener and Martelli, 2015). Exploratory by its nature, qualitative research does not tend to have a hypothesis as it does not set out to predict participant's views (Saunders, 2016). Data is collected through interviews, observations, documents and audio video materials. Researchers go 'into the field' to spend time with participants, to observe and understand their environment by acting as the instrument (Creswell, 2007).

Quantitative analysis, lined to the positivists approach looks at the relationship between variables. Variables are characteristics which can be independent, dependant or extraneous. Independent variables are characteristics that can be influenced by the researcher; dependant variables are characteristics that can be impacted by the independent variable; extraneous variables are extra characteristics that the researcher is trying to focus on demographic and are usually based on demographic information (Saunders, 2016).

A mixed method approach enables the researcher to use multiple means of exploration into their study. The researcher can apply qualitative descriptions allowing rich material to form themes while quantitative data can be used to

numerically support the data (Creswell, 2007). A mixed method approach provides a broad framework which can provide further insights and understandings which a single method can be limited by. Before applying the this approach, the researcher must first contemplate the timeline of their study and decide on when they want the strands of their qualitative and quantitative research to occur, i.e. concurrently, sequentially or multiphase (Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007)

Having considered each of the methods above, the researcher decided that the most appropriate approach to use was a qualitative methodology following a phenomenological design. This placed the study in the interpretivist tradition as outlined previously.

3.8 METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

A qualitative method explores the meanings of people's feelings, identifies the needs, captures language and generates ideas (Quinlan, 2011). It is commonly used to uncover reasons, motivations, impressions, perceptions and ideas that particular individuals have about a topic of interest. It usually involves talking in-depth and in detail with a few specific individuals. Such an approach was deemed ideal for this study as the researcher wanted to take an in-depth look at millennial graduate's views and behaviour in relation to their job expectations and their perceptions of their employment situation.

The application of qualitative phenomenological design involves understanding the essence of phenomenon by examining the views of the people experiencing them (Smith and Shinebourne, 2012) in this case, millennial participants who have completed a two year graduate programme. Qualitative research was used to expose and comprehend the thoughts and opinions of the participants as they verbalised their opinions, therefore providing a basis for auxiliary decision making. This approach was chosen as it is best suited to the type and depth of data required to answer the research question (Smith et al, 2012).

3.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher wanted to investigate the experiences of a cohort of people using thematic ideas and emerging data therefore a phenomenological methodology was identified as the most appropriate approach as it would provide a theoretical framework which would inform the research. As the researcher was herself a member of the millennial grouping, bracketing was applied in order to ensure her own experiences, predispositions and preconceived notions did not influence her comprehension of how the phenomena appears to the participants (Smith et al, 2012; , Lewis and Thornhill, 2016).

3.8.2 INDEPTH INTERVIEWS

The researcher conducted in depth individual interviews with participants who were deemed compatible with the research question through lived experience and who would help develop an understanding of the phenomena of interest i.e. investigating the employment expectations of millennial employees who have completed a graduate programme in the retail industry. Interviews were scheduled for a time and location which suited the participants. Some chose to do the interviews face to face, while others chose to conduct the interviews over the phone.

It is vital that the interviewer ensures that they use active listening, empathy and builds a relationship based on trust with the participants as Rudestam and Newton (2015) elucidate the ease and willingness of the participants to share their experiences when they are comfortable with the interviewer.

The researcher's original thought was to explore ethnography design, by studying the distinct characteristics of Millennials, by looking at their values, beliefs, language and behaviours, originating from the academic disciplines of research of sociology and anthropology (Gunn et al, 2013). The researcher wanted the final results to be rich with description from the data that was collected through observation and interviews to discover the major themes that describe the cohort's culture towards their job expectation; however the researcher changed their approach due to the many limitations of ethnography design. Ethnographic

design requires a high volume of time spent in the field observing in order to fully comprehend the cohorts culture through multiple interviews with the same individual. The researcher was also not confident that they would be able ensure they applied the bracketing approach to ensure there was no bias in their research.

Semi-structured interviews formulated the main instrument used in the study. Longhurst (2010, p. 103) describes the process as

“A verbal transaction where one person (the interviewer) attempts to elicit information from another person (interviewee) by asking questions”.

Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to ask themed questions that relate to the subject matter. It also allows the researcher the ability to ask additional probing questions that could uncover further information from the interviewee.

The researcher interacted with individuals on a one to one basis. Participants were asked open ended interview questions which focused on the phenomenon of Graduate Programmes and factors affecting the employment expectations among millennials. The researcher chose to use a semi structure for the interviews as supported by Anderson (2011) which allowed for probing deeper into participant’s experience in order for themes to emerge.

All interviews were audio recorded by the interviewer with the permission of the participant. The interviews were then transcribed by the interviewer. Each participant received a copy of their transcription to ensure accuracy of the transcribed interview.

3.9 ETHICAL RESEARCH

Ethical consideration was given to the formation, design and implementation of the study prior to its commencement. This involved ensuring all relevant participants were made aware of the purpose and implementations of the research. As the study specifically relates to a specific retail company in Ireland,

permission was requested and approved from the HR Director and the Graduate Programme Co-Ordinator.

Participants received an initial email detailing the purpose of the study. A detailed consent form was issued to all participants preceding their interviews. The consent form advised all participants that they were free to withdraw from the study without any consequence up to the point of data analysis. It also outlined how all data would be treated and that all information would be anonymised to ensure their identity was preserved.

Once prospective participants initiated their interest, they received a consent form, (Appendix A), confirming that all interviews would be anonymised, and that they were free to remove any part of the interview they were uncomfortable with. It was also pointed out that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were asked to sign and scan a copy of the consent form to the researcher prior to the interview taking place at a time that suited them. As the business is nationwide, participants were based across a number of sites across Ireland; participants were given the option of completing the interview face to face; over the phone or through Skype. Although the preferred method of interview was face to face, for logistical reasons, some of the interviews took place over the phone. Participants did not receive any incentive for participating in the study.

The consent form identified that the information would be treated confidentially and would only be used for the purpose of this study. As outlined by Bryman (2012) it is imperative to ensure participants are aware of their right to informed agreement, right to withdraw from the study and their right to confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were advised that all interviews would be recorded on an electronic device. The recordings were saved on a secure external hard drive which was password protected.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the data collection process, the interviewer needed to ensure the principle research question was being addressed.

Therefore when the data was analysed it was done so in line with the main research objectives. These were categorised into four separate themes: the profile of the graduate, the graduate programme experience, understanding millennials and job retention. (See Appendix C)

Moustakas (1994) progressed phenomenological analysis when he modified Stevick – Colaizzi – Keen method. This practical method outlines a stepped approach to data permits in depth data analysis.

Step one involved recording all statements of relevant experiences of the graduates. The process is known as horizontilisation. This involved treating equal the subject of graduate programmes, what millennials want and job retention.

Step two involved the researcher removing any duplicates or vague comments that the participants may have made throughout their interviews.

Invariant horizons were applied to step three by creating a list of what remained, followed by step four which grouped these statements into categories. The researcher did this by collating all participant’s key themes on an excel spread sheet as it would be easy to identify common phrases and themes. “Textural description” was applied to the experiences of the graduates with direct quotes from their transcripts included (Cresswell, 2007).

Step five organised the themes of the participant’s statements to create a contextual description of their experiences.

Step six Involved outlining the researcher’s experiences of the study. The researcher did not complete a graduate programme herself; however she does fit the classification of a millennial. The researcher documented her experiences and how they came to those viewpoints. This minimalized the risk of the researcher applying her own views and allowed her to focus solely on the views of the participant.

The final step involved the researcher composing a description of the phenomenon by integrating the textural and structural descriptions. This formed the context of the experience studied i.e. the graduate programme completed by the millennial cohort, identifying the factors which caused the graduates to remain in the business or leave the company once they completed the programme.

The researcher decided to transcribe the interviews manually. Although this is a time consuming process, it allowed the researcher to get fully immersed in the research and to fully understand the language, tone and sentiment portrayed in each interview. As the transcriptions were shared with the participants for their review, the researcher was confident the information was accurate and portrayed correctly.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter deliberated the method used to gather qualitative data for the research of this study. The steps taken involved identifying the research topic, determining the questions used in the interview, defining the population, carrying out a pilot study and a representative sample was decided upon. Six participants completed the interviews.

The interview questions were adapted from a similar study carried out by Linden (2015) which “explored the job expectations of millennial generational members within the Baltimore – Washington metropolitan area” (Linden, 2015 pp. 49). All questions related to the job expectations of millennials, with a focus on graduate programmes and job retention. These themes were discussed in detail throughout chapter two.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research question is: “An insight into the job expectations of Millennials, focusing on those who have completed a Graduate Programme within the retail sector in Ireland”.

This chapter will focus on the results as they emerged from the data. The qualitative results are presented by recording the themes which emerged throughout the phenomenological analysis through the medium of semi-structured interviews. All results are detailed in chapter five.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The qualitative retorts were analysed using phenomenological analysis. The information collected from the semi structured interviews was transcribed by the researcher and methodically coded using Moustaka’s (1994) seven steps of data analysis. Initial themes were identified and the data collected to relevant codes. By applying Moustaka’s approach it was possible for the researcher to amalgamate the data and labels for a better understanding of the themes that emerged.

Table 2: Themes and percentages noted by participants related to graduate millennials job expectations

Themes	% of participants who noted the themes
Career Progression	100%
Team Environment And Collaboration	100%
Responsibility and support	66.67%
Mentoring	66.67%
Need to be challenged	50%
Retention	50%
Good Cultural Fit	25%

4.3.1 THEME ONE: CAREER PROGRESSION

Career progression was a strong theme which emerged from the interviews. All participants discussed career development and progression throughout interview questions one, two, four, five, thirteen, fifteen and sixteen. This theme was the most predominant theme throughout the interview process.

Some graduate millennials confirmed that structured career development had an influence on their reasons for staying within the business after they completed the graduate programme.

So I was progressing quite well within the company. And I was progressing at a faster rate than I did in my previous career. So that's pretty much the reason why I stayed, just the level of progression that I was making within the company... (Participant A)

...and real opportunity to progress, so that was probably why I stayed... (Participant C)

I like the culture and I liked that you were given real responsibility and real opportunity to progress, so that was probably why I stayed... (Participant E)

... So when the job came up, it was offered to me as a good stepping stone. A good piece of experience to get and something that would be useful to me in the future... by trying to move up the ladder.... (Participant F)

Other participants asserted that 'structured' career progression plans are important to them and a determinant when deciding to remain in a company. When asked in Q6: "How do potential advancement opportunities influence your loyalty to a company?" Participants cited,

Massively! The more opportunities the better! In fact, before I got this role, I was half considering trying something else and then I got this role and I was kind of suggested to go for another role last week. Now, it's probably not a step up, but a step sideways. And not really what I wanted, but to know that there is opportunities like this, that's great, if you get me. Like the more opportunities, like, what that will do is... if I had left last year... I'm still here a year on and if something else pops up in the next six months, or even I do decide to throw my C.V. in for this one which I'm debating at the moment; that's definitely going to hold me for another year. So I think the more rotation for people, the better... (Participant B)

... My first year I would have been given an excel spread sheet with probably all of the stuff I needed to know and by when I needed to know it... (Participant D)

Like, if you're doing a five point scale here, it's a five... (Participant F)

...Because as I say, you know, Millennials it's not just about the money, it's about progression... (Participant F)

While some participants originally mentioned that career progression was the main reason for their stay in the business initially once the graduate programme was completed, they cited that this was a root cause for their decision to leave the business.

...There's not enough focus on upward career progression and that ultimate career path. There's a lot of that stuff in terms of having that basis when you are in the graduate programme, but not enough I don't think... post... and while I think it has a huge bearing, especially on Millennials...(Participant C)

When asked what length of time do you expect to stay in a role before being eligible for advancement opportunities expectations were mixed:

...nine months to a year... (Participant C)

...one year... (Participant E)

...One and a half years... (Participant B)

...One and a half years... (Participant F)

...two years... (Participant D)

...two and a half years... (Participant A)

When asked if they agreed that the graduate programme enhanced their career opportunities, the interviewees discussed opportunities within the business,

...Yeah, I think completing the programme definitely sets you apart from the other guys. If I bench mark myself against guys who would have been in the business before me as X managers, and whatever else, I would have moved up before they would have... (Participant A)

... I'd like to think so, yeah it has in fairness... Like I wouldn't be as well positioned to become let's say [job title] without some of the tools we learned in the IMI about managing stress, managing workload... that kind of stuff. (Participant D)

Participants also spoke of the opportunities afforded to them outside of the business,

Absolutely! Yeah I think it's a case of having three job offers when I left the company, and I think it's the things I learned on the Graduate Programme about myself, and the things I have learned about the retail industry, and taking it into the buying stream, I think the thinking in the company is even different from the company I am currently I am now

working for. It's very much enhanced my career opportunities.

(Participant C)

Definitely! I think it's well regarded in the wider market and I know that some people would even approach you on LinkedIn knowing that you have done it. Internally I think you have that little bit of extra pull. Even after it, people tend to give you time and they know you and they know your face...

(Participant E)

Oh absolutely, definitely!... So the reputation the company has is brilliant and as I say some of the projects I have worked on while I was there, and even the hands on experience, was real experience as well. So from an actual day to day, it was really really good... (Participant F)

Many of the millennial graduates have career aspirations, however only few have a long term plan set out for them. They are more focused on the short term milestones with many only looking ahead five years,

Yeah, I would definitely have a plan. I have set out milestones, very clearly of the things I want to hit by a certain point in time. I definitely have a plan in my own head. I've never made a secret of it. I've shared it with my line manager. I've outlined where I want to go... (Participant A)

I do... yes I do and it's not even so much as a plan, but you can have it capped. And this is probably a sure sign of a millennial, now that I think of it. I don't want to be a senior manager in of a company... (Participant B)

... I think that's my career path, I'm not so sure what the next step is... (Participant E)

But kind of as it stands I don't really to be honest with you, have a clear path of where I want to be. The reason being is I don't want to pigeon hole

myself and end up in a senior position at thirty five and just kind of get to erm... and just end up doing something that I just don't want to do. So I'm kind of happy going along where I am now. I know where my next couple of steps are but I don't know where my ultimate goal is but it's definitely executive committee type thing even though that might be way too aspirational but it's that kind of region, but how I get there is a different matter... (Participant F)

Participants find value in setting out short-term achievable milestones

...So I think if you don't have deadlines of where you want to go, and hit them within a certain date I think you won't achieve what you want to achieve... (Participant A)

...Like, I like giving myself a target and I like hitting it, whatever it is and I get a kick out of that... (Participant D)

I would never plan to go too far ahead. I'm not one of these people who have a five year plan, I've been the same since I was young, I like to get good at what I'm doing and when I'm good at what I'm doing I like to move on or do something else... (Participant D)

4.3.2 THEME TWO: TEAM ENVIRONMENT AND COLLABORATION

When questioned if being part of a team was important to millennial graduates, a number of factors emerged.

Some participants spoke of the sense of support and camaraderie that is important to them and the positive impact this has on the work,

Massively, yeah massively. Its one thing that I suppose for me, me and my colleagues that I socialise with at work, how do we describe it... It's a shit role but we're all in it together. It sounds funny but there is a part of it comradery, we're all busy and we're all stressed, and we're all under

pressure, but because your buddy beside you is in the same position, you almost end up having a laugh about it. And you just get on with it like. So if you didn't have that kind of comradery I don't think you would stick around to be honest with you. Yeah it's massive for me anyway... (Participant A)

...I'm now loving having daily team huddles, and I'm loving talking to my team every day. I'm loving something as silly as knowing the girl who sits opposite me, what she has in her tea or what she has in her coffee. I love going down and surprising her with a coffee; I love that element and I don't think I got that in my previous job. I've always been a keen sports man, and teams have always been hugely important. I think I felt, yeah I probably felt a bit lonely, but and it affected my job a little bit... (Participant C)

...I like the people I work with so it's very very good. The people make it a lot easier. In good and bad ways I suppose. There is almost this sense that "It's a bit shit but we're all in it together"... (Participant D)

Yeah, very important... I just felt that the team environment there was amazing. I'd never been on a team before where you would have a team meeting where everyone would discuss their ideas, and I've never had that environment before where you just really felt part of a team and everyone was... there was a real line of one mentality and like... we were all working towards the same goal even though we were all doing different things, everyone wanted each other to succeed. And people would give each other tips and it just was a really good working environment. And I think people would try a bit more in that environment because everyone had each other's back. It was just a nice environment to work in and I think you only really notice it when you are part of a real team... (Participant E)

Yeah, I think it's really important. I've kind of always told myself that I'd do any job if I get on with the team, and if the manager takes an interest in you. So like again, it's hugely important if you're having a rough time at

work with pressures and stuff, If the team that you have around you are kind of looking out for you, and everyone supports each other, it makes it so much easier... (Participant F)

Other participants expressed their thoughts on the influence their manager has on creating a team environment,

...I think it's more a manager saying to the team we have a new member joining next week, make sure you give them time we all know what it's like starting out and be someone to lean on if they need advice because you know, it's tough... (Participant B)

...I think it's a sign of a really good manager if you are working under the manager and whether it be a department manager or your line manager, you do feel like you are part of their team. It's always a good sign like, do you know what I mean, so for me it's a big thing with a leader like... (Participant D)

When discussing collaboration within the business, there was a general consensus that there were insufficient tools for collaboration due to the nature of the business.

No, if I look at the fact that we have similar departments across the different divisions of our business, I would have to say no. If I look at our division would we collaborate with them when I would say no, would they collaborate with us when we are working on something, then again no. Because we are competitive by nature, put it this way, we would be the smaller fish, in comparison to the other division of the business... (Participant A)

...I think it's a big problem within [name of company], everyone has KPI's that everyone is measured on and they don't go across departments'. For example, [department] don't care what goes into the warehouse, they don't care how much stock your sitting on, the warehouse could be bursting at the seams and they'll go out and agree a new deal to put 250,000 coco pops or something.... (Participant F)

4.3.3 THEME THREE: RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT

A theme which emerged throughout questions one, two and four was responsibility. Millennial graduates expressed their requirement for responsibility while on the graduate programme.

... While we all want support, at the end of the day if you were, let's say, if you're working a forty hour week and if I feel that I've no control of my category, why am I doing it like? Do you know what I mean? I shouldn't have to go to my line manager on every decision... (Participant D)

This responsibility needed to be reinforced with support from their managers.

... I got thrown in the deep end. But she always was always there with any questions, if I needed any help. So I was thrown in the deep end but she was there at the side with a ring boy, or whatever... in that sense. (Participant D)

... I was responsible for a project, and I made an absolute mess of something and there was a substantial amount of money at risk for the company. I went in and I met my Trading Director and I presented the scenario where everything I did added up to a massive profit. Okay, but am what we didn't foresee was something else happening, and something else happened, and went wrong. And the Director didn't give out to me and didn't go 'well that was stupid' or, they just said basically, don't let this experience turn you off

doing this again. Don't let this deter you from taking a chance again...
(Participant A)

...They gave me a lot of responsibility and I think the highlight of that is the responsibility but knowing it doesn't fall on you. The act of being given the work but not actually, or don't over pressure of stress the person...
(Participant B)

4.3.4 THEME FOUR: MENTORING

Participants were asked to reflect on the 70/20/10 framework and discuss their experiences regarding on the job experience, informal mentoring and formal learning in question two. While many participants briefly discussed their experience with on the job training and formal learning, the main discussion focused on the mentoring they received within the business.

Some millennial graduates discussed the mentoring they received from their peers,

...I had a lot of peer mentoring because there was three of us that went up originally and two there on the graduate stream above us. So I think without the five of us in Belfast for the first year, I don't think I would have got through those two years. Moving from Dublin up to Belfast, and having that peer group of graduates... me and [Graduate's name] would have spent a lot of time together up north. We would have bounced a lot of ideas off of each other in terms of I was operations and he was trading; I loved learning from what he was learning from. That essence of informal mentoring from each other and that was brilliant. (Participant C)

A common viewpoint of those interviewed focused on the ability of mentors to bridge the gap from the experience they gained in college and apply to their working environment,

... someone who will chat to you and just understand that...they're [graduates] not used to an office environment, they're used to learning something out of a text book. And you're pushed in different ways... (Participant B)

... my boss at the time was very good in terms of... obviously I learned a lot from him, about the actual job, but also in terms of the kind of... how you would present yourself within the business, ways to present and they were full of ideas on like, hints and tips... That mentoring really helped me particularly coming straight from college into the working environment, and I think I'm the same as anyone. It's a big adjustment... (Participant E)

... my bosses at the time took a real interest in my progression as it came up and came up with these progression plans for me to make sure I got experience in a lot of areas so... (Participant F)

Other millennial graduates expressed their views that mentoring should come from senior managers,

... I think from the point of view of a graduate programme going forward, a Graduate should be in the same office as a senior manager, they should literally sit beside them. Every phone call that a senior manager makes, the Graduate should be listening, listen it's the tone of voice that you use in a certain situation, you'll understand when you are in a strong position and when you are in a weak position, when you need to concede something or when you need to push a point home. They are the kind of things that are more important in our role... (Participant A)

After my first year I was given a mentor but he was more of an operations manager than a head of operations so from a mentoring basis I was probably at a disadvantage... (Participant C)

4.3.5 THEME FIVE: NEED TO BE CHALLENGED

There was a strong reoccurring theme among those interviewed regarding their need to be challenged. They cited,

... I'm probably not a good example of a millennial in terms of what I want. I just love having my brain, I dunno, my brain challenged. I mean that's the big thing. I love a job that challenges me both interpersonally and work basis... (Participant C)

... I really want to be challenged in my job, and if I get to a point where I'm not challenged... I think then I might think about moving on, I just think I'm willing to work hard and I'm willing to move around place and even on the Graduate Programme you'd rotate and there are positives and negatives of that. Like it is disruptive to actually uproot and move so I think that says a lot too that you are willing to work. (Participant E)

These challenges can often emerge through special projects and new activities that are assigned

...like I'm currently involved as a trainer for an engagement programme we are rolling out through the business and I really enjoy that. Part of the reason I did it is because 1. I like the project and 2. It's a massive opportunity for me to be trained in publicly speaking so I wasn't going to miss out on an opportunity on that, so that's kind of part of it... (Participant A)

...Like the biggest time I have seen my own, like pushing my boundaries, with the breakthrough, like getting out of your comfort zone is when I have changed teams, or when I have started a new project, or took on something new. That's definitely when I have seen the most benefit in your abilities... (Participant B)

Like, I'm willing to work hard, but I think that I want to be acknowledged for that. And I want to be given new activities and be challenged and if I'm not being challenged then I'd probably consider moving... (Participant E)

...The biggest piece that I took from the graduate programme was a kind of special project that I worked on. Because they completely take you out of your comfort zone... (Participant F)

4.3.6 THEME SIX: RETENTION

When asked if participants were in a situation where they were unhappy in their role, what was the likelihood that they would stay in the role, all participants affirmed they would leave the business; however, in regards to the amount of time they would remain in a company before pursuing external career opportunities, participants gave varying timeframes,

...Not very long. You would probably give it nine months tops. You know because you would kind of, you would pretty much have seen out the majority of the year. You'll know it's not going to get any better, because you would have done the majority of the year so at that stage then I would cut and run... (Participant A)

... I would definitely give it a minimum of six to nine months. Maybe even six to twelve months. Maybe that's just me, maybe I'm just risk adverse but I wouldn't like to be jumping ship too quickly. (Participant B)

...I think it was four months in my last role... (Participant F)

...So if we agreed by... in four weeks' time you'll have seen improvements, I think that's a fair amount of time for anyone to change a work practice...

While the consensus to leave the business was overwhelming, the majority of graduate millennials advised that they would discuss their discontent with their manager before looking at alternative options.

...So giving it a period of time and having expressed the need for change so... after expressing it and then eight months of no change... (Participant E)

...I'd call a meeting with my manager and I would lay out my expectations and where they are falling short, and the reasons why I'm unhappy. I'd agree a time line for that to change and agree that if that doesn't change I would leave like... (Participant D)

4.3.7 THEME SEVEN: CULTURAL FIT

When asked if participants felt their current employer was a good cultural fit for graduate millennials, opinions were mixed,

Yeah, I'm going to say no... (Participant A)

I...eh....I do.... Let's see... no maybe not actually. Maybe it's changing now... (Participant B)

Not that it was a bad fit..... but there's better fits out there I think... (Participant F)

There was a viewpoint that it was difficult to cater for the needs of millennials based on the industry the company operated in,

I think the retail industry in its essence struggles to cater for that. You're competing against the Google's and the LinkedIn's and if you look across the road, there is a company across the road Qualtrex and you can see into their offices and you can see four pool tables and a table tennis table and it's bang in the middle of the city centre. It's hard to cater towards the needs of what a Millennial wants and a Millennial wants a social life as well

as a work life. In its essence Company X was a large retailer and where the offices were going to be were always going to be based on like a warehouse. So it's very hard for a company like Company X to tick all of the boxes for what a Millennial wants... (Participant C)

The hierarchical structure of the business was also deemed unattractive to millennials,

The millennials that are coming through now in terms of the graduate programme, they are looking at the likes of the Googles and the Facebook's of this world where they get flexible working hours, the office is casual, it's probably open plan, there is a social aspect to work. I don't believe any of that is present within the company. Our company is quite hierarchical. We are very processes driven, there seems to be a block between... there's layers of middle management there that are blocking new ideas and their response to it is that will never work, we tried it before years ago and it didn't work; or we can't do it because our systems won't allow it. There is a generation there in the middle who are unwilling to try new things because in my own opinion they are afraid of it, they are afraid of new technology because they don't understand it and they don't want to learn it. They are happy to hold onto the old way of doing things because they are proficient in it, they know it inside out and they cannot be challenged on it so I think we are very stuck in the way we do things... (Participant A)

Those who did think that the company was a good cultural fit for millennials, based their opinion on the link between the graduate programme and a functioning role within the business,

I think currently.... I think for the Graduate Programme, it's really good when you come off the Graduate Programme, in terms of getting a [job title] but I think there is still work to do in terms of... bridging the gap between one role and the next role... (Participant E)

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1. STUDY OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study investigates the employment expectations of millennials with a focus on those who have completed a graduate programme in the retail sector in Ireland. This chapter will discuss the findings and equate them to existing literature explored in the literature review to identify if there is any correlation or variances between the two. This was completed by addressing the research question outlined in chapter three which defined a range of variables which was previously researched.

Overall the findings suggest that there are several common themes which define the employment expectations of those who have completed a graduate programme and fit the generational cohort of millennials.

5.2 CAREER PROGRESSION

The uniting theme among most participants in the study outlined that career progression is a priority for millennials who have completed a graduate programme. The viewpoints are supported by Howe et al (2003) detailing millennials as achievement orientated and McDonald et al (2008) belief that millennials place a focal point on career progression. Participants reported that career opportunities within the organisation had a direct influence on their decision to stay within the organisation once they had completed their graduate programme.

Once the graduate programme is completed, participants detail their requirement for a structured framework which would create a clear path for them to develop their careers. Ondeck (2002) supports this finding while Ferri- Reed (2013) embeds the importance for businesses to utilise insight building assessment tools in order to navigate a clear career path for millennials through consistent feedback and frequent discussions about their performance. The findings documented the frustrations felt by graduates of career paths which were not transparent and

vague. It was unsurprising that the participants who had left the business cited frustrations with the lack of a defined career path and a transparent view of their career progression.

The research collected outlines the expected time-frames millennial graduates feel is sufficient in order to be eligible for promotion. Some participants expected to progress within the business from nine months to a year. Sinek (2017) believes these time-frames support the labels placed on millennials as being impatient and having unrealistic expectations. It was interesting to discover when analysing the findings that those who gave a shorter time-frame were under the age of thirty, while participant A and participant D, who are both thirty and above, though a longer time-frame of two years or more was a more suitable time-frame. Further research would be required to identify if the expectations of these millennials would change as they grow older.

There was widespread consensus that greater career opportunities were available to those millennials who completed the graduate programme. Participants believed that they progressed faster within the business than those who did not complete a graduate programme based on the experience they gained through some of the projects they worked on and the networking opportunities they were afforded while on the programme. This 'edge' can be attributed to the support that graduate programmes offer millennials and eases the worries of those transitioning from third level education into the working environment (Gault et al, 2000).

5.3 TEAM ENVIRONMENT AND COLLABORATION

A second finding of this research focused on the need for millennials to feel part of a team. Participants spoke passionately about their need for acceptance among their peers and the small gestures that can create a sense of belonging between colleagues. A theme which emerged from the findings was the foundations of a good team stemmed from the manager. Many believed that their manager was

responsible for creating an aligned and supportive culture among the group which subsequently cascades through to all members of the team. Millennials gain solace in the fact that they may be having a tough time, and the nature of their role is demanding yet they empathise with the struggles of their peers and share support to get through the difficult times.

A common thought among those who participated in the research was that the business models did not allow for collaboration across the wider business. While there was opportunity to collaborate within their smaller teams, millennial graduates did not believe the greater business environment supported collaboration across departments. The researcher expected participants to attribute this to possible limited technologies within the organisation as theorised by Colvin (2015); however, participants explained that this was due to the business model and conflicting key performance indicators across departments.

5.4 RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT

The importance for millennial graduates to have a sense of responsibility was a recurring theme in the literature reviewed in chapter two. In contrast to labels such as 'lazy' and 'entitled' (Sinek, 2017) research carried out by Zhu et al (2017) refutes these terms. The findings support the theory by Zhu et al as millennial graduates express their need for responsibility, deeming if they do not have control over their work, their purpose within the business is meaningless. Millennial graduates believe that they have worked hard to gain entry to the programme and this hard work should be rewarded through additional responsibility.

“...if you show ability, you get rewarded with a push up, they will give you another responsibility, and they'll reward you with a promotion or whatever. (Participant A)

Proving further sustenance to the demanding nature of their generation, millennial graduates acknowledged that in addition to their requirement for responsibility, they also required support from their managers to be there to assist

them during times of pressure or help to deal with mistakes when they arise. Graduates commonly discussed the reassurance they felt in knowing that their manager trusted them to complete a task but was at hand to provide aide if required. It can be argued that millennials continue to crave the support that they received from their parents during their adolescent years, and view their managers as a foster for this support.

5.5 MENTORING

Millennial graduates vocalised the difficulty they had when they entered the workforce in applying the theory they learned in college and putting it into practice, and the value of bridging theory and experience. The company does not have a formal mentoring programme which Ragins et al (2000) argues can be disadvantageous if the correct partnership is not formed between the mentor and the mentee. Instead an informal mentoring approach is in place. Millennial graduates voiced their opinion that a mentor is of greater value to them when the mentor is in a senior management position rather than middle management. Time should be spent shadowing a senior manager, sharing office space with them and gaining insight into how they network and build relationships with other stakeholders. As documented throughout chapter two, millennials crave feedback and value constructive criticism and view the mentoring process as a prime opportunity to gain insights into the business and to receive regular advice from a senior manager within the business. Peer mentoring played a significant role for Participant C in the absence of a traditional mentor. He was able to turn to his peers who supported him through difficult situations, learn from those who were working in other areas of the business and use his fellow graduates as a soundboard for ideas as he progressed through the graduate programme. As supported by the literature, mentoring can be seen as an opportunity. Millennial graduate goals are evolutionary and good mentoring from senior managers and peers assists graduates with their professional evolution.

5.6 THE NEED TO BE CHALLENGED

Considering millennials are so driven to progress in their career, it came as no surprise to the researcher when participants discussed their need to be challenged as key to their engagement. Millennials have been widely criticized for their unrealistic promotional expectations and the pressure they place on their managers to promote them within the business; however Anderson (2016) believes this is attributed to their need for challenge (Sinek, 2016; Ferri-Reed, 2014; Eisner, 2005) Participants explained how their need to be challenged has a direct link to their loyalty to the business.

... I really want to be challenged in my job, and if I get to a point where I'm not challenged... I think then I might think about moving on... (Participant E)

The data collected revealed that through special projects and new activities millennial graduates were able to work outside of their "comfort zone" and "pushing boundaries". Participants viewed these opportunities as platforms to showcase their abilities which may not be utilised in their usual day to day. Balda et al (2011) support service leadership by creating an environment of growth to millennials by giving them tasks that are meaningful and compliments their strengths. While these activities are beneficial to the individuals, participants also voiced their concerns in regards to work load, and highlighted the importance of the resources available when taking on these projects.

"To be involved in a project, yeah great, but I suppose with the lack of resources we have in our division, sometimes a project can just be a bit of a pain in the arse..." (Participant A)

"I'm working overtime; I'm already doing everything I possibly can, just with my day job. So if you are going to put me on a project team... you're not going to get any value out of me because I'm going to be stressed" (Participant D)

This finding correlates with Klun (2008) as he emphasises challenge that businesses face in the modern era as they try to construct flexible working models for employees to juggle their work and personal lives.

5.8 RETENTION

Millennials are regularly accused of being 'job hoppers' and this is a topical conversation among many employers due to the impact that high staff turnover has on a business. There was consistency among participants as they would not stay loyal to a business if they were unhappy in their role. Reasons for leaving their employer consisted of lack of career progression, monetary reward, work life balance, benefits and personal circumstances.

Although it is not astonishing to discover that millennials are willing to change jobs if they are unhappy in their role, it was interesting to discover the variance in time they were willing to spend in a role if they were unhappy. The variance ranged from four weeks to two and a half years. It was also surprising to recognise the openness of millennials as they advised that they would discuss their frustrations with their line manager and make known their intention to leave the business before pursuing other opportunities. It can be argued that their willingness to be open and honest with their manager is based on their openness to feedback (Hershatte et al, 2010).

5.9 CULTURAL FIT

As millennials continue to grow within the workforce, they have a greater cultural influence within the business. Companies who have mastered the art of creating an environment that caters to the needs of millennials have invested time getting into the mind-set of millennials and have made adjustments to their working practices to facilitate their needs. They have embraced technology, created environments that support collaboration with their colleagues, created flexible working arrangements, and deliver frequent feedback to colleagues.

The participants had mixed reaction when asked if they felt the business was a good cultural fit for millennials. Participant E believed that the company was a good cultural fit as they reflected on the scale of the business and the avenues of opportunity available to those coming off the graduate programme. They advised however that the business was missing an opportunity to develop future leaders by not having enough focus on the next step of their career.

The participants who did not think the business had fully embraced a culture deemed attractive to millennials felt that there were multiple factors causing this. The topics mentioned by participants included, the hierarchical structure of the business, a lack of work – life balance and limited opportunities for colleagues to socialise outside of the office (i.e. offsite days).

There was positive acknowledgement paid to the efforts the business is making towards culturally transforming the organisation. They acknowledged that company leaders are incorporating tools across the business that encourage collaboration, positive feedback, aligned goals and a future focus to the business. By cultivating an environment that is attractive to millennials Twenge et al (2008) believe it will reduce the risk of millennials seeking this cultural fit elsewhere.

5.10 LIMITATIONS

There are several arguments for the merits of both qualitative and quantitative research (Saunders, 2016; Quinlan, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990). Cooper and Schindler (2006) detail the confines of qualitative research including the view by many senior managers that the process is too subjective and vulnerable to human error. They also outline the risk of bias when collecting and interpreting data. Horsburgh (2003, p. 308) echoes this sentiment due to the deficiency of “scientific rigour and credibility”.

As the topic of millennials is broad and research is emerging on the subject, a broad range of open-ended questions were used to gain insight from the

participants. Saunders (2016) advises that the use semi-structured interview questions is appropriate when asking a large number of questions, however upon reflection the researcher could have limited the number of questions used in the interviews. Each interview took between 30-45mins to complete. The interviewer observed that some participants were tired by the end of the interview process having discussed complex issues based on their loyalty to their employers. The high volume of questions also resulted in a high proportion of time required to collect the data from the participants in order to collate their findings.

The researcher needed to consider the pre-existing work relationship with the participants. The researcher, while they did not complete the graduate programme, was very familiar with its establishment and the experiences of the graduates and the workings of the business. It was vital for the interviewer to remain impartial, and to safeguard open, non-biased questions are carried out (Saunders). Jankowicz (2000) believes this can only be combatted by ensuring this is controlled prior to the interview by means of the interviewer asking questions that are important and relevant to the subject topic.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The focus of this research was to gain an insight into the job expectations of millennials, focusing on those who have completed a graduate programme within the retail sector. The research has presented data that millennials have different priorities to preceding generations and this has had an effect how managers manage this youthful cohort. The insights gathered from the qualitative research revealed seven key themes including (a) career progression, (b) team environment and collaboration, (c) responsibility and support (d) mentoring, (e) need to be challenged, (f) retention and (g) cultural fit. The analysis of the findings has demonstrated an appreciation of wider themes including frameworks for retaining talent, structured career progression and methods of cultivating a culture attractive to millennials within an organisation. The research was conducted in an organisation in which participants completed the two year graduate programme. Company leaders may use the findings to become a destination employer for millennials, increase engagement, reduce staff turn-over and develop those who have completed the graduate programme into future leaders within the business.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study allow clear insight into what millennials, who have completed a graduate programme, expect from their employer. These insights will enable the business to understand what motivates millennial graduates, and reduce the risk of losing talented employees once they have completed their graduate programme which can have a negative impact on productivity and have huge financial implications to a business (Hagen Porter, 2011).

The following recommendations have been made following the data collected and analysed:

Further research should be considered, including holding focus groups to gain an insight into the job expectations of millennials from graduates who have recently completed their two year graduate programme.

The data unveiled that millennial graduates are very ambitious and career focused. A structured career path would enable millennial graduates to map out a transparent career journey marking both short term and long term milestones that they can celebrate throughout their career. This will accommodate the millennial graduate's need for structure and also satisfy their impatient nature by creating short-term goals.

The researcher recommends training for managers of millennials to strengthen their approach towards engaging with this generation and adjusting practices that were suitable for Generation X and Baby boomers but redundant on this emerging generation. Managers will be able to develop the generation's skills, build on strengths of millennials in areas such as technology and social media, manage millennials expectations and understand how to deliver constructive feedback to millennials in a timely manner.

Finally, the researcher suggests the business develops a formal mentoring structure which will follow the graduate throughout the two year programme and into the initial stages of their career. It is recommended that these mentors form part of the company's senior leadership team and allow time for the millennial graduate to spend with the mentor, recommending scheduling regular meetings once per month for approximately one hour.

An opportunity to shadow the mentor in meetings with stakeholders and foster learning from their experiences throughout the mentor's career journey. While this process will be timely for senior managers, it is important to appreciate the long term positive effects this will have on potential future leaders of the business and the prospective cost-saving effect this will have on the business when retention levels improve.

The aforementioned recommendations can be adopted to cultivate a culture which is appealing to millennials who have completed a graduate programme the merits of which have been identified in chapter two.

6.3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of this study would be moderate. The business in question is currently in the process of rolling out a programme to members of the business which will support managers by utilising tools and frameworks which will encourage engagement with their millennial graduates. The cost to roll this out to managers is approximately €1,500 per participant with managers attending three full day workshops which are scheduled over the course of the year.

The financial implications of the remaining recommendations would be minimal to the business and requires time invested as opposed to finance.

Human labour involved in facilitating the focus groups for millennial graduates within the business is estimated at a maximum of two individuals. Mentors would also need to free time in their schedules to accommodate frequent meetings with their mentees.

Personal Learning Statement

When I set out to complete this thesis I was unprepared for both the challenge and reward I would face. I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to research the topic of millennials who have completed a graduate programme within the retail sector as this is a topic of particular importance to me. The method of conducting the research was particularly challenging at times but I believe the process has afforded me the opportunity to develop skills that will benefit me in both my personal and work life.

By conducting this study, I gained great insight into the subject but gained a greater insight into myself. I became aware of my own internal bias's and assumptions in the initial stages of the research, but through further exploration and insights unveiled throughout the study of existing literature and qualitative research, gained a deeper understanding of the research topic. The topic of millennials and graduate programmes is very broad, and studies are continually emerging on this topic. In essence, as the millennial population continues to grow within the workforce, it is imperative for employers to understand the characteristics of millennials and comprehend what it is that they want from graduate programmes and how the programmes can be used to retain talented future leaders within the business.

I was fortunate to have access to former members of the graduate programme, however found the process of analysing the interviews very time consuming. As the topic of millennials is still a relatively new topic, I struggled to taper the themes discussed. On reflection, if carrying out a similar study, I would consider refining the core interview questions and focus more on probing questions based on the emerging themes.

I would also consider conducting a focus group among the targeted cohort in addition to conducting individual interviews. As the volume of interviews conducted was less than ten, it would have been valuable to the research to gain an understanding from a larger group of people in an efficient time frame.

Throughout the analysis and recommendation process, I gained a great sense of satisfaction knowing that the research that I conducted throughout the initial stages of this study was relevant to millennials and graduate programmes and the insights I gained could be applied in a practical setting. The critical analysis skills I have gained will be beneficial to my professional ventures.

This thesis was a titanic undertaking and had an impact on both my professional and personal life. There is an enormous sense of pride associated with this thesis that I believe will only enhance the opportunities ahead of me towards developing a career in Human Resource Management.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION SHEET



Purpose of the Study

As part of the requirements for the MSc in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with investigating:

Factors which effect millennials' decision to build a long career within the company where they have completed their graduate programme;

Factors which may cause them to leave the company post completion of the graduate programme.

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are the general cohort of those born between 1981 and 2000 (Campione, 2014; Cheeseman & Downey, 2012; Johnson & Lopez, 2008).

What will the study involve?

The interview will involve the following:

Participants will also be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview with me to discuss their experience of the company Graduate Programme. These interviews will be audio-recorded so as to be reviewed for qualitative data.

Data yielded from these interviews will be anonymised, assessed thematically, critically evaluated and presented anonymously in the research.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part in this study as it requires a sample of participants who share the same or similar characteristics e.g. working environment, development opportunities, work challenges and age bracket. As a member of the company Graduate Programme you are a member of a cohort who are working to a specific development programme and have similar workplace opportunities and challenges. You are also considered a member of Generation Y which is commonly agreed to include those born between 1981-2000.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you volunteer, and are selected, for this study you will be asked to sign a consent form (see attached). You will retain a copy of this information sheet and a signed copy of the consent form. Appendix A outlines the responsibilities of my role as the interviewer and yours as an interviewee in this process. By signing the consent form you agree to participate fully in the interview as outlined.

You will have a maximum of two weeks after completion of the interview to notify me should you wish to withdraw from the study. If you do wish to withdraw at this point any identifiable data will be destroyed and not included in the study.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information which you give?

Any personal identifiable data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study, available only to me and my research supervisor. It will be securely stored on my personal computer in a password protected file. A back-up file will be maintained on my personal external hard drive for the duration of the study. The findings and anonymised extracts from the interviews will be published as per the following point.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The study may be read by the Group HR Director and Talent & Resourcing Partner of Musgrave Group as this study is being conducted with the consent of Musgrave Ltd. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. As part of the interview session we will establish the professional boundaries of my role as interviewer and my role as the Human Resource Officer.

Any further queries?

If you need any further information, you can contact me as follows:

Email: paulamarie.ryan@hotmail.com

Mobile: 086-31682xx

For the purposes of anonymity within the work environment please refrain from using my work email address to which you already have access.

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

[Over...

CONSENT FORM

I.....agree to participate in Paula Ryan’s research study entitled “Millennial Graduates: An insight into the job expectations of millennials, focusing on those who have completed a graduate programme within the retail in?”

Tick to agree	
<input type="checkbox"/>	- The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I am participating voluntarily.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I give permission for my interview with Paula Ryan to be audio-recorded.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I understand the role and responsibilities of both Interviewer and Interviewee in the interview process.
<input type="checkbox"/>	- I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed:

Date: _____

PRINT NAME:

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

Profile:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Education background:

Role applied for on Graduate Programme:

Graduate Programme:

1. What were the key job-related factors that prompted you to stay in the company post the Graduate programme?
2. *Academic studies have identified that effective methods of learning and development are based on a blended learning environment instead of a formal framework.*

Explain how on the job experience, informal mentoring & formal learning during your graduate program helped in the completion of your training programme.

3. How do you expect company leaders to demonstrate that they genuinely value your contributions in regard to rewards, benefits, and recognition?
4. What do you feel were the key highlights of the programme?
5. What would you suggest are the improvements required for the grad programme?
6. Do you feel that the Graduate Programme has enhanced your career opportunities?

Understanding Millennials:

7. Do you have a career aspiration / career goals set out for yourself?
8. How important to you are new activities or special projects that expand your skills in meeting your professional aspirations?
9. How important is it to you that you feel part of a team?
10. Place in order of importance (1 very important – 10 not very important)
 - a. Career aspirations;

- b. Feeling trusted;
- c. Receiving instant praise / feedback;
- d. Flexible working environment;
- e. A sense of fulfilment;
- f. Freedom to be creative / make mistakes
- g. Rewards and Benefits;
- h. Development opportunities;
- i. Relationship with manager;
- j. Job stability – 5 years +

11. Do you feel that your current employer is a good cultural fit for Generation Y employees?
12. Explain what factors have contributed to your overall level of job satisfaction?

Job Retention:

13. How do potential advancement opportunities influence your loyalty to a company?
14. How likely are you to stay with a company if it is not meeting your job expectations?
15. What other job-related factors would affect your decision to leave your current company?

Questions 16 & 17 will only be asked to those who have left the company:

16. What were the contributing factors that caused you to leave the company?
17. Is there any one thing that had it been changed that would have kept you in the company?