

A Qualitative Investigation into how organisations use
social media as a tool for the talent attraction of
Generation Y.

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Master of Arts in Human Resource Management

Submitted to the National College of Ireland 2021

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland
Research Students Declaration Form
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

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Degree for which thesis is submitted: MA Human Resource Management

Title of Thesis: A Qualitative investigation into how organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y

Date: 25/08/2021

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Abstract:

Technology has enhanced the way we communicate and work on a massive scale. However, never before has such transparency been available from employers and those looking to enter the workforce. As a result, employers must carefully conduct employer branding to appear attractive employers on social media platforms. This impact the way people view a given company and ultimately affects their overall reputation.

Due to the changing rate of technological advancements, research in this field has been scarce. There have been relevant studies from which information will be drawn on HR practices, Generation Y, and social media use. However, as none of these studies has been conducted recently, this research aims to bridge that gap.

A qualitative approach was taken through the means of semi-structured interviews. Five participants took part in the research and provided information on areas of their professions. Semi- structured interviews allowed for opinions of the participants to be considered and allowed for open ended questions to be asked. As a result of gathering the data, thematic analysis was employed to identify the four common themes.

The conclusions that were drawn related to organisations not necessarily conducting any specific measures to attract members of Generation Y from social media. A limitation of this study may have been the sample size.

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Section 1

1a- Introduction

The purpose of this research is to uncover how organisations use various social media platforms as a tool to attract potentially talented members of Generation Y to choose them as an employer. Section one will provide an overall understanding of the background of this topic and the position of the research. Then, the objectives of this study will be explained, followed by exploring the research design. Ethical considerations will be made regarding the kind of research being carried out. Finally, an overall outline of the study will be provided.

1b- Context of Research

Generation Y (Gen Y) relates to the group of individuals born in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, roughly between 1984 and 1996 (Bresman/ Rao. 2017). As members of the previous generation (Gen X) become older members if not already retiring. In contrast, Gen Y's members have majorly entered the workforce by now. They will be the most prominent workforce members in several years (Mansor et al. 2013). Whilst this factor of being the future of the workplace is extremely important, perhaps more notably members of Gen Y have been exposed to technology and technological breakthroughs from a much younger age than previous generations. Notably, as it just so happens, the launch year for the first Apple Macintosh computer happened to be 1984. Meaning this would be the constant minimum standard of technology that would have been available from the time of birth for the early entrants of Gen Y. Unlike generations that have gone before, Gen Y have had a constant technological stream since birth. Moreover, due to exposing an entire generation to technology from a young age meant that Gen Y are highly tech-savvy and have proven to be more efficient in this area than prior generations and are increasingly networked with the introduction of social media (Anitha/ Aruna. 2016).

In an ever-competitive market, an employer can have one genuine advantage over their rivals is that of a talented workforce. The ongoing 'war for talent' has made it increasingly difficult for organisations to attract and attain any potential or necessary talented individuals to join their labour force (Frank/ Taylor. 2004). Unlike generations before, Gen Y continuously seek advancements in their careers, feeling no hesitation in moving onto another means of employment if they feel as if they have mastered their current role (Anitha/ Aruna. 2016). This would indicate that the means of talent attraction and retention have abundantly shifted as traditional methods such as increased salaries are not viewed as the sole importance in these individuals' lives. Gen Y seek self-fulfilment and development in their employment, and due to the increase in technology are being provided with a platform to change their career paths as they see fit (Naim. 2014). Since traditional desires of importance have shifted for Gen Y, organisations must also modernise to ensure they are relevant in

the eyes of the potentially talented individuals they seek to add to their workforce, so they aren't being left behind in an ever-evolving technological era. The Human Resource (HR) practice of talent attraction has completely adapted to these mentioned changes in the technological era. One of the tools being utilised by organisations is that of social media. By building a favourable employer brand name, organisations present themselves online to try and attract talented individuals, more specifically members of Generation Y, to join their workforce. For the mentioned reasons of building a more desirable workforce, organisations must develop this brand name and appeal to the necessary talented individuals from Gen Y that will allow the organisation to sustain any form of competitive advantage in global and domestic markets.

How Gen Y interact with media is differing from that of other generations. The overall development and normalisation of social media in mainstream culture took hold when this generation were coming of age and has thus dictated the overall use of the various available platforms. According to Bhuyan et al (2020), as many as 81% of Gen Y are on Facebook and are frequent users of other social media platforms such as; Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. The numbers relating to Gen Y and their use of social media emphasise the importance of a given organisation to utilise these platforms. This research aims to investigate further how organisations handle their social media presence as a whole if this tool is as essential for talent attraction as research would suggest. Moreover, to further uncover any possible talent attraction methods used by organisations to attain those from Gen Y solely.

1c- Research Question

'How do organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y?'

1d- Research Objectives

- To explore methods of talent attraction used by organisations.
- To understand methods of employer branding used by organisations.
- To explore how social media is currently being utilized by organisations for both talent attraction and employer branding and if there is any room for improvement or further utilization.
- To uncover if there is an emphasis placed on attracting those from Generation Y and if so what measures are taken.

1e- Ethics of Research

Due to the chosen method of gathering data for this research project was semi-structured interviews, acknowledgements must be made to the privacy and confidentiality of the answers provided by the number of participants involved. Notably, each participant was made aware by the researcher that the interviewing process was entirely voluntary and confidential, and if at any time the individual felt the need to terminate the interview they had the power to do so at any stage of the overall process. Furthermore, each participant was provided with a consent form before the interviews being completed, acknowledging that any data collected would be used for research purposes.

1f- Outline of Dissertation

- **Section 1:** This section outlines the overall structure of the research topic. It further provides background and reasoning for deciding on the chosen topic, as well as establishing clear objectives of the research carried out.
- **Section 2:** This section seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of existing literature on this topic and will highlight previous research in other relevant fields as well as any existing gaps in the literature regarding the research topic.
- **Section 3:** This section will outline the research question and will further explain each research objective.
- **Section 4:** This section will outline the methodology chosen for this research topic. This will include; the method of research and the design, the method of sampling used for choosing participants, an analysis of the collected data and will discuss any existing limitations with the research method being put into practice.
- **Section 5:** This section will provide a thematic analysis of the research findings, and will compare and contrast the data gathered from the interviews carried out.
- **Section 6:** Reflections to section two will be made, and comparisons will be drawn from the gathered data and previously existing literature. Any gaps in literature will also be discussed accompanied by any limitations of the study.
- **Section 7:** An overall summary will be provided of the research findings. Any necessary recommendations will also be provided concerning future research.

Section 2- Literature Review

2a- Introduction

This section aims to review all existing literature carried out by academics in relevant fields. The following literature review examines literature relating to HR, Talent Management and Employer Branding. The reasons for choosing Gen Y instead of older or younger Generations and why organisations are pursuing those belonging to Gen Y.

This section will further assist with the purpose of this research by highlighting any previous study and any existing gaps in the relevant literature.

2b- Background of Human Resource Management in the Research Context and the Importance of Human Capital

Overall, Human Resource Management (HRM) is a relatively new concept, rising to popularity in workplaces in the 1980s (Reidy. 2011). HRM is defined by Armstrong (2006) as 'a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisation's most valued asset- the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives'. 'Strategy' is a key term used in defining HRM. It explains the longevity approach had by HR departments in having a strategic approach to managing people in the workplace.

Fleming (2001) states it is a result of deregulation and pressures from globalism and the influence of some UK and US academics that contributed to the growth and development of HRM. Storey (1989) identified four principles of HRM that distinguish this practice from any previous personnel management trends in the workplace.

- HRM is closely linked to the overall corporate strategy of an organisation
- HRM seeks to obtain the commitment of employees rather than their compliance
- Employees' commitment is attained by conducting an integral approach to HR practises such as; training and development, rewards and appraisals.
- And HRM is possessed by line managers, which allow for overall better integration. In contrast, personnel management was the product of specialist individuals in an organisation.

2c- Talent Management

Talent is a desirable quality in human beings, and organisations need a workforce with the right 'Talent' (Ansar/ Baloch. 2018). However, the possible talent pool for organisations to dip into when recruiting is scarce in number. Moreover, it is not simply enough for the presence of these talents; organisations must adequately utilise these talents for the overall advantage of the organisation (Ansar/ Baloch. 2018). The Term Talent Management (TM) relates to an organisations' efforts to attract, develop and retain skilled and valuable employees (Baqtayan. 2014). Schiemann (2014) defines TM as all activities associated with managing the talent's lifecycle in an organisation, from 'attracting and acquiring talent to developing and retaining. Despite TM having no clear singular definition, it is loosely defined by Klofsten/ Cadorn (2019) as being a strategic and holistic approach to Human Resource processes, 'business planning and strategic management.

Whilst both relating to people, it is essential to differentiate between TM and HRM. HRM has a broader scope than TM as it relates to all employees and not just those specific 'talents' within an organisation. It seeks to emphasise the overall importance of functions such as 'recruitment, training, development and assessment' (Banarjee. 2014). Stewart (2008) further illustrates how HRM relates to an organisation equally distributing its resources. In contrast, TM seeks to treat employees differently and begins paying attention to the different demands of different individuals. According to Baqtayan (2014), TM is a primary driver for organisational success in an ever-growing competitive market. Talent must be constantly managed in an organisation. Schiemann (2014) discusses the importance of TM as it involves an organisation getting the greatest possible return from its most important assets in talented individuals. Furthermore, TM impacts the ways; employees are organised, employees use technology, resources are fairly allocated, and what they do so, in turn, can positively impact the overall business performance (Baqtayan. 2014).

2d- Talent Attraction, Social Media and the 'War for Talent'

Talent attraction relates to an organisation's efforts and strategies to recruit potential talents to work for them (Lyria. 2015). There are several influencing factors of a job for potential talent. Some of these include the organisation's overall employer branding efforts and the sum of benefits related to working for the company as a whole (Hung. 2013). Lyria (2015) discuss the components of talent attraction as; 'recruitment and selection, employer branding, employee value proposition and [appearing] as an employer of choice'. Despite other important factors, such as company culture and additional benefits, according to Schlechter (et al. 2014), organisations must offer higher remuneration levels to make job offers appeal to potential talents.

Social media has massively changed how organisations interact with and attract potentially talented individuals to join their workforce. Organisations worldwide have been using social media for talent attraction and recruitment for several years through platforms such as; LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Headworth. 2015). According to Carpentier (et al. 2014), both job seekers and organisations actively use these mentioned platforms regularly to access information about each other. Gerber/ De Klerk (2018) explain how organisations have begun to forgo traditional recruitment methods and primarily use the social platform LinkedIn as their primary recruitment tool. This shift to digital recruitment and talent attraction on these platforms has meant that organisations require greater transparency (Staney. 2014). This would involve the organisation providing an increased amount of information to potential employees to allow for them to get a feel for the company and see if they align with their values and culture as a whole (Micik/ Micudova. 2018). Companies and potential candidates now have an increased stream of communication. The ways organisations use these platforms is through employer branding methods by presenting themselves as an attractive employer and thus providing a reason to individuals to apply to work for them (Kaur. 2013). An organisation's social media presence largely appeals to members of Gen Y due to their desire to stay constantly updated along with the instant gratification type culture of social media as a whole (Naim. 2013). Within a company, a study was carried out between four hundred and thirty members of staff. This research indicated that the use of LinkedIn and Facebook were most prominent with the ages between twenty-six and forty-five (Lewis/ Thomas/ James. 2015). This shows the importance of an organisations methods to fully utilise social media if they wanted to attract members from Gen Y.

The increase in the global shortage of highly skilled workforce, especially in the knowledge-based sectors, has also made the competition to hire and retain the necessary talent more difficult (Ansar/ Baloch. 2018). Companies are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain the required talents for their organisations. With the rise of the popularity of social media, job mobility has increased massively (Chambers et al. 1998). This trend of 'competing in the war of talent' emerged from the 1990s when the discussion was opened regarding the importance of talent management and having the ability as an organisation to attract talent needed for the functioning of that company (Stuss. 2020). Chambers (et al. 1998) stated that the average amount would work in five companies out of fifty executives being surveyed, which was predicted to rise to seven over the next ten years. This contrasts significantly with the way of the past and mass company loyalty. Stuss (2020) discusses to successfully compete in this 'war for talent' on a tactical level, an organisation must invest ample time in identifying the skills existing in an employee and focus on specific development for other employees. This relates to the company concentrating on choosing the right employees from the recruitment stage and further developing them.

2e- Employer Branding

Employer branding relates to the strategic efforts made by an organisation to build a positive 'brand' as an employer (Figurska/ Matuska. 2013). According to Biswas (2013), the very nature of 'branding' as a whole is to present or spread the advantages of a product or, in this case, the advantages of being employed by a given organisation. The importance of upholding a positive employer brand for an organisation relates to the potential impact it has on various human resource practices and processes such as; staff retention and turnover, talent attraction and the overall engagement of employees (Tewari. 2015). For example, within an organisation's recruitment department, addressing overall staff turnover would relate to retaining current employees and attracting necessary talented individuals that are the right fit for roles to the company. Employer branding with this staffing dilemma in mind begins with an organisation relaying to the market and its current employees the various values and the overall culture for them as an employer. According to Ambler/ Barlow (1996), it further relates to an overall summary of the various benefits an employer offers, be it economical, functional or psychological. Presenting this sum of benefits regarding why individuals should choose an organisation as an employer ultimately allows employers to stand out in an ever-competitive market for attracting individuals in the current 'war for talent' (Moseley. 2007).

The ways organisations carry out employer branding have changed as people have drifted from traditional media and use social media in their everyday lives. Social media has added an aspect of transparency with regards to individuals choosing an employer. Having an online brand presence as an employer allows potential employees to see if they align with the organisation's values as a whole (Micik/ Micudova. 2018). Whilst using social media may present as being a cost-efficient and effective method of talent attraction through employer branding, it is important to note that due to the nature of these various platforms, organisations are now accustomed to more scrutiny and criticism from individuals due to the lack of control they have from external factors speaking freely (Kissel/ Buttgen. 2015). Furthermore, according to Borah/ Tellis (2016), seeing as news and scandal tend to travel fast on social media, the negativity surrounding an employer on these platforms would influence some people's perspectives of an organisation.

2f- Generation X and Generation Z

Generation X (Gen X) relates to the generation of individuals before Gen Y. This roughly equates from 1965 to 1983. According to Gaidhani et al. (2019) Gen X were shaped by a number of global political events that occurred in this generation's youth, and as a result, are; increasingly open to diversity and have learnt to embrace individual's differences such as; 'religion, sexual orientation, class, race and ethnicity. This is amplified further by this generation's desire for more flexible work and life balance (Ahmad/ Ibrahim. 2014). Each generation are largely influenced by the one that succeeded them. In this case, Gen X were shown the ways of the working world by the extremely hard-working and diligent previous generation, otherwise dubbed as 'baby boomers' (Notter. 2007). As a result, according to Ahmad/ Ibrahim (2014), Gen X do remain competitive in the workforce and uphold loyalty to organisations.

Generation Z (Gen Z) relates to the generation of individuals that came after Gen Y. This roughly relates to those born from 1997 to 2012. They are the newest generation to enter the workforce. According to Gaidhani et al (2019) Gen Z are determined to be highly connected due to the current era of technological advancements and their prolific use of social media. Much like Gen Y, the attitude of Gen Z to the workplace has changed to that of the previous generation. Bascha (2011) relays how flexibility, self-reliance and personal freedom are non-negotiable terms of employment for this new generation of individuals. Gen Z are seen to be a professional and ambitious generation as they have had access to means of self-sustenance and self-education from a young age in the form of the ability to access information and communicate with people through technological means (Schwieger/ Ladwig. 2018). Nadya/ Farozin (2021) further explains that hobbies and passions are driving factors in choosing a career for individuals belonging to Gen Z. If Gen Y are to be considered the first generation to emerge with Tech-Savvy skills in the workplace and their everyday lives, the path has been paved for Gen Z being fully immersed in these technological advancements from birth. The open attitudes from previous generations have enabled Gen Z to possess this attitude in the workplace and seek other fulfilments from an employer.

2g- Generation Y/ the Emergence of a Tech Savvy Generation

Gen Y is the term used to describe individuals born in the years roughly between 1984 and 1996 (Bresman/ Rao. 2017). Due to the demographics of previous generations, Gen Y will soon occupy the majority of the workforce (Mansor et al. 2013). The importance and relevance of Gen Y relates to the fact that those belonging to this age bracket are the current most prominent entrants to the workforce (Islam/ Cheong/ Yusuf/ Desa. 2011. Pg 1802). The characteristics of Gen Y come as a result of the cultural shifting points that occurred throughout their lives in recent history. Morton (2002) discusses the examples of the Columbine school shootings and the 9/11 terror attacks and how events like these have made the individuals belonging to this generation more; risk-aware, conscious of their individual safety and cynical of mainstream media outlets.

Due to the technological advancements that have occurred throughout the lifespan of individuals belonging to Gen Y, they are seen to have an advantage entering the workforce. According to Sa'aban (et al. 2013) this lifelong exposure this generation have had to these breakthroughs; including the normalisation of mobile phones in daily life, the inevitable grasp of social media and an overall better adapted skillset to using the internet as a whole has allowed for Gen Y members to be seen as more skilled to potential employers. According to Anitha/ Aruna (2016) the constant exposure of Gen Y to technological advancements from a young age has allowed them to be more efficient in this area than generations that have gone before. Furthermore, this is amplified by their increased networking skills on social media platforms. Having this increased access to information via the internet and other electronic resources has given this generation of individuals a greater 'knowledge base', resulting in increased independence and the ability to question information and authority (Tapscott. 1998). As a result of access to this information, Coombes (2009) explains that members of this generation are deemed more; socially active, reasonable and headstrong with more robust views. Furthermore, Tapscott (1998) indicates that this ease of social communication with the use of technology exposes Gen Y to a wider variety of people to have contact with. This results in exposing this generation to a wider range of ideas and cultural differences, leading to a more socially inclusive outlook on life as a whole (Tapscott. 1998).

2h- Attitudes of Generation Y to the Workplace

Gen Y possess a different attitude to the workplace than that of previous generations. Collectively, Gen Y are characterised by 'technological immersion, developmental- orientation, recognition seeking, desire for feedback and team- orientation' (Naim. 2014). According to Blain (2018) members of Gen Y may possess somewhat of an advantage entering the workforce as growing up in a more diverse society has provided them with better adaptability to different cultures in the workplace. Similarly, Mansor (2013) discusses their willingness to accept change as a whole and work together with differing cultures. Along with these characteristics, Gen Y tend to seek creative freedom with an open 'speak your mind' atmosphere in the workplace and possess a further desire to be treated as equals (Naim. 2014). Naim (2014) further explains that Gen Y as a whole would tend to take bigger chances with career choices and have a lean toward employment that offers better opportunities for career advancements and long term progression.

Furthermore, they also crave continuous learning to upgrade their skills to remain relevant and competitive in the employment market (Naim. 2014). With this in mind, the idea of self-development is accompanied by the desire for more flexible working arrangements. As a result, Gen Y will tend to seek employment that supports their personal choices and work around their personal life, adopting a somewhat work to live and not live to work attitude (Mansor. 2013). A study carried out by Hays Recruitment firm of 1'000 members of Gen Y showed that whilst monetary compensation was the most attractive factor for applying for a role, second on the list was worktime flexibility (Hays. 2013). Despite it being the number one factor in this study, money is not everything for this generation. For example, 60% of respondents in that research mentioned 'interesting work' as a primary goal. This would mean there exists an international aspect to the work they do (Hays. 2013). This plays into Gen Y's incentives for freedom of movement between employers and desire to make independent decisions regarding their career direction (Bencsik/ et al. 2016).

Furthermore, this generation's ability to use technology adds to this independence as it allows them to seek and obtain information in a much quicker way (Mansor. 2013). However, whilst being independent overall, Gen Y do still crave performance evaluation and feedback. According to Bencsik (et al. 2016) they desire future-orientated feedback. They are open to performance discussions with managers in the workplace.

2i- Previous Studies/ Gaps in Existing Literature

In terms of previous studies in this field of research, there is an apparent lack of recent investigation. However, due to social media being a consistently altering concept, there is an avid reason to update research surrounding it continually. Naim (2013) provides information regarding organisations that

may utilise social media to attract Gen Y. Koch (et al. 2013) and discuss the impact social media has had on recruitment. Finally, the mentioned study carried out by Hayes recruitment (2013) provided an essential analysis of the attitudes of Gen Y and how they interact with the workplace and use social media. However, due to a gap in the literature in recent years and the increase of social media use, along with the introduction of new social platforms, there is ample reason to carry out this study.

Section 3- Research Question and the Aims of Study

Based on the above review of forgone literature it is clear to see there are existing gaps in previous research with regards to the specific talent attraction of individuals belonging to Generation Y on social media. This research will seek to provide a better understanding of the methods organisations use to attract potential talents from Generation Y through social media.

3a- Research Question

How do organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y?

3b- Objectives of Research

- **To explore methods of talent attraction used by organisations:** This research objective was chosen as even though ample literature surrounding the topic of talent attraction exists, organisations may give further clarification with the implementation of newer researched social media platforms. This objective further seeks to study if organisations excluding social media platforms are utilising any other talent attraction methods.
- **To understand methods of employer branding used by organisations:** This objective was set to gain a better understanding of the overall methods organisations employ for employer branding. This objective will investigate if any methods are still used, excluding social media by organisations for employer branding.
- **To explore how social media is currently being utilized by organisations for both talent attraction and employer branding and if there is any room for improvement or further utilization:** This objective was developed to uncover the ways social media is being utilized by organisations for talent attraction and employer branding and if any recommendations are to be made moving forward for other organisations.
- **To uncover if there is an emphasis placed on attracting those from Generation Y, and if so what measures are taken:** This objective seeks to investigate the importance organisations place on attaining and retaining members of Generation Y. If an emphasis on attracting Gen Y exists, this objective will further seek to explain what measures are taken.

Section 4- Methodology

4a- Introduction

This research centres on talent management and how organisations utilise social media as a tool to positively achieve this through the means of employer branding. Within this section, various types of research methods will be discussed to determine best which may be deemed the most appropriate for this form of data collection. The research design will be discussed, including the approaches taken to carry out this study. Furthermore, the sample will be discussed and their relevance to the research topic. The methods of collecting data will be provided with data analysis. Any limitations to the research will also be discussed.

4b- Qualitative v Quantitative Research Methods

The two primary methods of research that can be undertaken are Qualitative and Quantitative.

According to Palmer/ Bolderston (2006), qualitative research uses 'descriptions and categories' to study human encounters and realities from the participant's perspective. This research method is employed when researchers seek to understand people and the 'social and cultural contexts' in which they live (Palmer/ Bolderston. 2006). Qualitative research methods typically include interviews and general observations of people, however they may also include 'case studies, surveys and historical and document analysis' (Mohajan. 2018). Qualitative research relays an inductive approach which involved developing theories on gathered data (Williams/ Moser. 2019).

Contrastingly, quantitative deals with the utilisation and analysis of numerical data (Apuke. 2017). According to Aliaga/ Gunderson (2002), quantitative research relates to explaining phenomena by gathering numerical data and providing an analysis based on mathematical methods. This type of research seeks to factual data, whereas Qualitative offers a different insight to individual experience. In addition, quantitative research methods are used to test theories as they employ deductive approaches and measures variables with analysis of statistics (Bahari. 2010).

According to Rahman (2019), semi-structured interviews with a small sample size are a suitable method for uncovering 'previously unknown qualitative trends' and exploring new areas of research. This contrasts with the structured quantitative research approach that is likely to employ a greater number of participants (Apuke, 2017).

4c- Research Design

The research process may be defined as the systematic gathering and analysing of data or information to further our existing knowledge on the phenomenon in that we are interested (Dixit. 2011). According to Durrheim (1999) the research design aims to bridge the gap between the research question and the actual implementation or execution of the research itself. This research aims to investigate the methods used by organisations to attract individuals from Gen Y through the use of social media.

Palmer/ Bolderston (2006) explain how qualitative research is used to gain an in depth understanding of an individual's perspectives and experiences relating to the phenomenon in which they are concerned or interested. This form of research provides this desired deeper understanding and is suitable for studying the views of individuals (Mohajan. 2018). For these reasons qualitative research was chosen for this study as it sought to provide an understanding based on information collected relating to individuals experiences and the methods they employ to attract potentially talented individuals from Gen Y on social media. However, quantitative research would not be suitable for this study due to rigidity of its methods of gathering data (Apuke. 2017).

Qualitative research allowed the researcher to gain insight into the research question by compiling the views and experiences had by the participants whilst attracting talent using social media as a whole. Furthermore, using this research method allowed the researcher to use semi- structured interviews and ask open-ended questions to fully allow for the participants to give their points of view.

An interpretivism approach was taken to conducting this research as it allows for the understanding of the variants between individuals and their opinions (Williams. 2000). According to Williams/ Moser (2019) developing a theory from collected data relates to an inductive approach to research. Furthermore, Khan (2019) indicates how the grounded theory will allow for behavioural patterns and individual experiences to be further studied to develop theories.

The reasoning behind choosing qualitative research methods for this study and an inductive approach has allowed the researcher to better understand the perspectives of the individuals involved in the processes of talent management within various organisations.

4d- Sampling Method

The purpose of this study is to investigate how organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Gen Y, therefore individuals working in the field of Human Resources and more specifically recruitment/ talent acquisition were selected to participate. For this research the non-

probability purposive sampling method was used. Purposive or judgement sampling involves the purposeful choosing of participants by the researcher based on certain qualities that they possess (Alkassim/ Tran. 2015). Furthermore it involves the identification and selection of participants that are 'proficient or well informed' concerning the research at hand (Alkassim/ Tran. 2015).

A purposeful sampling method was chosen as it allows the researcher to have control in selecting participants with knowledge of the field of study. Furthermore, this sampling method was chosen as it allowed the researcher to gain insight from the participants working in roles relating to talent management as a whole and with prior knowledge of various Human Resource practices.

One advantage of using this sampling method is that it allowed the researcher to generalise the studied sample. Moreover, it allows the researcher to assume prior knowledge of the surrounding field of study (HR) from the participants (Sharma. 2017). However, the possible disadvantages of this method of sampling relate to the potential researcher bias that can be present (Sharma 2017). The judgement of the researcher is responsible for choosing adequate participants for the researcher, and this is often difficult to be carried out without any bias being present (Rai/ Thapa. 2004).

Participants working in recruitment or talent acquisition within Human Resource departments in organisations were chosen for this study. The researcher believed they would possess the most knowledge of current talent attraction methods being utilised. Each one of the participants was chosen based on their role in their respective organisation. They were approached individually by the researcher. The researcher aimed to provide a broad scope of methods organisations employ in several differing industries. The purpose of this was to

The following table is a breakdown of the industry in which the organisations operate and the roles carried out by the participants in these organisations.

4di- Breakdown of Participants

	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E
Role in Organisation	Talent Acquisition Business Partner	Senior Talent Acquisition Business Partner	Senior Talent Acquisition Specialist	Graduate recruitment coordinator	Hiring Manager
Industry/ Sector of Organisation	Financial	Recruitment	Energy generation, transmission and distribution	Professional services	Retail

4e- Collecting Data

The researcher gathered the data by carrying out 15 minute semi- structured interviews with five participants working in Human Resources over zoom. The collected data was primary and from the source of the interviews from individuals involved in talent management.

4f- Interviews

According to Rahman (2019), semi-structured interviews are a suitable method of data gathering for small sample sizes and further investigating new qualitative research on individual experiences. Therefore, the type of research that was chosen for this study was semi- structured interviews. Furthermore, due to the flexible nature of these interview styles, it allowed the researcher to probe the participant using pressing questions about how they feel their organisation is utilising social media for talent management.

These interviews were carried out with five individuals from five different organisations. Due to recent Covid restrictions and the current vaccine rollout it would have been increasingly difficult to provide a safe and comfortable space for the participants in which the interviews could take place. For this reason each one of the interviews took place over a zoom call. The interview questions (see appendix) were related to the talent management of Gen Y with the use of social media. The final draft of questions did vary with each participant. Some answers to early questions covered the bases of later questions, so the researcher changed the order depending on how the participant answered.

4g- Breakdown of Interview

The following interview questions were developed to better understand the research question; ‘how to organisations social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y?’. These questions

were also designed to achieve the four objectives of this research. The interview questions are available for review in their entirety in appendix.

Objective One: To explore methods of talent attraction used by organisations:

- 1) What are some of your organisations methods for carrying out talent management?
- 2) How does your company go about attracting necessary talented individuals?

Objective Two: To understand methods of employer branding used by organisations:

- 3) Who is responsible for employer branding?
- 4) What are some of the ways your organisation builds a positive employer brand? Why does it matter?

Objective Three: To explore how organisations are currently utilising social media for both talent attraction and employer branding and if there is any room for improvement or further utilisation:

- 5) To what extent is social media used for Talent attraction
- 6) How does your organisation build an online positive employer brand on social media?
- 7) How much time is invested in ensuring social media is being fully utilized?
- 8) Do you think social media is being fully utilized? Is there room for improvement?
- 9) Is social media classed as a useful tool for talent attraction?
- 10) What are the methods used by the org when attracting a potential talent on social media?

Objective Four: To uncover if there is an emphasis placed on attracting those from Generation Y, and if so what measures are taken:

- 11) Are specific measures taken to attract individuals from Gen Y?
- 12) Are Gen Y recognised as an important asset to your organisation?
- 13) Has it been harder to attract individuals from Gen Y? If so why?
- 14) Is social media a useful tool for attracting and recruiting Gen Y? Or is a distinction made?
- 15) Does your organisation directly reach out to individuals on social media?

4h- Procedure of Interviews

Upon first reaching out to each participant the researcher provided each individual with a participant information sheet regarding the study and a consent form. After the initial contact was made with the participants and agreed to take part a suitable time was agreed upon via email. This agreed time was only organised once the consent form was returned to the researcher.

Each interview was conducted in a private zoom call with only the researcher and the one participant being interviewed. Each interview began with two brief background questions relating to the participant's role within their respected organisation and the industry in which their organisation operates. This allowed the participant to begin talking openly before more pressing questions were asked relating to the research question and objectives.

4i- Data Analysis

The use of zoom allowed the researcher to record each interview and listen to them as many times as necessary. Once the audio was saved and backed up for safety reasons each interview was listened to several times to gain an immersive effect with the study. Khan (2014) states that grounded theory relies on data collection and analysis, subsequently constructing a theory that is 'grounded in the data'. Furthermore, this grounded theory approach selected for this research meant the process of coding occurs in the three stages of; open, axial and selective coding (Khan, 2014).

According to Nowell et al (2017), thematic analysis involves examining collected data through the application of common themes. William/ Moser (2019) detail that taking notes whilst listening to each interview several times allows for the researcher to find any patterns of common themes from the answers given by each participant. Once these thematic patterns were identified, they were then given a code. Subsequently each code was studied to ensure each category was included within the data.

4j- Limitations of Research

Interviews are potentially time-consuming, and asking participants to participate in the study requires them to give up their free time to conduct the interview process. As illustrated by Sharma (2017), further limitation may be in place from the nature of this research due to potential researcher bias or subjectivity. It is also important to distinguish that during this qualitative research the data gathered by the participants is not a generalisation of a group of individuals, but an attempt to understand their individual experiences and views.

4k- Ethics of Research

As pointed out by Munhall (1988), the ethical considerations of qualitative research relate to the privacy and security of participants as they are to be seen as the primary 'tool' for research. There were several ethical considerations to take on whilst conducting this research.

Due to the nature of the research in semi- structured interviews, the first ethical consideration was ensuring each participant was reassured about the confidentiality and privacy of any data collected. Before conducting the interviews, each participant was provided with a consent form via email to read, sign, and return to the researcher. This consent form provided all necessary information regarding data collection and that each interview would be audio recorded. In addition, each participant was made fully aware that the interview process was entirely voluntary and that they possessed the power to terminate the interview at any point.

Due to the sensitivity of the data being collected each interview was conducted separately on a private zoom call with each participant. This sought to provide a private environment in which the participant felt comfortable.

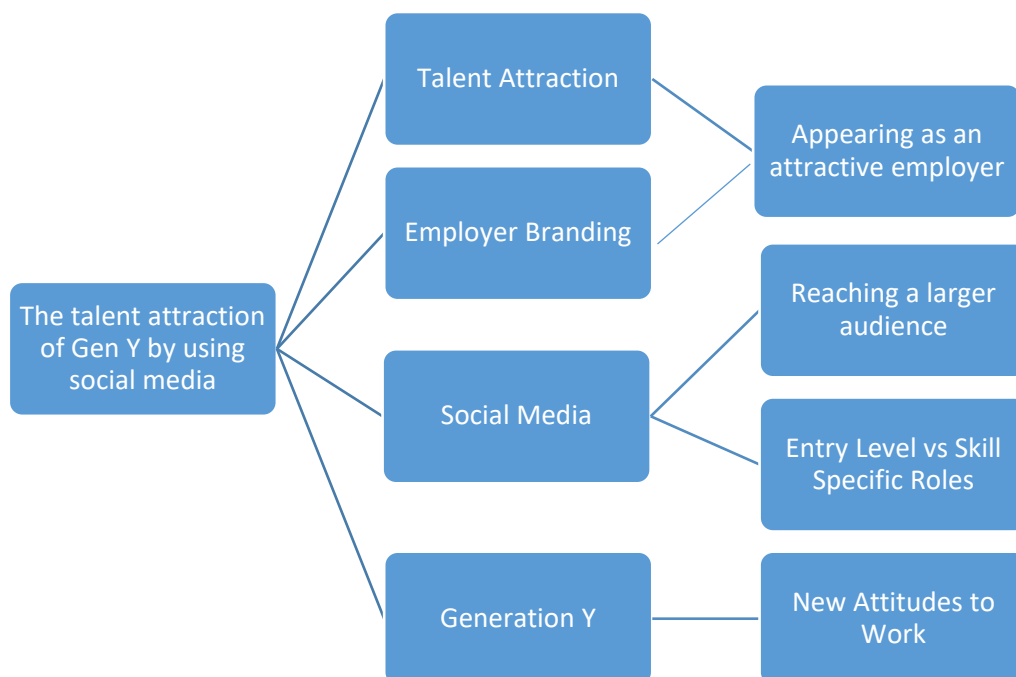
Section 5- Findings

5a- Introduction

This section will provide a further examination of the data collected and an investigation into the themes emerging from the data through thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with five individuals all working in Human Resource departments and working in some form of recruitment or talent acquisition role.

5b- Themes

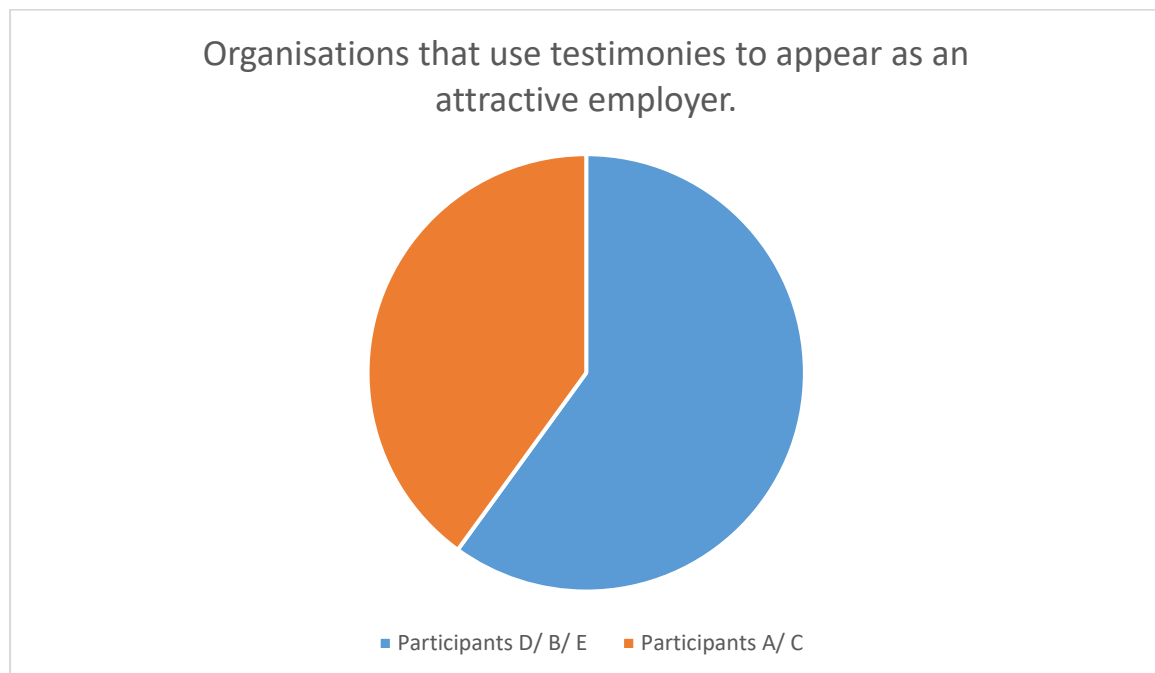
Thematic analysis was the process used to analyse the data attained from the five semi-structured interviews for this study. Each of these interviews was recorded and listened to multiple times by the researcher to uncover common themes emerging from the answers provided by each participant.



5c- Thematic Analysis

Theme 1- Appearing as an attractive employer

The first consistent theme that emerged from the interviews for this research topic related to the importance of appearing as an attractive employer. This relates to the research objectives of; exploring the overall methods of talent attraction and to better understand the importance of the processes of employer branding carried out by organisations.



Participant D stated - *'We have testimonies, from a graduate perspectives [in which they discuss] their involvement [in the organisation and this] can be used to market [the brand]'*

Participant B stated- *'Glassdoor reviews' are a good way to appear as an attractive employer. Moreover that they would 'create nice LinkedIn ads to promote the company [including] testimonials about working for the company'*

Participant E stated- *'We often allow for our staff members to create welcoming videos for social media to provide information about the latest in store offers and what it's like working for us as a retailer'*

These three statements give the incline that the using their current employees to speak on the employers behalf acts as a method of employer branding on social media platforms. This would aim

to promote the organisation and attract others by allowing them to be given an idea what it's like working for the company being discussed.

'As a brand you want to attract to what you're putting out there [we aim to] put the culture of the organisation out there' – Participant D

'Things go viral and people see the company is fun [you] can't just fire an ad up on Facebook- the content needs to be engaging' – Participant B

'We bring school students in on work experience to show how we treat our staff with respect' –E

These three comments show that organisations aim to give potential employees an insight on what it's like to work for them as an employer, and seek to present themselves as different to other companies.

'[We are] Representing the company [we need to] know the benefits the career progression why it's good to work in a certain area etc.' –Participant B

'Garner a following in order for people to see it [and] come up with creative ideas in order to utilize it' –Participant B

'Bringing candidates through a positive recruitment experience [one that is] big on diversity and inclusion builds a positive employer brand' –Participant A

These three comments give an insight on some of the responsibilities held by current employees of an organisation that assist the building of a positive employer brand.

Participant A discusses the importance of appearing as *'open and diverse'*

Participant C discussed the importance of *'hitting home in terms of the brand'*, looking for a *'brighter future'* and letting the public know the organisations push for *'going green'*.

Furthermore participant C explained how the organisation *'shows off the good work we've done'* and gave the example of *'building windfarms in the UK'*

These three comments show that organisations sell their brand to potential employees and how they would also present the public with all of the positive work their company is doing in local communities and abroad.

Theme 2- Reaching a larger audience

In relation to social media the participants discussed the importance of reaching a larger audience when managing talent for their organisation. This ultimately allows for the best possible outcome of choosing a potential talent to join their work force.

Participant D stated- *'Instagram, twitter and Facebook to an extent [are used] for their ability to reach and interact with larger audiences'*

Participant C stated- *jobs are advertised on 'LinkedIn, Irish jobs, indeed and NI jobs [and that] 'social media work for apprentices, undergrads and graduates, and for that the likes of FB and Instagram [are used]'*

Similarly Participant A stated- *'Facebook is used for new talent'*

Participant C further explained how - a co-worker of his posted a *'Tiktok video for the apprentices and it got over 500'000 views'*

These comments made by the participants give an insight to the various platforms at their disposal for advertising and attracting new talents on. Participant C's comment on the new platform of Tiktok is particularly relevant as it encapsulates the evolving nature of this technological era, and how a new platform can reach so many individuals with a single post.

'Open to anyone who is a recent graduate [or from] arts backgrounds' – Participant D

[We] 'Run programmes to include people that may be older and are looking for a career change'- D

[It's about] 'Reaching out to people with all different backgrounds [and] giving them the opportunity'
–Participant A

'Social media will always hit a target audience [but the] older generation use social media as well', 'the more we can get in front of people [the better it is] for recruitment and marketing' – Participant C

'All of our roles are open to absolutely everybody, once you have the skills and requirements' – Participant A

The participants provide information regarding their organisations desires to reach out to as many people as possible with the use of social media. The primary focus seems to revolve around reaching as many individuals as possible so they would have a greater talent pool to choose from.

'720k have seen [the organisations] ads since August 2019 roughly 10% click and 10% apply' [it's all about] 'exposure' – Participant C

'Showing off as many platforms as we can get' – C

'Networking' with a small team, 'getting a network of larger audiences to see so we have a bigger talent pool to pick from' – Participant D

'Put out the nice ad, share to list of connections'- Participant B

These comments made by the mentioned participants further relate to the importance of getting the organisation to reach as many people as possible on these platforms, and the possibilities of said platforms to reach large audiences.

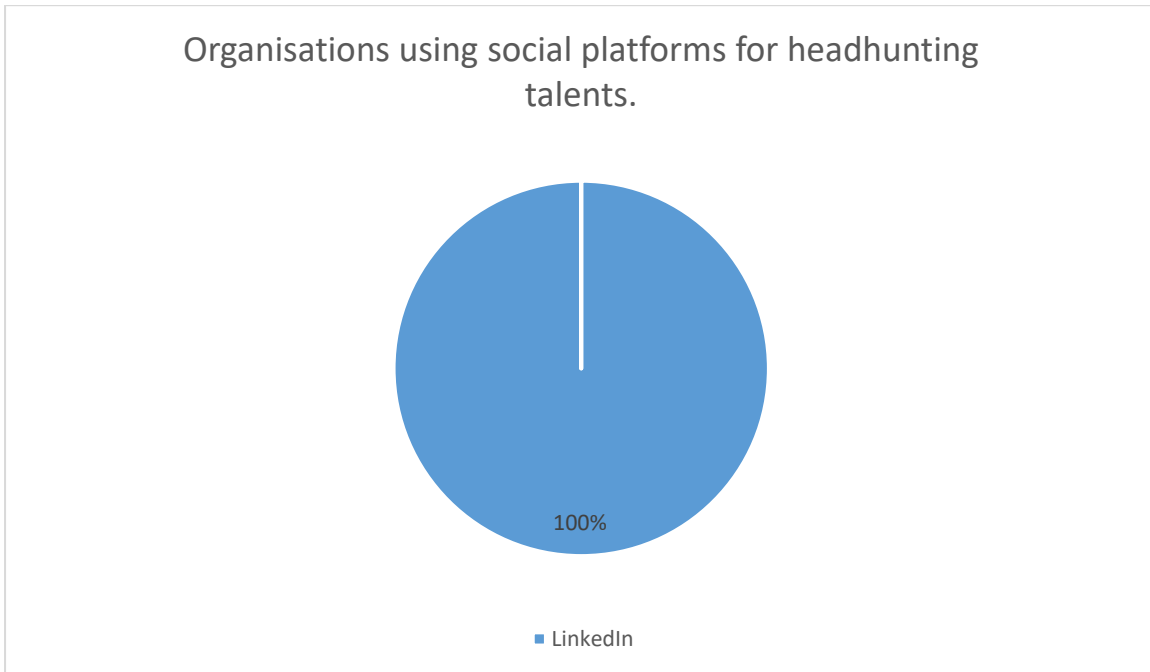
[We offer] 'Secondments, giving people the opportunity to go into a role temporarily, and can return to their home role if they want' –Participant A

'We often allow for our staff members to create welcoming videos for social media to provide information about the latest in store offers' - E

'Social media posts with our weekly offers are a massive help to our overall sales in my opinion' -E

This further provides information on the ways these organisations use social media to promote themselves by offering their audiences an insight on some of the benefits that come along with working for them and just general company promotion.

Theme 3- Distinction between entry level vs skill specific roles



‘My colleagues recruiting for larger areas like Technology or finance [looking for a] desired skillset [would be] reaching out to candidates via LinkedIn recruiter’ – Participant B

‘Headhunting- put out the nice ad, share to list of connections [and] reach out to candidates’ using LinkedIn recruiter -Participant B

‘Especially for more senior level roles, so we’d need to do a lot of sourcing for those roles’- Participant A

[We do] ‘A lot more sourcing for the senior roles’ –Participant B

‘LinkedIn would be used for managerial roles or roles in our office in the store’- E

This gives an insight to some of the methods employed by the participants in their organisations for recruiting necessary talents for specific roles. Some time and effort must be spent during this sourcing process to ensure the correct candidate may be given the position.

Participant B stated- *She recruits for ‘Group operations and retail banking [and] entry level [roles that] don’t need a lot of experience’. ‘An application tracking system is used [and they would] post the job via Core Hr, Irish Jobs and LinkedIn and the company’s website’*

'Facebook [is used] for junior candidates, and [the organisation] had a twitter account [as] younger people are on those social media platforms. Instagram is used as well' –Participant B

'Typically more junior candidates we can just advertise on Irish Jobs' –Participant A

'Entry level roles we could be doing a bit more for social media advertising [as] that age group spend a lot of time on social media- through Instagram and Facebook' –Participant A

'Generally we take CVS and conduct interviews based on those we receive as the turnover rate is naturally high in retail' – Participant E

These comments give an insight into the ways these organisations treat the process for recruiting and attracting general entry level roles that require very little prior experience.

'Grad fairs' and 'reaching out to the colleges' – Participant D

'Advertise on [the colleges] job boards for third year students' –Participant C

These two comments relate to the methods used by the organisations when it comes to attracting recent or soon to be graduates.

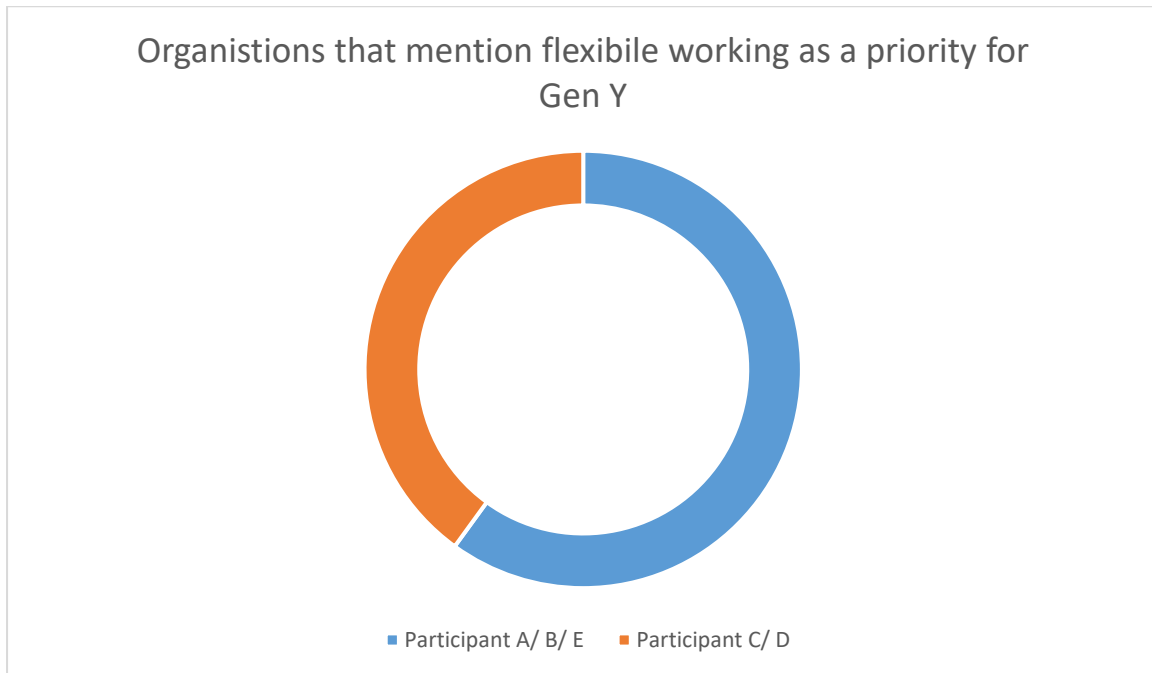
'Without looking at their CV you can see what they've done and are currently doing'- Participant B

'Especially candidates that have their statuses open to new opportunities' –Participant A

'Depends on the role and the experiences you are looking for' – Participant A

These three comments relate to the organisations using LinkedIn for sourcing talent and reaching out to individuals on this social platform.

Theme 4- New attitudes to work



[The] 'Content needs to be engaging, can't just create a twitter account' –Participant B

[We advertise] 'The role and what comes along with it is attractive, [the] Benefits [and offer] flexible working' –Participant A

[We offer] 'Opportunities and career progression'. [We promote that] 'You don't have to stay here forever [in] six month you can move on' –Participant B

[For apprentices] 'Outdoors, something completely different than sitting at a desk, [it offers a] 'Different option than going into college [that is] paid instantly'. [For attracting older generations] 'Older generation focussed on going green'– Participant C

This clearly shows that these organisations recognise they must present themselves as more attractive alternatives to their competitor employers. The participant's comments provide an insight as to some of the strategies taken by their respective organisations to show some of the benefits available if an individual chose them as an employer.

[Gen Y are] 'Smarter, [with] more emotional intelligence, they know they want to work for a nice company'–Participant B

[Gen Y are] 'Head strong as to what they want' –Participant

These two comments encapsulate the changing attitudes Gen Y have to work as a whole. Companies need to provide more for potential employees as they are seeking newer benefits from working life.

'Because we are a smaller store we can't compete with the grad programmes bigger retailers can provide for Gen Y' – E

This comment shows that the competition of benefits being offered by other organisations means that smaller companies can't compete when it comes to attracting certain graduates.

[Gen Y want] *'Flexibility, hyper working, working from home, tech provided to them, good culture' – Participant B*

Participant B mentioned- [The] *'Big commute' 'people don't want that anymore'*- when discussing the impact Covid- 19 has had on working attitudes

'We offer our office workers flexibility and can now opt to working remote if they choose to' – Participant E

'During covid we started an online shopping service and those working in that area of our store can do the work remotely' – Participant E

'People won't apply for these new positions or jobs in our office if they don't have flexibility' – Participant E

These comments relate to the changing attitudes to the traditional working setup, especially prior to Covid 19 when working on site five days a week was seen as standard. The participants imply individuals applying for jobs won't work for companies that don't offer some form of flexible work setup.

5d- Conclusion of Findings

This section set out the findings from the semi- structured interviews carried out for this research topic for the purpose of striving to achieve the objectives of the study.

The collected data was analysed by coding and thematic analysis. Subsequently four common themes emerged from the interview findings.

Due to the fact each one of the participant's organisations came from a differing sector the findings were versed in numerous differing themes but remained consistent in others.

Section 6- Discussions

6a- Introduction

This section will further examine the findings from section five and discuss why they are relevant to the research question. Furthermore, these findings will be linked to all or any relevant previously mentioned literature in the literature review.

The main objectives of this study were to investigate; the methods organisations use for talent attraction and employer branding, how organisations use social media for both talent attraction and employer branding, and how organisations go about attracting individuals from Gen Y to join their workforce.

Each one of these four themes relates to these mentioned research objectives;

Theme 1 relates to talent attraction and employer branding.

Theme 2 relates to the importance social media serves in talent attraction and employer branding.

Theme 3 relates to the methods employed by organisations on social media for talent attraction and employer branding.

Theme 4 relates to Gen Y's changing attitudes to work and how organisations have to adapt to attract any members of this generation to work for them

6b- Theme 1- Appearing as an attractive employer

From the findings of the interviews and from researching the relevant literature of this study, appearing as an attractive employer is essential for organisations and their bid for talent attraction.

Participant D mentions how you want '*to attract to what you are putting out there*'. Meaning the organisation needs to provide a solid job description with the vital benefits of working for them.

Similarly, Participant B discusses that 'people [need to] see the company is fun' and the content needs to be engaging'.

These two comments are supported by Biswas (2013) when the nature of 'branding' is discussed. It relates to the advantages of working for a company being presented to potential talents. This relates to the two comments made by the participants as they both recognise the importance of showing the company off in a positive light and providing attractive information about what they, as an employer, offer.

Similarly, Ambler Barlow (1996) defined *employer branding* as a sum of benefits an employer offers. Which is ultimately providing ample reason to the potential employee as to why they should work for you as a company (Moseley. 2007)

Participant B explains that they are '*representing the company*' and must '*know the benefits*' and why it is '*good to work in a certain area*'. This relates to the mentioned sum of benefits through employer branding but further expresses the importance of the current employees knowing what they are and what the company offers as an employer.

Participant C mentions '*hitting home in terms of the brand*', which relates to relaying to the public why they should be chosen as an employer.

On a separate note, Kissel/ Buttgen (2015) mentioned how organisations lack any absolute control and potentially face criticism from external factors on the likes of social media. Similarly, Borah/ Tellis (2016) discuss how fast scandals travel on social media and largely influence companies' perspectives. Participant A discusses the importance of appearing as '*open and diverse*'. Indirectly this indicates the company's attitude on appearing as an inclusive employer to all as if they did not. This has the potential to be a fat spreading social media scandal.

Participant A further mentions the importance of '*bringing candidates through a positive recruitment experience*'. Again, as mentioned, a scandal of mistreatment of a new employee to an organisation would potentially draw many views on social media and negatively impact the employer brand as a whole.

Participant E similarly mentioned how within their organisation, they would bring '*school students in on work experience to show how we treat our staff with respect*'. Further relaying the importance of representing the organisation positively and indicating how they treat their staff. Moreover, whilst not on social media, this type of scandal would still impact people's perception of the company as an employer.

Participant C discussed how their organisation strive to '*show off the good work we have done*' and provided an example of '*building wind farms in the UK*'. Likewise to scandal spreading quickly on social media, this information provided to potential candidates would influence their opinions on the organisation and influence others in their circles of communication.

6c- Theme 2: Reaching a larger audience

The findings of the interviews revealed the organisations' attitude to social media and its purpose of reaching a larger audience.

Participant D mentioned that '*Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to an extent [are used] for their ability to reach and interact with larger audiences*'.

Similarly, participant C mentioned similar platforms and added to the list by saying jobs are advertised on *'LinkedIn, Irish jobs, indeed and NI jobs [and that] 'social media work for apprentices, undergrads and graduates, and for that the likes of FB and Instagram [are used]'*.

Participant C further discussed a new social media platform and how a co-worker of his posted a *'Tiktok video for the apprentices, and it got over 500'000 views'*.

Headworth (2015) supports this by advising how organisations have been using social media platforms like; LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for several years. This mentioned research was carried out in 2015; from here, the rate of social media use for this practise has only increased, which is made evident by Participant C discussing the new platform of Tik Tok, and how a single post received *'500'000 views'*.

Participant C further discussed that out of *'720'000'* views on social media ads in *'august 2019, roughly 10% click and 10% apply'*, relating further to the *'exposure'* of social media.

Gerber/ De Klerk (2018) mention how organisations have moved away from traditional recruitment forms and primarily use social media for these processes. With view rates of *'720'000'*, It is understandable why this would be the primary focus. Organisations push to *'showing off on as many platforms as [they] can get'* (Participant C).

Similarly, Participant D discusses the concept of *'networking'* and the importance of *'getting a network of larger audiences to see so [the organisation] have a bigger talent pool to pick from'*. As mentioned by Gerber/ De Klerk (2018), the move away from traditional forms of recruitment is related to the opportunity organisations now have to reach larger talent pools and, in turn, have a better selection of potential talents to choose from.

Staney (2014) discusses how the move to digital recruitment and talent attraction has also meant more transparency is needed at the organisational level. This is supported by Participant E, who mentions how their organisation as a retailer *'allows for [their] staff members to create welcoming videos'*. This provides the public with a greater insight into the organisation's inner workings and ultimately a greater level of transparency.

Furthermore, Micik/ Micudova (2018) discuss how this transparency allows the public to see if they align with the culture and values of the organisation by gaining an insight as to what it would be like working for them. This aligns with Participant A discussing *'secondments, giving people the opportunity to go into a role temporarily' and further 'reaching out to people with all different backgrounds- once they have the skills and requirements'*. These comments give the impression that they allow potential candidates to get as much insight into their organisation as possible and allow equal opportunity for this to occur. Offering temporary secondment roles is an excellent opportunity to give potential

candidates the chance to get an impression of what it is like working for the company as a whole. This may also be seen as the organisation ultimately appearing as an attractive employer by providing more reasons to candidates for why they should work for them (Kaur. 2013).

Naim (2013) claimed that an organisations social media presence broadly would appeal to members of Gen Y as they have a tendency to stay online and connected. Participant C discusses how '*social media will always hit a target audience*', with the implications of graduates and early members of Gen Y.

This is further backed up by the study mentioned by Lewis (et al. 2015) in which the research dictated that Facebook and LinkedIn were most prominent with the age range between twenty-six and forty-five. So Gen Y seem to be the primary target of these methods of talent attraction and recruitment. However, Participant C further mentions that '*older generations use social media as well*' and that ultimately '*the more [the organisation] can get in front of people*', the better it is for the company overall. So whilst there may be a primary target, social media is being utilised to reach that broader audience and not just one generation of individuals.

6d- Theme 3: Distinction between entry level vs skill specific roles

The findings that emerged from the research interviews showed that specifications were made for entry-level vs skill-specific roles.

Ansar/ Baloch (2018) discuss the global shortage of skilled workers, especially in knowledge-based sectors, in which the competition to hire talents is increasing. This is amplified by the responses from the participants relating to headhunting talented individuals.

Participant B mentions how '*larger [knowledge based] areas like technology or finance- reach out to candidates via LinkedIn recruiter*'. They continue to mention '*headhunting*'.

Participant A mentioned that their organisations' '*need to do much sourcing for those roles*' concerning '*senior roles*'. However, as Participant B mentioned, they would do '*a lot more sourcing for senior roles*'.

Furthermore, participant E mentioned that '*LinkedIn would be used for managerial roles or roles in our office in the store*'. These comments further seek to back up the literature on the skill-shortage of knowledge workers and how organisations need to headhunt and carefully source candidates to fill their more senior/ knowledge-based roles adequately.

Participant B mentioned how '*Facebook [is used] for junior candidates*' and '*Twitter*' and '*Instagram*' – '*because younger people are on these platforms*'.

This relates to Headworth (2015) discussing how Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are being utilised by organisations. However, it would seem as though these platforms relate more so to entry-level roles.

Participant A further backed up this, stating their organisations whilst sourcing '*junior candidates [they] just advertise online*'. Furthermore, they stated that their company for '*entry-level roles could be doing a bit more for social media advertising [as] that age group spend a lot of time on social media*'. Again mentioning '*Instagram and Facebook*' specifically.

Furthermore, Kaur (2013) supports this when they discuss the increased stream of communication between employers and potential employees. Advertising on social media platforms for these general entry-level roles allows more candidates to see the posts and potentially feel as though they could apply as they would require little to no prior experience.

Carpentier (2014) discussed the ability of organisations and jobseekers to access an unprecedented amount of information on each other regularly due to social media.

Participant B supports this by providing an insight into their organisation's methods of using LinkedIn as '*Without looking at their CV you can see what they've done and are currently doing*'. This saves time throughout the recruitment process and helps the company find the right fit for a role.

Participant A furthers this but states it '*depends on the role and experiences you are looking for*', and they might primarily focus on candidates that '*have their statuses open to new opportunities*'. They again show how an organisation can gain an increased amount of information on a potential candidate by simply using a single social media platform.

With all of these platforms in mind, Chambers (et al. 1998) mentioned increasing job mobility for individuals. This is evident from the interview findings when each participant mentioned using social media platforms for entry-level and skill-specific roles at one stage. This means there will always be a stream of some form from organisations presenting themselves as employers in the face of social media users.

6e- Theme 4: New attitudes to work

Finally, the new attitudes to the workplace and work emerged as a common finding from the participants' interviews.

Participant B discusses how Gen Y have more '*emotional intelligence*', are more '*headstrong as to what they want*', and they '*want to work for a nice company*'.

This is supported by Naim (2014) when discussing Gen Y being characterised by seeking recognition and have a desire for feedback. Blain (2008) further supports this, mentioning that growing up in a more diverse society has led to this generation being better adaptable to change and differing cultures

in the workplace. This would imply they know that they want to work for a more open and diverse organisation. Naim (2014) discusses how a 'to speak your mind' culture is desired by this generation in the workplace.

Participant E mentioned that *'because [their organisation] are a smaller store we cannot compete with the grad programmes bigger retailers can provide for Gen Y'*.

Similarly, Participant A discusses how they advertise *'the role and what comes along with it is attractive, [the] Benefits [and offer] flexible working'*.

Naim (2014) explains how members of Gen Y tend to gravitate towards employment with opportunities for career advancements. However, as participant E belongs to a smaller retailer, their comment showed that they may not be able to compete with organisations that offer more linear progression for Gen Y. Much like participant A mentioning that when advertising the roles they advertise the job description as well as the other benefits of the company.

Similarly, Participant B discussed the *'opportunities and career progression'* that make their company attractive and that within their organisation, after six months *'you can move on'* to another role.

This is further backed up by Naim (2014) when discussing Gen Y's desire to upgrade their skills, which would be amplified by moving around a company gaining as much knowledge and skills as possible.

Mansor (2013) discussed how Gen Y would tend to seek employment to support their personal lives and choices, providing them with more time to do what they please.

Participant B touched on this when stating Gen Y seek *"Flexibility, hyper working, working from home, tech provided to them, good culture"*. Furthermore, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, people are not willing to take on a *'big commute'* every morning. Meaning flexibility and working from home would be desirable or completely necessary for members of Gen Y.

Finally, a study mentioned by Hays recruitment firm (2013) showed that second to remuneration, worktime flexibility was the second priority for Gen Y regarding choosing an employer.

Participant E emphasised the importance of this, stating that they *'offer our office workers flexibility and can now opt to working remotely if they choose to'*. This is because *'People won't apply for these new positions or jobs in our office if they don't have flexibility'*.

6f- Objectives of Study

- ***To explore methods of talent attraction used by organisations.***

Exploration of the methods of talent attraction used by organisations was done by investigating how they interacted with individuals on social media and through the recruitment process.

Without any prior gesture from the researcher, each participant immediately began discussing social media platforms as their primary methods for talent attraction. In addition, each participant mentioned at least one strategy of talent attraction carried out through social media in their interview, indicating it is their primary method.

- ***To understand methods of employer branding used by organisations.***

The investigation into employer branding methods being carried out by these organisations resulted similarly to that of talent attraction methods.

The literature on employer branding suggested that social media would be a significant factor in these processes, evident from the findings. Appearing as an attractive employer on social media platforms and from the use of graduate fairs seemed to be the primary methods used by these organisations.

- ***To explore how social media is currently being utilized by organisations for both talent attraction and employer branding and if there is any room for improvement or further utilization.***

It became evident that utilising social media platforms was a primary method of talent attraction and employer branding for these organisations.

Each participant discussed the importance of reaching a broader audience and, in turn, having a better talent pool to choose from. This came from employer branding methods on the social media platforms and ultimately appearing as an attractive employer overall.

There was a further distinction made between general entry-level roles and skill-specific roles. This leads the researcher to determine that the organisations use specific social media platforms (Facebook/ Instagram/ Twitter) for general entry-level roles. In contrast, in more knowledge specific roles LinkedIn would be used. This is because organisations can specify their required skills and solely headhunt for the talent they desire.

- ***To uncover if there is an emphasis placed on attracting those from Generation Y, and if so what measures are taken.***

Ultimately, whilst there was an implication from some participants that social media platforms would tailor to the demographic of Gen Y, no evidence was provided that they specifically sought after members of this generation.

Some of the participants discussed that social media platforms would always hit a particular demographic. However, this would not entail that there were any specific measures to attract members of Gen Y. Instead, the roles advertised would be directed at everybody '*once you have the skills and requirements*' (Participant A).

Participant C mentioned that despite social media being primarily used by Gen Y, their focus seemed to be attracting the right talents regardless of age.

If an organisation sought specifics when searching for potential talent, they would use the likes of LinkedIn to search for their needs. This is as opposed to directly trying to attract individuals from Gen Y.

The focus on Gen Y seemed to be on this generation's changing attitudes to work as a whole. Organisations recognised that their needs and desires were changing, and therefore they, employers needed to offer more flexibility and different working arrangements to attract individuals from Gen Y.

Section 7- Conclusion of Research and Recommendations

7a- Conclusion of Research

This research aimed to investigate social media and how organisations have utilised it to their advantage. From this, the research question was developed, 'How do organisations use social media to attract Generation Y'.

The study began by identifying similar literature and existing gaps in the literature. Existing literature spanned over several years ago and ultimately led to the realisation that many gaps were present. This resulted from the ever rapidly changing technological landscape, as these social platforms are seemingly gaining popularity and strength by the year. Not to mention the introduction of new social platforms as well.

The current literature was extensive on talent attraction and employer branding as concepts; however, there was no new research on these topics. Instead, social media has seemingly taken over as their primary method. Furthermore, there was existing literature on the importance of Generation Y in the workforce but seemed to be a lack of investigation into specific measures taken by the organisation to attract members of Gen Y.

A qualitative approach was a talent to conduct this research. Therefore, five semi-structured interviews were carried out with participants from five different professional sectors. The reason for choosing different sectors was to compare how they treated the mentioned processes across the board.

The first finding from these interviews related to each organisation's desires to appear as an attractive employer. When investigating talent attraction and employer branding methods, the participants provided information regarding how their respective organisations present themselves as attractive employers. The primary method of attracting talent mentioned by the participants ultimately related to their use of social media. Some participants discussed their organisation's methods of attending grad fairs, but generally, social media was the primary focus. Each organisation discussed posting attractive ads on various social media platforms and selling their brand as an attractive employer.

The second finding related to the importance of social media and how organisations use it to reach unprecedented larger audiences. When investigating the specific methods of talent attraction and employer branding organisations use on social media platforms, all participants relayed the importance of reaching as broad a crowd as possible. In this sense, social media directly influences the organisation's ability for talent management as the larger audiences ads on social media can cater to the bigger potential talent pool it presents the company within the recruitment process.

The third finding related to the differentiation made by the participants in regards to general entry-level roles versus skill-specific roles. When investigating talent attraction measures using social media, each participant specified between entry-level and skill-specific roles. Generally, entry-level roles would be posted on more user-friendly social media platforms such as; Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These roles tend to require little to no prior experience. As suggested from the responses to the interview questions, the reason for this was that generally, these ads would hit the younger demographic, and the roles would cater to them. However, it was also made clear that the roles were open to anyone to apply to. This contrasts with more skill-specific roles in that organisations would have to use social platforms like LinkedIn to source the candidates they specifically require for a role. This allows for a direct approach by the organisations making instant contact with a potential candidate for a role.

Furthermore, it is essential to mention that this finding emerged when discussing if organisations took any specific measures to attract members of Generation Y on social media. These questions would indicate that there are not any exact measures for attracting individuals from this generation. Moreover, it would appear from the responses that anyone has the right to apply for any position being posted by an organisation if they meet the skill requirements. Furthermore, the organisations would not seek to make the first contact if the individual did not possess the necessary skills.

The fourth and final finding of these interviews related to the overall changing attitude to work possessed by Gen Y and organisations adapting to their needs in order to attract them. The participants acknowledged the changing attitudes to working life possessed by members of Gen Y. They recognised members of Gen Y as having a desire for flexible working arrangements and that they may not settle for anything other than such setup. This largely influences the methods of talent attraction used by organisations on social media. Gen Y's desire for development and flexibility in the workplace must be accommodated if they are attracted to work for the company in question. Organisations use social platforms to present themselves as employers and provide insight into the open and diverse cultures they offer to see if they individual aligns with their values. To provide a summary benefits available with the company and presents any potential development possibilities to individuals that could occur for their careers in they chose them as an employer.

Whilst each participant comes from a different sector to get different perspectives on the research topic, the researcher recognises that there are limitations in the data collected. For example, one industry member does not represent that industry as a whole, and differences may be present in organisations. Furthermore, methods of talent management and employer branding may differ as a whole. However, the mentioned findings may suggest they apply to most modern-day organisations.

Despite the participants recognising that there have been adaptations made to cater to members of Gen Y due to their changed attitude to working life, it may be argued that this seeks to attract as many individuals as possible and not just from Gen Y. Ultimately, an organisation offering flexible working arrangements to their employees would work favourably to their employer brand as a whole and in turn allow for an increased probability of them getting adequate talents seeking to work for them. This, along with the findings from the participants discussing that each role is open to every individual regardless of background, once they possess the necessary skillset would suggest that the priority is placed on finding the correct individuals to fill roles and not just individuals from Gen Y- despite the mentioned advantages of having them in the workforce.

7b- Future Research Recommendations

In this field of research, there is great potential for future studies to be carried out. However, the nature of the technological aspects of working life ultimately dictates that changes will continue to occur and accelerate.

One of the participants mentioned the new social media platform TikTok and how it showed great potential for reaching a large audience and pushing an employer brand. Upon further development of this platform and potentially even newer platforms, future research can show organisations' strategies for using these new servers to reach a new plethora of people.

The existing literature before this research was conducted in the broad spectrum of the last twenty years. The technological changes that have occurred in previous studies are almost immeasurable. So moving forward, consistent research may be the key to gaining an overall better understanding of specific measures taken by organisations whilst using social media as a whole and attracting individuals from different generations.

Finally, using participants from different industries did allow for a better understanding of how they interact with individuals on social media and thus carry out the processes of employer branding and talent attraction. It would be advisable to carry this trend into future research as it does provide a better overview for analysing collected data.

7c- Recommendations

This section aims to make any relevant recommendations to organisations regarding the broader field of the research topic and objectives. Every participant recognised the importance and potential of social media regarding talent management and employer branding.

Due to the changing fast-paced nature of social media, it would seem that the organisations do have strategies in place to utilise the current platforms at their disposal. However, this landscape tends to change quite a bit. Furthermore, the findings made the researcher question what standards these organisations hold their utilisation of social media too. As this is a new medium, how do they know if it is genuinely fully utilised?

7c.1- Public Feedback System or Scheme

The first recommendation relates to organisations gathering data of their own from the public. As the findings suggest, social media is a constantly changing concept that is unpredictable by nature. Organisations should try to gather as much data from the public relating to their performances on social media as possible to maximise their online performances. This would involve offering benefits or rewards that the organisations specialise in exchange for participants' time to answer questions on their experiences with the said company on social media. A simple survey would seek to provide further insight into how the public perceives the organisation and if there is any room for improvements in their online engagements.

7c.2- Social Media Specialist Team

As the findings suggest, each participant recognised the importance of social media in critical HR processes. The marketing team generally seems to be responsible for utilising social media for employer branding and recruiters for specific headhunting needs. The second suggestion that will be made relates to the implementation of a social media specialist team. As one of the participants discussed, the changing rate of social platforms when they mentioned TikTok leads the researcher to believe that each company could do more to ensure these fast-paced, ever-changing platforms are being properly utilised.

The size of this project would vary with each organisation as implementing a new team may be costly but possesses massive benefit potential. Having gathered more information from the public regarding their perceptions of the company in question and their areas that need improving, the social media team can analyse this data and improve their online presence.

For large organisations with more financial disposal, to optimise this recommendation, a team should be put together to specialise in this area. For example, having a team with an HR, recruitment or marketing background would mean the members of this group know what they would be searching for whilst using social media and would be further able to build on previous experiences.

For a smaller organisation, it may be challenging to implement an entire team of individuals into this role. Having said this, a social media team could be developed within the HR team or marketing team. Ultimately, specific individuals train on the matter and allocate extra time to ensure this is being fully utilised.

Timeframe and Financial Costs of Recommendations.

The first recommendation of each organisation gathering data on their social media presence and people's perceptions of that would not be costly. Nor would it take much time to conduct. A member of the marketing or HR team should adequately conduct a survey and gather and analyse the data. Again, this would not require any additional costing for organisations given time be provided to the individuals gathering the data.

In terms of a large organisation implementing the recommendation of a social media specialist team, this may prove to be a little more costly and time-consuming. The implementation of a new team would occur in a 3- 5 month time period. Depending on the organisation's ability to allocate funds to this project, they should start with a minor team and hire internally, possibly taking the existing HR and marketing department members to work on this team. This is a cost-effective way of producing the same results. If the organisation were to increase the costs of their products or services being offered to the public, they might be less competitive in the marketplace.

This would not be as big of a project for smaller organisations as they would not possess the same financial means. Again, taking internal members and allowing for more time to be provided would allow the organisations to potentially see the benefit of implementing a team of such in their workforce. The timeframe would be instantaneous for smaller organisations as they would use what is already at their disposal, and the cost would be very minimal. It would simply require further development for those already employed by the organisation and are willing to take on new responsibilities.

Personal Learning Statement

To complete my Master's degree in Human Resource Management, I was required to carry out independent research on a topic of my choice relating to the broad field of HR. The area of research I chose was relating to the ways organisations use social media for talent attracting members of Generation Y. This topic seems to be at the forefront of any recent discussions regarding recruitment and is extremely relevant due to the popularity of social media.

As a result of carrying out this research, I gained an in-depth knowledge of the uses of social media in everyday HR practises. Despite this being the most challenging project I have ever completed, I thoroughly enjoyed conducting research that truly interests me.

As a whole, carrying out this research was a tremendous learning experience for me. I was forced to use and adapt my analytical skills to new means of gathering data. Furthermore, the requirements to research and analyse previous literature also helped this massively.

The chosen method of gathering data for this research was semi-structured interviews. This provided me with a particular insight into the ways of carrying out qualitative research. Reaching out to participants and carrying out the interviews boosted my confidence in this field and will hopefully assist me with working in HR in the future. The interviews being carried out over zoom further put me in a situation of discomfort as this would not have been an overly familiar platform. This further boosted my confidence in using media like this, and I will have no issue using them in the future.

There were several challenges present when conducting this research. Firstly, getting responses from participants was difficult. For some reason, participants were not comfortable with using zoom as a platform for being interviewed. Finding participants with relevant experience did prove to be a difficult challenge. This may have been due to the time this study was being carried out, as people were on summer holidays and annual leave. Regarding the interviews, some participants could not provide specific answers to certain questions regarding Gen Y. Still, their overall knowledge provided adequate information in the long run. The nature of social media also meant that it was difficult for anyone to give expertise as this is a constantly changing medium.

This research was highly beneficial to me as it developed my time management, interview and analytical skills. Working full time whilst conducting this study taught me how to effectively use my time and allocate adequate periods to such tasks. Overall I thoroughly enjoyed carrying out this research and believe my findings are relevant. I hope they are of some assistance to organisations in the future.

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Appendix 1- Email to participants

Hi _____

I hope all is well during these very strange times.

I am currently in the process of writing my dissertation for my Masters in HR Management in the National College of Ireland. The research question is an investigation into the ways in which organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y.

As my primary research for this study I aim to conduct interviews with individuals involved in recruitment or those with an oversight of talent attraction in HR departments that would provide further information on the various ways in which social media is utilized by organisations, and possible areas for improvement in the utilization of this tool. I further hope to gain a better understanding into the ways in which organisations attract individuals specifically from Generation Y, if at all.

Attached is an information sheet outlining further specifics of the study.

I hope you can assist me in this research and I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time

Kind Regards

Eoin Curran.

Appendix 2- Participant information and Consent Form

Participant information form

Research Title:

'A qualitative investigation into the ways organisations use social media as a tool for the talent attraction of Generation Y'

Purpose of this study:

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding at the ways in which organisations use social media as a tool for talent attraction of individuals belonging to Generation Y/ if at all.

This study will also seek to uncover areas of further utilization for the tool of social media.

Objectives of the study:

- To explore methods of talent attraction used by organisations.
- To understand methods of employer branding used by organisations.
- To explore how social media is currently being utilized by organisations for both talent attraction and employer branding and if there is any room for improvement or further utilization.
- To uncover if there is an emphasis placed on attracting those from Generation Y, and if so what measures are taken.

Confidentiality:

All data obtained from the interviews by the researcher will remain confidential. All/ any information provided by the participants in this research will be used specifically for this study.

Each participant is voluntarily taking part and has the right to refuse participation at any time of the interview. Furthermore the participant may refuse individual questions and may withdraw from the interview at any given time.

Risks of the study:

No apparent risks are present for taking part in this study, each participant may withdraw at any moment in time. If this is the case the researcher will not require an explanation.

Details about information provided:

Each interview will be recorded and the data will be stored on the researcher's laptop in a passcode secured file for the specified time until the final dissertation results have been released. To which, only the researcher and researchers supervisor will have access to.

Signed consent forms will be retained in a hard drive copy until final dissertation results have been released. A transcript of the interview will be retained for two years after this, to which you are entitled access at any time.

Contact information:

Eoin Curran- x20117230@student.ncirl.ie

Supervisor: Rob McDonald

If you seek any further information on the research topic or study please do not hesitate to contact me.

A consent form will be provided.

Consent Form:

Purpose of this study: As per the information sheet the primary purpose of this study is to investigate the methods used by organisations to attract individuals from Generation Y with the use of social media.

- I _____ voluntary 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 being interviewed and data recorded.
- 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 dissertation discussion chapter.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a specific location on the researcher's laptop in a locked file with a passcode and only the researcher has access to this data until the relevant period until the exam board confirms the results of the 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.
- By signing below I am agreeing to: Participate in this study, Participate voluntarily and Give permission for the interviewer to voice record the interview.

Signed by Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signed by Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3- Interview Questions

Intro/ Background:

- 1- What is your current role in your represented organisation?
- 2- Could you provide a brief background on your organisation? (The industry)

Talent Attraction:

- 3- -What are some of your organisations methods for carrying out talent management?
- 4- How does your company go about attracting necessary talented individuals?

Employer Branding:

- 5- Who is responsible for employer branding?
- 6- What are some of the ways your organisation builds a positive employer brand? Why does it matter?

Social Media:

- 7- To what extent is social media used for Talent attraction
- 8- How does your organisation build an online positive employer brand on social media?
- 9- How much time is invested in ensuring social media is being fully utilized?
- 10- Do you think social media is being fully utilized? Is there room for improvement?
- 11- Is social media classed as a useful tool for talent attraction?
- 12- What are the methods used by the org when attracting a potential talent on social media?

Generation Y:

- 13- Are specific measures taken to attract individuals from Gen Y?
- 14- Are Gen Y recognised as an important asset to your organisation?
- 15- Has it been harder to attract individuals from Gen Y? If so why?
- 16- Is social media a useful tool for attracting and recruiting Gen Y? Or is a distinction made?
- 17- Does your organisation directly reach out to individuals on social media?

Final Question:

- 18- Are there any additional comments you would like to make regarding the use of social media in regards to talent attraction? Any advice for other organisations?

