



An investigation into the key components of internal employer brand and its' impact on organisational performance and retention of talent within the recruitment sector in Ireland.

Aisling Murray

Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2019

Abstract

Purpose: In an increasingly competitive labour market, an organisations' ability to attract and retain the right skills in the 'war for talent' is invaluable (Ronda, et al., 2018). In Ireland, recent studies demonstrate increasing competition within the labour market, with demand outweighing supply in 2018 (Hays Ireland, 2018). The focus of this research is to explore the impact of internal employer branding on organisational performance and retention of talent within the recruitment sector in Ireland.

Research Design/Methodology: For the purpose of this study, the author pursued a qualitative, inductive approach to data collection, conducting non-standardised, semi-structured interviews with a number of representatives within the Irish recruitment sector. Results were extrapolated using thematic analysis, in which the author identified key themes in line with the research objectives. These themes were then discussed and analysed, with reference to both the primary and secondary data collected as part of the study.

Findings: The findings from this dissertation, suggest the indubitable importance of internal employer branding as a key tool for retention and business performance. The findings present a significant shift in how organisations view internal employer branding, establishing that many senior management teams are beginning to place greater strategic emphasis on internal employer brand. It was also noted that financial reward is no longer a key pull factor for employees and the need for employers to consider intangible elements of the employment experience when developing their Employer Value Proposition was also established. The fundamental finding of this study is communication. Effective internal communication that is open and transparent should be the basis for any internal employer brand in order for organisations to keep employees engaged, retain talent and improve business performance.

Murray, Aisling (2019) An investigation into the key components of internal employer brand and its' impact on organisational performance and retention of talent within the recruitment sector in Ireland. Masters thesis, Dublin, National College of Ireland.

Declaration

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation, National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form (Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Aisling Murray

Student Number: 17146984

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MA Human Resource Management

Material submitted for award: Master of Arts in Human Resource Management -
National College of Ireland

(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

(c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository

TRAP (thesis reports and projects)

(d) I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Signature of research student: *Aisling Murray*

Date: 18/08/19

Library Submission Form

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library - National College of Ireland

Student name: Aisling Murray

Student number: 17146984

School: School of Business

Course: MA Human Resource Management

Degree to be awarded: Masters

Title of Thesis: An investigation into the key components of internal Employer Brand and its' impact on organisational performance and retention of talent within the Employability/Recruitment sector in Ireland.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access.

I agree to a hard-bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

Aisling Murray

For completion by the School: The aforementioned thesis was received

by _____ Date: _____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank several people that positively contributed to this research. To my supervisor, Brendan Flanagan, thank you for your support and guidance.

I would also like to thank the interview participants, who gave up their own time to take part in this study, contributing invaluable insights and knowledge to this research.

Finally, I would especially like to thank my family, in particular my Fiancé, for your support, love and patience over the past two years, without which, none of this would be possible.

I am deeply thankful for your support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	I
DECLARATION	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	3
2.1. EMPLOYER BRAND.....	3
2.2. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING	5
2.3. EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION	7
2.4. EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND INTENT TO STAY	9
2.5. EMPLOYER BRAND AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE.....	10
2.6. CONCLUSION.....	11
3 RESEARCH QUESTION	13
3.1. RESEARCH TITLE	13
3.2. RESEARCH AIM.....	13
3.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	13
4 METHODOLOGY	15
4.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	15
4.2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.....	17
4.3. DATA COLLECTION	19
4.4. CHOSEN RESEARCH TOOL.....	19
4.5. PILOT INTERVIEW	19
4.6. SAMPLE AND PROCESS	20
4.7. LIMITATIONS.....	22
4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	23
4.9. METHODOLOGY CONCLUSION	23
5 FINDINGS: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS	25
5.1. INTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING AS A STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION	25
5.2. EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION	27
5.3. FLEXIBILITY AND AUTONOMY	28
5.4. CLEAR CAREER ROUTEWAYS.....	30
5.5. MEASUREMENT, FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	32
5.6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS.....	34
6 CONCLUSION	36
6.1. RECOMMENDATIONS, TIMELINES AND COSTINGS	37
6.2. FURTHER RESEARCH.....	40
6.3. PERSONAL REFLECTION	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42
APPENDICES	49

1. Introduction

Human capital is quickly becoming one of the most valuable resources in modern business (Pfeffer, 1994). As a result, organisations are now required to adopt a more strategic approach to human resources, developing and establishing employer brand as tool for attraction and retention of talent (Beardwell & Thompson, 2014; Balta, 2018; Ronda, et al., 2018; Maheshwari, et al., 2017). Organisations that have the ability to harness human capital, attracting and retaining the top talent within the labour market, will create a long-term, sustainable competitive advantage, that is difficult for competitors to imitate (Pfeffer, 1994). The focus of this research is to analyse the key elements of internal employer branding and how organisations can develop internal employer brand as a strategic tool for retention of talent and improving business performance.

According to Hays Ireland (2018) the needs and wants of employees within the Irish labour market are changing. This is leading organisations to re-evaluate their traditional offering to current and prospective staff and to adopt new approaches to attraction, motivation and retention of talent. In many cases this has led to increased emphasis on the development of more wide-ranging reward packages, professional development opportunities and flexible work options (Beardwell & Thompson, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial that businesses have the ability to react to and meet the changing needs and expectations of the labour force and to create an employer value proposition and environment that enables the organisation to attract and retain top talent (Kashyap & Verma, 2018).

Throughout existing literature, the topic of external employer brand in relation to attraction of talent is widely discussed. However, it was identified that internal employer brand is significantly less prevalent within existing literature, with many studies recommending further research to be conducted in the area of internal employer brand (Tumasjan, et al., 2016). In addition, it has been recommended that, although there is a body of literature that studies the correlation between job satisfaction and retention, further research be conducted around employer brand retention and how this affects overall business performance (Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016).

The aim of this study is to deliver a heightened understanding of employer branding and its application or possible benefits as a strategic tool for business leaders and researchers alike. In an effort to develop a more thorough understanding of this area, this dissertation will be structured in the following manner.

Chapter two of the dissertation will review existing literature to identify research currently available on the area of employer branding. The author will also aim to provide a background on the topic as well as an overview of current practices and initiatives within the area and how this impacts retention and business performance.

Chapter three outlines the main research question as well as the overall aims and objectives of the dissertation. In this chapter, the author will detail the questions to be answered and sub-objectives of the overall study.

In chapter four, the author will then go on to discuss the various different research methodologies available when undertaking research. The chosen methodological approach will then be discussed with rationale as to why this method was chosen ahead of other methodological considerations. This chapter will outline the research philosophy, strategy and instrument used for gathering research data and will also detail the chosen sample, ethical considerations and any limitations that the author encountered.

Finally, chapter five will look to discuss and analyse the findings from both the primary and secondary research conducted within this study. The findings will be discussed using thematic analysis.

The author will then provide a conclusion in chapter six alongside recommendations, implications and costings as well as suggestions for further research.

It is hoped that the findings of this research will provide a valuable insight into the area of internal employer branding and the impact on modern business. A list of references and appendices can all be found at the end of the dissertation for reference, if needed.

2. Literature Review

“The employee is evolving, and the very concept of employment must evolve to keep pace” (Nagpal, 2013)

The purpose of this literature review is to conduct secondary research, exploring the key features of internal employer brand and the effect of internal employer branding practices on the retention of talent and how this effects overall organisational performance. This chapter aims to provide an evaluation of current research, journals and academic publications relevant to the authors’ area of study of internal employer branding, retention and business performance. The author will also look to identify any gaps in current research to provide further direction for primary research to be conducted, as well as highlighting the rationale and justification for this study.

2.1. Employer Brand

Employer branding can be defined as “A set of attributes, often intangible, that makes an organisation distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform best in its culture” (Beardwell & Thompson, 2014, p. 152). An employer branding strategy consists of internal and/or external marketing initiatives, undertaken as part of an organisations’ overall business strategy (Ritson, 2002). During periods of high employment and within a tight labour market, employer branding can become an imperative consideration for organisations who wish to compete for talent and strategically position the company as an ‘employer of choice’ in a bid to retain current staff and attract prospective talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The original concept of internal marketing, which later developed into internal employer branding, was pioneered by Berry (1981), who argued that the needs and wants of the employee or ‘customer’ be taken into consideration when creating or designing roles or ‘products’ (Varey & Lewis, 2002). Ahmed & Rafiq (2002) also outline how an ‘employee as customer’ approach can help organisations to appeal to their target market. This should aid the organisation in improving attitude and motivation in employees, which in turn can improve quality of service, organisational performance and competitive advantage. Figure 1 illustrates Berry’s concept of treating the employee as a customer, as a means of creating sustainable competitive

advantage (Varey & Lewis, 2002). Kaplan (2017), further adds to this concept, suggesting that employees should be considered a market themselves and should be prioritised by the organisation in order to develop a competitive edge through the people within the business. Likewise, Kukreja (2017) states that organisations that consider employees as clients can stand to benefit from improvements in performance, motivation, staff morale and overall productivity. Ahmed and Rafiq (2002) go further to state that employers who treat staff as their first customer will increase employee satisfaction and that happy employees will lead to satisfied customers.

Despite the concept being in its infancy in the eighties and nineties, many of the original recommendations outlined in Berry’s Internal Marketing Model, including the concept of job design based on the needs and wants of the employee and considering employees as primary market or customers, are echoed throughout a multitude of studies to this day (Cappelli, 2000; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016; Alshathry, et al., 2017).

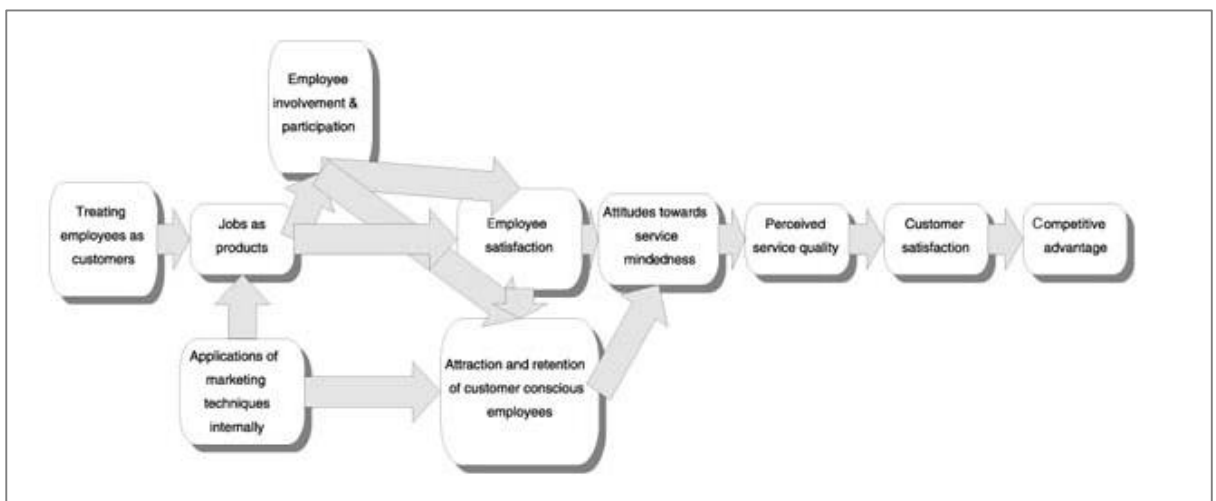


Figure 1: Berry’s Model of Internal Marketing

Source: (Varey & Lewis, 2002, p. 135)

Although the benefits of Berry’s model are apparent, Varey and Lewis (2002), warn that employees do not have the same level of choice as the external customer. For this reason, organisations that adopt this approach should avoid informing employees that they are considered customers, as this may prompt employees to adopt a “customer is always right” mentality and may lead to unreasonable demands on the business if this culture is permitted to develop.

Gronroo's 1984 Internal Marketing model bears some similarity to Berry's 1981 model; however, more focus is placed on the value of effective communication and training thus, enabling employees to develop a customer-oriented approach to their work in order to improve customer satisfaction. Some studies have combined elements from both models to create a hybrid approach to internal employer branding (Varey & Lewis, 2002; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016).

Now, more than ever, strategic employer branding is an increasingly important consideration for organisations within the modern labour market, due to increased competition and demand for talent (Maheshwari, et al., 2017). In order for organisations to remain competitive and sustainable, it is imperative to have the ability to react to and meet the changing needs and expectations of the labour force (Kashyap & Verma, 2018).

2.2. Internal and External Employer Branding

Employer branding is generally discussed under two key areas; internal and external employer branding. Internal branding focusses on improving motivation, productivity and retention of talent within the organisation through various initiatives for current employees (Ritson, 2002). In contrast, external employer branding aims to develop an attractive external brand, in order to compete for and attract top talent within the labour market (Beardwell & Thompson, 2014).

Earlier literature around the area of employer branding was primarily concerned with the external employer brand and how organisations compete for and attract prospective talent. The aim of such practices was to establish the organisation as an employer of choice for graduates and talent within the labour market (Ambler & Barrow, 2016). However, this viewpoint has since evolved based on recommendations that a successful external brand is dependent on the implementation of an effective internal employer brand. This concept suggests that a good internal brand can strengthen the external brand through word of mouth, independent employment studies and social media (Srivastava, et al., 2017). Likewise, Ullah and Ahmad (2017), suggest that the success of an organisation's external brand is dependent on how effective the internal brand is at motivating and satisfying the needs of staff. This viewpoint suggests that organisations view their employees as the

primary customers and that success in satisfying the needs and wants of the employees will in turn lead to successful performance externally (Ullah & Ahmad, 2017). Effective internal branding can help organisations to retain “qualified, skilled and experienced staff and make them feel valued and appreciated, which in return will boost morale, enhance their work performance, productivity and then, the quality of the service” (Balta, 2018, p. 3).

Increasing competition within the labour market and the current ‘war for talent’ has led many business leaders and senior human resources representatives to begin placing increased emphasis on employer branding as a key success factor for businesses (Botha, et al., 2011; Beardwell & Thompson, 2014). The development of effective internal and external employer branding strategies is becoming an increasingly important consideration for organisations seeking to enhance overall business performance (Matanda & Ndubisi, 2013). Alshathry, et al. (2017) further add to this suggesting that a strong and effective internal employer brand strategy can put an organisation in a favourable position during times of high competition and can decrease the level of turnover.

The primary purpose of employer branding activities, is to strengthen the organisations ability to attract, retain and engage with talent in order to deliver a high level of organisational performance (Vatsa, 2016). Employer branding can also be used as a tool to “increase productivity and to improve recruitment, retention and commitment” within an organisation (Ambler & Barrow, 2016, p. 20). Further to this, Huang & Yang (2010), suggest that the development and application of an effective internal brand can also be used as a strategic tool for motivating employees and improving intent to stay.

Although the benefits of employer branding are apparent across a volume of studies, there are also some criticisms around the practice. Beardwell & Thompson (2014) state that employer branding, although beneficial in many regards, can sometimes receive a negative response from current employees who view the practice as an avoidance tactic for employers who do not wish to increase the wages of current employees.

Another common criticism of employer branding is organisations failing to follow through on promises made, which can be counterproductive for the business

(Alshathry, et al., 2017). It is therefore important for employers to avoid over promising and under-delivering when creating an internal employer brand and to ensure that the organisation creates an employment experience that meets or exceeds employee expectations and is achievable for the company to deliver on (Alshathry, et al., 2017). It is suggested that “overstated employer brands are expected to generate a larger applicant pool, yet it is less likely to perform well in retaining them as employee experiences will be below prior expectation” (Alshathry, et al., 2017, p. 425). The rise of social media platforms such as Glassdoor, where employees can publicly rate their experience with an employer, has also meant that organisations who are not delivering their internal employer branding strategy, can run into difficulty if what they are promising in their brand is not reflected in the feedback from current and past employees online (Srivastava, et al., 2017). However, organisations that deliver on promised employee experience to current employees may stand to benefit from increased loyalty and engagement, which in turn can also positively contribute to the external employer brand through word of mouth and social media (Srivastava, et al., 2017; Ullah & Ahmad, 2017).

Staff (2010) found that many organisations who embark on costly internal employer branding strategies, can, often, fail to consider the reason for staff turnover and the cost of staff turnover. This can lead to ill-aligned branding initiatives that do not meet the needs of the desired target market and therefore have little or no impact on retention or business performance. For this reason, it is important for organisations to consider the cost of employee turnover and recruitment as well as the needs and wants of the employee when devising an internal branding strategy (Staff, 2010).

2.3. Employer Value Proposition

Employer Value Proposition can be defined as the complete employee experience on offer to current and prospective employees (Botha, et al., 2011). “Employer branding is an effort by the organization to market its employment value proposition in order to improve recruitment and retention and increase the value of human capital” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 510). Botha, et al. (2011) recommend that employers ensure that the employer value proposition and the needs of the employee are aligned

and that the organisation leaders should strive to develop a differentiated employer value proposition in order to remain competitive.

Employer value proposition can be broken into a number of dimensions within three categories; psychological, functional and economic benefits (Kashyap & Verma, 2018). One method for organisations to measure the value of employer brand is to explore their brand through the five areas within the aforementioned categories. These include; Interest Value and Social Value (Psychological), Application Value and Development Value (Functional) and Economic Value (Berthon, et al., 2005). Organisations that develop an internal employer brand based on considerations around each of these categories, will be better equipped to meet employee expectations and can stand to benefit from improved attraction, engagement and retention of talent as a result (HRM International Digest, 2019).

Throughout current academic literature, there are many differing perspectives on the needs and wants of the employee in the modern labour market and how internal employer brand can meet the expectations of employees. Staff (2010) suggest that high potential talent of the modern labour market are no longer focussed on financial reward and will instead look at the intrinsic value proposition of an organisation as a key factor in decision making. It is therefore suggested that, organisations should be reacting to this with complete offerings to prospective and current employees. Larkan (2009) and Pink (2010), both argue that organisations should consider shifting the traditional, primary focus from financial reward and instead, place more emphasis on intrinsic or intangible reward such as professional development, autonomy and purpose. Taylor (2014), further adds to this, stating that employers should adopt a 'total reward' approach to internal branding, offering current and prospective employees a blend of both financial and intrinsic rewards including progression, purpose, financial reward packages and corporate values and ethics. Similarly, numerous studies recommend a blended approach to employer brand, highlighting factors such as work/life balance, culture, development and autonomy alongside traditional compensation as some of the key pull factors for organisations to consider (Sharif & Sharif, 2017; Kapoor, 2010; Kukreja, 2017; Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). Narteh and Odoom (2015), also identify effective and consistent communication, autonomy, reward, learning and development and culture as the key facets of an effective internal

brand. In contrast, Lazorko & Zajac (2014), argue organisational reputation to be the most important consideration for employees when choosing an employer.

It is argued that the key success factor of internal employer branding is an effective and consistent communication strategy that inspires and motivates staff (Malmelin & Hakala, 2009; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016). Balta (2018), further adds to this stating that communication is key and that organisations must invest time and resources in discovering the key motivators of employees, their needs and wants and that job design and people strategy should be based on these findings. In order to explore what the employee wants, organisations need to communicate directly with employees, gather feedback and act on this feedback (Balta, 2018). In addition, it is suggested that business leaders apply the same marketing principles for products to job design, developing roles based on feedback from employees on what will stimulate, reward and motivate the target market within the workforce (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2002; Cappelli, 2000). Kaye & Jordan-Evans (2014) highlight the importance of exit interviews as an opportunity for employers to explore different reasons for employee turnover and areas for improvement but also the importance for businesses to proactively seek feedback from current employees before it's too late. This can be gathered through annual employee surveys, however, Kaye & Jordan-Evans (2014) also suggest business leaders and management conduct 'stay interviews' with high potential talent within their organisation in order to mitigate the risk of losing top talent.

2.4. Employee Retention and Intent to Stay

The development of a strong internal brand can assist organisations in reducing employee turnover and the loss of talent to rivals within the labour market (Ritson, 2002).

Kukreja (2017) argues that intent to stay within an organisation is predicated on a collection of dependent factors including; reward, progression opportunities, learning and development, culture and effective, open and transparent communication between business leaders and employees. In contrast, Ahmad & Daud (2016) identify career development as the single, most influential aspect of internal employer branding for employees deciding whether or not to remain with their current employer (Ahmad & Daud, 2016).

Kashyap & Verma's (2018) study on the area of employee turnover intention further adds to this, finding lack of progression or development opportunities (Development Value) to be the primary reason for employee turnover, with financial reward (Economic Value) or pay packages having less impact on an employee's decision to stay with a particular employer (Kashyap & Verma, 2018). Similarly, Taylor (2014) states that financial reward is not a key deciding factor on intent to stay, finding that businesses that display the top rates for engagement and retention are often not those with the most attractive financial offering, but instead, those with the most attractive overall brand and 'total reward' packages.

Further research indicated that organisations that are providing a more comprehensive offering such as professional development and internal progression or succession planning have experienced improvements in morale, motivation and retention among staff members (Rothwell, 2016). Improvements in staff turnover and retention of key talent within the business are evident as employees are given the opportunity to develop their career path within their current organisation and therefore do not feel the necessity to look elsewhere in order to progress (Taylor, 2014). The perceived development value within an organisation is dependent on the organisations ability to target and nurture individual talent and to provide career development or succession opportunities for high potential employees (Berthon, et al., 2005).

2.5. Employer Brand and Business Performance

Although research on internal employer brand is somewhat limited, many initial studies have indicated a positive correlation between internal employer branding and enhanced employee motivation and business performance (Al Badawy, et al., 2017). Further to this, it has been found that the development and implementation of a strong internal employer brand can enable organisations to source and retain top talent within the labour market which, in often cases, will result in improved performance within the business (Beardwell & Thompson, 2014).

Balta (2018), identifies that the execution of an effective internal branding strategy can assist employers in tackling some of the key challenges facing today's organisations including; high levels of absenteeism, employee turnover and lack of loyalty and commitment to the organisation, all of which, can negatively impact

organisational performance. An effective and well-informed internal branding strategy can serve as an effective tool for creating a positive corporate culture and for improving employee satisfaction and performance (Ullah & Ahmad, 2017). In addition, it is recommended that the internal employer branding strategy is aligned with overall business strategy in order to effectively deliver enhanced productivity and business performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; HRM International Digest, 2019; Tumasjan, et al., 2016). Armstrong (2015) found that organisations offering tailored reward and employment experiences benefited from increased employee engagement, the development of a high-performance culture and improvements in overall business performance.

Pfeffer (1994) argues human capital to be the key to developing a sustainable, long-term competitive advantage in modern business. He states that, unlike tangible assets such a technology, cash investment or location, human capital, in particular an engaged, motivated and happy workforce, is not easily imitated by competitors (Pfeffer, 1994). Businesses that can effectively recruit, retain and engage talent through a successful employer branding strategy, will develop a competitive advantage within the market (Maheshwari, et al., 2017; Beardwell & Thompson, 2014).

Hadi and Ahmed (2018) further add to this concept, stating that organisations that effectively harness engaged and motivated human capital can develop a competitive advantage on rivals within the market. As a result, an increasing number of organisations are now shifting focus from physical assets or tangible resources such as products/machinery that are easily imitated to placing an emphasis on human capital or intellectual assets which are harder for competitors to replicate (Al Badawy, et al., 2017). Organisations that proactively recognise the value of human capital as a means of enhancing business performance, may increase their ability to develop a sustainable, competitive advantage within the industry and improve organisational performance (Sharif & Sharif, 2017; Lazorko & Zajac, 2014; Kaplan, 2017; Kukreja, 2017).

2.6. Conclusion

The overall findings of the secondary research confirm a definite need for employers to begin placing increased emphasis on employer brand and internal branding as a key

strategic consideration for a sustainable business. The importance of communication and seeking feedback from employees was also established as well as the importance of offering tailored employment experiences based on the needs of the employees. The literature review has also provided a positive correlation between internal employer branding and organisational performance and retention of talent, with many studies concluding that the implementation of effective internal marketing or employer branding initiatives can deliver improvements in business performance.

3 Research Question

3.1. Research Title

‘An investigation into the key components of internal employer brand and its’ impact on organisational performance and retention of talent within the Recruitment sector in Ireland.’

3.2. Research Aim

This research seeks to establish the impact of internal employer branding initiatives on organisational performance and retention of talent within the Irish recruitment industry. In undertaking this study, the author is aiming to address a research gap in current literature, which predominantly focusses on external employer branding for attraction of new talent, and instead, would like to explore the internal processes organisations should consider, in relation to current employees.

In addition, the author aims to provide a greater insight into the application of internal employer branding as a strategic tool for organisations, where performance may be negatively affected by staff turnover or low motivation, in times of high employment or within a tight labour market. This research aims to provide a valuable insight into the practical applications of internal employer branding and whether a competitive advantage can be gained from the effective implementation of such practices.

3.3. Research Objectives

The following section will outline the main objectives of this research and the questions to be considered so that the overall aim of the research study can be achieved.

(i) Research Objective 1

The starting point within this research is to determine what internal branding practices or initiatives are being used at present. This will need to be established in order for the

researcher to analyse internal branding in relation to retention of talent and overall business performance.

- What importance is placed on internal branding within organisations in a tight labour market?
- Establish the correlation, if any, between internal branding and staff turnover and to ascertain if internal employer branding can impact an individual's commitment to their employer and intent to stay.
- Explore the impact of internal employer branding on organisational performance.

(ii) Research Objective 2

The second research objective will seek to establish if organisations are adapting a proactive or reactive approach to internal employer branding?

- Are organisations prioritising internal employer branding as a key strategic tool for building a particular type of culture within the organisation in an attempt to mitigate risk of low levels of productivity/motivation or loss of talent.
- Is internal employer branding part of the overall organisational strategy?

(iii) Research Objective 3

Finally, the author will look to explore whether organisations are experiencing employee turnover issues within the current climate and if so, how this is being tackled?

- Have any internal branding initiatives been implemented in response to loss of talent?
- How effective have these activities been? How is the effectiveness measured?

4 Methodology

This dissertation looks to explore the use of internal employer branding in organisations within the Irish recruitment sector and the impact of these practices or lack thereof, on productivity and intent to stay. Upon undertaking this research, a number of factors needed to be decided on in relation to how the study would be conducted. For this purpose, the author needed to consider what research methods to use, what questions should be asked, what people or groups should be involved in the research, how this data will be collected and how results will be extrapolated from data generated during the study.

This chapter aims to outline the different methodological research approaches, research philosophy, the rationale for the research methods pursued by the author, as well as alternative considerations and limitations to the study.

4.1. Research Philosophy

The first consideration for the researcher when undertaking this study, was to set out the research philosophy that will underpin the research design and approach to gathering data within the research piece. Research philosophy refers to the creation of new knowledge in a particular field and the nature of these findings. Research philosophy is based on relevant assumptions from the authors viewpoint (Saunders, et al., 2012).

In order to determine the most suitable way in which to collect data, the author structured the design of the research using Saunders, et al., (2012) research ‘onion’ as a framework. (Figure 1) The research ‘onion’ consists of six different layers for consideration starting from the outer most layer. These include; philosophies, approaches to research, different strategies, choices, time horizons and technical procedures. The most outer layer of the research onion addresses research philosophies (Saunders, et al., 2012).

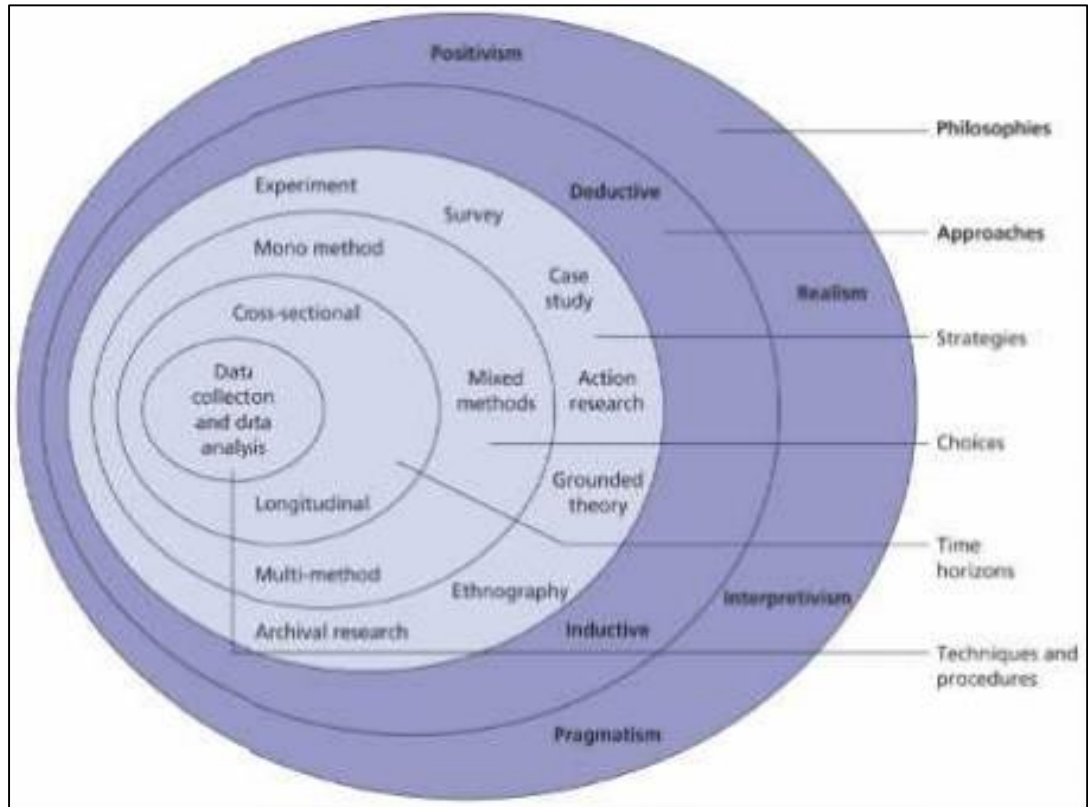


Figure 2: The Research ‘Onion’

Source: (Saunders, et al., 2012, p. 138)

The aim of this study is to develop an understanding of the effectiveness of internal employer branding as a tool for motivating and retaining employees.

Within this study, the author seeks to subjectively explore key motivators of employees within the recruitment sector, with an overall aim to gaining a valuable insight into individual perceptions on organisational performance and intent to stay and how this may be connected or related to internal employer branding. For this reason, the author has chosen to pursue an interpretivist approach within epistemology. Epistemology refers to an area of research philosophy that is concerned with how knowledge is created, the nature of that knowledge and what is considered satisfactory knowledge within research studies (Saunders, et al., 2012). Collis and Hussey (2014), define epistemology as how we determine or accept that knowledge is

reliable or valid in the context of the particular research study and the person carrying out the research.

By pursuing an interpretivist approach the author was required to be consciously empathetic to research subjects in a bid to best understand their viewpoint. Interpretivism is rooted in a number of intellectual practices, one of which is phenomenology which refers to the way individuals make sense of their surroundings and interactions with each other and how this interpretation can affect the individuals own understanding or meaning of their environment or influence how one may behave (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Consideration was given to alternative philosophical approaches during the research design, with the author also considering adapting a positivist stance with a resource focus, however the author concluded that the nature of this study warranted an approach that allows the researcher to look at subjective reasoning and motivators. The author also wanted to allow for a richness of data collected and felt that the use of positivism or a more resource-based approach, analysing facts and figures on attrition and motivation levels within the recruitment sector, would limit the quality and depth of knowledge gathered in comparison to subjectively delving into individual observations and feelings on employer branding, performance and retention of employees (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

4.2. Methodological Approach

For the purpose of this study, the author has decided to pursue a qualitative, inductive approach to data collection. Other research methods were also considered within the design phase and will be addressed below.

Qualitative research focusses on studying the meaning or understanding individuals have on a specific topic and seeks to uncover and analyse individual perceptions of the topic or area of research. Qualitative research is primarily inductive in nature and requires the researcher to adopt a “bottom-up” approach, analysing instances based on generalisations, identifying patterns and generating theories (Horn, 2012). In contrast, quantitative research looks to derive meanings based on numbers with findings studied through statistical analysis. Quantitative research is predominantly deductive in nature, which is the opposite to the inductive approach, working from the top

down, meaning the starting point for the researcher is the theory, creation of a hypothesis and observations in order to confirm or argue against a theory (Saunders, et al., 2012).

The author chose to pursue a qualitative, inductive approach as during the research proposal, it was found that the area of internal employer branding was not very well defined in current literature and studies. For this reason, the author felt that a “bottom up” approach would be most suitable and aims to develop knowledge, based on observations, through gathering in-depth insights from professionals within the field. This strategy was deemed the most suitable approach to researching this area in comparison to analysing quantities of data or statistics. The aim of this study is to develop knowledge on the phenomena of intent to stay and business performance in today’s labour market and to delve deeper than attrition or performance statistics and look at the complexities behind the facts and figures. In choosing this style of research, the author aims to gather a suitable volume of detailed perspectives on the chosen topic from key individuals within the chosen sector. Bell (2010), states that researchers who adopt a qualitative approach to research, are often more interested in gaining an insight into individual perceptions and developing an understanding of these perceptions or views on the chosen area of research in contrast to gathering a larger sample of less detailed/in-depth data.

A mixed methods approach was originally considered as part of the initial research proposal, with the author proposing both quantitative and qualitative methods to be applied as part of the study. The rationale for this consideration was to gain both the perspective of the HR team and management through semi-structured interviews and the employee perspective by conducting questionnaires, gaining an insight from both perspectives for a more thorough analysis of the topic. Cohen, et al. (2011), identifies a positive increase in mixed methodology approaches to research, with more researchers looking to gain an insight into both statistics and the narrative behind the figures. Unfortunately, due to the time restraints of this study and challenges in gaining access to a volume of employees within different organisations within the recruitment sector, this approach was deemed not viable for this particular study.

4.3. Data Collection

For the purpose of this study both primary and secondary research was conducted. The findings from the literature review in chapter 2 and the data collected as part of the primary research conducted within this study, will be discussed in chapter 5 – Findings and Analysis.

4.4. Chosen Research Tool

It has been outlined that the author has chosen to pursue a qualitative, inductive approach to data collection, underpinned by an interpretivist philosophical strategy in epistemology. Once this was decided the author was then required to choose a research instrument. Within qualitative research, interviews are the most common form of data collection and can be classified into 3 categories; structured, semi-structured and in-depth (unstructured) interviews (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

As part of the primary research for this study, the author conducted non-standardised, semi-structured interviews. The author chose this style of interview and chose a number of key themes and questions to cover which gave the researcher the flexibility to adapt some questions to the interview subjects position within the organisation. For example, the HR Director will have a better insight into employer branding as part of the overall strategy at director level whereas the “on the ground” manager will be able to provide a better insight into the impact of such initiatives on their teams motivation and intent to stay. Structured interviews were originally considered, with a prescribed list of question to work through regardless of the research subject or their position, however, it was decided that this would be too limiting if the researcher was planning to interview at various different levels within the business (Saunders, et al., 2012).

4.5. Pilot Interview

Before embarking on the primary research, a pilot test is recommended in order for the researcher to pinpoint any problems with the research instrument and questions and to rectify this before going live (Saunders, et al., 2012). A pilot interview was conducted with a business manager within an employment and training organisation, ahead of the scheduled interviews. As a result of the pilot test, it was decided that

participants should be provided with more in-depth information on the area of study and themes that the researcher wished to cover, ahead of the interview. Employer branding is a common theme, however, internal employer branding has had less coverage, although this is changing. The participant in the pilot interview was able to provide lots of detail on employer brand for attraction and external purposes and although their organisation is active in internal branding initiatives these were not as prominent or obvious as the more established concept of external employer branding. By providing the interview subjects with a more detailed insight into the research area and key themes to be discussed, it is hoped that this will improve validity and reliability of findings (Cohen, et al., 2011). The aim is to give participants, who previously may not have considered internal employer branding as a separate strategy, the opportunity to relate these themes to activities or strategies within their organisations that may not be as obvious as external branding initiatives in order to provide a greater quality of information on internal employer branding, in particular.

4.6. Sample and Process

Saunders et al. (2012) argues the need for researchers to consider sampling techniques at the outset of their study and identifies two forms of sampling; probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling techniques contain some form of random selection of subjects, whereas, non-probability sampling techniques do not contain any random selection of cases (Horn, 2012). Within the design phase of this study, the author decided that non-probability, purposive sampling would be the most suitable technique for the research topic. Purposive sampling in non-probability requires the author to target research subjects that the author determines are best positioned to give valuable insights into the area of study (Saunders, et al., 2012).

The author chose a population of five research subjects working across a multitude of companies within the recruitment sector, with the sample spanning from director level to senior HR representatives to “on-the-ground” managers. It was initially intended that a slightly larger sample be collected, however, there were some limitations that affected this which are discussed below.

Within this study, the author aims to assure validity through triangulation, gathering perspectives from a number of different roles within the recruitment industry from

CEO/Director level, HR specialists and ‘on-the-ground’ managers in order to develop a richer understanding of the topic at different levels of the business (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Although the author is not pursuing methodological triangulation which would involve using a mixed methods approach, it is hoped that by collecting perspectives from a number of different levels within the organisational chart, across different organisations within the sector, that this will improve the validity and reliability of the research (Horn, 2012). With this approach the author aims to arrive at a number of common themes based on data collected from a number of different perspectives within businesses in the recruitment sector (Cohen, et al., 2011).

Participant Code		Occupation	Business
Interview 1	A	Manager	Recruitment Agency
Interview 3	B	Internal Marketing & Communications Manager	Recruitment Agency
Interview 4	C	Manager	Recruitment Agency
Interview 5	D	CEO/Managing Director	Recruitment Agency
Interview 6	E	HR Director	Recruitment Agency

Once interview participants were confirmed, each individual was provided with an interview pack containing a participation consent form and further detail on the research. Interviews were then conducted on a one-to-one basis over the phone and face-to-face with each lasting approximately forty minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed after the interviews were complete, with the author then conducting a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts in order to establish key findings from the study and analyse these comparatively between each interview scenario and alongside the secondary research conducted as part of the study.

4.7. Limitations

Throughout this research, the author encountered a number of limiting factors which are detailed below.

The author encountered some difficulty in finding willing participants to conduct interviews with on this topic and this was a limitation. The author feels that this may have been related to the topic itself in that some managers may not have considered internal branding previously and would not feel comfortable discussing in detail. The interview invitations were also sent in the summertime with shortages in teams and staff on annual leave which again affected the response rate. This delayed the research as the author had to identify additional participants that would be willing to take part in the research. As a result of limitations in securing participants the author had to work with a smaller sample size that was originally planned for. The small sample size within the study somewhat limits the research in that the breadth or scope of the data collected is limited and may not be fully applicable in other scenarios. In hindsight, interview invitations should have been sent earlier in the year so as to mitigate the risk of not securing the desired sample size.

At the outset, the author had thought that a mixed method paradigm approach to data collection would be the most suitable research method for this study. The rationale for this decision was that the author could gain an understanding from both the employee and employer perspective on the application and effectiveness of internal employer branding. However, the author found it difficult to gain access to a volume of employees across different organisations within the sector and was also limited by the time frame of this study.

Previous studies have found that employers perceptions of the needs and wants of their employees and the actual employee preferences are often not aligned, resulting in an employer-employee expectation mismatch (Chadha & Kumar, 2018). As the author focussed on a sample of management and high-level HR professionals, the employee perspective was not captured in this study and may be a consideration for further research in this area.

Another limitation of this study is that the qualitative research conducted reflects circumstances within a specific time frame, in this case within a buoyant, tight labour market where employer branding for retention and attraction may be an important

consideration for organisations. However, if a further study was to be conducted during a period of economic downturn or an “employers’ market”, the findings of this study may not be relevant.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

An important element of consideration when conducting research is the area of ethics. Fisher (2007) states that ethical considerations are imperative so that the author can assure the research will not negatively impact any research subject or organisation. In addition, he states that the researcher must always treat people fairly and cause no harm (Fisher, 2007).

All data collection within this study was conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines outlined by the National College of Ireland to safeguard the integrity and validity of this study. It is important that all research participants are fully informed of the ethical guidelines and code of conduct for research with particular emphasis on keeping all data anonymous (Horn, 2012).

In preparation for the primary research stage of this study, the author completed the National College of Ireland Ethical review form and all participants were provided with a written consent form (Appendix 1), acknowledging participation of their own free will and consent to use any findings as part of the final dissertation. The consent form will inform participants that the author has considered and is abiding by the ethical guidelines and will also offer participants the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. All interview subjects will be coded by their job title and companies will also be coded to ensure anonymity (Cohen, et al., 2011). This coding will be chosen after the primary research data has been collected. Participants will also be informed that interviews will be recorded and that once the dissertation process is finalised these recordings will be destroyed, and interview subjects will be notified.

4.9. Methodology Conclusion

As outlined, the author chose to pursue a qualitative, inductive research method underpinned by an interpretivist philosophical stance in epistemology. As part of the

qualitative approach, the author decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with senior members of the HR team and “on-the-ground” management within a number of different recruitment businesses. The author chose to sample a mix of HR professionals and general managers as it was identified that members of the senior HR team would have a detailed insight into the overall strategy and implementation and it is hoped that the managers will be able to provide an insight into the application of these activities and the impact this has on their employees. A qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable for this particular topic, as the researcher wanted to gain an in-depth insight into the drivers behind employee motivation and intent to stay and to go beyond the figures or statistics around this area. The study is somewhat limited in that the sample does not capture the employee perspective; however, this will be discussed in recommendations for future research. Chapter 5 will look to analyse and discuss the findings from the primary research conducted in line with the literature review outlined earlier in this study.

5 Findings: Discussion and Analysis

The findings of the primary research conducted as part of this study will be discussed in this chapter. As part of this chapter, the author will discuss data collectively, by addressing and analysing emerging themes from the interviews conducted. The primary research within this study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with several senior HR Managers and Business Managers across a number of different organisations within the recruitment sector in Ireland. The findings were explored using thematic analysis, with the author reviewing findings, coding the results and analysing all interviews collectively under different themes that emerged across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author used an inductive thematic analysis or categorisation of data in order to analyse and discuss these themes in relation to existing literature discussed earlier in this study (Saunders, et al., 2012).

The initial findings from primary research conducted, point to the indubitable importance of internal employer branding as a key tool for retention and business performance within the recruitment sector. Interview subjects all cite challenges in retaining talent within the sector and the struggle with attempting to satisfy the changing needs of the modern-day employee. In addition, the need for consistent communication and flexibility within the workplace was also highlighted as a key consideration. Finally, participants highlighted the concerns with maintaining consistency and momentum with implementation of internal branding strategies and discussed the challenges with getting buy-in from senior management teams and developing internal branding or employee engagement as a key strategic consideration within the organisation.

The author will now discuss and analyse these findings, under a selection of key themes, including the secondary data collected as part of the literature review within this dissertation.

5.1. Internal Employer Branding as a Strategic Consideration

The findings from both the primary and secondary research conducted, as part of this dissertation, highlight a significant emphasis on the use of internal employer branding as part of the overall strategy. Manager D states that “*Any company worth their salt is considering employer brand as part of their overall strategy*”. Increased competition

and demand in the labour market is prompting organisations and business leaders to consider employer branding as part of the organisational strategy (Maheshwari, et al., 2017).

Previously, factors such as technology, investment, location or innovative patents were viewed as the key to competitive advantage. However, it is now argued that human capital is the most important factor in developing an inimitable, sustainable competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994). For this reason, a trend is developing with organisations shifting focus to their human capital. Manager C *“There has been an increased emphasis over the past two years, employer branding activities are now being discussed at management meetings which was never the case before”*. Organisations that can harness talent through effective branding and engagement will develop a competitive advantage in the marketplace and improve business performance (Maheshwari, et al., 2017; Beardwell & Thompson, 2014).

The changing management perspective on internal branding or engagement initiatives was also noted in many of the interviews, with organisations implementing internal branding as a means of improving business performance and retaining talent during times of high competition. What was once a ‘nice to have’, ‘crowd pleaser’ is now being viewed as one of the top priorities for some organisations to ensure future success of the business. Manager B states that *“there has been a definite shift in priorities in terms of internal engagement and branding initiatives and this is coming from senior management and board-level. Before, these things were almost seen as the ‘fluff’- I don’t want to call it that, but the ‘nice to have’ bits, however, this is now one of my key deliverables”*. This trend is also echoed in existing literature with many authors detailing the increased emphasis that is being placed on employer branding by business leaders in a bid to improve business performance into the future (Botha, et al., 2011; Beardwell & Thompson, 2014).

Although some interviewees cited challenges in shifting the mindset of senior managers, for the majority, this change has already taken place with employer branding being viewed as a key strategic and some managers answerable on this just as much as sales or revenue statistics.

A number of the interviewee’s also referenced the changing mindset of employees within the labour market, with jobs being viewed as temporary and less people

committing to organisations long-term. Manager E states that *“the ‘job for life’ concept is gone, and employees no longer have the same loyalty to employers as maybe, in previous generations, which makes it harder for us to entice people to stay. I think this is why there has been a shift of tactics”*. In addition, Manager A notes that *“It is getting harder and harder to get people to commit or see themselves in the company long term, as it is no longer frowned upon to have several different organisations on your CV as maybe it would have been in the past”*. The points raised suggest the change in mindset to be one of the factors or reasons for companies to change their approach to branding and retaining talent. It also suggests the importance of companies positioning themselves as an ‘employer of choice’ within the labour market to secure future success and retain talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

5.2. Employer Value Proposition

The findings from this study point to the importance of employers developing a differentiated and tailored employer value proposition based on the changing needs and wants of the modern-day employee. For this reason, the employer value proposition is an important consideration for business leaders and prompts employers to adopt a broader approach to employee experience and reward.

Although each of the interviewees gave different perspectives on the needs and wants of their employees and reasons for staff turnover, there were a number of overlapping ideas and considerations. All five managers noted that pay or financial reward no longer appeared to be the key motivator or driver of employees’ intent to stay within their organisations, from their perspective. Manager A identifies the two main reasons leavers detail at exit meetings are pay and lack of growth opportunities or career development within the organisation, however she also states that she does not feel that salary, in isolation, is a deciding factor and that employees are now looking at the complete package on offer more than ever before. This viewpoint corresponds to a body of existing literature, suggesting that employees are no longer solely focussed on financial reward and are now also considering factors such as the employer value proposition, culture and development opportunities as part of their decision (Staff 2010; Larkan 2009; Pink 2010; Kukreja 2017).

Manager D *“We are looking at what our competitors are offering, in terms of compensation, work environment, reward and trying to develop a differentiated EVP so that we stay ahead of the curve”*. Botha, et al. (2011) adds to this recommending that the employer value proposition and the needs of the employee are aligned and that there should be a concentrated effort to develop an employer value proposition that is differentiated from competitors’ offerings. The importance of building a differentiated employer value proposition and ensuring this is aligned with the needs and wants of employees, was also highlighted in the primary research; Manager C *“we now need to build a culture and environment that will make employees want to stay and the employer value proposition needs to stand out from competitors, otherwise we are fighting a losing battle”*. Kashyap & Verma (2018) further add that, for organisations to remain competitive and sustainable, it is imperative to have the ability to react to and meet the changing needs and expectations of the labour force.

5.3. Flexibility and Autonomy

One of the re-occurring themes within the findings of this research, for satisfying the needs of current employees through employer brand, is flexibility. The potential benefits of such an approach were outlined across much of the primary and secondary data collected. Manager B highlights an increase in individual performance as a result of flexible work options; *“The top 2 performers in our company are working mothers who work flexi-time in order to manage their home life, both work the equivalent of 3 days per week and are outperforming our full-time staff”*.

Beardwell & Thompson (2014) highlight the importance of offering flexibility in the modern labour market and how this can impact employee satisfaction and performance. Although not all subject organisations are offering flexible work options, all five interviewees detailed the increasing importance for organisations to offer flexibility to employees such as work from home, part-time hours or flexitime. Manager D adds that *“Flexible working is now more important than financial reward and can provide work life balance to your staff. Working from home or working flexitime will mean less time commuting, more time with family, maybe people can live further away in a bigger house with a bigger garden for their kids if they can start work at 7am and leave at 3.30pm. These aspects of living are becoming more*

important and valuable than salary and can be implemented with little cost to the business”.

It was found that some of the organisations involved in the primary research had introduced flexible work options in response to employee turnover and feedback from those exiting the company. Manager E details how *“Lack of flexibility was a key reason for leavers in the past and as a result the company introduced part-time and work from home options which has had a significant impact. Recruitment can be a stressful and fast paced environment and I think this takes the pressure off, giving people a work-life balance and definitely helps to retain good people.”* Manager B also adds to this explaining the impact of flexible work options and how this is also benefiting their external brand; *“this year we started to offer flexible work options for employees which allows staff to choose their own work hours based on what suits them, this has been extremely well received and has been a game changer for the organisation in terms of satisfaction and staff turnover and we are shouting about it on our social media platforms in order to help with attracting candidates as well. I think for many people nowadays flexibility is almost a bigger consideration than the money”.*

In contrast, organisation C does not offer any flexible work options and is experiencing a higher number of employees leaving due to lack of flexibility, oftentimes losing experienced staff to competitors that are offering this option. Manager C *“we have lost lots of good people because the job simply is not working with their family commitments or living situation. From my own perspective, being a parent, I do think that the organisation needs to offer flexibility and that this would improve retention and stop good people going to the competition who are offering this to employees”.* Organisations that do not offer flexibility, within the modern labour market, may experience increases in employee turnover as a result (Masuda et al. 2012)

Although it is positive that some employers are conducting exit interviews and reacting to feedback, not all organisations are offering flexible work options despite an extensive amount of literature and studies pointing to the demand for this kind of offering and the benefits from an organisational point of view. When considered alongside other employment factors such as reward packages or professional training/development, offering flexible work options as part of the employer value

proposition appears to be quite a cost-effective way for an organisation to attract and retain talented individuals.

Onken-Menke et al. (2018) suggest that organisations who decide to offer flexible work options are strategically positioned to improve attraction and retention of talent. They add, that this practice can also improve employee satisfaction and business performance as a result of the perceived level of autonomy.

Three of the five interviewees also highlighted autonomy and trust a key driver for engaging, motivating and retaining staff. Manager D suggests *“autonomy is an important factor and can help improve performance and willingness to stay with an organisation”*

All three managers who discussed the importance of autonomy, also detailed how this can improve business performance if executed correctly. Manager A highlights a notable improvement in individual employee performance detailing how *“employees who feel trusted are happier and oftentimes we see an uplift in individual’s performance when their needs have been satisfied in terms of flexibility or autonomy in how they carry out their duties, which is beneficial to the employee and the company. It’s a win-win.”* Manager B adds to this stating that *“employees want to be given the autonomy to do their job and not be micro-managed which in turn improves employee satisfaction and performance”*.

5.4. Clear Career Routeways

Career development, growth opportunities and progression are re-occurring themes within the data collected as part of this study, with each of the participants placing a high value on the power of offering succession and talent development or progression opportunities as a means of retaining talent and improving performance. This observation is also evident in existing literature with Ahmad & Daud (2016) identifying career development and progression as the most influential element of internal branding and a key driver of intent to stay. Manager E adds to this, stating that opportunities must be created for high performers *“we must nurture, develop and provide opportunity for talent in order to retain it”*.

For this reason, the process of establishing a clear routeway for career progression internally is an important consideration for business leaders. This should then be

communicated so that high potential employees can see a future within the organisation. Manager C adds to this stating that *“highlighting clear progression opportunities for high performers will create more loyalty to the organisation as staff can see a future in the company”*. This can be done through development plans, succession planning or talent programmes (Ahmad & Daud, 2016). Manager B describes their internal brand and how it aims to *“paint that picture for talented individuals so that they can see a clear path within the organisation and therefore do not have to look elsewhere”*. Further to this, Berthon, et al. (2005) suggest the success of an organisation is dependent on its ability to nurture talent and provide clear succession planning or career development opportunities for high performers.

Failure, on the organisations part, to provide development or progression opportunities will result in difficulties retaining top talent. Kashyap & Verma’s (2018) identify lack of career development (Development Value) to be the main driver of employee turnover intention. Manager D further adds to this point noting *“If employees cannot see a routeway to improve their career within your company they will look elsewhere. Now more than ever, candidates at job interviews are asking questions about progression and development opportunities within the company they are applying to, which suggests employees are placing a high value on this area”*.

Manager A details how the organisational structure within her organisation is quite flat and suggests that employees may not be able to see their next step within the organisation and that this could be contributing to staff turnover or loss of talent; *“We have quite a flat organisational structure which, in my opinion hinders employee’s ability to see how they will progress their career. I think that the creation of more layers within the organisational structure is an important consideration for the senior management team to counteract leavers”*

Rothwell (2016) suggests that it is imperative for employers to offering training and development opportunities for its high potential employees and to build a talent pool that aims to retain and further develop talented individuals for progression within the organisation. Manager E *“we created a talent programme this year, pinpointing top performers in the company, providing them with specialised training and mentoring opportunities which allowed us to create a talent pool for future progression and hopefully retain our top people”*. Manager A adds to this concept stating that training and development should be paired with a succession plan in order to be effective; *“no*

matter how fantastic the training and development opportunities are within our company, if this is not paired with some sort of succession or talent programme, we are only upskilling employees so that they are better positioned to go for jobs elsewhere”.

5.5. Measurement, Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Although the growing importance of internal employer branding is apparent from the primary and secondary research, findings from the primary research indicate that some organisations are falling down when it comes to measuring the impact of their internal brand. It finds that some employers are not proactive in seeking feedback from current employees and when feedback is provided, many are failing to act on this feedback. Manager A *“We’ve never actually measured the impact of our internal branding, but maybe this is something we should consider. The only statistics we normally consider are those provided by HR metrics such as volumes of applications, onboarding, leavers and reasons for people exiting the company”*

The findings from this study have highlighted employee feedback as one of the key measurements of how an internal brand is performing and a valuable basis for future internal branding initiatives. If employees fail to gather feedback and look inward to continuously improve, the branding strategy will be ill-aligned and will not meet the needs of current employees. Staff (2010) identifies how many employers who launch costly employer branding strategies have failed to look inward and consider the reason for staff turnover and what employees’ value. By not seeking feedback and using this feedback to direct the internal branding plan, employers are left with an ill-aligned branding strategy that will have a limited impact on retention or business performance. In addition, it was found that the importance of exploring the reason for staff turnover and cost of staff turnover is underestimated (Staff, 2010).

Kaye & Jordan-Evans (2014) highlight the importance of exit interviews and getting regular feedback from employees on areas that the company can improve on. Two of the interview participants also detailed the use of employee forums, annual employee satisfaction surveys and other means of measuring the impact of their internal employer brand. These tools provide the organisation with an opportunity to gather feedback from current employees on the overall employment experience, allowing the

company to develop a better insight into the needs and wants of their employees. Manager A explains how the organisation conducts *“an annual employee engagement survey to gather employee views and feedback on areas such as communication, compensation, wellbeing and development which gives us a good idea of how we are performing across the board”*. Manager E adds to this explaining how *“the employee satisfaction survey and employee forum are both extremely effective tools to learn what is important for our teams and what we can do better. This is also a great measure for internal branding initiatives that have been introduced throughout the year, for example our Internal Communication strategy launched last year in response to the employee satisfaction survey results and this year we are up 10% on communication, likewise a talent programme was also launched and this improved our score for development which is encouraging to see”*.

All interviewees agreed that listening to and gathering feedback from current employees is beneficial. Balta (2018), argues that communication is key and that employers must explore the motivators, needs and wants of its employees and use the findings to develop the basis for job design and an internal people strategy. Similarly, two of the five interviewees detailed how this feedback is used in job design and in developing a more attractive employer value proposition. Manager D *“Job design should be underpinned by brand, corporate culture and values but guided by what the employee wants and values”* Manager E *“The organisation is constantly looking to improve and enhance its employer value proposition to current and prospective employees; we do this by building an EVP based on feedback from talent within the organisation”*.

Two of the six research subjects also identified the use of external measurements including the Great Place to Work Survey and the IBEC Keep Well Mark. Manager B details how this is the key measure on the effectiveness of their brand *“we take part in the Great Place to Work Survey every second year which gives a good insight into how we’re doing but internally we do not currently have anything in place to formally measure the impact on employee satisfaction or retention”*.

Although it is positive that organisations are proactively gathering feedback from employees and this can lead to employees feeling more valued and listened to or part of the decision-making process, failure on the organisations’ part to act on the feedback gathered can be counterproductive. Manager D *“Get your feedback and act*

on it, otherwise the entire process is futile and your employer brand or offering will not be aligned with the needs of your target market.” Manager C *“I think, from my experience, many organisations collect data from exit interviews or employee surveys or questionnaires but very few follow through or take action on the results. The market is so competitive now that I think it is really important that organisations and managers are self-critical and do not shy away from feedback, as a manager when a grievance is raised or someone exits the company I try to look inward on what we can improve on for next time”*. Ahmed & Rafiq (2002) and Cappell (2000) further add to the importance of employers acting on feedback, arguing that organisations that actively seek and act on feedback from employees will be better positioned to stimulate, reward and motivate current employees which can deliver increased business performance.

Overall, the findings from this section conclude that the measurement of initiatives, gathering of feedback and listening to employees is critical. Some of the organisations do not have any measurements or tools for gathering feedback from current employees and others are quite proactive in gathering this data. As encouraging as this is, the final point raised is that companies need to ensure to take action on findings as it was found that many collect and analyse data from surveys or exits interviews, but oftentimes little change is made. This is an important consideration for organisations.

5.6. Internal Communications

Throughout existing literature, it is suggested that the success of an internal employer brand is dependent on the organisation having an internal communication strategy that inspires and generates buy-in from employees (Malmelin & Hakala, 2009; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016). Four of the five managers interviewed, also stressed the importance of consistent, transparent internal communications as a key element of successful internal employer branding and improved retention. Manager D states that *“Open and transparent internal communication is key, creating an inclusive platform where employees feel valued, listened to and part of the business”*. The theme of open communication was further discussed in the findings from research carried out on existing literature, with a number of sources emphasising the importance of effective internal communications when implementing an internal branding strategy. (Varey &

Lewis, 2002; Ishaque & Shahzad, 2016) Manager B further adds to this, suggesting that internal communication is the main tool for developing an internal brand and getting buy-in from employees, *“Internal communication is great for getting a certain message across and setting the tone for the type of culture you are trying to establish. We especially try to ensure that all successes are shared and celebrated with the entire organisation as this, we feel, boosts the mood and is a way of thanking the teams and recognising the good work”*.

Manager E details how failure to communicate with employees will result in increased employee turnover *“nowadays everyone wants information instantly, therefore consistent internal communication is so important. If we are not communicating effectively with our employees or if the employees cannot identify with the leaders or feel a sense of purpose they will go elsewhere”*.

Similarly, Balta (2018) suggests communication is key and should be a priority for organisational success. The findings also showed some companies using internal communications in a bid to keep employees at all levels involved and engaged in the company. Manager A details how improvements in internal communications were introduced in response to staff turnover, *“In response to an increase in turnover, the company launched a series of interviews with members of the senior management team which were then published on our intranet. As part of this initiative the SMT gave an insight into their background, how they have progressed within the company and most importantly why they like working for the company. This soon became a discussion point among the teams and sent a positive message to those possibly questioning their purpose or future with the company, it also gave a more human element to our internal communications”*. Manager E suggests organisations develop an internal communications strategy in order to drive internal branding initiatives *“consistent and relentless internal communication throughout the organisation, making sure the values of the brand are in everything we do, sometimes this can be hard to do and great plans and strategies can often fizzle out or lose momentum. For this reason, we developed an internal communication strategy to keep us focussed and accountable for keeping communication consistent and on track”*.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to analyse the area of internal employer branding within the recruitment industry in Ireland. By undertaking this study, the author sought to develop an insight into the impact of employer branding initiatives on employee retention, engagement and overall business performance. Both primary and secondary research was conducted as part of this study, with the author seeking to analyse existing literature alongside primary data collected through semi-structured interviews with HR professionals and senior management across the recruitment sector. The research subjects were questioned on topics such as internal employer brand, staff turnover trends, reasons for staff turnover in their organisation, employer branding initiatives and measurement of the effectiveness of branding in relation to overall business performance and retention.

Much of the data collected, a part of the primary research, concurred with findings from existing studies and literature presented in chapter two and suggests the growing importance of internal employer branding as a key strategic consideration for businesses within the modern labour market.

The changing needs and wants of the modern-day employee were also discussed as part of this research, establishing that employees are now placing increased value on intangible elements of an employer value proposition such as flexible work options, career advancement opportunities and a positive work environment and culture. These findings further emphasise the need for employers to consider internal employer brand in order to engage and retain talent and to develop a more complete employer value proposition considering elements such as reward, flexible work options, learning and development, corporate culture and progression. Employers should also be looking at the employment experience offered by competitors within the market, however, it is important that employers develop an internal brand that is achievable so as to avoid over-promising and under-delivering.

Internal communication was also established as one of the most important elements of internal employer branding with much of the research suggesting that internal communications be positioned as a key business priority in order to improve retention and overall business performance.

In conclusion, the overall findings of this study confirm a definite need for employers to begin placing increased emphasis on employer brand and internal branding as a key strategic consideration for a sustainable business. This study also found that employers that adopt this approach could stand to benefit from improved business performance, employee engagement, motivation and a reduction in staff turnover, which, in times of high competition could be critical to some organisations. This is particularly significant for the recruitment sector, where many organisations appear to be losing talent to in-house roles with more job security and a higher base salary. For this reason, it is important for employers within the recruitment industry to build an attractive and enticing internal brand that engages talent within the organisation and improves intent to stay.

6.1. Recommendations, Timelines and Costings

The key discussion points that have been raised as a result of this study are; the implementation and measurement of employer branding initiatives, internal branding as a strategic consideration or KPI and internal communication. The findings from this study show many organisations having the best intentions around internal branding, but that in many cases it is yet to be considered a key success factor or a strategic factor within businesses and is in some cases still considered a ‘nice to have’. Based on these findings the author has put together the following recommendations as a means for utilising internal employer branding as a strategic tool for improving employee turnover and business performance.

(i) Internal Communications Strategy

The findings from this research suggest that the success of internal employer branding or employee engagement initiatives is dependent on the organisation’s ability to ensure consistent, open and transparent internal communications with its employees.

For this reason, the author is recommending the development of an internal communications strategy to determine the type of message that is to be conveyed, by what channels or means and how often. A well-executed internal communications strategy will help the organisation to convey the key messages of their brand and set the type of culture they wish to develop within the organisations and can help improve employee satisfaction and engagement. This will also hold the HR team and senior

management team accountable and should keep up the momentum of any internal employer branding initiatives or strategies introduced.

It is estimated that the development and implementation of a new internal communications strategy would take approximately four months to turn around and would involve increased input and manhours from the HR and Communications department. Costs involved are the people resource, having members of both the HR and Communications/Marketing team working on the creation and implementation of the strategy. This may also require an internal communications officer on a part-time basis to develop content and manage internal communications. Estimated cost to the business approximately €19,000 per annum for a part time role.

By developing an internal communication strategy, the organisation will be able to get the desired messages through to employees, celebrate success, grow the corporate culture, inform employees of different initiatives and keep employees engaged and involved in the business.

(ii) Internal Branding and Engagement as a Key Performance Indicator

One of the main barriers to a successful and effective internal branding strategy is the implementation. Within this study, all interviewees detailed this as a key challenge, with many stating that, although exciting people plans or internal branding initiatives are developed by the HR department, the lack of buy-in from senior management and on-the-ground managers is a difficulty. It is therefore suggested that the senior management team, HR and on-the-ground managers should act as champions of the internal brand and culture of the organisation in order for this have an impact at all levels of the business.

The author recommends that internal employer branding should be built into the overall company strategy and should be measured like any other KPI within the business. This would mean that managers are reporting on items such as engagement activities and results, retention, employee satisfaction as well as the standard revenue and performance reports. By integrating employer brand or engagement as a key deliverable of both senior management and on-the-ground managers, this should help shift the mindset from 'nice to have' to considering the internal brand as an integral part of the business. The company could also enhance the effectiveness of the

implementation of their culture and brand and this will also help keep up the momentum.

This recommendation can be introduced immediately and at little or no cost to the organisation. Some training may need to be provided to the management teams through the HR department to help develop managers as brand champions and to ensure activities are aligned with the overall internal branding strategy and corporate culture.

(iii) Employee Voice and Continuous Improvement

From the findings of this research, the benefits of communicating with and getting feedback employees are evident. For this reason, the author is recommending that organisations adopt a continuous performance approach and ensure that feedback from employees is being accessed through exit meetings, 'stay' meetings, employee engagement surveys or employee forums.

Employee surveys and forums are a cost-effective way of gathering feedback, giving employees a voice, which in itself, can help to improve satisfaction and engagement. By adopting this approach, organisations are better positioned to satisfy the needs of their employees compete for talent, staying ahead of the curve and mitigating the loss of talent.

In particular, regular employee engagement surveys are a cost effective and proactive means for organisations to gather real time feedback on the needs and wants of employees and enables the organisation to measure and track the impact that internal branding initiatives. By conducting employee engagement surveys bi-annually, organisations can get live feedback from employees and be in a better position to react to changing attitudes, needs and wants of their employees in order to improve intent to stay and overall performance. There is very little cost associated with surveying employees, with many organisations using free providers such as [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to gather feedback.

A key side note on this recommendation is that employers act on the feedback or data gathered. A common pitfall in the area of engagement studies is organisations not listening to or acting on the results of employee surveys which can be counterproductive. It is therefore important for organisation to assign a resource from

the HR team to be responsible for analysing results and devising a plan of action within the people plan to present the senior management team.

6.2. Further Research

One limitation of this study, detailed above, is that the research only sampled senior HR professionals and managers within the sector, neglecting to gain the employees perspective. , An extension of this research could be undertaken, using a mixed methodology approach, studying both employer and current employee perspective in relation to internal branding with a view to providing a more complete understanding of the phenomena and the changing needs and priorities of the employee.

Another theme that emerged from this study was the lack of formal measurement of employer brand internally in many of the organisations, with participants highlighting how external brand is being measured, but with limited detail or tools in place for measuring the impact of internal branding initiatives. For this reason, it is suggested that further research be conducted, with particular emphasis, on the measurement of internal branding initiatives and how the return on investment can be measured. This could help organisations to justify a more strategic approach to internal branding and help companies to improve its offering through effective measurement of internal branding and continuous improvement.

6.3. Personal Reflection

Since graduating with an honour's degree in International Business and languages in 2012, my career path has taken me on a journey through various different roles and business functions including sales and marketing, recruitment and people management, across a range of different sectors. The decision to return to study towards a master in Human Resource Management, after five years in the workforce and five years out of study, was an exciting, but daunting one. I felt that my career was excelling at a good pace but that I needed to upskill and further develop my skills and knowledge in order to continue to progress.

My current role, in people management, involves a lot of work in the area of HRM, for this reason I found the master course in HRM extremely useful in aiding me in day to day practical application of different HR / Leadership principles in order to perform to the best of my ability. I found that I was able to develop a more in-depth understanding of the course content based on my professional experience to date which also helped me to retain the information and to go back and apply it in my role.

Undertaking the dissertation section of this course was, for me, the most daunting part of my return to further studies. Gathering participants to partake in the study, I found, was particularly difficult. I had managed to agree interviews with a number of relevant parties within my network, however, it was difficult to tie people down with some of the participants backing out last minute due to their own busy schedules. For this reason, phone interviews were useful in some of the cases where our calendars were not allowing time a face to face. I found time management was an issue in the beginning, as this was self-directed learning and I found it difficult to set aside the time with increasing demands in work. However, upon breaking down the workload into individual pieces and by choosing a topic that was of particular interest to my own professional journey, I found it to be more manageable.

Overall, returning to complete a masters part-time whilst working has been a challenging but extremely rewarding undertaking. The skills, knowledge and insight I have gained from both lecturers and colleagues/classmates throughout the course of my studies, I feel, will be invaluable in helping me to enhance my performance and to further develop my career in Human Resources and People Management.

Bibliography

Ahmad, N. & Daud, S., 2016. Engaging People with Employer Branding. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, Volume 35, pp. 690-698. Available at: doi: 10.1016/S2212-5671(16)00086-1. (Accessed: 24 May 2019)

Ahmed, P. & Rafiq, M., 2002. *Internal Marketing*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Al Badawy, T. A., Fahmy, V. M. & Magdy, M. M., 2017. Can Employer Branding Raise the Retention and Motivation of Egyptian Employees?. *Journal of Competitiveness Studies*, 25(3), p. 250–265. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=128891249&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 27 January 2019).

Alshathry, S., Clarke, M. & Goodman, S., 2017. The role of employer brand equity in employee attraction and retention: a unified framework. *International Journal of Organisational Analysis*, Volume 3, p. 413. Available at: doi: 10.1108/IJOA-05-2016-1025. (Accessed: 14 August 2019)

Ambler, T. & Barrow, S., 2016. The Employer Brand: Origins of Brand Equity. *Market Leader*, Issue Q2, pp. 20-23. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=114151778&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 14 August 2019).

Armstrong, M., 2015. *Armstrong's Handbook of Reward Management Practice: Improving Performance Through Reward*. 5th ed. London: Kogan Page.

Backhaus, K. & Tikoo, S., 2004. Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9(5), pp. 501-517. Available at: doi: 10.1108/13620430410550754. (Accessed: 24 May 2019)

Balta, S., 2018. The Influence of Internal Marketing on Employee Satisfaction in the Service Industry. *Business Management Dynamics*, 8(1), pp. 12-15. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=133802867&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 9 July 2019).

Beardwell, J. & Thompson, A., 2014. *Human Resource Management, A Contemporary Approach*. 7th ed. England: Pearson.

- Bell, J., 2010. *Doing Your Research Project*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Berry, L., 1981. The Employee as Customer. *Journal of Retail Banking*, 3(1), pp. 33-40.
- Berthon, P., Ewing, M. & Hah, L., 2005. Captivating Company: Dimensions of Attractiveness in Employer Branding. *Internal Journal of Advertising*, 24(2), pp. 151-173. Available at: doi: 10.1080/02650487.2005.11072912. (Accessed 24 May 2019)
- Botha, A., Bussin, M. & Swardt, L., 2011. An employer brand predictive model for talent attraction and retention. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(1), pp. 298-309. Available at: doi: 10.4102/sajhrm.v9i1.388. (Accessed 20 July 2019)
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101. Available at: doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa. (Accessed: 9 August 2019)
- Bryman, A., 2007. Barriers to Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), pp. 8-22. Available at: doi: 10.1177/2345678906290531. (Accessed 24 May 2019)
- Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2011. *Business Research Methods*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford.
- Cappelli, P., 2000. A Market-Driven Approach to Retaining Talent. *Harvard Business Review*, 78(1), pp. 103-111. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=2628911&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 14 August 2019).
- Chadha, S. & Kumar, S., 2018. The Engagement Paradox at work. *Human Capital*, 21(10), pp. 14-21. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=128644356&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 4 February 2019).
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K., 2011. *Research Methods in Education*. 7th ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Collis, J. & Hussey, R., 2014. *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*. 4th ed. London: Palgrave.

- Edwards, J. & Cable, D., 2009. The value of value congruence. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(3), pp. 654-677.
- Fisher, C., 2007. *Researching and Writing a Dissertation*. 2nd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hadi, N. & Ahmed, S., 2018. Role of Employer Branding Dimensions on Employee Retention: Evidence from Educational Sector. *Administrative Sciences*, 8(3), p. 44. Available at: doi: 10.3390/admsci8030044. (Accessed: 24 May 2019)
- Hays Ireland, 2018. *Hays Ireland Salary & Recruiting Trends*, Dublin: Hays.
- Horn, R., 2012. *Researching and Writing Dissertations*. 2nd ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- HRM International Digest, 2019. Towards improved employee retention : The importance of employer branding benefits. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, Issue 4, p. 31. Available at: doi: 10.1108/HRMID-04-2019-0105. (Accessed 9 August 2019)
- Huang, X. & Yang, L., 2010. *Employer Branding and Employee Performance*. Kunming, International Conference on Information Management. Available at: doi: 10.1109/ICIII.2010.609. (Accessed 24 May 2019)
- Ishaque, A. & Shahzad, K., 2016. Impact of Internal Marketing on Employee Behaviours: Mediating Role of Employee Job Satisfaction. *Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(1), pp. 233-250. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=a9h&AN=116805677&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 24 July 2019).
- Kaplan, R., 2017. Internal Marketing and Internal Branding in the 21st Century Organization. *IUP Journal of Brand Management*, 14(2), pp. 7-22. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=123727549&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 9 July 2019).
- Kapoor, V., 2010. Employer Branding: A Study of Its Relevance in India. *IUP Journal of Brand Management*, 7(1), pp. 51-75. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=51265564&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 2 February 2019).

- Kashyap, V. & Verma, N., 2018. Linking Dimensions of Employer Branding and Turnover Intentions. *International Journal of Organisational Analysis*, Issue 2, p. 282. Available at: doi: 10.1108/IJOA-03-2017-1134. (Accessed 9 August 2019)
- Kaye, B. & Jordan-Evans, S., 2014. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler. Available at:
http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=nl_ebk&AN=642567&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2019).
- Kukreja, J., 2017. A study of Employee Motivation as a Tool for Implementation of Internal Marketing. *Amity Business Review*, 18(1), pp. 92-103. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=128930796&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 9 July 2019).
- Larkan, K., 2009. *Winning the Talent War: The 8 Essentials*. 1st ed. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International.
- Lazorko, K. & Zajac, M., 2014. Internal Marketing and Talent Management as Integral Elements of Employer Branding Strategies. *Economic Processes Management*, Volume 1, pp. 1-10. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=99565788&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 20 July 2019).
- Maheshwari, V., Gunesh, P., Lodorfos, G. & Konstantopoulou, A., 2017. Exploring HR Practitioners' Perspective on Employer Branding and its Role in Organisational Attractiveness and Talent Management. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 25(5), pp. 742-761. Available at: doi: 10.1108/IJOA-03-2017-1136. (Accessed 9 August 2019)
- Malmelin, N. & Hakala, J., 2009. Guided by the brand: from brand management to integrative corporate communications. *Business Strategy Series*, 10(5), pp. 248-258. Available at: doi: 10.1108/17515630910989141. (Accessed: 14 August 2019)
- Masuda, A., Poelmans, S., Cooper, C., 2012 'Flexible Work Arrangements Availability and their Relationship with Work-to-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intentions: A Comparison of Three Country Clusters'. *Applied Psychology*, (1), p. 1. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=e>

dsgao&AN=edsgcl.274126641&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 14 August 2019).

Matanda, M. & Ndubisi, N., 2013. Internal marketing, internal branding, and organisational outcomes: The moderating role of perceived goal congruence. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(9-10), pp. 1030-1055. doi: 10.1080/0267257X.2013.800902. (Accessed: 24 July 2019)

Nagpal, G., 2013. *Talent Economics: The Fine Line Between Winning and Losing the Global War for Talent*. London: Kogan.

Narteh, B. & Odoom, R., 2015. Does Internal Marketing Influence Employee Loyalty?. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 36(2), pp. 112-135. Available at: doi: 10.1080/15332969.2015.1014237. (Accessed 14 August 2019)

Onken-Menke, G., Nüesch, S. and Kröll, C. (2018) 'Are you attracted? Do you remain? Meta-analytic evidence on flexible work practices', *Business Research*, 11(2), pp. 239–277. Available at: doi: 10.1007/s40685-017-0059-6. (Accessed: 14 August 2019)

Pfeffer, J., 1994. Competitive Advantage Through People. *California Management Review*, Issue 2, p. 9. Available at: doi: 10.2307/41165742. (Accessed: 9 July 2019)

Pink, D., 2010. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. Edinburgh: Canongate.

Ritson, M., 2002. *Marketing and HR Collaboration to Harness Employer Brand Power*. s.l.:s.n.

Ronda, L., Valor, C. & Abril, C., 2018. Are they willing to work for you? An employee-centric view to employer brand attractiveness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(5), pp. 573-596. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2017-1522>. (Accessed 9 July 2019)

Rothwell, W., 2016. *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent From Within..* New York: AMACOM.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A., 2012. *Research Methods for Business Students*. 6th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

- Sharif, F. & Sharif, S., 2017. Assessing the relative importance of employer branding dimensions on retention of employees: A case of private schools of Karachi. *IBA Business Review*, 12(1), pp. 71-88. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=133965704&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 24 May 2019)
- Srivastava, P., Bhatnagar, J. & Arora, A., 2017. A multi-dimensional scale for measuring employer brand. *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, Issue 4, p. 659. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.509893921&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 15 August 2019).
- Staff, W., 2010. *Attraction & Retention*. Scottsdale: WorldatWork. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=nl ebk&AN=543258&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 14 August 2019).
- Taylor, S., 2014. *Resourcing and Talent Management*. 5th ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Tumasjan, A., Kunze, F. & Bruch, H., 2016. Linking Employer Branding and Firm Performance: Testing an Integrative Mediation Model. *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, p. 1104. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=edb&AN=119227316&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 3 February 2019).
- Ullah, M. & Ahmad, H., 2017. The Impact of Internal Marketing on the Organizational Performance through Organizational culture Mediation. *Abasyn University Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), pp. 129-148. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=a9h&AN=123762066&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 9 July 2019).
- Varey, R. & Lewis, B., 2002. *Internal Marketing: Directions for Management*. London: Routledge. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=020mww&AN=68939&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 13 August 2019).

Vatsa, M., 2016. Leveraging Employer Branding for Organizational Success. *Review of Management*, 6(1), pp. 9-13. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,shib&db=bth&AN=116834394&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=ncirlib> (Accessed: 13 July 2019).

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview Participation Consent Form

Research Title: An investigation into the key components of internal Employer Brand and its' impact on organisational performance and retention of talent within the Employability/Recruitment sector.

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves taking part in an interview on the theme of internal employer branding practices and its impact on motivation and retention of employees.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.
- This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the final dissertation as part of this study.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will

discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained and stored securely by the researcher until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher of this study, Aisling Murray, to seek further clarification and information if required.

By signing this form, I hereby agree with the above points and consent to participating in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

1. What is your role within the organisation?
2. What is your understanding of internal employer branding? / How would you define internal employer branding?
3. Do you view internal employer branding as an important factor for employers to consider in today's labour market?
4. Does your organisation have an internal EB strategy or is EB a factor of the people strategy within your organisation?
5. If yes, what internal employer branding initiatives are in place in your organisation?
6. How does your organisation measure the impact/effectiveness of internal employer branding initiatives?
7. Has the organisation experienced success within internal EB?
8. Do you feel that internal employer branding initiatives impact organisational performance?
9. Do you feel that internal employer branding impacts employee's loyalty or intent to stay with the organisation?
10. If there is one thing you would do to improve motivation/retention within your organisation through internal marketing/EB, what would that be?
11. From your own personal perspective what do you view as the key elements of your organisation's internal brand that would keep you satisfied and want to stay within the organisation?