Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic?
An investigation into Irish millennial's relationship with employer branding post pandemic

By

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Abstract

Employer branding is a field that has been gaining significate attention over the last ten years, with the academic community and the corporate world. Employer branding essentially means the reputation of an organisation, both internally and external. With the war on talent commencing in post pandemic Ireland, employer branding is a tool which can be utilized by employers to gain dominants in the labour market. The study found that millennials are estimated to be the leading demographic in the workforce. In order to attract this top talent employers need to understand the need or brand equity required within the key demographic.

In the wake of the pandemic, there has been significate change to the work environment for Irish employees, with an overnight role out of work from home and hybrid work the landscape of work culture has permanently changed. Due to the recent nature of the pandemic, little research as be conducted into how these workplace changes will impact the labour market. This study hypothesis Has Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? In order to legitimist this question the researcher conducted a quantitative research strategy in the form of an online survey, 77 respondent completed the self-guided survey. The result found that yes the Irish millennials description of a good employer has changed post pandemic, the major change been, millennials did not want to return to pre covid in office work culture and the significates of flexibility over work ranked slightly higher than compensation. In terms internal employer branding the topic of management styles was the key differencing metric from internal and external branding.

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1. **Introduction**

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate how covid-19 and remote work has influenced how Irish millennial's measure organisations as a 'good place to work". The study will investigate Irish millennial's relationship to employer branding Ambler and Barrow (1996), pre and post covid, with the intention of quantifying any change to the key components this generation use to measure 'good places to work".

The reputation of an employer is known as employer branding, in order to gain an overarching view of how the pandemic has influenced Irish millennial's barometer for successful employer branding, this study will measure both internal and external branding. Current academic research has specialised in one of the two topic's but there has been a gap in research in the cross relationship internal and external branding have Saini et al. (2022) This relationship is a fundamental factor in an organisations employer brand as the reputation of an organisation is based upon the a satisfied workforce.

1.1 Research question

Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic?

1.2 Research objective

The purpose of this study is to support the hypothesis that remote/Hybrid work culture has changed how millennials view organisation's company culture and employer branding. That the key components this generation use to measure 'good places to work" such as compensation, work life balance, company culture, management styles, company ethics and career progression (fields, 2004; Saleem and Iglesias, 2016) are still the corner stones of successful employer branding but the hierarchy of importance have shifted since the 2020 pandemic.

Furthermore the hypothesis that remote/hybrid work specifically will need to be established as a 7th metric to be added to this list of key components. Remote/hybrid work options are quickly establishing as one of the leading factors the Irish talent pool consider when working with an employer. In a report conducted by Galway University (McCarthy et al., 2020) on Remote work during covid-19 within Ireland, found that 87% of respondents were working remotely as a result of covid-19 and over half the 7,421 participants (51%) had reported never working

from home before the pandemic, at this time 78% of the participants stated that they would like to continue remote work.

1.3 Purpose of the dissertation

Through investigating Irish millennial's definition of a good employer pre and post pandemic and the importance of offering this generation hybrid and remote work. We will gain an insight into how organisation's can make tactical shifts within their work culture to elevate the employer brand both internally and externally to attract and retain top talent within the Irish talent pool.

1.4 Research approach

A quantitate study will be conducted in the form of a survey distributed to Irish millennials. This Survey will be structured into four categories. Section one Will provide demographic information of the participants, the function of this section is to ensure that all data extracted from the survey is will be within the key demographic of Irish millennials. Section two will consist of a series of questions designed to measure the influence of employer branding on a candidate. The three sections are designed to measure Irish millennial the hierarchy of the key components this generation use to measure '*good places to work*" such as compensation, work life balance, company culture, management styles, company ethics and career progression pre covid-19 and the fourth section is design to measure any change to the hierarchy post covid-19.

When all data has been compiled it will be assessed through a framework developed by Saunders et al. (2019) titled '*The Research Onion*' a systematic system for filtering information gained within field study research, such as interviews, survey etc. There are six layers within this methodology type Research philosophy, research approach, choices, time

horizon and Techniques & Procedures. There are three main research axiology ontology and epistemology Saunders et al. (2019)

The data will then be analysed to identify any reoccurring trends and patterns within the demographic with the aim of answering the research question objectively with the removal of personal bias. (Noon, M. 2018)

1.5 Structure of the dissertation.

1.5.1 Introduction
The first chapter will establish the rational and foundations for this study, with a guided synopsis of the key topics within the dissertation, concluding with the Research objective set for this dissertation.

1.5.2 Literature review
The function of this section of the dissertation is apply the academic and literature structure to the hypothesis, by researching other academic studies within the field of employer branding, millennials, retention and Covid-19.

1.5.3 Research methodology
In this section of the dissertation the topic of methodologies utilized for data collection to produce research for the hypothesis will be discussed and ethical consideration will be outlined.

1.5.4 Results with Analysis
This chapter will present the reader with the results of the data collection from the research carried out. This data in this chapter will be summarised.

1.5.5 Deliberation
A discussion on the findings that resulted from the *Results with Analysis* chapter which will be cross referenced against the studies hypothesis and literature reviews.

1.5.6 Conclusion / Recommendations

The closing chapter with present the conclusions that have resulted from this study, while highlight any limitations and recommendations for future examinations.

Chapter two.

2.1 Literature review

2..2 Introduction to employer branding.

Employer branding is a term coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996), the term is used to describe the repercussions an employer's reputation has on the attraction and retention of talent. Since the establishment of this term, the topic of branding and marketing have been applied to human resources to improve engagement with external and internal talent pools (Saleem and Iglesias, 2016).

Furthermore to illustrate how the parameters of branding/marketing can be applied the research of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) argues that the product is the job and the consumers are the external and internal talent pools, this analogy is also discussed by (Gupta, Kumar Sahoo and Ranjan Sahoo, 2018). The results of the positive impact branding can have on the HRM and recruitment industry's can be seen in (Saini, Lievens and Srivastava, 2022; Fulmer, Gerhart and Scott, 2003). Who discuss; when marketing management strategies are effectively applied within a HRM systems, the outcome will lead to higher talent attraction and retention. Taking into consideration the impact of employer branding has been well established as a positive contributor to retention and talent attraction within the academic community mentioned above. There has been little researcher carried out on the impact of pandemic / work from home culture on employer branding. It is the recommendation of this research that the topic of pre and post pandemic employer branding be investigated

.2.3 Internal vs External employer branding.

To begin by gaining a deeper understanding into employer branding one must first understand that employer branding is consumed from both an employee perspective and equally from a potential candidates perspective. Meaning that employer branding can be divided into two

separate sub-categories external employer branding, the study of brand equity on the external talent pool (Saini *et al*., 2022; Silva and Dias, 2022; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Ambler and Barrow, 1996) and internal employer branding the study of brand equity on the current employees of an organisation (Saini *et al*., 2022; Saleem and Iglesias, 2016; Burmann, Zeplin 2005; Du Preez and Bendixen, 2015)

According to Saleem and Iglesias (2016), the five categories of internal branding are: leadership, ideologies, brand centred HRM, communication and community. Whereas Fields (2004) outlines that the external brand of an employer can be divided into *four distinct employer brands*. *Prestige* – the organisation reputation is built on being an industry leader and carries high level status for the employee. *Cause* – a company that aligns with the employees ethics. *High risk / big reward potential* – Companies such as start-ups which require large commitment but can result in accelerated career growth. *Work life balance* – the reputation is based on employees having a positive life style with minimal impact to there personal lives. Taking into account that both internal and external employer branding have been studied in great detail there has been little research in the cross- pollination of the two categories (Saini *et al*., 2022)

Applying this information to the context of Irish millennials, the researcher will need to conducted both an internal and external investigation into how Irish millennials view a good employer post pandemic, as the research above indicates that these two metric are co-dependant.

2.4 The objective of employer branding.

Now that the topic of employer branding has been investigated, one may ask themselves, what is the need to research employer branding? The primary objective of employer branding is to create a work environment that attracts and retains talent. Effectively applied the employer will create a competitive advantage in the employer market (Theurer *et al*., 2018; Lievens and Slaughter, 2016; Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen, 2013). As the war on talent becomes increasingly competitive in recent years, employers are investing more heavily in the employer branding strategies (Chhabra and Sharma, 2014).

The result of post pandemic employment market has created an employee's market with employers struggling to attract and retain talent, which is evident in Taylor, C's (2022) Article on the topic of high levels of job vacancies that remain unfilled. There is significate research to suggest that the way to attract and retain top talent to an organisation is through establishing a reputation within the market as a leader in competitive compensation. According to (Trevor, 2001) top talent will move to organisations with high level compensation and prestige. If this theory that high compensation retains talent then the high levels of job vacancies that remain unfilled mentioned within Taylor, C's (2022) article would only be evident in the lower paying sectors yet; Taylor reports that the issue of staff shortages is evident throughout low to high paying industries. If the this trend is occurring throughout pay scales this is evidence that compensation is no longer enough to create a robust employer brand as a staff shortage means the issue or retention on this level is an internal and external branding issue.

Furthermore according to the Irish Central Statistics Office (2022), there has been a growth in employment levels between the ages of 15-70 of 17.8% from May 2021 the unemployment rate was 21.9% compared to May 2022 when the unemployment rate stands at 4.1%. In a recent CIPD report; resignations are standing at 40% higher than pre pandemic levels (Boys, 2022). In figure 1. which illustrates the reason for attrition within the work forces from the time from of 4Q 2019 to the 3Q in 2021. We can see an increase of 40% resignations while other factors such as redundancies and family reasons have taken a 20% decrease (Boys, 2022) The generations with the highest levels of retention issues over covid are baby boomers approaching retirement and above them are millennials. According to at Cook's 2021Harvard Business Report article there is an average increase of 20% in resignations for the millennial generation. (Cook, 2021)

As illustrated above the top levels of attrition are within the boomer and millennial demographics. Although these metrics are intriguing they will only bare relevance to the topic of employer branding if both generations are re-entering the workforce. The next chapter will explore which of the two generations will be the leading demographic for attrition, job hunting and in turner employer branding

2.6 Are Millennial's the target audience for employer branding?

As outlined in the previous chapter the leading generations for attrition are the boomers and millennials. When attrition occurs in one organisation there is the potential for another organisation to benefit from new talent, but how can an organisation attract the top new job seekers, if traditional tools such as compensation are not having the same impact as before covid? According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) the strategies used to attract a customer to the field of recruitment is creating brand equity. Meaning the value a talent pool associates with an company through their perception of the brand. In order to create optimal levels of brand equity, the employer must first establish who the brand equity will be directly addressed too, as each demographic will have different needs and wants from an employer. (Stark and Farner, 2015) research indicates that each generation has its own tailored needs within the core topics of management and communication. This leads to the question, will brand equity need to be generated within millennials or Boomers?

The pattern of baby boomers leaving the labour force amidst covid-19 is mimicked through the western world. According to Shaw's (2021) Irish independent article, one in three boomers have been forced into retirement due to covid-19 resulting in 150,000 worker from the ages of 55-65 leaving the employment market. Unfortunately these figures have been extracted from the UK labour market, current studies from a Ireland only perspective are under researched at this point in time and it would be recommended for similar studies to be conducted in Ireland.

From the point of view of employment growth the latest Irish CSO employment report, reported that the age group with the highest employment rate was 35-44 years with a rate of 77.5%. According to (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) by 2025 75% of the workforce will be will in the millennial demographic.

Taking into consideration the above figures and trends, there is evidence that the millennial generation are holding a larger stake in the post pandemic labour market with potential to access more established roles in organisations as a result of the boomer covid-19 retention issue. This will have a huge impact on the workforce considering that according to (Agrawal 2016) 50% of the workforce will be millennials by 2020. As such organisation's may gain

competitive advantage in the labour market if their employer branding is tailored to the millennial generation.

2.7 Millennials relationship with internal branding.

Beginning with a general overview of the millennials working habits pre covid-19; (Glass, A 2007) the believes and working habits of millennials are different for the previous 50 years of youths entering the workforce. Millennial's have built upon the pervious Gen X's need for work life balance, to a higher level, this generation requires a fulfilment and meaning. (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012) Person-Organisation Fit or PO fit is defined as a measurement of alignment between an employees individual values and goals with the an organisation (Sutarjo, 2011)

This trend of millennial's having different metrics to define an "*good employer*" is also evident in a quantitative study conducted by Santiago, J. (2019) on 281 participant, 60% of which were millennials, found that employer branding has a key role to play when attracting and retaining talent. Furthermore the study found that traditional high impacted employment topics such as above average pay and career progression rated less important to millennial. In the context of this dissertations hypothesis; Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? It is evident that millennial's as a demographic are more susceptible to employer brand, even from the perspective of pre pandemic and with this are changing the way employers measure benefits within roles.

2.8.2 Company Culture.

In Tom Rath (2006, cited in Yap, W.M., & Badri, S.K.Z 2020) research found that employees who reported to have high levels of friendship with colleagues were seven times more likely to be engaged. The importance of peer to peer relationship can be seen when isolation occurs, there is evidence of this negative in remote work studies. (Collins and Moschler, 2009) Found that Isolation from peers has been noted as having negative effects on employee wellbeing this is also evident in (Park, Jeong and Chai, 2021)

Work culture has a significant role to play in the motivations of employee. Supports for work culture and employee engagement have been an oversight during the two years of the pandemic and could be argued that this lack of awareness has transitioned into the "*great-resignation*" seen within the workforce today. In a 2021 report carried out by (Hardy, 2021) found that the estimated cost of poor work culture on the UK's economy was 2.2 billion. (Evans, 2022) States that the switch to remote work did not remove organisation culture it exposed the raw elements of an organisations value system.   *"In times of crisis, a team's raw culture becomes exposed."*

Although there is evidence to support negative impact to work culture and employee engagement, evidence for positive remote work culture is evident too, (Lew et al., 2018). Pang et al. (2018) theorise that text based **Computer-mediated communication** (CMC) facilitate the interpersonal cues that are missing from non-face to face interactions and when used effectively it can be as effect at developing affection / bonding to the same level as face to face interactions.

Examples of this within an organisation culture can be found in (Evans, 2022) were Even's makes note of several online support groups within organisations being established in a bid to strengthen supports and community spirits within an organisation "*Lockdown taught us that a culture is more than just an office building,*" In (Hinds and Elliot, 2021). Give in practice examples of companies such as IBM creating a "*Work from Home Pledge*," and the US operations of the organisation Alibaba shifting cultural events to an online platform such as quilt making events etc.

Therefore there is evidence to support the hypothesis that Covid-19 has played a role in changing how the workforce access peer to peer engagement and supports within their organisation. Which can equally result in a positive or negative outcome for the internal employer branding of an organisation.

2.6 Covid-19 and the remote working.

Covid-19 has given rise to a new digital workplace, overnight companies went from an in-office work environment to Work from Home. The definition of WFH is the use of any digital

technology to conduct work base tasks outside of the employers premises, this includes the use of smart phones (Oakman *et al*., 2020). Pre pandemic the remote working options were not as commonly wide spread with the nation with only 51% of resonance for a 2020 survey on Remote working during COVID-19 stating that they had never worked remote before the pandemic. (McCarthy *et al*., 2020) There has been evidence to suggest that the millennial generation have been prioritising a flexible work environment prior to 2013, as indicated in (Tyler and Tyler, 2013) when Tyler quote Angel Pedersen, SPHR, an HR business partner at Dyson Ltd saying *"Millennials need more flexibility—not just around time but around everything,"* she then goes on to state that Millennial want flexibility around work locations, schedules and assignments.

Taking this into consideration the topic of flexible work has been a motivator for this generation pre covid. This is also mentioned in (Daly Aune, 2018) discusses how Deloitte and Touche LLP have had success with remote work by installing technology platforms to monitor output. Although this approach allows the origination to gain metrics on the workflow from remote workers these systems alone may create a Micromanagement or Transactional Management Style which could play a negative role in the organisations work culture and cultivate an isolation culture.

In the wake of the pandemic more employers are opting for a hybrid workforce in order to blending the pre and post pandemic work environment. With the aim of creating a "best of both worlds" style approach. According to Gallup (cited in Park et al. 2021) 69% of employees in America have switched to remote/hybrid work environment. In the Irish remote work survey (McCarthy 2022) 30% of respondents stated that the would be willing to leave a job and even take a pay cut in order to continue with remote work options and in the 2020 survey (McCarthy 2020) 78% of the participants said they would like to continue remote work options after the pandemic. Taking into consideration the demand for flexible work pre and post pandemic there is substantial evident to suggest that the need for flexible work is a major contributing factor for millennials as a demographic.

2.7.1 Leadership / management pre covid-19.

The topic of millennials relationship to employer leadership is identified as a leading cause for attracting and retaining top talent according to (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) Where they state that the millennial generation are drawn to a strong timeless leadership style and continues to state that this generation will challenge their leaderships to develop and evolve. This need for millennials to tailor their management to their needs can be seen in the introduction of mentorships. Shaw and Fairhurst, (2008) proclaim that millennial's approach to learning in work is a large contributor to the introduction of mentorship schemes in the workplace. Learning from observing peers has be a corner stone of social learning for decades: According to Bandura (1977 cited in Yarberry, S. and Sims, C. 2021) Social learning theory i.e. learning through role model and observation plays a critical role in employee development. Millennial's have built upon this concept to create a more inclusive and structured system through the workplace mentorship schemes.

As event above the millennial generation need a work culture of collaboration and development in order to cultivate high levels of positive internal branding. But how has the pandemic and the rise of remote work impacted this generations work culture. The topic remote work on career development has been highlighted in recent research; with some researchers believe that the absence of in person collaboration will negatively affect the development of the workforce Bandura (1977 cited in Yarberry, S. and Sims, C. 2021) Social learning theory i.e. learning through role model and observation plays a critical role in employee development. When Irish workers were asked this question directly in the (McCarthy 2020) remote work survey 49% said they did not believe there would be a negative impact, 33% were unsure but only 9% believed that remote work would negatively affect there progression.

In terms of work place collaboration and leadership, there is evidence that management and senior leaders may have a larger disconnect form the issues effect their workforce, according to a recent study carried out by bambooHR on over 1,000 HR leaders and office workers, issues around company culture and hybrid work are listed as some of the top issues that are leading motivators in staff attrition (LLC, n.d.). In this survey 73% of participances agreed that workplace culture was not defined as a physical space, although 77% of participances

acknowledged that their employer attempted to strengthen culture. These employees noted that the attempts where misdirected and more investment was needed to support the new hybrid / remote work environment. The miscommunication is illustrated further with 94% of Vice presidents stating that culture of good, while only 65% of individuals agreed.   This survey illustrates that the leadership of organisation will need to take a more collaborative or Servant Management Style approach when beginning to rethink how the future workplace will look.

2.7.3 Ethics and millennials

According to (Klimkiewicz and Oltra; 2017) Corporate Social responsibility; meaning how a an organisation that takes accountably for its impact on the world, can have a positive impact on employer branding / attracting talent. This is evident in the last two years of Deloitte Global Millennial Survey's (2020) and (2021) there was dominating theme which is a call to action from these generations to their employee to algin with they're generations moral code. In the 2020 report , 38% of millennials would proactively support an organisation reported positive impacts on climate change. Furthermore one third of this generation stopped engaging with an organisation due to the negative impacts on climate change.

Taking into consideration that the above research relates to the pre pandemic workforce, how has the pandemic impacted the employees perception of CSR? There is evidence that this Person-Organisation fit is till important to employees as (Kakkar et al., 2022) Kakkar discusses how communication with an organisation in relation to positive information such as CSR reports can have a positive impact on employee engage meant and lower level of alienation in a remote work environment. This is mirrored in a recent research conducted by BODOG and ANDREESC (2021) which found that the impact of covid-19 has created a more socially concise workforce and community generally, which in turn has lead organisations to invest their CSR in the fields of; education, health and the environment. BODOG and ANDREESC go on to state that this has created a "good citizen" (BODOG and ANDREESC; P333; 2021) reputation for the organisations

Concluding this section the researcher notes that CSR can have a significantly positive impact on an organisations external brand but there is little research to indicate if the cost of large donations can be recouped in the form of staff retention. Kelly Services (2009, cited in Yap, W.M., & Badri, S.K.Z 2020, p. 106) found that 100,000 employees stated that they would consider a paid decrease if they the work was meaningful. This is a considerable number but the cost per employee of a significate CSR donations may be financially beneficial. More researcher is recommended to identify if CSR has a notable impact on the Irish millennial's retention and recruitment decisions.

2.10 Variables to consider in relation to Irish millennial retention.

Variables that will need to be taken into considerations how employer branding / company culture has been impacted during the pandemic, as the organisational culture can be viewed upon as a psychological contract (Schein, 1980) between employee and employer relationships. Has psychological contract been broken due to the new work pandemic environment? Are Maslow's 1987 *hierarchy of needs*, being met in this work environment? Work culture plays an importance role within job satisfaction but this gratification can only be predetermined if all basic *hierarchy of needs* are being addresses such as, Physiological needs / survival and Safety needs / security need.

With considerable rises in the cost of living and inflation due to a range of issues such as low supply of housing, as mentioned in a recent time (Hearne, 2019) article *Why fixing Ireland's housing crisis requires a change of policy*. Increases in the cost of food due supply chain issues and a high level spike in the cost of utility services, mentioned in Irish time article (Holl and Correspondent, n.d.) which contained a collective of interviews with citizens who are struggling to keep up with the demands of risking living costs.

If an employee's compensation is on or below the minimal standard of living, than the an investment in work culture will not have the same impact as the employee will not reach the "*Love and belonging / belonging - Almost engaged*" (Maslow 1987). With the rise signification supply chain and inflation issues globally over the pandemic, an organisation that satisfied the base levels of Maslow's 1987 *hierarchy of needs* may need to readdress compensation in order

to remain at this level of job satisfaction. Microsoft have been reported to have doubled their staffing budge to retain their staff over cost of living increase. (Chatterjee, 2022)

In spite of this fact employee satisfaction can be improved when phycological safety is priorities by the employer. In a 2020 interview with the great place to work organisation Declan Ronayne, the Chief Executive of chadwicks and woodies addresses the issue of building engaged employee culture and reducing retention issues in a low compensation work environment. He notes the key to addressing this was to welcome negative feedback in the form of survey to build phycological safety within the employer – employee relationship. Resulting in a 55% risk in reported trust levels.

2.9 Literature conclusion

In the literature review, we can see that the core componence that are used within the Irish millennials barometer for a good employer have not changed, this generation are driven by progression, whether it is career progression or the pursuit of challenging work. All topics that have been listed in the linkedin survey conducted by Agrawal A. (2015) on 5000 millennials listed career advancement and challenging work in their top 3 needs for a workplace.

This need for consistent development is molding the leadership above the generation with (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) stating that the millennial generation push their leadership to grow and process with them. With this in mind, are the millennial workforce now leading the way in evolving the work environment post covid-19? By leading their industries into a more remote friendly work environment. This need for development and fulfilment will need to be addressed in post covid workforce planning in order to attack top talent.

On the topic of attrition it should be noted that this generation will have high attrition then previous generations, (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) states that this is a standard for employment going forward and businesses will need to strategy for this outcome rather then trying to stop it completely. Hobart and Sendek describe this generations approach to careers as, *'lease and*

buy not buys' and *'multiple jobs is a badge of honour"* Will this attitude towards work companies will need to start incorporating role with an expiration date.

Example of this maybe early years graduate roles, they will service the purpose of catering to the millennial generation's need for career progression / development while allowing businesses to pre-emptively build in some planned for areas that may have high attrition due to a lack of progression in the role.

Although the need for growth and progression is a need within this generation, there appears one domination trend within the post pandemic workforce that flexibility and remote work options are becoming a higher priority for the workforce then compensation. With 30% of respondents in the (McCarthy 2022) Survey on remote work in Ireland stated that the would be willing to leave a job and even take a pay cut in order to continue with remote work options. Will large organisations such as google and cutting remote worker salary by 25% (Kurter, n.d.) The issue of remote and hybrid work is a topic the workers are willing to stand up which can be seen in the receive mandatory return to office mandate that golden and sachs tried to enforce, 50% of the works did not return to office. (Fortune, n.d.)

Taking the above into consideration most of the data and literature gathered to this point are generalised to the Irish workforce or the millennial workforce globally. It would be recommended that more quantifiable data will need to be gathered in order to establish how the demographic of Irish millennials will measure the importance of work life balance, company culture, management styles, company ethics and career progression when it comes to employer branding and retention.

3 Chapter Methodology

3.1 Introduction to methodology

In (Kumar 2015) research methodology is the scientific approach to the collection of unbiased information with the aim of gaining insight into a particular hypothesis or topic in the pursuit of knowledge. The research method is a critical point of the dissertation as it puts the researchers hypothesis in the context of its real world scenario and while reducing the levels of personal bias. Other information within this chapter will be limitations to the study, ethical considerations and future recommendations.

3.2 Research Aims.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to investigate the research question, Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? Using the Irish millennial talent pool as a case study the aim of this research study is to gain tangible information around the topic of employer branding / company culture and the impact on the retention of millennial within the new hybrid work environment. With the intention of identifying the key topics that millennial use to measure successful culture/brand post covid in order to mitigate retention issues. In order to measure effectively, the research should identify the key factors that millennial use to measure successful culture/brand pre and post Covid.

The findings of the study will aid employers to gain industry leadership in employer branding by designing a robust post pandemic work culture with the next generation of leadership and workforce in mind.

3.3 Research question.

The research conducted within this dissertation is designed to answer the following question:

Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic?

In order to effective address this question the research will need to establish the following:

1. How does employer branding effect millennials?
2. What key characteristic did millennial use to define *a good place to work* per pandemic?
3. What key characteristic do millennial use to define *a good place to work* post pandemic?
4. Will flexible working out rank compensation as a priority for Irish millennials post pandemic.

3.4 Research Framework

The framework selected for this research methodology is a framework developed by Saunders et al. (2016) titled '*The Research Onion*' is a systematic system for filtering information gained within field study research, such as interviews, survey etc. There are six layers within this methodology type Research philosophy, research approach, choices, time horizon and Techniques & Procedures.

3.5 Research Philosophy.

There are three main research philosophies axiology ontology and epistemology. Axiology is the study of the philosophy of value and how to assess what characterises contribute to defining a things as valuable. Saunders et al. (2016)

Ontology is the philosophy of reality Saunders et al. (2016) There are two main sub sections of ontology objectivism and subjectivism, (Gupta and Awasthy, 2015) objectivism and subjectivism how an individual's interpretation of reality can influences their surroundings. Epistemology is the philosophy of the pursuit of knowledge and the minds relationship with reality Saunders et al. (2016)

When carrying out the research for this study the epistemology philosophy will be applied, as the topic of culture/brand and human behaviour would fall into the terminology of a social construct and according to (Jha, A.K. & Devi, R. 2014). The social epistemology is the term used to describe the pursuit of knowledge and justification of our beliefs are structured through social interactions and transfer of knowledge. After this a researcher will determine one of four positivisms, post modernism, interpretivism, pragmatism positions or critical realism.

3.6 Research approach

This section of the Saunders et al. (2016) '*The Research Onion*' consists of two sub categories inductive and deductive. These categories relate to how the researcher approaches the collection of data for processing. Inductive is based on the assumption that if something is a certain way in the present or past it can be assumed to the proof of how it will be in the future. Inductive as an approach needs to have a favourable balance with probability to be effective and (Fisher, 2010) argues that this approach can be seen as weaker when compared to deductive yet the strategy of inductive approach naturally accumulates more evidence.

Whereas the deductive approach does not rely on experience or observation it is based on the logic of a statement. (Fisher, 2010) states that the issue with the deductive approach is that the logic itself is base within truth and it does not carry the foundation of evidence, that an approached based on experience and observation would have.

As this dissertation's research will be based on a quantitative data collection in the form of a survey the primary research approach will be deductive as this information gathered with be based on statements and logic. An element of inductive research will be used to illustrate experience and observation in the form of cross-referencing the primary research data against another data set on remote work over 2020 and 2021 conducted by (McCarthy, A 2020, 2021) and NUI Galway.

3.7 Research Strategy

The type of strategies listed within the Saunders et al. (2016) '*The Research Onion*' are as follows; Experiment, Survey, Case study, Action research, Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Archival research. To begin explaining which approach will be best suited for this research we first exam what methodology is taken for the differing approaches.

Ethnography Research is an observation of environment study the research is a of field study that is cased out of a prolonged period of time which can include qualitative and quantitative approaches (Fisher, 2020; Gill, Johnson and Clark, 2010) According to (Johnson and Clark, 2010) there have been several studies of organisational culture carried out using the ethnography approach, he goes on to reference Dalton's (1959) this research comprised field studies comparing the relationship between communication style and the impact on internal gossiping. In the case of (Dalton,1959) this research strategy was highly effective it would not be effective in the pursuit of this dissertation's hypothesis as a study on Irish millennials within one organisation will not give an clear overview of issues the overall demographic are having with employer culture and details may be skewered due to internal employer culture issues and office politics.

Action Research is a research strategy widely used within the social sciences, it involves the researcher measuring the before, during and after impacts of an action on a demographic while situationally gathering research and reflection upon results. the Saunders et al. (2016) As this study is based on Irish millennial's relationship to internal and external branding the researcher will not be able to conducted controlled the actions on such a large demographics as the variables are to large, as a result this form of research will not be suited for the proposed hypothesis.

Experiment strategy defined as measuring the relationship between cause and effect within a per set of variables, examples of this in an employer culture setting are referenced in (Fisher, 2010) when he discusses a masters students experiment strategy on employees screen warning signs for internet use. Fisher goes on to state the ethical dilemma presented to the researcher in this experiment as the employee may not be aware of the levels of access the employer has to their digital footprint / data.

Grounded Theory is a qualitative theory which sees the hypothesis derived from the data collected This approach is normally unitized where is no pre-existing theory for a phenomenon. This approach involves numerous round of data collection and analysis as the hypothesis is formed within this process. (Fisher, 2010) When we take the research question from within this study into account has Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? This question has be clearly defined at the beginning of the study and have guided the course of the interview, as a result the grounded theory would not be applicable.

Archival research involves the researching and extracting information from original archives Saunders et al. (2016) As pandemic work is a newly emerging field there is not sufficient prior research to apply the archival approach.

The surveys strategy involved distributing a questionnaire to a cohort of people. The benefits of this strategy is that the demographic can be controlled by the researcher, in the form of only distributing the questionnaire within a key demographics Saunders et al. (2016). It also allows the researcher to gather larger volumes of data sets as it is more time efficient to as the people conducting the survey can do so without the guidance of the researchers, with the added benefit of multiple questionnaire been completed at the same time, unlike the survey or case study approach which will evolve a hands on approach from the researcher. (Fisher, 2010)

With the nature of both being time heavy there is an unlikelihood that the same number of data could be collected within the same space of time. Saunders et al. (2016)

The Case study strategy is a qualitative research strategy which consisted of the researcher interviewing several people within a key demographic on a particular hypothesis, with the aim of detecting any trends or patterns that may lead to a further insight into the hypothesis. Saunders et al. (2016) According to (Gill, Johnson, Clark, 2010) the downside to case studies is the basic of a coherent rationale, given that the topic of this research hypothesis is Irish millennial's relationship with employer culture pre and post pandemic, there is a risk that the topics may fuel a more personal agenda and the data gathered may not contain the same coherent rationale throughout all of the interviews.

Research Strategy Conclusion

According to (Collis and Hussey, 2014) to successfully measure a trends in behaviour with a key demographic there will need to be a large sample size in order to rule out bias within smaller data sets. In the case of this research the key demographic is Irish millennials, if we take into consideration what Collis and Hussey have said and limitation of time scale needed in order to conducted a sizable amount of case studies or interviews Saunders et al. (2016) there is a high risk of not achieving the numbers needed to gain an overarching over of this demographics relationship with internal and external branding. The strategy of quantitative surveys has been used frequently within the topic of work culture, for example (McCarthy, A 2020, 2021) remote work surveys. This strategy of questionnaire was also utilised in when measuring employer branding and millennials in Santiago's (2019) research which aimed to measure the millennial's relationship with attractiveness and the job applications.

After careful consideration of all of the above approaches, the research strategy that will be the best approach for this hypothesis will be a quantitative survey strategy, although the case study approach is also a suitable approach for data collection due to the time limitations there will be a higher level of risk that the researcher will not have enough time to conduct the amount of interviews needed effective measure such a large demographic.

3.8 Research Choices

The subject of research choices relates to how a researcher may combine methodologies, there are three categories when it comes to this topic, Mono method which refers to a single

methodology, mixed method which refers to two or more methods used and multi method which refers to the use of several methodologies. Saunders et al. (2016) As stated above in section the method that has been determined as the most appropriate approach for the hypothesis Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? Will be a mono method approach which will be a quantitative strategy, data will be gathered through the form of a multiple choice survey and the epistemology philosophy will be applied. For the rationale behind these choices please see section *3.5 Research Philosophy, 3.6 Research approach* and *3.6 Research approach* of this dissertation.

3.9 Research time horizons

Time horizons refers to the time limitations within the research, there are two known categories within time horizons cross-sectional and longitudinal Saunders et al. (2016) cross-sectional is data compiled from one point in time whereas longitudinal data is captured of a long period such as monthly, quarterly or yearly etc. As the topic of the pandemic is a relatively new phenomenon i.e. 2020 and 2021 there has been a short time frame to allow for longitudinal research time horizons, due to this reason a cross-sectional approach will utilized for this research. It's should be noted that the option for a longitudinal approach to future research should be considered as this has been seen in (McCarthy, A 2020, 2021) surveys on remote work in Ireland.

3.10 Research techniques and procedures

This section of Saunders et al. (2016) '*The Research Onion*' refers to how the researcher will conduct data collection and analysis. The definition of research is the process of collection, analysis and interoperating data to gain a deeper understanding of a particular topic or hypothesis. (Leedy, Ormrod T., and Johnson. L, 2019) When the researcher is choosing a research technique it will be primarily driven by the type of data needed to best address the hypothesis. i.e. text based data such as interviews for qualitative and number based metrics for quantitative Saunders et al. (2016)

3.11 Qualitative and Quantitative data

When cross-referencing the text base data with the numerical data research shows that the numerical data can be seen as a more reliable data point as there will be less points for misinterpretation as words can be misconstrued with personal bias but numbers are a liner data point with little room for interpretation (Domegan, Fleming; 2007) According to (Gill, Johnson, Clark, 2010) there can is an issue of basic of a coherent rationale when analysing data points within a text format such as interviews and case studies.

Taking into consideration the above points the methodology utilised within this study will be a quantitative data collection, in the form of primary data collected in an anonymous survey completed by 74 Irish millennials. The Survey can be located in Appendix 2. With four sections of the survey which will be used to, gather demographic information, general information on millennials and employer branding, How Irish millennials ranked the topics of compensation, work life balance, company culture, management styles, company ethics and career progression; pre and post pandemic. With a final section comparing compensation to remote work flexibility.

3.12 Data Collection

The quantitative data collection approach that will be administered for this research will be a survey. According to (Fink, 2003) a survey is data collection from or about people to gain knowledge or predict attitudes and or behaviours. (Patricia Pulliam Phillips, Phillips and Aaron, 2013) describes a survey as a tool designed to extract information. When it comes to surveys there are several different approaches through the design that will need to be considered, for example survey administration; this refers to how the participant will receive the survey i.e self-administered surveys, interview, focus groups or observations.

The second thing to be considered when designing a survey is the type of questions that will be within the survey. There are open-ended questions which require long thoughtful answers from the participant or a simple survey instrument or a Multi-scale questionnaire. This scale is usually in the form of a 1 to 5 statement from Strongly Disagree – Disagree - Neither Agree Nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree

3.12.1 Types of survey administration.

There a three common ways of conducting a Survey 1, self-administered surveys 2, interviews 3, focus groups and 4, observations. The benefit of a self-administered is that the research has left time committed to the collection of data and the people completing the survey are more like to engage with the convivence of a email rather then the commitment to attending an in person event. (Patricia Pulliam Phillips, Phillips and Aaron, 2013) With this in mind it will be recommended that the survey for this dissertations will be a self-administered surveys.

3.12.2 format of questionnaire.

The second thing to be considered when designing a survey is the type of questions that will be within the survey. There are open-ended questions which require long thoughtful answers from the participant or a simple survey instrument or a Multi-scale questionnaire. This scale is usually in the form of a 1 to 5 statement from Strongly Disagree – Disagree - Neither Agree Nor Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree (Patricia Pulliam Phillips, Phillips and Aaron, 2013)

When considering the options of an open-ended questions, single-item questionnaire or Multi-scale questionnaire format the researchers objective was to identify the optimal option to result in a clean and comparable data sets. According to (Bourke, J., Kirby, A. and Doran, J, 2016) the key to a comparable surveys standardisation. Standardisation aim to create a set explore for all participances to remove the option for misinterpretation. Furthermore according to Saunders et al. (2016) a research conducted in the form of a survey has less success if the question format contains a large number of open ended question.

3.12.3 Data Collection Conclusion

Taking into consideration all of the above the researcher has decided to design this dissertations survey as a self-administered survey with a combination of single-item questionnaire and a Multi-scale questionnaire. As the aim of this survey is to measure a feeling and what millennial's think in relation to employer branding and the pandemic. The single-item question style will be used to measure factual information such as demographic, work status etc. The

Multi-scale questionnaire will be utilised to measure feeling as a yes no answer may result in a binary answer to a non-binary topic.

In order to collect the data required to conduct an analysis on the hypothesise Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? The researcher designed and distributed an online survey created in the google forms software to 77 Irish millennials. This software allow the researcher to unsure that the questions are standardised throughout the participance. After all Data has been collected the researcher has used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) google sheets data analysis and google analytics to analysis the results.

3.13 Survey Design.

The survey has been designed in four sub-section in order for the research to measure Irish millennial's on the following topic, Section 1, a demographic background of the participance to unsure they fit the demographic required which is Irish millennials. Section 2 to measure how millennial interact with employer branding on a general scale, do the research employers? Does the reputation of an employer impact the likelihood of an Irish millennial to apply for a position etc.

Section three of the survey is designed to measure Irish millennial's attitude towards both internal and external employer branding before the pandemic and mass role out of remote and hybrid work. Section four is designed to measure Irish millennial's attitude towards both internal and external employer branding after the pandemic. The questions will for pre and post pandemic will be repeated in order to create the standardisation and controlled measurement mentioned in (Bourke, J., Kirby, A. and Doran, J, 2016) with the aim of removing any room for misinterpretation. At the end of section four there will also be some questions on the topic of evolving measures of employer branding that are not applicable to pre remote work.

3.14 Pilot Survey.

A test survey was sent to four Irish millennials, the pre-test survey is an important activity as it allows the researcher to identify issue around, communication, usability, comparable data set etc and is important process as it allows the research to remove common error before the main study commences. (Adams et al., 2014) The results of the feedback found that:

From a user's point of view:

Q3 What demographic best describes you? A. Boomer B. Gen X C. Millennial D. GenZ was open to misinterpretation as the age brackets were not defined.

From a data analytic point of view:

Section 2 of the survey which was designed to inform the researcher how Irish millennials interacted with employer branding on a general scale, would need more questions in order to gain an clearer view.

Section 3 and 4 which were designed to be a direct comparison of pre and post pandemic topic millennials use to measure employer branding needed to be completely uniform in order to compare data effectively.

The latter half of section 4 which was designed to explore the hypothesise that hybrid work options are a new metric millennials uses to define a good place to work ,will need to explore more on the topic of compensation vs flexibility.

3.15 Limitations to the study.

The limitation's within the study that have been identify by the researcher are as follows: The hypothesis of this dissertation is based on the entire Irish millennial population and the survey has a sample population of 77. The limitations of a sample size of this level is that the data sets may not represent the population as a whole. (Quinlan, 2011).

The second limitation identified by the researcher is the time frame the data is being collected, the survey was distributed in July 2022, meaning all pre-covid questioning as being posed to. the participant in the timeframe of a post-pandemic mindset. According to (Lacy and Stark, 2013) *"memory is a reconstructive process that is susceptible to distortion."* Meaning the

reliability of memory is questionable as this can be skewed by the participants emotional regulation

3.17 Ethical consideration.

According to (Biggam, 2011) the five primary ethical research issues are: confidentiality, no harm, transparency, remaining impartial and information is collected voluntarily. As the survey is of a voluntarily nature and is completed privately by the participant, the primary ethical concern in relation to quantitative data is in regards to breaches in data security and GDPR. (Fink, A. 2003) Due to the sensitive information that is being generated the participants identifies will be concealed from researcher using a third-party data software google form, this program with holds the participants email addresses and other identification. The participants will also reserve the right to withdraw their data.

Chapter four .Data analysis and results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is designed to measure the statistical significates of the dissertation's survey results. The reason for data analysis is to quantify the levels of chance when researching a hypothesis that relates to a population i.e Irish millennials through a sample group i.e the survey participants. (Jackson, S, 2010) In order to analyse data and the results of the research survey there are several informational point that will need to be identified within the process, such as data types, variable types and appropriate statistical tests to place the results in a macro and micro level, meaning the sample or population as a whole. (Boslaugh, S, Watters, P.A.; 2008)

Data set - The first informational point is the data set, this is a term used in statistics to describe a collection of information. This data set will refer to a gathered from a sample of the overall population and than a statical tests will be applied to put the results of the survey into the context of the population as a whole. (Agresti, A, 2010)

Variable - a set can be divided into two categories, categorical and numerical. Categorical variables refer to information that are identified via labels such as gender, whereas numerical

variables such as age are numbers. The difference between these variables are how the data can be arranged or organised. (Jackson, S, 2010)

When applied to this dissertation the population is all millennials within Ireland and the sample are the Irish millennials who completed the researchers survey. The information that is gathered within the survey will have a selection of possible answers, for example gender, male female, and numerical scales, meaning that this survey has a combination of both categorical and numerical variables. Types of variables will be identified in order for the researcher to correctly distinguish the applicable test. All tests are built around a two spear hypothesis: (Agresti, A, 2010)

hypothesis 1 – there is **no** correlation in the variables

hypothesis 2 – there is correlation in the variables

For the researcher to successfully eliminate H1 a P – Value need to be measured and will need to range between 1 – 0.05, meaning that the level of chance that the data set would change each time a new sample is measure would be between 10% to 5% which is considered statistically valid. (Jackson, S, 2010) The tests utilised by researcher's are T test for a single numerical variable. When interpreting more than one variable a Chi-squared, spearman test or the test of normality is recommended for two or more Categorical variables and a Correlation test is used when interpreting two or more numerical variables. If the researcher will be analysing a combination of numerical and categorical variables a T test or a ANOVA test – can be applied but if there is more than one categorical variables than the ANOVA or Cronbach's Alpha test is recommended. (Agresti, A, 2010; Jackson, S, 2010; Weaver et al., 2018)

4.2 Summary of respondents

The demographic section of the survey was designed by the researcher to identify information within the participances such as age, sex, employment status etc. When analysing this data the researcher found that; of the 77 participants 66 were currently residing in the republic of Ireland and 7 participants were not. Of the 77 participants 42 respondents were female and 31 were male.

The age demographic of survey respondents was as follows: 66 participants were within the millennial age bracket of 25-40, 3 participants were under 25, and 7 survey respondents were over the age of 41. As the hypothesis of this study is Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? The ten participants who do not meet the age demographic results will need to be removed from the further sections of data analysis to prevent skewed data results.

In terms of the survey respondents sector of employment the two highest employers were the private sector and ngo with 43 participants, the second highest employer being state and semi-state employees at a total of 22 participants, other survey respondents included 6 self employed and 1 unemployed. The researcher had considered removing the 6 self employed survey respondents from the results as there was an underline concern that they would not be entering the talent pool, but under further consideration this was ruled out as to assume that a self employed person would not re-enter the workforce could be considered an unconscious bias, (Noon, M. 2018) defines unconscious bias as a set of unconscious assumptions a person has inherited or learned when effects how they react to others and perceive information.

To conclude from this demographic information collected from the survey, a total of 77 participants completed the survey, after removing the 3 participants were under 25, and 7 survey respondents were over the age of 41. The new metrics for gender were 46.9% Male and 53.1% female. The changes within the employment sectors post data correction were as follows; 53.3% worked in the private sector, 33.3% of participants worked within the public sector, 10% were self-employed and 3.3% were currently unemployed.

4.3 Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha test were applied, this test is designed to measures the internal consistency of survey scales. The formula for Cronbach's Alpha test is $x = (k \div k - 1)(sy^2 - \sum_s 2 \text{ i} \div s_y^2)$ the aim for the alpha is between 0.5 to 1 The higher the numerical value illustrated the higher the levels of reliably (George and Mallery, 2003) This formula was

applied to Q7 What factors made an employer attractive? Compensation / payment, Work life Balance, Career progression, Status, Work culture / social aspect, Ethical , Flexibility / Hybrid work and management style. This question scored a 0.9 on the Cronbach's Alpha test which indicates that the test has a very high rate of reliably. For fully formula calculations see fig. 4

						sy2:	28.317	Alpha	0.9
Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant 4	Variant 5	Variant 6	Total sum Variant			Between 0-1
1.059	1.115	1.544	1.385	2.204	1.747	9.054			Higher reabilty

Cronbach's Alpha test table Source researcher's own

4.4 Inferential Statistical Analysis

Along side the descriptive and reliably analysis an inferential statistical test was conducted in order for a researcher to establish if the samples data set can be applied to the outer population as a whole. Different tests can be applied, the type of test will be determined by the type of variables the researcher will be processing. (Jackson, S, 2010) The list of corresponding variable and statistical tests can be found in section of this dissertation 4.1 *Introduction To Data analysis and result.* These tests aim to measure the levels of chance which is a numerical range that is referred to as the P-value, meaning the statistical level of chance (Weaver et al., 2018)

Taking into consideration that the majority of questions in the survey are 5 point Likert-type scale meaning a rating scale from 1 to 5 (Weaver et al., 2018) recommends a Pearson or Spearman's Rank Correlation. The different between these to formula's is Spearman's Rank does not assume the data is monotonic; meaning the data is liner. (K Selçuk Candan and Maria

Luisa Sapino, 2010) A scatter plot was applied to the data from Q7 and Q19 of the survey to identify if the data was monotonic see fig. 4 which indicates that the data is in fact monotonic and a Spearman's Rank Correlation was applied. The results found indicated the the P-value was under .05 meaning the null hypothesis could be removed and the data is statistically valid. For full formula information see fig 5.

Spearman Ranking	
Coefficient (rs)	0.4733993959
N:	64
T statistic:	4.231775539
DF:	62
P value:	0.01%

Spearman Ranking results table: Source Research's Own

4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion this chapter's objective was to measure the statistical viability for the researcher's survey results. As the sample group was considerably smaller than the population in question it was vital that the results of the P-value to rank within a 1- 0.05 range and in turn be considered statistically valid outside the sample group. A successful score of 0.01% was achieved on the spearman's rank and a high level of reliability was gaged on the Cronbach's Alpha test. It is recommended that a higher number of participants would be needed within future studies to insure a data set that is better paired against the population numbers as a whole.

Chapter 5.Overview of results

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter of the dissertation is to allow the researcher to identify trends in the participants survey results with the objective of pin-pointing changes in the Irish millennials employee needs pre and post pandemic. This will be achieved by comparing the same set of questions posed to the participants in a pre and post pandemic context with the objective of producing comparable data sets.

This chapter will be divided into the major topics within the researcher's employer branding study. 1. An overview of Irish millennial's engagement with external employer branding, which resulted 93.3% of participants stating that they research companies before applying for vacancies. 2. Examining the contribution factors that the samples use to measure external employer branding, pre and post pandemic. 3. Pre and post pandemic contribution factors for internal branding within the sample group. 4. Examining the growing trend in the market of flexibility vs compensation, with the objective to establish if this is a compromise that is set by employer or employees.

After all trends have been identified a conclusion of recommendations will be bestowed with the intention of answering the hypothesis; Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? The intention of this hypothesis and dissertation is to analysis how an employer can gain the status of an top employer to attract and retain top talent.

5.2 General Employer branding metric

This section of the survey was designed to measure millennials relationship with general employer branding. The first two questions within this section were designed to establish if the external brand of an employer was considered by the participants when applying for a role within a new organisation and if this information was actively pursued by this group of Irish millennials. When answering question 5 do you research a company before applying for a position? 93.3% of survey respondents voted yes and only 6.7% voted NO. This result illustrated that the 93.3% of the millennials surveyed actively seek out information about the

company and it culture before applying for available positions. This high level of employer branding engagement in line with Santiago, J. (2019) study on 281 participant, who stated that employer branding had a large influence on retention and recruitment.

Taking into consideration that this information illustrates the reach of an employer's external brand within the millennial demographic, it does not yet measure if an employer's external brand would stop the millennials from applying. This is what Q6 is designed to measure; Would the reputation of a company have an impact on your decision to apply for a position? The results found that 93.3% of survey respondents said that the reputation of a company would impact their decision to apply for a position.

Furthermore when the researcher cross referenced the 6.7% who voted no in Q6 and the 6.7% who voted no Q5 these were not the same participants. Meaning the 6.7% of participants who do not active peruse their own independent research into an employer's brand would not apply to a company if they heard third party information about an employer's reputation. Whereas the second 6.7% group; who voted yes to researching an employer reputation and no when asked if it would impact their decision to apply. It is recommended that the sub demographic be further examined to identify the reasons why employer branding is information they will actively research if it does not play a role in the job application process. This sub demographic may hold answers to actions an employer with a damaged employer brand can take to appear more attractive to this Irish millennial talent pool, such as compensation etc.

5.3 Compensation vs flexibility post pandemic.

When analysing the impact of the pandemic on external employer branding the research asked participants to rank the following topics Compensation / payment, Work life Balance, Career progression, Status, Work culture / social aspect, Ethical , Flexibility / Hybrid work and management style in hierarchy of how important it was when describing an employer attractive. In the pre pandemic section of the survey participants 91.5% voted compensation as highly important to important and 91.5% voted work life balance as equally high. These results algin with (Glass, A 2007) theory that millennials have build upon the previous generations needs and are not will in to sacrifice compensation for better work life balance and vice versa. In the post pandemic results there is a slight decrease in compensation of 2% and work life balance ranked 93.7% an increase of 2.6%. Meaning a trend of 4.6% in post pandemic Irish millennials are shifting work life balance as the leading hierarchy in employer branding.

Furthermore 73% of survey respondents said they work be will in to take medium to lower compensation to in order to have a flexible work schedule and location. Indicating that the topic of flexible work is the leading factor in Irish millennial's perception of employer branding. When this question was posed in reverse, *I would take higher than average compensation / pay with mandatory onsite work schedule,* 67% of Irish millennial's agreed meaning that in order to not negatively impact employer branding with millennials an organisation will need to signification increase compensation if the expectation is for employee to work in office full time.

Cross referencing the data against Fields (2004) four style of external employer branding *Prestige, High risk / big reward potential, Cause* and *Work life balance,* post pandemic Irish millennials are leaning towards a *Work life balance* style, in order to create higher external engagement it is recommend that organisation promote a balanced work place but ensure he compensation is market leading as it still ranks highly in Irish millennials barometer.

5.4 Hybrid work and work life balance

The topic of *Work life balance* post pandemic cannot be considered outside of the hybrid work style, hybrid work allows the employee to gain back considerable personal time without effecting their work schedule, time fringe benefits include, commuting hours, or simply adding household tasks between a work tasks. (Yang, Kim and Hong, 2021; Basile and Beauregard, 2016; Becker) Furthermore in a study conducted by Colley and Williamson (2020) found that a flexibly work schedule lead workers to have more time for their personal relationship with 82.6% of respondents having more time for family and selfcare.

As indicted above there is a corelation with flexible / hybrid work and work life balance but how does this apply to Irish millennials and how the work deem a good employer? Furthermore in section 5.3 of this dissertation, Irish millennials has a rank work life balance as the most important factor in employer branding post pandemic. This work indicate that flexible / hybrid work is seen as leading factor in the Irish millennial's description of a good employer. This

hypothesis is mirrored in the researchers survey results which found that pre pandemic 50% of Irish millennials ranked hybrid and flexible work as highly important, and grew to 78% post pandemic, this is a 28% increase in importance of flexible and hybrid work.

5.5 Management styles and attrition.

The above sections have address what leading factors Irish millennial's will use to measure if an organisation is deemed a good employer, but the general scope of information have been from an external branding context. In order to address the second half of this dissertation internal branding and attrition, the researcher will need to establish if the major factors in attraction to an organisation (external branding) such as compensation and flexibility are the same for retention and attrition issue i.e. internal branding. According to Saleem and Iglesias (2016), categories for internal branding are:, brand centred HRM, leadership, ideologies communication and community.

According to the researchers survey results, the two highest factors for attrition within the Irish millennial workforce are, 1. Compensation with 86.4% ranking it as important to highly important and 2. Management style. 78.5% of respondents stating it was important to highly important. In third place was flexible work environment with a 69.5% ranking. The outlying factor in the difference between internal and external employer branding is Management style meaning that to improve retention and office culture an organisation must address issues in regards to management style and culture. This is mirrored in the researchers literary review when (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) states that management styles are a key factor in millennial attrition. The topic of management style is so engaging to millennials that in Shaw and Fairhurst, (2008) they found that millennials have sculpted the modern management styles within organisations by developing mentorship schemes.

In order to measure the styles of management that are best and worst suited to the Irish millennial talent pool the following management style definitions were used. Lewin et al (1939) *autocratic management* Style - Top to bottom hierarchy system, decisions are made with no collaboration from other levels. *Laissez-Faire Management Style* - high levels of trust, low levels of input and guidance. *Transactional Management Style* - relies on rewards and punishments Stogdill & Bass (1981) *Servant Management Style* - Puts the needs of the team above their own. (Sendjaya and Pekerti, 2010) With the final metric being Micromanagement - excessively direct and controls employees.

The survey found that, pre pandemic Irish millennials voted 33.3% *Laissez-Faire Management Style,* 26.4% *autocratic management,* 18.1% Micromanagement, 16.7% *Servant Management Style* and 5.6% *Transactional Management Style.* If we compare this to post pandemic Irish millennials 34.2% *Laissez-Faire Management Style* had 33.9% had *autocratic management* 15% *Servant Management Style,* 13.7% with Micromanagement, 2.2% *Transactional Management Style.* Both pre and post pandemic had *Laissez-Faire Management Style,* and *autocratic management* as the top ranking management styles in their current organisation. The most substantial metric is that Micromanagement level reduced by 3% over the pandemic.

Of the 31.5% of respondents who stated they are considering leaving their current roles within the next six months. furthermore of the 31.5%, 76.4% stated management style was a highly important factor when leaving an organisation. To further investigate the 31.5% of potential attrition the researcher, cross-referenced their data sets to identify the leading management styles within this sub sample. The results indicated that there were significantly higher levels of micromanagement at 33.3% with 33.3% *autocratic management.* These finding indicate that Irish millennials have a similar need for a collaborating relationship with management as found in (Hobart and Sendek, 2014) referenced in the literary review.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction.

The objective of this dissertation was to conduct research into the hypothesis; Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? With the intentions of identifying changes within this demographics definition of a good employer can be applied in an external and internal employer branding context. With the aim of reducing attrition and optimizing attractive top talent. A quantitative study in the form of a survey, was conducted within 77 Irish millennials talent pool. This chapter will conclude the research of this

dissertation, add recommendations and costing while ending with a learning refection statement.

6.2 Recommendations and costing.

The section of the dissertation will list a series of recommendations for employers in relation to employer branding within the Irish millennial talent pool. With the aim of improving attrition and talent attraction through data gathered from Irish millennial to identify if their definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic. The recommendations will contain a cost benefit analysis.

6.2.1 Improving employer branding exposer within the labour market.

Recommendations to improve external branding exposer companies; will need to invest in online exposer, through traditional site such as LinkedIn and online job portals such as, indeed and glassdoor. The average price of a monthly prescription to these sites is on average 80-120 per month. In larger organisation the role of an Employer Brand Communications Manager or Employer branding specialist role will need to be created. Examples market leaders who have invested in this role are Dunne Stores, Visa, EY, Lidl Ireland, Indeed and HubSpot. The objective of these roles support the growth of positive internal and external employer branding through content creation such as vacancy advertisements, promoting CSR investments to the internal organisation and the general media. The annual salary of these roles can range from 60,000 to 120,000 per year.

Another way for more progressive employers to gain exposer in the online world is content creating; a newly emerging field within organisational branding and employer branding, with organisation even entering the social media spectrum by creating tiktok videos of a day in the life of an employee, this is popular content within the tech recruitment industry but can also be seen in industries that are primary considered traditional such as aviation and languages studies. Ryanair and Duo lingo have utilised their logos to create alter egos, and comedy media to promote engagement. Costing that will occur are generally upfront once off payments for

supplies such as; up to date smart phone 600-1000 euro, ring light 50 euro, subscriptions to online video and photo editing services 50 euro per month.

6.2.2 Flexible work options for employee.

The topic of flexible work option was a dominate subject throughout the research, leading the research to conclude that Irish millennials do not view an organisation to have an effective work life balance without some form of hybrid work. It is recommended that hybrid work is offered to employees in order to maintain positive employer branding. The costs to hybrid work are as follows, supply of technical equipment, such as laptops and back support chairs averaging at 1000 per employee. Costs can be reduced if the organisation plan to downsize office capacity as supply can be refurbished for home office use. It is recommended that the organisation investigate a reduced capacity office as daily numbers onsite will be significantly reduced. With average office prices being 630 per square meter compared to the office hot desking in spaces like week works that start from 250 per month. The hotdesking services have the added benefit of flexible growth options, compared to a traditional office let which would see and organisation committing to an expansion project in large yearly leasing terms.

6.2.3 Investments in management training.

Results for the survey found that a leading cause of attrition could be linked to management styles within an organisation. It is recommended that organisation design a robust investment plan in the learning and development sector. In regards to leadership training, project management and online communication and team building classes. The leadership training and project management programs will be tailored to management level, whereas it is recommended that all employee are trained within the x classes with the aim of impowering them to work effectively in a hybrid workforce.

Average leadership training classes range to 1350 per person in the UCD perfectional academy. Project management courses in the same university range from 1350 per person. A LinkedIn learning subscription for employees to gain skills in online communication and team building which can be completed remotely, fee of 300 per month.

6.3 Conclusion

The research of this dissertation concluded that Irish millennial's are highly engaged in relation to the topic of employer branding from a pre and post pandemic view point. The research conducted also reviewed that millennial's are some to be the largest demographic within Irish workforce, meaning the role of employer branding will significantly grow in the coming years. Out of the 77 survey respondent 93.3% actively researched an employer before applying for a role. The impact of employer branding on the millennial workforce was noted in Santiago, J. (2019) Organisations will need to significantly increase investments with branding to compete in the labour market, (Saini, Lievens and Srivastava, 2022; Fulmer, Gerhart and Scott, 2003) have all referenced the positive impact employer branding can generate. As the millennial workforce becomes the leading talent pool in the labour market, this demographic's needs in regards to employment will shift the way good employers are described. Moulding new approaches to employment is a regular occurrence with this generation, examples such as Shaw and Fairhurst, (2008) stating then millennials need for content development was the leading factor in peer to peer mentorship schemes.

In reference to the hypothesis question Has the Irish millennial's definition of a good employer changed pre and post pandemic? This dissertations research has found the answer is yes, the overarching theme that emerged from this study is millennials moving away from traditional work place culture to a new post pandemic hybrid approach. The temporary work from home solution to the pandemic has lead to a post pandemic hybrid workforce. Irish millennials now view flexible work times and locations as an extension of their definition of work life balance. In turn there is evidence work life balance to indicate that compensation and work life balance are on par with one another in terms of over aching descriptions of a good employer, with work life balance tending 2% higher in the post pandemic results. This is evidence to support the dissertations hypothesis. It should be noted from an internal brand equity point of view, management style was placed in the top three factors in why an Irish millennial would leave an organisation. This mirrors the research in the literature review.

Further studies into the topic of post pandemic employer branding is recommended as the topic is a board spectrum. In order to find substantial data that employers can apply to their employer

brand equity, there will need to be address separately in each of the subjects, such as company culture, management style, compensation, and work life balance to gain more in dept detail

6.4 Reflection and CIPD requirements

The benefits gaining from completing this dissertation and MA in HRM are: personal development, the challenge of committing to a masters programme while in full time employment has allowed me to gain new depts into what is achievable for myself when commitment and discipline is applied. I have gained time-management, critical thinking skills and protectional skills.

The challenges I faced when carrying out the dissertations was to understand that writing a study of this nature was not a linear process and as I and my information development edits and adjustments to both my writing and the topic of study would need to be adjusted. When reflecting over my research in hindsight I would have cut the number of questions in my survey in half as 28 question required an enormous amount of time to analysis and quantify. Another adjustment would be to narrow the focus of the topic to hybrid work and employer branding as there are a significate number of factors that can result in how a person interprets employer branding and each need to be studied in greater detail.

Overall on completion of this dissertation I have gained an insight into a topic that greatly interests me, my confidence in my presentational abilities has growth and I look forward to the next chapter in my life long learning journey.

Appendix:

    Figure 1.

Change in absolute number of job movers by reason

Legend:
- Dismissals and redundancies
- Resignations
- Chose to leave previous job for family or personal reasons1
- Other reasons2
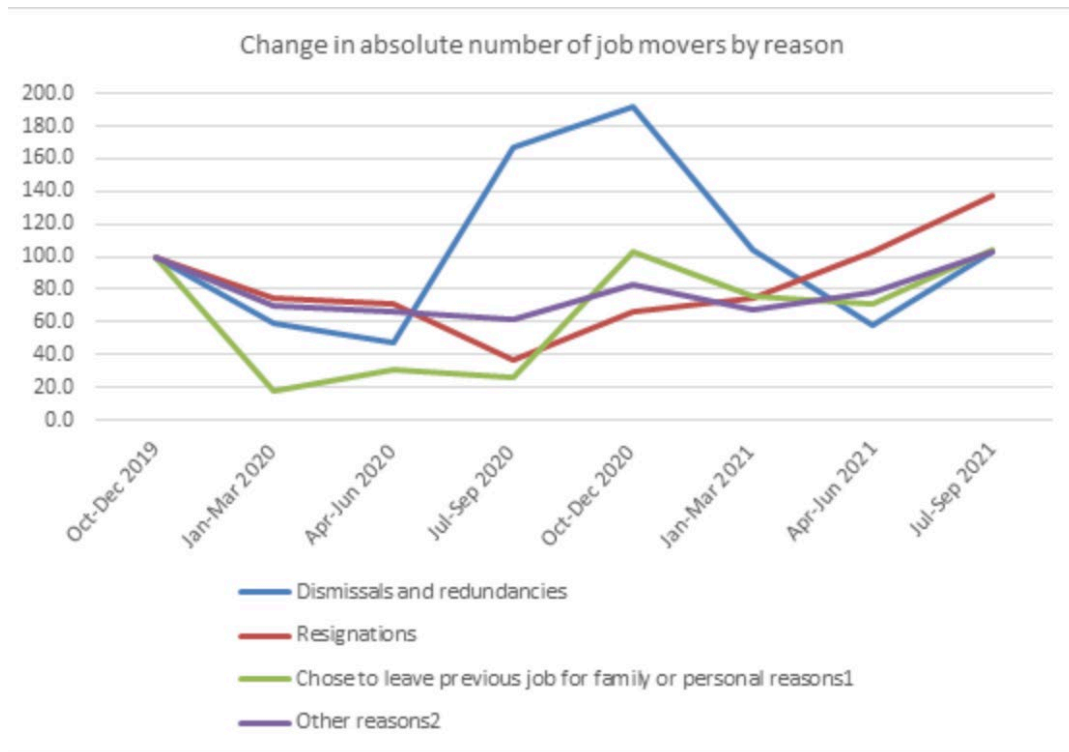
CIPD (Boys, 2022)

Figure 2

FIGURE 2.4 ILO EMPLOYMENT RATE BY AGE, OVER TIME (%)
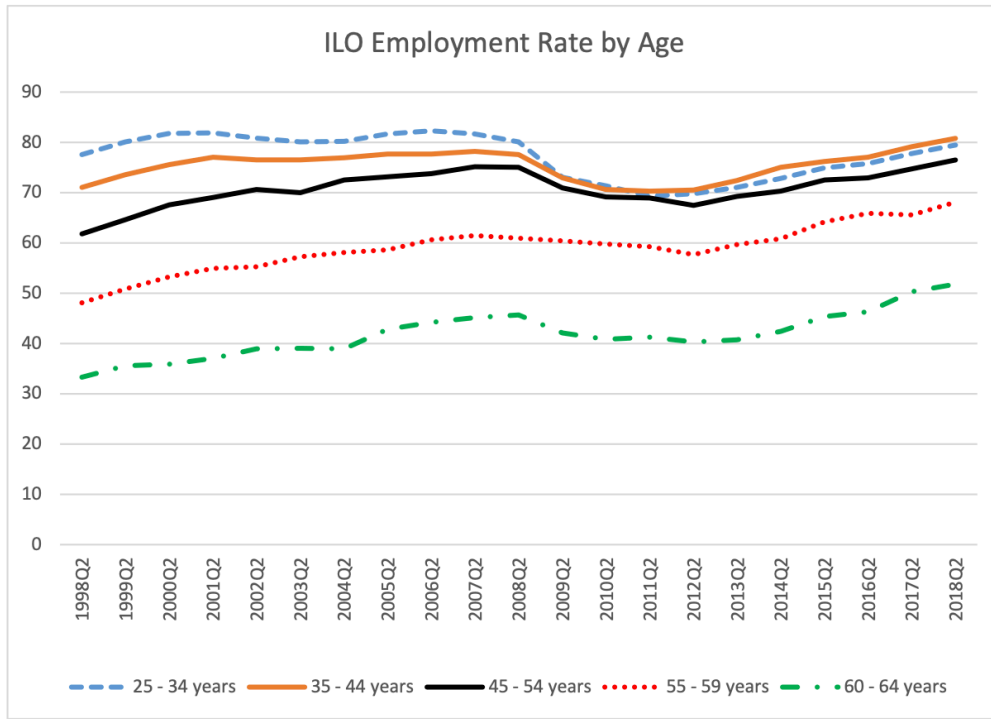
ILO employment rate by age

Figure 3.

eBEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer attractive? [Career	BEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer	BEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer attractive	BEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer attractive	BEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer attractive	BEFORE THE PANDEMIC Q7. What factors made an employer attractive?	total		

progressio n.]	attractive ? [Status]	? [Work culture / social aspect]	? [Ethical]	? [Flexibili ty / Hybrid work]	[Manage ment style]			
3	3	4	2	2	2	16		
4	3	3	4	2	4	20		
5	4	4	5	5	4	27		
5	3	3	3	2	3	19		
5	3	4	5	5	5	27		
5	5	5	5	5	5	30		
4	2	3	4	4	4	21		
4	3	3	4	4	5	23		
3	3	3	2	5	3	19		
4	3	2	4	4	4	21		
5	4	5	5	5	5	29		
2	2	1	2	1	1	9		
3	4	5	1	4	4	21		
4	1	2	4	2	3	16		
4	3	4	5	4	5	25		

4	4	4	4	4	4	24		
5	3	3	4	1	5	21		
4	2	3	4	2	3	18		
4	3	4	3	4	3	21		
4	3	3	3	3	4	20		
5	3	4	4	5	5	26		
5	4	5	4	5	4	27		
1	1	1	2	1	1	7		
5	1	1	1	2	2	12		
4	2	3	4	4	4	21		
5	3	3	3	4	3	21		
3	2	2	3	5	4	19		
4	4	5	5	5	5	28		
5	3	5	5	5	5	28		
3	3	3	3	4	3	19		
5	5	5	5	4	5	29		
4	3	4	4	4	5	24		
5	2	2	4	1	5	19		
4	4	4	4	1	5	22		

1	1	1	1	1	1	6		
5	3	3	5	3	3	22		
3	3	4	4	5	5	24		
5	4	5	4	4	5	27		
5	3	5	4	1	4	22		
4	4	4	3	2	5	22		
5	4	4	5	2	5	25		
4	4	4	4	3	5	24		
5	2	2	4	3	3	19		
5	4	5	4	5	5	28		
4	3	3	3	3	4	20		
4	2	4	2	1	5	18		
4	2	3	4	5	5	23		
5	2	2	1	2	1	13		
5	2	1	2	1	1	12		
4	1	1	5	5	5	21		
3	3	3	4	3	3	19		
1	2	3	2	3	1	12		
4	2	3	5	4	4	22		

5	3	5	4	2	5	24		
4	3	2	4	3	4	20		
2	2	5	4	4	4	21		
5	5	5	5	5	5	30		
4	5	3	1	5	1	19		
5	5	5	5	5	5	30		
4	3	3	4	3	3	20		
4	4	4	4	5	5	26		
4	4	3	3	1	5	20		
4	3	2	4	5	5	23		
4	3	3	3	1	5	19		
					sy2:	28.317	Alpha	0.9
Variant 1	Variant 2	Variant 3	Variant 4	Variant 5	Variant 6	Total sum Variant		Between 0-1
1.059	1.115	1.544	1.385	2.204	1.747	9.054		Higher reabilty

Researcher's own. 2022

Fig. 4
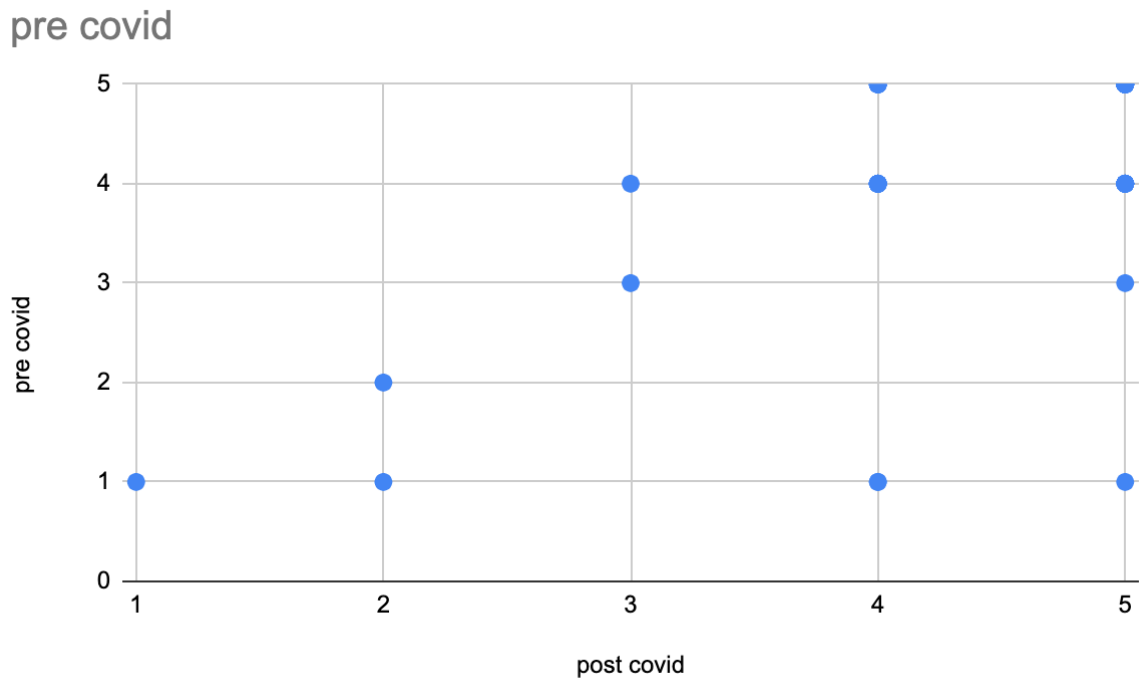
pre covid

Researcher's own. 2022

Figure 5.

post covid	pre covid	ranks post covid	ranks pre covid	Spearman Ranking	
4	5	15	47	Coefficient (rs)	0.4733993959
5	3	44.5	7.5	N:	64
5	5	44.5	47	T statistic:	4.231775539
4	5	15	47	DF:	62

5	5	44.5	47	P value:	0.01%
5	5	44.5	47		
5	4	44.5	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
5	4	44.5	19		
2	2	2.5	6		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	5	15	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
3	3	4.5	7.5		
4	4	15	19		
4	5	15	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
1	1	1	3		

5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	4	44.5	19		
5	4	44.5	19		
5	4	44.5	19		
3	4	4.5	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	1	15	3		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	4	44.5	19		
5	5	44.5	47		

5	4	44.5	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	5	15	47		
5	1	44.5	3		
4	1	15	3		
4	4	15	19		
5	5	44.5	47		
2	1	2.5	3		
4	4	15	19		
4	5	15	47		
4	4	15	19		
4	5	15	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
5	5	44.5	47		
4	4	15	19		
5	4	44.5	19		

5	5	44.5	47		
5	4	44.5	19		
5	4	44.5	19		

Researcher's own. 2022

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